

LOVE, SWEAT AND TEARS

*Church planting in
east London*

By Tim Thorlby



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOREWORD

It is fitting that this report should be released at Easter, for it tells a story of renewal and resurrection. This careful study dispels some common myths about church planting and offers grounds for thankfulness and hope.

The narrative we are so often told by the media (and by some within the Church) is that our congregations are in terminal decline. Church planting is one of the ways in which across the diocese we're telling a different story – that churches can have a new lease of life and flourish at the heart of London's diverse communities. The following pages tell the story of how that has happened in a few square miles of east London.

This report shows that this movement of the Spirit is forming new disciples, not simply shuffling existing ones around - and is renewing the parish system in some of London's most deprived and challenging neighbourhoods. Where once the Church had seemed condemned to inexorable decline, instead reinvigorated congregations are a powerful witness to the risen Christ.

I hope the stories told here will be an inspiration to parishes across London and beyond. More than that, the lessons which have been learned over the past ten years since the reinvigoration of St Pauls, Shadwell could serve as a template for others who share the vision of revitalised churches. There is much to be said for learning the practical lessons of church planting contained within these pages.

In London, we have a vision for 100 new worshipping communities across the diocese by 2020. We are on the way to achieving this partly through church planting. As we read in this report, there can be some trepidation around the process. Yet experience shows it is overwhelmingly good news for the communities in which a parish is refreshed. This has been my experience in visiting such communities over the past 20 years but it is important that we now have a solid research base on which to continue the process of planting churches.

It's clear that church planting requires a lot of hard work, humility, compromise and a good sense of humour. For all that, the rewards are obvious. Five churches described in this study, and many more across London, have been revived. Not only is that good news for each

congregation and community, but members of these churches are in turn looking at how they can bless other churches through planting. This chain reaction is indicative of the creative, compassionate God we serve and the confident Gospel we proclaim in the 21st Century.

Church planting is not the possession of one tradition, but a gift to the whole Body of Christ. The revival of the See of Islington is enabling a wider range of congregations to experience its benefits. This report is an important part of that process. The Centre for Theology and Community is to be thanked not only for undertaking this pioneering research, but for helping churches in very different traditions to put its lessons into practice.

*Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dr Richard Chartres KCVO DD FSA
Bishop of London*

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This report is the first fully-researched and published account of the church planting that has been undertaken in east London through the Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) Network. It tells the story of the five churches which have benefited from planting over the ten year period from 2005 – 2015, beginning with St Paul's, Shadwell. It attempts to tell the stories honestly and as a help to others.

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

Five of the Church of England's 18 Parishes within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets have become part of a church planting initiative which began in 2005 with the Parish of St Paul, Shadwell.

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets covers the heart of the traditional East End of London and illustrates the diversity of the sub-region. It includes extremes of wealth and poverty as well as widely varying cultures. With one in three Tower Hamlets residents identifying as Muslim it is also one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse places in Europe.

The church planting story is no less remarkable. Each parish experience has been different in context and approach. Each story is complicated. But the overall impact after 10 years is very encouraging and the practical lessons learned will be of value to others. Their experience should make an important contribution to the rich and varied story of church planting across London.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on new primary research undertaken during summer and autumn 2015. The research included:

- Face to face semi-structured interviews undertaken with key local stakeholders
- A 'snapshot congregational survey' of all adults present in all of the services in each of the five churches on one Sunday in October 2015, with over 500 responses

- Analysis of Church of England Sunday Attendance statistics and financial data as collated by the Diocese of London, as well as a review of relevant local documents

PART A: FIVE CHURCHES, FIVE STORIES

St Paul's, Shadwell was on the verge of closure in 2005 when new leadership and a large group of 100 new members was 'sent' by Holy Trinity, Brompton to give the church a new lease of life. After ten years, the church now has a regular Sunday attendance of over 250 and has enabled fresh starts in four more churches.

St Peter's, Bethnal Green is now a 'cross-tradition' church incorporating both Anglo-Catholic and evangelical streams. The church entered into a partnership with St Paul's, Shadwell in 2010 when a new Vicar and a small group of people from St Paul's and elsewhere joined the church. The church has grown in the last five years and has a strong focus on 'social transformation' within its mission.

All Hallows, Bow has a lively, creative congregation which serves its local community through church, community centre and parties. In 2010, new clergy and a small group of people joined the very small existing congregation to give the church a fresh start. The church has been growing every year since.

The Parish of Christ Church, Isle of Dogs has a large resident population and two churches – Christ Church and St Luke's. The Vicar and PCC invited St Paul's, Shadwell to send a new minister and new congregation members to join the very small congregation of St Luke's within their parish. The fresh start at St Luke's began in 2013 and the congregation has grown from 15 in 2013 to 70 in 2015. The church meets in a community centre and works with Christ Church to serve the parish.

In 2014, a new evening service was established at **Christ Church, Spitalfields**, the result of a partnership with St Paul's, Shadwell and Holy Trinity, Brompton. The evening service is led by two new curates, each of whom led a group of people from their previous churches to join Christ Church. After a year the evening service has a regular attendance of over 120 people.

PART B: ANALYSIS AND LESSONS

Overview of impact

In ten years, the church planting process in these five parishes has seen significant results:

- ***Overall Sunday attendance has grown tenfold in 10 years***

Typical Sunday attendance of adults and children across the five churches has grown from 72 before the planting process to nearly 750 currently. Our surveys show that their regular members are very diverse. The vast majority live in east London and the majority live within the same postcode as their respective church.

One in five regular attenders were either returning to church after several years away or were completely new to church. Across the five churches, this currently equates to about 115 people on a typical Sunday, many of whom are from the local community.

Overall, four out of five regular current church members were previously attending another church. Many have come via the original church planting processes but they are clearly attracting significant numbers of churchgoers newly arrived in London who would otherwise probably have attended a city-centre church. Very few have transferred from other churches in east London.

- ***The Diocese of London is now over £300,000 better off each year as a result of the financial changes***

From 2004 to 2014 the five parishes have moved from paying 34% of their Common Fund costs to paying 95% of these costs, leaving the Diocese with more resources for other parishes.

- ***There is a high degree of volunteering and involvement across the five churches***

An average of 68 per cent of regular adult attenders currently volunteer in some way. Church members also volunteer on existing projects run by neighbouring churches.

- ***Church growth and social transformation seem not only compatible but may reinforce each other***

All five churches are actively engaged in reaching out to their local communities and serving them in practical ways. The churches which have the highest proportion of attenders who are new/returning to church are also the churches with the most active community work.

Each church is different and each one continues to evolve in different ways. Overall, the church in east London is better off. East London is better off.

Hundreds of largely middle-class Christians who were living in east London but attending large churches in central London now regularly attend churches in east London. The benefits of this shift are fourfold:

- It brings people, skills and resources to the parishes involved, allowing the renewal of the church buildings and communities and restoring the sustainability of these churches
- It brings benefits to the local communities in terms of missional outreach (people coming to faith) and service (practical social benefits)
- It brings benefits to the Christians now engaged in new kinds of service and ministry in east London amongst hugely diverse communities
- It strengthens the parish system ('a church in every community') both directly and indirectly, by restoring some parishes and freeing up Diocesan resources to support other parishes in need

These churches also defy simple labels. They are neither fully contextual nor are they rootless 'network' churches, but something of a hybrid of the two. All of these parishes are seriously deprived by the Government's measures but also include pockets of wealth within them and nearby. Rich and poor do indeed live cheek by jowl in London, and in this sense it may not be typical for the UK. These churches bring these two groups of people together for mutual benefit, albeit imperfectly and with much still to learn.

These are also stories that contain immense generosity – of churches supporting each other through financial giving and of new church members respecting the established traditions of older members and the foundations on which they now build for the future.

The future?

Any revival of the church's fortunes will require a mix of approaches, working together. The model of church planting described in this report is not a 'cure all' for every place or situation, but it certainly appears to have a role to play. It demonstrates what can be done within the traditional structures of the Church. It also carries a challenge to all churches, all traditions and all denominations to play a role in the revival of the Church in the UK.

Myths and Lessons

The report concludes by addressing nine myths about the church planting process in east London and then summarising a number of practical insights and lessons gleaned from the interviews and discussions with the churches involved in this study. We hope that these experiences will be of the benefit to those interested in church planting.



1 INTRODUCTION

This report is the first fully researched and published account of church planting undertaken in east London through the Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) Network. The report tells the story of five churches which have benefited from planting over the ten year period from 2005 – 2015, beginning with St Paul's, Shadwell. It attempts to tell the stories honestly and as a help to others.

The 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.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report tells the story of five churches, all in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

East London is a remarkable place. Its inner city areas remain some of the most deprived in England,¹ yet its history, diversity and adaptability make it a fascinating, vibrant and dynamic part of the capital. In some ways it lags behind other places, but in other ways it is at the cutting edge of social and economic change.

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets covers the heart of the traditional East End of London and illustrates the diversity of the sub-region. It stretches from the City of London in the west to the Isle of Dogs in the east and from the River Thames in the south to the edge of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Hackney Wick. It includes extremes of wealth and poverty as well as widely divergent cultural practices. It is home to global business HQs in Canary Wharf and London's revitalised Docklands as well as Brick Lane, Banglatown and some of London's trendiest hipsters in Shoreditch. With one in three Tower Hamlets residents identifying as Muslim² it is also one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse places in Europe.

The church planting story is no less remarkable.

Five of the Church of England's 18 Parishes within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets have become part of a church planting initiative which began in 2005 with the parish of St Paul, Shadwell. Each experience has been different in context and approach. Each story is complicated. But the overall impact after 10 years is very encouraging and the practical lessons learned will be of value to others.

It must be noted that even after 10 years this report can only be considered as an interim review. Whilst the church plant at St Paul's, Shadwell has been running for a decade and has arguably reached a mature stage, the most recent partnership initiative with Christ Church, Spitalfields (at the time of writing) is only a year old. It is too early to come to final conclusions, if such a thing is ever possible, and the work continues and evolves, but we believe that enough work has been done

¹ DCLG (2015) *The English Indices of Deprivation 2015*

² 34.5%; from Census 2011, ONS

in enough parishes to merit a thorough review and interim conclusions.

It is also important to note that the church planting work which is a focus of this report is by no means the only church planting happening in east London or even in Tower Hamlets. This report considers one initiative within the Church of England in one borough in some depth – the full picture of church planting across London is rich and varied.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

This report is based on new primary research undertaken during the summer and autumn of 2015 and includes:

- Face to face semi-structured interviews undertaken with 14 different people, including the key church leaders involved, members of their congregations, a selection of neighbouring parish priests and other relevant local stakeholders. A full list of participating interviewees is provided at the back of the report for transparency. We have sought to gain a rounded view.
- A 'snapshot congregational survey' of all adults present at all Sunday services in each of the five churches on one Sunday in October 2015, with over 500 responses.
- A review of relevant local documents including annual reports and any other reviews or evaluations undertaken.
- Analysis of Church of England Sunday attendance statistics and financial data as collated by the Diocese of London.

The research focused on the following five parishes:

- St Paul's, Shadwell
- St Peter's, Bethnal Green
- Christ Church, Spitalfields
- Christ Church and St John with St Luke, Isle of Dogs
- All Hallows, Bow

1.3 A BRIEF NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

There is considerable angst and debate about the language that surrounds ‘church planting,’ both with respect to the process itself as well as the labels used to describe the resulting forms of church. Is it a ‘plant,’ a ‘graft’ or a ‘partnership?’ Is it a ‘church plant,’ a ‘fresh expression’ or a ‘missional community?’

There are certainly important differences of substance between some initiatives which do need to be understood, but many of the labels currently in use also overlap considerably. Generally speaking, we have tried to avoid becoming entangled in this debate and have employed the same labels and language currently being used by those involved in each church to whom we have spoken. We hope that there is also sufficient information in each story for readers to come to their own conclusion about what is happening.

1.4 THE STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

The rest of this report is structured as follows...

In section 2, we provide a brief summary of the methodology used in our research.

In sections 3 to 7 we tell the stories of each of the five parishes where church planting has taken place, seeking to describe the situation in the parish beforehand, how the planting came about and then how it unfolded and what difference it has made. It is impossible to tell the five stories in full detail, as each one would be far too long but we have tried to paint a picture in sufficient detail to be meaningful and helpful.

Finally, sections 8, 9 and 10 provide an overview impact assessment, an analysis of the key myths about these church plants and a summary of lessons learned from these experiences.



2 METHODOLOGY

This section briefly summarises our methodology.

2.1 CONSTRUCTING THE STORIES

We have drawn together a range of evidence with a view to telling the recent story of each church in a rounded and informative way. The sources used include:

- Interviews with the churches themselves, including clergy and some members of their congregation
- Interviews with a selection of neighbouring parishes to hear their perspective
- A review of annual reports and any other existing research or evaluation evidence
- Analysis of data from the Diocese of London on parish Common Fund contributions and also church attendance over the last ten years
- Our own Snapshot Surveys, explained below

The story of St Paul's, Shadwell is obviously the longest out of the five and so their story is the fullest. For each story, we have sought to describe what happened in the same way:

- History and context of parish
- The state of the parish just before planting
- How the church planting process was brought about
- Then a structured description of the changes in relation to different aspects of church life:
 - The people involved (The team)
 - Resources, building and management
 - Church life: services and activities
 - Mission (including evangelism, community engagement and further church planting)
 - Engagement with other local churches
- Impact assessment of the church planting

2.2 SNAPSHOT SURVEYS

For this research, we designed and undertook some novel surveys of the five churches involved in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of who the people in the congregations are and where

they have come from.

All five churches agreed to take part. On a Sunday in October 2015, each church surveyed all adults aged 16 or over who attended all of their church services on that Sunday. We excluded paid staff. We counted visitors but did not ask them to complete questionnaires.

The surveys secured a large response (70 per cent overall) and have provided some very valuable data. The results have been included in the following sections at the appropriate points. The response rates were as follows:

Church	Sunday services	Date	Total no. of completed questionnaires	Of which: Regular attenders (excl. visitors)	Total adults present in all Sunday Services	% coverage
St Paul's, Shadwell	9:30am 11am 6:30pm	4 Oct 2015	116	95	189 (count)	61%
St Peter's, Bethnal Green	10am 11am 6pm	4 Oct 2015	106	69	174 (count)	61%
All Hallows, Bow	10:30am 6pm	11 Oct 2015	110	103	120 (count)	93%
St Luke's Millwall	10am	4 Oct 2015	36	32	45 (count)	80%
Christ Church, Spital-fields	10:30am 5pm	4 Oct 2015	155	120	220 (count)	70%
Total			523	419	748	70%

Please note:

- The survey was only of adults attending on that day so does not provide full coverage of all church members but we are confident that the high response rate in all cases gives us a high and strongly representative sample of the full cohort of regular Sunday attenders
- The headcounts provided by the churches of adults present does

include some modest double counting of individuals who attended more than one service but this is a very small proportion of all adults and does not affect the survey data

- We have not attempted to survey those involved in the church outside of Sunday services – e.g. midweek activities like ‘parents and toddlers’ groups, so the survey does not give a full picture of all adults involved in every aspect of church life or outreach

2.3 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Finally, for each church, and then overall, we have sought to assess the impact of church planting upon the church itself and, where possible, any wider impact. Any such assessment is inevitably interim in nature given many of these initiatives are at a relatively youthful stage, but we wanted to attempt a structured reflection on the difference made so far.

Drawing on helpful frameworks developed by others¹ we have developed a simple framework for assessing the impact of church planting in each parish:

Dimension of church life		Indicators
Up	Relationship with God	1. Worship 2. Discipleship
In	Relationships within the church	3. Church community 4. Financial sustainability
Out	Relationships with the community	5. Congregational growth & mission 6. Service to the community
Of	Relationships with the wider Church	7. Collaboration with, and serving of, other churches

The first dimension of ‘Up’ – essentially of a church’s spiritual health and relationship with God – is a rather difficult one to measure and is beyond the resources of this study. All of the churches in this study clearly take worship and discipleship seriously and approach it with sincerity, but this is not an area of church life we have attempted to assess in depth in this study.

Our assessment therefore focuses on the remaining three dimensions – In, Out and Of - and the five different indicators of these. At the end of each story, we use this simple framework to discuss the evidence of impact.

¹ A very helpful evaluation framework can be found in the appendix of: Moynagh, M. (2014) *Being Church, Doing Life* Oxford: Lion Hudson

PART A

**FIVE
CHURCHES,
FIVE STORIES**



3 THE STORY OF ST PAUL'S, SHADWELL

St Paul's, Shadwell was on the verge of closure in 2005 when new leadership and a large group of 100 new members was 'sent' by Holy Trinity, Brompton to give the church a new lease of life. After ten years, the church now has a regular Sunday attendance of over 250 and has enabled further plants and partnerships in four more churches.

3.1 HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The Parish of St Paul, Shadwell with St James, Ratcliff (usually shortened to St Paul's, Shadwell) is situated in the eastern part of Wapping in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

The parish has its origins in the 17th Century, serving the sailors and residents of the working docks. Records show that John Wesley preached at St Paul's and Captain James Cook worshipped there for a time. The current building dates from 1820 and is located on The Highway, a major road route into central London.

The parish is home to a diverse mix of communities which are continuing to change, as they have always done. There is a small white working class community, although many have moved out of the area in recent decades. Their place has been taken by a Bengali community, although they are also beginning now beginning to move out, replaced by a growing number of eastern Europeans. A diverse middle-class community has also grown over the last 30 years as the area has been redeveloped and new housing has been built, but even this is a mix – of bankers, people working in media and local teachers.

Overall the parish is deprived with some of its most established communities experiencing the most entrenched poverty. The area includes a wide range of households, however, including significant pockets of wealth.

The church itself has had a long and varied history, having swung from High Church to Low Church over the years, each phase having left some imprint on the buildings and traditions. In the 19th Century, the architect Butterfield recreated the church as a High Church 'shrine,' only for much of his work to be removed in the 1930s. The result is a mixed architectural legacy, perhaps reflecting the diversity of the parish it still serves.

3.2 THE PARISH BEFORE CHURCH PLANTING

The church community at St Paul's has a long heritage and it has sought to serve the local areas for centuries. However, by 2004, the parish church had been in decline for some time and was in danger of being closed, with potential plans for use as a theological college. There was no Rector, while the congregation had just 12 people, mainly over the age of 60.

They were determined to see the church survive and many were praying for a revival.

The church building is Grade II* Listed and was in reasonable condition, although the ceiling needed urgent repairs. The parish had a rental income of c£40,000 pa which provided some support. This came from the crypt which was let out to a commercial nursery and from a neighbouring building called 'The Institute' which housed the church office, with the rest of the space let out to various commercial tenants. The adjacent Rectory was being squatted and was in a poor state of repair.

The Bishop of London invited Holy Trinity, Brompton (HTB) to consider leading a church plant at St Paul's, and after visits and consultations, this was agreed. The Bishop was concerned that the population of working professionals was growing in the Docklands area as new housing continued to be built, particularly along the waterfront, but that local churches were not really reaching them. He wanted to see a church that would focus on serving them.

The Revd Ric Thorpe agreed to become Priest-in-charge in June 2004 and it was publicly announced in July 2004.

Ric had initially worked in industry before working at HTB in various operational roles and then finally feeling the call to both ordination and church planting. As an Assistant Curate he played a supporting role in HTB's early church planting initiatives before feeling the call himself to lead a church plant.

The Revd Jez Barnes joined the team too as Associate Vicar. Through the autumn, Ric and Jez held open meetings at HTB every few weeks to share the vision of the church planting process and to recruit people

who wanted to join the church in Shadwell. By Christmas 2004 they had 100 people committed. Many of these people were already living in east London and meeting together in three different mid-week house groups ('Connect Groups') based in the area. A handful began attending St Paul's during this time.

On 20th January 2005, Ric and Jez were licensed as priests in the Parish and their first Sunday services began at the end of January.

3.3 AIMS OF THE CHURCH PLANT

The original stated aim of the church plant at St Paul's, agreed with the Bishop of London, was to reach the young professionals who were growing in number in east London and to rebuild the viability of St Paul's in the process. Although the parish has conventional boundaries, Ric was encouraged to serve people 'regardless of parish boundaries' (although he notes that they are hard to ignore in practice).

They were also keen to keep the existing congregation. As a working philosophy, Ric quotes Mark Jobe in saying *"We should honour the past, navigate the present and build for the future."*

There was an obvious tension from the outset – the parish is home to many wealthier young professionals, often moving in to rent for a few years, but is also home to other communities which are diverse and often more deprived. This includes remnants of white working class communities as well as the large Bangladeshi community, which is predominantly Muslim. For a new church plant it would be challenging to serve such diverse communities from day one, not least as they require very different approaches. In line with the original call, the church leadership initially opted to prioritise serving young professionals, although a significant number of the congregation were interested in engaging the wider local community and have gone on to do so. The tensions here have ebbed and flowed over the years and the church has since shifted its approach to being more comprehensively engaged locally.

3.4 OVERVIEW

It is possible to think of the last ten years at St Paul's in three very approximate stages of church life.

'A long arrival'

The first stage was arriving and setting up. It took perhaps 18 months (2005 and early 2006) for the church to begin to settle down and to shift its thinking from "we are a new church plant, are we going to survive?" to a more 'normal' approach to church. Those involved note that it is difficult to keep up a 'new project' tempo for long - it is too tiring. Eventually, the church began to relax and settle into a more sustainable rhythm and there was a confidence that the church plant "was going to work."

'Putting down roots'

The three to four years from 2006 – 2009 were a time for church development which involved both some 'putting down roots' but also preparing for church planting. The aim was to grow the church and achieve some stability. It took several years for the newly invigorated church to feel properly 'established.'

There was a constant 'natural' churn in the congregation at the same time - St Paul's experiences the same sort of 'churn' of church members each year typical of many inner London churches – perhaps 30 per cent each year. A degree of change is constant.

'Planting out'

From 2010-2015, the church 'sent' out four groups of people to become part of church plants elsewhere in Tower Hamlets. Each departure has inevitably had an impact on the sending church. This phase has involved considerable movement of people (leaders and congregation) in and out of the church over this time at key points, with periods of relative calm in between. Related to church planting, clergy and some other staff were coming and going most years – with clergy being trained and moving on to lead church plants or other churches.

Throughout this time, the Rector has remained the same and a core group of church members have also stayed, providing continuity of senior leadership and some continuity of lay leadership and community.

It is difficult to summarise the life of a church in a few pages, particularly when it has been as active as St Paul's, but the next two sections attempt to give a sense of what the church has been doing over the last decade.

3.5 PHASE 1: THE LONG ARRIVAL (2005-6)

At the outset, the church planting 'team' arrived at St Paul's with:

- The Revd Ric Thorpe in his first role as Rector
- The Revd Jez Barnes, Associate Vicar (who had been assistant curate at HTB for 4 years)
- A group of 100 people from HTB's congregations, of whom c80 already lived in east London but were commuting in to HTB in South Kensington on Sundays, and some of whom were part of Connect Groups meeting in the area. Most of these people were young (under 40) and with mainly singles or couples. These are the members of a congregation who are most mobile. A handful moved house to join St Paul's and make it their local church.
- A grant of £50,000 from HTB, to be drawn down as required, plus a further goodwill offering of c£35,000 (including Gift Aid) collected from the wider HTB Network at Focus, their annual summer gathering.

The overall direction was clear, drawing on an established five-fold model¹ of the ways in which they wanted the church to grow:

- A adoration
- B belonging
- C community
- D discipleship
- E evangelism

Over time this was simplified in practice to three priorities (drawing on the experience of other churches):

- "Up" – Worship – enabling the congregation to fully engage with

¹ Drawn from: Tomlin, G (2002) *The Provocative Church* SPCK: London

worship by investing in this and ensuring that the music and support was high quality

- "In" – Fellowship – ensuring a pro-active approach to welcoming and hospitality for newcomers to the church, and encouraging people to join the regular midweek 'Connect' groups
- "Out" – Mission – providing Alpha courses each term, supporting the congregation to develop more missional attitudes and habits and developing new missional initiatives

There was a great level of enthusiasm too amongst the leadership, the team and the congregation. *"We didn't know what couldn't be done."*

However, within this, it was a very 'human' process – it was not a neat plan, tidily and efficiently executed. For example, what was the first 100 days like? Ric's initial response: *"Total chaos!"*

The first year was planned, in practice, on a term by term basis, and plans evolved as circumstances changed. There was a lot of hard work too – most things had to be done for the first time from scratch – something which can be very tiring.

The approach in the first few months was also typified by lots of discussion and negotiation between the team and the congregation about what to change and what to continue with. It is clear that great care was taken to be sensitive to the concerns of the existing congregation, whilst still proceeding, as will be seen. The value of this approach is evidenced by the fact that nearly every original member of the congregation chose to stay.

The rest of this section explores the changes with respect to each area of parish life in **the first year or so** in more detail.

1) THE TEAM

The staff team began with Ric and Jez. They recruited an administrator very early.

They had a part-time worship leader. They also benefited from some experienced lay leaders too. Ric's wife Louie worked as part of the leadership team as a voluntary staff pastor and she led a number of missional initiatives over the years. (Ric and Louie considered the call to church planting as a joint call.) Jacquie Driver, working at KPMG, became the treasurer from the very beginning of the planting process

(and still is, at the time of writing). Others were also important in providing practical and pastoral leadership.

Later in the year, Amanda Lee joined as a full-time associate pastor, adding leadership capacity and providing a much needed female presence on the leadership team and bringing new skills to the team.

During the second year, a new full-time worship leader was recruited, Andrew Sercombe, who also made a significant contribution to the church's communication via social media. He went on to become an assistant pastor until moving on in 2013.

The staff team began to meet weekly, and has done so ever since, including spouses whenever possible. In the later phase of planting churches, some of the leaders of the new plants also joined these meetings.

Amidst the practical challenges and busyness of the work, it was also an emotional experience. For some of the team it was their first time living in east London, and even the first time living in a deprived area. Ric remembers that *"it took several years before it felt like home... but we grew in confidence... and went on to stay for 10 years. Now we love the place."*

II) RESOURCES, BUILDINGS AND MANAGEMENT

There were challenges with the buildings from the very start. The Rectory needed to be refurbished so Ric and his family could live there. Given the state of the church ceiling, substantial repairs had to be undertaken immediately – costing the church £33,000, with English Heritage providing the balance.

Diocesan approval (from the Archdeacon) was secured for a 'temporary faculty' to remove the pews for 18 months and replace them with stackable chairs and carpet, making the main church sanctuary a more flexible space (with the pews retained so that they could be reinstated). This was an early priority. The Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) was involved in the process in a collaborative way; the team's vision was to restore the church building to good order but to also to make it a more flexible space – and the DAC helped to shape how this was done. A subsequent faculty was approved which made the change permanent, although some pews were eventually reinstated into the galleries.

The Institute building was also 'reclaimed' for church use. Although this meant losing some rental income as commercial tenants were

asked to leave, it meant the church actually had space to work with – for offices, meetings, activities, etc.

There was also a gradual 'tidying up' of the church and the various bits of furniture and other objects that had accumulated over the years.

Finances

Financially, the clear expectation was that St Paul's would be financially self-sufficient from day one, so there was no ongoing financial support provided by HTB after the initial grant. There was also a clear agreement with the Diocese of London that the parish would pay its full Common Fund contribution from the outset.

“
**THE CLEAR
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PAUL'S WOULD
BE FINANCIALLY
SELF-SUFFICIENT
FROM DAY ONE**

The budget for the first year was c£180,000 of which c£90,000 was the full Common Fund contribution to the Diocese (for two clergy), which the team had agreed to pay, £33,000 was the urgent ceiling repair bill and there were also the costs of employing a new administrator. It was a steep challenge at the outset, and significantly beyond anything the church was used to at the time.

Previous budgets had been closer to £30,000 annually, mainly funded through rental income, with little congregational income. Passing the first budget through the Parochial Church Council (PCC) required a fair degree of trust as existing members were not used to relying on congregational giving to such a degree.

The church met the budget through a combination of the gifts they had received and congregational giving. The new congregation was highly committed and nearly all of them contributed.

III) CHURCH LIFE: SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

The **9.30am Sunday service** continued much as before, using Common Worship, and providing a lot of continuity for the original congregation. (The service still runs today.) The new Rector declined 'to

robe' on principle as he wanted to promote an ethos of making church more approachable for visitors (and many other local churches already provided that experience) but otherwise there were few changes. Some of the new church members also chose to attend this service, so it grew in size from about 10 to over 20 people each Sunday.

A new **Sunday service was also added at 11am**, aimed more at families and younger people, with a more contemporary style of worship - reflecting the typical model of service used by many churches in the HTB network. The service was preceded by 'coffee and croissants' which acted as a social 'bridge' between the two services, as well as a welcome for people arriving for the second service.

One of the challenges faced by the leadership team was working out what to change and what not to change. Clearly, to build for the future it was necessary to make a range of changes, but that did not mean that everything needed to change, nor should changes be made for the sake of it. Care was clearly taken in the early years to be sensitive to the wishes of the original congregation. Changes were often made in stages. The removal of the pews was an example of a significant early change, although even this was only temporary at first. The continuity provided by the 9.30am service was an example of something which was left largely unchanged.

In the first term, one midweek meeting was held for all those who wanted to meet together during the week. In the second term, midweek house groups were set up, meeting in people's homes.

IV) MISSION

The first Alpha course was run in the autumn of 2005, with 25 attendees. The church also ran Marriage and Marriage Preparation courses in the first year and a number of outreach events around Christmas.

St Paul's was also looking for partners to work with in mission. An early connection was with XLP, to begin engagement with local young people.

There was also a willingness to let people within the church try new activities. All sorts of projects came and went as members of the congregation with different passions sought to establish new activities. Some worked, some didn't. (Some of these are described later.)

V) EARLY ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Reaction to the church plant at St Paul's amongst local church leaders varied, and it was clearly not all plain sailing. As one consultee has noted, church planting of any kind almost inevitably causes anxiety amongst existing church leaders in an area, not least reflecting a fairly natural fear of change or of the unknown. In this case, there was a degree of fear and anxiety – and in a couple of cases, hostility - for two different reasons.

Firstly, there was a general expectation in 2004 that the church would probably be closed or subsumed into another parish, so there was genuine surprise when the Bishop of London decided it should remain open and receive a church plant. There appears to have been little consultation with local clergy at the time, and certainly not much notice given of the initiative. The lack of opportunity for discussion was unhelpful as it allowed exacerbated fears amongst some local clergy about what impact the church plant might have upon their parishes and, in some quarters, it left a legacy of ill feeling.

Secondly, aside from the relative speed with which the planting happened, there was a more general and underlying sense of anxiety amongst some church leaders, particularly those of an Anglo-Catholic tradition. Their concerns were various - that their long-standing church traditions may not be understood or valued, that they might lose some of their congregations through greater competition or perhaps even be 'taken over' themselves at some point, and that large and confident 'incoming' congregations may be insensitive, tending to believe that 'everything they do is new' or 'assuming they are the only ones who have something to give' rather than engaging with mutual respect.

It was clear from the consultations that after ten years a handful of leaders still hold to these anxieties, but others have shifted from scepticism to broad support. The incoming leaders and new congregation members turned out to be more sophisticated and generous in their approach than they were initially given credit for. Mistakes were inevitably made along the way, but the initial fears have not materialised:

- The evidence suggests that very few local churches have lost congregation members through competition (unsurprising given the

difference in traditions in many cases)

- Parishes have not been ‘taken over’ – all church plants covered by this report have been by consent
- A number of existing local church projects in the area were actively supported by St Paul’s
- Ric and his colleagues have sought to actively and positively engage with the local Deanery structures/networks and work through them

The real anxieties stirred by church planting do warrant serious reflection and are not to be dismissed. A later section of this report draws out some of the lessons from our research about how these processes can be successfully managed. There is also a challenge back to each church tradition to consider how it can play its own role in church planting and church growth.

VI) IMMEDIATE IMPACT

Of the 12 members of the original congregation from 2005, 11 stayed on and the one who left had always intended to leave when the interregnum was over. Indeed, ten years later, nearly all of this group who are still alive remain church members. Most were ‘won over’ by the church plant. They felt that they were listened to and that the new members were not only very friendly but “worked very hard to keep a united congregation.”

By all accounts most of the original congregation still prefer the traditional style of worship, but they value the survival and growth of their parish church. “Thank God for HTB... the church was dying and they brought it back to life”. For some, seeing lots of children in church again was a symbol of more hopeful times for the church.

Numbers varied through the first year. The planting team brought 100 people with them in January 2005, asked to commit for at least one year, and most did stay for the year, with some turnover towards the end of the year. Numbers varied from week to week though – during August, one Sunday attendance fell to a few dozen, which caused some jitters. By the autumn of 2005 however, the congregation had stabilised and organising regular pastoral care became easier. By the end of 2005, the end of the first year, the congregation was growing.

3.6 PHASES 2 & 3: PUTTING DOWN ROOTS AND PLANTING (2006-15)

After the ‘long arrival,’ the church began to put down roots and prepare to plant out.

I) THE TEAM

There was a strong team – a mix of full-time and part-time staff, some of their spouses and also lay people/volunteers. The team had strong motivation and momentum.

Ric and Jez clearly had very different leadership styles which was a challenge to the team. It took time to work this out, but with help they did so. Leading a church plant for the first time is hard work and there will always be things to learn.

The team enjoyed a few years of stability and also growth as The Revd Adam Atkinson joined in 2007 as assistant curate. Then in 2009, after four years, the original leadership team underwent significant change as Jez moved on to become Vicar of St Stephen’s, Twickenham and Amanda Lee left. A few months later, in 2010, The Revd Ed Dix and The Revd Cris Rogers arrived.

The change of key leaders was a milestone for the church, marking the start of a new chapter in church life – for the congregation as well as for Ric. Significant effort was put into working with the congregation to manage this time of change – through teaching and pastoring. The midweek groups were also re-imagined at this point as ‘Connect Groups’ to encourage a shift in mindset across the church to being more of an outward-looking missional community, with Connect Groups seen as small missional communities within this. There was an intention of moving into a more actively missional stage of church life – which worked its way out partly in church planting. The church’s leaders sought input for this process of change from a professional ‘change management’ consultant, who helped them structure this process.

The clergy team has changed many times in ten years. The comings and goings are summarised in Table 1. Some came for training as curates and most came for the specific purpose of leaving a few years later as part of a church plant.

Table 1: Summary of key changes at St Paul's, Shadwell 2005 - 2015

Year	Leadership Team	Church Planting	Ave Sunday congregation (adults + children)
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrival of the new church planting team led by Revd Ric Thorpe and Revd Jez Barnes • Later in the year Amanda Lee joined as a pastor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New 11am family service added to the 9.30am service 	170
2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Evening service begins, with a group from the morning congregation 	195
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revd Adam Atkinson joins as curate 		188
2008			179
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revd Jez Barnes moves to become Vicar of another parish • Amanda Lee moved to get married 		227
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revd Cris Rogers joins as curate • Revd Ed Dix arrives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revd Adam Atkinson leads church plant to St Peter's, Bethnal Green (with c10 people) • Revd Cris Rogers leads church plant to All Hallows, Bow (with c10 people) 	225
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darren Wolf joins staff team as part of training for ordination • Revd Rod Green arrives 		246
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revd Ric Thorpe becomes the Bishop of London's Advisor for Church Planting 		273
2013		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revd Ed Dix leads church plant to St Luke's, Millwall (with c30 people) 	242
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revd Rod Green moves to become Vicar of another Parish • Revd Alexandra Lilley joins as curate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revd Darren Wolf leads a group to establish a new evening congregation at Christ Church, Spitalfields (with c20 people) 	273
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revd Ric Thorpe becomes the new Bishop of Islington and the parish searches for a new Rector 		Data not yet available

Ric also became the assistant Area Dean for Tower Hamlets in 2007, which helped him feel more at home in the Deanery, and also to get to know it better.

Other Team

An XLP worker joined the team fairly early, to lead on work with young people in the area, and the worker (and her replacement) was funded by St Paul's for five years and based at the church – an example of St Paul's hosting a worker for the borough's wider benefit, not just the parish. There were XLP interns too.

The church has taken interns most years from HTB's Worship Central Academy.

A small team from InnerCHANGE² also moved to Shadwell and has worked closely with the church for many years, committed to in-depth incarnational ministry.

At the time of writing (2015) as an indication of scale, St Paul's has an employed staff team of eight FTE, including two clergy, worship leader, administrator, children and families worker, finance and site manager, vergers and a community outreach intern. Other interns join from time to time. The church has made good use of interns, providing experience and training to them and in return securing valuable extra capacity through their work.

II) RESOURCES, BUILDING AND MANAGEMENT

The annual budget has grown as the congregation of St Paul's has grown, funding not only the staff team but also project activities and grants to enable the launch of some of the further church plants. The plant to All Hallows, Bow (see later) received significant financial support from St Paul's for several years to enable it to happen.

In 2014, the church's income was just over £400,000, comprised of 70 per cent congregational giving, 15 per cent from rental income and the rest from charitable grants for individual projects or posts.

Congregational giving has been generous since the outset. Church members are highly motivated. Currently, approximately one third of the congregation give at any one time regularly by Standing Order/

² InnerCHANGE is an international Christian charity innerchange.org

Direct Debit, complemented by a handful of church members giving more substantial amounts. As noted earlier, the congregation has a relatively typical inner London ‘churn’ of perhaps one third each year, so the church mainly relies on longer-term members for financial support.

III) CHURCH LIFE: SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

In the second year of the church plant, a **new Sunday evening service** was established. Ric describes this as “*the start of St Paul’s church planting.*” A group of about 30 people from the morning congregation moved to form the foundations of the new service. It left a bit of hole in the morning congregation, which was a little dispiriting at first but also a spur to the congregation to grow again. The evening congregation took some years to grow, and was up to about 80 regular attenders by 2014 when a group left to join the new evening service at Christ Church, Spitalfields. After this, attendance fell but it is currently gradually climbing again.

The church also runs a network of eight midweek ‘Connect’ groups for Bible study/prayer and getting to know each other. Regular courses are also provided, sometimes in partnership with other churches – for example the Marriage Preparation and Marriage courses and the Parenting Teenagers course.

A common question asked of church plants is ‘how contextual are they?’ That is, how much do they reflect the culture of the local community? The leadership at St Paul’s, Shadwell made a clear decision in 2005 that they would prioritise serving young professionals (as they had been asked to do) and so their approach reflected this. This is, of course, partly contextual in that a section of the local community is comprised of young professionals.

The tensions of ‘who to serve and how to serve’ were present from day one, as many in the new congregation were actually keen to see greater engagement with the more deprived parts of the local community. Over time, the church has evolved to become more contextual in its membership, its ‘feel’ and its activities. The church’s overall aim remains much the same as at the start, as does the model/format of its Sunday services, but the church has grown in confidence and experience in “how to embrace people from very different backgrounds.” This contextualisation has taken time as the congregation

has experienced ‘churn’ with people moving on and new people arriving, including local people becoming Christians and church members.

Church community life at St Paul’s has also evolved over the years. As a relatively large church community it relies on the midweek ‘Connect’ groups to complement Sunday services as spaces for people to really get to know each other.

The Snapshot Survey of St Paul’s showed a high level of congregational involvement, with nearly 75 per cent of regular attenders involved in some form of volunteering through church, including more than one in three supporting a Connect group and one in five involved in ‘mission to the local community.’

IV) MISSION

Mission includes witnessing to, as well as serving others, outside of the church.

This has always included Alpha courses each year, as well as door knocking from time to time, and various outreach events including Christmas services, etc.

The church’s ‘social transformation’ work (engaging with and serving the local community) has grown significantly over ten years and many in the congregation care deeply about this and get involved. The church provides volunteers to existing local projects and has also begun to develop its own initiatives. It can be harder for those who do not live in the parish to get involved as the time commitment required may not be practical, but it is clear that a fair number do get involved.

Examples of existing local projects supported by the church and its volunteers in the last year include:

- Some years ago, E1 Community Church (formerly Cable Street Community Church) established *Energise!*, a football project reaching out to young people in the area – both boys and girls. The community church had set up the project and St Paul’s has provided volunteers, working in partnership.
- Fathers’ football with local Bangladeshi fathers and sons, in partnership with ‘Ambassadors Football.’
- A local adventure playground has benefited from volunteer support.
- The church participates in the Tower Hamlets winter nightshelter (GrowTH) one night per week, hosting 15 homeless people at a time.

- A stream of small-scale ‘social actions’ by groups in the congregation; e.g. painting and gardening for local people who wanted some support.
- Tower Hamlets Street Pastors.
- Tower Hamlets Food Bank.
- XLP’s youth work, funded by St Paul’s but covering the whole borough.
- TELCO (community organizing with Citizens UK).

Examples of initiatives set up by St Paul’s include:

- A twice weekly ‘Mums and Tums’ group, mainly attended by people who are not church members, currently attracting up to 80 different people per week.
- The church runs five holiday clubs each year plus various family fun events and local social outings.
- St Paul’s set up a money management/debt advice service in 2008 which runs courses each term.
- Some members of the congregation have become trustees of local charities, offering skills and time.

There is perhaps a bit of a disconnect between Sunday services, with a very ‘professional’ feel and the church’s midweek activities which serve a much wider group of local people. Translating midweek engagement into Sunday attendance has also proved difficult. The church has found mission to the area to be challenging and often seemingly not very fruitful, with limited movement of people from social engagement to church attendance. Some have indeed responded and joined the church, but most have not. *“We are ploughing ground that is hard; it may be that others will benefit.”*

Church planting

The attitude of St Paul’s to church planting is to be generous – their stated aim is to give people and money away to benefit other churches.

A fuller account of the further four church plants of 2010-2015 is given later in this report and so is not repeated here, but in summary:

- 2010 – The Revd Adam Atkinson led a team to St Peter’s, Bethnal

Green and The Revd Cris Rogers led a team to All Hallows, Bow, in the same week

- 2013 – The Revd Ed Dix led a team to St Luke’s, Isle of Dogs
- 2014 – The Revd Darren Wolf led a team to Christ Church, Spitalfields

V) ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER CHURCHES

St Paul’s has continued to work in partnership with local churches and projects. This has included the football project for boys and girls with E1 Community Church and Easter-related services and activities with neighbouring churches. The XLP youth work was also done with the involvement of different local churches. As discussed earlier, many of the initial fears about the church’s impact have not been borne out in practice.

The church has also actively supported and encouraged the four new church plants established from 2010 – 2014, as described in the later stories in this report.

VI) ST PAUL’S TODAY

The church today is in an interregnum, searching for a new Rector as Ric has moved on after ten years to become Bishop of Islington. St Paul’s will no doubt continue to evolve with new leadership.

3.7 IMPACT

I) CHURCH COMMUNITY AND INVOLVEMENT

As a larger church, promoting the development of church community is a challenge. The mid-week Connect groups are important in this and engage a reasonable proportion of the congregation. As already noted, there is also a fairly high level of engagement from the congregation in volunteering.

II) FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

St Paul’s now pays its own way, including payment of its Common Fund and so does not require financial support from the Diocese, benefiting other parishes indirectly. Most of its income is from congregational giving.

III) NATURE AND EXTENT OF CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

The church congregation has grown from 12 to 250 in ten years (counted as regular Sunday attendance of children and adults). Ric's initial hope was to grow to 800 in 10 years (although this was never a formal target). This has not been achieved at St Paul's, although the total attendance at St Paul's and the four other church plants enabled by it (see Section 8) is now over 700, so the original vision has arguably

been fulfilled in a different way.

“ THE CHURCH CONGREGATION HAS GROWN... TO 250 IN TEN YEARS

As with most churches, the typical Sunday attendance usually represents only part of the membership at any one time. St Paul's estimates its total current membership at about 350 people, with about 250 in attendance on any given Sunday.

Who are they? The Snapshot Survey gives a good idea. The congregation is diverse in terms of gender and age, with a lot of young people, families and also some older retired people. One in four are from a black and minority ethnic group. The household income is also diverse, although half have a household income of £40,000 or more.

The vast majority (85 per cent) live in east London and nearly all of the rest live in south east London, across the river. The church clearly serves a much wider area than its parish or even its postcode, but it does not attract people from across London, only east London. It could be described as a sub-regional network church.

Ten years after the church plant, a high proportion of the original dozen elderly congregation members are still present. Also, a modest core of perhaps 20 per cent of the original 100 'church planters' have remained as long-term members.

Beyond this, the church experiences significant churn as people come and go each year, particularly younger members, some of whom would have liked to have stayed but have had to move on due to the price of family accommodation in east London. The church has lost far more people through churn than church planting in the last ten years, although these people are then replaced by newcomers.

The Snapshot Survey showed that some 85 per cent of the regularly attending congregation at St Paul's had transferred from another church when they joined. Their previous churches were widely spread across London, the UK and overseas suggesting that St Paul's attracts people newly arrived in east London. Very few came from other churches in east London.

The remaining 15 per cent of the congregation have either returned to church after several years away or are completely new to church. Most stated that they were invited by a friend, with some also joining an Alpha course as well. This is the element of church growth which is 'new' people rather than transfers from other churches.

Does St Paul's attract churchgoers to the detriment of other churches in east London? The survey evidence suggests not. Very few people have transferred directly from other churches in east London. Three out of four of St Paul's neighbouring parishes were also consulted and the general view is that any impact on local congregations in the last ten years has been very limited, where there has been any at all.

The churches in the Anglo-Catholic tradition were confident they had not 'lost out,' unsurprisingly, given they tend to attract people interested in a different style of worship. The more evangelical churches thought that they might have lost out on a few potential joiners each year, moving into the area, but they still considered the impact to be limited. St Paul's is primarily displacing people from large city-centre churches in London who would otherwise have commuted in to central London, but instead attend church in east London.

IV) SERVICE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Although local 'social transformation' work has not always been a priority for St Paul's there is a fair amount of activity on this now, engaging a good number of people in the community – e.g. the 'Mums and Tums' engaging 80 mainly non-church people each week.

St Paul's may be a sub-regional network church, attracting members from across east London but it also has a core of members who are committed to Shadwell in particular. In this sense, it is an interesting hybrid – a 'network church with local roots.'

V) SERVING OTHER CHURCHES

St Paul's main work in serving other churches has clearly been its church planting – described in detail in the next few sections of this report. It has helped to plant and fund the start-up of four further congregations.

In a smaller way its congregation also provides volunteer time and support to other existing local projects, some run by other churches.

IMPACT AND CONCLUSIONS

Ten years ago St Paul's, Shadwell was on the verge of closure as a parish church.

Today it is a thriving church with hundreds of members. Its buildings have been repaired and it is financially sustainable. It has a track record of planting more churches in east London. It has seen a steady stream of people come to faith and return to church. The church draws its members from across east London, and enables more of these people to go to church closer to home instead of commuting in to central London, but it also has a locally beneficial impact – through serving the local community in practical ways and seeing people join the church.



4 THE STORY OF ST PETER'S, BETHNAL GREEN

St Peter's, Bethnal Green is now a 'cross-tradition' church incorporating both Anglo-Catholic and evangelical traditions. The church entered into a partnership with St Paul's, Shadwell in 2010 when a new Vicar and a small group of people from St Paul's and elsewhere joined the church. The church has grown in the last five years and has a strong focus on 'social transformation' within its mission.

4.1 HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The Parish of St Peter with St Thomas, Bethnal Green was first established in 1841 in the heart of east London. It was part of a remarkable experiment in church planting in the area by the then Bishop of London, Charles Blomfield, who set in train plans to build ten new churches in Bethnal Green, in addition to the existing two - one for each apostle. Five of these churches still survive as working churches today, including St Peter's.

As with much of east London, the parish is hugely diverse and continues to change. It covers some of the northern part of Bethnal Green, includes Columbia Road flower market, and adjoins the rapidly up and coming areas of Hoxton and Shoreditch. Bethnal Green itself is changing too. Although much of the parish is deprived, it is gentrifying as house prices continue to rise. The area is still home to locally rooted families and an ethnically diverse community, with a large Bengali population, but incoming young professionals are growing in number.

4.2 THE PARISH BEFORE CHURCH PLANTING

St Peter's is surrounded by an enclosed churchyard with gardens at the back, in a quiet residential area. There is a sizeable crypt below, which is rented out to the neighbouring organ making company for use as storage, and the church hall faces the church across the road. The Vicarage is adjacent to the Church, with a flat in the basement which is rented out (by the Diocese). The church and its buildings are in reasonable condition.

The last full-time Vicar left in 2001. He left a small but active and determined congregation of about 30 people. After his departure the 'living' was suspended and from 2005 a part-time Priest-in-charge, Sister Judith from St Saviour's Priory in Hackney (part of the Society of St Margaret, an Anglican Religious Order) was licensed to oversee, lead and serve the church on a part-time basis. This arrangement lasted for several years, and Sister Judith played a key role in keeping the church

going during this time. The Vicarage was rented out during this time.

The church continued to meet at 10am on Sundays for a traditional Sung Eucharist in the Anglo-Catholic tradition. In addition to Sunday worship, the church also had a culture of gathering together for socials through the year, such as the Harvest Supper and summer outings, so continued to play a role in the local community.

The modest income from renting out church spaces meant that the church was able to cover its running costs each year, although struggled to cover the costs of a priest and did not pay much in Common Fund contributions.

Towards the autumn of 2009, The Revd Ric Thorpe at St Paul's, Shadwell and his curate The Revd Adam Atkinson were exploring options for a new church plant which Adam could lead from St Paul's when his curacy ended in 2010. Ric had consulted with the acting area Bishop and Area Dean and St Peter's had been suggested. Given that Adam was living in the Vicarage at the time, and already knew the area, it was also an obvious choice. So, St Paul's Shadwell approached St Peter's to explore the possibilities.

4.3 AIMS OF THE CHURCH PLANTING

It was clear from the early discussions that the congregation at St Peter's was determined to see the church stay open. There had already been discussions in previous years with the Diocese about the church's prospects and its possible closure - which the congregation had fiercely resisted. But they were also anxious about what a partnership with St Paul's might entail.

St Paul's made a formal proposal to St Peter's Parochial Church Council in September 2009, that Adam would lead a group of people from St Paul's to join St Peter's and become the Vicar there - a "transfusion" to bring renewed life to St Peter's. The PCC of St Peter's discussed this but was unsure of what to do. There were a variety of views - wanting to see the church survive and do well, but also afraid of changes. Following this there were numerous further discussions. Members of St Peter's also visited St Paul's and experienced a couple of Sunday services.

The process of consultation unfortunately suffered from the fact that, at the time, both the area Bishop and Archdeacon were ill and so the sort of support and facilitation that would normally have been available to the PCC was not available – it led to a rather rushed process. It was clearly not an ideal process, even if the end result may not have been much different with a longer process.

Sister Judith generously worked with the PCC and the congregation to think through the options honestly, even though it was clear that the new proposal would probably lead to her moving on. Sister Judith ensured that there was good consultation and discussion within the church, and that they had some space to consider it. In the end, the Bishop of London proposed a 'Partnership Agreement' where Adam would be Minister-in-charge for one year, and the PCC collectively agreed to this in the spring of 2010. The view of the majority was that they wanted to see their church survive, and also thrive again - "we want to see children in the church again." Many recognised this would require some changes. "We were scared, but we knew that if we didn't do something, the church would close."

From April 2010, Adam began to gather together a group of people who were willing to commit to joining St Peter's. In June 2010, Adam led a group of 20 people to St Peter's – with half from St Paul's and half from a handful of other churches. Many lived in the area already. A few more people also joined over the summer, so the congregation built up gradually.

The new chapter in the church's life began with a formal 'handover service' in June which was led by the Bishop of London. This was the first time that the 'new' congregation had been together.

The aim of the new partnership was to re-establish St Peter's as a thriving and growing church for the local community, with a character reflecting its history and current context and with mainly local members who would be involved in the community. The aim was to achieve some continuity, but also to set the church on a new path to growth. Unusually, it was also to be a 'cross tradition' church with both Anglo-Catholic and more charismatic evangelical styles of worship provided.

4.4 THE STORY

1) THE TEAM

From the summer of 2010, the church was led by Adam, supported by his wife Heather as a voluntary lay pastor, The Revd Angus Ritchie who worked one day per week as an assistant priest while a full-time worship leader/pastor was also recruited. Within a few months, a number of new congregation members also strengthened the church's lay leadership – on the PCC and in pastoral roles – adding to those already working in the church.

The journey of the Atkinson family to Bethnal Green had taken some twists and turns over the years. Adam came to faith at school. After a short spell in the Army and pursuing a career in PR for a number of years he increasingly felt a call to the priesthood. From a post at a national charity, he moved on to work at HTB for 18 months, supporting

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IT WAS A DIFFERENT CITY!

their large network of mid-week groups and then in 2005, left to train for ordination at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. Whilst looking for his first curacy, he was invited by Ric to join him at St Paul's Shadwell. Adam and Ric had known each other as

students and also at HTB, so had already worked together.

Adam worked as a curate at St Paul's from 2007 – 2010. For the first few months of their time there, the family lived in a flat in Shadwell, but then moved to live in the Vicarage at St Peter's, Bethnal Green as it had become available. This was the family's first time living in the east end of London and it was clearly a culture shock - "it was a different city." Adam remembers that it took the whole family some time to adjust to living in an area which felt quite different. But over the months they settled in and discovered not just the challenges of the east end, but also the joys, guided by the people already living there. Now they love the area.

In 2010, Adam was installed as Minister-in-charge for the first year and was then subsequently licensed as Vicar in the summer of 2011. Adam remembers his licensing as a milestone – it was confirmation, after a year of working together, that the partnership was working.

The church's staff team has evolved and grown over the last few years and meets weekly. In addition to the clergy and a part-time worship leader, it includes a youth work student, an Ordinand and a part-time operations manager. In the early years, a programme called Mission Year also provided volunteers for one-year spells, although this programme no longer operates. The church has also employed a part-time community organiser at times. The staff team also includes people working on mission projects, although these are generally funded separately through project funding (see Mission discussion below) not by the congregation – e.g. the SPEAR team.

Since joining St Peter's, Heather has also been ordained and is now working as a curate in Hackney.

II) RESOURCES, BUILDING AND MANAGEMENT

The church's finances were in a reasonable state in 2010 – it had reserves and the church covered its modest annual costs with a mix of congregational giving and rental income from users of the crypt and church hall. With the arrival of Adam and new members, the church received a one-off £10,000 grant from St Paul's, Shadwell as a goodwill gift.

From 2011, a more formal approach to annual budgeting was introduced, something which was important as activities and costs began to increase, and some new members joined the PCC, including a new treasurer. Since 2010, the church has covered the full cost of its clergy, including while Adam was 'off Common Fund' (2010-2013) and then since 2014 when the 'living' of St Peter's was reinstated as part of the Common Fund. The PCC now pays its full annual Common Fund requirement.

As the church and its activities have grown, so have its costs, with most of the increase covered by the growing congregation's giving. Ensuring a balanced budget every year is a challenge, and as in many churches, only a minority of adults give regularly through Standing Order (or envelopes) although this is increasing.

Few significant changes have been made to the buildings in the last few years, but a team has been developing proposals for a major redevelopment, including the crypt – the project is being phased and is currently in the fund-raising stage.

III) CHURCH LIFE: SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

First year

There was a lot of continuity in the church's life, together with some changes. The tone was 'evolution not revolution.' The aim was to 'honour the past' by respecting the ongoing traditions of the existing congregation, but also to make the church more welcoming for visitors – and to prepare it to grow.

The church's traditional 10am Sung Eucharist Sunday service was continued, although with some modest changes. The liturgy was simplified and more visitor-friendly explanations were used. An organist was recruited, which everyone enjoyed. New songs were introduced from time to time. Better lighting and sound equipment was installed. The 'tea and toast' time after the service also continued, a key socialising time, although "real coffee" was also added to the offer. The short Thursday evening Communion service continued, and still continues today.

Some mistakes were made as they went along, often because the significance of something was not always understood, but a willingness to listen together with some ongoing advice on Anglo-Catholic traditions from their assistant priest, Angus, helped to keep the momentum and relationships going.

The congregation grew, and began to attract more families with children, as well as young, single professionals and after six months had grown modestly to about 50 people on a regular basis, including children. Most of the original congregation stayed and are still there today. They are positive about the changes that have been made.

A mid-week 'Life' group also began meeting regularly in 2010, the nucleus of which was a group of people who had been meeting before as part of St Paul's. There are now eight mid-week Life groups meeting regularly.

Moving on

After the first year, a new 11am Sunday service was introduced to provide more contemporary worship. The congregation was consulted on how best to do this and it was agreed that the 10am service would stick to its original time, and the traditional 'tea and toast' would become a shared time for those leaving the first service and those

arriving for the second service. Then once a month, there would be one shared service which blended the two worship styles.

This is how the church has developed its relatively unusual ‘cross-tradition’ approach. Adam describes the church’s approach to worship as being about “Scripture, Spirit and Sacraments.” Both morning services have grown and some people have discovered new approaches to worship by trying out the ‘other’ service. Some people attend both.

In late 2014, the church also began to trial a monthly evening service at 6pm, and in January 2015, a regular Sunday evening service was launched, now at 5pm, appealing mainly to young adults.

The church’s seasonal activities have also retained many traditions but built upon them. For example, at Christmas, there is still a Midnight Mass but also a Christingle Service for families and a new contemporary carol service aimed at guests. On Palm Sunday there is a procession which has been expanded and tours more of the parish.

“ THE CHURCH HAS GROWN AND DEVELOPED IN WAYS WHICH EVERYONE FEELS SOME OWNERSHIP OF.

The church is also developing a growing strand of work with children and teenagers – on both Sundays and during the week.

In addition to the regular services and activities the church has an active social life and runs various activities and outings through the year, as well as regular lunches. There is a warm community. Any sense of ‘them and us’ between the original congregation and new members has

been lost over the last five years as the church has grown and developed in ways which everyone feels some ownership of.

Future?

The church is interested in initiating new ‘fresh expressions’ of church within the parish and possibly being involved in church planting. These are possibilities under discussion, although no definite plans as yet.

IV) MISSION

Mission is a major feature of the life of St Peter’s. The church’s strapline is “Worship God, Make Friends and Change the World” and they take all three very seriously. The latter commitment is also sometimes summarised as ‘mercy, justice and evangelism’ and is a key feature of how the church operates. It is about much more than Sundays. It is also a key way of bringing the congregation together around aims they are passionate about – mission as a force for unity.

The church runs an Alpha course each year and did from the very beginning of the church partnership in 2010, although it has not been the main source of new members. The church also does some local door knocking, has experimented with various approaches to mission (from bingo to a pop-up café to Christmas carols at Columbia Road flower market) and has begun to provide some training in how to share faith. This is an area of church life which is still very much developing.

The church has also become very involved in serving the local community in a number of ways over the last five years. This has meant a mix of existing projects which the church has supported and also new initiatives which the church has kick-started, often in partnership with others:

- The church joined Shoreditch Citizens, which was then a chapter of Citizens UK, and has since been actively involved in community organising with TELCO (The East London Communities Organisation) for some years. Congregation members now regularly take part in listening exercises, campaigns and actions to promote the London Living Wage, City Safe Havens and other local civic aims.
- The church became a collection point for Tower Hamlets Food Bank.
- The church provides volunteers for a number of projects in the area, including Arch76, working with vulnerable women.
- The church supported a health worker based in a local GP Practice who runs a ‘whole person care’ clinic and refers patients on to community projects in the area – she is now funded and employed by the NHS.
- In 2014, the church established a new arms-length charity to run ‘SPEAR Bethnal Green.’ SPEAR is a London-wide initiative which uses coaching to help 16-24 year olds who are not in education, employment or training to find and sustain employment.

- In 2015, the church entered into a partnership with a local business initiative, 'Maker Wharf,' to operate the church hall as a co-working space during the week – providing workspace, community and advice for small businesses and also generating an income for the church.
- Most recently St Peter's raised funding to employ a part-time Parish Nurse, based at the church and working in the community.

V) ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Adam was instrumental in setting up the Shoreditch Group (together with the Centre for Theology & Community)¹ which provided a bi-monthly networking opportunity for church leaders in and around Shoreditch, to build relationships between churches and promote collaboration on social projects in particular.

The church also provides volunteers to existing local projects like Arch76, established by the nearby Good Shepherd Mission Church.

4.5 IMPACT

I) CHURCH COMMUNITY AND INVOLVEMENT

The church has an active community life on Sundays and through mid-week groups, and regular socials, with a range of missional activities and a fair level of volunteering from the congregation. This is all assisted by the primarily local nature of the congregation.

II) FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The church's finances are tight but with sufficient congregational giving to ensure it is now quite close to financial sustainability. St Peter's pays its full Common Fund.

III) NATURE AND EXTENT OF CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

The congregation grew from about 30 before 2010 to about 50 at the start of the church plant to a regular Sunday attendance of about 150 today. (The total active membership is larger than this, but this is the current typical attendance on any given Sunday).

The Snapshot Survey shows the congregation is diverse in age and

¹ A full review of the Shoreditch Group was published in: Thorlby, T (2014) Churches Collaborating for Urban Mission, CTC. This is available on CTC's website.

types of household, including young professionals new to the area as well as families with young children and long-standing local residents who are now retired. The range of household incomes is fairly well balanced between the income brackets, with the largest proportion of lower incomes of the five church plants studied here. The church is not particularly ethnically diverse.

Nearly 70 per cent of the congregation lives within Bethnal Green – a broader area than the parish itself, but a walkable distance from the church. The rest live further afield in east London.

The majority of the regular attenders, 73 per cent, transferred to St Peter's from another church when they joined. A third of the congregation have been members for five years or more, indicating quite a stable core and a good retention rate of both the original and new congregation initially formed by the church planting in 2010. There are very few transfers from other churches in Tower Hamlets, supporting evidence from interviews that suggests that impact on neighbouring churches from the church plants has been limited.

However, 27 per cent of the congregation are people who have either returned to church after several years or are completely new churchgoers. (This is the highest proportion of this group across the five churches in this report.) This is the result of the church's relational work in mission and outreach. Most joined as a result of being invited by someone. Interestingly, none of those in our survey claimed to have joined via an Alpha course.

IV) SERVICE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The church is very active in birthing new 'social transformation' projects and initiatives and this is a priority for the church. The church's reputation is also enhanced in the local community through this kind of mission and service.

V) SERVING OTHER CHURCHES

St Peter's regularly works alongside other churches in collaborative projects and plays a full part in the life of the Deanery and local ecumenical groups.

IMPACT CONCLUSIONS

In 2010, the small but determined elderly congregation at St Peter's was bracing itself for a fight to remain open. Five years later there is a regular congregation of 150, with an active children's church and one in four of the congregation are new Christians or returning to church. St Peter's has also managed to develop and hold together a cross-tradition approach, retaining the original faithful congregation as well as bringing in many new people. The church is also close to achieving financial sustainability and has a bright future once again.



5 THE STORY OF ALL HALLOWS, BOW

All Hallows, Bow is a lively, creative church which serves its local community through church, community centre and parties. In 2010, a new minister and a small group of people joined the very small existing congregation to give the church a fresh start. The church has been growing every year since.

5.1 HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The parish of All Hallows is in Bow, adjacent to Stratford. The church was built in 1874, damaged in 1940 and then rebuilt in the mid-1950s. The parish is primarily residential, including the Lincoln estate.

Overall, the parish is deprived, with much of it among the 10 per cent most deprived neighbourhoods in England. The community is diverse, with a large Bengali community but also white working class and an international mix of young professionals too.

5.2 THE PARISH BEFORE CHURCH PLANTING

All Hallows, Bow was a traditional ‘middle of the road’ Anglican church, leaning towards Anglo-Catholicism. By 2009, the membership had fallen to 14 people, with a typical Sunday attendance of fewer than 10 people. There were small morning and evening services, both using traditional liturgies. There had been no incumbent for a number of years, relying upon retired and visiting clergy to keep the worship going. There was discussion of merging with a neighbouring parish and possibly closing the church. The church’s prospects did not look hopeful.

The church building itself is fairly simple, with stone floors and pews. There is no separate hall. The church had some invested funds which it was slowly spending down, keeping the building maintained. The Rectory had not been lived in by an incumbent for 20 years and had been rented out to students

5.3 AIMS OF THE CHURCH PLANT

In 2010, All Hallows was identified by the Diocese as a church which could benefit from a church planting initiative. The Revd Ric Thorpe at St Paul’s, Shadwell was aware of it and interested in sending a small group of people to help reinvigorate the church, but was looking for the right leader - and one from outside of St Paul’s Shadwell, as their clergy were all committed already at that time. He was approached by The

Revd Cris Rogers, who was at Soul Survivor, Harrow at the time, but who was interested in leading a church plant with his wife. Ric showed them round All Hallows.

Cris and his wife Beki wanted to help grow a church “incarnationally,” growing out of the local community, so did not want to start with a large group of new people. They felt All Hallows could be the right place for them.

Cris had come to faith as a teenager (“*my life was turned upside down by Jesus*”) and felt the call to serve the church early on. He chose to study theology at in Bristol, where he met his wife Beki who was training for ordination. He went on to become a youth minister at a church in Birmingham, while his wife was a curate in a neighbouring parish. As part of the youth ministry they started a skate park and built up a regular gathering of 100 teenagers. After doing an MA in Theology, Cris joined Soul Survivor, Harrow in 2005 to lead youth ministry there. In 2007, after CPAS leadership training, he was ordained.

After a number of years in Harrow, Cris and Beki felt a pull to leave their large church and serve somewhere which was more ‘on the margins,’ perhaps a church struggling to recruit a Vicar. After a number of discussions with the Bishop of Willesden and others, they eventually met with Ric at St Paul’s in the summer of 2010 and he identified All Hallows as a possibility.

Ric and Cris met with the PCC of All Hallows. The congregation was very small, but determined to keep the church open. Ric offered the PCC the opportunity to take a small group of people from the congregation of St Paul’s, Shadwell, with Cris as their priest and with some funding from St Paul’s to cover the initial costs. The PCC knew it was a big step but agreed and the decision was approved by the Bishop of London.

It was agreed initially that Ric would have formal oversight of the parish as the Priest-in-charge of All Hallows, Bow and that Cris would be the Associate Minister. This would ensure that Cris would have some support and mentoring as he took on the new post. The moved into the Rectory in August 2010 and began work in September 2010.

They were joined by a group of about 10 people who had been attending St Paul’s, Shadwell but who lived near All Hallows and wanted to get involved in their local church. They joined in stages. From September 2010, they also began to pick up new members, either people

moving into the area or just people interested in returning to church – a real mix of people.

5.4 THE STORY

I) THE TEAM

The initial staff team was Cris, as Associate Minister, and his wife Beki as a part-time minister (unpaid). An intern also joined them, living with them in the Rectory, (for three years in the end).

A key addition to the team was the arrival of an Eden team from March 2011. Alex and her husband Phil moved onto the Lincoln estate, joined the church, and began to recruit a small team of people to live and work with them on the estate. They now have ten members – the team leader is paid (from charitable grants), but the rest serve in their spare time. They have focused on reaching out into the community and engaging local youth, and have made a significant contribution.

Over the last five years, as the church has grown, the staff team has grown too, to include a part-time worship leader and an additional pastor. Lay members of the congregation also play an important part in running and administering the church.

In January 2015, Cris and Beki were licensed as the Rector and Associate Rector of All Hallows.

Although not involved in the day to day life of All Hallows, Ric Thorpe and the team at St Paul's, Shadwell have also clearly been very supportive. The church plant would not have been possible without their organisation, financial giving and ongoing support. Cris has joined the St Paul's staff team meeting each week and has found the support there to be key. Cris and Beki have also been careful to ensure that their young family gets time together through the year, acknowledging that church leadership can be hard work; *"Church planting is exhausting."*

II) RESOURCES ,BUILDING AND MANAGEMENT

From 2010, the parish has paid its Common Fund in full. St Paul's, Shadwell agreed to pay all of it for the first three years, then tapered down its support each year until 2015, so All Hallows now pays all its own Common Fund. St Paul's described the support as a 'loan' to All

Hallows, to be repaid to other churches in due course when All Hallows one day plants churches too. The financial support from St Paul's is in keeping with the approach of seeking to be generous with resources and also encouraging churches to 'pass it on.' St Paul's provided over £160,000 to All Hallows over five years.

III) CHURCH LIFE: SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

The story of the first 18 months is one of growth, change and tension.

For practical reasons, Cris stopped the evening service to focus on building up the morning service. The style of worship from the outset was a mix of new and old – retaining liturgy and weekly Eucharist, but not wearing clerical robes, introducing new songs and trying out new ways of involving children in the service, as well as using both

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**IT TOOK 18
MONTHS TO
BUILD THE TRUST
OF THE ORIGINAL
CONGREGATION**

the organ and guitars in music. It was clear after a few weeks that the original congregation was not happy with the many changes and there was significant tension. There was discussion and compromise – some traditional practices were reinstated, but some of the new ones retained. Cris was clear that 'no change' was not an option.

By the Easter of 2011, the congregation had grown to about 50 people – partly the initial congregation, partly the new members from St Paul's and partly people joining the church naturally. More families with children began to join. All of the original congregation stayed.

By early 2012, the new arrangements and relationships had been established and settled down and from then on, a much more normal and collaborative atmosphere prevailed. It took 18 months to build the trust of the original congregation, but this was eventually secured. Most of them remain today as key members of All Hallows.

Further changes were brought in, over time – for example carpet in the church to improve the acoustics, replacing the pews with chairs to allow for more flexibility.

The evening service was restarted in the autumn of 2011. In contrast to the morning service which is very family oriented, this attracts

a largely twenty-something congregation, including a lot of young professionals. It has a contemporary and charismatic approach to worship and may be one of the few church services in London with a 'cigarette break' half way through. The congregation has grown significantly since it started and matches the morning congregation – with currently about 75 people (children and adults) attending each service, each week.

The church also runs a network of midweek small groups for church members to belong to.

A key feature of church life is also its parties. The church wants to be an "*explosion of joy*" for its neighbours. As part of this the church hosts five seasonal parties every year which the community is invited to join in with – Easter, Pentecost, summer holidays, Advent and Christmas. Halal food is served so Muslim neighbours can join in.

IV) MISSION

The church's stated aim is: "An explosion of Joy, by making Jesus known, within our local community, to see lives transformed." The church clearly takes its responsibilities for both witness and service seriously, but with an emphasis on parties and joy also seems to have fun in the process.

The church is very active midweek in engaging the community, including:

- A parent and toddler group, meeting twice a week
- An after school arts and crafts club
- A music club for children
- A drama group
- A monthly Saturday club for children (themed this year as the 'Jedi Training Academy')
- Youth work through the Eden team, including youth Alpha – they engaged with over 200 young people in 2014
- Regular Alpha courses
- Supporting the GrowTH night shelter, accommodating up to 15 people at a time last winter

In January 2014, the church also took on the management of a long-standing local community centre, at the request of the trustees who felt they could no longer run it. The 'Fern Street Settlement' has

been operating for over a hundred years and is now a charity run in partnership with All Hallows and which provides a wide range of projects serving local needs. This is a significant development for the church and the area. The church is able to reach out to a wide cross-section of the local community through the centre.

The building is leased from the original Trust, which also provides an annual grant of £35,000 to pay for the project manager. The manager is a member of the All Hallows staff team. Volunteers are drawn from the church and the wider community. Projects include Alcoholics Anonymous, English courses (ESOL), 'Time for Tea' (a social group for over 60s), a knitting and crochet club and 'Crafternoons' for women and girls. Some of the church's children's activities are also now run at the Settlement. The Fern Street Settlement's 2014 report counted 225 people as regularly involved in centre activities from across the community's ethnic diversity.

The church is also interested in engaging in church planting – passing on the help it has received itself. Tentative discussions have begun around this.

V) ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER CHURCHES

All Hallows has sought to work with other local churches where possible. Most of the neighbouring Anglican churches are of a rather different churchmanship, so All Hallows complements rather than competes with them. The Vicar of St Paul's, Bow Common nearby has been particularly supportive in helping Cris and Beki get to know the area and feel at home.

5.5 IMPACT

I) CHURCH COMMUNITY AND INVOLVEMENT

The church has an exuberant approach to community life with a strong emphasis on fun and parties, and quite a lot of lay involvement in leadership and service.

II) FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

After five years the church is expecting to achieve financial sustainability in 2015, no longer relying on St Paul's for support.

III) NATURE AND EXTENT OF CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

The congregation has grown each year since 2010, from about 15 people to about 150 people (adults and children).

The Snapshot Survey shows that the congregation includes all ages although with a predominance of people under 35 years old. They are diverse in income and ethnicity. They are very local too, with 70 per cent living in Bow (E3) and the rest living in adjacent neighbourhoods.

As with the other church plants, the majority (in this case 74 per cent) of the congregation have transferred from other churches. People have moved into the area from across London and the UK and joined All Hallows as their local church. In addition, some 26 per cent of the congregation are new to church or returning after several years of non-involvement. With St Peter's, All Hallows has the highest proportion of this group in the study.

IV) SERVICE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The church's engagement with the community through the Fern Street Settlement was an important development. It is now involved in delivering a wide range of activities to local people. The Snapshot Survey also revealed a high level of congregational engagement in 'mission to the local community' – one in three – this outreach and service may also help to explain the high level of new people joining the congregation.

V) SERVING OTHER CHURCHES

All Hallows has not engaged in a lot of local church partnerships, but does play its part in the local Deanery and has been striving to pay its way financially.

IMPACT CONCLUSIONS

In 2010, All Hallows was on the edge of closure with no clergy in post and a regular Sunday congregation of fewer than ten. Today, there

is a vibrant and creative congregation of 150 meeting each week. It now runs the local community centre and engages with the local community in numerous ways. One in four people in the congregation are new to church or have returned, showing the results of a reinvigorated church in this part of east London.



6 THE STORY OF ST LUKE'S, MILLWALL

The Parish of Christ Church, Isle of Dogs has a large resident population and two churches – Christ Church and St Luke's. The Vicar and PCC invited St Paul's Shadwell to send a new minister and new congregation members to join the very small congregation of St Luke's within their parish. The fresh start at St Luke's began in 2013 and the congregation has grown from 15 in 2013 to 70 in 2015. The church meets in a community centre and works with Christ Church to serve the parish.

6.1 HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The Parish of Christ Church and St John with St Luke's, Isle of Dogs covers most of the Isle of Dogs, a large geographical area, now with a population of over 30,000. It was originally three parishes which were amalgamated into one after the war. The parish has two church buildings - Christ Church is located at the southern end of the Island and St Luke's, Millwall is further north.

The parish has obviously been greatly impacted by the redevelopment of London's Docklands in recent decades and the building of Canary Wharf. The Island is gentrifying slowly but surely as new housing continues to be developed and sold, but it also still includes some of the more deprived neighbourhoods in east London, with a local community which has benefited little from the redevelopment. It is now home to a mix of households, living cheek by jowl.

6.2 THE PARISH BEFORE THE CHURCH PLANT

The parish has been led for several years by Fr Tom Pyke.

Christ Church has a regular Sunday congregation of about 65 adults and children and is a diverse and lively church in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, with a strong musical life too.

At the time of the first discussions about church planting, St Luke's congregation was a small but very committed group of about 12-15 people. They were meeting in a nearby school on Sunday mornings. St Luke's church building had deteriorated over many years and was in a poor state so a redevelopment process was underway; the church had been closed in 2011 and was subsequently demolished, with a view to being replaced by a new church with more flexible facilities, funded by a housing development on part of the site.

During his time in the Parish, Fr Tom had come to feel that he did not have the capacity, by himself, to lead two churches and serve a parish of such a size. He wanted another priest to work with him and to lead the work at St Luke's. He had seen the church planting that St

Paul's had been doing in the last few years and so in 2012 he approached The Revd Ric Thorpe at St Paul's to explore the possibility of doing some kind of church plant at St Luke's. The initiative came from the parish, and was encouraged by the experience of the other parishes in Tower Hamlets that had benefited from recent church planting.

6.3 AIMS OF THE CHURCH PLANT

In the discussions to bring new leadership and people to St Luke's, a number of options were considered for how best to structure the arrangements. The aim was to preserve the unity of the parish, but also give the church plant sufficient space to develop a vision for the northern part of the parish. The churchmanship of the two churches in the parish was clearly going to be different and it would be important to give both of them the space to develop in their own way, whilst also working together where it made sense. In the end, a temporary five year Bishop's Mission Order (BMO) was agreed as the best option to get the church plant started, with the arrangements to be reviewed after that. The BMO was agreed between all parties:

- It set out clear aims with the understanding that St Luke's would serve the northern part of the parish in pastoral care, but share with Christ Church in missional outreach to the whole parish
- It provided a degree of autonomy for St Luke's, licensed directly to the Bishop, but expected partnership working with Fr Tom at Christ Church
- It is a temporary arrangement and will be reviewed

The objectives of the BMO were set as follows:

Working with and empowering local people in establishing St Luke's, Millwall as a self-sustaining, mission oriented church with ministry serving the whole population of the Isle of Dogs in a way that is complementary to the existing work of the Parish of Christ Church and St John with St Luke's, Isle of Dogs.

Through active mission and ministry, to grow a vibrant and diverse community of Christian disciples united around Jesus. Maintaining a particular focus on serving young families by

becoming a centre for family life that provides parenting resources, marriage resources, a schools ministry, toddler groups and a well-resourced children's church on Sundays.

BMO, December 2012

To enable this to happen, St Luke's was established as a separate charity to employ The Revd Ed Dix, with the trustees delegating most control to a 'church council' which operates like a traditional PCC. St Luke's church site is still owned by the parish. The two churches engage in more formal business together through the 'Island Parish Forum' – formally bringing together representatives of the PCC and St Luke's church council three times a year, although it does not have the power to take decisions.

The new chapter at St Luke's began in January 2013.

6.4 THE STORY

I) THE TEAM

The church 'graft' to St Luke's was led by The Revd Ed Dix, Minister-in-charge, and his wife Fuzz, who works in a part-time unpaid capacity as the church's children's pastor.

Ed was born in South Wales and grew up in a family which attended a Baptist church. His journey to faith began early and led him, via a year in Nepal and a music degree at Goldsmiths, to serving as a youth worker for six years with All Saints, Peckham, where he also met his wife, Fuzz. His work was based in the community, serving a very multicultural area. He went on to be ordained, training in Oxford. Whilst searching for a Curacy position, he met with The Revd Ric Thorpe at St Paul's, Shadwell and they both felt there was a good fit. Ed and Fuzz were excited at the thought of becoming involved in church planting. Ed joined St Paul's in 2010 as a Curate, fully funded by St Paul's. The expectation was that when he had completed his training he would lead a church plant.

As a result of the approach from Father Tom, and following discussion, Ed and Fuzz agreed that they would lead a group to St Luke's. They began attending Sunday services at St Luke's before the plant happened, to get to know people. In January 2013, they took a

group of just over 30 people with them from St Paul's, Shadwell, mainly families – 17 adults and 15 children – to join the 12-15 people already at St Luke's.

For the first two years, the grant enabled the employment of a part-time worship pastor who has helped to develop a group of musicians and build their confidence in leading worship. There is no paid administrator, and the lack of administrative capacity is sometimes a problem.

II) RESOURCES, BUILDING AND MANAGEMENT

St Luke's pays the stipend for Ed and also the rent for their house, which is rented at a below-market rate from the Diocese. Funding a full-time clergy person would have been very difficult for a congregation of c40 people, so they have been greatly assisted not only by some very committed giving by the regulars in the congregation but also by a significant grant of £100,000 over 3 years (2012-2014) by the Church Commissioners as part of its Developing Church Growth in Deprived Areas Programme (which funded 29 projects in England). This has provided important space in the first few years to give the church time to grow.

As the congregation has grown, giving has also grown too, bringing the church closer to being self-supporting, (although there is a challenge in bringing people who are new to church into a regular habit of giving). At the time of writing, and after nearly three years, the church's own giving now covers the majority of its costs, but not all, and is not yet paying a full Common Fund contribution. The church hopes and expects to be 'paying its way' after five years.

III) CHURCH LIFE: SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

The initial aim was to continue the existing 9.30am Sunday traditional communion service and also add a second more informal family service at 11am.

However, the school felt that it could not accommodate the request for two services, so they were only able to run one service. After consultation, it was agreed to run one 10am service which would be a compromise between the two service approaches – a communion with a simple liturgy, together with more informal worship. As Ed put it "it

was outside everyone's comfort zone!" Over time, and as newcomers have joined the church, the service has increasingly been accepted as just the way that St Luke's works. Many also feel that at its best it brings different traditions together in a way which enriches both.

By October 2014, the congregation had outgrown the school so moved to the Alpha Grove Community Centre in the parish - a former Methodist chapel which became a secular community centre some 50 years ago. Unfortunately, they were only able to rent this on Sunday afternoons, so for six months had to move the service to Sunday afternoons, with a small 9.30am communion service held in a local Sheltered Accommodation facility. It was clearly not ideal and some families could not make the revised service time, so numbers reduced somewhat. From June 2015, it has been possible to rent the community

“ IT WAS OUTSIDE EVERYONE'S COMFORT ZONE!”

centre on Sunday mornings, so the united 10am Sunday service has returned and numbers have begun to recover. Moving service times and locations several times in a year has not been helpful.

Of the original congregation of 12-15 people, a couple of people did move to Christ Church rather than stay at St Luke's, but the rest have remained. New people have also joined. Currently, after nearly three years, the congregation has grown from just over 40 to about 70 regular attenders, where it has recently held steady. One third of the congregation is children and there is a lively children's church on Sundays, led by a strong team of volunteers.

The congregation is diverse in age, ethnicity and background. It includes young families and older people, single parents, traditional East End families and people from overseas. Perhaps reflecting the proximity of Canary Wharf, there is also a relatively high proportion of higher income households within the mix.

There is a very high level of volunteering in the church (80 per cent help in at least one activity) contributing to organising Sunday services (they have to set up each week as they use shared premises), running children's church and the various missional activities. There are a number of mid-week house groups and also both men and women's ministries seeking to promote discipleship and development.

IV) MISSION

The two churches undertake outreach to the whole parish but seek to complement each other. Their differing approaches to worship and identities make this easier in some ways.

Over the last three years, St Luke's congregation has undertaken a mix of missional activities including:

- setting up a regular 'mums and toddlers group' of about 40 people (adults and children) which mainly serves families not attending church
- running Alpha courses
- door knocking by groups of volunteers to raise the church's profile
- delivering various 'family life' courses – such as parenting and marriage preparation courses (the parenting course has been revised to suit local families and their circumstances)
- running several community 'fun days', each attended by hundreds of local people
- the church's musicians have run 'acoustic nights' at a local pub and a Christmas candlelit carols event was held in the same pub one year
- providing volunteers to existing projects in the area – Foodbank, XLP, Tower Hamlets night shelter, etc.

The 'Pub church' is an initiative which seeks to engage with 'twenty-somethings' who do not attend church but want to be part of a community and are interested in deeper conversations about life. It meets once a month on a Sunday evening at a local pub – 'Salt 'n' Pepper' at the 'The Pepper Saint Ontiod'. It is led by St Luke's but seeks to reach the whole parish in partnership with Christ Church.

V) ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER CHURCHES

St Luke's and Christ Church seek to work in partnership wherever possible. Indeed there are some services which only Christ Church can currently provide for the parish - such as weddings, although the clergy share the duties. The churches also hold joint services several times a year and work together on joint projects – for example several seasonal community events (e.g. harvest festival) at Mudchute City Farm.

6.5 IMPACT

I) CHURCH COMMUNITY AND INVOLVEMENT

The church is still small enough for everyone to know each other and has a sense of community. It also has an unusually high degree of volunteering, partly driven by the need to set up and pack down the Sunday service each week given the lack of permanent church premises. It may be hard work, but the lack of premises appears to have had the beneficial effect of strengthening the community.

II) FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

St Luke's financial situation has significantly improved due to the larger congregation and it continues to work towards sustainability. It is probably several years away from this still.

III) NATURE AND EXTENT OF CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

The congregation of St Luke's has grown from 15 to 70 in three years. As already described, it is a diverse group. Most people are also very local, with over 80 per cent living on the Isle of Dogs itself, within the parish.

As the church plant only happened three years ago and is still relatively young, a fair number of the 'planters' are still with the church as are the original congregation.

In total, just over 80 per cent of the congregation have transferred from another church, with the remainder being new to church or returning after several years. This is evidence of the church's work in local mission and outreach.

IV) SERVICE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The church and its members actively support a number of projects and services that benefit the Isle of Dogs.

V) SERVING OTHER CHURCHES

The church which St Luke's most closely works with is of course Christ Church, its sister church in the parish. There is also some partnership working with other neighbouring parishes.

IMPACT CONCLUSIONS

A small congregation of 15 people has become a lively and noisy congregation of 70 people after three years. The Isle of Dogs now has two viable and complementary Anglican churches to serve its growing population. The church is still relatively young in its new form but is making progress towards financial sustainability and building up a range of missional activities.



7 THE STORY OF THE EVENING CONGREGATION AT CHRIST CHURCH, SPITALFIELDS

In 2014, a new evening service was established at Christ Church, Spitalfields, the result of a partnership with St Paul's, Shadwell and Holy Trinity, Brompton. The evening service is led by two new curates who came to Christ Church and each of whom led a group of people from their previous churches to join Christ Church. After a year the evening service has a regular attendance of over 120 people.

7.1 CONTEXT

Spitalfields is a crossroads in London.

The Parish of Christ Church, Spitalfields includes the eastern edge of the City of London and the beginnings of the East End. It is traditionally an area of transition and has long been home to immigrants – whether French Huguenots of the 17th Century or more recent influxes of Jewish, south Asian and Somalian communities.

The parish is now home to many Bangladeshi Muslims, what remains of the traditional white working class ‘eastenders’ and a growing ‘Britart’ set of artists, hipsters and wealthier culture lovers attracted by the heritage and ‘vibe’ of the area. The Parish includes Spitalfields Market, Brick Lane and the former Truman Brewery as well as some of Whitechapel. The parish is also a place of work for many commuters who live elsewhere but travel in to the City every day.

Christ Church itself is a Grade 1 listed building and a major local landmark, but it is also a vibrant church.

In 2014, when the new evening congregation was started the church already had a well-established and regular Sunday morning congregation of almost 100 people, as well as a small and more traditional midweek service held every fortnight, a weekly lunchtime service of 30-40 people and a monthly service for Bengali speakers. The Sunday morning congregation is mainly local, includes families with young children, and reflects the area’s character in having a bent towards arts and culture.

This story is therefore rather different from the previous four in that it involves a partnership with a thriving church. It is also the newest initiative, so is still quite young.

7.2 HOW IT CAME ABOUT

Christ Church’s leaders were keen to see the church grow, seeing the building’s size and profile in the area as an opportunity, and had wanted to establish a new evening congregation, believing that this would be key to growing the church overall, particularly in appealing to the younger population. An evening congregation had been attempted before but had not grown and was eventually discontinued.

The Rector, The Revd Andy Rider, discussed with the PCC the possibility of entering into a partnership with a larger church to establish a new evening congregation. After much discussion, over time, the PCC agreed. The decision was made in the knowledge that it may well lead to changes, expected and unexpected, in the church – as any growth brings change. Not all members of the church were happy with this, and a handful eventually chose to move elsewhere in due course, but a clear decision was made by a significant majority to try a partnership. The decision was also discussed with the Bishops and the clergy of surrounding parishes. A lot of work went into a good level of communication with all those who might be affected by the change.

The outcome of various exploratory discussions was the identification in 2013 of two candidates to work together as a team – Darren Wolf at St Paul’s Shadwell, for whom the position would be his first curacy after training, and The Revd Phil Williams, who had already begun a curacy at Holy Trinity, Brompton. Andy Rider already knew Darren from his time working at a previous church - All Souls, Langham Place. Both candidates were formally interviewed by the church and recruited, starting work at Christ Church, Spitalfields in September 2014.

The intention had been to recruit one person, but it was felt that the two of them together made a good team, and that the opportunities were sufficiently significant to warrant two new clergy.

THREE JOURNEYS

The journeys of Andy, Darren and Phil are an important part of the story.

Andy has been Rector of Christ Church for 12 years. He has worked with the PCC to expand the church’s vision for growth and make the most of its historic location and buildings. This has resulted in a number of changes over the years as the church has grown in confidence and size. He has also overseen the church’s physical restoration. Wanting to build a new evening congregation was a natural part of this long term vision. Before working at Christ Church, Andy ran the Club House, part of All Souls, Langham Place, which is where he first met Darren.

Darren was one of the original members of the church plant at St Paul’s, Shadwell. Although a member of All Souls Club House in 2005 he was also living in east London and when he heard about the initiative at St Paul’s he decided to join. He moved house to Shadwell and became

fully involved in life at St Paul's, whilst working full-time in a charity management role. He led a Connect group (a house-group) on a Friday evening to which non-church goers were regularly welcomed. He discovered a vocation for church leadership and an interest in church planting and eventually went for ordination and trained at St Mellitus College. Whilst there he had met with The Revd Andy Rider and heard about Christ Church's plans for growth and felt that this was the opportunity he was looking for. After discussions with Phil Williams, a fellow student at St Mellitus, and much consultation with the churches involved, Darren joined Christ Church, Spitalfields as a Curate in 2014.

Phil's journey was rather different. He had spent many years living in east London, with his wife and family, working in pastoral roles in several different community churches (one of which was a new church plant) as well as building a business as a part-time, self-employed graphic designer and, for a time, working for the charity City Gateway. By his late twenties, he was living and working in Tower Hamlets working full-time for a community church. At this point, he took on a new and rather different role, moving to work for HTB in west London in a creative role, and eventually moving to live there for a few years. This was Phil's first real taste of the Church of England. Whilst there he also began studying at St Mellitus College and then sought ordination in the Church of England. He became a curate at HTB in 2013.

Whilst working at HTB Phil also experienced their new cross-tradition work at HTB Queensgate (St Augustine's) which provides both a traditional Anglo-Catholic service and a more informal, charismatic service on a Sunday. He described this as a formative experience and one that opened his eyes to the breadth of the church. Whilst working as a curate, Phil was approached by Darren and drawn to the opportunities at Christ Church and the chance to return to living in east London. So, after a year as a curate at HTB, Phil moved to his current role at Christ Church, to join Darren in leading the evening congregation.

A PARTNERSHIP

The initiation of the new evening congregation, and the recruitment of its leadership, was very much a partnership project between Christ Church, Spitalfields, St Paul's, Shadwell and Holy Trinity, Brompton, and shaped by all three. The 'sending' and 'receiving' churches worked

together. This was conducted within a process which included full consultation with, and approval from, the Bishops and also consultation with other local clergy.

PREPARATION

The agreement to proceed was put in place in the autumn 2013. Darren and Phil then spent time during the spring of 2014 developing a strategy for it, shaped and supported by their involvement in the St Mellitus church planting course led by The Revd Ric Thorpe.

By Easter 2014 they were ready to begin sharing the vision at both HTB and St Paul's, Shadwell. They invited those interested to come to meetings in each church to hear the vision and learn more. People were encouraged to commit for at least a year and to begin giving financially too. From May to July, those who were interested began to meet monthly for prayer and then during August to meet weekly, in preparation for the launch in September.

Part of the challenge of this early transition process was to develop an approach which was new and appropriate for Christ Church, but which was also sufficiently familiar and reassuring to those coming that they felt confident to 'make the leap.'

7.3 LAUNCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The new 5pm service began in September 2014. Its primary aim is to build a diverse congregation but with a focus on people aged 18-30 and to make good use of the church's very visible and accessible location to do this. As such it aims for very professionally delivered services – music, sound and lighting - and also to reflect the particular culture and vibe of the area. It also has a clear focus on reaching the unchurched part of this community with every service explicitly tailored to be accessible for visitors.

1) THE PEOPLE

Some 5-10 people from the morning congregation at Christ Church decided to join the new evening congregation.

The Revd Darren Wolf led a group of about 20 people from the St Paul's, Shadwell evening congregation, most of whom lived locally and

many of whom has been part of Darren's Connect group at St Paul's.

The Revd Phil Williams led a group of about 80 people from Holy Trinity, Brompton, most of whom also lived in east London already. Much of this group comprised three well-established Connect groups of HTB which had been meeting mid-week for several years in east London and one of which had been meeting in Christ Church itself and therefore had a strong affinity for the church already.

There was a deliberate intention to begin with a congregation of 100 or more. The leadership wanted a size of congregation which was 'fit for growth' from the beginning - large enough to include several communities (not just one where everyone knows everyone else) and which would be amenable to building a 'culture of invitation' where newcomers might feel more comfortable.

II) RESOURCES

The present staffing level is unusual for the church, with it having two curates. Both have been accommodated in church flats in the parish. In terms of staff costs, Darren has a Common Fund stipend and Phil is funded directly by the local church.

On launching the evening service, a one-off grant of £10,000 was gifted to the parish from a Christian charity to support the move. All other funds were generated from the incoming congregation as they began to give regularly to the church as they joined.

III) DEVELOPMENTS SO FAR

Although the evening congregation is a new departure, it is important to note that the leaders intend it to be fully integrated into the life of the church. There is 'one church and one parish' and the mainly new congregation is becoming a part of this. So far, the process of transition seems to have proceeded fairly smoothly. A good example of the integration is how a number of evening congregation members responded to a call to volunteer in the children's church on Sunday mornings – a good example of shared endeavour.

The evening service has had a regular attendance of about 120 people on a Sunday, out of a list of regular attenders of about 200 people. The 'pattern of belonging' for many members, similar to many other churches and increasingly typical of younger church-goers, is that

they are more likely to attend perhaps 2 out of 4 Sundays each month rather than every week. The majority live in east London, although the service also attracts people from across London.

As with many inner London churches there is significant 'churn' of members as people move on, with perhaps 25 per cent turnover by summer 2015. The Snapshot Survey shows a congregation which is predominantly young, mainly in work. There is a steady stream of newcomers beginning to join who are new to church or returning after several years.

The addition of the evening congregation has also enhanced the church's overall capacity for engagement with the local community as a number of the evening congregation have sought to get involved in projects serving local needs. More volunteers are now engaged in running the church school's assemblies and there are more volunteers supporting the Tower Hamlets Foodbank and the Tower Hamlets nightshelter project GrowTH. The Alpha course has grown, with over 50 people attending in Spring 2015.

A student pastor has also recently been employed with a view to taking a more pro-active approach to engaging and pastoring local students.

7.4 IMPACT SO FAR

At such an early stage, it is really too soon to assess impact. In the first year though, the benefits of the new evening congregation have included:

- A new evening service offering a different style of worship and new opportunities for 'belonging'
- A larger Sunday attendance at Christ Church overall – over double the previous size
- Increased congregational giving as a result – over double the previous level of giving
- Greater volunteer capacity to run children's church and other activities including church school assemblies as well as providing volunteers for other projects including the homeless night shelter, caring for ex-offenders and prison work
- A larger and more vibrant Alpha course
- A bigger leadership team allowing more scope for reflection and strategy development

PART B

ANALYSIS & LESSONS



8 OVERVIEW OF IMPACT

This section considers the overall impact so far of the five churches, accepting that some have been operating much longer than others and that this is inevitably an interim assessment not a final one.

8.1 CHURCH COMMUNITY AND INVOLVEMENT

The Snapshot Survey highlighted a high degree of volunteering and involvement across the five churches – an average of 68 per cent of regular adult attenders currently volunteer in some way. Much of this is on Sundays, but it also includes mid-week groups, Alpha courses and missional activities. Interestingly, in four of the five churches more people volunteer on ‘mission to the local community’ than on Alpha courses, demonstrating the significance of local engagement to most of these churches.

8.2 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The five parishes are all better off financially today than before the church planting initiatives and in such a way that benefits the whole Diocese. A key indicator of this is the parishes’ payment of their annual Common Fund to the Diocese.

A comparison of Common Fund costs incurred and payments made in 2004 (before St Paul’s, Shadwell was planted in 2005) and 2014 (the latest data available¹) for all five parishes shows that:

- In 2004, the five parishes paid 34 per cent of their Common Fund costs (£80,000 out of £237,000)
- In 2014, the five parishes paid 95 per cent of their Common Fund costs (£428,000 out of £451,000)

The level of support required for these parishes from the Diocese has dramatically reduced, leaving more resources to expend on other parishes and projects. Comparing 2004 and 2014 at today’s prices indicates that the Diocese is now over £300,000 better off each year as a result of this change.

¹ Data kindly provided by the London Diocesan Fund, November 2015.

8.3 NATURE AND EXTENT OF CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

We know that all five of the churches being researched here have grown significantly since their planting/partnership initiatives, as summarised in the table. Overall Sunday attendance has grown tenfold:

Church	Typical Sunday attendance (children + adults) before the planting initiative		Typical Sunday attendance (children + adults) in 2015	
	Year	Attendance	Year	Attendance
At Paul’s, Shadwell	2005	12	2015	250
St Peter’s, Bethnal Green	2010	30	2015	150
All Hallows, Bow	2010	15	2015	150
St Luke’s, Millwall	2013	15	2015	70
Christ Church, Spitalfields (evening congregation)	2014	0	2015	115
Total	Pre	72	Current	735

What is the nature of this growth? Who are these people and where do they come from? How closely do these churches mirror their local communities?

The answers to these questions does differ to some extent between these churches, as they are each evolving differently, and some of these differences have already been explored in previous sections. For example, most of the church plants enabled by St Paul’s are more locally rooted than St Paul’s itself. Here we consider the overview.

The Snapshot Surveys (of adults) show that overall their regular members/attenders are diverse in terms of gender, age, working status, ethnicity and household income. Every church has members in every category. The vast majority live in east London and the majority of these live within the same postcode as their respective church (e.g. E1 or E14)

which is a much larger area than the parish but still relatively local and not unusual behaviour for churches in London.

Compared with the population of Tower Hamlets as a whole, one of the most diverse and most deprived in the UK, these churches do have a higher proportion of white ethnic groups and a higher proportion of wealthier households, but not by a large degree. Some 78 per cent of these congregations are from white ethnic groups, compared to 66 per cent of the comparable local community² and 56 per cent of their households earn less than £40,000 per year, compared to 70 per cent of local households who earn less than £45,000 per year.³ The evidence suggests that, overall, these churches are neither fully contextual nor rootless 'network' churches, but something of a hybrid of the two. The church plants do also vary between them in this respect, as already noted.

Where has the growth come from? Overall, just over 80 per cent of regular current church members previously attended another church but nearly 20 per cent were either returning to church after several years or were completely new to church.

Of those who transferred from another church, approximately one in four came from another church in east London, primarily St Paul's, Shadwell (with few transfers evident from other east London churches). Half came from another church in London or the South East, including a significant number from HTB, and one in four came from elsewhere in the UK or from overseas. Many of these transferring from other churches in London have obviously come via the original church planting processes so the snapshot represents a particular point in the journey of these churches. This will change over time – for example, 10 years after the church plant, fewer than 10 per cent of St Paul's congregation were part of the original group from HTB. What is interesting is that these churches are clearly attracting significant numbers of churchgoers newly arrived in London who would otherwise

probably have attended a city-centre church.

Of the 20 per cent of regular church attenders who were not going to church immediately before they joined, approximately half are returning to church after several years and half are new to church altogether. Across the five churches, this 20 per cent equates to about 115 people on a typical Sunday at current attendance levels.

The proportion of the congregation new to church varies from 14 per cent to 27 per cent between the five churches, peaking at approximately one in four of the congregation at both St Peter's, Bethnal Green and All Hallows, Bow. Of greatest interest is perhaps that those who are new to church are a diverse group but they are also more likely to be local, from an ethnic minority and

from a lower income household than other church members. It strongly suggests new members are joining from the local community as a result of the churches' local presence and missional activities. It also suggests that many of these 115 people would probably not be attending church today unless these churches had been present and engaged in their locality.

On the Sundays when the Snapshot Survey was undertaken, there were also nearly 150 adult visitors participating in services across the five churches, equivalent to another 25% on top of the regularly attending congregation. The visitors were a mix of friends and family, those attending an infant baptism as well as first time visitors and enquirers.

It is also important to put these five parishes into the wider context of the rest of Tower Hamlets. There are 18 Church of England parishes in Tower Hamlets. For the last decade for which Sunday attendance data are available (2003 – 2013), the borough as a whole showed a healthy 40 per cent growth in congregations. However, this disguises two quite different pictures. Eight parishes showed gradual decline, but there were ten parishes which grew. Some 60 per cent of the congregational growth was from the four parishes which had benefited from an HTB church plant by 2013 and 40 per cent was from six other parishes, benefiting from a number of different initiatives, church plants

“ NEW MEMBERS ARE JOINING FROM THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

² Tower Hamlets has a very large Bangladeshi Muslim community – some 32 per cent of the borough, from the 2011 Census. Using 'all population' data for this borough as an indicator of ethnic diversity for churches is rather crude. If the borough's large Bangladeshi community is excluded, then of the remaining 68 per cent of the borough some 66 per cent are from white ethnic groups. For churches this is a more meaningful comparison.

³ Data sourced from: LB Tower Hamlets (2013) *Household Income in Tower Hamlets: Insights from the 2013 CACI Paycheck data*

and redevelopments. This report tells part of the Tower Hamlets story, but there are clearly other stories to tell.

8.4 SERVICE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

All five churches are actively engaged in not only reaching out to their local communities but also serving them in practical ways. There is more 'social transformation' work than traditional evangelistic outreaches being done, although it is clear that the social transformation activities can also sometimes lead to people finding faith and contribute to church growth. It is interesting that the churches in this study which have the highest proportion of attendees who are new/returning to church are also the churches with the most active community work – St Peter's and All Hallows. There may not be enough evidence to suggest cause and effect between social transformation work and church growth, but it certainly demonstrates that they are not incompatible.

8.5 SERVING OTHER CHURCHES

Our evidence suggests east London and its churches are better off as a result of the church planting described in this report.

There are plenty of instances where these churches have supported existing church initiatives in the area and they are clearly attempting to work in a collegial way overall.

The Common Fund payments analysis also shows other parishes now benefit indirectly from the fact that these parishes largely pay for themselves now.

Evidence on the growth of these churches at the expense of neighbouring churches suggests that any such impact is very limited. They have largely succeeded in attracting local people who live in the parish, members who would otherwise have attended city-centre churches or people in who are new (or returning) to faith and who were not attending any other church.

8.6 IMPACT CONCLUSIONS

IMPACT SUMMARY

In ten years, the church planting process enabled by Holy Trinity, Brompton in five parishes has seen significant results:

- Overall Sunday attendance has grown tenfold
- One in five regular church attenders have either returned to church after several years or are completely new to church. This rises to one in four in some churches.
- The Diocese is now over £300,000 better off each year as a result of the financial changes
- Church growth and social transformation seem not only compatible but may reinforce each other

However, each church is different and each one continues to evolve in different ways.

Overall, the church in east London is better off. East London is better off.

REFLECTIONS

Do these stories matter?

We think they do. There may be something new here.

Hundreds of largely middle class Christians who were living in east London but attending large churches in central London now regularly attend churches in east London. The benefits of this shift are fourfold:

- It brings people, skills and resources to the parishes involved, allowing the renewal of the church buildings and communities and restoring the sustainability of these churches
- It brings benefits to the local communities in terms of missional outreach (people coming to faith) and service (practical social benefits)
- It brings benefits to the Christians now engaged in new kinds of service and ministry in east London amongst hugely diverse communities
- It strengthens the parish system ('a church in every community') both directly and indirectly, by restoring some parishes and freeing up Diocesan resources to support other parishes in need

These churches also defy simple labels. They are neither fully contextual nor are they rootless 'network' churches, but something of a hybrid. All these parishes are seriously deprived by the Government's own measures but also include pockets of wealth within them and nearby. Rich and poor do indeed live cheek by jowl in London, and in this sense it may not be typical for the UK. These churches bring the two groups of people together for mutual benefit, albeit imperfectly and with much still to learn.

If these are 'success stories' they also defy the critics in another important respect. Much of the energy and drive for these initiatives – to make them happen, to make them work - has come from the parishes themselves, not from 'the top down.' This is not a story of a national or Diocesan programme or strategy but of a local drive for growth (and survival) with support from above. The leadership is local.

These are also stories that contain immense generosity – of churches supporting each other through financial giving and of new church members respecting the established traditions of old members and the foundations on which they now build for the future.

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

Any revival of the church's fortunes will require a mix of approaches, working together. The model of church planting described in this report is not a 'cure all' for every place or situation, but it certainly appears to have a role to play. It demonstrates what can be done within the traditional structures of the church.

These experiences also raise some intriguing questions which merit further research and development:

- In a place and a time where mission can seem so difficult and fruit so hard to come by, can we see a link between church growth and work for social transformation?
- All of the church leaders agreed that what they had learnt in their theological training colleges did little to prepare them for planting churches or the practicalities of running churches. How best can church leaders be equipped to lead, organise, manage and communicate?

Finally, as the ink dries on this report, we know that these churches are already moving on. Their stories carry on unfolding. The question for us is - what are we to do?

There is a challenge to all churches, all traditions, all denominations to play a role in the revival of the Church in the UK.

As Jackie Pullinger once wrote:

"So go. Write your own books. Go!"



9 ADDRESSING THE MYTHS

In undertaking this research, it became clear that HTB and the church planting it has done has had more than its fair share of critics and sceptics. Whilst honest debate is always to be welcomed, this should also be grounded in evidence. Having completed the research for this study it is clear that much of the criticism is not supported by the evidence. This section summarises the most common criticisms and the evidence gathered.

1 THE CHURCH PLANT WAS UNDERTAKEN AGAINST THE WISHES OF THE ORIGINAL CONGREGATION

In two of the parishes, the incumbent himself took the initiative to invite a partnership – Christ Church, Spitalfields and Christ Church, Isle of Dogs – and oversaw the partnership.

In the other three parishes – St Paul's, St Peter's and All Hallows – the PCC was centrally involved in the discussions about whether a church plant would take place and gave consent. The church planting has enabled these churches to remain open.

2 WHEN THE CHURCH PLANT HAPPENED, THE ORIGINAL CONGREGATION LEFT

In all of the churches, nearly all of the original congregation members not only stayed but many are still members today. Most are very positive and supportive of the changes made.

3 THE NEW PEOPLE MARCHED IN AND CHANGED EVERYTHING

In all of the churches there was a strong degree of continuity in the traditions and Sunday services being offered. For example at St Peter's and St Paul's, their more traditional Sunday morning services are still running today and have increased congregations. It was clear from all of the stories that there was considerable discussion and consultation on all changes made, and that many of the changes were brought in over time, in stages.

4 ALL OF THE LEADERS AND NEW CONGREGATION MEMBERS ARE FROM HOLY TRINITY, BROMPTON

Of the five churches in this study, only three of their leaders were previously members of HTB – Ric at St Paul's (who has now left), Adam at St Peter's and Phil at Christ Church, Spitalfields. The other three clergy (Darren, Ed and Cris) came from other churches.

A large proportion the newly expanded congregation at St Paul's in 2005 were previously members of HTB, although 80 per cent were already residents of east London so not new to the area. Ten years later, only a minority of the congregation are former members of HTB. Of the

four subsequent church plants, only one – Christ Church, Spitalfields – drew some of its new congregation members directly from HTB.

5 THE CHURCHES MAY HAVE GROWN BUT IT DOESN'T REALLY COUNT BECAUSE THEY ARE JUST CHRISTIANS MOVING FROM OTHER CHURCHES

Some 80 per cent of the regular membership of the five churches are currently people who have transferred from other churches, but 20 per cent are either new to the faith or returning to church after several years. That is equivalent of over 100 people on a typical Sunday morning attending church who were not previously attending church. It is likely that many of these are people who would not be attending church if it were not for these particular churches. They therefore provide added value by being located where they are and doing what they do. As the church plants and partnerships mature over time, one might expect this proportion to grow.

6 THE CHURCH PLANTS HAVE GROWN AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHER LOCAL CHURCHES WHO HAVE LOST OUT

The evidence from both the Snapshot Survey and also the interviews makes it clear that very few people have transferred from existing local churches to the church plants and that the impact of 'displacing' new incomers to the area from other churches is limited.

7 THE CHURCHES HAVE UNFAIR ADVANTAGES AS THEY ARE GRANTED FAVOURS OVER OTHER LOCAL PARISHES

The evidence tends to suggest the opposite is true. All of the church plants were asked to pay their Common Fund in full from the beginning of the initiatives and the data show that between them they now pay 95 per cent of their costs, compared to 33 per cent before the church planting. Most parishes would not consider this a 'favour.' In terms of receiving permissions for changes to buildings, etc., the same rules apply to all parishes.

8 THE CHURCH PLANTS ALL RECEIVE BIG SUBSIDIES FROM HTB

HTB supported St Paul's with a one-off grant when it was established in 2005. Since then St Paul's has paid its own way, largely through congregational giving. HTB does not provide any ongoing financial support.

St Paul's in turn has provided one-off start-up support, of varying amounts, to the subsequent church plants but does not provide ongoing support. Each parish aims to achieve financial sustainability and pay its own way.

9 THE CHURCH PLANTS DON'T REFLECT THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY AND HAVE LITTLE CONTACT WITH THEM

All of the five parishes in this study are located in some of the most deprived and diverse communities in the UK, including the largest resident Muslim population in the country.

The churches are mainly 'hybrid' in nature, with a significant number of locally resident members and some from further afield. The current membership does tend to be more ethnically white and wealthier than their immediate community but they are also very diverse in age, ethnicity and household income. This is a challenge shared by many Church of England parishes.

All of the churches actively and energetically engage with their local communities in providing practical support – either through the church's own new initiatives or through church members volunteering within existing projects like Tower Hamlets Foodbank. The growth of these churches has delivered a boost to local social action work through the injection of new people, skills, time and money.



10 LESSONS FOR CHURCH PLANTING

The interviews and discussions with those involved in the churches of this study have unearthed a number of insights and lessons. This final section summarises some of this experience for the benefit of those interested in church planting.

PREPARATION AND WARM-UP

- Attempting a church plant in a hurry is not a good idea. It takes months to prepare, develop ideas, undertake the necessary communication and gather a team of people.

GENEROSITY IS AN ATTITUDE

- Church planting requires generosity. It is an underlying theme. Planting is all about a church giving away people, money and time and then encouraging those people to do the same and pass it on. There is a benefit to the 'sending' church in that planting out tends to encourage growth at home too.

GATHERING A TEAM

- It is possible to have too big a team for a church plant. The benefits of a large staff team are that you can do more at the start and have a bigger short-term impact, but the downside is that you can limit the opportunities for congregational involvement, which is important for building community and developing leaders.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

“Every church plant causes anxiety at the church itself and in neighbouring parishes”

- Every church planting process needs effective, regular and intentional communication before, during and after the plant in order to manage expectations and address fears and anxieties. Assume nothing. It could save a lot of time and effort later in the process.
- Communication needs to include the 'sending' church, the 'receiving' church, the surrounding churches and every level of decision-maker from top to bottom.
- In the church plants described in this report, there were no 'take overs' but always a 'triple consent' –that of the sending church, the receiving church and the Bishop.

MANAGING CHANGE

“Honour the past, navigate the present and build for the future.”

- Generally speaking, it is easy to overestimate how much can be achieved in the first year and underestimate how much can be achieved in the first five years. Perhaps don't try to do too much in the first year. Building relationships takes time.
- It is important to be open to change. Plans often need to be adapted and to evolve as circumstances change. It is important to keep listening and learning and respond to your context.
- In any church there are likely to be aspects of church behaviour and tradition which are healthy and should be kept, some which are unhealthy and should be lost and some which do not really matter either way. The judgement required of a church leader is working out which is which. Where there are important changes that should be made, there is then a decision as to whether it needs to be changed immediately or whether it can be done in stages.
- Much of the resistance to change in churches is not theological but cultural. Decisions about chairs instead of pews, or guitars instead of organs, or particular kinds of art are usually not matters of high principle in themselves but matters of personal preference. They can become significant when the decision says something about the church's priorities or even about relationships, power or control in the church. Also, different groups of people may have surprisingly different implicit values which are not immediately obvious on the surface; misunderstandings are common in these situations as the 'real' underlying tension may not have actually been identified.
- Managing change can be difficult and stressful, and even feel rather lonely. It can sometimes require strong leadership and a willingness to establish new patterns of behaviour.
- Leadership requires a good degree of emotional intelligence and also spiritual discernment to help navigate the many relationships with the congregation as well as with neighbouring churches and their leaders.

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION ARE GIFTS

- There is a large amount of organisation and administration involved in running a church, and even more when trying to change a church and how it is run. Putting in place some skilled support for this is important if the church leader is not to be overwhelmed with paperwork and emails. Experience suggests it is helpful to put capacity in place early to assist with financial management, administration and governance. Some churches may also need additional support on asset/building management.

MONEY HELPS

- Funding is essential to making most initiatives happen. The financial issues need to be addressed early and seriously.

PRAYER HELPS TOO

“Church planting is an art, not a science... and seeing God in it is important.”

- God famously moves in mysterious ways. The church planters in this report have often been able to identify how events and processes which seemed unconnected at the time were in fact equipping them for their current journey.

THE NATURE OF LEADERSHIP

- It is not obvious if church planters have personality traits in common – those featured in this study are actually quite a varied group. Church planting is perhaps less about personality and more about mindset. It certainly requires a ‘can do’ attitude and also a bit of nerve to cope with so much change.
- Church planters need to be enablers, not people who want to be centre-stage all the time. If we want to see growth in our churches, we must be committed to developing leaders, of all kinds, within those churches. Trying to do everything ourselves is a recipe for smallness.
- Leadership development is about both character and skill. (See 2 Timothy 2:2 “reliable people who can teach.”) We need to pay

attention to both. The character of a leader impacts on the whole organisation, as much as their particular skillset – positives and negatives – so also requires accountability.

- The greatest danger for a church leader is isolation. You need a team around you who can carry the vision with you. It cannot be done alone.
- Good leaders know when to go on holiday. Church planting can be more intense than running an existing church and so ensuring regular breaks is important – weekly, seasonally. Every leader needs rest and recuperation.

GROWTH IS AN ATTITUDE

- For a church to grow and keep growing its leaders need to be thinking about how to prepare for this, encourage it and enable it at every stage of the process.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

- Churches have much to learn from others, which can be practically useful and also encouraging. The leaders of most of the church plants in this report have met together regularly throughout the process. This has enabled good communication, practical learning, leadership development and mutual support.

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Any errors or misunderstandings are entirely those of the author.

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