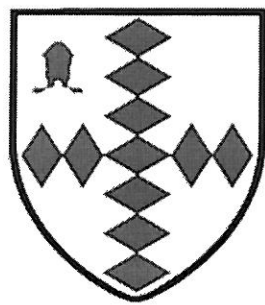


# Mission-Shaped Church



The Diocese of  
**Southwark**

## Diocesan Guidelines for Church Planting

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### Introduction

1. In a society in which many people are disconnected from church life and Christian faith, it is vital that the Diocese of Southwark is proactive in ensuring that the patterns for mission and ministry are as productive and fruitful as they can be within an overall and developing Anglican framework. The Anglican system has been built for hundreds of years on the centrality of the parish and its boundaries. With increasing mobility, the social reality of such neighbourhoods has become more and more tenuous, stimulating initiatives in cross-parish mission such as church plants, which often build on networks of people rather than neighbourhoods. The recently published report “Mission-Shaped Church” (The ‘Cray Report’) has tried to give an underlying theology and framework for the church’s mission in contemporary society.
  2. Alongside this, the Review of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Related Matters (‘A Measure for Measures’) has also attempted to respond to these changes especially in the suggestion of provision for episcopally authorised mission initiatives (Recommendation 18). Relevant too are the DAC framework, the regulations for the use of church buildings, and also questions of clergy conditions of service and deployment. The latter, in particular, is in a state of considerable flux. All of these factors need to be borne in mind as a general background to the more specific guidelines for church plants.
  3. It has become clear over the last few years that the Diocese needs some guidelines for church plants in the light of recent experience. It is undoubtedly true that there are areas, estates and networks of people where the Church has had relatively little impact. Many of these cross parish boundaries, and it is obviously desirable to try to stimulate new initiatives of mission which might enable the churches that work in such areas to be more fruitful.
  4. It is important to begin with defining what constitutes a church plant. The Cray Report has done a considerable amount of work on this. These Diocesan guidelines use that definition which emphasises that church planting is a process. It says, “Church planting is the process by which a seed of the life and message of Jesus embodied by a community of Christians is immersed for mission reasons in a particular cultural or geographic context. The intended consequence is that it roots there, coming to life as a new indigenous body of Christian disciples well suited to continue in mission” (‘Mission-Shaped Church’ p.32).
  5. In particular, those involved in planning a church plant need to be clear about the understanding of both the ecclesiology and missiology which underpins it, as well as the legal framework in which it is possible to operate, if it is to be an Anglican church plant. It also needs to be recognised that there is considerable diversity of styles and approaches in church plants, including church grafts.
  6. Another crucial factor is identifying the process for the planning on new church plants. As well as identifying the incentive for the proposed plant, this must centrally recognise the need for a good working relationship between all who are concerned, and this is particularly important where the parish boundaries are crossed.
- N.B. These guidelines apply in particular to church plants which cross parish boundaries, but the principles still are of use for other church plants internal to a parish.

## Criteria for church planting

### 1. Responsibilities of those proposing a church plant

#### 1.1 Vision and need - produce a statement

Any proposed church plant must establish a clear vision and need for the plant, i.e. that the plant will be an effective use of resources in the Church's overall mission. In particular, proposed church plants which cross parish boundaries must make it clear why a cross-parish boundary approach is thought to be more effective in this case. The 'vision and need' statement should include the target group, the resources available, the means to be used in the proposed plant, and how it fits into the mission of the Church across an area. In particular it should ensure that it is not unwittingly exclusive and there is appropriate minority ethnic representation.

#### 1.2 Seek Episcopal authority

The Cray report recommends that the Bishop should "act as the broker in discussions where there are cross-boundary disagreements with the ability to authorise a new plant or to deny it permission to proceed" ('Mission Shaped Church', Chapter 8, page 145, para. 4.1). This needs to be seen alongside the proposals in the Review of the Dioceses and Pastoral Measures for a Bishop's Order to authorise a new form of ministry ('A Measure for Measures', Recommendation 18 p. 98), and also Canon C 8.4, which specifically states that the agreement of the incumbent of the parish in which a plant is to occur is necessary. This veto for the incumbent may go if the new Dioceses and Pastoral measure comes in. However in all cases where a cross parish boundary church plant is proposed the written support of the Area Bishop must be obtained.

#### 1.3 Ensuring local consultation occurs

Existing churches and proposed new expressions of church or church plants need to work in ways that are complementary to each other. Consultation needs to take place with both Anglican parishes and possible ecumenical partners in an area before a plant occurs. This must be done at the earliest possible moment.

#### 1.4 Anglican commitment

Anglican planters using Anglican resources must be committed to the Church of England, and to be clearly willing to be part of the Diocese, working under the authority of the Bishop.

#### 1.5 Leadership

Suitably qualified and trained leaders are essential for a successful church plant. The Diocese of Southwark commends the recommendations on p. 147 of the Cray Report (and pp 132-5).

#### 1.6 Fairer Shares

After an initial injection of resources new church plants are expected to contribute to diocesan funds through the Fairer Shares scheme. Phasing in arrangements would normally be completed within three to five years.

#### 1.7 Evaluation

All church plants must be monitored regularly, assessed annually and appraised after five years for further authorisation. The appraisal must be authorised by the Area Bishop or Archdeacon and conducted by a group appointed by them in consultation with the church plant leaders and the sending church. Plants must not be authorised without an agreement on the process of evaluation. Evaluation must also envisage possibilities of closure as well as continuation, should it be considered that the resources used could be deployed more effectively. Evaluation must also consider the options for the legal status of a developing church plant ('Mission Shaped Church' pp 123-9, see Appendix 2) including the proposed new category of a Bishop's Order ('A Measure for Measures', paras 3.30-3.35) and the representation of the church plant in the synodical structures.

## 2. Central Diocesan Responsibilities

### 2.1 Recognition

Bishops and Archdeacons hold a primary responsibility for mission and church growth. In addition to this general responsibility, the Diocese should appoint a member of staff who is responsible for supporting church plants, and who is a link to the senior staff. The Canon Missioner is the obvious person to undertake this role. He or she should relate both to the senior staff of the Diocese, the Diocese in general (especially with those who are actively involved in church plants), the National Adviser on Evangelism, and other Diocesan and ecumenical contacts, to ensure that good practice is shared within the Diocese and the wider church.

### 2.2 Examination of options

The possibility of a church plant must be fully investigated whenever key opportunities arise through a) vacancies, b) reorganisation of parish boundaries, c) redundancies and d) places where the local church is manifestly struggling as indicated, for example, by the Gibson formula. Parish, Deanery, Archdeaconry and Episcopal Area and Diocesan boundaries should not in themselves be a bar to experimental new forms of church. It is important that the Diocese does not rule out fresh experiments solely on the ground of crossing geographical boundaries.

### 2.3 Consultation

The possibility of church plants and new expressions of church should be considered at every level of the Diocese's planning including the Bishop's Staff Meeting, the Trio meetings between Area Bishops and Archdeacons, the Archdeaconry and Diocesan Pastoral Committees as well as Deaneries and Parishes. The Archdeacons play a key role in ensuring this consultation is 'joined up'.

### 2.4 Financial Support

Where grants and mission funds are available, request for financial support for church plants from the Diocese should be judged alongside other initiatives in mission. Priority should be given to help to finance the start up costs of new forms of church and initiatives in mission - with a view to their self-sustaining financial viability within three to five years.

### 2.5 Episcopal Authorisation

The relevant Area Bishop will be the person to give authorisation to any proposed cross parish boundary church plant, but only after careful consideration ensuring these guidelines are being followed. The Bishop should also authorise where applicable the selection, training and deployment of ministers who are involved in church plants. If there are critical lay leaders in any church plant initiative, they should be prepared to be commissioned by the Bishop using his own criteria, and to have an annual ministerial review.

### Further background information

- The recommendations in the Cray report ('Mission Shaped Church'), especially pages 145-149
- Effective analysis and use of the census material
- Review of the Diocese, Pastoral and Related Measures ('A Measure for Measures') Chapter 3, and pp. 98ff Recommendation 18.

*References are to Mission Shaped Church: Church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context ISBN 07151 40132 pub. 2004, Church House Publishing, and A Measure for Measures in Mission and Ministry The Review of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Related Measures, pub 2004 Church House publishing, GS 1528))*

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