

From a traditional denomination to a Church Planting Movement: A personal journey

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Churches of Christ in the UK

- Formed in 1842
- Grew to 200 congregations and 16,000 members by 1930
- Long period of decline
- Division and death
- A new start in 1980 with 25 very small congregations - an average of only 30 mostly older people per congregation

Renewal through church planting

- A few existing congregations grew and planted
- A small number of congregations began as pioneer works
- Some American workers came and planted churches
- Some growth but very slow progress
- This was not movement

2006 – time to re-assess

- We had been replicating old models of church which were pastoral in nature and not mission focussed
- We were short of leaders
- We lacked financial resource
- Most of all we lacked vision and decision

We made a new plan

- From the original 25 congregations, only 15 were left
- 15 congregations had been planted during the previous 26 years making 30 congregations in total
- We repented of our slow growth and set a goal to plant 10 congregations by 2010

Progress

- By 2012 we had added 20 congregations so now we were 50 congregations
 - Average size of congregations was greater
 - Now some large congregations
 - Average age had dropped – more young people
- We set a new goal to be 100 congregations by 2017
 - In reality we are around 80 congregations actually established or in process of being planted
 - Some of these are newly planted churches that simply joined the denomination
 - Quite a larger number are from ethnic minority groups
- Getting ready to make the next jump to 200

Lessons Learnt

- Casting the vision is crucial – that helps to recruit planters
- Creating a training system is key
- Aligning resources around the vision matters – that might mean restructuring the denomination
- Church planters are more successful if they have coaches and mentors
- Planting in regions is more effective than planting as isolated church plants
- Plant “mission shaped” churches
- It’s helpful to have some “resource” churches