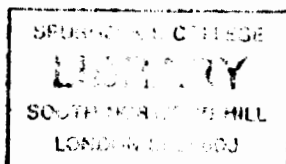


PLANTING PAPERS

(Spring 1992)



The Significance of the Sent-unit Size by Bob Hopkins

More and more church plants are happening in England in all sorts of denominations and independent groups. Tremendous variety and creativity is emerging in this flush of new church mission activity. We should expect this if the Holy Spirit is inspiring this wave of reproduction and multiplication of life in the Body of Christ.

It is fascinating to review all these models and to learn from them. These new 'births' are

coming from so many different sorts of 'mothers' - large and not-so-large, and with every kind of church tradition and philosophy of church life and ministry. The mission fields that the plants are seeking to reach are also very diverse.

All this variety of origin and context re-emphasises the priority of prayer and allowing God to direct and shape each vision and plan for planting a new church. However, church

Planting Papers aims to promote all aspects of church planting within the Baptist Union and beyond. All contributors, in sympathy with this aim, have full freedom of expression, and views cannot be said necessarily to represent those of the BACUP executive or editors.

BACUP Executive

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Steve Hill (Isle of Dogs, London)

Colin Cartwright (Spurgeons's College)

Editor: Steve Hill (Tel. 071-537 2261)

BACUP, c/o 189 South Norwood Hill,
London SE25 6DJ.

Planting Papers Issue No. 4 - Contents

- p. 1 The Significance of the Sent-unit Size
- **Bob Hopkins**
- p. 4 Inner Cities - A Church Planting Priority
- **Stuart Murray**
- p. 6 Church Planting in Rural Areas
- **John Berry**
- p. 7 Report on a Sabbatical Training Course
- **Gary Jenkins**
- p. 9 NOTICE BOARD
- forthcoming events or conferences
- p. 10 Seed, Vegetative or Landscape
- **Ian Drummond**
- p. 11 "From the BAC-Room"
- Views from the Mission Office
- **Derek Tidball**
- p. 13 FROM THE EDITOR

planting is also both art and science and there are lessons and principles that can help the pioneers.

The Planting Unit

Just one aspect of the kaleidoscope of models is the size of the initiating unit for the church plant. In England this has varied over a continuous range from a lone individual planter to over a hundred folk beginning the new work! Obviously the dynamics and challenges of planting will vary greatly as you move through this spectrum of starting sizes. It seems to me from my observation that this range can be subdivided roughly into four principal categories of planting size. I say this because I have noticed that each of these four broad types of unit appear to have distinctly different characteristics. Each sort of planting unit also seems to have rather different key principles for its success. Having said this there is obviously much overlap between them and they are not watertight compartments but rather 'fuzzy at the edges' like the colours in a rainbow!

Four Categories of Unit Size

To classify these four types of unit I use four descriptive terms. I give these terms specific definitions for the purposes of helping us understand the different planting dynamics according to which sort of unit we start with.

First there is the '*Individual*' or 'pioneer' and this can often be a couple. My second category I call a '*Team*' and seems to range from 3 to about 12 adults. As the size increases above this I change the description to a '*Group*' and this qualitative unit continues up to about 45. This group size appears to be the most popular planting unit among recent plants.

The last category is where more than 45 people form the starting group sent out for the new church. This I term a '*Transplant*' since the new church is established with numbers not far short of the average English church and there are obviously few 'mothers' that can contem-

plate giving away so many members.

Let's look at these four categories to see what principles may emerge and the effects of changing sizes.

The Pioneer Individual or Couple (1 or 2)

In the foreign mission field this unit has often been the favourite. However, more recently several missions have recognised that individuals or couples sent on cross-cultural church planting alone may be less fruitful than

joining them up into teams - they have also seen lone church planters experience 'burn-out' or withdraw early from the mission field. Nonetheless, in some current third world revival movements the indigenous church planting waves are initiated mainly by pioneer couples or individuals.

Quote:

"It is practically a truism to suggest that when a leadership team is divided in spirit or purpose, the congregation will reflect that division"

- David Shenk

Clearly, for the individual church planter, their personal qualities and ministry giftings are the key. They must have strength of character and considerable perseverance. Multi-giftedness is obviously a great advantage where there is no team to contribute different gifts. If a new church is to be started by an individual or a couple then the gift of evangelist would seem of paramount importance if they are not to stay on their own! Surprisingly however this fact may often be overlooked.

A church planter/couple on their own may be so motivated to gather their first converts that their only thought is 'full-time ministry'. However, without a team or group to share the financial burden it may be essential to have a full-time or part-time paid 'tent making' job. In fact this can also have great advantages in terms of giving credibility in the new community, quickly building relationships with people and helping an understanding of the community to be reached.

The Small Team (3 to 12)

When planting with a team of from 3 to 12 people there are immediately the advantages of mutual support and encouragement, together

with a pooling of a range of gifts and ministries. But it can make a big difference if the different members' gifts are specifically recognised and affirmed in the team. This will encourage the range of gifts to develop. Planning is also needed to fully release different members in their ministries. As with the individual planter, the crucial need for the evangelist must be recognised if the team is to grow into a new church. Ephesians 4:11-12 makes it clear that all the ministries are gifts *to the church* and for the equipping of *the whole church*. Too often we understand the evangelist as a ministry out there on their own. We need to particularly embrace this gifted person to make the whole team an evangelistic unit. Those with the gift of 'people gatherers' can wonderfully complement the evangelist (as Priscilla and Aquila seemed to work with Paul). But if there are immediate advantages in a team, there are also some cautions. On moving to a plural planting unit there are all sorts of dynamics that, if not understood and rightly handled, can hinder the progress of the plant in its vulnerable early stages. First, it is so important to have a common vision to unify the team. This should include not only the overall purpose of the plant but also the priorities and philosophy of ministry. Thus, time on praying and planning as a team is vital.

Secondly, there is the whole area of relationship dynamics. In a planting team under the pressures of a pioneer work, it is so helpful to understand personality types and differences rather than resent them. Then there are those who are more the 'visionaries' as distinct from those who are implementers and doers. Again the relationships in the team can be either further complicated or enriched by the range between those who are more people orientated and others more task orientated.

The Larger Group (13-45)

As the planting size increases above a dozen or so, it is hard to maintain the dynamics of a team - the unit becomes more than a single cell. There begins to be the need for some differentiation in the group with the identification of those who represent the 'core leadership' for the plant. In a way this is like the 'team' within the 'group' and the considerations we mentioned

above about gifting and relational dynamics are similar.

As well as one of the most popular modern planting units in England, this can be one of the most successful for rapid multiplication. There are even more people resources than in the smaller team. Also there are likely to be two or three home groups from the outset, each of which can be gathering points for new people if their focus includes outreach. This sort of size of group also makes a good beginning for Sunday worship services - it should not seem too insignificant a number even in a hall that could accommodate a hundred or so.

However, once numbers of the initiating unit go over 25, 35 or even 40, there are a couple of dangers to be aware of. Firstly, the group may become inward looking and comfortable. Some 35 meeting on an estate where there has been no church can seem quite a success and stagnate. The priority of outreach can be lost if the leadership is unaware. Hence it is just as important to recognise and mobilise the evangelists in the group and plan activities around this priority. The other danger is that larger units are less adaptable to new social or cultural settings and can seem like an 'imposing outside clique'. This 'transplant rejection syndrome' would apply even more to the last category.

The Transplant (45 and over)

There are not so many 'mother' churches that can give away 'chunks' that are already of congregational size. Although this model is less widely applicable it can be very successful in a big cosmopolitan city where there is great population mobility, large areas of similar culture or large numbers attending the mother church who already live in the area of the plant.

In this case success is more related to maintaining the factors which produced health and growth in the parent congregation. This will include the qualities of the transplant leader, his leadership team and ministry teams. The dynamics of the cell group structure will also need to be maintained as well as a coherent philosophy of ministry aimed at growth and outreach to the community.

Bob Hopkins is minister of Parr Mount C. of E. in St. Helens, Merseyside.

Inner Cities - A Church Planting Priority

by Stuart Murray

One of the things which most attracted me to the role of Oasis Director of Church Planting at Spurgeon's College was the emphasis, both in the Mission Studies course and within Oasis, on the city and urban issues.

I am unashamedly biased towards the inner cities as the areas where church planting should be concentrated. I am aware that many rural areas need new churches. I accept that some suburban areas are under-churched. I believe that creative new church planting initiatives are needed to reach many neglected groups who are beyond the scope of the traditional 'local church'. But I remain convinced that the inner cities (including large inner city type housing estates wherever these are located) should be accorded priority in our strategies, our training, and our allocation of personnel and resources.

Why? Inevitably my own experience contributes towards my bias. I have lived for fourteen years in inner London (in Camberwell and Tower Hamlets). For twelve of these years I was involved in planting and leading the Tower Hamlets Christian Fellowship, a multi-racial charismatic fellowship which is now in the process of planting out a new congregation. In the past two years, although living in a small mining town in the Midlands, my wife and I have both been involved with an inner city charity providing emergency accommodation and help for homeless people.

So my bias can easily be written off as simply a reflection of my own experience and concerns. All I can say is that I believe there is more to it than this. Perhaps I can set out briefly some of the factors involved.

(1) The Biblical Factor

My book, *City Vision*, is an attempt to explore what the Bible says about the city and the implications of this for the mission of the church. Following the story of the city from Genesis to Revelation, listening to the prophets addressing the city, watching Jesus weep over Jerusalem, tracing the progress of the early church from city to city across the Roman

Empire, I am convinced that the city has a pivotal place in human history and in the purposes of God. Combine this with the equally clear biblical focus on 'good news for the poor' and you have a mandate for treating inner city church planting as a biblical priority.

(2) The Statistical Factor

It is in inner city areas that people are most concentrated and yet the churches are weakest. In many suburban or provincial areas churchgoing is between 10% and 12%. In Tower Hamlets the figure was roughly half of 1% (at least 20 times weaker). And the recent English Churches Census suggests that, from an already weak base, churches in the inner cities are declining three times as quickly as the national average! If church planting is needed anywhere, it is needed in the inner city. Hundreds of new churches are needed.

(3) The Strategic Factor

There are almost unlimited opportunities for church planting in the inner cities. The continuing existence of monolithic church buildings should not obscure the reality of the situation - that there are areas where thousands of people live which are not effectively served by any church (the parish system is a nonsense in most urban areas). Add to this the fact that it is in the inner cities that many almost unreached people groups live, it is in the inner cities that the most pressing social needs exist, and it is the inner cities that readily attract the attention of the media, and the strategic importance of the inner cities in any church planting initiative becomes plain. Neglect the inner cities and this nation will not be effectively evangelized.

(4) The Justice Factor

The present imbalance between churches in the inner cities and the suburbs is not only strategically foolish. It is unjust. The areas of greatest need are being neglected by the churches. While suburban churches extend their facilities, increase their staff and multiply their programmes, their inner city counterparts are

struggling to survive, let alone respond to a variety and depth of needs practically unknown to suburban Christianity. Most Christian books and magazines are aimed at a suburban market; most evangelistic strategies do not touch inner city people. Most Bible teachers, healers, counsellors, apostles and worship leaders live elsewhere and rarely visit inner city areas. Many Christian leaders who do move in only stay briefly (although slightly longer on average than teachers and social workers, who generally last less than 12 months in Tower Hamlets).

(5) The Historical Factor

Most, if not all, revivals in the UK have begun amongst the poor. Most poor people are now concentrated in the inner cities and the large overspill housing estates. Contrary to the impression often given, poor people *do* respond to the gospel - provided it does not come with an impenetrable middle-class packaging. If we want to see revival breaking out, if we want to see large numbers converted, if we want to see many new churches planted, if we want to see these churches making a lasting social impact - the inner cities must be our primary targets.

(6) The Ecclesiological Factor

There are opportunities in inner city church planting to explore some very exciting implications of being the church. It is in these areas of tremendous need and sometimes bewildering variety that the church can discover what it means to be 'all one in Christ' and to break through racial, social and economic barriers. It is here that holistic models of church life that integrate evangelistic, charismatic and social elements ('word, works and wonders') can be developed most meaningfully. It is here that new ways of being the people of God are being - and must be - discovered. Many things we thought were necessary for being the church begin to seem less important, and other things, often

neglected or undervalued, take on new significance.

(7) The Outrage Factor

It is in these inner city areas that the powers of darkness have been allowed to operate freely for too long, oppressing people and wreaking havoc on individuals and communities. It is in these areas that the church is regarded (often with good reason) as antiquated, powerless, irrelevant and alien. It is time this situation was challenged. It is time the flight to the suburbs was reversed. It is time to stop labelling the inner cities as 'hard areas' and advising young leaders with potential to look for jobs elsewhere. Yes, there is pain involved in inner city ministry, but also tremendous joy. Yes, there are problems but also unequalled openings.

Church planting is crucial in the inner cities. But I believe it is also true that inner city issues and perspectives are crucial to church planting. What the inner cities do *not* need are models of church life imposed from elsewhere, culturally illiterate

Quote:

"If we want to see revival breaking out, if we want to see large numbers converted, if we want to see many new churches planted, if we want to see these churches making a lasting social impact - the inner cities must be our primary targets."

church planters and initiatives that ignore what is already happening. There are many lessons to learn *from* inner city churches and inner city communities, lessons that are vital if we are to plant new churches in the inner city, lessons which might also have much to teach us as we plant churches in suburbia and in the villages. The inner cities provide the best opportunities in the UK for addressing a plethora of ecclesiological, cultural and hermeneutical questions that are of crucial importance for church planters, but church planters also need the inner cities.

Stuart Murray has recently been appointed as the new Oasis/Spurgeon's 'Church Planting' Course-Director, and will take up full duties in August 1992.

Church Planting in Rural Areas by John Berry

'I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys' (Is.41:18)

In all the talk of church planting I haven't heard anyone mention the rural areas of Britain. And yet the needs and opportunities are perhaps as great as in some of our urban areas.

The rural scene has changed dramatically over the past 50 years. The farming community has decreased, to be replaced by commuters, retired folk, arts and crafts people, or holiday cottages. New people often require changes in worship patterns as well as in other aspects of village life. At the same time, the church scene has changed in various ways. Many villages no longer have their own vicar, Methodist and Independent Chapels have closed, and yet people still look for some local expression of Christian worship and fellowship. Some House-Churches have been planted, but too often become eclectic centres for people from a wide area wanting a particular kind of worship and do not attract more than a minority of the local folk, or they split and split again, as different groups vie for control.

There are some organisations that have a deep concern for this situation. For years the Datchet Christian Fellowship (now called Rural Ministries) has bought redundant chapels, appointed pastors and prayerfully sought to rebuild an outpost of the Kingdom. Counties Evangelistic Work, the Fellowship for Evangelising Britain's Villages, the Derbyshire Village Mission, Mission For Christ (Rural Evangelism) and others have worked not just to evangelise the rural areas, but to build a Christian community there. But they are limited by man-power and resources.

No Mega-Churches

The number of Anglican village churches that have been brought to life again by young evangelical clergy and their families moving in with a real sense of call and commitment has grown amazingly. I have been thrilled on my travels by the work of God in those places. But there is room also for churches of other groupings. I was recently at an independent

chapel on the Derbyshire/Staffordshire border which, with the assistance of workers from the Derbyshire Village Mission, has come alive and is revealing the power of God in life and worship.

With two others I have recently sat down with a map to look at rural areas where the candle of Christian witness is burning low. The needs are great, the opportunities are there. But the cost can be high, and you will never be the pastor of a mega-church!

If anyone is interested in working with me and others on this, please would you get in contact. I would also be very interested in hearing stories of rural churches or chapels coming alive, or new churches being planted in the countryside.

Please do not write to "BACUP",
but directly to:
Rev. John Berry
Evangelical Alliance Midlands Office
Manna House
194 London Road
Leicester
LE2 1ND

*Rev. John Berry is the Director of Evangelism
for the Evangelical Alliance*



Spurgeon's College offers you the opportunity for

SABBATICAL STUDIES
in
CHURCH PLANTING

October - December '92 or January - March '93

A number of study places are available for ministers of all denominations on the Oasis/Spurgeon's Church Planting and Evangelism Course. (See Gary Jenkins' article in this issue of Planting Papers for a verdict on the course.)

*Details from Christina Carter (Course Administrator),
Spurgeon's College, 189 South Norwood Hill, London SE25 6DJ
(Tel. 081-653 0850)*

Report on a Sabbatical Church Planting Course at Spurgeon's College -Spring 1991 by Gary Jenkins

Description of the Course

The overall title for the course was 'The Principles and Practice of Church Planting'. This was broken down into the following subject areas:

1. Church Planting in Biblical and Theological Perspective

The lectures in this section were based on Hesselgrave's analysis of the missionary activity of the early church (Hesselgrave, D, *Planting Churches Cross Culturally*, Baker,) in which a 10 stage 'Pauline Cycle' of missionary endeavour has been identified of: Commissioning of Missionaries; Contacting the Audience; Communicating the Gospel; Conversion of Hearers; Believers Congregating; Faith Confirmed; Leadership Consecrated; Believers Commended; Relationships Continued; Sending Churches Convened.

2. Church Planting in International and Historical Perspective

The international perspective considered four case studies:

Mizoram: Church planting among a largely Animist people in N.E. India where church growth has been very rapid indeed.

Hindu India, where considerable resistance to the Christian message has been found - church growth has been very small and largely confined to the lowest castes of society.

Angola where the social upheaval of revolution has resulted in rapid growth of the Baptist church.

Latin America: the story of the enormous expansion in the number of protestant believers during this century.

The international perspective was widened by visiting lecturers who spoke from personal

experience of church planting work in the United States, New Zealand and Honduras.

The historical section looked at three case studies of church planting in England:

- ☆ by the early Methodists;
- ☆ by Baptists in the Commonwealth period (1640-1660)
- ☆ and by C.H. Spurgeon (who planted 160 churches in the second half of the nineteenth century, mainly in South London).

3. The Challenge of Contemporary Church Planting

This part of the course considered some of the practical issues in contemporary church planting such as: reasons for church planting; objections to church planting; use of community survey techniques; deciding where to plant; appropriate leadership models for new churches etc. as well as considering a series of case studies presented by visiting lecturers with personal experience of church planting. These included:

- ☆ 9 case studies from the Yorkshire Baptist Association of churches planted in different types of area using different models of leadership.
- ☆ Church Planting Ecumenically: three new ecumenical churches planted in housing estates in Bury St Edmunds;
- ☆ St Andrews Plaistow: church planting in East London among white working class, African, West Indian and Asian communities;
- ☆ Willow Creek Community Church: churches for 'seekers' in Chicago suburbs;
- ☆ New Zealand Baptists: a church planting strategy for a whole denomination;
- ☆ DAWN 2000: a church planting strategy for whole nations;
- ☆ Redcar Baptist Church: planting a new church in a neighbouring village on the 'satellite' model;
- ☆ George Patterson, 'Church Reproduction': emphasis on churches amongst poor and working class people; building indigenous churches; planting churches that can plant other churches; obedience to the commands of Christ.

Evaluation of the Course

The strengths of the course were:

- ☆ it was practical without being untheological. Considerable attention was given to practical matters and to the actual practice of church planting but at the same time there was a strong emphasis on giving a proper theological and biblical basis to the work.
- ☆ it was enthusiastic and positive without being triumphalistic.
- ☆ it made very good use of serving ministers as visiting lecturers. This provided a wealth of practical and spiritual insight from men working in a whole variety of situations.
- ☆ it was a broadly based course: it was not focussed just on this country nor just on the contemporary scene but examined the subject of church planting from both an international and historical perspective.

Possible weaknesses:

- ☆ a bit too Baptist! Perhaps not surprisingly the course had a very strongly Baptist flavour. I did feel at times that it might have been enriched by drawing rather more on the experience of other (non-Baptist) Christians. Having said that, Spurgeon's is a Baptist college and my own ignorance of Baptist history etc. prior to the course perhaps demonstrates that Anglican colleges are just as parochial.
- ☆ I think the course might have benefitted from a more systematic treatment of how to reach people, how to evangelise them, and how to build up the church. Lots of clues and helpful advice was given in this area in the section on the contemporary scene - somehow it needs to be systematised.

Overall verdict: very interesting and stimulating and well worth doing. I learnt a lot and I would warmly recommend it (and Spurgeon's College) to others in the diocese who might be considering some study in connection with either Post-Ordination Training or a sabbatical.

Gary Jenkins is an Anglican Curate at St. Luke's, West Norwood, London, from where he is leading a church planting team into a local unreached area.



Willow Creek Community Church Conference

**“CREATING A CHURCH
FOR THE UNCHURCHED”**

16th - 18th June 1992
at the International Convention Centre, Birmingham

Cost: from £49.50

Details: from Mr Nigel Edward-Few, Conference Coordinator
P.O. Box 616, Chesham, Bucks. HP5 1RX (Tel. 0494-792808)

“PLANTING DYNAMIC CHURCHES IN INNER LONDON”

A day conference for all concerned about the church in the city!

Speakers include:-

Ralph Neighbour; with input from experienced London based leaders and workers.

at:- Hanbury College, 22A Hanbury Street, Spitalfields, London E1

15th February 1992 3.00pm - 9.00pm

More details from...

Zebra Project, 1 Merchant Street, Bow, London E3 Tel. 081-981 1007

BACUP is able to announce that for 1992, in conjunction with the BU Mission Department, we are involved in the planning of B.I.C.E.C.:

**BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
for**

ESTABLISHING CHURCHES

March 23rd-26th 1992 at Swanwick, Derbyshire

This gathering, sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance is likely to be one of the most significant in the area of church planting that UK Baptists are likely to have the chance to participate in during the Decade of Evangelism.

Speakers will be drawn from the Baptist community worldwide and attendance is being sought from delegates from across East and West Europe.

Cost:-

Registration Fee - £40 (£60 per couple)

Accommodation and meals - £76 per person

For more information, contact Derek Tidball, Secretary of Evangelism, Baptist House,
129 Broadway, Didcot, Oxon.

Seed, Vegetative or Landscape?

- A “Macro-Approach” to Church Planting

by Ian Drummond

As I write this article my wife and I are about to move into a new house, which will give us the opportunity to plant a brand new garden. We've read the gardening books, and all of them tell us about the vital importance of careful planning, to put the best and most suitable plants in the right place, so that they will flower at the right time. This is so that our garden might not just be full of a load of individual plants stuck in randomly, but that the whole garden might combine together to give the best overall effect.

Would that our church planting could be undertaken in a similar vein, yet to be honest much church planting is so concerned with individual church plants, rather than an attempt to form an overall strategy to reach a whole area for Christ. Jim Montgomery's vision of an evangelical church for every 1000 people by the year 2000, outlined in the book *DAWN 2000*, is an excellent one. But in the Philippines, where this vision has been taken on board, they have occasionally run into problems. For different churches are sometimes trying to plant churches in the same area, while other regions have not been reached. With an overall vision there needs to be an overall plan, but unfortunately this is often not talked about in church planting literature.

A simple review of church planting literature divides church planting into two basic types.

1. **Seed** Here a small team or couple are sent into an area which is remote from the parent church, in either a geographical or sociological sense. Gradually they build up community contacts, usually to form a home group, which later on develops into a church. This is by its nature a time-consuming process.

2. **Vegetative** This tends to be the more popular method of church planting in Britain today. Here a larger group, usually 20-30, are sent out by the parent church to a situation. The advantage with this method is that it tends to produce an 'instant' church. The disadvantage is that usually the new church is modelled on the parent one,

which can be inappropriate for the area or group it is seeking to serve.

3. Therefore, continuing this horticultural theme, I would like to propose a third type of church planting, namely **landscape church planting**. This is inspired by the work of Charles Chaney in his book *Church Planting at the End of the Twentieth Century*. In this book Chaney describes a church planting project undertaken in Illinois, U.S.A., where a computer database was used to identify either geographical areas or specific ethnic or social groups in a whole region, which might be able to support a new church. Then a strategy could be devised to plant individual churches.

Could such method work here? The biggest obstacle, it has to be admitted, is the nature of the Baptist denomination itself. For, to be honest, we are sometimes too independent for our own good, and the idea of some kind of overall strategy where we are told to plant churches and what kind of church to plant could fill many with horror. Doubtless some will couch their replies in spiritual language, that they wanted to wait on the Lord etc. etc. but the essential fact is that our independence is threatened. But despite the problems there is still in my opinion a need for such an overall strategy. Of course it will cost money to employ researchers to do the necessary demographic surveys, but the result could well be to identify areas of which local churches were previously ignorant. Areas could be identified on a number of criteria:

1. The absence of any evangelical church within an area of given population size.

2. The presence of a particular ethnic group within a geographical area which existing churches were not reaching.

3. The presence of a social group in an area which is not catered for by existing churches, (e.g. a council estate where the local churches are dominated by middle-class professionals).

Having identified such areas it could then be decided which method of church plant would

best fit the situation (although it might also be suggested to churches that they might change their existing structures to cater for groups in criteria two and three, rather than starting new churches). Generally, the vegetative approach would probably be best in situations coming under criterion one, while seed teams might need to be used in cases involving criterions two or three. Following this decision, individual churches, or indeed groups of churches, can then be approached and the planning for individual church planting begun in earnest.

Of course the obvious basis for such planning could be at association level, although perhaps in some cases groups of associations or even areas could sponsor such research. However, to some all this might seem like needless delay in 'doing the Lord's work', of actually getting on with church planting. But, it has to be

said, that time and time again from the church planting literature comes the plea to thoroughly plan any church plant. Therefore, with such advice surely it makes sense to take time to 'do our homework'?

If my wife and I rush down to the nearest garden centre and buy every plant in sight (although this is not possible on minimum stipend!), and then plant them here there and everywhere in our garden, then we are going to end up with a mess. However, with careful planning we might (and just might, with our gardening skills!) produce a garden which reflects the glory of God in His creation. Landscaped church planting might just be the way to reflect the glory of God and the good news of Jesus into the whole of our nation.

Ian Drummond is the minister at Stourport-on-Severn Baptist Church in Worcestershire.

“From the BAC-Room”

Views from the Mission Office for 1992

Church planting is high on the agenda for Baptists during 1992. Throughout the year the Mission Office at the Baptist Union will have it at the centre of its focus.

The year will see three significant conferences and three significant related events.

DAWN 2000

The Dawn 2000 Congress in Birmingham (18th-21st February) will come first. The Congress will seek to set out the Discipling A Whole Nation strategy which has been effective elsewhere in the world and has particularly revolutionised the life of Baptists in New Zealand. It is committed to the position which has been stated by Peter Wagner that 'church planting is the most effective form of evangelism today'.

Stephen Ibbotson has represented Baptists in the planning of this Congress. David Coffey will be speaking and I will be chairing the Baptist stream meetings which will take place during it.

The congress hopes to get denominations to make a commitment to church planting and publish a goal. Baptist commitment to church planting should not be under suspicion. Our record since the 1980's, which will be detailed at the Congress, is beyond question. We shall

continue to have it at the heart of our strategy. But a congress like this cannot speak for Baptists and at the most I expect it to contribute to an existing and on-going envisioning and strategizing process which will bear fruit in our Council accepting a goal some time later.

BICEC

In March (23rd-27th) the Mission Office will host the Baptist International Conference on Establishing Churches, at Swanwick. BICEC for short! It will gather Baptists from around the world to pray, study and strategize about church planting. It will be different from Dawn 2000 in that it does not start with a plan already determined. But nonetheless it has a commitment to and a passion for church planting. It stems from an initiative of Tony Cupitt, the Baptist World Alliance's Secretary for Evangelism and Education.

Participants are coming from Zimbabwe, Cuba, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Brazil, USA and of course the UK. It will prove to be a most exhilarating time as we get a global perspective on what God is doing and saying to Baptist churches in such diverse situations. It will enable us to listen to the voice of the Spirit speaking to our particular family.

In addition to plenary inspirational sessions and windows on the world there will be opportunity to engage in practical and down-to-earth workshops. It will not be all envisioning at the expense of practicalities. The Congress will end with a statement calling all Baptist churches to action.

A Church for the Unchurched

Thirdly, there is the conference being sponsored by Willow Creek Community Church, Illinois, from 16th-18th June, again in Birmingham. Willow Creek has remodelled church life to shape it around the central goal of reaching the 'unchurched Harry'. What we might know as normal worship services and church activities take place during the week. Sunday is devoted to 'seeker services' where those who are not part of the church culture may attend, and they do in their thousands, an event which is culturally relevant to them and hear the gospel.

This supplies a vital missing link in all our strategizing about church planting. *Planting churches is one thing. What sort of churches is another. Planting churches which are clones of existing ones may well not be the answer to evangelism in Britain.* Willow Creek sought to do things differently, taking the needs of the outsider seriously, and has set itself up as a 'model of permission' to others. We cannot transplant what they have done neatly into our different situation but we have much to learn from them in terms of principles and practice. If this nation is to be reached for Christ then the gap between the gospel and culture must be bridged. This will help us do so.

Three different conferences - three vital pieces of the jigsaw.

What else is happening?

The Mission Office has spent the autumn receiving information about church planting which has taken place since 1980. During the early months of next year that will be analysed, questions tabled and steps towards establishing goals will be taken.

The General Secretaries will lay out before the March Council of the Baptist Union their vision for the next five years. The vision has been shaped by the Listening Day process in which they engaged last year. Mission is at the heart of it and church planting figures in it. This will set the direction for our denomination and

so much prayer is needed to get it right. Pray for them - support them in it.

Harry Weatherly has written a Church Planting Manual for the Christian Training Programme. That will be published during the course of the year. It contains biblical insights, a first rate survey of how churches are planted and practical information as to how to go about it. Much of what I have read on church planting up to now is either too theoretical or too anecdotal - this is how it happened to me, so it must be the same for you. Harry's book will bridge that gap superbly and be more useful than either.

So, plenty of talking, plenty of thinking, plenty of praying, plenty of action already under way. The Union is beginning to take initiatives. Plenty more are needed and they will come.

Qualifying Comments

Let me end with two qualifying comments. As a failed church planter myself we need to be sure that we move forward wisely. *We dare not set before the people uninspired nor unrealistic goals; nor goals that we are not prepared to work hard to achieve. We must match vision with reality. We must own the vision totally.* Church planting is going, among other things, to involve huge financial investment - to support people but hopefully not too many buildings to begin with. With Home Mission already failing to reach its target by half a million pounds last year, *are we not only going to dream dreams but raise cash?* Church planting takes resources. Together we must ensure that the resources are there to be taken.

Secondly, I unashamedly commit us to church planting as an essential strategy for growth in the future. But I also believe that it is not the only strategy. Other ways and means also exist. For instance, many churches need to learn some of the other lessons of church growth before engaging in church planting. The needs of our rural churches need different attention. There is no one single answer to the evangelism of Britain. Nor should we expect there to be so. We are 'by all means to save some'. So expect church planting to have a high profile, as it already has, but expect us also to be talking about a lot of other things and taking other initiatives as well.

Derek J. Tidball

Mission Office Baptist Union

From the Editor

Good-bye to Stuart Christine -

Stuart was lecturer in Church Planting and Evangelism at Spurgeon's College and the catalyst for the formation of BACUP. We wish him God's richest blessings as he returns to a church planting ministry in Sao Paulo, Brazil with the B.M.S.

Hello to the new BACUP executive -

BACUP has seen it necessary to increase its executive staff as the network continues to expand. The new BACUP executive now comprises...

Rev. Derek Tidball (B.U. Secretary for Mission)

Rev. Geoffrey Reynolds (Southern Area Superintendent)

Rev. Steve Ibbotson (Minister at Moortown Baptist, Leeds)

Rev. Jon Bush (Minister at Herne Bay Baptist, Kent)

Mr Gerry Barlow (Pastor-Evangelist at Ruddington B.C., Notts.)

Mr Steven Hill (Leader of Quaystone, Isle of Dogs, London)

Mr Colin Cartwright (Co-Leader at Greenhill Baptist Fellowship, Herne Bay, Kent)

Attention to all BACUP members! -

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Calling all Study Group Coordinators -

Could all BACUP study group coordinators please write to the editor of Planting Papers with progress reports on their groups.

Correspondence Welcome! -

If you would like to respond to any articles in Planting Papers, if you would like to contribute your own article on any aspect of church planting, or if you would like to advertise your church planting event, please write to:-

Steve Hill, The Editor, BACUP PLANTING PAPERS,
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