



HTB family of churches

Within the U.K. Church Planting movement, Holy Trinity Brompton in London has been one of the leaders. How transferable is their model of planting? Is this dynastic cloning or intentional diversity? **George Lings and Paul Perkin test the legend.**

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ChurchArmy

Encounters on the Edge

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No.15



Dynasty or Diversity?

The HTB family of churches

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In the July 2002 edition of *Focus*, the Holy Trinity Brompton in-house newspaper, Sandy Millar, the Vicar, wrote that church planting “is in our genetic code and if we forget it we shall wither and die”. He recalled that the church planting instinct was inherited from his predecessor John Collins. Underlining its importance for the Church to spread, he described it involving partnerships with the wider church and noted its cost in prayer, time, money and people. The issue celebrated the growth of two further initiatives and the centre spread gave snap-shots of most stages of the seventeen-year history.

Alpha supper



Holy Trinity Brompton, or HTB for short, is synonymous in many people’s thinking with both *Alpha* and Church Planting. The former may now be more widely known, but the latter is an equally long story, although its

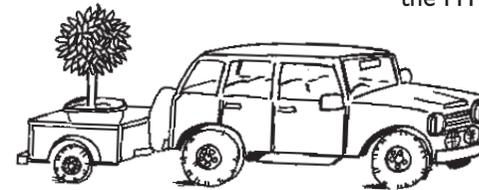
scope is narrower in delivery and deals in smaller numbers. The story of HTB’s planting has been somewhat shrouded in myth. For the sake of history it seemed good to gather some facts to test the legend.

Encounters on the Edge seeks to tell the stories of adventures in cross-cultural mission in the United Kingdom. We analyse why and to explore what the wider church may learn from this. The HTB dynasty of churches is the nearest phenomenon Anglicans have to an intentional church planting movement in a city. Some look to this as an example to follow and some

dismiss stories of notable success as attributable to an unrepeatable concentration of resources. Looking at the fact behind the fiction, it becomes more meaningful to ask what can be learnt and what can be translated elsewhere. That is a concern for this series.

What is the mythical HTB church planting stereotype ?

Think of a large *transplant* (100+) of yuppies from HTB into an area, previously unoccupied by them. They, and the leader curate they like, take over a church building inhabited by a small existing congregation and impose the HTB worship style and charismatic



Holy Transportable Brompton

values upon them. Thus this model has little value for anyone else, because the numbers sent could not be emulated by other churches and only London has that number of young

professionals who might be flexible enough or obedient enough to go. Such a stereotype engenders both hostility and disdain from outsiders.

What did we seek to discover ?

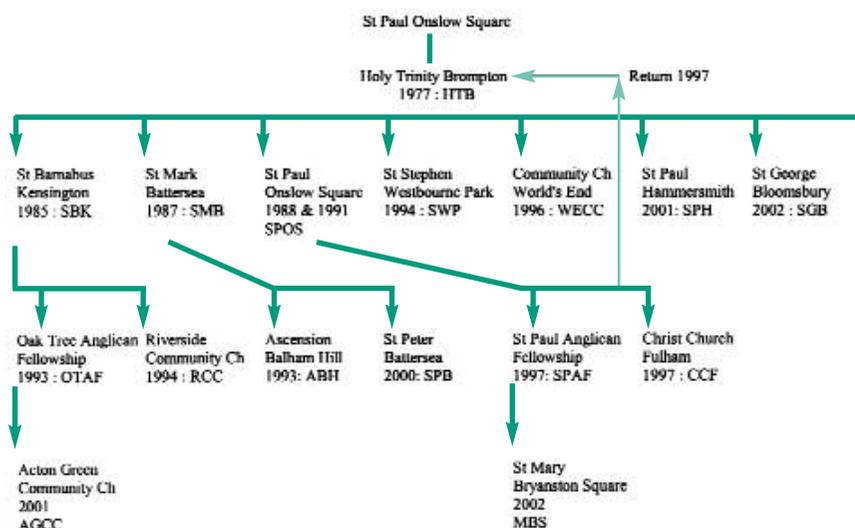
A questionnaire went to each leader of these plants asking details about the original leader, year, size of team and receiving group, and where the team came from. It sought informed estimates of the size and sources of subsequent growth, the extent to which the plant was for a neighbourhood or network, and its social and ethnic make up. It also posed attitudinal questions about the identity of the plant, its relationship with the parents in the HTB family into which it was born, what was inherited from the local receiving church and how they worked with that tradition.

The questionnaires were designed in cooperation with Paul Perkin (*right*) and introduced to the leaders of all the current family of churches by him. As leader of the



second plant in 1987, he is an established member of this family. In informal interview with some of the leaders he clarified details that were ambiguous on the responses. In some cases hard information was unavailable and he supplied our best guesses.

A Family Tree



Key
1990 – Year of start : ABC = Acronym

At the outset we note that HTB is itself a kind of church plant or at least, a transplant. In 1977 the congregation, located at St Paul Onslow Square and led by Rev'd Raymond Turvey, moved a mile to Holy Trinity Brompton when the two churches became one parish. There was an influential curate at that



time, one Sandy Millar (left). The new venue gave a better location in terms of visibility and presence, and offered larger premises. There was a receiving group of another tradition, mixing central and mildly catholic instincts. We think some of the planting instincts were born at this stage. Then the reading of, and meeting with, American planters including John Wimber in the early 1980's, determined the next chapter of the church.

Do the myths stand up ?

Myth One : HTB plants are all transplants

Name	Abbrev	Sending	Year	Took	Inherit	Now	% Grow	Type
Holy Trinity Brompton	HTB	SPOS	1977	300	150	3400	655.6	Transplant
St Barnabas Kensington	SBK	HTB	1985	120	15	450	233.3	Transplant
St Mark Battersea	SMB	HTB	1987	49	20	550	697.1	Transplant
St Paul Onslow Square	SPOS	HTB	1988	200	0	0	-100.0	Replant
Ascension Balham Hill	ABH	SMB	1993	55	50	200	90.5	Graft
Oak Tree Anglican F'ship	OTAF	SBK	1993	50	0	130	160.0	Replant
St Stephen W'Bourne Pk	SWP	HTB	1994	35	0	80	128.6	Replant
Riverside Community Ch	RCC	SBK	1994	12	8	25	25.0	Graft
Worlds End Comm. Ch	WECC	HTB	1996	4	0	30	650.0	Seed
St Paul Anglican F'ship	SPAF	SPOS	1997	300	0	800	166.7	??
Christ Church Fulham	CCF	SPOS	1997	120	40	250	56.3	Transplant
St Peter Battersea	SPB	SMB	2000	8	30	40	5.3	Graft
St Paul Hammersmith	SPH	HTB	2001	150	10	500	138.1	Transplant
Acton Green Community Ch	AGCC	OTAF	2001	7	15	22	0.0	Graft
St George Bloomsbury	SGB	HTB	2002	100	40	140	0.0	Transplant

In a *Transplant* numbers sent greatly exceed those in the receiving church and the incoming team are the dominant group. *Graft* describes where the numbers sent are equal or less than the group who received them. A *Seed* is where people move area in cross-cultural mission to establish a fresh presence. *Replant* is a newer term to describe when a team take over an empty church building. These terms were used in the writing of the House of Bishops report "Breaking New Ground" 1994 pages 6-8 and 49.

Six out of fifteen are *Transplants*, but the majority are not. Four are the more vulnerable *Grafts*. Three are *Replants*. One is most like a *Seed*. St Paul's Anglican Fellowship (SPAF) falls outside this kind of classification and needs individual explanation. In the case of St Paul Onslow Square to HTB, the whole of the sending church *transplanted* like a relocation of the whole plant.

Myth Two : HTB moved people in on a new area

This is the accusation of colonising an area. From the information given in the questionnaire we were able to determine which planting had been *pioneer* or *progression*. Was it the case that HTB spotted areas for *pioneer* development - where people needed to be moved to because the number of Christians there was low – as is the case with the Eden projects in Manchester? Or would it be more true to say that these were *progression* plants, built upon the existing strength of members in the area to be planted?

We looked at the numbers sent and the estimate of what percentage of these people already lived in that area. We also tabled the number of people from other HTB family churches - known as Home Focus Churches (see column HCFN). The results underlined an existing HTB-type mission resource of people in the area. The first eight on the list demonstrate clear *progression* plant identities.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that HTB churches and *Alpha* have acted as a magnet for young singles moving to London, both Christians and those not yet Christian. However when people at HTB central churches meet and marry, and more so when families come along, they cannot afford housing prices in those parts of London. They move further south and west within London. The location of the plants shows this. This is not colonisation but repatriation.

HTB Plants Name	Abbrev	Took	Inherited	Prog%	HFCN	Net	Neigh	GRST
14 Acton Green Community Ch	AGCC	12	15	90+	0	1	5	G
3 St Mark Battersea	SMB	49	20	71-90	300	4	3	T
5 Ascension Balham Hill	ABH	55	50	71-90		2	5	G
12 St Peter Battersea	SPB	8	30	71-90	20	2	5	G
13 St Paul Hammersmith	SPH	200	10	71-90	200+	2	5	T
2 St Barnabas Kensington	SBK	120	15	50-70g		4	3	T
6 Oak Tree Anglican F'ship	OTAF	50	0	50-70	150	1	5	R
11 Christ Church Fulham	CCF	120	40	50-70	200	3	3	T
4 St Paul Onslow Square	SPOS	200	0	31-49	300+	6	1	R

1 Holy Trinity Brompton	HTB	300	150	16-30	n/a	6	1	T
10 St Paul Anglican F'ship	SPAF	300	0	16-30	100+	6	1	?
9 Worlds End Comm. Ch	WECC	4	0	0-15	0	1	6	S
8 Riverside Community Ch	RCC	12	8	0-15	1	1	6	G
15 St George Bloomsbury	SGB	100	40	0-15	5	2	5	T
7 St Stephen W'Bourne Pk	SWP	35	0	0-15	50	2	5	R

Most of the planting is following population movement among Christians. As such there is a theological instinct at work – to give expression to church where and how people are. This is deeply Anglican, though not narrowly parochial. In the past this would have been repudiated by those who thought such population movement should have been reflected by attendance at the existing parish church. However, in today's climate of greater acceptance of diversity and the partial legitimacy of choice, that is a solution that lacks credibility. When people have found a church that works for them, it is more natural that they should associate with a movement that brings this kind of church nearer to them, than try to join a different local church lacking this draw. In this case, one advantage of consumer choice is brand loyalty.

Conversely, at the foot of the table are four plants, where less than 15% of the team lived in the area, marking them as *pioneer* ventures. In three cases they represent a deliberate choice to engage with more socially diverse communities, perhaps by definition where less classic HTB types might be found. The fourth, to Bloomsbury, may mark the beginning of finding mission locations not characterised by the drift to the south and west of the city.

Myth three : All HTB plants are network churches.

We asked all of them whether their self-understanding was to serve relational, non geographic networks or to reach neighbourhoods. These were scored out of six, with six meaning high and one meaning low.

The 3 plants nearest to central London (HTB SPOS SPAF) have the highest *network* identity, reflecting the city social patterns mentioned above. Because of this their *progression* scores are also lower reflecting that they function

more as *eclectic* churches. This is not unique either to HTB or London. In cities, mobility is normal and many people will travel to their choice of excellence in churches – whether All Souls Langham Place, All Saints Margaret Street, St Helens Bishopsgate or HTB, to name the best known of varying traditions.

SMB and SBK both score four. This may be an indicator that they, too, serve in areas with high mobility. However, in two thirds of the other cases the neighbourhood score is dominant, so the myth is far from true. One return was particularly surprising. Oak Tree was set up as an Extra-Parochial Place to connect with networks yet it too returned a high neighbourhood score. Acton is a strongly defined area, with Council and Deanery fairly co-terminous, and the plant has put a high priority on social engagement within the needy parts of Acton. For these reasons, neighbourhood seems the best way to describe its identity, although this does not mean parochial. Its Extra-Parochial Place status gives a licence for its influence to be throughout the deanery, though they worship in a previously redundant church.

Generally, the further away (either geographically or socially) from Kensington the plants are located, the stronger the identification with neighbourhood. Neighbourhood is not identical with parish; neighbourhood is similar to the urban village that some areas of London still have, reinforced by social factors like school catchment areas. Across the HTB plants, both network and neighbourhood operate in tandem to express some sense of belonging.

Myth four : HTB does take-overs

Paul Perkin devised the choice of a set of statements that best described the tradition inherited from the receiving church and then a set of statements covering the speed of development on from there.

Tradition inherited		
Abbrev	Meaning	Nos
AFC	Affirming Catholicism	1
CEN	Central	6
EVA	Evangelical	1
CH/EV	Charismatic Evang	2
n/a	Not applicable	5
	Total	15

In the majority of cases a *central* tradition was inherited and they were cases where the congregation left was at best in crisis, and at worst had already died, and public worship had ceased.

HTB Plants : Tradition inherited and its development

Name	Took	Inherit	GRST	Trad	Dev
4 St Paul Onslow Square	200	0	R	n/a	1
11 Christ Church Fulham	120	40	T	EVA	1
15 St George Bloomsbury	100	40	T	CHA	1
2 St Barnabas Kensington	120	15	T	CEN	2
3 St Mark Battersea	49	20	T	AFC	2
13 St Paul Hammersmith	200	10	T	CEN	2
5 Ascension Balham Hill	55	50	G	CEN	3
9 Worlds End Comm. Ch	4	0	S	n/a	3
10 St Paul Anglican F'ship	300	0	?	n/a	3
1 Holy Trinity Brompton	300	150	T	CEN	4
12 St Peter Battersea	8	30	G	CEN	4
14 Acton Green Community Ch	12	15	G	CH/EV	4
6 Oak Tree Anglican F'ship	50	0	R	n/a	6
7 St Stephen W'Bourne Pk	35	0	R	n/a	6
8 Riverside Community Ch	12	8	G	CEN	6

Key for Dev

1	Prearranged Revolution
2	Immediate Radical Change
3	Determined steps
4	Negotiated decision making
5	Steady evolution
6	Finding its own identity

High scores indicate a longer, evolutionary process. The correlation between the *graft*, *replant*, *seed* and *transplant* designations (GRST) and the *Dev* different scores was explored. With very small sample sizes conclusions are risky, but all but one *transplant* returned 1 and 2 scores. The exception was HTB itself, which may be deemed untypical. The *grafts* show 3 and 4 scores and one 6, reflecting the different kind of negotiated partnership entered into. With the *replants*, the scores are 1 and 6. At first sight this may seem confusing, but is perhaps only paradox. With an empty building it is both entirely possible to have a “prearranged revolution” and, as the church continues in that new venue, to “find its own identity”.

Thus it could be argued “take-over” only occurs in *transplants*, and in view of the disparate resources involved it is appropriate. However it does need wisdom to be done well. “Take over” in *replants* is a non-issue for there is no one to take over from, and in the case of the *grafts* it appears that negotiation is the style adopted.

Myth five : HTB plants are culturally homogeneous



The image is that this group are all homogeneously middle-class. Of course in some parts of London they fit the dominant culture. Church memberships that are typical of their area are to be encouraged. We invited the leaders to estimate the ethnic and social

mix and tabled their results. Where they said “a few” we put a percentage figure that tried to be fair. However, we don’t claim the numbers are statistically derived, nor that the social categories are rigorously differentiated. We admit to being impressionistic here.

The Mix - by %

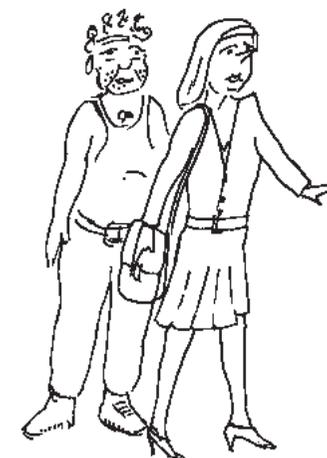
HTB Plants Name	Prog%	Ethnic				Class			Similar	
		Asian	Black	White	Other	Under	Working Middle	Upper		
Holy Trinity Brompton	16-30									
St Barnabus Kensington	50-70g	2	8	90	0	2	4	50	44	3
St Mark Battersea	71-90	5	5	90	0	5	10	70	15	2
St Paul Onslow Square	31-49	5	5	90	0	5	2	73	20	3
Ascension Balham	71-90	1	15	84	0	0	20	70	10	3
Oak Tree Anglican F'ship	50-70	5	10	80	5	10	40	30	20	3
St Stephen W'Bourne Pk	0-15	5	20	75	0	0	20	70	5	2
Riverside Community Ch	0-15	0	15	80	5	20	20	60	0	2
Worlds End Comm. Ch	0-15	0	50	50	0	20	70	10	0	3

St Paul Anglican F'ship	16-30	5	5	90	0	5	10	75	10	2
Christ Church Fulham	50-70	2	5	93	0	10	15	70	5	3
St Peter Battersea	71-90	0	50	50	0	20	50	20	10	3
St Paul Hammersmith	71-90	10	10	80	0	5	25	75	0	3
Acton Green Community Ch	90+	0	15	85	0	20	30	40	10	4
St George Bloomsbury	0-15	No info				No info				

Key to numbers for the Similar column

1= Unlike 2=Overlapping 3= Typical 4=Identical

Contrary to the myth, a higher level of diversity emerges with two congregations being 50% black and noticeable black minorities in another six. A working class majority in four plants was an initial surprise; they and large minorities in another five plants make more sense with some knowledge of the areas in which they are set, such as estates in Acton, World's End, and Battersea. Ten cases see themselves as typical of their patch or network. Four report having a preponderance of middle class members, not dissimilar from the rest of the Church of England.



The Sloane Ranger and Onslow?

All of the churches in the family are seeking to become more socially diverse and to include ministries with the marginalised. In HTB itself, the work of *Besom Foundation* (projects connecting the needy and those wanting to get involved in social action), a charity working with child AIDS sufferers and *Alpha* in prisons are cases in point. In St Mark Battersea, there is engagement with those in debt, those who need mediation services, rehabilitation after prison and with the homeless. This kind of link is reflected in the numbers, albeit small, of people in the underclass being found in most of the HTB churches.

What is the overall reality ?

The myths surrounding HTB churches turn out to be just that. The idea of a dynasty of cloned HTBs around the capital is unfounded. The myths express something of the original ethos but they do not do justice to a more diverse reality, which is rightly more contextual. Since 1977 there has been a slowly widening family of churches that might be termed children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren from HTB. This grouping, like any extended family, reveals common likenesses, a perceivable held set of values and a sense of connected history. Yet it also discloses the existence of individual churches in the wider family who have different features, gifts and strengths. It includes members that have built their own identity and, as the generations succeed, different degrees of attachment to the founding parents emerge in what may be thought of as an unfolding and gradually diversifying family dynasty. Church plants, to be their best, need both to inherit spiritual values from their sending church, but also the freedom to change their form in the light of the mission context.

St Stephen Westbourne Park :

A case study in dynasty and diversity



Tom Gillum, with Joanna his wife (left) and children had been around HTB for some time. During his years as a solicitor specialising in family work, he was a member from 1979-87. But in ordination training a formative influence was a placement with Chris and Cathy Woods in St Helens Lancashire.

Here the love for community-based church work was kindled. The style of the leaders and the parish spoke volumes about open communication. More than that, they lived the values of vulnerability, daring to be candid about strength that comes in admitted weakness. It was almost with reluctance that

Tom accepted an invitation to go back to HTB as a curate in 1989, perhaps in time to lead another of those church plants. London and city centre were far cries from the earthy realities of parochial Lancashire or the beauties of rural North Yorkshire. In that period, Tom's role as Brompton Hospital chaplain taught him further lessons in facing crises and compassionate pastoral ministry. He could not know then how they were to be used.

HTB in general were praying for a suitable church into which to plant; Tom and Joanne in particular prayed because their curacy time was up, and they thought they should keep the planting option open. A clergy friend casually mentioned St Stephen's over a breakfast meeting in October 1993, indeed he and his leadership had themselves been contemplating the possibility of planting into it. They went to see it. Tom wrote, "*The building was very abandoned and sad. Everything was decaying and filthy. I was told that in 1991 it had been closed. The small congregation had been transferred to a neighbouring parish.*" Immediate contact with the Diocese invited proposals from HTB but warned, "*don't be under any illusions about the state of the building.*"

Later when they were shown round the inside, Tom had some second thoughts. "*I remember being struck by the damp, dirt and stench of pigeons who were living there - but it did not take long to glimpse what potential it had.*" He had the wit to see its location, central to the townscape and to Westbourne Park itself. He sensed the extremes of rich and poor in the area for which the variety of his experiences had been preparing him. In his mind's eye he could begin to see the building with its intrinsic height, authority and special features restored to be the heart of this fascinating, diverse community, so full of flavour.

Architects and Surveyors were instructed, both to make the building safe in the present and to re-develop it fit for the future. Structurally sound but unusable,



St Stephens, Westbourne Park

immediately it would only cost £1.1 million! Tom met local residents and their associations. They bemoaned the decay of the building and the loss of a living church diminished the locality. Monies started to be promised by the City Council, English Heritage and the HTB family. By May 1994 a scheme with the Diocese, in consultation with the Deanery had been talked through. Tom would become Priest-in-Charge and start with an HTB team in October, although few HTB members lived in the area.

Summer is a difficult time to recruit and grow a team. Holidays interrupt communication and prevent meetings. All they could do was use publicity to sow some seeds. Far from finding an all-singing, all-dancing, all-conquering cast of hundreds, 35 accompanied them. The weaknesses became apparent. Some were not really prepared for the demands of the task. It was almost as though they had been used to full-board holidays in a hotel and now they were asked to learn to go camping. Some did not stay long. The majority were young and unmarried and there were no families. This meant that there were not many mature leaders, which as Tom noted *“at times placed excessive burdens on the more mature”* and it meant sometimes entrusting leadership roles to people who were not ready. Appointing and hoping for the best is risky and can flow from expectations of the range and quality of ministries only normal in larger churches. The absence of families brought some sense of loneliness to their own family; it reduced the stability in the new church, because families tend to stay longer in an area. It also followed that there were few homes that could offer the ministry of hospitality, so crucial to making fresh relationships in the community. Sunday attendance was not high enough to enable others to come in with anonymity. HTB had given what it could: a curate, those who wanted to go, £50,000 to the rebuilding costs and encouragement to press on, but it was a sending out followed by a path of independence. Subsequently HTB individuals gave generously to the project and a handful of others joined the team. In conversation Tom and Joanna used images like *“starting from scratch”* and *“hitting the ground running”*. There was a sense of surprise and exposure.

The strengths were the commitment of those who did stay; they knew from the start it was an uphill task, involving sacrifice. The smaller church would mean they would all know each other and all have clear and active roles. It

was a working church. It was to be a community based church, so living close or moving to the area, which some did, was essential. Looking now at both the ethos and subsequent history, a congregation can be seen developing organically, heightening the sense of God bringing people together. Unity across diversity of background and abilities, allied to the areas of specific social concern brings a sense of creative spontaneity. Graham, the recently appointed youth and worship leader, told me *“the best thing about St Stephen’s*

is its diversity - rich and poor mixing where normally they would not”.

The Autumn of 1994 was spent clearing the muck out of the church and meeting in the primary school. By Easter 1995 the roof was watertight and the building safe enough to meet in the central aisle. Two years later the main building was virtually complete, under budget and the

Showing the diversity of housing in Westbourne Park



congregation had felt involved at levels of consultation and giving, but not all were hands-on people. Tom by contrast, by his own admission, loves the hands-on ministry of all kinds and this fits well with the immediacy of the local hardworking culture. As an illustration, during my afternoon with him, two unscheduled meetings for funeral arrangements took place in the church and I widened my perception by talking with other staff.



Tom Gillum and assistant Andy

Eight years on, the planting is history and the reality is sustaining what is. The Gillums wonder if they got it right to focus on the building first and build community through small groups; their story is not of the big *transplant* that took off quickly. But then they resist the criterion of vigorous numerical growth as a sure sign of blessing and are gently critical of the consumerism of some Christians for whom the absence of a raft of church groups for all ages of children seems to blind them to a much fuller understanding of church and especially the children's involvement. In any event, it would only take a group of them to come for the groups to be created between them.

Highlights that remain are the glories of the reopening, the cameos of church life such as the faith of a single mum coming alive in a new way at the HTB houseparty, children of utterly different backgrounds unselfconsciously playing together, times of serving others like a kids' camp in Romania and the fun of the unpredictability of this corner of London. It has been a tough road for the family; their house does not aid privacy, peace, or extensive hospitality. They feel the loneliness in the needy of the area and the pain of its extremes. It brings a roller-coaster ride of living by one's wits. Neither college nor HTB prepares you for the night when a mentally ill person drives



Interior of St Stephens,
Westbourne Park

their Volvo through - and I mean through - the church doors, the hall doors, up the aisle scattering chairs left and right and parks it by the altar in order to get closer to God.

Tom is his own man. Brought up with a love of words, he is at

home in liturgical worship and Anglicanism, rather than it being a flag of convenience. He knows *Alpha* helps the nominal into faith, but can stand back from it and freely say it is limited in those it can touch. He is committed to the rich and poor, and the house prices mean lots of both but little in between. He recognises that the culture no longer brings white people to the church door out of any sense of religious duty, though black mums will still bring children. His heart beat is community and the provision of places for it to be expressed. Like many of us, he does not find it easy to



Emerging
cafe culture

see how those comfortable in something like a free Tuesday lunch can make the leap to Sunday worship, but slowly, slowly, by warmth of human contact and accessible buildings they inch forward.

Some wider questions

Do large teams work best?

The first table, page 5 gives the numbers involved and the resulting percentages. Caution is needed as they cast an interpretation, tending to favour the growth from very small beginnings. So WECC, with 4 people growing to 30, figures as high as SMB growing from 69 to 550. While WECC looks impressive, how it fares in the next few years will be a good test. SMB's growth since 1987 looks commendable and sustained. It is clear that it was the smallest *transplant* team and the story of its start reflects a time when HTB was less confident about how much resource they could afford to give away, having only sent out SBK two years before. So size is by no means the only factor, but critical mass can help as *Encounters on the Edge 14* on the *Eden* projects shows. Other studies suggest that quality of leadership, mission capability of the overall team and the receptivity in the area will also be highly significant criteria.

It is hard to be rigorous in this study on sources and factors in growth rates. For example, the figures for HTB SMB, SBK and OATF are net of people given away to further plants. However over half have more than doubled, while a fifth are too new to tell. This then suggests that all the vigour associated with HTB can be reproduced to some extent in its children. The rapid growth of



St Paul Hammersmith (above) with Simon Downham (right - centre with his wife Anna) in a very short time continues this trend.

It is noticeable that the percentage growth from the *transplants* and *replants* is higher than that at the *grafts*. Some caveats are that two *grafts* are very recent and the other two are not into obviously receptive groups. My guess is that in *grafts*, where the team taken is small, a higher proportion of time and energy is taken up in the rescue and renewal of the residual congregation and thus there is less energy for the mission task. This does not necessarily mean we should designate them less effective. It might be equally realistic to recognize that their task is different and the time frame before they can reach out in a more focussed way is longer. Compare Encounters on the Edge No 10 *Hard Graft* for further details.

Does the planting part of the DNA from HTB continue ?

The two earliest plants, SBK and SMB, have reproduced (see the family tree diagram page 4) and retain the desire to do so. The capability to do this partly depends upon the larger starting size but perhaps more upon subsequent growth. Another factor in further planting will be what percentage of HTB people, or the HTB family of churches, are in particular

areas that could receive a plant. This would be to continue following population shifts. SPH may well follow in the footsteps of SMB and SBK. Three plants, SWP, SPB and WECC are into culturally different and classically tougher groups, and so patterns and pace of church life will be slower and the ability to reproduce another congregation will be more doubtful.

It is too soon to tell if the more modest later plants will follow suit, in sending out yet further plants. We asked all churches to indicate their intentions to potential planting. Some look as though they have lost the church planting part of the HTB DNA, but this may reflect the early stage of their life, their relatively small numbers and their inability to exercise the leverage of an HTB in negotiating with the diocese for further opportunities.

HTB does have unusual leverage for a number of reasons. It continues to draw high quality assistant staff, who may be recruited with the sending out of another plant in mind. It has the recognized internal pressure of full numbers, makes significant financial input to the diocese and possesses a strong and experienced negotiating team to open opportunities, with a known track record.

This may be as well, for in London Diocese all further plants have to be carved out. There are no new major housing areas to warrant new parishes. London is arguably the most over-churched diocese in the land and as a result has both a disproportionate number of thriving City centre churches and the highest proportion of surplus church buildings. Moreover London is full of classy edifices; without one it is hard to be visible at all. Cell church would be a totally underground form of being church. In addition, because the property prices in London are such that new church buildings are virtually unaffordable, the rescuing and recycling of existing buildings is a tactical choice with some virtue, even though it is clear that the family of HTB churches have pumped several million pounds into that strategy. The financial background of London may create a culture that is less likely to prop up failing examples and is more open to the philosophy of take-over and re-ordering.

To understand the overall picture, readers need to note that SMB and ABH and SPB are all in Southwark Diocese. It may be that the ecclesiastical

climate south of the Thames is also open to planting, more out of a sense of felt need and also because it is recognized that significant numbers of HTB people live there and will continue to do so.

Sources of subsequent growth

The family of churches were asked to assess, in percentage terms, where their post-planting growth had come from. We widened the normal variety of church growth sources. We offered various forms of transfer:

TPC - a further transfer from the parent church	BIO - children of existing members
OHFC - those from other HTB focus churches	LAP - restoration of the local lapsed
LOC - other local churches	DEC - return of the dechurched from elsewhere
GEOG - Christians moving into the area	ALF - conversion through Alpha
	OTH - conversion from other sources

HTB Plants Name	TPC	OHFC	LOC	GEOG	BIO	LAP	DEC	ALF	OTH
Holy Trinity Brompton									
St Barnabas Kensington	5	30	5	30	5	0	15	10	0
St Mark Battersea	5	10	10	35	10	0	10	15	5
St Paul Onslow Square	Not given								
St Paul Anglican F'ship	Not given Not Deemed HTB plant								
Ascension Balham	0	10	0	20	20	10	20	0	0
Oak Tree Anglican F'ship	0	10	0	20	20	0	25	20	5
St Stephen W'Bourne Pk	10	5	10	20	10	10	10	5	20
Riverside Community Ch	20	10	5	10	0	5	0	20	30
Worlds End Comm. Ch	Too Early To Tell								
Christ Church Fulham	0	20	20	30	0	0	10	10	10
St Peter Battersea	95	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
St Paul Hammersmith	10	3	0	20	10	10	15	0	12
Acton Green	Too Early To Tell								
TOTALS by addition	145	98	50	190	75	35	105	120	82
Totals by average %	16.1	10.9	5.6	21.1	8.3	3.9	11.7	13.3	9.1

Certain features emerge. The picture is incomplete with no figures from HTB nor the newer plants. From what is given, no one factor explains it all. *Alpha* does not explain all the growth; on average, around 13% come that way, though it is the second most frequent source of growth. However, allied to other conversion growth a figure of over 23% is one many churches could be glad of. It would be too simple to think that all growth through *Alpha* is conversion growth and there is probably considerable overlap between this and the recovery of faith among the dechurched and the locally lapsed, making nearly 15%.

Transfer by Christians moving into London is the single leading factor at 21%. This fits with the general drift to London and the sociologically generated strategy on which *Alpha* can build. Many Christians who move to London look for a HTB family church near them, knowing they will have common backgrounds. A powerful social network is at work here. Other churches have expressed a fear that HTB plants vacuum up many of their folk and suck them into central churches. The view of the leaders who gave these figures repudiates this. It may be helpful to note that this data was gathered without them being asked that specific sharp question about which they could have been defensive and perhaps less than candid. An average of 6% for this factor is no higher than the transfer rates between a whole variety of churches.

Please note that the figure for later transfer from the parent church is distorted by the unusually high figure for St Peter Battersea and without this particular case this would be one of the lowest factors.

Families are not tidy

One of these plants (SPOS) metamorphosed. This was not because it was failing in itself. The rationale is explained in the July 2002 *Focus* newspaper. In 1997 there was a desire to make the HTB services attract the younger generation and for the leaders Nicky and Sila Lee to head up the Family Life ministries from HTB. So the St Paul Onslow Square plant members were asked to return to resource these changes. This was not easy, either to ask or receive. In the end a choice was given and the birth both of St Paul

Anglican Fellowship (SPAF) and Christ Church Fulham (CCF) was the result. 120 went with curate Stuart Lees to CCF, 300 stayed in the new SPAF with another curate John Peters; the remainder went back to HTB. SPAF were allowed to continue using St Paul Onslow Square while looking for a future venue of their own and St Mary Bryanston Square was identified by the Bishop of London in 2000, re-ordered and eventually reopened this summer. The whole episode is described as a costly process. Good relationships between the leaders have been preserved, but both SPAF and CCF have become independent of the Home Focus annual family holiday week that is one of the main expressions of their continuing links.

Acute readers may have picked up that not all the churches on the list are Anglican. “Community Church” is often a give-away for “Free Church”. In these two cases there is not the same structural relationship, but lay leadership and some members have been sent out and finance donated which is the basis on which they have been included. In today’s post denominational world such partnerships express good Gospel values even if we cannot easily see how a tidy or convincing ecclesiology can be worked through.

The Family relationships

Like all families, the HTB family of churches exhibits all the joys and sorrows, the emotions, the advantages and the costs of persevering the relationships of a human family. The strong family identity which maintains the unity of the group is counterbalanced by the diversity which respects their differences, and the freedom of individual members of the family.

Like all families, the various members of the HTB family are at different stages of growth in life: from conception to birth, through infancy to childhood, from teenage independence to mature adulthood. With each phase is associated a typical and evolving relationship with the rest of the family members.

The parallel with a human family need not be passed at every point of comparison; churches need not grow old and die. In one sense every church plant has to become independent, whereas in another sense none of the

church family need leave home. At another level, each church congregation is itself a family with all its own networks of family relationships.

The rights that go with the privileges of being part of a secure and large family carry with them the responsibilities to the family. For HTB church members this adds an extra layer of balanced priorities with several already existing responsibilities: to the wider Anglican church, to national networks of Christians and to local ecumenical partnerships. Like some, although few human families in today’s western world, the HTB family is not a tightly-knit nuclear family, but an extended family with a wide band of loose relationships with adopted, fostered and other relationships based upon friendship.

So what for others ?

The *dynasty* side of the HTB story reveals very strong personal links, informal meetings between the leaders, common features, sharing of some training resources and a joint annual holiday. However, the crude stereotype of an exclusive and impenetrable family, is not borne out by the facts. There is a *diversity* of planting size and method which means more places elsewhere can learn how negotiated plants between sending and receiving churches can bring life. There can be no doubt that the HTB family of plants is a stronger Christian presence in the capital than could have been gathered in the one church. HTB claims a massive 3400 across its own congregations which is a figure few could dream of. Yet the plants between them add the same number again. It is also a more diverse basis from which further growth could occur.

Where else ?

The HTB pattern of responding to population movement has significance nationally as a number of cities including Birmingham, Bristol, Bournemouth, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield, Southampton, are seeing the creation of housing to repopulate their brown field central sites. Population movements are a classic opportunity for new churches as the new people to an area are more open to explore faith.

In university towns where the number of students who remain for jobs is high, the pressure on accommodation and the tilt of investment towards

property means that housing around university areas of the city is becoming too expensive and these young married graduates are moving to other areas of the city. This creates analogous circumstances to the HTB scenario. This too needs learning from around the country.

The Government is asking for an increase of a fifth to the housing stock by 2016, over half of which is due to be built in the wider south east - perhaps Bournemouth to the Fens. It means new mission opportunities. I saw an advertisement, placed by the Bishop of Dorchester, in the June Church press for a pioneer for a new church plant for Bicester, Oxfordshire, “supported by a core group drawn from St Aldate’s, St Ebbe’s and St Andrew’s in central Oxford”. Frankly I can’t imagine that advertisement coming out even 10 years ago without causing uproar. It seems flexibility is increasing in the face of great need and significant opportunity.

Minsters

In each city to identify which churches could act as a missionary Minster is not so difficult. It is harder to devise ways in which they could be allowed to multiply their life, but HTB shows it can be begun. They have demonstrated the old adage in planting: the more you give away, the more

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you receive back. They also model going for the long haul. It is seventeen years since the launch of St Barnabas. Being a Minster is a long term vision, not a quick fix. Patient negotiation has to be persevering; it must tolerate discouragement and cope with failures. It takes the humility that can accept when the wider Church says no to a promising lead, and be gracious when it all comes right. It takes generosity to keep giving away your best people, the most promising younger leaders and enough finance to set them on the journey. Discernment is required to know when to give away and when to wait or withhold.

Can we multiply?

Partly because permissions are painstaking and partly because England is a tough mission field, the dream of church planting as a movement that can liberate churches to continue to multiply, has seldom been realised in white western churches. Even the HTB family tree shows a pattern more like faithful addition, rather than exponential multiplication. Now other changes may be afoot. A group is working on a radical sequel to *Breaking New Ground*. I also see early but energising signs, that relational trust in the Bishop as leader and broker in Mission across his own diocese may be allowed to transcend the legal and territorial instincts rooted in the narrow concept of parish. Then resources and permissions might move forward hand in hand at a faster pace. Not before time, I say.

George Lings and Paul Perkins
October 2002

Where could you go from here?

Strategically...

■ Further sources on *The HTB family of churches*

- The Stories of and St Barnabas Kensington: *Planting New Churches* George Carey and others (Eagle 1988) pp.84-101
- The story of St Mark Battersea is also commented in Grove Evangelism Booklet no.8 *Church Planting* Bob Hopkins p.9ff, with key questions by Paul Perkin on p.31
- *Focus* Newspaper No.126 July 14th

- #### ■ If you have **connections within diocesan permission givers**, please think who else needs exposure to these kinds of questions and suggestions. How can these issues help us all get closer to good practice?

Practically...

- #### ■ For whatever reason if you want **further copies**, those can be ordered from Claire Dalpra by note, phone or email - see *next page*.
- #### ■ Is the **first issue you've read**? You may want to collect the previous issues listed on the back cover. All individual copies are £3.

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