

## **A Strategy for Planting New Mission Congregations**

While in the past, many of our missions have been “reactive” and as a response to a call from a group or community, the focus of this document is on the intentional, planned planting of new mission congregations. This is one of the three areas of focus of the COMC as defined in our Charter:

### ***How does the Convocation establish new missions?***<sup>1</sup>

- *Establishment of new missions is under the direct supervision of the Bishop in Charge, working with the Council of Advice and the Committee on Mission Congregations.*
- *Establish strategy to set up new missions in areas considered fertile.*
- *Encourage congregations to consider establishing new missions.*
- *Develop expertise to help establish and grow new missions.*
- *Identify and train clergy and lay leadership when needed.*
- *Seek collaborative arrangements with ecumenical and Anglican partners if possible.*

### **Why do we want to establish new missions?**

It is our Biblical commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

And according to our 2017 Strategic Plan, it is one direction in which we believe God is leading us: “Develop new communities, where possible in association with ecumenical partners, including indigenous language churches”<sup>2</sup>

### **What sort of missions do we want to establish?**

There will be a variety of models, depending on the country, the local situation, and the resources available. To quote from the 2014 discussion paper, “As a framework, it is clear that 'one size does not fit all' and, accordingly, we should promote a 'mixed economy' of mission congregations with styles and structures to suit the 'local' circumstances, bearing in mind the network possibilities. Given such possibilities, there are likely to be implications for the traditional one church/one clergy model and consideration may need to be given to team ministries and other options ... recognizing that Anglicanism and TEC are not bounded by being English-speaking, we should be open to establishing new mission congregations as communities worshipping in their most appropriate language.”<sup>3</sup> Possible models will include weekday evening rather than Sunday services, “Dinner Churches”, Bible Study and Worship

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<sup>1</sup> The COMC Charter, last updated 2/2019

<sup>2</sup> A Strategic Plan for the Convocation, 10/2017

<sup>3</sup> MISSION CONGREGATIONS – A DISCUSSION PAPER, 9/2014

combinations, outreach ministries, regional missions, and many more. **Most recently we have been looking at non-geographical virtual (and hybrid) mission offerings.**

Services in a language other than English are also possible and could be attractive for example where we do not have a local-language full communion partner (e.g. the Old Catholic Church in Germany) or there are significant numbers of non-English speaking Anglicans in a given location (e.g. Mons) **or where non-English speakers wish to gather virtually.**

### **Where do we want to establish them?**

Our ultimate goal is to establish an Episcopal presence in every major city in Continental Europe where there is a significant community of English first- or second-language speakers either interested in or coming from an Anglican tradition. Other positive contributing factors will be the presence of institutions of higher education and a longing for community and connection.

In the decision process, any Church of England presence – see Mission Congregations Asset Map<sup>4</sup> - would be taken into account<sup>5</sup>. **In accordance with the 2020 Porto Covenant,**<sup>6</sup> the Diocese in Europe, and any other Anglican or Old Catholic jurisdiction with a congregation in the targeted town or city will be consulted before starting a new mission. Where possible, we will respond to expressions of interest we receive from communities attracted to our expression of Christianity. This initial mission could later expand to local/other languages (subject to the conditions above).

Initially we will want to focus on locations where local or nearby resources would facilitate founding a new mission, in particular:

- A local-language partner church<sup>7</sup> offering facilities and perhaps also legal recognition or
- A nearby (max. 2-hour journey) Episcopal parish or mission offering priestly and logistical support, and also a legal structure.

**Virtual missions, i.e. groups of people who may wish to gather on-line, are by definition independent of location.**

### **How do we want to establish them?**

Planting new mission congregations needs resources in the form of both people and money.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1Ibqq6XOh-wyE3rZKEXEjw4wLhzhE-NK&ll=41.13627284411816%2C54.97214445000009&z=3>

<sup>5</sup> In particular factors and questions such as style of worship, attitude to LGBT community, can the “Anglican potential” support an additional congregation

<sup>6</sup> **Porto Covenant agreed on November 27, 2020 between the bishops of the four Anglican jurisdictions**

<sup>7</sup> Especially the Old Catholics, and Lutheran churches with full communion agreements, but also other local ecumenical partners

Existing Convocation parishes are key resource centers for mission plants within a reasonable distance offering priestly resources (rector/vicar, assistants and associates), logistical help (loan of materials), and contacts (to local ecumenical organizations).

The 2014 paper suggests that as “a minimum there should be three people (lay and clergy) within the Convocation who have received appropriate leadership training to be able to engage in pre-planting planning and preparation, as well as post-planting nurturing and development.”<sup>8</sup> Once initial interest is identified (e.g. interested parties are invited to a meeting), a local project team would be established. This would include local residents and a trained church planter from the Convocation. If the church planter was not ordained, other provision would need to be made for the provision of sacramental services, especially regular Eucharists. The Convocation should set a target (and limit) of new missions to be explored per year.

There is already some Convocation funding for missions (e.g. the Rowthorn and Germany funds), but this will not be enough, and we need to determine what financial support would also be available from central TEC funds.

Rather than forcing new missions to form local legal structures (associations, Vereine) at a very early stage in their existence, we should consider forming regional institutions to provide a legal structure and tax-benefits and the ability to open bank accounts. If possible, the Convocation itself could be incorporated in each country or alternatively we could use a specialized vehicle like the “Association for the Promotion of Episcopal Missions in Germany” that was being considered in Germany.

### **What is the measure of success?**

While recognizing that we must not treat the planting of new mission congregation communities as simply a matter of 'business' opportunities, it is appropriate to create and agree criteria by which to measure performance and outcomes, thereby evaluating achievements. This agreement would be in the form of a covenant, outlining mutual commitments. Such a structured approach reflects the seriousness of the enterprise and be in keeping with good stewardship.

After a 5-year “plant, grow, and nurture” phase, there would be a formal mutual review. Key milestones could be:

1. Has the mission established a pattern of regular worship of God in ways that reflect the Anglican inheritance of liturgy and conforms to our understanding of the place of prayer in shaping belief.
2. Are there regular, sustained, and substantive programmatic efforts to teach the Christian faith and the Anglican understanding of Christianity?
3. Is there a clear sense of community purpose also directed outward, with an intent of sharing the good news within their context and surroundings?

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<sup>8</sup> MISSION CONGREGATIONS – A DISCUSSION PAPER, 9/2014

4. Has the mission created structures for lay governance? Is its work characterized by transparency and shared responsibility? Does it have a clear leadership cohort able to keep the community together in the absence of its founder?
5. Is the mission bearing witness to the reconciling love of Christ for the world by engaging in acts of mission and service to the local and wider community?
6. Is there a culture of committed, regular, intentional giving to support the work of the church, both locally and more broadly? <sup>9</sup>

Ultimately, but not necessarily within five years, “the mature mission congregation should be self-governing, self-financing and self-propagating.”<sup>10</sup>

*Approved by the COMC in their meeting 26.11.2019, revised 09.03.2021*

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<sup>9</sup> From the MISSION CONGREGATIONS' MEMORANDUM, 2/2019

<sup>10</sup> MISSION CONGREGATIONS – A DISCUSSION PAPER, 9/2014