

WHERE SHOULD WE PLANT MORE CHURCHES?

Planting churches is the result of effective evangelism, so that should be our priority: to reach out to our friends, neighbours and work colleagues, wherever we find ourselves, seeking to introduce them to Jesus and his great family!

God has also highlighted to us priorities for our work together across our region:

PLANTING INTO OTHER TOWNS

For example, Banbury, Carterton, Swindon, Thame.

PLANTING INTO VILLAGES

200,000 people live in lots of villages in rural Oxfordshire and we want to find ways to establish God's community for them too, as we more proactively plant cells linked to one of our churches

PLANTING INTO NEW COMMUNITIES

We can plant into new communities in towns where we already have churches. As society becomes increasingly fragmented into micro-communities, based on non-local friendships, workplaces and common interests and excluding of ethnic minorities, the poor and other marginalised groups - so we need to find new ways of doing things! So, we need to find new ways of doing things! As an example, the Oxford church has been working hard to understand the different ethnic communities in the city and is developing various ways to reach them and to gather a multi-ethnic congregation.

MORETON-IN-MARSH

Dan and Kerstin Campsall, with the church in Chipping Norton, are feeling stirred about the potential to plant a church in one of the nearby market towns. How about travelling up the A44 to Moreton to help establish something there, linked to the church at Chipping Norton?



It's hot off the press, so contact Dan and Kerstin on danc@occ.org.uk for more info, or call 01608 645762.

CARTERTON

Carterton, inextricably connected to major employer RAF Brize Norton, is a West Oxfordshire town that is projected to grow in the next few years by 30% to 16,000 by 2011. So, lots of new homes are being built! Matt and Anna Biddlecombe lead a group of people that are seeking to find new and creative ways of reaching their community and to establish a church. Having been linked to the church at Cote, they are increasingly establishing their own identity.

The Carterton group have a particular focus on work with children and families, through regular kids clubs and family fun afternoons!



Talk to Matt or Anna Biddlecombe for the low down! Email mattb@occ.org.uk or call them on 01993 846510.

SWINDON

Just off the south-western corner of Oxfordshire, Swindon is a large city of 180,000.

John and Gail Reeve lead a church plant in West Swindon. Now numbering around 20 adults, they are growing steadily through running courses like Alpha and Freedom in Christ.



Contact them for more info on 01793 870916 or email johnreeveuk@hotmail.com

COTE, ASTON AND BAMPTON

Cote Baptist Church was one of the founding churches in Oxfordshire Community Churches, and has been a seedbed for many church plants. The church at Cote is currently releasing the Carterton plant. Situated in rural West Oxfordshire, Cote, Aston and Bampton villages are home to a growing number of young families and who work from home or commute to Oxford or London. There is definitely scope for fresh work amongst them.

How can we introduce these busy young professionals to Jesus and his church? We are looking for at least 2 young families who would consider moving to Cote to initiate new creative strategies to build church amongst these people, starting with a blank sheet of paper! This new work would have a high degree of flexibility to meet the needs of a growing mission field in the villages. You could enjoy the community life of a village and pioneer a new work for God!



Contact Steve Thomas (stevet@occ.org.uk) or Andy O'Connell (andyo@occ.org.uk or 01865 297440) for initial information.

BANBURY AND VILLAGES

Banbury, an outpost in the northern tip of Oxfordshire, see itself as more 'Midlands' than 'South-East'. Yet, with its catchment area of villages, across four counties, Banbury is a significant town and is set to grow by 12% to 47,000 by 2011.

Barrie and Mary Wood, who in 1992 moved from Oxford to plant Bicester, moved again in 2004 to establish a base in Banbury, from which to see viable expressions of church established in the surrounding villages.

They say: "We are not building a conventional congregation competing with other churches in the town, but drawing together groups meeting informally in homes or other venues. The groups will develop in different ways, but at the heart of each will be a focus on Jesus and the key values of giving, receiving, accepting, caring and encouraging. "Eventually there will be a network of such groups established in various parts of Banbury itself and in villages across north Oxfordshire. The emphasis is on each person walking the pathway of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and reaching out to his or her unchurched friends, neighbours, work mates or other contacts with the love of Jesus."



Contact Barrie and Mary Wood by emailing barriew@occ.org.uk or phone 01295 279268.

THAME AND VILLAGES

Thame is an Oxfordshire town of 11,000 that's so far on the eastern border of Oxfordshire that it's almost in Buckinghamshire! For a number of years planting a church in Thame has been 'on the radar' for the leaders of OCC.

Andy and Ruth O'Connell are part of the Oxford church. Andy is an elder and with Ruth has until recently led the Oxford church's developing work with student 'Fusion' cells.

Andy and Ruth have been feeling the call of God to 'go' and are in a process of moving to Thame, with a view to responding to God as he leads in reaching out to that community and gathering a church. With their 4 kids life is never dull, so expect an informal emphasis, with lots of stuff for families!

Is God stirring you about Thame, Long Crendon, Princes Risborough, Haddenham, Chinnor, Wheatley, etc.? You don't have to be specially gifted - just willing to be obedient to God!



Get in touch with Andy and Ruth to find out more on andyo@occ.org.uk or rutho@occ.org.uk, or call them on 07946 666760.

SCHOOL PLANTING & FLEXI-SCHOOLING

One of the challenges facing us is the provision of Christian Education across our growing geographic area. God spoke to us many years ago about our children being God's VVIPs and the need for parents to work in partnership with church, in providing the right education that will positively form their worldview, character and values.

Over the last 2 years God has been speaking to the Area Leaders of OCC about a new season of development in education. We have been challenged that our focus needs to be on Christian education, not just a Christian school.

In practical terms, we have started to dream of a network of local community schools across the county feeding into a new central Junior-Senior school. These will provide early-years (3-8) provision that is accessible financially and geographically and enables a new generation of parents to catch the vision. Some parents are also home-educating or 'flexi-schooling' (a mixture of home-ed and school).

God is clearly 'stirring the pot' and we would be interested in hearing from you if God is speaking to you.



Contact Mike Madden, chairman of the Area Education Team. (AET develop and vision and strategies for education, on behalf of the Area Leadership Team.) Email mikem@occ.org.uk



A VISION FOR CHURCH PLANTING

OXFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY CHURCHES

SUMMER 2005 UPDATE



THE CHALLENGE OF OUR REGION

Oxfordshire! A county of 600,000, bounded by several other counties and urban areas. A region which includes commuter-belt Henley and Chilterns in the east, the Cotswolds and Gloucestershire in the west, and to the north almost touches the Midlands. Those of you who have joined one of our churches in the last few years may not realise it, but church-planting is in our genes! Having started us off 25 years ago as two churches working together in Witney and Cote, God led us to plant into Wantage and Chipping Norton, Oxford, Abingdon and Bicester, West Witney and most recently Didcot, Blackbird & Greater Leys and Carterton. As the leaders of Oxfordshire Community Churches have been praying, talking and reflecting in recent months, God has drawn us again to focus on the challenge of making a difference all across our region – through the good news of Jesus and the impact of his people as they act as *salt and light* in society.

A NEW CLARITY

This new clarity is reflected in the adoption of a new mission statement, expressing clearly our aspirations and hopes for our churches – a family on mission together:

- **Bringing people to Jesus** Jesus is teaching us to be 'fishers of men' - churches focused on others.
- **Making disciples** We want to be 24-7 disciples of Jesus, not just church-goers.
- **Multiplying cells** Small groups are essential - communities of friends, transforming the wider community
- **Planting churches** Reaching into every community across our region to establish God's family.
- **Living in the Spirit** Living fully in the life, power and leading of the Holy Spirit, both in and out of church; Redemptive society and education
- **Seeing the Kingdom of God** influencing every part of society, particularly in education.
- **Going to nations** Sending workers to serve in many other nations, in church-planting, aid and development.

7 REASONS WHY WE KEEP PLANTING CHURCHES

Because it works!

Church planting is the most effective form of evangelism! Author Peter Wagner comments: 'Why plant new churches instead of renewing old ones? Both time and money can be better directed towards reaching the unchurched. It is easier to have babies than raise the dead!'

Because of the large need!

There is a very large harvest field facing us (at least in the UK and Europe). The workers (as ever) are few, so we need lots more churches, touching different communities. Ultimately, bringing people to Jesus is a one-to-one process and so we need church to be outworked in everyday reality as individuals relate compassionately to other individuals: 'on-the-ground' with people, at their level; in touch; 'connected'.

Because God wants to establish his family!

He does not want to save lonely individuals and send them in search of a church where *individualism* still thrives. Rather, he wants to deliver them from isolation by drawing them into his community! God's people are his holy dwelling. God is accessible on his planet among his people. So when we plant a church in a new location, we are establishing a 'dwelling' where God can be encountered, where his presence is felt and experienced as God-centred lifestyles are lived out in God-centred communities.

Because of the rest of God's church!

The provocation of church planting is one way in which the whole church can be constantly kept mobile, responsive and dynamic. Through fostering good relationships with existing churches, they too can be provoked to fresh vigour!

Because of the diverse need!

In today's UK culture, which has been variously described as post-modern, 'post-Christian' and 'post-evangelical', we urgent need creative and innovative expressions of church, that reach out to people who increasingly see the church as irrelevant, whilst holding firm to the message of Jesus.

Because we have a contribution to bring!

In the last 2000 years there have been many movements raised up by God, people with a common vision and fresh passion, used by God to restore some truth of doctrine or practice to the rest of church. We are part of one such movement, and are convinced that we still have a unique contribution to bring to towns and villages across the UK and Europe, as we set a high value on community life, Spirit-led worship, responding to God's direction, the restoration of equipping leadership, personal pastoral care and discipleship.

Because we need new, creative churches!

God has created people in his image, with an inbuilt creativity. Today's challenges require that all those creative energies are fully deployed. There seems to be something about a church plant particularly that draws out an adventurous, creative, pioneering spirit.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Everyone can get involved somehow, even if you don't want to move!

DO

You can start doing it! We should all be 'planting church' where we are, introducing people to Jesus and his family, and seeking to find ways that his family can 'connect' with people – going to people, wherever they are!

PRAY

You can pray for one of our plants. Contact one of the people listed below and ask to be kept up-to-date with news and prayer requests.

ASK

You can ask God whether he wants you to move. Don't start by thinking about all the practical, family and financial issues – ask God. If he speaks, then everything else will fall into place!

READ

You can read. Even if you don't feel that God wants you to move in the near future, why not read a bit about church-planting, so that you are ready to 'go' if and when he says that to you? The Salt and Light website will get you started: visit www.saltlight.org/resource

EXPLORE

You can explore a move to join one of our plants. Start a conversation with the leader of the plant and with your own church leaders. No-one is going to put pressure on you – the main thing is to help you find God's will for your life.

START

You can start to plant a cell. Talk to your church leaders about planting a cell into the community or village where you live.

SUPPORT

You can offer personal support. If you have friends involved in church-planting offer to help out with their next event, or baby-sit – anything that helps! They need all the support we can give them!

FOR MORE INFORMATION



For more information about OCC's church planting plans please talk to your church leader or contact: Andy O'Connell (assistant to team leader Steve Thomas) on andyo@occ.org.uk



Oxfordshire Community Churches
www.occ.org.uk
 a family on mission together
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