

ABSTRACT

“THEOLOGY THAT ACTUALLY WORKS”:

AN ANALYSIS OF THOSE ASPECTS OF THEOLOGICAL FORMATION

WHICH BEST EQUIP CHURCH PLANTERS FOR THEIR WORK

by

John H. Valentine

Against the dark background of spectacular decline in church attendance in the Church of England, church planting is proving successful in the heart of one of the most secularized cities in the world, and considerable leadership endorsement and investment is following it. Following the *Mission-shaped Church* report and the fierce debate which followed its publication in 2004, little work has been carried out on the theological training of church planters.

The purpose of this study was to discover, describe, and analyse the current practice of the training of church planters in London and beyond, with a view to recommending best practice for the future which was both effective and theologically robust. Eighty-six church planters responded to a questionnaire about their experience of training, as did thirty-six people currently involved in the training of church planters, and there were three in depth interviews with those leading movements in English church planting.

The study found that the effective training of church planters required an integration of ecclesiology and missiology within a theological framework of the wider

purposes of God. It also found that the manner of delivery of the training was as significant, and as theological, as the content of the training. Training in actual missionary situations within cohorts of fellow church planters being led by actual participants was congruent with biblical methods, theological insights, and contemporary theories of adult learning. The personal formation of church planters as pioneering missionaries, equal to the emotional, social, and spiritual demands which would be made of them and their families and teams as they planted churches, was discovered to be crucial. There was learning about the place of the Theological Educational Institutions ('T.E.I.'s) and the Church of England's strategy for the training of church

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by
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CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter looks at why a robust theological training for church planters is so important for me personally and why it matters scripturally, theologically, and pragmatically. The problem of getting theological training right, in such a way that potential planters are adequately and effectively equipped for what God is calling them to do in their contexts, leads to the statement of the purpose of this project—the examination of how church planters are currently trained with a view to developing best practice for the future. This is argued for from the perspective of Scripture, a theological critique of current practice, an educational perspective, and then from the point of view of some practical and strategic considerations.

The remainder of the chapter gives overviews of the approach this project has taken to the relevant literature and then of the research project methodology.

Personal Introduction

At the time of starting this study, I was a church planter in central London. The church was a church plant from Holy Trinity, Brompton, and we had planted two other churches in London. My wife and I were friends with Bishop Ric Thorpe and his wife, and so we were privileged, through our friendship, to see something of the extraordinary way in which church planting was taking off in the Diocese of London and all around England. I volunteered to help Ric in his work for a day a week. In his customarily generous way, he asked me if I would take over the hosting of the church planting course he had pioneered in London in 2010. This placed me within a quite remarkable team and exposed me to about twenty-four church plants each year, all about to plant their churches. I learned at least as much as they did!

I loved leading our church, but these Thursdays became the highlight of my week. I learned so much about church planting—the variety of models, different contexts, the challenges and opportunities of it all. It was a privilege to meet these amazing church planters and to walk with them for two short months of their journeys, at a particularly crucial stage, just as they were about to launch their church plants. Church planting became, for me, not a theory but a practice, and a practice of people that I knew and cared about. I began to see just how much God was working through this practice of church planting. I had known a bit through my own experience and through the privilege of being part of the network of churches planted from Holy Trinity, Brompton, but to work in Ric's team showed me a bigger picture week by week. I think it was the combination of getting close to the church planters and the sheer variety of church plants that got under my skin. There were the big church plants into city centres, huge in their ambition, impossible in their scope without the power of God. There were those church planters who brought their experience of being mission priests or who were applying their previous life-experience in advertising to bear on their missionary methodologies. There were the missional communities reaching out to other religions and non-white ethnicities. There were the lay pioneers, men and women, leading significant church plants in creative ways, whilst still working as students or builders or whatever. Then, there were the brave planters going into really challenging areas of urban deprivation, starting something on new housing estates with just their families, creatively pioneering something in artistic quarters of their cities, or boldly planting churches in areas where they were resented and misunderstood, by church and locality alike. These people were becoming friends, and we often stayed in touch and

enjoyed seeing each other at our annual, newly inaugurated church planting conference. The sheer numbers of these churches was going up and up, and the data from them was so encouraging. I really began to see that God was doing something at scale in our day in our country.

Alongside that was the insight that, through Ric and the team, we had access to a body of knowledge and experience that was not generally known in the wider Church of England. Church planting, in its most recent manifestation from the 1980s on, had had an ambiguous start and, as a generalization, was regarded with suspicion by the Church of England as a whole, and sometimes with good reason. It was seen as an American import which was not appropriate for an English context or as an almost sectarian thing. This began to change through the pioneering work in church planting led by Holy Trinity, Brompton (“HTB”), with its emphasis on good relationships between church planters, their sending churches, and the relevant bishops into whose dioceses they were planting churches. These churches were seeing people coming to faith. They were contributing substantial sums of money into diocesan coffers, and they were having real impact for good on their local communities. When it became known that young people in their twenties were finding faith in Christ, the Church of England began to take greater note, because this was a largely missing demographic in most Anglican churches in England. HTB began to plant larger churches in strategic cities around the country, and these were flying in Birmingham, Brighton, Norwich, Plymouth, and so on. They themselves began to plant other churches, and they were revitalizing whole cities and regions, doing magnificent work amongst the poor, as well as amongst students and young professionals. It was apparent that God was doing something around the country

through church planting. The Diocese of London led the way. It was a significant moment when Ric was appointed as the Bishop of Islington in 2015, with a specific remit to oversee the formation of 100 new worshipping communities in the Diocese by 2020, and a more general task of encouraging and resourcing church planting around the country. The Church of England has 42 dioceses, and all bar one or two of them were in active communication with Ric about how they could engage with church planting. We live in extraordinary times.

I have now moved from our parish to working full time for Bishop Thorpe and the team, with the responsibility to look at the training of church planters, not least from the theological point of view. It has become apparent that, although there is much excellent theological training available in England, very little of it is specifically for church planters. Most of the training in the theological colleges (or “Theological Education Institutes” or “T.E.I.”s) is for those who are to be ordained and to serve the gospel within what might be termed the “inherited” mode of church. Increasingly, as I talked with church planters, I was left with questions around what training would be like that was designed from a more missionary starting point and which placed more centrally the particular challenges faced by church planters. I began to hear reservations from trainers and planters and from non-evangelical traditions within the Church of England about the theological robustness of what training church planters had received.

This was what led up to the study: on the one hand, a rapidly accelerating movement with the potential to multiply and to change the face of the English church and the English nation, and, on the other, a sense that the training of those leading this movement was largely in its infancy. An analysis of what was currently happening and

all that was good about it would be invaluable learning, and so would a perspective which had an eye to what was not actually being done at the moment. Could the learning from the former inform the practice of the latter? It felt a huge, potentially hubristic, question, but the urgency of the times combined with the scale of the opportunities persuaded me to make this the subject of my study.

Statement of the Problem

So, here was the problem I wished to study: how could we best train the rapidly increasing numbers of church planters, in London and all round England, in ways which were in step with the Spirit of God, partnering with what he was doing, and which was personally, emotionally and spiritually effective in enabling these church planters (new kinds, as well as old) to plant these new churches in new places in new ways to reach new people. The starting point was what kind of theology would they need – how much of it, when delivered, by whom? And the best methodology was to discover and investigate what current best practice was, and to see how this might or might not form the foundation of future training of church planters.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the research was to investigate current practice in training church planters in England with a view to developing a theologically robust way of training church planters in the Diocese of London going forward.

Research Questions

The three research questions were designed to align with the purpose statement for the study.

Research Question #1: What are the current practices, courses and methods for training church planters?

The study was designed around the discovery and description of what training there was for church planters. For this purpose, three research instruments were designed. There was a questionnaire for those currently training church planters, another for those who had been or were currently being trained to plant churches, and a semi-structured interview with those involved in the leadership of movements in English church planting. There were specific questions in all three instruments about what current practices, courses, and methods there were for the training of church planters.

Research Question #2: What are the particular obstacles to training church planters?

This research question was designed to investigate what causes there might be for any ineffectiveness in the training of church planters and what might lie behind them. Again, all three research instruments had specific questions in them designed to address this question and to draw out answers in a richly descriptive way.

Research Question #3: What are the best practices for training church planters in the Diocese of London?

This last research question was designed to bring both the previous questions together by drawing out descriptions of both what the participants currently viewed best practice to be and to consider what it might look like in the future. All three research instruments addressed this question directly. Both questionnaires moved from more direct questions to more open-ended ones, giving the respondents the opportunity to respond more deeply and fully. Half the questions in the semi-structured interviews

were about this. The aim was to encompass both the descriptive and the aspirational when it came to church planter training, moving from one to the other, in alignment with the purpose statement of the study.

Rationale for the Project

The rationale for the project may be grouped in these ways:

Biblical: The New Testament depicts the God of Jesus Christ who is active through the Holy Spirit in the reconciliation of the world to himself through the proclamation of the gospel as it is lived out in word and deed in the multiple communities of faith established across the world. The narratives and teachings of the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the letters all confirm the planting of churches as part and parcel of the mission of God to the world. Believers are given a vision of church which is inescapably missionary, and a mission which is inescapably ecclesial.

The importance of this intersection of church and mission in the New Testament explains the key place of the training of those who will plant and lead these churches. The life and ministry of Jesus has a very distinct model of training, which is carried over and developed by Paul the apostle. The weight that this training work carries is shown by both the amount of biblical space it takes up and also by the urgency and heightened rhetoric of some of the training sections. Jesus links Christian leadership and mission explicitly to the cross as a kind of replication of his own ministry to the world (e.g. Mark 8.31–38), and Paul charges Timothy (2 Tim. 4.1–5) and others in the strongest terms to fulfill their calling as church planters and leaders.

The pastoral epistles, the charge to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20.17–35), the letters of John all tie theology, life, and leadership closely together. A biblical picture of the training of church planters is found within this same matrix.

The biblical rationale for any examination of the training of church planters is that this is an urgent and deeply significant topic, which is near to the very centre of the priorities of Jesus, Paul and the early church. The Bible also consistently gives the church a very particular and highly relational model for training.

Theological: There is an urgent task to bring excellence and clarity to the task of the theological training of church planters.

What Timothy Tennent says of the world of missions in general is equally applicable to that of church planting: “Today, robust missions practice coupled with a confident missionary force demands a more thorough going biblical and theological perspective” (506). Stuart Murray argues to similar effect:

In some recent church planting literature, the scope and level of theological discussion and engagement with biblical teaching has been disappointing.

Responding to the objection we are considering here requires advocates of church planting to move beyond selected proof texts and develop a

hermeneutically responsible and theologically coherent framework for the

practice they are advocating. (qtd. in Stetzer 25; Murray, *Church Planting* 33)

Stetzer also cites Hunsberger, who says, “the greatest indicator of the inadequacy of our current missiology is its lack of theological depth” (qtd. in Stetzer 23; Hunsberger 5).

The primary theological questions for church planters are, of course, around the nature of the church and the essence of mission. J. D. Payne alludes to Stuart Murray’s

work when he says, “Murray encouraged us to keep in mind that church planting is located at the intersection of **ecclesiology** (doctrine of the Church) and missiology (science and art of missions)” (Payne 7, emphasis original). Payne goes on to say, “How church planters answer the questions, What is the church? and What are the functions of the church? will affect everything they do when planting churches” (18).

The theological rationale to studying the theological training and formation of church planters is to develop a much needed clarity (according to the literature consulted in Chapter 2) around the core theological themes of church and mission. These themes lead to an examination of the very life of the Trinity and God’s purposes for not just the church but his world. It is not just that lack of theological clarity will weaken any churches which are planted by those trained without this depth of engagement with missiology and ecclesiology, but rather that the whole enterprise is called into question. If church planters see their activities as somehow separate from the person and mission of God, and if what they are planting are not actually churches and if their ministry is not actually biblically mission, then any groupings gathered by these church planters will likely prove both highly questionable theologically and ineffective. The effect of being part of such work may well prove detrimental to those involved in it, and the wider mission of God will suffer.

Educational: Adult learning theory, since John Dewey’s pioneering work in the 1930s, has emphasized the primary place that experience has in any learning, and this insight has been increasingly adopted in the world of theological education. Likewise, it has been adopted among the trainers of church planters (e.g. Croft; Davidson; Jolley and Jones; Moynagh). Although this model is held in high regard in much of the training

currently offered to church planters in England, much of the training is still based around older, university-type models. The educational rationale for this study is that the training of church planters could be more effectively undertaken to the extent that the logic of Dewey's and others' models is allowed to dictate the content and, in particular, the manner of delivery of any such training.

Practical: There is real danger of burnout, disappointment, and distorted ministries for church planters who draw their inspiration from theologies which are more rooted in marketing or therapeutic systems than in a robust theology. The rationale for this study is that the health and welfare of church planters, their families and teams, and the churches they plant may be adversely affected if the theological formation which underpins everything is not a healthy and life-giving one.

A further practical concern is that some bishops or other denominational leaders may discourage or oppose church planting on the understandable basis that the kind of churches being planted and the kind of leadership being exercised in these churches are insufficiently robust theologically.

Definition of Key Terms

“Church of England” / “Anglican” refers to the state Church of England, part of the world-wide Anglican communion. It is catholic and reformed in theology and practice, is episcopally led and synodically governed, and has a vision to have a Christian presence in every community of England.

“The Diocese of London” is that geographic area which is defined by the Church of England. It is not to be thought of as co-terminous with the civic or other secular definitions of London, but it is a specific geographical area north of the river Thames.

“Church planting” is defined (following Bob Hopkins, as quoted in *Mission-shaped Church*) as referring to “creating new communities of Christian faith as part of the mission of God to express God’s kingdom in every geographic and cultural context” (xi).

“Church planters” are those who start or revitalize churches. These may or may not be in traditional church buildings. Church planters may be lay or ordained, may be full- or part-time, and they may be paid or be self-supporting.

“Theological training” is that training offered to church planters to facilitate them in the planting of churches which is specifically theological. Although it is hard to know when the theological shifts into the practical, in this context, the focus of theological training is on those ideas and themes which pertain to God and his plans for planting churches. As will become apparent as this study develops, the manner of delivery as well as content of the theological training of church planters is also to be considered as theological.

Delimitations

This study engaged those who have been or were being trained as church planters in England, those who trained them, and those with considerable expertise and perspective in the training of church planters. All were over the age of 18, and all were known, either personally or by reputation, to the researcher. In practice, this meant that the subjects of the research were within the researcher’s own ambit. This was a considerable delimiting factor, but, given the researcher’s privileged position of working with Bishop Thorpe, this did mean that the researcher did have considerable reach

within most of the church planting networks in England, especially those within or closely allied to the Church of England.

Every effort was made to include in the study those who would not describe themselves as evangelical or charismatic. Alas, at the moment, this is not a particularly sizeable group.

Those invited to take part in the research were largely Anglican, and many of them based within the Diocese of London.

Those kind enough to take part in the Best Practice Interviews were chosen for their considerable experience in church planting and the training of church planters and for the perspective they brought as leaders of movements in English church planting.

Review of Relevant Literature

This study chose to root theologies for training church planters in a closer examination of how Jesus called and trained his disciples in the Gospel of Mark and how Paul did the same with his co-workers. These insights formed the foundation for wider theological engagement with contemporary missiologies from both Catholic (Bevans and Schroeder) and Protestant (Bosch) perspectives and ecclesiologies taken from post-war ecumenical theological writing (Newbigin, Minear, and Dulles).

This introductory work on the literature of mission and church in general set up the debate around church planting in particular. This study took as its starting point the 2004 report *Mission-shaped Church*, which did much to set the terms of current conversations about church planting in the U.K., summarizing those who endorse and those who oppose its approach.

The contemporary situation in England, generally, and in London, specifically, showed the urgency and potential fruitfulness of the task at hand.

This study then examined church planting training from within broader theological contexts, explored some key thinking around adult learning, especially experiential learning, and supplemented this with reports of recent training programmes in England and elsewhere.

Research Methodology

In addition to the literature consulted, the research was based around two extensive questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

One questionnaire was for those who had been or were being trained as church planters in England. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher and sent to one hundred potential respondents in the summer of 2019. Eighty-six people responded. Care was taken to ensure that those responding to the questionnaire were giving informed consent when taking part. The questionnaire, after some questions about demographics, asked about the respondent's experience of being trained, both at the level of what that training comprised and also in terms of what they found most helpful. The remaining questions were more open-ended and invited deeper and more nuanced reflection on the experience—what had been best practice for them and what might have better equipped them for the task of planting churches.

The other questionnaire was to those who were engaged in the training of church planters. It was sent to sixty-one potential participants, of whom thirty-six responded. Again, care was taken to ensure that informed consent was given. After questions about the demographics of those responding to the questionnaire, identical or very similar

questions were put to the trainers as had been put in the questionnaire to those being or who had been trained. The answers to these questions from both questionnaires provided data that could be compared, and the similarities and differences in the answers were illuminating. Again, the questionnaire concluded with open-ended questions, giving the respondents opportunity to respond at greater depth and length, should they so wish, as they reflected on their experience of church planter training.

The research was designed to engage and elicit deeper reflection on church planter training from a different perspective by interviewing experienced leaders in the church planting movements in England. This information was gathered to put alongside the findings from the two questionnaires. Five people were chosen as potential interviewees, but, in the end, three participated. One declined to be interviewed, and one did not reply before the time set aside for the interviews. All interviewees were experienced in church planting and in the training of church planters, and all had considerable leadership and influence in church planting movements in England. The interviews were semi-structured and built around six questions. The questions were designed by the researcher and aimed to draw out the interviewees' experience and bring it to bear on their perceptions on current practice in England and how they might envisage best practice in the future. All three interviews happened over the summer months of 2019, and each lasted under one hour.

Type of Research

The research was a pre-intervention study, and it adopted a mixed method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative data. Data collection was by questionnaires and by interview.

Participants

The participants were largely Anglicans, the majority from the Diocese of London, who were over the age of eighteen, and who responded to either of the two questionnaires or who took part in the semi-structured interviews. They were both lay and ordained, men and women, of a variety of ages and from a variety of ethnic and social backgrounds. They were also from differing backgrounds as far as Christian traditions are concerned. An ambition of the research was for both evangelical and charismatic Christians and those from “broad” and Anglo-Catholic Christian backgrounds to take part so that the study could research whether theologies specific to individual Christian traditions might help or hinder church planting, and whether some commonly-held theological convictions might prove effective in preparing Christians from every theological background for the work of church planting. Unfortunately, insufficient numbers from non-evangelical or charismatic backgrounds took part, so this aspect of the research could not take place.

Instrumentation

One questionnaire was designed by the researcher for those who had been or were being trained to plant churches in England. After some initial demographic questions, there were twenty-one further questions. The questionnaire asked about the respondents’ previous Christian, educational, and church planting experience and aspirations. Then it asked those who were currently being trained what their experience

of the training was like and what they thought was proving to be of most value to them. The questionnaire then put questions to those who had been trained previously about their training. Both those currently and those previously trained were then asked about the relative weight in their training around academic, formational, and skills training. The rest of the questionnaire comprised more open-ended questions about what was the most and what the least transformational aspects of their training, what obstacles there were to their training, what they wished was on the curriculum, and their reflections on how the training was delivered, before offering a last opportunity for anything else the respondents may have wished to say.

The other questionnaire was designed by the researcher for those who were currently involved in the training of church planters in England. After demographic questions, there were twenty-two further questions. There were questions about the levels of training being offered, to what extent the training for church planters was part of a wider training, whether or not the training was aimed primarily at ordination, and then some questions about the background (age, gender, church tradition). The respondents were then asked identical or very similar questions to the other questionnaire about the proportions of academic, formation and skills training, followed by more specific questions about what was taught in the training and how it was delivered. There were then two questions about what happened after the training—about how many of those trained actually went on to plant churches and how they were finding it. The rest of the questionnaire comprised open-ended questions about obstacles to training, what has and has not worked in training, reflections on the delivery and aims of the training, before a final opportunity to say anything.

The semi-structured interviews were designed by the researcher to give maximum opportunity to the interviewees to reflect on the main themes of this study. There were six questions, the first of which was an invitation for the interviewees to explain their experience of church planting and the training of church planters. There were then two questions, one around obstacles to training and another about what those being trained might view as most important in their training. The next two questions were about best practice in the content and the delivery of training. The closing question offered a final opportunity to say anything further that they might wish.

Data Collection

The questionnaire for those training church planters (“TQ”) was sent out by email on 10 May, 2019, together with a letter about informed consent. It was emailed to sixty-one people known to the researcher. Those who wished to respond were given until the end of May to fill in and return the questionnaire. In practice, several did respond outside that time frame, but it was still possible to take thirty-six responses. Google Forms were used, which automatically collated the data.

The same methodology was used with the questionnaire, which was sent to those who were being or had been trained in church planting in England (“CPQ”). The questionnaire and informed consent letter were emailed out on 10 May, 2019, with a deadline of the end of the month to complete and return the questionnaire. Some missed the deadline, but it was possible to include their responses. One hundred people were emailed, and sixty-eight elected to take part in the research. Again, Google Forms were used, which automatically collated the data.

For the Best Practice Interviews (“BPI”s), five potential interviewees were emailed on 30 May, 2019 to ask if they would be willing to be interviewed. One replied immediately to say that the pressure of work made it impossible. One did not reply until after the period for the interviews had passed. Three consented to be interviewed. The interviews took place on 7 June, 22 July, and 29 July, 2019. Two took place in the homes of the interviewees and one in the vestry of St George’s church in Holborn, central London. The interviewees each signed formal consent letters. The interviews were recorded on the researcher’s iPhone and transcribed using Otter software, which the researcher then edited when the transcription had not picked up the interview correctly.

Data Analysis

For both questionnaires (TQ and CPQ), the Google forms automatically collated the data. The questions were asked in such a way that there was some quantitative data, which showed things like demographic material and the proportions of academic to formation to skills training for church planters. Some questions in both questionnaires were deliberately identical (TQ 9 / CPQ 10; TQ 11 / CPQ 11; TQ 12 / CPQ 12; TQ 13 / CPQ 13; TQ 14 / CPQ 14) around what was perceived to be in the training, so that the results could be directly compared. The data was closely examined by the researcher.

Both questionnaires contained questions which were much more open-ended (TQ 18 – 22; CPQ 15 – 21), inviting deeper reflections on the experience of training and its impact from the perspective of trainer (TQ) and those being trained (CPQ) alike. Again, two of the questions were similar (e.g. TQ 18 / CPQ 17 about obstacles to the training of church planters; TQ 20 / CPQ 20 on the manner of delivery of the training)

which allowed for direct comparison of the replies. For these questions and for the responses to the BPIs, textual and linguistic analysis was used, looking for consonance and dissonance in the responses, especially between TQ and CPQ, identifying repeated words and themes, and looking for gaps and significant silences in the responses. As well as the contrasts and similarities between the TQ and CPQ responses, the BPI interviews interacted with one another and the questionnaires in very illuminating and suggestive ways.

Generalizability

The subjects who responded to both the questionnaires and the interviews were mainly Anglican, ordained, evangelical or charismatic, and working in urban environments. Given these limitations, the reach of the research within these categories was extensive. The study identified principles and practices in the training of church planters which are of widespread usefulness, validity and generalizability.

Project Overview

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature and research, setting up some key areas of research for the project. Chapter 3 looks in more detail at the project itself—its methodology and handling of data. Chapter 4 moves on to the presentation and analysis of that data, and Chapter 5 draws some conclusions and implications, before ending with some suggestions for further study and practice.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter is an overview of the literature relevant to the theological training of church planters, looking at Scripture, theological writing, and contemporary practice. The literature review addressed the questions raised in chapter 1 of how church planters can be effectively trained today and attempted to isolate those theological aspects of training which have the greatest impact in the lives of the church planters.

The biblical foundations for the study drew conclusions of how Jesus and Paul trained the first disciples, demonstrating a similar methodology of involving them in mission and drawing lessons along the way. A contrast emerged between traditional methods of training and some emerging paradigms: there was widespread dissatisfaction with the former and encouraging signs of progress with the latter. In terms of contemporary practice, the 2004 Church of England report *Mission-shaped Church* has continuing influence, with some dissenting voices from a more Anglo-Catholic perspective. There were hints of a way forward from the more theological literature, with a flexible and creative approach to both ecclesiology and missiology.

Biblical Foundations

The purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate current practice in the theological training of church planters with a view to recommending robust best practice for the future. This section of the review looks at those sections of the Bible which describe how the disciples of Jesus and the first Christian missionaries and church planters were themselves trained by Jesus and Paul. These methods and subjects can then be used to assess contemporary practice.

How Jesus Trained the Twelve

Scholars point to the prominence of the theme of discipleship in the Gospel of Mark (see esp. Morna Hooker, *Message* and R. T. France, *Divine Government*), and for this reason, the discussion will focus on aspects of Mark's treatment of how Jesus trained the Twelve.

Specific to the Twelve are three phases of their training, which Ched Myers helpfully identifies as "calling . . . naming . . . [and] sending" (212). A central section of Mark, in chapters 8 to 10, holds much of the Gospel's teaching on discipleship and will be examined separately.

The Calling of the First Disciples

The main call narratives take place in Mark 1.16–20, where Jesus calls Simon and Andrew and James and John, and then in Mark 3.13–19, where Jesus appoints the Twelve.

In the first passage, Jesus is "passing along the Sea of Galilee" when he sees Simon and his brother Andrew at their work as fishermen, and says to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people" (Mark 1.16–17). He then sees James and his brother John at work mending their nets and similarly calls them. Both sets of brothers "immediately" follow him, Simon and Andrew leaving their nets and James and John their father Zebedee. The narrative emphasizes both the authority of Jesus to bring about such a dramatic and instantaneous change and the prompt nature of obedience at the heart of the life of following Jesus.

Myers points out how two of the three calling narratives have seaside backgrounds (132). Mark, in particular, will draw out multiple crossings of the Sea of

Galilee as the scene for dramatic episodes and key learning experiences for the disciples. Storms and danger happen at sea. There is a symbolic backdrop of the demonic for open water, and the Sea of Galilee, in particular, frequently serves in Mark as the geographical transition from Jewish to Gentile territory. This life of discipleship is one set at the borders of mission, a place that will see spiritual and physical challenge.

There is some scholarly discussion of the metaphor of the men becoming those who will “fish for people.” Hooker draws attention to the only other scriptural instance of this image in Jeremiah 16.16, where it is a picture of divine judgment (*The Gospel* 60). Myers develops this background, arguing that, in Jeremiah, the judgment is specifically on the rich, and so sees Jesus, by using this unusual metaphor, as “inviting common folk to join him in his struggle to overturn the existing order of power and privilege” (132), but both Hooker (*The Gospel* 60) and France (commenting on the parallel in Matthew, *The Gospel of Matthew* 147) reject this.

The Naming of the Disciples

In the second passage, Jesus “went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons” (Mark 3.13–19). The reference to the unnamed mountain is an allusion to the place of mountains at significant times in the history of Israel, especially at “the creation of the nation of Israel in Exodus 19–20” (Hooker, *The Gospel* 111), which also helps to underline the significance of the number twelve in the designation of the apostles, the same number as the sons of Jacob and the twelve tribes of Israel. There is a sense in which Jesus is setting himself over against Israel. Myers

refers to his establishing a kind of “confederacy” (163–64) and Hooker to how he did not chose eleven plus himself as a kind of embodiment of the true Israel, but rather twelve as an implicit challenge to Israel and a claim about his own ability to do this (*The Gospel* 111). In addition, the language has become that of commissioning: the Twelve are “appointed” and “named apostles” (Mark 3.14). When the Twelve are named in the subsequent verses, the three disciples whom we will meet most frequently in the Gospel are all given new names (Simon is named Peter, and James and John “Boanerges”). Whatever the reasons behind this, it is a strong theme in the calling narrative.

Equally strong is the emphasis on what this summons would involve: it will mean being with Jesus and being sent out by him to preach and cast out demons. Both elements are played out throughout the rest of the Gospel.

The Sending of the Disciples

In Mark 6.7–13, Jesus “called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.” This is the actualizing of their commission. Up until now they have indeed been with Jesus, but it is only at this point that Jesus gives them authority and sends them out on mission. Commentators do not arrive at unanimity about why Jesus sends them out in pairs, but the most common suggestions are that they are fulfilling the law that there must be more than one witness in any case before judgment can be given and that there are practical advantages to mutual support in what could sometimes be a hostile environment. The Twelve “proclaimed that all should repent” (v. 12), a throwback to Jesus’s initial announcement of the kingdom in 1.14, with the concomitant summons to “repent, and believe in the good news.” Demons are cast out and many sick people cured.

Discipleship Teaching in Mark

R. T. France develops most extensively what most commentators allude to in outline, that chapters 8.27–10.45 of St Mark’s Gospel are “generally and rightly regarded as focused primarily on the nature of discipleship” (*Divine Government* 49). The phrase “the way” is used frequently and metaphorically of following Jesus on his way to Jerusalem and to his death on the cross (8.27; 9.33; 10.17, 32, 52), and the whole section is framed by the healing of two blind men (8.22–26; 10.46–52). France highlights how the disciples learn a new scale of values, which are congruent with the kingdom of God and diametrically opposite to the values of the world. He claims that the key sayings of these chapters are “Many who are first will be last, and the last will be first” (10.31) and “But it is not so among you” (10.43). France argues that Jesus is training the disciples to see the world differently, which is what the life of repentance means – which was the very first announcement of Jesus in this Gospel. He does this through a series of encounters and reflections with the disciples, culminating in the discussion of greatness as James and John ask who is to sit at the right and left of Jesus in his glory. France points out that in this long section on discipleship Mark recounts Jesus’s three predictions of his passion (8.31; 9.31; 10.32–34), with their stark call that “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (8.34). Hooker refers to this as “the meaning of discipleship” (*Message* 110).

One final textual reflection on discipleship in Mark is the contrasting groups which he describes. There are the crowds, who can be amazed or unbelieving and who Jesus describes as being “those outside” (4.11) and for whom the teaching of the

kingdom of God is always in parables. Then, there are the disciples to whom has been given “the secret of the kingdom of God” (4.11). The demarcation between the disciples and the Twelve is not always clear, but the “disciples” always includes the Twelve. These are the family of Jesus, who hear and respond to the word of God, which he teaches (3.31-35). Within this group, there is a subgroup of Peter, James, and John, who alone witness the raising of Jairus’s daughter and the transfiguration. The disciples (and the inner three) are not distinguished by their understanding and obedience; in fact, their journey of discipleship from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem is marked as much, if not more, by failure as it is by success.

Reflections on Discipleship Training in Mark

Both John Davidson and Robert Banks have reflected deeply on these patterns in the light of contemporary application to church planter and ministerial training respectively. Both (along with many commentators) have highlighted how Jesus’s practice differed from the rabbinic model of his time. Potential disciples would attach themselves to Rabbis and serve them in return for instruction designed to qualify them for future posts as Rabbis after a set time of training (Davidson 19–20; Banks 98). In sharp contrast, Jesus approached people in the middle of their lives and summoned them to follow him. The emphasis of his training was not on academic teaching but was rather around interaction with the challenges and opportunities of ministry in the middle of what life threw at them (Banks 105–6; Davidson 28). Banks quotes Hengel, when he says, “With him the learned atmosphere of the school . . . is wholly lacking” (qtd. on 106). Both Banks and Davidson quote E. Glenn Hinson, when he describes Jesus’s methodology as a kind of “mobile seminary” (qtd. in Banks 106; Davidson 26).

Both men see a distinctiveness in the role of the Twelve, rooted in their calling in Mark 3 “in their being companions of Jesus and having an apostolic role” (Banks 101). Davidson is particularly good on what he refers to as “the call to proximity” (19). He makes this the heart of his critique of so much contemporary ministerial training which is rooted in distance learning. By contrast, “this brand of relational training is meant not only to relay a message through teaching, but also to reproduce one’s way of life in another” (Davidson 27). Banks develops the distinctiveness of the apostolic role for the Twelve: “It was not *preparation* of the Twelve *for* mission that was uppermost in his [Jesus’s] mind, but *engagement* of the Twelve *in* mission” (111, emphasis original). This engagement was dramatic and challenging, based in a proclamation of repentance in the light of the presence of the kingdom of God in Jesus and in confrontation with the powers of evil. R. T. France, in commenting on the passage in Matthew 10 when the Twelve are sent on mission, notes how the ministry of the apostles is to be exactly the ministry of Jesus (*Matthew* 380-81). Jesus is aiming to reproduce and to multiply his own ministry in the Twelve.

Davidson has two other fascinating points. He notes the prominence of the Twelve learning together as a group, or the inner three (33). He also argues that, when the Twelve were alone together with Jesus, they received training “specifically concerning the development and practice of faith” (33).

Taken together, these observations of how Jesus called, chose, and sent out the Twelve in Mark have shown an aim and methodology which differs sharply from much contemporary practice in ministerial and church planting training. There are potentially fruitful avenues to explore in terms of not just cognition in any training for church

planters but also the affective and behavioural aspects. Jesus put just as much emphasis on action and praxis in his training of the Twelve as he did in the teaching and theological reflection that he shared with them. The manner, as well as the matter, of his discipling the Twelve were startling and original. The church may have lost the heart of both in how it currently trains church planters.

How Paul Worked with his Co-workers

When attention is turned to Paul, the change in vocabulary is striking. Although the language of “disciple” and “disciples” continues in Acts, it is not used at all in the Pauline corpus (Banks 113). Instead, Paul uses nine different expressions for his co-workers as a whole and a further four of some of them (Schnabel 249). The two most common designations are “co-worker,” both with God and with Paul, and “brother” (sc. and “sister”) (Ellis 187). Of the nine general descriptors, no less than four have the Greek prefix *syn-*, indicative of a joint relationship (Schnabel 249, n. 77). Banks speaks of Paul’s “language of collegiality, of partnership” (113). For Paul, ministry was a joint venture, undertaken within a band of shared work and familial affection. This latter is emphasized by Paul’s habit of describing his converts as his children (e.g., 1 Cor. 4.14–15, 17). His relationship with Timothy, in particular, seems to have gone beyond that, as indicated by the frequency and intensity of the father-son language employed by Paul about Timothy (e.g., 1 Cor. 4.17; 2 Tim. 1.2). This is the language of a closely bound group, not individuals within the classroom. The sheer number of Paul’s co-workers is striking. Ellis counts “some one hundred individuals” (183), of whom Schnabel identifies thirty-eight as co-workers (248–49).

The Calling of the Co-workers

If Timothy is taken as the prime example of Paul's dealings with his co-workers, certain principles and key practices may be inferred. Paul first encounters Timothy in Lystra, in the second missionary journey, where he is described as "a disciple . . . , the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. He was well-spoken of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him" (Acts 16.1–3). No reasons are given as to why Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, but there may be significance in his background which combined both Jewish and Gentile elements and his reputation amongst the churches. This is something which Paul will impress on Timothy himself in later life, when he urges him to pass on Paul's teaching "to faithful people" (2 Tim. 2.2). As with Jesus and his disciples, it is noteworthy that Timothy did not volunteer for apostolic service but was chosen ("[Paul] took him", Acts 16.3; cf. Davidson 58), and missionary service was to be rooted in shared life and work ("to accompany him", Acts 16.3). The scriptural emphasis is not so much on the qualifications of co-workers but the potential of the task, a pattern which holds for others of Paul's most frequent companions: Barnabas, Timothy, Luke, Aquila, Priscilla, Silas, Titus, Tychicus, and Apollos (Davidson 53). The prosaic nature of the calling of the co-workers is surprising given the dramatic and supernatural nature of Paul's own calling on the road to Damascus (e.g. Acts 9.3–9, 15–16) and how he and Barnabas were set apart for their work by the Holy Spirit, as the leaders of the Antioch church worshipped the Lord and fasted (Acts 13.1-3), although there are indications elsewhere of prophecies made in connection with Timothy (1 Tim. 1.18; 4.14). Apostolic calling may originate through a direct Holy Spirit encounter but

may equally come about through economic partnership (as with Priscilla and Aquila in Acts 18.3) or some other understated factor (e.g., Luke himself).

The Training of the Co-workers

Even though there is little description of the activities of Timothy and the apostolic bands, Banks does not go beyond the evidence when he says, “The purpose of the group was evangelism, church planting, congregational nurture, and networking” (116). Paul is almost always with his companions, so they must have shared in his apostolic work, something which is reinforced by the titles by which Paul and Luke describe them, which underline the shared nature of the missionary work in which they were engaged (Davidson 58; Schnabel 249). Davidson develops this in his analysis of the work which Paul’s delegates did when he left them in key cities. Priscilla and Aquila are left in Ephesus in Acts 18.18–19, and plainly planted a church in their home (1 Cor. 16.19), and Titus, left in Crete, was instructed to appoint elders in every town (Tit. 1.5), activities which Davidson describes as planting churches and organizations (80–82). As he states elsewhere, “Paul did not train [his co-workers] *for* ministry; he trained them *in* ministry” (66).

Davidson, Schnabel, and Banks draw out the implications of the collegiality model of training employed by Paul. Banks describes the purpose of Paul’s groups as “active service or mission in furthering the kingdom” (123). Although there must have been ample theological engagement and reflection on their travels, “Paul’s group was primarily a community action in which learning and maturing also took place” (118). Schnabel sees such learning happening informally (“unintentional learning through the daily events of life”), nonformally (“intentional learning outside a formal school

setting”), and formally (“intentional learning in a formal school setting”) (389).

Davidson finds these categories too precise, but still finds them valuable (61, 70). Both he, Colin Marshall, and Tony Payne reflect on the parenting, imitative and apprenticing aspects of Paul’s method in training his younger protégés (Davidson 63–66; Marshall and Payne 144–46). Banks is uncomfortable with the designation of “apprentices,” arguing that Paul was studiously more egalitarian than this implies (116). However, all three authors are in agreement that Paul informally schooled his co-workers in life and ministry by taking them along with him on mission. “It was not only the good deposit of the gospel that Paul passed on to Timothy, but a *way of life*” (Marshall and Payne 72, emphasis original). Banks quotes Joseph Grassi when he says: “[Paul’s] roving little community of apostles was at once a training school, a miniature Church, and a mutual source of support in a very difficult vocation” (qtd. in Banks 114). It is what Davidson refers to as the “intensely personal apprenticeship” (75), which made this possible.

Banks quotes Grassi to sum up the challenge and significance of this intensely personal training:

[It was] not geared to mass production. It needed participation and sharing both in a lifestyle and in a common action. This takes a great deal of time as well as intense exposure [. . .and . . .] is only possible in a group that comes in close contact with one another and their teacher (*The Teacher in the Primitive Church*, qtd. in Banks 125).

Neil Cole adds in a further nuance when he argues that Paul’s methodology changed as he learned during the course of each of his missionary journeys. Cole argues that Paul engaged with most of the ministry himself on his first journey and trained

leaders on the second whom he visited again to encourage and mature. Something changed on the third journey though, when he aimed instead to reproduce himself in his lieutenants such that they could carry forward the work of the kingdom apart from his presence. This strategy proved so effective that “all the residents of Asia . . . heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19.10). Paul’s training schools on mission were designed not just for the replication of Paul’s own apostolic ministry but also for its multiplication in his absence.

Some Deductions from How Jesus and Paul Trained

Banks and Davidson summarize and draw conclusions from the evidence of how Jesus called, trained, and deployed his disciples and Paul his co-workers and potential implications for the training of missional leaders today (Davidson 94; Banks 126).

Although there are some differences in the approaches of Jesus and Paul, these can be explained by reason of the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and Paul’s desire to focus his co-workers and their mission on Christ, not himself.

There is much to reflect on from this biblical material on the training of the disciples and the apostolic bands, but the main conclusions are two-fold:

1. The training was “on the job.” Both Jesus and Paul involved their followers in their mission, their lifestyle, and their lives. Teaching, whether informal, unformal, or formal (to adopt Schnabel’s categories), all revolved around the mission and life of the kingdom and interaction from that perspective on what life threw at them.

2. The training was collegial (the Twelve, the Three, the co-workers were together, sharing in the task) and relational (they were in “close proximity”, to use Davidson’s phrase, with their trainer).

Both these elements lead Davidson to argue for contemporary training of church planters to have as their model what he calls a “Missional Apprenticeship” (94). In this model, learning happens in relationship with God, the teacher, and the cohort. The context is always active mission. The teacher is a missional practitioner, and theological reflection arises out of daily life.

For the purposes of this study, these conclusions draw attention to the fact that the manner of delivery of any theological training, its context and aims are as pertinent as the content.

Theological foundations

There is striking unanimity from around the world about the challenging lack of theological training for church planters. From the U.K. field, George Lings and Stuart Murray report that the training of church planters “is still inadequate and is perceived as one of the main reasons why church planting ventures fail. . . . There is widespread discontent among pioneers in many denominations about the kind of training offered” (*Church Planting in the UK*, 21). This is a recurring theme for Murray (one of the most experienced and incisive writers in the British field):

In some recent church planting literature, the scope and level of theological discussion and engagement with biblical teaching has been disappointing. Responding to the objection we are considering here requires advocates of church planting to move beyond selected proof texts and develop a hermeneutically responsible and theologically coherent framework for the practice they are advocating (*Church Planting* 33).

He is interested in drawing out that this lack of theological training may not have significant short term impact, but there will almost certainly be damaging longer term effects (*Church Planting* 30). Murray also critiques current practice as being too oriented towards academia and unintentionally excluding those whose background and previous educational experience are hurdles to such an ethos and approach (*Church Planting* 227; see also Shaw vii).

More widely in Europe, Stefan Paas draws out an ecumenical perspective when he reflects how church planters from a more catholic background will have difficulty with the language and limited perspective of much contemporary evangelical writing on church planting (218). In the United States, Ed Stetzer cites George R. Hunsberger, when he says, “The greatest indicator of the inadequacy of our current missiology is its lack of theological depth” (Hunsberger 5; Stetzer 23; cf. Hess 9, 10, 139). J. D. Payne summarises more positively: “*Church planters must be both outstanding theologians and outstanding missionaries*” (xxxii, emphasis original).

Around the world this concern is echoed. The recent World Council of Churches’ global survey of theological education, which surveyed 1,650 theological educators and other church leaders “in every Christian tradition in every part of the world” over a 21 month period, reported a demand for an increase in practical and cross-cultural skills to prepare students for ministry and the integration of spiritual formation with experiential learning (Estherline et al.). Timothy Tennent concurs when he critiques the reliance on the social sciences in theological training for missionaries. Instead, he argues for “a more thoroughgoing biblical and theological perspective” (506).

This critique is sharpened with a further area of unanimity—that any theology of church planting must, of necessity, focus on the intersection of ecclesiology and missiology (e.g., Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions* 14; Moynagh, *Church in Life* 7; Murray, *Church Planting* 53; Ott and Wilson 26; Paas 265). Steven Croft articulates the current challenge to the theological education of church planters. He writes, “The key areas that need serious theological resourcing . . . are in the two areas of reflection on mission on the one hand and on the life of the church, and particularly the interface between the two” (*Mission-shaped Questions* 14). Michael Moynagh explains the need for this by reference to Stephen Bevans’s comment that typically missiology and ecclesiology have focused on different things (*Church in Life* 7), whilst Murray puts it down to both disciplines having historically been marginalized in the theological world (*Church Planting* 53).

Accordingly, this summary of the theological foundations for church planting training will consider missiology and ecclesiology, before looking at debates around contemporary church planting practice in England and Wales.

Missiology

Models of mission will be classified under three approaches: a Trinitarian understanding of mission, with especial note of the theology of the *missio Dei*; seeing mission within the broader category of the kingdom of God; and understanding mission as essentially the proclamation of Jesus Christ in word and deed. This synthesis follows thoughts from the two primary most influential books on the history of mission in today’s debates: David J. Bosch’s monumental *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, from a Protestant point of view, and a Catholic approach from

Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder's magisterial *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*. The same categories are employed by Stephen Spencer in his more recent *SCM Studyguide to Christian Mission*.

Bevans and Schroeder root their discussion of mission as a Trinitarian phenomenon in the Vatican II document, *Ad Gentes*. This defined mission as "evangelization and planting of the Church among those peoples and groups where she has not taken root" (in Bevans and Schroeder 286). This understanding of mission is located in a wider theology of the whole church being caught up within the overflow of the life of the Trinity. Bevans and Schroeder trace this thinking through the theology of Yves Congar (in commenting on *Ad Gentes*) and Karl Rahner (in his classic 1967 essay on the Trinity).

They also note a more ecumenical perspective. The Orthodox churches take a similar line in their 1986 document "Go Forth in Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission," which sees all mission as coming from God's very nature as a missionary God. Even more influential, at least in Western theology, have been the Protestant contributions of those following Karl Barth's articulation of what Karl Hartenstein was to call the *missio Dei* in 1934, most notably Lesslie Newbigin. This position was stated clearly in the World Council of Churches' 1952 conference in Willingen, Germany:

The missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God himself. Out of the depths of his love for us, the Father has sent forth his own beloved Son to reconcile all things to himself . . . We who have been chosen in Christ . . . are committed to full participation in his redeeming mission (qtd. in Spencer 11).

David Bosch endorses and summarizes the contribution of the mission as *missio Dei* when he says, “Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. It is impossible to penetrate deeper still; there is mission because God loves people” (392).

This way of viewing mission has been influential on academic theologizing of mission (such as John Flett’s work) and on practioners (such as Alan Hirsch). Paradoxically, it has led to both the location of mission as an inseparable part of the life of the church (from a more Catholic perspective) and to the reverse (from more radical Protestant viewpoints). More recently, theologians such as Catherine Mowry LaCugna, David S. Cunningham (as applied by Stephen Bevans), Anthony Gittins, and Robert J. Schreiter are all seeing the inter-relatedness of the life of the Trinity as a model of giving and receiving which legitimizes and necessitates dialogue and mutual understanding as the predominant mode of mission for the twenty-first century’s increasingly inter-connected global context (Bevans and Schroeder 291–93). What comes to the fore is how ecclesiology, which has the power to shape missiology, and the relative weight that each theologian or practioner ascribes to these approaches dictates the practical missional or church planting outcome. This perspective can still beg the question of what mission actually is.

The second perspective views mission as something to be understood within the category of the kingdom of God. Biblical theologians have been arguing for the kingdom of God to be the central hermeneutical key of the Bible for some time, such as John Bright’s *A History of Israel* in regard to the Old Testament, George Eldon Ladd’s *The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *The Presence of the Future* for the New, and the classic

treatment of *the Biblical Foundations for Mission* by Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller. Catholic missional thinking was articulating something similar in the 1975 papal exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, locating the church's missionary task in the practice of Jesus, who lived, demonstrated, and proclaimed the kingdom of God. In Protestant thinking, under the influence of Johannes Hoekendijk, the WCC conferences in Uppsala and Bangkok moved from the church as the starting point of Christian mission to the world to whom the church had been sent. The dramatic social changes of the 1960s gave rise to an anger from many because of the injustices and oppressions of the world and the belief that these could be changed and freedom brought in. By contrast, the church seemed self-obsessed and ineffective. In spite of the work on the Catholic front of Gustavo Gutierrez and other South American liberation theologians, who endeavoured to locate social action within the theology of the church, and that of Wolfhart Pannenberg, on the Protestant, connecting missiology with an inescapable ecclesiological component, in much WCC thinking the church became irrelevant and embarrassing, and the agenda for mission was taken from the world.

More recent theologians and practitioners have sought to adopt the central biblical thrust of mission being the kingdom of God, not least as taught and demonstrated by Jesus, by ensuring that church and mission be seen as integrally connected. This has been argued for by Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio* (Bevans and Schroeder 322) and by the careful argumentation of Christopher J. H. Wright in both *The Mission of God* and *The Mission of God's People*, the latter significantly sub-titled *A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*.

The third model for mission is an attempt to identify mission with the proclamation of the salvation to be found in Jesus Christ. Although this can be found in Catholic and Orthodox thinking, it is an emphasis associated in particular with evangelical and Pentecostal mission. Bevans and Schroeder quote the Lausanne Covenant when it says:

To evangelise is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15.3,4), and that as reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2.32–39) and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe (John 20.21). (325)

Pentecostals, in the extensive dialogues between Catholics and Pentecostals, emphasize the need to proclaim “Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord resulting in a personal, conscious acceptance and conversion of an individual” (“Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness” ¶8, qtd. in Bevans and Schroeder 328).

Both evangelicals and Pentecostals have been at pains to nuance this position. John Stott was one of the chief architects of the Lausanne Covenant quoted above. He was also influential in subsequent Lausanne thinking, which tried to integrate evangelism and social action as the “two hands of mission,” later written up in popular form as *Christian Mission and the Modern World* (see a helpful discussion in Richard Yates Hibbert). Similarly, “Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness” has a full 31 paragraphs on social justice (¶36-67, Bevans and Schroeder 329). Nonetheless, in contemporary, postmodern, and highly pluralist western societies there is something to be welcomed in this approach which puts the proclamation of the gospel in words at the centre of missionary and church planting strategy.

Reflections on missiology

Andrew F. Walls wrote an influential essay, entitled “The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture” (first published in 1982), in which he imagines “a long-living, scholarly space visitor” who visits five different manifestations of the church and Christian mission down the ages. They are all so different. Can there be any coherence in Christianity, when it is viewed in such a vast chronological and cultural perspective? Walls concludes that there are essentially two continuities—Christology and ecclesiology (3–7). Bevans and Schroeder add a further four “constants,” but the force of both these scholarly contributions is that mission must not be—and cannot adequately be—viewed as something monolithic and unchanging. Rather, it is a continuing dialogue between what Bevans and Schroeder call “constants” and “context.” David Bosch would agree: “It should . . . [be] clear that at no time in the last two millennia was there only one single “theology of mission”” (8). His book, *Transforming Mission*, is built on an historical survey, which sees the church adopting different paradigms (a concept he takes from Thomas Kuhn, as previously presented as a way of understanding church history by Hans Küng) in regard to mission throughout the ages. Bosch sees the current time as a deeply significant paradigm shift when the next phase of Christian mission is being born.

Both Bosch and Bevans and Schroeder argue for an integration of the three models of mission summarized above. Bosch argues for what he calls a “*creative tension*” between them: “It is only within the force field of apparent opposites that we shall begin to approximate a way of theologizing for our own time in a meaningful way” (367). Bevans and Schroeder are remarkably similar, describing a synthesis of these

three models of mission in terms of “Mission as Prophetic Dialogue” (348). They develop this by envisaging the missionary work of the church in the developing contexts of the twenty-first century, adding interreligious dialogue, inculturation, and reconciliation to the more traditional proclamation, worship, justice, peace, and care of the environment. This ties in with British missiologist Andrew Kirk’s exploration of contemporary and future mission under the seven headings of evangelism, inculturation, justice for the poor, interreligious dialogue, peace work, care of the environment, and global partnership between the churches. It is also strikingly similar to the Anglican Communion’s five marks of mission: “to proclaim the good news of the kingdom; to teach, nurture and baptize new believers; to respond to human need by loving service; to seek to transform unjust structures of society; to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the earth” (qtd. in Croft, *The Future of the Parish System* 192).

This exploration of the theology of mission demonstrates that mission is far more flexible a concept than is usually realized. This is a time when the diverse and changing “contexts” in which the church finds herself may determine a more creative response in mission to those around her with those “constants” (Bevans and Schroeder) or “continuities” (Walls) of the overflowing life of the Trinity, the kingdom of God, and the gospel. Any theological training of church planters will need to adopt an approach which gives expression to both this flexibility and those things which cannot and must not change.

Ecclesiology

The historic “marks” of the church, as expressed in the major creeds of the Church, that it is “one, holy, catholic and apostolic,” have remained the guiding star for defining the church throughout the ages. For Anglicans, the Chicago Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888 is influential in expressing shared ecclesial values within the Church of England: commitments to Scripture, to the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, to the whole of Christian tradition especially as this is expressed in the historic creeds, and to the historic episcopate (see Croft, *The Future of the Parish System* 181). Nonetheless, understandings of the church have come under pressure within the context of new initiatives in church planting and fresh expressions of church, and ecclesiology has become something of a battleground in many conversations around church planting. At one level, this is inescapable: Steven Croft (“Formation for Ministry” 52), Craig Ott and Eugene Wilson (26), Stefan Pass (13), J. D. Payne (xxviii), and Christopher J. H. Wright (*The Mission of God* 27, 532) all point out the clear logic that if it is churches which are being planted then a clear understanding of what a church is will be central to the whole enterprise. Steven Croft comments that it is ecclesiology which is “significantly neglected in theological training” (“Formation for Ministry” 51), particularly in light of his extensive experience of training those involved with church planting and starting fresh expressions of church. At another level, though, there are particular questions which are raised by the planting of new ecclesial communities, not least within the context of an historic, mainline denomination.

One potentially fruitful way forward is to see what can be learned from ecumenical theological work around the nature of the church. Arguably, the three most influential books on the church in ecumenical circles since the Second World War are

Lesslie Newbigin's *The Household of God* (1953) (and his *The Reunion of the Church* from 1948), Paul Minear's *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (1960), and Avery Cardinal Dulles's *Models of the Church* (1974). All of these works speak to the highly contested understandings of the church from the points of view of Protestant and Roman Catholic standpoints (and Pentecostal too in Newbigin's work) and achieve ways of seeing the church which can be fruitfully adopted by each section of the church.

Each author is careful to step back and to adopt as wide a perspective as possible on the church. Minear finds no less than ninety-six images of the church in the New Testament, before isolating what he considers to be the four lead images: the people of God, the new creation, the fellowship in faith, and (the most central) the body of Christ. For Newbigin, he asks what constitutes the church and answers under a rubric which he generalizes as the Protestant (by the Word of God), the Catholic (by the sacraments), and the Pentecostal (by the Holy Spirit). Dulles lays out five models—the institutional (which alone of the models he argues is not ultimate), that of mystical communion, the sacramental, the kerygmatic, and the church as servant. This breadth of view, demonstrated by all three authors, is not always a characteristic of contemporary debates about the place of ecclesiology in church planting.

Even more significant is how each author locates the essence of the discussion in something beyond the church, but never without losing a sense of the local and concrete. For Newbigin, it is the eschatological and missionary nature of the church “and only in that perspective can the deadlock of our present ecumenical debate be resolved” (25). For Minear, the nature of theological language—a kind of imaginative poetics, necessitated by the theological realities to which the language points—is a reflection of

how the life and existence of the church is nourished by God himself (12). He refines this insight, seeing how the “panorama [of the images] is dependent upon another panorama, the portraits of the messiah. The story of Jesus as Messiah defines the church as his people” (262). For Dulles, he argues for a methodology which is congruent with the supernatural nature of the church. He reaches for definitions which allow for the life of Christ by his Spirit in the church and resists rigid classifications for something which is alive by virtue of the action of Jesus. He calls this “mystery” and argues that this “rules out the possibility of proceeding from unclear and univocal concepts” (10).

These insights and methodologies have potential for the development and exploration of any ecclesiology for church planting. There is something provisional in the way that all three theologians proceed, which generates a flexibility when it comes to reflecting on the nature of the church. This flexibility is not born of pragmatism but is rather rooted theologically in the life and action of the Triune God in the church, not least its missionary life. It enables genuine dialogue with different theological positions.

It is striking how little of this flexible and imaginative approach there is now in ecclesiology in relation to church planting, and also how little different ecclesiological perspectives seem to have the freedom and flexibility to speak to each other.

The most heat has been generated in church planting discussions of late in the U.K. in the intersection of ecclesiology and missiology. These discussions often have reference to conflicting ecclesiologies and will be examined in the following section.

Church Planting

Any discussion of contemporary church planting in England and Wales must be undertaken in the light of the *Mission-shaped Church* report of 2004. This will form the heart of this section, examining the current state of church planting in Britain.

Nonetheless, *Mission-shaped Church* did not see the start of contemporary church planting in the Church of England, although it did have something decisive to say to it. David Goodhew wrote, in 2012:

Based on a range of studies, it is likely that over 5,000 new churches have been started in Britain in the 30 years since 1980 – probably significantly more. . . .

To put these numbers into some kind of scale, the number of new churches started since 1980 is substantially greater than the total number of Roman Catholic churches in England and equivalent to one third of all Church of England churches. (*Church Growth* 7–8).

George Lings traces the acceleration of church planting from 1967 to 1998, seeing at least 28,000 attending an Anglican church plant by 1998, “equivalent to attendance across a fair sized diocese” (“A History” 168). Following the *Breaking New Ground* report from the Church of England in 1994, church planting had become a major element in Anglican thinking and practice, something which George Lings and Stuart Murray chart very helpfully in their two Grove booklets (“Church: Planting Past Present and Future,” “Church Planting in the UK”). This was accelerated by the publication of *Mission-shaped Church* in 2004 and continues today. At a conference in June 2018, Bishop Ric Thorpe (the bishop with responsibility for church planting in the Diocese of London and increasingly with a national remit) said that in 2013 the dioceses of the Church of England pledged to plant 100 new churches, a figure which had increased to

2,472 in 2018. Church planting is deeply significant for the Church of England's missionary strategy in England and Wales. George Lings has written: "church planting in the Church of England . . . is no whim or fad, nor mere human invention. It is, for me, a discernible movement of the Spirit in our day" ("A History" 162).

The Mission-shaped Church Report

By the time *Mission-shaped Church* was published in 2004, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, could write in his introduction that the Church of England was "at a real watershed" (v). *Mission-shaped Church* tipped the Church of England firmly into the new territory of legitimizing church planting as mainstream to Anglican missionary thinking and practice (Davison and Milbank 1; Moynagh, *Church in Life* 2).

The report followed Bob Hopkins in defining church planting as "the discipline of 'creating new communities of Christian faith as part of the mission of God to express God's kingdom in every geographic and cultural context'" (xi). The report began with a clear-eyed look at the impact of consumerism on British society, seeing it as nothing less than a missionary call. Following the principle of the incarnation, the Anglican church was to see herself as being with people both *where* (geography) and *how* (networks) the people of Britain were. After a summary of the recent history of church planting, it argued for a more contextually aware approach to planting in the future, seeing it as a dynamic process, consonant with the core Anglican value of being a Church for the whole nation, and fitting for a context that was once more essentially missionary, not pastoral.

The heart of the report is a long chapter which looks at twelve different forms of new church, of which only one was described as a “traditional church plant.” The emphasis was on stories and examples in practice. The methodology was deliberate: to promote a diversity of incarnational practice and to produce not so much a “how to” book as a range of approaches, rooted in solid missional theology. The theology followed, arguing for the impact of the Trinity, the incarnation, the work of the Spirit, and eschatology, as these bear upon church planting and fresh expressions of church. After two practical chapters, including a methodology for contextualizing planting and fresh expressions, training, and the place of bishops, the report closed with some specific recommendations. These revolved around strategies that are wider than the parochial and measures concerning leadership and training.

The report has been summarized at some length because it has proved decisive and influential in making developments in church planting and fresh expressions of church possible. It has introduced a whole new vocabulary and, in some circles at least, it is proving a culture-changer in the Church of England. George Lings makes a list of “what might change, for mission reasons:”

- Church need not stay inside parish boundaries.
- Church need not only be congregational.
- Church need not be on Sunday.
- Church can happen outside dedicated buildings.
- Church need not be led by clergy.
- Church can be for segments of the population.

- Church is about more than public worship and attending it. Growing quality of community and serving others in mission are of equal priority. (“A History” 174)

This list gives a sense of the seismic potential the report had to shift the ecclesial and missionary culture of the Church of England.

The report also sparked furious debate, which continues to the date of writing. The main parameters of this debate will be summarised in the next section and form the backdrop to any investigation of the training of church planters in contemporary London.

When Missiology Trumps Ecclesiology

It will be remembered that several writers identified the core theological task for the training of church planters as the intersection of ecclesiology and missiology (e.g., Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions* 14; Ott and Wilson 26; Payne xxviii; Moynagh, *Church in Life* 7; Murray, *Church Planting* 53). This can be seen clearly in the debates about the *Mission-shaped Church* report.

The report itself is clear that mission must be prioritized over church (e.g., 21, 24, 85). It quotes Tim Dearborn in bold to demonstrate its emphasis: “**It is not the Church of God that has a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a church in the world**” (qtd. on 85, quoting *Beyond Duty: A Passion for Christ, a Heart for Mission*). The report justifies this position on missionary grounds, with the realization that British society is in acute need of evangelization (11–13). It quotes the WCC 1968 report with approval: “A changing culture constitutes a call from God” (13, quoting *Church for Others and the Church for the World: A Quest for Missionary Congregations*, 3). This approach finds many supporters from other contemporary

writers, such as Bosch (14), Hirsch (142–44) and Hull (5, 31, 34, 36). Bob Hopkins, who with his wife Mary has been hugely influential in British church planting and the starting of fresh expressions of church, is quoted by Stuart Murray as saying: “We must stop starting with the church” (qtd. in *Planting Churches in the 21st Century* 18).

Under this paradigm, the primacy of mission legitimizes new forms of church and has a crucial role in shaping what church will look like in such missionary circumstances. Critics argue that, frequently, what gets planted under such a paradigm, are not actually churches. By contrast, critics such as John Hull and Michael Moynagh argue that the approach of *Mission-shaped Church* does not go far enough and mission ends up being limited by too prominent an ecclesiology. Hull’s argument is that, under this thinking, the church is made to be equivalent to the kingdom of God, and thus constrains the mission of God.

When Ecclesiology Trumps Missiology

By contrast, much of the Anglican criticism of *Mission-shaped Church* has argued that its ecclesiology is limited, and what there is, is fatally undermined by its privileging of missiology over ecclesiology.

Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank argue that form and content must be kept together for any truly missional ecclesiology to be established and that *Mission-shaped Church* has separated them. In a sophisticated presentation, they criticize the report for capitulating to the very consumerism that it aspires to evangelize in British society by its individualistic understanding of salvation. Incorporation into the church as a concrete, actual reality is both the goal of salvation and also the strong means by which God calls us into Christ in the gospel.

Davison and Milbank present a specifically Anglican ecclesiology, something which Angela Tilby develops with her argument that Anglican ecclesiology is inseparable from its liturgical inheritance. Steven Croft engages with this when he argues that the shape of liturgical practice is changing in the Church of England. On the one hand, he argues that already there is demonstrably a diversity of Anglican liturgy. So, it is increasingly hard for Tilby and Davison and Milbank to argue for liturgy to be the bench mark of authentic Anglicanism. On the other hand, Croft traces a movement in recent years from liturgical *texts* to the *shape* of the liturgy to certain liturgical *values* in Anglican worship (*The Future of the Parish System*). The point is well made, and there are real questions, not least in the wider ecumenical scene, about how the liturgical practices of many of the more recent church plants can be viewed sympathetically by those churches from a more Catholic or Orthodox background, especially when this critique is broadened to include the theology of the sacraments (cf. Paas 218).

Debate with Davison and Milbank and those they represent has centred around two main foci. First, there is a question in the minds of many church planters about whether or not Davison and Milbank have sufficiently taken on board the full extent of church decline in British society and the demonstrable inadequacy of current church practice to reverse this trend. The parish system is clearly not reaching the parishes, and British society is so changed in recent decades that the argument that Britain is adequately served by the old geographically-based parish system simply does not hold water. Second, there are reservations about the inflexible nature of the ecclesiology being employed. There is no ground given by Davison and Milbank to what has become known as the “mixed economy” of church (taking Graham Cray’s phrase from his

introduction to *Mission-shaped Church* x). By contrast, Michael Moynagh, in his interaction with Davison and Milbank, has creatively argued that the church should understand herself in terms of self-giving, something which is learned and experienced directly from the self-donation at the heart of the Trinity (*Church in Life* 158–59). This enables a far more flexible ecclesiology to support a church planting missiology. Even the Anglo-Catholic Rowan Williams has written of how a theology of missional church is now “a clear touchstone” for assessing fresh developments in the life of the Church of England (60). And in his Foreword to the *Mission-shaped Church* report, he writes:

If ‘church’ is what happens when people encounter the Risen Jesus and commit themselves to sustaining and deepening that encounter in their encounter with each other, there is plenty of theological room for diversity of rhythm and style, so long as we have ways of identifying the same living Christ at the heart of every expression of Christian life in common. (v)

Church planting is thus a vibrant and effective movement within the mainstream of Church of England life and practice, but it is not without its critics. Its privileged position is not one that all would affirm without reservations. Any theological training of church planters within an Anglican context must take seriously these reservations, which find their focus around the relative weights given to ecclesiology and missiology and how the two disciplines interact. The wider literature has shown possibilities of fruitful dialogue between differing perspectives, provided missiology is flexibly interpreted and ecclesiology understood theologically within wider Christological, eschatological, and missionary contexts.

Church Planting in the Diocese of London

Attention will now be turned to the recent history of church planting in the Diocese of London. The Diocese of London has bucked the trend of church decline in recent years. Anglican churches have grown since 1991, with usual Sunday attendance having increased by 15% by 2009. Once mid-week attendance figures are factored in, attendance could be as high as 3.7% of the London population. Electoral Roll statistics are even more dramatic, having grown by 71% between 1991 and 2010 (Wolffe and Jackson 31 ff.).

Why should this be, against a backdrop of national decline? Woolfe and Jackson ascribe it to “some favourable external circumstances but mainly through a new culture, strategy and spiritual renewal” (32), led by David Hope when he was Bishop of London between 1991 and 1995. They also point to the impact of “the rise of Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB)” and say that “probably the main growth-dynamic associated with HTB has been through transplanting” (35). The authors are careful not to overstate their case, but clearly church planting has played a significant role in the renewal of Anglican churches and mission in the last few years.

HTB’s first church plant was in 1985, since when it has planted some twenty church plants in the Diocese of London and further afield. The vision is usually to plant into “historically significant and beautiful Anglican churches” (HTB website). These church plants frequently planted further churches themselves, so that, as of December 2018, twenty-eight of the four hundred and ninety churches in the Diocese of London were part of the network of churches planted by HTB. Again, as of December 2018, the HTB website listed sixteen City Centre Resource Churches, planted by HTB with the

vision of revitalizing church and society in significant city centres around England. In 2017 a related charity, the Church Revitalisation Trust, was set up to be a “catalyst for a momentum of church planting that will see 100 City Centre Resource Churches (CCRCs) planted in strategic cities across the country, bringing revitalisation to the Church and seeing communities transformed” (HTB website).

Anglican church planting in London has not been the exclusive province of HTB. Co-Mission is another church planting network, working actively in London since 2005. Also, many individual churches have planted, without seeing themselves as part of any wider movement. Ric Thorpe was consecrated the Bishop of Islington in September, 2015, with the express aim of helping the Diocese of London reach its goal of starting one hundred new worshipping communities by 2020 and to be available to the national Church of England in regard to church planting. The Centre for Church Planting and Growth was set up to assist Bishop Ric in his work. At the first Church Planting Conference put on by the Centre for Church Planting and Growth, Bishop Ric reported that twenty-five Anglican church plants had been started in London since 2013, with attendance at these churches numbering around 1,600 people, a high proportion of whom were not previously attending any church. Amongst other things, the Centre runs three courses a year to train church planters and their teams who are about to plant churches in the Diocese of London and further afield.

Peter Brierley’s 2013 research into the 2012 London Church Census complements this picture for London as a whole. He points out that “one London church in 7, 15%, had started another congregation” between 1992 and 2012, and “93% of these new churches were still meeting 5 years later. . . . Two-fifths (38%) of the

growth was reckoned to be new people, or at least those not previously churchgoers” (13).

Church planting in London is a significant phenomenon, and the Diocese of London is playing a substantial role in it. The training of church planters and their teams has considerable strategic importance for the future of the church in London, both for the health and vitality of the planters and the churches they are pioneering.

This is further highlighted by a report into fresh expressions of church in London Diocese written by George Lings in 2015, which showed that there are challenges for church plants to take on board. Lings noted that, in recent years, the rate of growth has slowed, with the Average Weekly Attendance in the Diocese of London increasing by only 0.6% from 2006 to 2013 (although increasing by 6% between 2013 and 2015). The overall percentage of London’s population attending an Anglican church was 1.93% in 2015. Lings concludes: “[London Diocese] thus appears overall to have certain strategic advantages, yet is facing real challenges about how to maximize those opportunities” (1). More specifically to church plants, Lings’s research shows that what he calls “traditional church plants” are less effective at reaching the unchurched than fresh expressions of church: the average congregation for the 35 church plants researched by Lings had 31% from amongst the unchurched, as compared to 76% from the fresh expressions of church. 54% of the plants had plateaued in their growth. More encouragingly, 22% had planted again. Clearly, there is work to do.

A further concerning fact is the low number of church plants planted by those sections of the Diocese of London which would not self-identify as evangelical or charismatic. In a survey at the 2018 Church Planting Conference, of the 36 church

plants at the conference whose leadership had been trained through the Centre for Church Planting and Growth 22% would call themselves Anglo-Catholic. However, the general picture is less positive. There is a perception amongst Anglo-Catholic and “broad” church Anglicans that the current resurgence in church planting is an evangelical phenomenon and is dependent upon evangelical convictions, culture, and practice, matters which are not shared by non-evangelicals. Jonathan Clark, the Bishop of Croydon, spoke for many when he wrote: “If your instincts are Catholic, evangelical ways of being the church are never likely to work well, because they are not mere techniques: they spring naturally from an evangelical theology and approach to church life,” and “Most Catholics don’t make very good evangelicals, because their heart isn’t really in it” (2).

Adult Learning and Theological Education

This study looked at assessing the theological training of church planters. Accordingly, questions of adult learning, as they relate to theological education, are highly germane.

John Davidson and Robert Banks both detail the debate over the nature and practice of theological education since the 1980s between such seminal figures as Edward Farley, Max Stackhouse, John Cobb, Joseph Hough, Charles Wood, David Kelsey, and Banks himself. In different ways, both authors take David H. Kelsey’s classification from his 1993 book, *Between Athens & Berlin: The Theological Education Debate*, and further developments derived from the perceived strengths and deficiencies of Kelsey’s writing. Theological education has been caught between seeing itself as resourcing theological wisdom, as expressed in certain practices and approaches

(*paideia*), and the teaching of certain practical skills for ministry (*wissenschaft*). These approaches have been further formed by cultural factors, such as the need to see theology within the framework of training for other professions, Christianity's diminished role within modern Western societies, and the developing awareness of other global faiths and issues.

Latterly, there has been increased dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of theological education. Davidson quotes five studies (from Ed Stetzer, Christian Schwartz, Lalive d'Epinau, Jeff Fulks, and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen; which could be supplemented by Hansung Kim's study from Korea) which concluded that there was no correlation between the level of theological education and certain ecclesial outcomes, such as attendance at churches led by those who had been so trained (134–36). Schwartz found that there was “a direct inverse correlation between denominational growth and educational expectations: the more education a denomination expects of its pastors and educators, the more that denomination evidences decline” (qtd. in Shaw 17). Such startling conclusions have provoked soul-searching but little change in practice in theological education.

The profoundest shift for theological educators has been towards what Banks called a “missional” model of theological education. By this he means “reflection, training, and formation for work on the mission field, whether the latter takes place overseas or locally” and which is “wholly or partly field based, and that involves some measure of doing what is being studied” (142). Perry Shaw terms this model “a missional-ecclesial foundation for theological education” (19–21). This shift is, in part, a recognition of the missionary situation in which the post-Christendom church in the

West finds herself but also, and maybe more so, due to methodological issues revealed by theories of adult learning since the 1950s. There is the theological conviction that mission is near the heart of the church in fulfilling God's purpose in the world, but there is also the insight that good education needs to take account of a nuanced understanding of the relationship between knowing and acting.

How Adults Learn

Sharan B. Merriam and Laura L. Bierema point to the influence of John Dewey's 1938 book, *Experience and Education*, which argued that adults learn by a process of continuity with previous experience (105–7). It is the relationship between life experience and learning which informs much of contemporary theories of adult learning. Merriam and Bierema (108–11) and Perry Shaw (231–34) highlight the significance of the work of David Kolb in the 1980s. Kolb defined learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (qtd. in Merriam and Bierema 108). He saw learners as tending to perceive and to learn in four different ways. Both authors use Kolb's work as a springboard to other theories of learning, but they make the same point, that different people learn in different ways. This applies equally to motivation for learning. Merriam and Bierema highlight the work of Houle, when he argued for three different motivations for learning—those who are motivated by goals, those by activities, and those by the learning itself (151). Shaw demonstrated that what is true for different personalities is equally true for different cultures and genders (236–38). He argued that the dominance of Western theological academies in the teaching and accreditation of theological education has exerted an enormous influence on how people are educated theologically and that this “approach is rarely questioned” (238).

There is widespread agreement (Merriam and Bierema, Shaw, Banks, and Thompson) on prioritising experience as the primary *locus* for adult learning, both theological and otherwise. Banks writes about the need to bring theory and practice closer together in theological education, arguing for a praxis that brings about a dialogue, rather than privileging one over the other (164–68). Merriam and Shaw (115–16) and Banks (139–40) reference the seminal work of Donald Schön in training professionals in reflective practice. Schön distinguishes “reflection-on-action” from “reflection-in-action.” The former is a way of evaluating an experience after it has happened, drawing conclusions from it. The latter is something which more experienced practitioners aspire to, an ability to think on one’s feet in the middle of an action or situation (Merriam and Bierema 116), a construction of a new theory for each individual circumstance (Banks 139). This is not dissimilar to what Perry Shaw calls “deep learning.” Shaw writes, “real learning is not what is remembered at the end of a course, but what is remembered five or ten years after taking the course, and even more what shapes in the long term the character and actions of the learner” (130). Shaw links this to memory, but he distinguishes *explicit* long term memory (those things which we are aware of learning and remembering) and *implicit* long term memory, which are those things “that have come so much to shape the person that life decisions are habitually formed by healthy reflective practice” (135). It is the latter which is truly transformative. This is also the aim of “theological reflection.” Theological reflection is defined by Judith Thompson as “a process by which explicit connections are made between belief and practice” (3). Shaw states that the key to powerful, long-term, transformational learning is “if students value the material as significant for life” (139).

Intriguingly, in light of the conclusions drawn by Banks, Davidson and others from the biblical material on how Jesus and Paul disciplined their followers in mission, Merriam and Bierema cite craft apprenticeships as a model of what they call “situated cognition”, a development of reflective practice (119–120), and “communities of practice” or “learning communities” (120–23). Banks cites the work of Charles Van Engen who argues that it is only in modern times that theological education has seen itself as being defined by a university approach to ministry training and “for the first time emphasized *knowing*, at the expense of *doing* and *being*” (135). Van Engen argues that an apprentice-style training model would recapture this early and biblical emphasis (Banks 136).

A further point of widespread agreement (Merriam and Bierema; Shaw) is the need for the whole person of the one learning to be brought into the educational process—somatically, spiritually, socially and so on. All these aspects serve to make up the experience from which learning can take place. Shaw argues for an intentional adoption of a more holistic approach to learning and education. He takes the approach of Benjamin Bloom and David Krathwohl from the 1950s and 1960s as a template: “holistic learning for effective theological education can only be accomplished through the intentional promotion of *affective learning*, . . . *behavioural learning*, . . . *cognitive learning*” (67, emphasis original).

In part, this is due not just to how human beings work but also to the nature of knowledge and knowing in general and of Christian theology specifically. Shaw argues against what he perceives as an imbalance in the contemporary practice of theological education towards the cognitive and sees it as “founded on the faulty epistemology of

modernist objectivism” (76–77). Biblically speaking, he says, “knowing” is always a relational word. The aim of all Christian education is not just to learn some facts in our heads, but to “think, feel and act like Jesus” (69). Learning, seen in such a light, includes the emotions, relationships, practices, a growing sense of who one is, and what one’s vocation might be. Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives may begin with knowledge, but it also comprises a vital stage of understanding before moving on to the more challenging stages of analysing, synthesizing and evaluating (Shaw, 5, 74–76). Stephen B. Bevans takes this a stage further when he argues that such an interaction between theology and context is itself a “theological imperative” (3, 15). This is demanded by not only the constantly changing contexts in which the Christian faith finds itself, but also by the inherent qualities of Christian theology itself: the incarnation, God’s commitment to his creation and his showing himself through it, and the global nature of the church, all show God interacting dynamically with the world, and require good theological practice to do the same.

Two Crucial Factors

Both Banks and Shaw draw attention to the role of the educator as well as the learner in theological education. For Banks, the faculty have a huge role in modelling what it is they are teaching and in pouring their lives into those of their students (172, 201). Shaw has the helpful concept of “hospitable” teaching, in which he sees those who teach as viewing their students as guests (262–64). Distinguishing affective, behavioural, and cognitive learning, he states that “the heart of affective learning is the *teacher-student relationship*” (71). He argues against the distance and objective view of teacher-learner relationships, rather suggesting that the model of Jesus with his disciples

is not just more authentically Christian but also more educationally effective. Elsewhere, Shaw distinguishes between the explicit and the hidden elements of the curriculum, arguing that how teachers and administrators interact with each other and the students may well serve to communicate a more powerful message than that taught in more formal settings.

Both Shaw and Banks draw out another key factor, which is not present in secular learning theories (nor, sadly, in some Christian ones)—the recognition that the Holy Spirit is the chief educator in the mission of Jesus Christ (Shaw 11; Banks 63). In any training of church planters, more than token space must be given to prayer and worship and to the guidance, teaching, and inspiration of the Spirit of God.

There is thus a close tie between the biblical material of how Jesus and Paul trained the first disciples and what contemporary theories of adult learning communicate. The key to the latter is increasingly seen as reflection on experience, bringing the whole person to actual life experience, with the recognition that the wide range of human ways of learning, cultures, and experiences necessitate a flexibility in educational methods and strategies.

Examples of Church Planter Training

There is widespread agreement that the missional exigencies of the current situation in Britain require new leaders, and new leaders require a new way of training, specifically a move away from the more traditional model of pastoral leadership to something more apostolic or missional (e.g., Croft, *The Future of the Parish System* 47; Lings and Murray, “Church Planting: Past, Present, and Future” 19-20 and “Church Planting in the UK” 21; Male, *Pioneering Leadership* 3, 8-9; *Mission-shaped Church*

132; Murray, *Planting Churches* 163; cf. Hirsch 78). This was affirmed by the Church of England in the 2015 and 2016 reports from the Renewal and Reform subcommittee of the General Synod: in 2015, the group proposed “an increase of at least 50% in ordinations on 2013 figures sustained annually from 2020” (2). By 2016, they also fed back the “key requirements” stated by each Diocese in the Church of England with regard to leadership training: not only were there requirements for an increase in the numbers of those being ordained but also a request for a new type of leader, with “a new emphasis on mission, collaboration and adaptability to changing needs; more ministers suited for new forms of church and non-traditional settings; development of lay ministries alongside ordained” (2).

Steven Croft has been a key figure in the training of missional and pioneer leaders in the Church of England. He was asked to head up the Church of England’s response to *Mission-shaped Church* by encouraging fresh expressions of church in the Church of England and the Methodist Church in the UK, a position he held from 2004 until 2008. Disarmingly, but tellingly, he wrote about this experience, saying, “Even after eight years intense engagement with theological education, this has felt more than anything else like the beginning of developing a whole new subject area in conversation (*The Future of the Parish System* 47–48).

His conclusions are worth spelling out. He and his team developed a year long, part-time course, which was called “Mission-shaped Ministry” (“MSM”). In his description of the course, Croft begins with principles, before moving on to subject areas. He prioritizes the processes whereby MSM is delivered over the content of the

course. Even within this prioritization he further prioritizes a reflective, action-based approach to learning. He writes:

Perhaps the most important principle is that learning for this form of ministry appears to be most effective when it is in context and alongside developing practice. As each situation develops in a unique context, building habits of ongoing reflection, supervision and support is more important than advanced preparation. (*The Future of the Parish System* 48).

This process of developing habits of theological reflection and support is something which Croft recommends should happen in groups (*The Future of the Parish System* 49).

These conclusions are very weighty, coming from someone tasked with the delivery of training this new kind of missional leadership in the Church of England as a whole. They align with Perry Shaw, when he argues that a central task of any theological training is “to teach students how to self-educate” so that they continue to develop throughout ministry (40). They also agree with the model developed by Banks and with Davidson’s Missional Apprenticeship approach to church planter training.

Michael Moynagh takes Croft’s conclusions a stage further. He argues against current methods of selection for ordination and other missionary leadership within the Church of England, when selection precedes training and subsequent deployment of pioneers. Instead, he advocates that a better model would be one of encouraging potential leaders or teams whilst they were underway in some missional venture, then recognizing gifting and potential, and providing ongoing support (*Church in Life* 310–13). In this way, training is in the midst of practice, and education is always pertinent to immediate needs.

How effective have such models of training been? The evidence is most encouraging, with four separate training courses showing signs of genuine success. First, Bob Jackson reported back on the MSM course set up by Steven Croft and his team: “Around 35 per cent of their fresh expressions continue to grow significantly beyond the start-up stage compared with 20 per cent of those led by people with no training” (168–69). Second, Andy Schofield and Liz Clutterbuck reported on a similar modular based course, primarily for lay pioneers, run by the Church Mission Society: between 2010 (when the course was launched) and 2015, 110 students had taken the course, 80% of whom had found the course a good or very good experience, and 78% of whom, at the time of the report, were still pioneering. Third, Andy Jolley and Ian Jones reported back from an apprentice scheme in urban Birmingham in England. Seven apprentices went through a two-year scheme, which combined significant missional responsibility in areas of urban deprivation with fortnightly opportunities to learn, to reflect on their experiences, and to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. Jolley and Jones described encouraging results, with participants reporting high scores of relevance to the training, of growing towards targets of personal and spiritual growth, and retention of employment in urban missionary work beyond the duration of the scheme. Fourth, at a 2018 conference to which all the church planting teams trained by the Diocese of London’s Centre for Church Planting and Growth were invited, attendees at the conference supplied data in response to a questionnaire ahead of the conference. At the time of the conference, fifteen courses had been led, and thirty-six church plants responded to the questionnaire. The data revealed a wide range of plants in terms of churchmanship, socio-economic location of the plants, and size and model of plants.

The data showed that 47% of those attending these new church plants had not been attending church previously.

Tim Thorlby has conducted research on behalf of the Centre for Theology & Community into church planting in London in recent years. His first report in 2016 focused on five plants, all in the same Deanery in East London. St Paul's, Shadwell was planted by Holy Trinity, Brompton, under the leadership of Ric and Louie Thorpe in 2005. St Paul's experienced substantial growth, and itself planted three other churches between 2010 and 2015. It also established an evening service in another church in the same area. Over a 10-year period, overall Sunday attendance across the five churches increased ten-fold, from 72 before the plants to 735 (86). The financial contribution that these churches were making to the central resources of the Diocese of London has increased over the same period by £300,000 p.a. (iii). The research shows that 20% of the regular attenders at the churches were not going to church immediately before they joined (88).

By contrast, Thorlby wrote a second report for the same organisation looking at Anglo Catholic Church Growth, this time across the whole of London. The report looked at seven examples of Anglo-Catholic churches, which have experienced numerical growth (on average 5-10% p.a.) for at least four years (xiv). Whilst this is encouraging, the report made clear that there were challenges, not least "the great difficulty in finding many Anglo-Catholic parishes which had grown considerably in the last five years" (xix) and the absence of "evidence of systemic church planting or growth initiatives to benefit other parishes" (xxii).

The two reports, taken together, draw conclusions about the kind of leadership in church plants which is conducive to growth. Thorlby concluded that church planting leadership is not about personality but is more to do with mind set. The East End planters, whilst being very different from each other, shared a “can do” attitude and a certain steadiness of nerve to handle so much change, and were enablers of others (*Love, Sweat, and Tears* 103). By contrast, the second report revealed that many Anglo-Catholics did not share the growth mind set of the priests of the churches which provided the case studies, showed a reluctance to share ministry with lay people, and did not have either the insight or the capability of increasing the entrepreneurial aspects of church and parish life.

These stark conclusions back up David Voas’s research which demonstrated a manifest correlation between leaders of churches who were intentional about the numerical growth of their churches and an actual increase in the numbers of those attending (10). Similarly, Croft, Male, and Moynagh all note the importance of a sense of missional identity amongst church planters and other pioneers. Moynagh wrote about the need for planters and pioneers to embrace a “new identity” (*Church in Life* 298), Male about the importance for such missionaries to “self-identify with their calling” (*Pioneering Leadership* 5).

Research Design Literature

Tim Sensing was the primary guide in the research design for this project, supplemented by John and David Creswell. Sensing’s dictum that “tools should be selected because they best fit the intervention and are designed to provide the data

necessary to present a complete evaluation of the effectiveness of the project” was the guiding star for the design (139).

The research design for the project was a pre-intervention with a view to developing best practice for the future. As such, the project looked to collect the best data possible on current practices but also to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and to open up suggestions for future practice. Although the weight of the project was towards the qualitative side of things, there were quantitative elements of the research as well. So, the study may be described as adopting a mixed method approach. Although mixed methods may still be controversial in some quarters, both Sensing and the Creswells argue that this approach now has established credibility through the recognition that the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods potentially yields valuable interpretative data and “a stronger understanding of the problem or question than either by itself” (Creswell 213, cf. Sensing 52).

The purpose statement of this project described the aim as being to investigate current practices, but with a view to developing something else—a robust theological approach to training church planters. It thus has a two-pronged purpose. The quantitative element of the research was to provide data from instruments which could be analyzed using statistical procedures, in this case, the answers to pertinent questions in the two questionnaires taken by participants (Creswell 250). The qualitative element of the design was designed to go deeper, addressing questions of meaning which the participants experienced (Creswell 251), and which would provide deeper analysis of both current training practices and potential future directions in the training of church planters. By using a range of approaches within the instruments—certain open-ended

questions on the questionnaires, and the semi-structured interviews—the research was designed both to get a deeper picture of training experienced by the participants and to capture different aspects of the experiences and interpretations of the participants. The combination of data from questionnaires and that from interviews was designed to be a triangulation, and so to enable a “thicker” interpretation (Sensing 72). Heed was taken to Sensing’s warnings around reflexivity by paying conscious and intentional regard to the researcher’s role in designing all three instruments.

This methodology of mixing qualitative and quantitative methods for eliciting data was also used by John Davidson in his research on the impact of the theological education on church planters in the Church Multiplication Network (Assemblies of God) when he integrated results from surveys with interviews.

Summary of Literature

The literature laid down clear areas of agreement concerning training in contemporary church planting and suggested ways forward for engaging dissenting voices.

Overwhelmingly, there was agreement in emphasizing the *method* of the training, as well as the *content* of the training. The example of Jesus and Paul laid the foundation biblically, calling the disciples and co-workers into a missionary experience and using this as the basis of learning. Both Jesus and Paul modelled what John Davidson has called “the call to proximity” (19), both to the teacher and to the cohort sharing in the missionary experience. This practice and methodology have been endorsed both from the point of view of theories of adult learning, and from contemporary church practice (Croft, *The Future of the Parish System*; Jolley and Jones;

Moynagh, *Church in Life*, etc). The *Mission-shaped Church* report crystallised calls for a new kind of leadership for a new missional practice necessitated by the missionary (not pastoral) context of contemporary Britain, and this “Missional Apprenticeship” model (to use Davidson’s helpful language) is the clearly emerging model. Over against the near unanimous frustrations with more traditional methods of training church planters and other pioneers, this emerging model is seeing success, both in training church planters and in establishing church plants which are contextually appropriate and effective.

As to the *content* of any potential training of church planters, those voices which dissent from the emerging training practice tend to do so based on its implicit ecclesiology (Davison and Milbank; Tilby; Paas) or missiology (Hull; Moynagh). There is unanimity that the key area for theological work about training church planters is the intersection or interface between ecclesiology and missiology (Croft; Moynagh; Murray; Payne). So, any training of church planters must ensure a significant focus here. The work of Bosch and of Bevans and Schroeder on mission and of Dulles, Newbigin and Minear on ecclesiology offered ways of being responsibly flexible in both disciplines and how they might intersect for the modern church planter. Such an approach showed potential for engaging a wider conversation than the purely evangelical or charismatic, and so this may continue the momentum that contemporary church planting is enjoying in London and beyond in Britain, as well as provide much needed insights into how churches can be planted in the future. Fresh perspectives on church and mission, rooted in Christology and eschatology and missiology, have real potential to bring about substantial change in the attitudes of church planters from more diverse ecclesial

backgrounds and to see wider and more effective church planting in Britain in the years to come.

When this kind of cognitive input is combined with a training method aligned to that of Jesus and Paul than the university and rooted in reflection on actual experience and in learning cohorts of affection and shared missional goals, there is reason to hope that church planting in Britain may continue to flourish and to move into a new and more effective phase.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter looks in detail at the methodology for the project. It describes the project as a pre-intervention, which took the form of two questionnaires—one to those involved in the training of church planters (the “trainers’ questionnaire” or “TQ”), the other to those who are being or have been trained in church planting (the “church planters’ questionnaire” or “CPQ”)—and a semi-structured interview. The participants were all over the age of 18, were both lay and ordained, from the Church of England and other denominations, and of a variety of ages and backgrounds. Participants were those who responded to the researcher’s invitation to take part in the research. Care was taken to ensure that their consent to taking part was informed and that their anonymity was preserved throughout the project.

The instrumentation for the project was three fold: the two questionnaires (TQ and CPQ) and the semi-structured interviews (or “Best Practice Interviews” or “BPI”s). All these instruments were researcher-designed. TQ comprised twenty-one questions, CPQ twenty-two questions, and BPIs six questions. The questionnaires were emailed to potential participants in May 2019, together with a letter about informed consent. Those invited to be interviewed as the BPIs were also invited by email in May 2019 to take part. Information about informed consent was also included with the email. The participants who filled in and returned the questionnaires did so by email over the summer months of 2019. These completed questionnaires were stored on the researcher’s personal computer, to which only he had access and the password to which

was known to him alone. The collated responses to the two questionnaires were printed out and stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's study in his home, to which only he had the key.

The three BPIs were conducted in June and July 2019, recorded on the researcher's phone and transcribed using Otter transcription software on the researcher's personal computer. The transcriptions were edited by him when the transcription service had failed to make sense of the interviews. He printed these out and stored them in a locked filing cabinet in his study in his home, to which only he had the key.

The data from each instrument was analyzed by the researcher—the results of the two questionnaires, and a full transcript of the semi-structured interviews.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

The study was designed to address the issue of the theological training of church planters, specifically to describe and analyze the effectiveness of current models of theological training in England, with a view to the development of robust forms of theological training of church planters in London Diocese in the future. The instruments were designed to discover, understand, and evaluate, with as much precision as possible, the effectiveness of current practices for training church planters, with a view to learning how the future training of church planters might be practiced in the future with as much fruitfulness and healthiness as possible.

Research Questions

The study had three research questions, designed to deliver on the purpose of the project as a whole.

RQ #1: “What are the current practices, courses and methods for training church planters?”

This research question was designed to discover what current training there was for church planters in England. In a sense, it was the gateway question to all that followed. This research question was applied in TQ in the factual questions asked of those involved in the training of church planters about the training that they were delivering. On the Trainers’ Questionnaire, questions 1, 3 and 9–14 asked about the content of the training. Questions 2 and 4–8 asked about those being trained, and question 15 asked about the manner of delivery of the training. Question 19 asked respondents to explain which philosophy lay behind the training they were offering to church planters.

On the Church Planters’ Questionnaire, questions 10–14 asked directly about the training they had received or were receiving.

The Best Practice Interviews began with a question about the interviewees’ experience of the training of church planters.

RQ #2: “What are the particular obstacles to training church planters?”

This research question was designed to dig a bit deeper and to begin to investigate the effectiveness of the training being offered to church planters. By identifying obstacles to the training currently being offered, future training could be designed in such away to avoid or otherwise bypass the obstacles so identified.

Both questionnaires asked directly about obstacles (TQ 18, CPQ 17), the former from the point of view of designing and delivering church planter training and the latter

from the perspective of receiving such training. Similarly, BPI 2 asked directly about the obstacles to the training of church planters.

RQ #3: “What are the best practices for training church planters in the Diocese of London?”

This research question was designed to go to the heart of the purpose statement for the project as a whole and to get to the hinge of the purpose statement for the study by simultaneously identifying current best practice and indicators of potential effectiveness for the future. Questions were asked which asked respondents to evaluate current training and to imagine future training.

For those involved in training church planters, they were asked to identify what was working and what was not working in the training of church planters (TQ 19). They were also asked about what percentage of those trained to plant churches had actually gone on to plant churches within three years of their training (TQ 16) and how they were finding the experience (TQ 17).

For those who had been or were being trained in church planting, they were asked a wider range of questions: they were asked to identify which subjects in their training had proved most helpful to the planting of churches (CPQ 4 and 9), to write about what had proved most and least transformational for them in their training to plant churches (CPQ 15 and 16), and what they wished was or had been on the curriculum for their training that was or had not been there (CPQ 18 and 19).

Both questionnaires asked for reflections on the manner of delivery of the training (TQ 20, CPQ 20), and both concluded with an open invitation to say anything

else that respondents wished to say (TQ 22, CPQ 21). These questions were designed to invite wider and richer reflection from participants.

BPI questions 3–6 were all designed to invite the interviewees to think and talk about best practice, both currently for the future, both in terms of the content, delivery and teaching of the training of church planters.

Ministry Contexts

London is a huge city. Greater London covers some 607 square miles and has a population of 8,825,000, which comprises 13.4% of the UK population. Metro London covers 3,236 square miles, with a population of 14,040,163. The Greater London Authority speaks of the “city region” and claims it has a population of 22.7 million. Over 300 languages are spoken. The 2011 Census found that 36.7% of London’s population are foreign born, with 69% of the children born in London in 2015 having at least one parent born abroad. 60% of London’s population were white, according to the 2011 Census, 18.4% Asian and 13.3% Black. Black and Asian children outnumber White children 6 to 4 in London’s State schools. In terms of religion, the 2011 Census saw 48.4% claiming to be Christian, with the next largest group responding “None” to a question about what religion they followed, which was a substantial rise on previous censuses. The next largest religious grouping was Muslim, with 12.4% of London’s population.

This study has the Diocese of London in mind, which is not congruent with a secular geography of London since it covers only that part of London which is north of the river Thames. According to the London Diocese website, the Diocese covers 277 square miles, includes the historic Cities of London and Westminster and 16 London

Boroughs, and covers a population of 4.2 million people. The Diocese includes over 500 worshipping communities and has 1,000 clergy and ministers, and its churches have over 75,000 regular worshippers. It also has a notable work with schools; there are 150 church schools in the Diocese, with over 52,000 children in attendance.

The Diocese of London is nearing the end of its current action plan, called “Capital Vision 2020.” A core element of that plan is the establishing of 100 “new worshipping communities” by 2020, with the express aim of doing so “in new ways, in new places for new people” (Centre for Church Planting and Growth website). The 50th new worshipping community was launched in April 2018. In December 2017, the Diocese received strategic funding of about £8.7 million from the Church Commissioners for the revitalization of churches and the training of curates.

There are many encouragements in the world of church planting in London and the UK. In June, 2018, the House of Bishops of the Church of England issued a statement entitled “Church Planting and the Mission of the Church,” which warmly endorsed and commended church planting in the Church of England. “We welcome planting new churches as a way of sharing the apostolic mission by bringing more people in England to faith in Christ,” said the bishops. At a conference that same month, Bishop Ric Thorpe quoted the statistic that in 2013 the dioceses in the Church of England between them had expressed public commitments to plant 100 new churches. In 2018, that number had risen to 2,472. He also stated that 25 Anglican plants have been planted in London since 2013, and these churches have a total of 1,600 people worshipping in them, of whom a high number were not previously attending church. At that conference, Toria Gray presented recent research, commissioned by the Centre for

Church Planting and Growth, which reported data from 36 church plants that had been trained through Bishop Ric's Church Planting Course. Of the people attending these church plants, 47% had not been attending church before.

The context of this project in the Diocese of London is thus, on the one hand, very exciting. Dr Winfield Bevins, at the church planting conference referred to above, compared what is happening to the eighteenth century Methodist revival. On the other hand, the London context for these extraordinary advances is extremely complex socially and religiously. Within the Church of England, too, whilst it is encouraging to see that Anglo Catholics are also starting to plant again (22% of those plants represented at the summer 2018 church planting conference would describe themselves as being varieties of Anglo Catholic churches), much of the thinking and terminology for church planting in the Church of England derives from an evangelical background, which can be unintelligible and even alienating to those from other parts of the Church of England. The theological task for the formation of church planters in the Church of England is urgent because of the need for new churches in London, but also because churches are being planted fast and at an increasing rate. New churches do need to be planted, but they also need to be healthy new churches, led by church planters who are properly formed and energized by good theology.

Participants

The participants for the study were a variety of individuals, all over the age of 18, who were either involved in training church planters or who were being trained or who had been trained to plant churches, and who responded favourably to the invitation from the researcher to take part in this study.

Criteria for Selection

Candidates were selected on the basis of their response to the emails from the researcher asking if they wanted to be involved in the research for this study. All were over the age of 18, and all were involved in church planting, either training church planters or who had been or were being trained to plant churches.

For the Trainers' Questionnaire ("TQ"), the researcher selected those known to him (either directly or by reputation). Some were Principals of Theological Education Institutions ("T.E.I.'s), predominantly but not exclusively Anglican, or those who oversee the training of church planters in T.E.I.s. Some head up church planting movements or train church planters in church planting movements, predominantly but not exclusively in England. Others lead or train church planters in significant church planting churches in England. Others, again, were involved in the training of church planters and others in the centralized Church of England. Others were involved in the training of church planters and others in some Dioceses of the Church of England. Some train church planters in the Methodist church in England. All but six women were men. The aim was to get as wide a spread as possible of those involved in the training of church planters. Some as part of denominational theological education, most notably the T.E.I.s. Others, less institutionalized training routes. Others, training church planters in their Anglican Dioceses. Others, training church planters as part of church planting movements. And some from overseas and from non-Anglican denominations with experience in the training of church planters, to give some breadth and a fresh perspective. All in all, sixty-one people were asked to take part in the questionnaire, of whom thirty-eight responded favourably.

For the Church Planters' Questionnaire ("CPQ"), people were invited to respond who were known to the researcher, either personally or by reputation, who had planted churches, and who had been trained to do so. Some had planted churches with the researcher and from the researcher's church plant. Some were part of the HTB network of churches. Some were from other church planting networks. Some were non-U.K. nationals who had planted churches among non-English speaking communities in England. Some had planted large churches, which had gone on to plant multiple churches. Some had planted into areas of considerable urban deprivation. Some had planted over 10 years ago, others much more recently. Some were women, although the large majority were men. Most were charismatics, some were evangelical and a much smaller number (around five) were Anglo-Catholics. Most were lead church planters, and some were in the teams who had planted churches. Some had come through the Church Planting Course run by the Centre for Church Planting and Growth in London. Most were traditional church plants, others were more like missional communities. Most were urban plants, with a very few rural and more suburban. Most church plants were in the south of England, although not exclusively so. Nearly all were ordained in the Church of England. Exactly one hundred people were invited to take part in the response, and sixty-eight responded favourably. The aim was to interact with genuine church planters, practitioners who had engaged with church planting on the ground and who had been trained and gone on to have active experience planting churches. A range of men and women of different church traditions, types of church plant, and contexts into which they had planted their churches was looked for.

In Tim Sensing's terms, for both TQ and CPQ, this was a combination of "purposive" and "maximum variation" sampling (83, 84).

For the Best Practice Interviews ("BPI"s), initially five people were asked to be interviewed. One replied straight away that the pressure of work made it impossible, and another did not reply until after the interviews had happened. The criteria for selection were people who themselves had experience of church planting and of the training of church planters, who headed up church planting movements, and who would be able to speak insightfully into current best practice and have wisdom about the future training of church planters. Of those interviewed as the BPIs, two were Anglican bishops. All three head up church planting movements. One has experience of having been a T.E.I. Principal, another is a lecturer at a T.E.I., and one trains church planters all over the world. The three included one woman and two men. One respondent was from the North of England and two from London. All three have an evangelical-charismatic church tradition, held with a theological generosity towards others. Two respondents were Anglicans, and one was a non-denominational church planter.

All of those who took part by responding to the two questionnaires or the BPIs did so with great generosity of their time, wisdom and experience, and the researcher is very grateful to each of them.

Description of Participants

Thirty-six people responded to the Trainers' Questionnaire— 29 men and 7 women. 3 were aged between 26 and 40. 25 of them were aged between 41 and 55, and 8 were over 55. None were less than 26 years old. 23 were white British. 12 were not from the UK, and 1 was from a BAME background. 24 were ordained, and 12 were not.

25 were Anglican, and very small numbers were Catholic, Independent, FIEC, or United Methodist. 26 described themselves as evangelical, 21 as charismatic, 5 as Pentecostal, 7 as broad church, and 2 as Anglo-Catholic.

Sixty-eight people responded to the Church Planters' Questionnaire, and of those 54 were men and 14 women. 26 were aged between 26 and 41, 32 between 41 and 55, and 10 over 55. None were younger than 26. 61 were white British, with some not from the UK, from a BAME background, or from some other ethnic background. 61 were ordained, 5 not, but 2 did not answer this question. 65 were Anglican. As to church traditions, 54 described themselves as evangelical, 51 as charismatic, 11 as Pentecostal, 4 as broad church, and 6 as Anglo-Catholic. 60 had some previous theological education, and 8 did not.

For the Best Practice Interviews, all three head up church planting movements. Two were Anglican bishops. One has experience of having been a T.E.I. Principal, another is a lecturer at a T.E.I., and one trains church planters all over the world. One was a woman and two were men. One was from the North of England and two from London. All three have an evangelical-charismatic church tradition, held with a theological generosity towards others. Two were Anglicans, and one a non-denominational church planter.

Ethical Considerations

Care was constantly taken to protect the participants. For both the questionnaires, an email was sent inviting the recipient to take part in the research for this study. The email referred to informed consent, and there was a letter attached to the email laying out an explanation of informed consent, what the risks were to those taking part, and what

measures the researcher had put in place to protect those taking part in the research. The letter emphasized that participation was totally voluntary. In addition, the first question on both questionnaires asked whether or not the recipient wished to take part in the research by completing the questionnaire. If any participant had replied “no” to that question, then the questionnaire would automatically have moved to the “submit” section of the questionnaire, and it would not have been possible for the participant to complete the questionnaire. The researcher tested this function on the questionnaire personally before it was sent out.

For the BPIs, those asked to participate were sent an email inviting them to be interviewed, which also explained that their informed consent to participate was an important part of the process. An informed consent letter was attached to the email. One BPI interviewee signed and returned it by email, and the others signed the letter at the interviews.

As was explained in the informed consent letters, the questionnaire responses (which were anonymous to the researcher) were collated by Google Forms. This collated data was printed out for both questionnaires by the researcher. The BPIs were recorded by the researcher and transcribed on his personal computer using Otter software. These transcriptions were edited by the researcher, when the sense was not plain or where it was inaccurate, and then printed out by the researcher. The collated data from TQ and CPQ and the transcriptions from each BPI interview were kept by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet in his study at his home, to which he alone had the key. His computer was password protected, and only he had the password. In this way, the data and the identity of the participants were kept safe. The responses to the questionnaires and the transcripts

from the BPIs are to be deleted from the researcher's computer or shredded (as appropriate) within 1 year of the completion of the researcher's Doctor of Ministry. The recordings of the BPIs on the researcher's phone were deleted once the transcriptions had been made.

Instrumentation

Three research instruments were used to fulfill the purpose statement for this study. All were researcher designed. The two questionnaires were a mixture of quantitative and qualitative, and the interviews were qualitative.

There was a questionnaire for those involved in the training of church planters ("TQ"). It was comprised of 22 questions and aimed at the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. The rationale for using the instrument was to get accurate data about the training of church planters currently being delivered in England by those responding to the questionnaire, to dig below the surface of this initial data to find what was or was not proving effective, and to hear the reflections of the practitioners of this training on why this might be and what could be done better.

Demographic information was requested first. Then the questionnaire asked about the church traditions and church planting experience of the respondents. Questions 1–3 asked about the level, extent, and focus of the training. Questions 4–8 asked about those being trained by these church planting trainers. Questions 9–14 asked about the content and balance of the training, and question 15 about its delivery. Questions 16 and 17 were about its effectiveness. All these questions were framed quantitatively or in terms which required answers framed in categories set by the researcher. The rest of the questions were more open-ended and invited as short or long

a response as each participant wished. Question 18 was about obstacles to the designing and delivery of the training. Question 19 asked about what worked and what did not work in the training. Question 20 asked about how the training was delivered. The last two questions invited deeper and wider response: question 21 was about the philosophy or aims of the training and question 22 invited the respondents to contribute anything else they wished to say. TQ is reproduced in Appendix A of this study.

The questionnaire for those who had been or were being trained to plant churches (“CPQ”) comprised 21 questions. Like TQ, it was both quantitative and qualitative. The rationale for using the instrument was to get accurate data from those responding to the questionnaire about the training of church planters which church planters had received or were currently receiving in England, to dig below the surface of this initial data to find what was proving effective and what not, and to hear the reflections of church planters on why this might be and what could be done better.

After questions asking for demographic data and spiritual tradition, question 1 asked after the spiritual experience of the respondents, their involvement in church planting, and their experience of education. Question 2 was about their spiritual ambition, when it comes to church planting. Questions 3–4 were for those who were currently being trained for church planting, and the questions asked about how effective they thought their training was to help them plant churches, both in general (question 3) and in regard to specific subject areas (question 4). Questions 5–9 were for those who had previously been trained for church planting, and asked how long ago (question 5) and where (question 6) they were trained, whether this training was primarily for ordination (question 7), if they felt it equipped them to plant churches (question 8), and

which subjects have proved the most useful for them in their church planting (question 9). Questions 10–14 corresponded exactly to their counterparts on TQ and asked about the content and balance of their training. The rest of the CPQ questions were more open-ended inviting reflection from the respondents. Question 15 asked the participants to name the most transformational aspects of their training, and question 16 the least transformational aspect. Question 17 was about obstacles to their training. Questions 18 and 19 concerned what they felt was missing in their training, and question 20 invited reflections on the manner of delivery of the training. Question 21 invited them to contribute anything else they wished to say. CPQ can be found in Appendix A.

The Best Practice Interviews (“BPI”s) were semi-structured, based around the same six questions. The instrument was a purely qualitative one. The rationale behind it was to give more space and room for these experienced practitioners to reflect deeply and expansively on their experience in church planting and the training of church planters from their perspectives as movement leaders in English church planting. The semi-structured nature of the interviews was both to ensure compatibility across the three interviews (by virtue of starting with the same questions), whilst not constraining the interviewees in their answers.

The first question asked the interviewees about their experience of church planting and the training of church planters. The second asked them to identify any obstacles to the training of church planters. The third asked them what they thought the people being trained to plant churches would say was the most important aspect of the training. The fourth asked them to describe “best practice” for the training of church planters. The fifth was about their views on how and by whom church planter training

might best be delivered. The sixth question invited the interviewees to contribute anything else they wished to say. The BPI questions are at Appendix A below.

The data from the two questionnaires was to be used to answer the demand of the project's purpose statement to describe as accurately and fully as possible what training was currently being delivered and experienced in England to train church planters for their work. The more expansive questions were to yield data about the perceived effectiveness of otherwise of this training and to show the thinking of trainers and those being trained alike on what they thought might be best done to make future training both theologically robust and ministerially effective.

The data from the interviews was similarly to be used to describe current practice and its limitations and to yield expert thought on what best practice for the training of church planters would look like in the future.

All three research instruments were designed to provide accurate and deep data which both looked back to current practice but, by a process of evaluation and reflection on experience, also to look forward to what the training of church planters might be in the future, thus reflecting both perspectives of the purpose statement for this study.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

The reliability of the study was high. The processes for both TQ and CPQ were tight and ensured that the respondents to TQ were replying to the same questions as each other, and the same was true of the respondents to CPQ. There was no possibility of interference or distortion by any outside party, and the researcher had no way of inserting himself into the process of the respondents answering the questions of both questionnaires. The researcher had no way of knowing who had responded to the

questionnaires, so could not skew the data by guessing who was saying what. Response rates to both questionnaires were very high: 59% for TQ and 68% for CPQ. The sample size was more than adequate for the reliability of the data (thirty-eight respondents for TQ, and sixty-eight for CPQ).

As for the Best Practice Interviews, the procedure for each interview was identical and carried out exactly the same on each occasion. The same six questions were asked as the basis for each interview, having been set beforehand.

The validity of the research was also high. The questionnaires were both designed to align as closely as possible with the purpose statement. Those invited to take part in the research by filling out and returning the questionnaires were a wide group of church planters from many contexts and situations, and the questionnaires were designed to encourage and enable frankness and clarity. The anonymity of the responses was guaranteed by the technological mechanisms of the Google Forms process. The way the two questionnaires had identical or very similar questions in them enabled exact comparisons to be made between the answers to these questions. The timescale for responding to the questionnaires was short enough to capture participants' attention and availability but long enough to ensure their participation.

The BPIs carried greater risk, not least due to the dangers of reflexivity from the researcher. The semi-structured nature of the interviews was to protect against this, which also allowed the interviewees maximum freedom to take the interviews where they wished. The interviews were kept purposely short, with a small number of questions, and none exceeded an hour. This was to make sure that the interviewees stayed fresh and did not become tired as they gave their answers.

The combination of the research instruments made for stronger validity. On the one hand, the mixed method used for the two questionnaires, by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, made for stronger validity, and, on the other, the combination of using questionnaires with interviews added a triangulation framework, thus giving depth to the data and wider perspectives within which to view it.

Data Collection

The study was a pre-intervention project, designed through the use of quantitative and qualitative research instruments to investigate current practice in training church planters with a view to developing a theologically robust way of training church planters in the Diocese of London going forward. Two questionnaires were used. Both were designed to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data from those involved in the training of church planters (“TQ”) and those who had been or were being trained to plant churches (“CPQ”). Semi-structured interviews were also used with leaders in church planting movements in England to discover best practice in the training of church planters, both now and for the future (“BPI”s). This was a research instrument designed to elicit qualitative data.

The researcher drew up lists of potential participants in the research through either of the two questionnaires or in the interviews. Having designed the instruments, he then wrote to sixty-eight potential respondents to the TQ questionnaire on 10 May, 2019. Each email was identical, and the researcher had attached to it a formal consent letter. Embedded in the email was a link to the questionnaire for any who should wish to participate in the research by filling it in and returning it. The questionnaire was a Google Form, designed in such a way that the researcher could not know the identity of

those filling in and completing the questionnaire. The email invited any potential participants to return their completed questionnaire within two or three weeks. A general reminder email, also attaching an informed consent letter and having a link to the questionnaire embedded within it, was sent to all the potential respondents on 30 May. In practice, many respondents filled in the questionnaires later than that, but it was possible to accept their questionnaires and admit the data into consideration. The researcher only knows this because some respondents emailed him to apologise for the late return of the questionnaire. He did not know who replied to the questionnaire or when.

The same procedure was followed for the CPQ questionnaire. The researcher drew up a list of potential respondents and emailed them all with an identical email on 10 May, 2019, again inviting them to respond within two or three weeks. An informed consent letter was attached, and the email had embedded within it a link to the questionnaire. This too was a Google Form, designed in such a way that the researcher could not know the identity of those responding. A general reminder email, also attaching an informed consent letter and having a link to the questionnaire embedded within it, was sent to all the potential respondents on 30 May. Some responded later than this, but it was still possible to incorporate their data into the research. Again, the researcher only knows this because some respondents emailed him to apologise for the late return of the questionnaire. He did not know who replied to the questionnaire or when.

The data came through to the researcher's personal computer, which was password protected, and only he had the password. Google Forms collated the data on

both questionnaires, and the researcher printed out both summaries of the responses to the questionnaires. This was kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's study at home, to which he alone had the key.

Both TQ and CPQ were designed to yield both quantitative and qualitative data, with a view to strengthening the validity of the data.

The best practice interviews ("BPI"s) were designed to take the data from the questionnaires deeper and to yield exclusively qualitative data. The researcher drew up a list of five potential interviewees. He wrote an identical email to all five on 30 May, 2019, asking if they would like to be interviewed. The email had an informed consent letter attached to it. One potential interviewee replied that same day to say that pressure of work made it impossible. Another did not reply within the time frame, although the researcher knows from a subsequent meeting that this person was fully behind the project but just could not spare the time over the summer. The other three potential interviewees all graciously agreed to be interviewed, and a date and time and venue was fixed with each of them. Two interviews happened in the homes of the interviewees and the third in the vestry of St George's church in Holborn, central London, which is a quiet and private room. The interviews took place on 7, 23 and 29 June, 2019. All were preceded by small talk and cup of tea or coffee, and none lasted more than 60 minutes.

Each BPI followed the same pattern. The researcher took the interviewee through the six pre-set questions, according to the design of the semi-structured interview, occasionally following up on replies to ask for clarification or development of the thought of the previous replies. The informed consent forms were signed at the interview by two of the interviewees, the third having already scanned, signed, and

returned the form previously. The semi-structured interviews were all recorded on the researcher's phone, with the express permission of the interviewees. The researcher also took notes during each interview, again with the interviewee's express permission. After each BPI, the recording of the interview was emailed by the researcher to his computer at home. One interview was transcribed by the researcher manually, the other two with the aid of Otter software, with the researcher editing the transcriptions only in as much as sense and technical vocabulary demanded. These transcripts were kept on the researcher's personal laptop computer, which was password protected, with only he knowing the password. He did print out each transcript and kept them, together with the researcher's own notes from each interview, in a designated folder in a locked filing cabinet in his study at home, to which only he had the key. The recordings on the researcher's phone were all deleted.

Data Analysis

The instruments yielded a rich resource of data, both quantitative and qualitative, which was analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics and document analysis. Care was taken fully to incorporate more than one perspective as much as possible, with the perspectives provided by the participants placed alongside that of the researcher. The researcher tried to mitigate the impact of his own involvement in the process and his own biases, prejudices and experiences.

The data from the Trainers' Questionnaire ("TQ") and the Church Planters' Questionnaire ("CPQ") was analyzed in two ways. First of all, the numerical data was analyzed. Many of the questions had asked the respondents to reply in such terms. For instance, TQ questions 4–9 and CPQ questions 10–14 asked the participants to estimate

percentages of various categories. This meant that the data was, to a degree, already analyzed. Google Forms was also extremely helpful and presented the data in terms of percentages (for instance for men and women, ethnic background, Christian tradition).

Both questionnaires also yielded much more qualitative data from the more open-ended questions (TQ 18–22, CPQ 15–21). All the data from the BPIs was of this nature. This data was in the form of text from written answers from the participants. Some answers were brief, others extensive. Documentary and textual analyses were employed to analyze the data from these questions.

For the textual data from TQ and CPQ and from the BPIs, the researcher adopted Sensing's "Themes, Slippage, Silences" paradigm (197–202). He identified themes through careful and detailed examination of these texts. He read each one several times, jotting down thoughts on a separate piece of paper as he did so. He then returned to each one and made a note in the margin of the print out of the collated responses to both TQ and CPQ from Google forms and on the transcriptions of the text of each BPI. He identified key words as they arose and looked for the repetition of the word or the concept, taking cognizance of their contexts. He colour-coded them as they emerged and collated responses under each heading. Alongside that, he undertook separate readings of the texts through the lens of categories taken from the results of the literary review above, namely the major headings from the biblical and theological writings, the influence of the recent history of church planting in the UK, and concepts from theories of experiential learning and motivation. He compared the two readings, looking for dissonance or convergence. He then took a third approach, trying to see what was not there.

He established patterns by reference both to the emerging themes but also to where these clashed with the findings from the literature review, and from reflecting on his own biases and reactions to the data.

The correlation of the results of the analysis of the quantitative data with the more in depth exploration of these areas through the analysis of the qualitative data gave a rounded and helpful picture of the participants' responses.

There were also certain questions (numbers 11–14 on both TQ and CPQ, and TQ 18, CPQ 17, and BPI 2) which were identical or very similar on TQ, CPQ and BPI, and this allowed for direct comparison of the data from all three instruments, which was revealing of the different perspectives of the participants.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The aim of this study was an analysis of current practices in training church planters, with an especial eye to their theological formation. London provides particular opportunities and challenges for the planting of new churches, and the study aimed to see what training is currently in place, what particular obstacles there might be in the training of these planters, and what is viewed as best practice at the moment. The hope of the study was that lessons could be learned which would be of value for developing ongoing training practices and processes for the training of church planters within the Diocese of London. This chapter is a presentation of data from a questionnaire for those involved in the training of church planters, another questionnaire for those who are currently being trained or who have been trained as church planters, and interviews with three people who have planted and have had considerable experience in the training of church planters. The data has been organized around the three Research Questions designed to explore current practice in training church planters, to identify perceived obstacles to the training of church planters, and to describe current best practice in the training of church planters.

Participants

One Research Instrument was a questionnaire for those who have been or are being trained for church planting (“the Church Planters’ Questionnaire” or “CPQ”). This was sent to exactly one hundred church planters, with the response rate of sixty-eight percent. These were all men and women known to the researcher, who have

planted churches. Fifty-two of those invited to complete the CPQ have planted in the Diocese of London. Of the responses, fifty-four came from men and fourteen from women. Every effort was made to include as many women in the questionnaire as possible, but, sadly, there are currently many more men than women planting churches in the Diocese of London and further afield. All those who responded were Anglican.

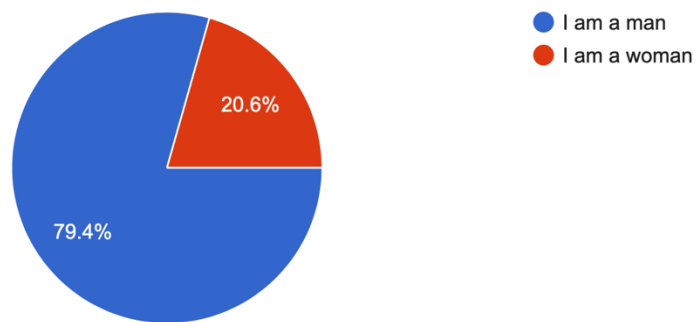


Figure 4.1 Men and women who responded to CPQ

Age-wise, the majority of those responding to CPQ were aged between forty-one and fifty-five (thirty two respondents), followed by twenty-six aged between twenty-six and forty, and ten aged over fifty-five. There were none aged between eighteen and twenty-five.

68 responses

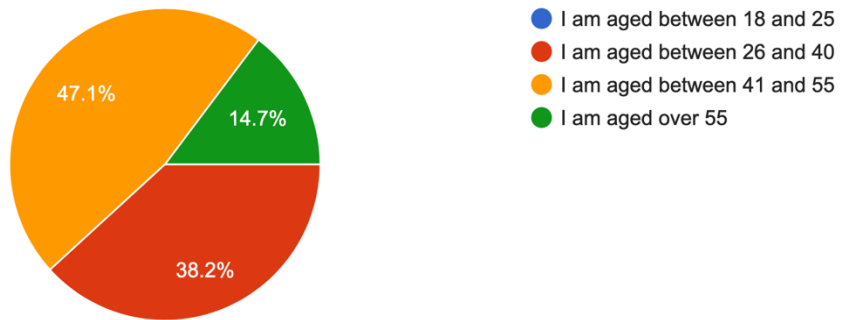


Figure 4.2 Age profiles of those responding to CPQ

Ethnically, the vast majority were white British (sixty one respondents), with far smaller numbers not from the U.K. and from BAME or other ethnic backgrounds.

68 responses

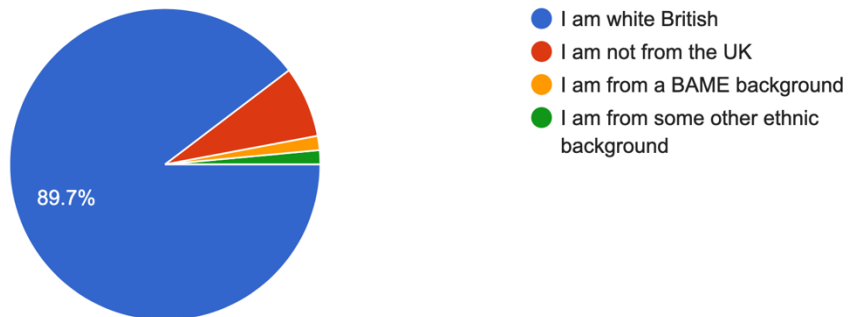


Figure 4.3 Ethnic backgrounds of those responding to CPQ.

Of the respondents to CPQ, all bar five were ordained in the Church of England.

66 responses

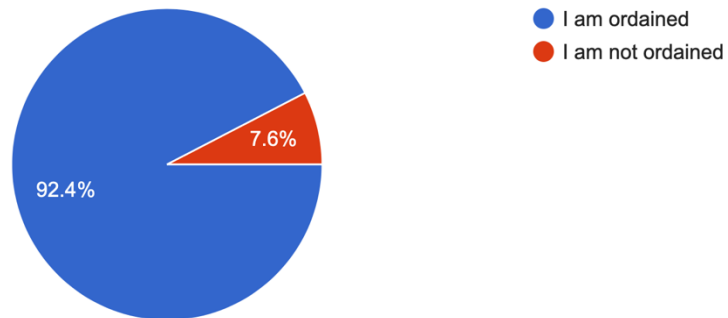


Figure 4.4 Percentages of those ordained and not ordained who responded to CPQ

In terms of Christian tradition and church practice, the majority of respondents to CPQ were happy to be described as evangelical (fifty four) and charismatic (fifty one), with eleven Pentecostals and six Anglo-Catholics. Four thought of themselves as broad church, and various individuals substituted alternative self-designations.

68 responses

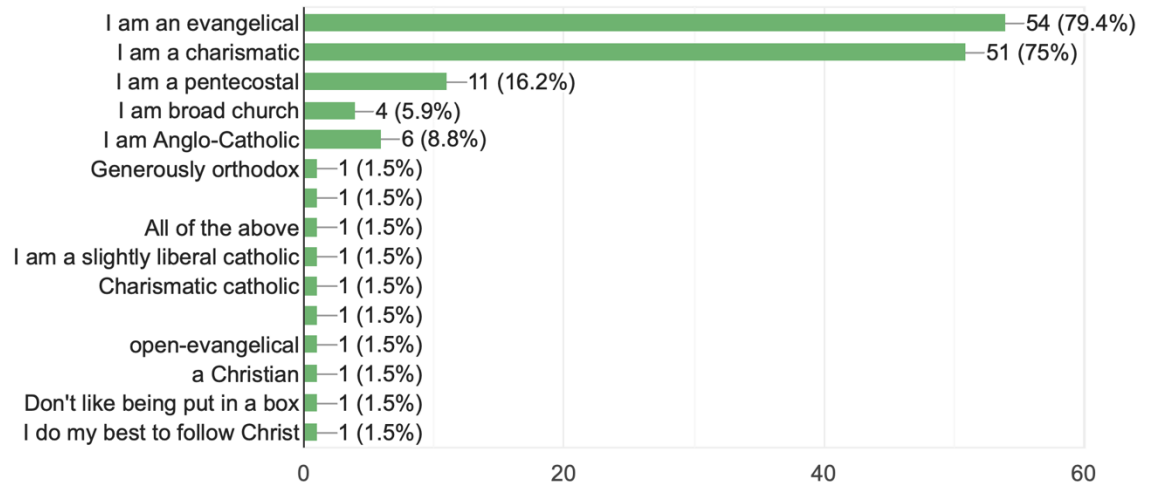


Figure 4.5 Church traditions of those who responded to CPQ

None of the respondents to CPQ teach in a theological education institution or equivalent. Fifty-three have an undergraduate degree and thirty-three a postgraduate degree. Sixty of the respondents have had a conversion experience, and forty-one grew up in a Christian home.

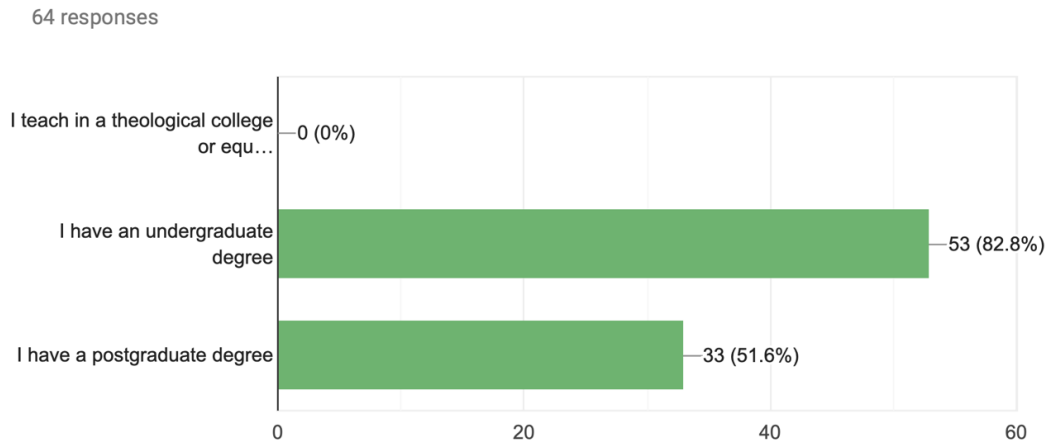


Figure 4.6 CPQ respondents' level of theological education

A conversion experience

68 responses

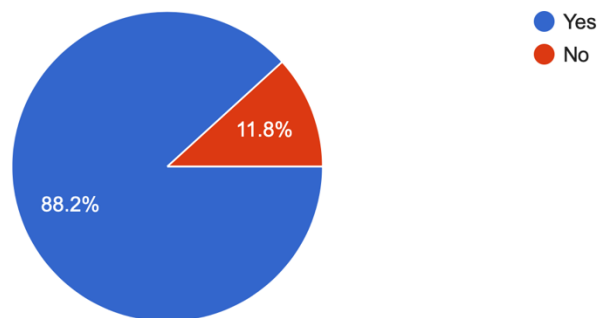


Figure 4.7 Conversions amongst those who responded to CPQ

Growing up in a Christian home

68 responses

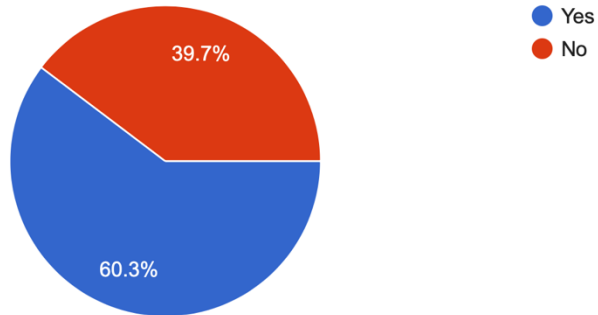


Figure 4.8 Percentages of those responding to CPQ growing up in a Christian home

In terms of church planting experience, forty-five have already planted one church, thirteen more than one church, and fifty have been part of a church planting team.

You have already planted a church

67 responses

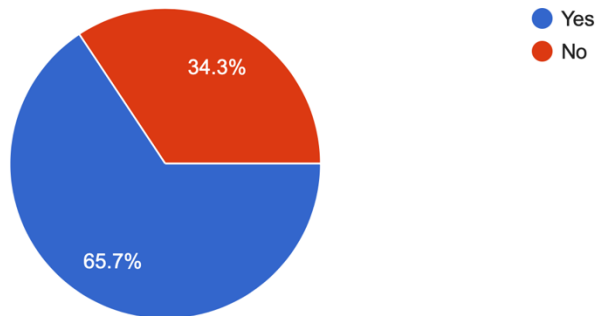


Figure 4.9 Those responding to CPQ who have planted a church

You have planted more than one church

66 responses

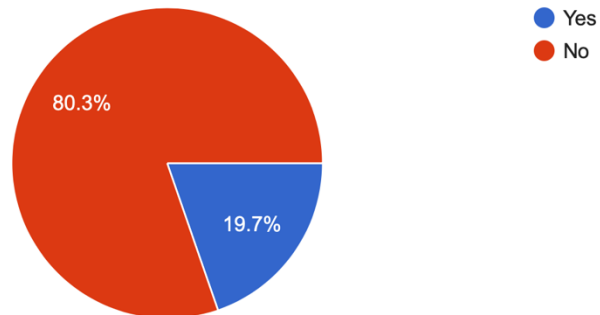


Figure 4.10 Those responding to CPQ who have planted more than one church

You have been part of a church planting team

67 responses

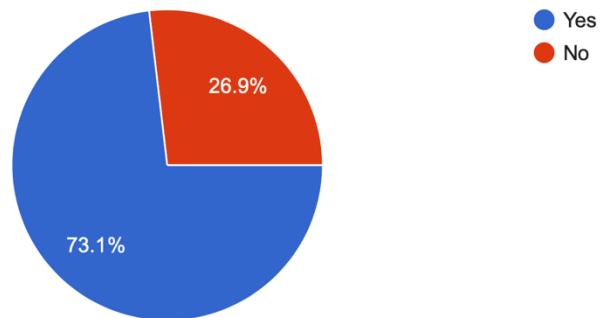


Figure 4.11 Those responding to CPQ who have been part of a church planting team

The other Research Instrument was a questionnaire for those who currently train others to plant churches (the “Training Questionnaire” or “TQ”). Sixty-one people were invited to respond to the questionnaire, all of whom were known personally to the researcher. Those invited to respond are involved in a variety of posts and institutions

or training programmes. Two Bishops were invited to respond, nine Principals of Theological Education Institutions (“T.E.I.”s), a further fourteen teaching in some capacity in a T.E.I., eleven leaders of missional movements in some capacity, and sixteen involved in some aspect of missionary and church planting work for various dioceses in the Church of England. Of course, it is not possible to know who responded. There were thirty-six responses in total to this questionnaire.

Of the respondents to the TQ, twenty-nine were men and seven were women, approximately the same proportions as with CPQ.

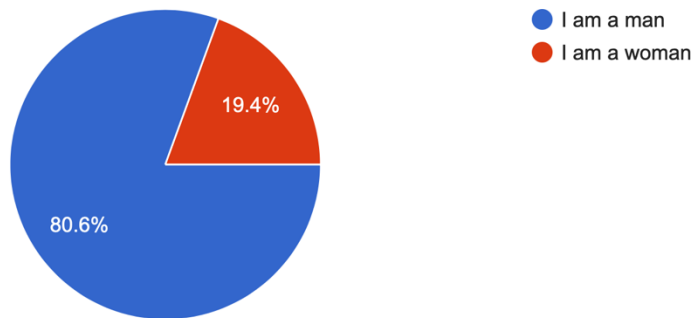


Figure 4.12 Percentages of men and women who responded to TQ

The age profile of those responding to TQ was older than those responding to CPQ, with the majority (twenty-five respondents) aged between forty-one and fifty-five. Three respondents are aged between twenty-six and forty, and eight over the age of fifty-five. Again, there were no respondents aged between eighteen and twenty-five.

36 responses

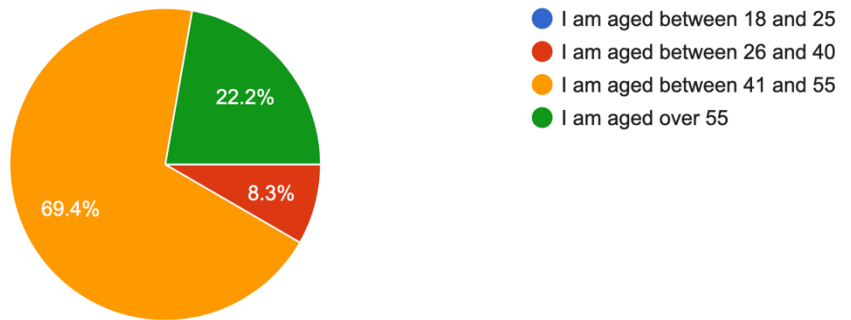


Figure 4.13 Ages of those responding to TQ.

Ethnically, the majority were white British (twenty-three respondents), twelve not being from the U.K., and three from a BAME background.

36 responses

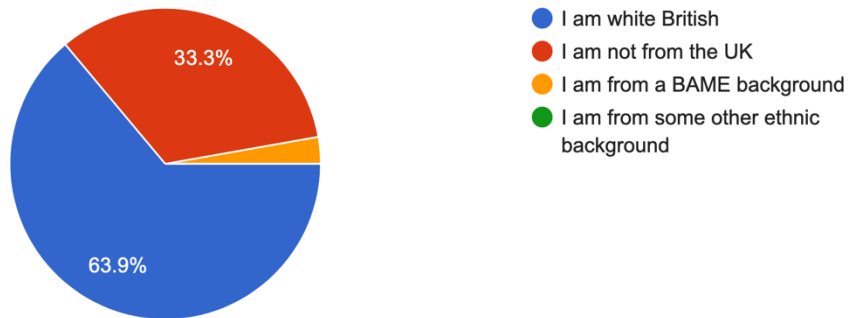


Figure 4.14 Ethnicities of those responding to TQ.

Twelve respondents were not ordained, and the remaining twenty-four were ordained.

36 responses

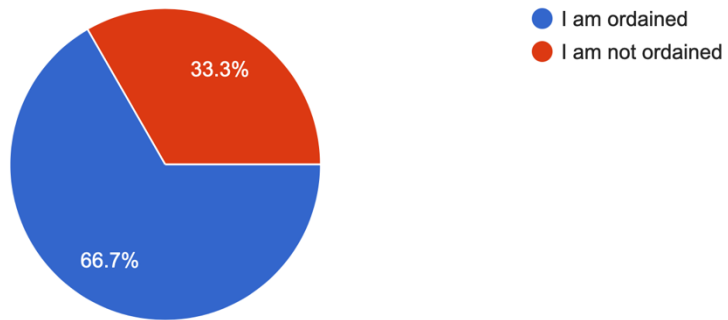


Figure 4.15 Those ordained and not ordained who responded to TQ

The spread of denominational and Christian tradition background was greater than those who responded to CPQ. Anglicans were still in the majority (twenty-five respondents), but there were also representations from a significant range of other denominations. Again, as with CPQ, the majority were content to describe themselves as evangelical or charismatic, alongside those from Pentecostal, Broad church and Anglo-Catholic stables.

33 responses

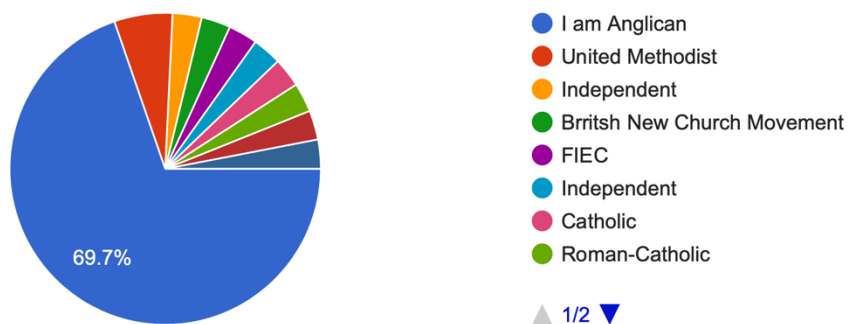


Figure 4.16 Denominational backgrounds of those responding to TQ

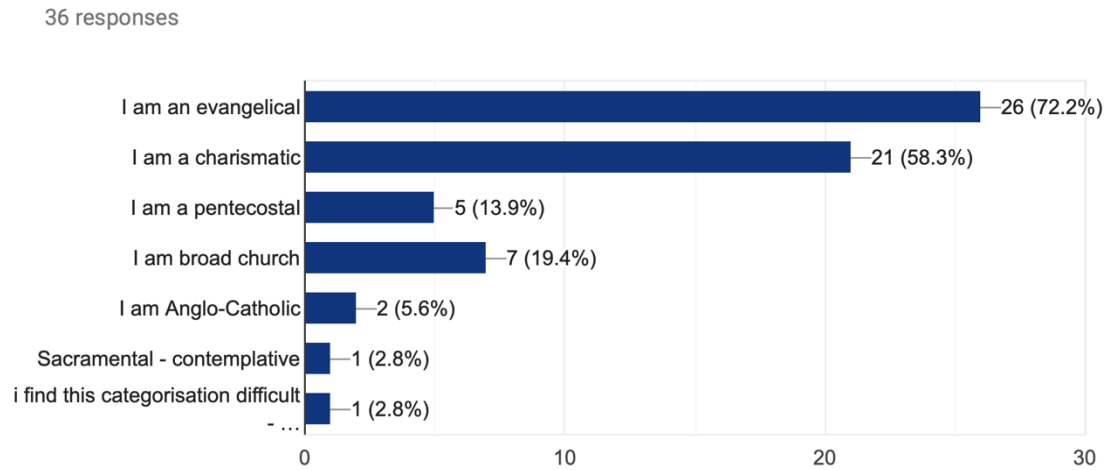


Figure 4.17 Respondents to TQ by Christian tradition

Nearly a third of the respondents teach in a T.E.I. or equivalent. Twenty-one of them have an undergraduate degree, and twenty-three have a post-graduate degree.

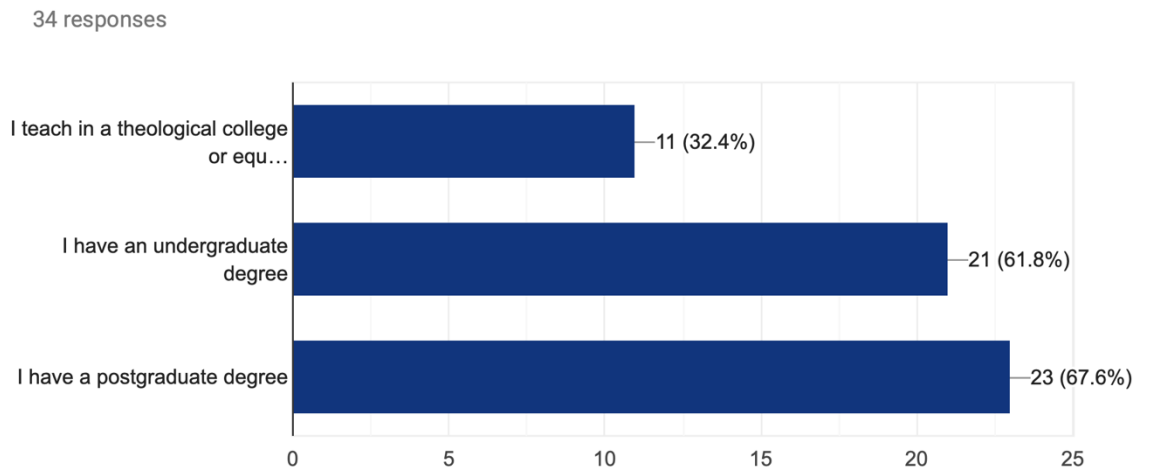


Figure 4.18 Teaching in T.E.I.s and higher degrees of TQ respondents

Interestingly, and encouragingly, nearly seventy percent of those training church planters, who responded to TQ, have themselves planted a church and nearly forty-five

percent have been part of a church planting team. Nearly seventy-eight percent of the TQ respondents are also currently involved in some form of regular Christian ministry.

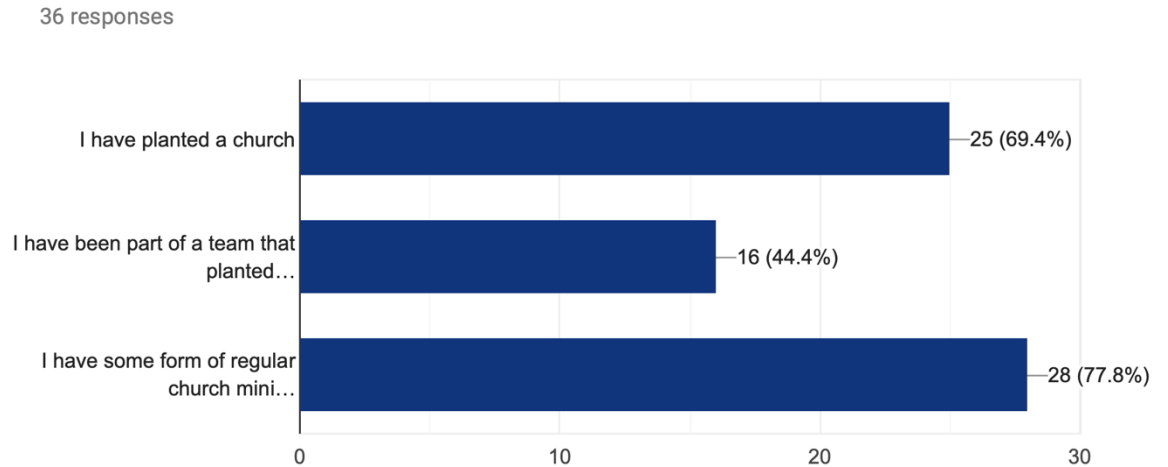


Figure 4.19 Church planting and Christian ministry involvement of TQ respondents

When it came to the training the TQ respondents were involved with, the majority (twenty-three) were teaching at certificate level, with a roughly even spread of diploma and degree level teaching (twelve and thirteen), and a lesser involvement at Masters and Doctoral levels (nine and four).

31 responses

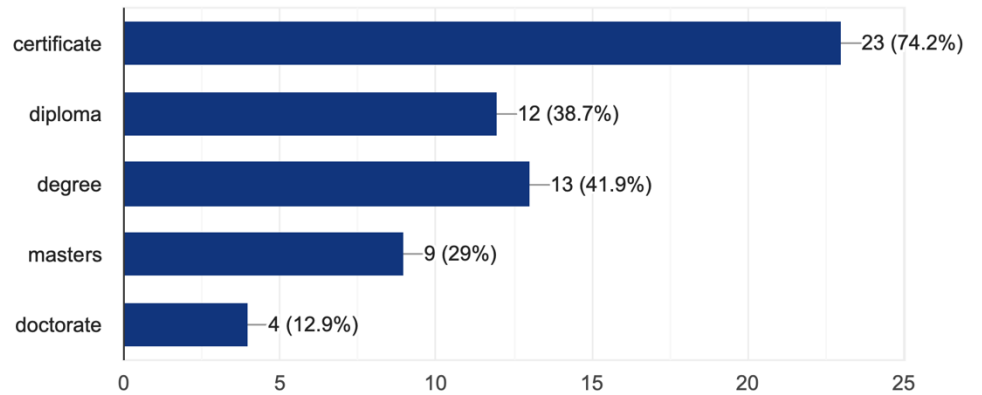


Figure 4.20 Academic levels of training from TQ respondents

The numbers of planters being trained by the TQ respondents each year was quite substantial, with twelve training in excess of twenty-one church planters annually, and five training between eleven and twenty each year.

36 responses

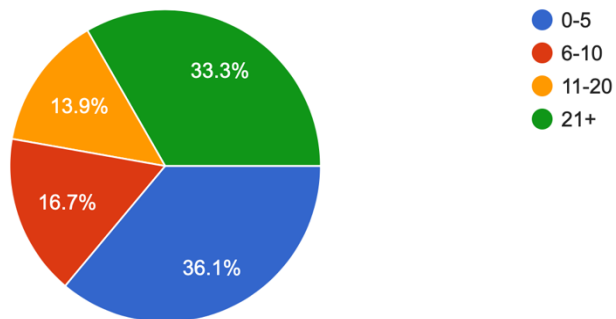


Figure 4.21 Numbers of church planters being trained each year by respondents to TQ

Alongside that, though, must be placed the statistic that only nine of the respondents to TQ were involved in courses focused exclusively on the training of church planters. The majority were training church planters as a part of a wider curriculum.

35 responses

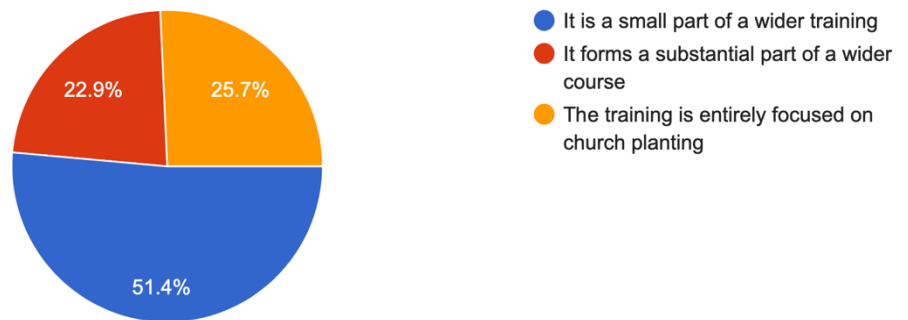


Figure 4.22 Church planter training and wider training for TQ respondents

The third Research Instrument was an interview with experts in the field of church planting. It had initially been hoped to interview between three and six such people, but only five were eventually selected, of whom one declined to be interviewed and one did not respond to the request for an interview. Those who were kind enough to be interviewed were a range of men and women, Anglican and non-Anglican, London and non-London based. All are movement leaders, with substantial experience of church planting, as practitioners, over-seers and trainers. Two are bishops in the Church of England, and one had previous experience as the head of a T.E.I.. Two are known well to the researcher.

Those being trained to plant churches, who responded to the CPQ questionnaire, were not without ambition. Fifty-five of the respondents felt called by God to plant a church (figure 4.23), forty-six to be part of a planting team (figure 4.24), forty-eight to plant more than one church (figure 4.25), and fifty-eight to be part of a church planting movement (figure 4.26).

To plant a church

67 responses

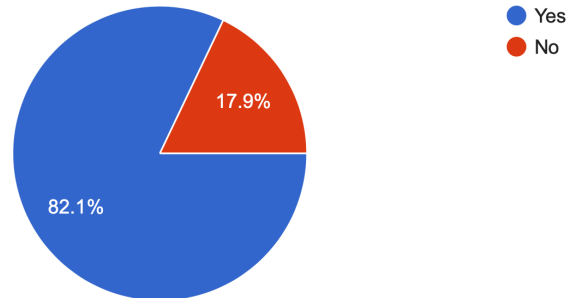


Figure 4.23 Percentage of CPQ respondents who felt called to plant a church

To be part of a church planting team

63 responses

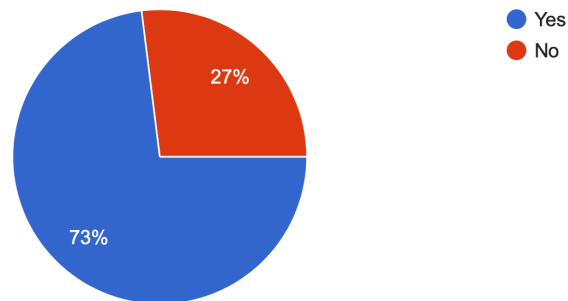


Figure 4.24 Percentage of CPQ respondents who felt called to be part of a church planting team

To plant more than one church

66 responses

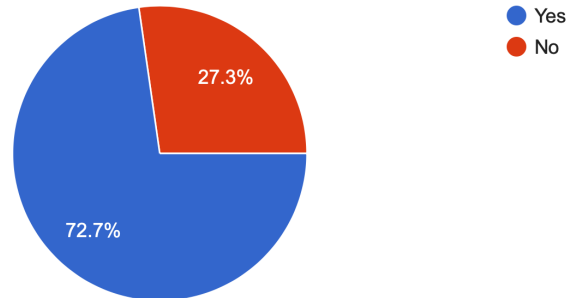


Figure 4.25 Percentage of CPQ respondents who felt called to plant more than one church

To be part of a church planting movement

67 responses

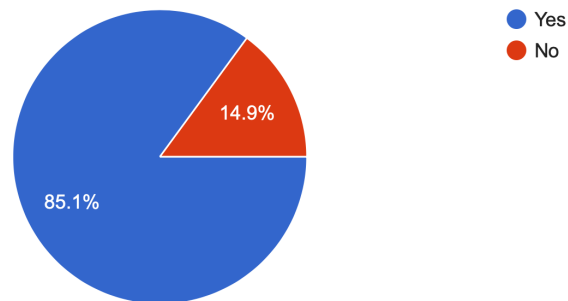


Figure 4.26 Percentage of CPQ respondents who felt called to be part of a church planting movement

This was more than enthusiasm, as shown by the depth of understanding of missional church planting: fifty-three wanted to reach a particular place or people group (figure 4.27), sixty-one to innovate new forms of church (figure 4.28), and sixty-seven out of sixty-eight to reach those the church is not currently reaching (figure 4.29). If

ever church planters are to be trained well, then these amazing people deserve the best that can be devised and delivered.

To reach a particular place or group of people

67 responses

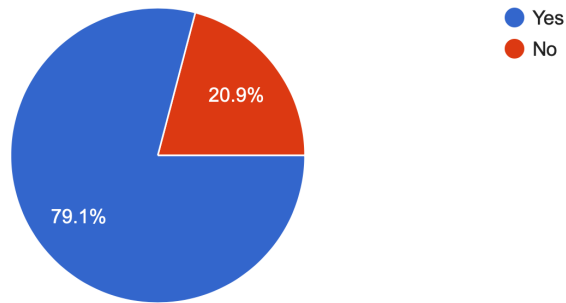


Figure 4.27 Percentage of CPQ respondents who felt called to reach a particular place or group of people

To innovate new forms of churches

67 responses

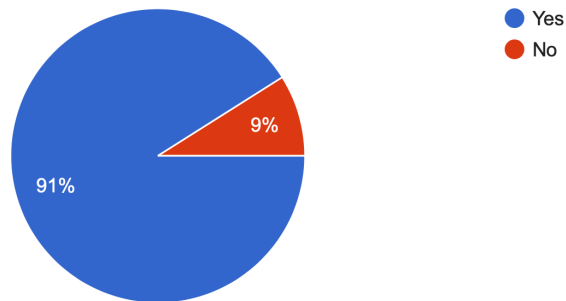


Figure 4.28 Percentage of CPQ respondents who felt called to innovate new forms of church

To reach those the church is not currently reaching

68 responses

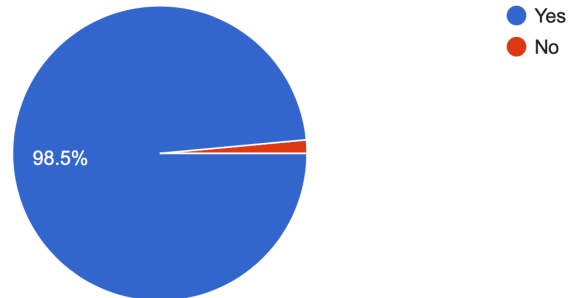


Figure 4.29 Percentage of CPQ respondents who felt called to reach those the church is currently not reaching

Similarly, the work of training currently being delivered by those responding to the TQ questionnaire was impressive but sobering. There was quite a spread of those who go on actually to plant a church within three years of their training (figure 4.30), and TQ respondents reported that many more of those they had trained were struggling rather than flourishing in church planting. Nonetheless, good numbers were planting multiple churches (figure 4.31). Trainers had no illusions about the scale and challenge of the task of church planting. Insights into the best practice of training planters were hard won and grounded in real experience.

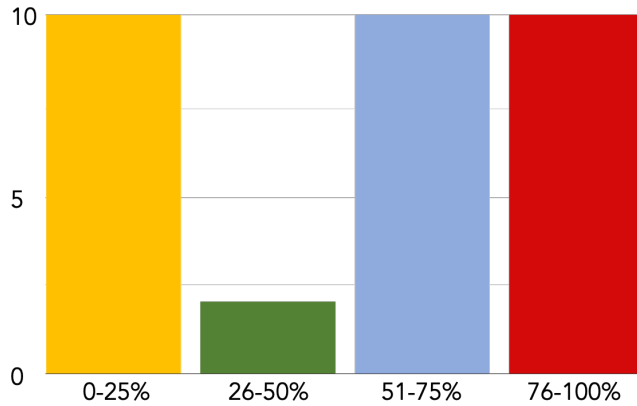


Figure 4.30 Numbers of trainers who report what percentage of their trainees who plant churches within 3 years of their training (TQ 16)

17. Where you have been able to stay in touch with those you have trained, roughly how many do you know of in the following categories?

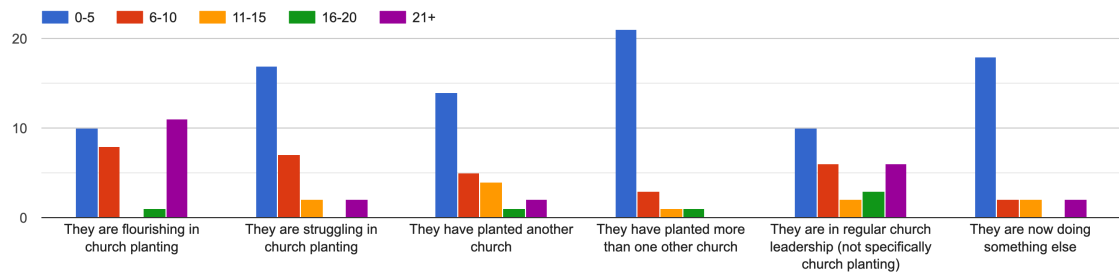


Figure 4.31 The experiences of church planters trained by TQ respondents (TQ17).

Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

RQ1: What are the current practices, courses and methods for training church planters?

The central sections of both CPQ (questions 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14) and TQ (questions 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14) were designed to elicit what current training practice is for church planters. These sections were framed identically so as to invite comparison from the church planters’ and their trainers’ perspectives. Other questions were

designed to look a bit more deeply at attitudes and expectations (CPQ 2; TQ 21), the manner of delivery (CPQ 20; TQ 15, 20), whilst the more open-ended questions at the end of each questionnaire aimed at thick descriptions of how church planters and their trainers felt about the training and its effectiveness. The interviews (“best practice interviews” or “BPIs”) had a question about current practice and the perspective of those being interviewed of the perceptions of those being trained (question 3).

Those responding to CPQ, who have already been trained as church planters, were overwhelmingly being trained in T.E.I.s, so their answers are to be viewed within that context (figure 4.32). 100% of those who had previously been trained were trained for ordination and not specifically or entirely for church planting. This was apparent, as well, in the responses to TQ, where about one quarter of the training was focused solely on church planting (figure 4.33).

6. Where were you trained?

63 responses

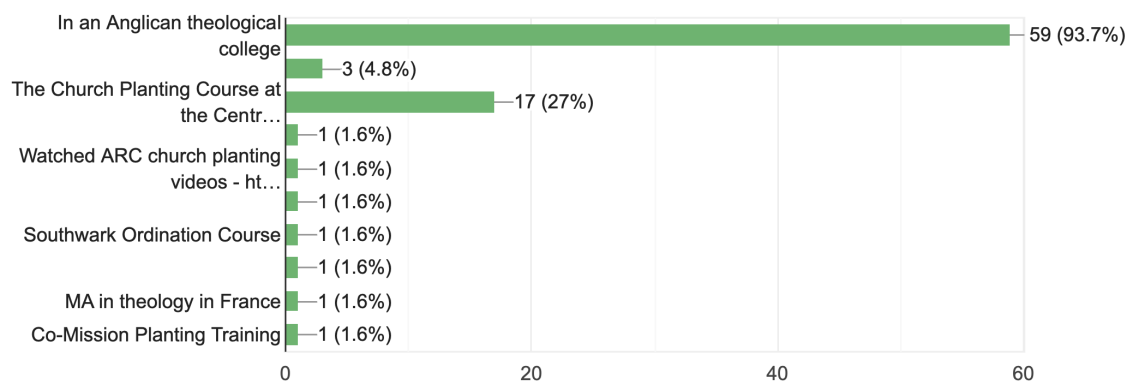


Figure 4.32 Where respondents to CPQ were trained (CPQ 6)

3. To what extent is the training of church planters part of a wider training (eg ordination training or a theological course)?

35 responses

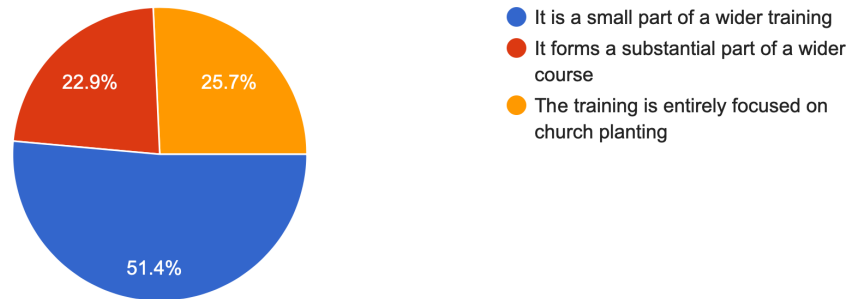


Figure 4.33 Proportion of training offered by TQ respondents focused on church planting (TQ 3)

As to the content of the training, there was an interesting mismatch between the perceptions of those being trained and those doing the training. The majority (44%) of those being trained felt that between half and three-quarters of their training was academic theology (figure 4.34), whereas 50% of those training church planters thought that academic theology comprised a quarter or less of the training (figure 4.35).

10. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is/was spent on academic theology, spiritual formation and the teaching of skills?

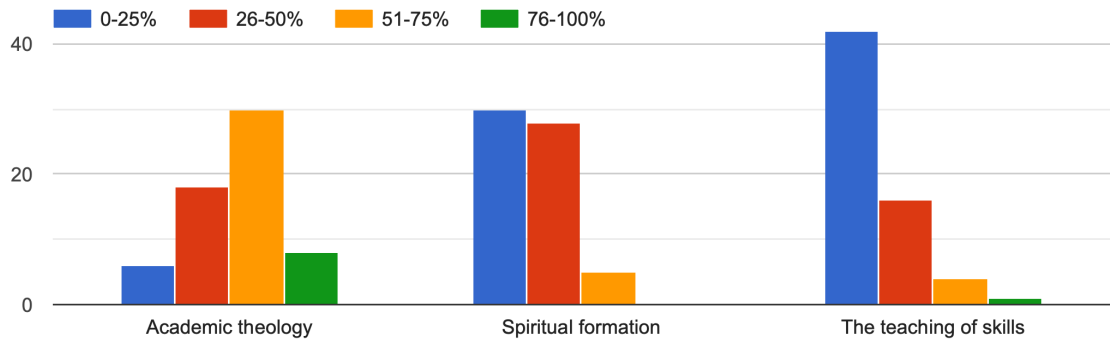


Figure 4.34 / CPQ 10 Proportions of academic, formational and skills training from CPQ respondents

9. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is spent on academic theology, spiritual formation and the teaching of skills?

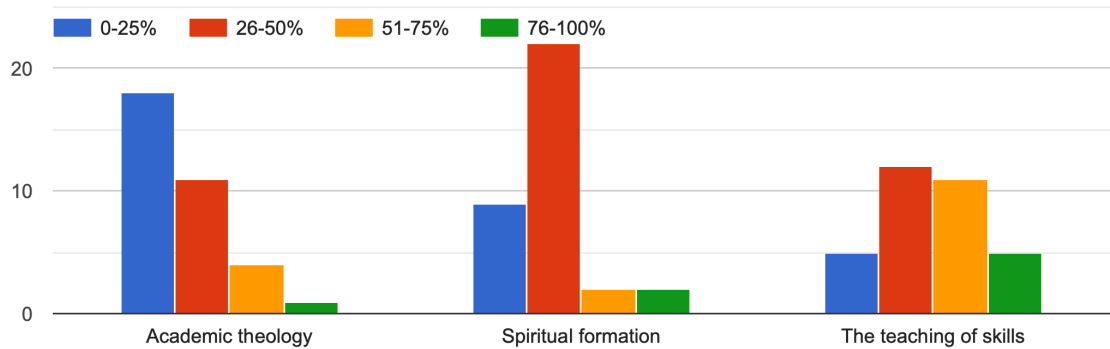


Figure 4.35 / TQ 9 Proportions of academic, formational and skills training from TQ respondents

The other area of mismatch was that the CPQ respondents felt that they were not being taught skills (60% of them according to figure 4.34), whereas 64% of the trainers thought that skills training made up either 26-50% or even 51-75% of the training (figure 4.35).

More specifically, both those being trained and those doing the training were asked what proportion of the training of church planters was concerned with leadership development, evangelism and missional training, and well-being. Again, the mismatch of perceptions is striking.

For leadership development, 54% of those being trained felt that this comprised 10% or less of the training (figure 4.36), whereas 37.1% of the trainers thought that 26-50% of their training was concerned with leadership development, and 11.4% of the trainers thought that actually more than half of the training was spent on leadership development (figure 4.37).

11. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is/was spent on leadership development

63 responses

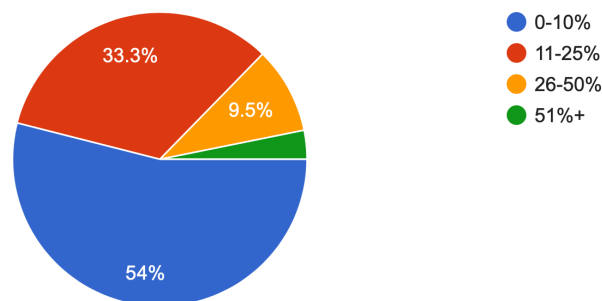


Figure 4.36 / CPQ 11 Percentage of training spent on leadership development according to CPQ respondents

11. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is spent on leadership development

35 responses

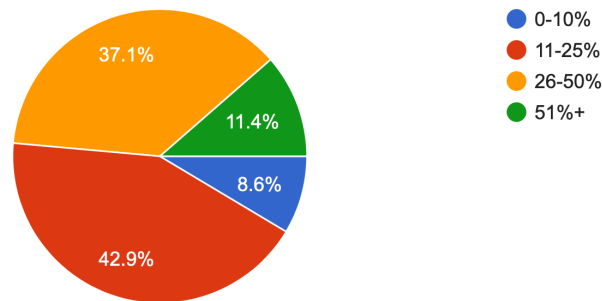


Figure 4.37 / TQ 11 Percentage of training spent on leadership development according to TQ respondents

This is corroborated by over 97% of the trainers indicating that leadership was one of the main topics covered in their training (figure 4.38). Interestingly, 74.2% of those being trained reported that they had found their leadership training helpful as they considered planting churches (figure 4.39). There appears to be some mutual confusion of understandings about what leadership and leadership development might be between the two groups of respondents. The trainers thought that leadership development was much more a part of the training than the CPQ respondents did. Nonetheless, those being trained did feel considerable benefit from the training they did receive.

10. Indicate which are the main topics covered in the training you offer to church planters:

35 responses

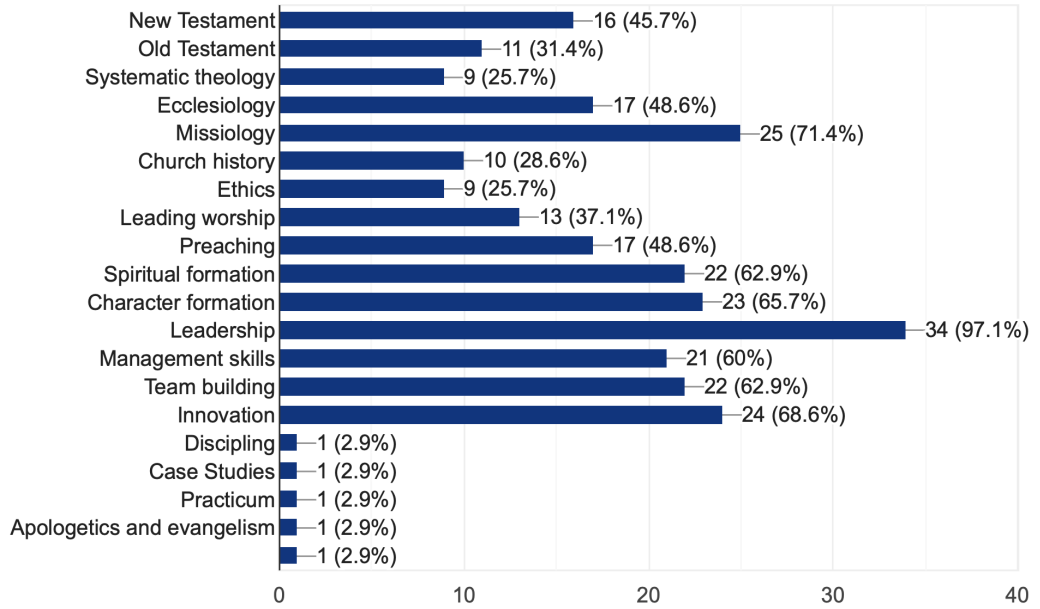


Figure 4.38 / TQ 10 Main areas of training offered by TQ respondents

9. Which of the following subjects has proved most helpful to you in your training, as you think about planting churches?

62 responses

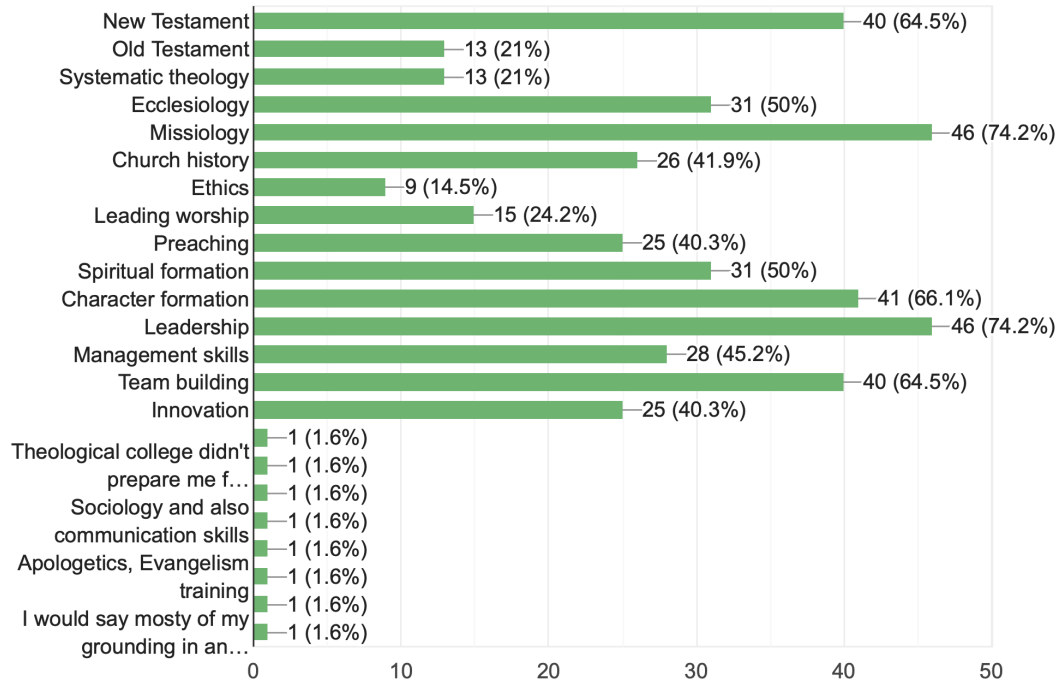


Figure 4.39 / CPQ 9 Areas of training which helped CPQ respondents

A similar pattern emerged with regards to evangelism and missional training.

For those being trained, 44.4% felt that mission and evangelism made up less than 10% of their training (figure 4.40), whereas for the trainers, 20% felt that more than half the training was about this (figure 4.41).

12. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is/was spent on evangelism or other missional training?

63 responses

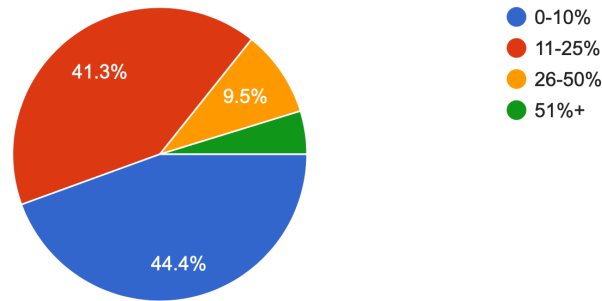


Figure 4.40 / CPQ 12 Percentage of training on evangelism and mission according to CPQ respondents

12. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is spent on evangelism or other missional training?

35 responses

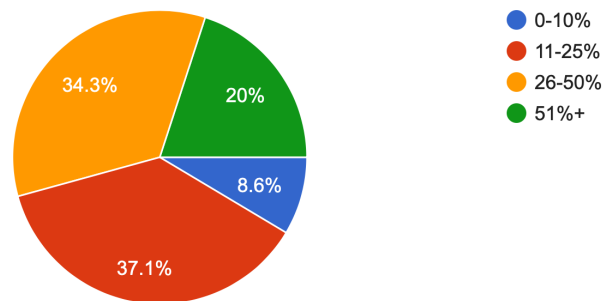


Figure 4.41 / TQ 12 Percentage of training on evangelism and mission according to TQ respondents.

This mismatch of perceptions is also discernible in answers to the more open ended questions. The trainers, in responding to question 21 of TQ which was about the aims and philosophy of their training, wrote frequently about the priority of mission in their plans:

“Aim is to keep people engaged in mission, church planting is a great tool for this. Our philosophy is ‘by all means to [save] some’”

“Missional”

“1. Missional . . .”

By contrast, those being trained frequently expressed their frustration at what they perceived to be the lack of evangelistic or mission focus in their training:

“Most training geared around attractional thinking not mission [at] all”

“An assumption that ministers in the CofE [sic] will just maintain existing structures, not innovate for mission”

“Church Planting and evangelism [were not on the curriculum]”

“[It would have been good to have been taught] Mission and Evangelism as done by a person and not an institution”

“Evangelism [was not taught]”

It may be germane that, of the CPQ respondents, only 9.5% were trained within the last 2 years, with 36.5% having been trained over 10 years ago (figure 4.42).

5. How long ago were you trained?

63 responses

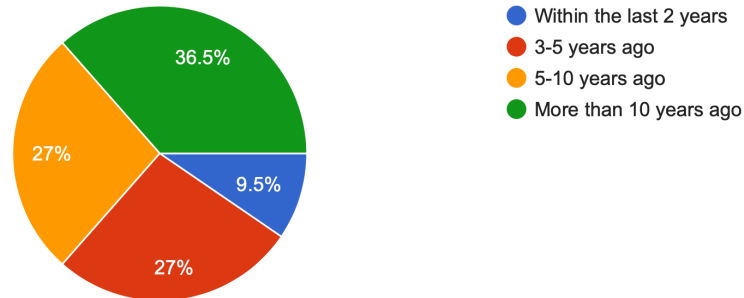


Figure 4.42 / CPQ 5 Length of time since CPQ respondents were trained

By contrast, nearly all those responding to the TQ are currently actively engaged in the training of church planters. Much has changed in theological training in recent years. One CPQ respondent, reflecting on their training experience, wrote “It was a different world,” and many respondents said that church planting was just not on the agenda when they trained, which is not the case now. Thus, of those CPQ respondents who had been previously trained, 68.3% thought that their training had not equipped them to plant churches (figure 4.43), whereas the figure for those currently being trained is lower. It is sobering, however, that of thirty-nine respondents who are currently being trained, twenty-one of them considered that their training is not equipping them to plant churches (figure 4.44).

8. Do you feel your training equipped you to plant churches?

63 responses

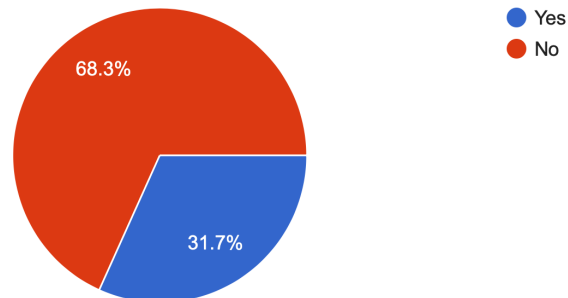


Figure 4.43 / CPQ 8 Percentage of CPQ respondents who had been previously trained on whether or not their training equipped them to plant churches

3. Would you say your current training (if applicable) is equipping you to plant churches?

39 responses

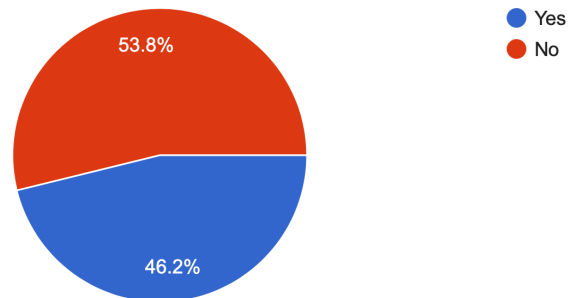


Figure 4.44 / CPQ 3 Percentage of CPQ respondents who were currently being trained on whether or not their training equipped them to plant churches

Turning to how the training is delivered, the respondents to TQ indicated that this is currently done through a mixture of a classroom model, small groups, and mentoring (figure 4.45). This was fleshed out through their responses to a further question (TQ 20) on delivery, which highlighted more relationally-based methods of training than the bald classroom model might imply. There was much mention of

cohorts, apprenticeships, the use of smaller groups, learning communities, and group work. Even lectures have a more personal feel than might initially be supposed—“We allow lots of interruption,” wrote one trainer; “We avoid lectures, opting for chunks of no more than 20 minutes of input,” wrote another.

15. How is the training delivered?

35 responses

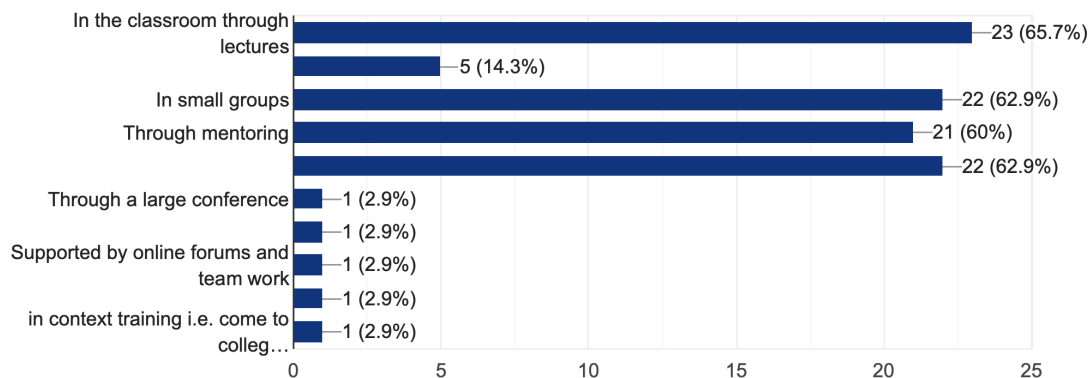


Figure 4.45 Methods of delivering church planter training (TQ 15)

Those being trained appreciated this variety, but, once again, there was a perception amongst CPQ respondents that training was largely delivered in a lecture format, with mixed effectiveness:

“Less lectures”

“Lots of big lectures – which was good for some subjects but not for the practical stuff”

“I found the lectures hard. Is there another way of communicating and learning about theology?”

Several CPQ respondents commented on the high place of essay writing in their training. One found this helpful (“as I’m an introvert and confident reader”), most were neutral, but a few were critical:

“I find actually doing stuff practically not writing essays sticks best in the long run”

“Training should [be] majority verbally assessed. I have never written an essay for my congregation but I have preached hundred[s] of sermons.”

The largest area of comment on delivery, for both TQ and CPQ respondents, was around the inter-relationship of learning, reflecting and action. This initially presents in a highly negative light, and so will be considered in the next section on obstacles in training church planters.

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

RQ2: What are the particular obstacles to training church planters?

Both the TQ and CPQ questionnaires had specific questions about obstacles in the training of church planters (TQ 18, CPQ 17). In addition, trainers were asked about what works and what does not work regarding the training they are offering (TQ 19), which made for a different perspective in some answers. Similarly, the BPIs had a specific question about the obstacles to the training of planters (BPI 2).

The major area of feedback from the questionnaires was about the inter-relation of academic and practical training, and this will be reported first. A further obstacle identified was a lack of clarity by what is meant by planting a church. There were reflections around time and resources. And there was a significant number of responses around the role of the Church of England as an institution. The BPI interviews

summarized and deepened all these concerns, and each placed the questionnaire data in wider perspectives.

To start with the inter-relationship of theory and practice, what one CPQ respondent called the “academia/pragmatism disconnect,” which he or she went on to explain: “The academy focuses on the theoretical and the ideal and the pure. Reality is neither [*sic*] of these things.” This was echoed by other CPQ respondents, sometimes with considerable feeling:

“Too much focus on academic theology within training.”

“Studying dry academic material with no practical application.”

“Theoretical lectures.”

“Initial training was very theoretical.”

“It was extremely academic and therefore one dimensional.”

“My ordination training did not train me to church plant. It trained me to write essays, preach sermons, and sit alongside colleagues representing the breadth of the Church of England.”

Those interviewed in the Best Practice Interviews were all also concerned about the application of theological learning in the training of church planters. One BPI interviewee expressed it vividly, stating, “I do think training needs to be practice, as well as theory really. I don’t know how you can do it with just the theoretical side really. Can you learn how to give birth to a baby? We could read some great books.”

Another BPI interviewee reflected on their experience of being a tutor in a T.E.I. and contrasted it in the training done on a specialist church planting course. Of the first, the interviewee stated: “When I do training of church planters at [the T.E.I.] it does not

produce church planters. It just informs them about church planting. When I train people on church planting courses, it changes them for church planting.” The interviewee reflected that those training without an immediate context for church planting tended to ask different sorts of questions (“Why?” questions), which could often camouflage hostility or indifference towards church planting, as opposed to those being trained who were actively engaged in church planting (who asked “How?” questions). Another BPI interviewee argued that all church planting training needs to be “on the ground in an actual church planting environment.”

Although this theme—that their training was “academic” and, as such, irrelevant to actual ministry—clearly surfaced in the CPQ responses, it was not as prevalent as one would have imagined. Ironically, it was perhaps more deeply felt by the trainers of church planters, arising from their experience of training church planters. Here are some typical TQ responses as to their perception of obstacles to the training of church planters:

“Getting prospective church planters to appreciate that missiology and theology deeply matter to the planting of fruitful churches.”

“Church planters (as entrepreneurs and agitators) . . . tend not to be very teachable.”

“Convincing innovators and entrepreneurial leaders that they need training”

“Persuading practical people of the need for academic study.”

Beneath this surface-level mutual frustration, lie some far more nuanced perceptions. Most respondents to both questionnaires recognized the need for both theological input and practical application, and there was a good deal of illuminating

reflection on the potential interaction between the two in the training of church planters. Respondents had mixed reactions to the teaching of reflective practice, but nearly all who mentioned it saw it as a key practical skill which church planters need. There were appeals for help in making connections between theology and practice, often linked with hearing stories from church planters. For instance:

“Theological engagement and developing critical thinking around a theology of church-planting and various models. Hearing the experience of people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Worked examples of different models”

“Connecting theology to methodology to stories of what works; reflection on practice coupled with input on methodology and theology”

“We frame everything through pioneering mission . . . Of course the learning itself is important too and we work very hard to make it genuinely a practical theology i.e. there is a strong relationship between theory and practice.”

And there were interesting suggestions around what theology should be taught, within an applied framework:

“I found anything that wasn’t applied wasn’t as helpful. I’d have liked to have done NT theology, while looking how its [*sic*] applied to mission and preaching for example.”

“Too little attention paid to church planting dynamics in the New Testament.”

“Although it’s fashionable to berate the academy for over-emphasizing theology, I think a good dose of ‘bible school’ would have [been] really useful.”

“[Training should provide] a solid theological base to work from – not just about missiology and ecclesiology but the foundations of Christian faith – so that good church planting is fed by good theology.”

“More on the Kingdom of God, more on living from the Spirit, far broader church history.”

“The evangelism and apologetics training has been paramount.”

These responses have been quoted at length to reflect the prevalence of such replies to the questionnaires and the depth at which respondents were grappling with the relationship of theory and practice (often expressed as theology and application). Two particularly thoughtful responses express this well. The first is from a CPQ respondent:

“Although the core theology modules don’t appear to aid church planting, they are the key to the role of the priest. The skills needed are twofold: firstly, the initial vision and drive to plant a church effectively, secondly, the wisdom and theological depth to feed and lead a church into spiritual depth”

And the second from a TQ respondent:

“We are a residential community who deliver training on site – largely before people are engaged in church planting. This might appear disadvantageous but the key advantage is that future leaders are solidly rooted in theology and so see church planting in a wider theological perspective – and not just as a series of technical activities.”

A related obstacle, particularly from CPQ respondents, was the experience (or lack of it) in church planting from their teachers. Six CPQ responses went directly or indirectly to concerns that they were being trained by people who had not actually

planted a church. This was also commented on by one of those interviewed in a Best Practice Interview: “[Trainers] need to be practitioners, people who know what they are talking about.” The interviewee interestingly went on to talk about the value of mistakes made in communicating good training. “There needs to be an authenticity about it,” said the interviewee. These responses need to be offset by the large percentage of TQ respondents who have been actively involved in church planting (see figure 4.19).

A recurring theme in both questionnaires and in the BPIs was around the lack of clarity of what was being planted. For some, this was about models of church being planted and the need for bespoke training for different types of church plants. For others (both trainers and planters), there was the distinction between regular church leadership and outreach and a more specific approach for church planting (and so, for trainers, how to fit church planter training into ordination training). For others, different ecclesiologies meant different understandings of church planting, most specifically Anglo-Catholic understandings of church. More widely, as one CPQ respondent put it, “We have a default of training people for a church that existed ten years ago, never mind one that will exist in ten years’ time.”

A prominent theme in all three Research Instruments was how church planting was to be situated within a wider missionary agenda. Notably this showed itself around the vocabulary of “pioneering.” “Is church planting a term within which pioneering sits or are they two different things?” wrote one TQ respondent. “Pioneering does not necessarily have the outcome of church but might have the outcome of a project or mission community or a transformed world. We find mission to be a much healthier way to frame training than church planting. Most of our students would self describe as

pioneers rather than church planters.” This brings ecclesiology to the fore in any training of church planters. Surprisingly, ecclesiology was not indicated as a main topic for church planter training by TQ respondents to the same extent as missiology (see figure 4.38 above). It became a key point for some respondents though when they reflected on what church planter training should be. One of the BPI interviewees put this strongly:

“The biggest theological obstacle . . . is the tendency to undermine the definition of church in order to do more. . . . [It] is cutting down the nature of the church theologically. So, basically, anything that you do, you can suddenly start to call the church. . . . And actually, I don’t think that’s really going to help us.”

Alongside these theological and methodological and pedagogical obstacles, were some practical logistical concerns. Time for training was an issue for those being trained, trainers, and BPI interviewees alike. Those being trained had other commitments, sometimes difficult commutes, and struggled with mid-week training. Those training, particularly in T.E.I.s, had full teaching timetables, and church planting had to fight for a space in the curricula, especially when set by the Church of England’s academic regulator. Similarly, finances were an obstacle, whether for the planters or the T.E.I.s training them or the Church of England more widely. More flexible patterns of training were suggested.

Sadly, the Church of England as an institution had an unanimously bad press from TQ, CPQ, and BPI respondents. It was widely viewed as wed to outmoded church and mission approaches, sometimes actively opposed to church planting, having a

culture of inertia, and having little vision for what the church might be in the future as opposed to the inherited past.

This is a good place to move to reporting the wider perspectives of the BPI interviews. Two interviewees focused on the obstacle of *who* should be being trained to plant churches. One interviewee was viewing current practice from the perspective of being “in a time of huge transition in training” in the Church of England. Social factors make for the church being marginalized in wider society, the U.K. now inhabiting an increasingly post-Christendom framework. How the churches which are to be planted are to position themselves missionally within British society must have a considerable impact on what church planters are to be trained to do. Concurrently, there are changes in training, with the increased use of technology and more widely understood learning about how training actually works and what is most effective. Selection criteria for those to plant churches should reflect these changed and changing circumstances, and the methods, environments, and outcomes of their training similarly. The interviewee said that the questions of this study are “the right ones to be asking at this time in history.” In Sensing’s terminology of “slippages” (the gaps in data) (197, 200-01), this perspective is profoundly significant: who is not being trained and what they are not being trained for are as germane to the future training of church planters as lessons to be learned from current practice, however strong it might prove to be.

The second BPI interviewee focused on those potential planters who are currently being missed or excluded from church planting because of current practice. The interviewee told the story of the cattle herder Caedman, in sixth and seventh century England, who was called out to mission by the Abbess Hilda. Caedman was tongue-tied

but had a dream in which he was singing the gospel. Hilda got to hear about it and released Caedman into mission and ministry. It was the first time the gospel had been sung in the Anglo-Saxon language. The interviewee drew the parallel of those in contemporary indigenous English cultures, who are tongue-tied. They are probably not well educated and do not have the language of sophisticated theological or social cultures, but “they were the ones with the strategies for church planting or congregation planting” in those parts of England which the Church of England most struggles to reach. The interviewee has considerable experience of both theological education and diocesan strategies for church planting and reflected that such people, modern day Caedmans, can very easily be made to feel second class by the Church of England’s current selection criteria and training. The interviewee saw this as a considerable obstacle to current church planting and training. “Church planting is about reaching people who haven’t heard the gospel, often you need people who can speak that language to put the gospel to them.” Current practice is not doing this. Another major “slippage.”

The last wider perspective from the BPI interviews is the spiritual side of church planting. Although prayer was mentioned occasionally in the responses to the TQ and CPQs and formation was identified as a significant element of training, it was only this BPI which drew out the implications and added a thicker description. The interviewee used a combination of scriptural and historical examples to paint a picture of church planting training and practice as a combination of deep engagement with God in the “hidden place” of prayer and courageous missionary activity. The interviewee emphasized the challenging nature of the journey of being called to plant churches, and

the need for encouragement, support, spiritual protection and power, not least during the time of training. Spiritual warfare is a reality, and often resurrection power is accompanied by crucifixion pain. The interviewee reflected on a training approach which took full cognizance of this. Ephesians 6 and the armour of God was suggested as what church planters most need to be trained in, especially a deep knowledge of Scripture, a control of the thought life, and praying in the Spirit. The interviewee contrasted academic excellence with spiritual power. That which “really shifts stuff is all supernatural.” A profound obstacle to the training of church planters was another “slippage”—the intentional equipping of church planters for the emotional and spiritual realities of their calling.

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

RQ3: What are the best practices for training church planters in the Diocese of London?

This Research Question goes to the heart of this study: what elements of current best practice in the training of church planters can be identified, with a view to developing robust and increasingly effective theological training for church planters in the Diocese of London and potentially further afield.

The questionnaires invited responses around describing the best elements of current and recent training, and questions around more aspirational elements (CPQ 15, 18, 20; 19, 21; TQ 19, 20, 21; 22). The BPIs moved more towards best practice (BPI 4, 5, 6).

There was surprising unanimity around what best practice in the training of church planters might look like, although there were also significant differences of

emphasis within each category. This summary of the data will report the findings under the headings of theology, learning / engagement, context, relationship, and formation.

Best Practice in Theology: As to theology, it was clear that what was required was a mixture of ecclesiology and missiology. This is squarely in line with the findings of the literature review of this study. The missionary imperative of church planting resounded through both questionnaires and all three BPI interviews. What was different was the place of the church in such missionary activity and what constituted a church. Although there were different answers to that question, they were united in asking the question. Some preferred to see church planting within the context of pioneering and mission more generally, whereas others argued that, in order to plant a church, planters needed to know what a church is. Those advocating a pioneering position tended to be more theologically precise and explicit than those arguing for (or assuming) the priority of the church in mission. Trainers used phrases such as “gospel, church, and context,” “a high view of the Church’s role in the plans of God, a commitment to the *Missio Dei* and mobilization,” and “missional – framed through a wider lens of pioneering and not solely church planting.” The planters articulated a similar ambivalence:

“Diverse / conflicting vision of planting / planters. “What is it to plant a church” has many answers . . . If there is no blueprint for what a plant and a planter looks like, then it is well-nigh impossible to develop people to do it.”

“When I trained there were two streams: Pioneer stream and Main stream.

Those in the main stream were not really trained much on church planting and fresh expressions. Of those from the Pioneer stream I don’t know many that have planted churches.”

“I still think there is a confusion of language between ‘church planting’ and Pioneering. I would not see myself as a ‘church planter’ but as a Pioneer Minister.”

Best practice in training planters would demand greater clarity around the intersection of ecclesiology and missiology.

A further theological angle was around the work of the Holy Spirit and the life of the Kingdom of God. Several respondents mentioned the need for teaching on the Kingdom of God to be central to any church planter training. The Spirit was mentioned, but largely in passing: “We need Spirit filled training,” “As planters we need to ‘keep in step with the Spirit.’ It’s his church.” In one of the BPI interviews, this was drawn out more. Taking the story of Mary and the Magnificat, the interviewee took Mary as someone who was afraid in light of the enormity of the purposes of God, just as a church planter might be. They said, “Sometimes the work of God is quite frightening at first. Goodness me, how on earth is this going to happen? Well, the power of the Most High will overshadow you.” Without in any way using the phrase in a partisan way, the interviewee talked of the power of the Spirit as fundamental to church planting training and practice. This was partly a doctrinal point but also, and perhaps more so, a positioning of the training of planters away from an abstract learning zone which was somehow separate from life, mission, and church planting in action and instead moved it to the place where the training was seen as part of the actual offensive of mission in a contested territory. The analogy of army training was used. Apparently, the worst blow a fresh military force can suffer is a reverse at training camp. Reflecting on the current Church of England selection criteria for ordination training, the interviewee drew out a

distinction between knowing about the Christian faith and actually having faith itself. Church planting requires great faith in the purposes of God, often against significant opposition and obstacles from both within and outside the church. For Jesus, it was seeing faith itself in others which excited him and its lack which discouraged him. Best practice in the training of church planters should position theological training within the context of both action and an active, living faith in the active, living God. The intersection between missiology and ecclesiology should also be an intersection with pneumatology and some focus on God's kingdom or the Lordship of Christ: something which acknowledges the activity and sufficiency of God for this venture of faith.

Best Practice as to Learning / Engagement: This leads into the second heading of learning or how those being trained can best and most effectively engage with their training. Although all respondents and interviewees acknowledged the need for both theology and application and although there were articulate voices arguing for separation of the two, the majority of data (from both the two questionnaires and the interviews) argued for a thoroughly integrated learning, often prioritizing and privileging action and seeing learning as reflection on that action.

Trainers and those being trained were generally aligned on this. Some typical TQ responses were that it was "practical in-service training" which was most effective; "They need more than classroom instruction. . . . Implementation is the issue"; "Church planting is not a theory per se, but a field of praxis"; "The most valuable thing to offer seems to be reflection on practice." For those being trained, it was actual mission, placements, being with church planters in action or hearing their stories which they

found most transformational. An approximate third of all CPQ responses to the question about this could be summarized under those headings. A typical CPQ response was:

“Church planting is better caught than taught. . . . We learn it by doing it. We reflect on it while we go and we learn while we go.”

Not infrequently this was linked to theological reflection, as, for example, in this response:

“I think for me learning about Church Planting has been a dialectical process by which I would reflect my academic learnings in the field or sometimes the other way round.”

This was also reflected in the Best Practice Interviews. One interviewee argued that all church planter training should be done in the field, and the route should be mission. In other words, potential planters should be identified as those who were gifted in personal mission before they moved into church planting. Another interviewee quoted an anonymous Second World War American General who said, “As a man [sic] trains – so will he fight.” The third interviewee went as far as to suggest that there should be some kind of metaphorical firewall between the theologians and the practitioners, and questioned whether church planting training should take place within the context of theological colleges rather than in more active contexts.

Contemporary training arenas which are not part of T.E.I.s did come in for considerable praise from respondents. These tended to have a “bias to action,” to employ what one respondent called “just in time” training. One would not take planters or teams until “they have a date, place and authority to plant.” Another respondent combined being placed with a church at the centre of a multiplying church planting

network, visiting actual church plants, and being trained on their in house course.

Another combined occasional weeks out for training in mission and apologetics with frequent missions. All forms of training spoke affirmatively of the role of mentors, coaches, internship, or apprenticeship schemes, since all help church planters “on the job.”

Best Practice as to Context: A third area of best practice was the central importance of a contextual approach to church planting. This arose in part from an anxiety from some respondents to the TQ and CPQ questionnaires that there was merely one prevailing model of church planting which, whilst of value in some contexts, was not deemed to be transferable to other situations, cultures or environments. One TQ respondent articulated what others also mentioned: “[The aim and philosophy of the training offered was] to equip people with theological tools to engage in contextual mission within a church planting context (ie listening and responding to context rather than adopting a fixed model).” Another spoke of their training as having “a cross cultural or contextual imagination embedded in our approach.” Interestingly, there was far less of an emphasis on contextualisation amongst the planters, although this principle was strongly affirmed by the BPI interviewees—one seeing this as the primary theological task in training planters who already had some degree of theological education, another seeing context as the inescapable locus of planting, and the other defining it as essential to ongoing mission in England. Exposure to different models and different contexts during training was frequently recommended.

Best Practice as to Relationship: A fourth area of best practice was the near unanimous affirmation of cohort learning and training. A relational environment was seen as immensely effective in the training of church planters. Trainers, planters, and BPI interviewees all emphasized the value of learning with like-minded peers and travelling a journey of church planting training together with them. A typical response, which will serve as emblematic of many others, was: “Most transformational for me was being alongside my peers. They helped me to realise the reality of the Kingdom of God, and to begin to recognise the activity of the Holy Spirit on earth as in heaven.”

Other CPQ respondents spoke of the “wisdom in the room,” of encouragement and support, and of the value of reflecting together on shared experiences. TQ respondents emphasized more the value of smaller groups for building character and forming planters in godliness and holiness. All three BPI interviewees affirmed the place of being trained in teams or described a training culture of learning together, usually in action.

Best Practice as to Formation: Lastly, best practice emerged in addressing the formation of the character of the church planters being trained. Sometimes the emphasis of this was on building resilience, the forming habits of prayer, or the inculcating inescapable commitment to mission (“bleeding mission”, as one TQ respondent graphically put it). Some CPQ respondents spoke of facing their demons and sharing vulnerabilities, and several respondents spoke of an “undefended leader” course or training on a course from a Christian psychologist. One BPI interviewee, who is also a bishop, spoke about the pain of dealing with clergy later in life who were acting out

issues which could and should have been confronted and healed earlier in life, potentially in training.

Quite a few respondents spoke of leadership as an integral part of church planting or as a core component of training being offered. This was corroborated by the data of topics taught by TQ respondents (see figure 4.38). This emphasis was not taken deeper in responses to personal development, and it was unclear what church planter leadership might look like. Leadership is undoubtedly popular in the church planter training described by respondents to the questionnaires for this study, but far more powerful and effective seemed to be a growth in self-awareness, healthy habits, spiritual routines and rhythms, and resilience.

Interestingly, there was no reference in any of the responses to the questionnaires to personal vision or calling. Although there was mention of a need for bespoke training for different styles of plants and different contexts, there was no suggestion of bespoke training based on differing personalities, strengths and weaknesses, or gifts. Most striking of all was the suggestion from one BPI interviewee that the heart of church planting training should be the creation of a culture of “extreme courage.”

Summary of Major Findings

The data yielded the following major findings. They will be explored in more detail in the following chapter, together with their potential implications.

1. As to the theological content for the training of church planters, the key areas were, not surprisingly, ecclesiology and missiology. There was more of a need for a clear ecclesiology, but how this intersected with missiology was also significant. What was new was the need for pneumatology as a key element of the theological training of

church planters or, at least, the positioning of theology within an experiential missionary experience. Whilst there was a striking lack of definition of the gospel for the church planting enterprise, there was a call for an immersion in Scripture in the training of church planters.

2. Following on from this was the finding that training should be anchored within the field of practice, rather than the classroom, and, wherever possible, delivered by church planting practitioners. There were questions about whether or not T.E.I.s, for all the good work they do, were best suited to this methodology.

3. Another finding was the need to ground training in a selection and training praxis which saw the recruitment and equipping of those not currently being drawn into church planting who, by virtue of their social background, were better able to reach people in London and England who were not currently being reached.

4. The data was overwhelming that church planter training was best delivered in highly relational contexts, such as cohorts, small groups, apprenticeships or mentoring or coaching relationships.

5. The last key finding was that church planter training should give a priority to the person of the church planter, recognizing the emotional and spiritual challenges of planting churches. Such training should take place within a context that saw training as much an active part of church planting as the delivery of the plant in due course.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This Chapter is the synthesis of all that has gone before. Bearing in mind the problem which this study attempted to address was the effectiveness of current church planter training in England, this chapter takes the findings from the research project into current practice and puts them through the analytic and synthetic filters of the current literature, a biblical and theological grid, and the personal experience of the researcher, with a view to making recommendations for an approach to training church planters which is both theologically robust and practically effective. The limitations of the present study are described, along with those findings which were particularly surprising to the researcher, before some recommendations are made in conclusion.

Major Findings

1. The pneumatological interaction of ecclesiology with missiology

Not surprisingly, the key areas for theological investigation for church planters were the nature of the church and what is meant by mission. What was new to me was the importance of the interaction of the two for church planters and how it was this inter-relationship which moved training from being something perceived as academic and of limited practical application to the actual realities of planting a church into something dynamic and effective. The research demonstrated that, for many church planters, it was the role of the Holy Spirit as the bridge between ecclesiology and missiology which was the catalyst for their training catching fire.

This finding was in line with the current literature and built on it. There was unanimity from the literature review that the core area of theological training for church

planters was the intersection between ecclesiology and missiology (e.g. Croft, *Mission-shaped Questions* 14; Moynagh, *Church in Life* 7; Murray, *Church Planting* 53; Ott and Wilson 26; Paas 265). Steven Croft's summary statement bears repetition: The key areas that need serious theological resourcing . . . are in the two areas of reflection on mission on the one hand and on the life of the church, and particularly the interface between the two (*Mission-shaped Questions*, p. 14).

What was striking to me was how competing ecclesiologies could effectively stymie both theological and missionary action, as laid out in the work of such diverse theologians as Newbigin, Minear and Dulles. There were also hints of this in occasional responses to the questionnaires for this research project, with competing ecclesiologies between pioneers or church planters or between more catholic or evangelical planters, making it hard for these impressive individuals to engage with church planting. Interestingly, Newbigin, Minear and Dulles overcame this impasse by locating ecclesiology within broader theological visions, such as Christology or eschatology. Something similar was happening in the responses to the questionnaires about current theological training of church planters. When responses located ecclesiology by itself as the most significant locus of theological training or mission by itself in a similar position over against other theological subjects, there was a tendency to find theological training either problematic or static. The way through this obstacle for some respondents was to locate the competing demands of ecclesiology and missiology within broader theological categories, such as the kingdom of God or, especially, the power of the Holy Spirit. This had the interesting effect for the respondents of lifting training from something which might have previously been thought of as something of a

classroom based activity into something much more active, engaging and missionally significant.

Such an insight is borne out by the insights of the missiologists cited in the literature review from both Catholic and Protestant backgrounds, who argued for mission to be understood as an overflow of the Trinitarian life of God (with an especial view to the *missio Dei*), as part of the activity of God known as the kingdom of God, or as focused around the proclamation in word and deed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Such scholarly unanimity brings into question the theological prioritization of ecclesiology in church planting from some writers (such as Murray, Paas, or Payne), or this unanimity at least argues for a more relative place for it within this more wide-reaching understanding of mission. Church planting is better viewed as something which requires more theological as well as practical dynamism, and a refusal to privilege ecclesiology over missiology (or *vice versa*). Rather, there should be a relativizing of both categories within a wider view of church planting as something issuing from the being and activity of God himself.

Scripture bears this out. There was much comment in the literature of the paucity of references to the church in the ministry and teaching of Jesus (e.g., Ott and Wilson), and it is striking that Acts does not appear to make more of the missionary work of Paul as to do with the founding of churches. Such an emphasis, though, would be contrary to other strands of New Testament teaching, notably in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians where ecclesiology is positioned as the lynchpin of God's action in the world. Clearly, responsible biblical exegesis will have to find a way of holding the emphases on both mission and church together. John Davidson helped to highlight the prominent

place for the kingdom of God and the power of the Holy Spirit in how Jesus trained the Twelve.

Little attention was given by respondents to the questionnaires and interviewees to the place of the gospel for the training of church planters. Writers such as Tim Keller and J. D. Payne, by contrast, would see this as crucial to both the formation of the church planter and for any understanding of the ministry of church planting. It may be that this is a specific contribution that more evangelical church plant training can bring to the enterprise. It may also be that a clear grasp of the gospel as “the power of God” (e.g., Rom. 1.16) performs the same function for evangelicals as a wider view of the kingdom of God or the power of the Holy Spirit does for other theological traditions.

The first finding then related to what might be called “overt” theology. Church planters were effectively trained theologically when ecclesiology and missiology were taught as dynamically interacting within the process of church planting, and not seen as somehow competing with one another. Noteworthy, especially in the experience of those being trained, was a welcoming of locating church planting within a wider theological frame of the power of the Spirit or the Kingdom of God. This emphasis may be because the majority of respondents to the training questionnaire (CPQ) self-identified as evangelical or charismatic. Other Christian traditions may express this differently.

2. The theological training of church planters anchored even more in the field of practice

John Davidson and Robert Banks demonstrated from Scripture that, for both Jesus and Paul, the context of training for ministry was the practice of ministry. Banks wrote: “It was not *preparation* of the Twelve *for* mission that was uppermost in his [Jesus’s] mind, but *engagement* of the Twelve *in* mission” (111, emphasis original), and both men quote the striking phrase of the “mobile seminary” (Banks 106; Davidson 26). There was a real reflection in the responses to both questionnaires that theological training of church planters has made great efforts to align itself more with this model of training, with the increasing prevalence of models such as placements and mixed mode training, along with the teaching of reflective practice for church planters.

What was striking to me was a certain mismatch of perceptions between those being trained for church planting and those doing the training. Although there was substantial (and encouraging) overlap in the aims of training between trainers and those being trained, it was sobering that 68% of those who had previously been trained felt that their training had not equipped them to plant churches (figure 4.43). This is partly explicable in that the majority of those responding to the questionnaire of those trained to plant churches were reflecting on an experience that was more than 5 years old (figure 4.42). Many were trained for ministry before church planting was explicitly on any curriculum; much has, happily, changed since then. Nonetheless, this should not mask the uncomfortable challenge that for those who are currently being trained, 54% did not think that their current training is equipping them to plant churches (figure 4.44).

This may be for many reasons, but, when it came to thinking about effectiveness in training, substantial numbers of respondents (both to CPQ and TQ) stated that it was in the practice of mission and church planting, with reflection on this experience in the

field, that they felt most equipped for the work of church planting. A third of all CPQ responses (those trained or being trained for church planting) responded in this way. Typical was this response: “Church planting is better caught than taught. . . . We learn it by doing it. We reflect on it while we go and we learn while we go.”

This accords with the literature on adult learning. This was new to me before undertaking this study, and I was struck by the unanimity of the literature in seeing effectiveness in learning as being directly linked to experience. From the foundational work of John Dewey in the 1930s to David Kolb’s seminal work in the 1980s to more contemporary reflections such as that of Donald Schön from the world of professional training, all the literature speaks with one voice: in Kolb’s words “[learning is] the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (qtd. in Merriam and Bierema 108). This insight has been vigorously applied to the world of theological education by Robert Banks and Perry Shaw with their critique of the limitations of much contemporary theological training. Banks’s citation from Charles Van Engen bears repetition when he argues that it is only in modern times that theological education has seen itself as being defined by a university approach to ministry training and “for the first time emphasized *knowing*, at the expense of *doing* and *being*” (135). Although such conclusions have been noted and applied by some theological educators (such as Croft, *The Future of the Parish System*, Schofield and Clutterbuck, Jolley and Jones), the full implications seem yet to have been taken on board for the majority of respondents to the questionnaires for this study.

This was most explicitly stated in the Best Practice Interviews. Each of these movement leaders in church planting had highly critical things to say of what they

perceived to be the academic approach to the current theological training of church planters. Each, instead, argued for training “on the job” for training to be positioned as reflection on practice.

The BPIs questioned whether T.E.I.s were the best place for church planters to be trained. The learning environment was so skewed towards an inherently academic or university model that it served to remove those being trained from the actual contexts into which they would be planting their churches. There was a consistent questioning, as well, from both BPIs and the respondents to the CPQ, of whether church planter training was actually best delivered by practitioners rather than teachers in theological institutions. This chimes in with the arguments of Perry Shaw and Robert Banks when they argue for the crucial importance of who the educator is in the teaching experience. One of the BPI interviewees argued for the need for “authenticity” in the training of church planters, implying that the current practices of many T.E.I.s were inauthentic because taught by those who were not involved in church planting. Over against this should be noted the encouraging statistic that nearly 70% of the TQ respondents had actually planted a church, figure 4.19.

Two final reflections on this finding. The first is the tendency to separate academic learning, which is usually called theology, from the actual field of practice of church planting. Stephen Bevans and others have argued for a broader understanding of theology than that, which sees context as being as much theological as the context in which more classroom learning is applied or reflected upon. Perry Shaw called this “the faulty epistemology of modernist objectivism” (76–77). This study agrees with this

analysis and so argues that the whole of its subject matter is to be viewed as lying within the remit of effective theological training.

The second reflection is a delicate and painful one for me. There appears to be a blind spot for many in theological training. This is signaled generally by the widespread sense that there is something amiss in the current training of church planters (e.g. Lings and Murray, Hunsberger, Estherline, and Davidson’s five studies—see above, p. 68). And it comes out more specifically in the striking mismatch of the perceptions of those training church planters and those being trained. The literature and the research for this study point to shortcomings in the current training of church planters, which is not being adequately acknowledged or addressed by those training church planters. This is delicate to me because I so admire those currently training church planters and count many of them as friends. It is clear, though, that recent moves to relocate the training of church planters nearer to the actual practice of church planting are to be welcomed, but that this needs to be taken further.

3. Theological training for church planters which is congruent with the demands of our current missionary situation

A cardinal driver for me for this study has been the searing statistic that 92% of the population of England have nothing to do with church. As the research progressed, it became apparent that, whilst the vast majority were convinced of the missionary imperative for the church in general and for the training of church planters in particular, there was more of a mixed attitude to the kind of changes which would be necessitated to reach the 92% in the English context. 91% of those being trained for church planting stated that they were prepared to innovate in terms of forms of church (figure 4.28), and

99% were committed to reaching those the church is not currently reaching. By sad contrast, there was a unanimous perception that the Church of England as an institution was outmoded, was even opposed to church planting, and was set on training clergy, in particular, for a form of church that was outdated and with no vision for reaching the future. Sometimes, those being trained criticized their training institutions for preparing them for existing church structures and not to be missionaries to a changing culture.

This perspective had more specific applications. One was that a perceived emphasis still on academic training was having a detrimental effect on missional effectiveness and was a mis-step in preparing church planters. Aspects of the literature support this: for example, Christian Schwartz's devastating finding of the "direct inverse correlation between denominational growth and educational expectations" (qtd. in Shaw 17). Another was in patterns and practices of the selection of church planters: for instance Michael Moynagh's suggestion that the current practice of selecting, then training, then deploying should be replaced by a method of training those who are currently in the midst of fruitful missional work (*Church in Life* 310–13). Another was the core sense from Croft, Male and Moynagh that a sense of missionary identity was key to the theological formation of church planters, something backed up by Thorlby's contrasting reports into London church planting, where he argues that the effectiveness of those East End planters was not a matter of personality but rather of "mind set." Yet another was the cry from the Church of England's Renewal and Reform sub-group of its General Synod for "more ministers suited for new forms of church and non-traditional settings."

Most powerful of all was the BPI interviewee who argued passionately that the kind of church planter who could best reach those parts of England and English society where the Church of England is currently conspicuously unsuccessful was actually being missed. The interviewee has considerable experience of mission and church planting in situations of urban deprivation and argued that the people with the best strategies for reaching such areas actually come from them. The current systems of selection and training mitigate strongly against such people, who frequently have little by way of formal education and often have had bruising experiences of life. Such a reflection accords well with the definitions of adult learning as the transmutation of experience into learning through processes of active reflection. One might add in, too, Perry Shaw's point of the importance of the person and experience of the educator and her or his relationship with the learning cohort: there are currently very few theological educators and church planting trainers from such backgrounds.

My own observation, as the research progressed, has been the significance of allowing evangelistic urgency to release theological trainers into fresh ways of seeing the opportunities and demands of our missionary context and encouraging them into a freedom to re-imagine how people who are not currently planting churches could be trained, deployed, and released to plant new kinds of churches in areas where the Church of England is having little missionary success. One wonders about the connection with Paul's burning missionary passion ("woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel", 1 Cor. 9.16; "But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace," Acts 20.24) and the flexibility and imagination of his

missionary methods (“I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some,” 1 Cor. 9.22; “I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish – hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome,” Rom. 1.14–15). Does not the logic of the incarnation drive us not just to contextual mission but also to the practice of methods of theological training that best inhabit those contexts into which new churches must be planted?

The third finding is that we must be more radical and more flexible in the training of our church planters on account of the urgent times in which we live, and we must have the courage to follow through on the implications of needing to train new sorts of people in new ways to plant new sorts of churches in new locations and contexts.

4. Training best delivered in cohorts engaged in active ministry

This finding is not controversial, and followed the unanimous testimony of Scripture, the literature, and investigations into current and best practice. Church planters are trained most effectively when they do so with others, preferably in peer groups and ideally in some contexts where they can reflect together on praxis, as well as knowledge.

This had struck me from my own experience of training church planters in the London-based Church Planting Course, where learning and planning in teams is a central feature of the programme. The practice of Jesus with the Twelve and Paul with his co-workers corroborates this. John Davidson’s argument for a Missional Apprenticeship model and Robert Banks’s and Perry Shaw’s positioning of theological education within the practice of mission all back this up. Likewise, there was

widespread appreciation in the responses to the questionnaire in this study for those being trained for opportunity to be with their peers, especially in shared missionary activity. Sometimes the exigencies of the timetable for the larger training institutions meant that this aspect could only find expression in placements, but the literature and the research data from this project align with the Scriptural testimony in arguing for making this dynamic of cohorts learning together in active mission the centre for the effective training of church planters. Many T.E.I.s are already doing this, and many courses and church-based trainings have made it their own methodology. This study affirms this methodology and urges that it be done more and more. One interesting reflection from a Best Practice Interview urged a change of mindset such that, where training precedes deployment, training is now viewed as being as much part of active missionary service as the planting of the churches themselves.

5. The person of the church planter as a collaborator in the mission of God as a key part of theological training

A standout moment for me in reviewing the literature concerning the theological training of church planters was John Davidson's conclusion that, in the way that Jesus trained the Twelve, faith was a key—perhaps the key—component to their training (33). I have much appreciated the view of the formation of church planters, which I had largely thought of in terms of the spiritual disciplines and Rules of Life, but a fresh perception for me has been to see the adequate preparation of church planters for the demands of their work as being a core task of any theological training. The view of Jesus's discipleship training as located in the activities of daily life and in reflection on whatever came up in active missionary service provides a sound biblical basis for this

view. Davidson's insight is that what Jesus is particularly training the Twelve for is the life of faith, the belief that they could be used in inaugurating and implementing the life of the Kingdom of God in word and deed.

The responses to the two questionnaires for this study were illuminating in just how much the emotional as well as intellectual aspects of this formation were appreciated. These should be viewed as being as much theological as those aspects of training which have been traditionally seen as core to the academic curriculum. Reflections on resilience, family life, transparency, as well as the development of rhythms and practices of prayer, Scripture reading, and shared life were all spoken of warmly. Many trainers were deeply impressive in their commitment to seeing church planters adequately formed in terms of character and wisdom for the life that lay ahead of them.

Two observations have struck me. The first is how such formation is often viewed as being separate from the theological training of the church planter. Just as the cognitive aspects of training have frequently been separated from the affective and behavioural, rather than being seen as part of a holistic whole, just so has character formation been hived off from theology. Scripture teaches us that we are to view the formation of our characters through the lens of the missionary calling which God places upon our lives. The findings of Croft, Male, Moynagh, and Thorlby all point in the direction that when church planters begin to understand themselves explicitly as church planters that they somehow best grow into the ministry and are able to meet its demands. The theology of church planting is crucial to the inner formation of the church planter and the effective preparation of them for this work.

The second observation is that character formation happens in the fire of active missionary engagement. The training methods of Jesus and Paul make clear that it is not so much that a person's character is prepared in advance for the work of church planting, and then he or she lives out what he or she has been prepared for. Rather, it is in the midst of real life challenges and demands that persons are formed by the Holy Spirit, through various means, more and more into the likeness of Christ. The Twelve learned to pray like Jesus by seeing him at prayer in the middle of a ministry trip. They learned the limitations of their faith when they could not cast out the demon from the boy at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration. They learned about service by seeing Jesus wash their feet.

This was most strikingly brought out in one of the Best Practice Interviews when the interviewee spoke of the need for church planter training to be a place for drawing out and inculcating "extreme courage." This is not dissimilar to Jesus's berating the disciples for their lack of faith when they thought they were going to drown on the Sea of Galilee. Planting a church can sometimes feel like being caught in a firestorm, and learning ways to respond and to resist can be crucial to the life of the planter and the plant. Theological reflection on themes such as opposition, spiritual warfare, suffering, and the cross, seen within the theological frame of mission, in the midst of the actual experience, can lead to some of the most powerful learning for any church planter. Training should allow for as much of this sort of engagement as possible through Scripture, hearing the stories of other church planters, and reflection on their own work and ministries.

Once again, this finding lines up with other learning in this study—that theological training for the church planter extends well beyond the classroom and asks for the application of theology to the exigencies of the lived experience of active missionary service. The self-understanding of the church planter as someone who is actively participating in God’s mission in the world by planting churches is a key element to their personal formation and needs to be addressed as much theologically as psychologically.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

Many of the findings of this study are supportive of current practice and are deeply encouraging to the many who are doing such a good job in the training of our church planters. The challenge of the findings is that these same good practices now urgently need to be developed and the logic of their rightness be taken further if church planters are to be more effectively trained.

Curriculum design: First of all, there are implications for those tasked with the design of any curriculum for the training of church planters. There is an exciting opportunity to reframe doctrines which have traditionally had little to say to each other and to situate ecclesiology and missiology within a mutually affirming relationship. Perhaps these doctrines and their implications can be drawn out together from biblical narratives of God’s kingdom and action in the world and linked together with pneumatological studies. The more these biblical and theological studies can be located within the framework of actual ministry the better. Could prayer for church plants be incorporated into biblical and theological studies, or could prayer times be framed within biblical and theological teachings?

Learning and praxis: Secondly, there are implications for how training can be situated within a framework of praxis. There are doubts as to whether current models of theological training are sufficient for this. Residential models, notwithstanding their creative commitment to placements and missions, are still so resolutely linked to a place which is separate from the locus of ministry that the message of the implicit curriculum (that church planting happens separately from the spiritual life of the residential community) overwhelms the explicit teaching about situated learning, however well done it is. Even those institutions committed to mixed mode teaching still have the centre of community life in buildings separated from where mission and church planting take place.

There is potential for exciting reconfigurations of where theological training takes place for church planters. If there were ways of reversing the current trend (that church planters come away to seminary) such that seminary, in effect, comes to the church planters right where they are planting churches, this would send powerful messages and greatly enhance effective training.

Manner of delivery of training: Thirdly, there are implications and creative possibilities around the whole manner of delivery of the training of church planters. Some elements of the theology will still best be delivered in a lecture-style, but there are freedoms on offer to online training, for example, that are not available for the old model of people sitting listening to an expert speaking from the front of the room. Further than this, there is the potential for a much more reflective approach, with teaching and discussion and prayer following on from an activity. Were such training to take place within teams of church planters, whilst they were actively engaged in church

planting, and were such training to be delivered by fellow practitioners, then the whole dynamic of the experience would be changed, with expectations of informed practice rather than what Perry Shaw might call a more “modernist” approach, or a university model of education.

There are potential implications for the training of both ordinands and lay leaders around the timing of training. Were potential church planters to be identified whilst they were planting churches and then be trained *in situ* or were those at college or other training institutions expected to make the primary focus of their studies the planting of an actual church, with those training them facilitating theological learning in the midst of their mission, this would approximate much more closely to the training methods of Jesus and Paul. Such an approach might be far more conducive to those from non-educational backgrounds and would remove the necessity, expense, and disruption of removing church planters from the very communities into which they would be ideally placed to plant churches.

The Church of England more widely: Fourth, there are implications for the more institutional side of the Church of England. It is most unfortunate (and perhaps not entirely fair) that the institution is regarded with such wariness or even hostility by many church planters. Were different models for the training of church planters to be introduced and financed by the institution (whether by senior staff, dioceses or the central denominational training bodies), this might help. There is the possibility of a whole fresh approach, which is not dependent on academic requirements and measurements, being introduced to run in parallel with the current system.

Accreditation needs to happen in some form, but it is questionable, in the light of much

of the literature and the questionnaires and interviews in this study, whether academic measurement is the most appropriate for the effective training of church planters.

Similarly, there are implications for the methodology of selection, training, deploying, and supporting church planters. The order of these interventions could be changed (to support and training, selection and then either further deployment and support), but so could the locus. Were the local church (the sending or planted church) to be the context in which assessment, training, and support took place, this would align far more with biblical models and may be much more effective than the current, rather extractive, approaches, where potential and actual planters are taken out of their own indigenous environments and cultures.

The theological engagement of church planters: Fifthly, there are implications for potential and actual church planters. Several respondents to the trainers' questionnaire in this study found the church planters they were training to be resistant to their teaching. The perception was that church planters are practical people, with an aversion to what they saw as academic and thus irrelevant input. Within this proposed framework of theological training, church planters would have no excuse not to engage with an approach which regarded all training as theological and missional. Methods appropriate to educational backgrounds, indigenous cultures and agreed outcomes could be designed, such that not everyone would be required to write essays or listen to traditional-style lectures. A broader understanding of theology could open church planters to the kind of robust biblical and theological training they need to plant healthy and effective churches.

Personal formation: Sixthly, there is the final and overarching implication that sees the church planter as a person deeply formed by the missional purposes of God in the world, who is courageous, wise and true, on fire with the Spirit of God, equipped in the Scriptures, with the necessary tools to reach individuals and communities, neighbourhoods, cities and regions for Christ. The focus of the training shifts to the heart and person of the individuals concerned, with a self-understanding as a church planter. The view of theology changes to be an applied understanding of church and mission in the planter's own world and experience. This takes on board the current best practice in adult learning, aims for the creation of a culture of faith or "extreme courage," and enables church planters to be learning and reflecting on theology effectively. These things could be done through a combination of mentoring and peer learning, both features which the questionnaires of this study found to be much appreciated by church planters.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited by the pool of those responding to the questionnaires and who were interviewed in the Best Practice Interviews. Although the numbers who responded to the two questionnaires were generally good, there were limitations. For the questionnaire of those who had been or were being trained (CPQ), the vast majority (92%) had gone on to be ordained (figure 4.4) and their training had been or was in T.E.I.s (94%, figure 4.32). They were also 90% white British (figure 4.3), and none were younger than 26 (figure 4.2). Data from non-ordained and younger church planters would have filled out the study, as would data from those not from white British backgrounds. It would also have been useful to have data from those church planters

who were not trained through T.E.I.s to contrast that with those who were. A significant piece of data was that 37% of those responding to the CPQ questionnaire had been trained over 10 years ago, whereas nearly all those responding to the TQ questionnaire were actively involved in training church planters right now (figure 4.42). Much has changed in recent years, and the experience of those trained in or before 2010 may well not reflect that of those currently being trained. It would have been valuable to have focused more on those currently being trained and those who had been trained in, say, the last 3 to 5 years. Also, the study did not distinguish the different types of church plants for which church planters were being trained, and some respondents picked up on this. The terms of the study still stand, but greater focus could have been achieved by distinguishing how effective the training proved to be for pioneers, for instance, as opposed to a more traditional understanding of a church plant.

For the TQ questionnaire, only 36 of the 61 people asked responded. The number of responses was sufficient for meaningful data, but the large proportion who did not respond was striking. Even more significantly, only 9 of the respondents were involved specifically in the training of church planters, as opposed to the training of church planters making up one part of a wider training curriculum. 51% of the TQ respondents said their training of church planters was a “small part” of a wider training (figure 4.33). It would have been valuable to have distinguished between training that was specifically designed for church planters and training in which church planting featured as a smaller part of the whole, and to have tracked any differences.

Respondents to both questionnaires were largely from an evangelical or charismatic Christian background (figures 4.5 and 4.17). This was less so amongst TQ

respondents but still marked. This meant that the study lacked more of the perspective of Anglo Catholic or broad church planters and trainers. Sadly, this is largely because church planting is under-represented in these traditions in England. God willing, this will change over coming years, and happily, there are already signs of a change here.

There were 3 Best Practice Interviews, which was potentially small enough to be misleading. Thankfully these movement leaders all had sufficient experience and wide enough perspectives to make their contributions immensely valuable. There was a good balance of men and women, Anglican and non-Anglican, London-based and wider. There were 2 bishops, and 1 had previous experience of having led a T.E.I. Initially, there were to have been 5 BPIs. One did not reply in the allotted time scale and another declined to be interviewed. Thankfully, because of the quality and perspectives of the interviewees, their interviews yielded data which has significant generalizability.

Another limitation was the depth of data on some topics. There was good and valuable data, for instance, on what training was offered and what was thought to be valuable, but it would have been valuable to have followed up on this data with interviews or focus groups. For instance, granted that 74% of the CPQ respondents found ecclesiology helpful in their training as church planters (figure 4.39). What was it about that doctrine and the manner in which it was taught that made it valuable to them? And how did it prove valuable in the field? Or, granted that significant proportions of those being trained in church planting had not planted a church within 3 years of their training (figure 4.30) and that significant numbers of church planters were struggling in their church planting (figure 4.31), what were the reasons for not planting and what was the nature of those struggles? It would be interesting and potentially important to know.

Unexpected Observations

This whole study has been a privilege for the researcher, not least to interact with church planters and their trainers—people of such quality and commitment. I had expected to find the study interesting but not to have my heart stirred to the extent that it was and to be moved to praise God for these amazing people and what he is doing in England through them and their like.

More empirically, I was surprised at the lack of research into English church plants and the training of church planters. There is much excellent material from around the world, especially from the United States, but, apart from some notable exceptions (such as George Lings, Stuart Murray and Stephen Croft), there is not much written to help those planting churches in an English context and training them.

Similarly, there is not much theological writing about church planting. What has been written tends to the practical side of things. The more theological writing about church planting is mostly critical of church planting. This is a considerable gap, and it must serve to debilitate the church planting movement in England. Robust theological writing about church planting would serve not only to resource church planters, giving them confidence and wisdom in what they were doing, but also to increase credibility for the church planting movement in England amongst its critics and those who have the power to advance or hold back church planting.

Perhaps this goes some way to explaining a number of redundant debates around church planting and some areas of mutual incomprehension between those adopting differing views and practices. Most notably, ecclesiology is often set over against missiology in the training of church planters. Equally, competing missiologies can serve

to divide what would better be held together. For instance, the relationship between church and kingdom can be conflicted territory. The occasionally vitriolic tone of some of these exchanges was saddening to read.

A joyful theological surprise was how placing church planting within a wider theological frame could serve to free up the terms of debate around church planting. Even more so, this could well be the key to giving that sense of immediacy and relevance in training for church planters. Christology or the doctrine of the kingdom of God or, most notable, the power of the Holy Spirit—all these serve to bridge the gap between what church planters frequently see as a cognitive, classroom approach and the actual ‘live’ practice of church planting.

This insight aligned well with the unexpected recalibration of how to think about theology itself. Two of the major findings of the study were just how crucial to the effectiveness of the training of church planters were the manner of delivery and the context of that training. I had been aware of these thoughts prior to the study, and they came into increasingly sharp focus as the study proceeded, as is reflected in the conclusions above. The big surprise was to see these factors as being, in themselves, deeply theological. Previously, I had separated out the theology (the place of ecclesiology, missiology, the teaching of the biblical narratives etc) from the manner in which that theology could be taught to church planters. This study has taught me to abolish that separation. To facilitate a group interaction with a biblical text on church planting to a group of church planters on an estate in a deprived part of the North of England as opposed to a lecture on that same biblical narrative in a classroom in a university-type situation are different theologically, as well as culturally and

pedagogically. It is not just that each pedagogy has its own inherent theological assumptions, which is true, but the manner and context of the delivery of theological training carry within themselves powerful theological imperatives. It is what Perry Shaw refers to as the implicit curriculum. We are teaching church planters what is actually and really important as much by how we teach as by what we teach. So, a meeting of church planters in one city, which is framed with prayer, begins with reports back from the coal face, and then draws down theological resources from the group as a whole, is powerful theology about the task of church planting, the calling of the church planter, how God interacts in the world, and how Scripture relates to the immediate context. And, equally, a lecture in a university hall sends all kinds of messages about the privileging of knowledge over experience, the separation of learning from mission, and the chasm between God and ordinary people's lives. And these are the kind of lessons we want church planters to carry with them and to replicate into their churches. They are to see themselves as missionary theologians, carrying the applied knowledge of God and his ways into the contexts into which they are planting churches. All of this I have found electrifying. It is why this whole project is couched in terms of theology, even though previously I would have viewed theological training and its effectiveness as being in distinct categories.

It has had a sad corollary in that I have been dismayed to find just how far from this model the majority of the training of church planters is. On the one hand, many T.E.I.s would subscribe to this methodology in theory, but their practice falls short. Not all are aware of this gap, as evidenced by the mismatch of perceptions between those training and those being trained in this study. But many are acutely aware of it. They

feel themselves bound by the constraints of the academic framework required of all Anglican T.E.I.s and by the huge volume of material that must go into every T.E.I. curriculum. There is just not sufficient time and space to do everything, and church planting in general and this praxis-based learning model in particular cannot be fitted into already packed timetables logistically. Understandable though the reasons are, there is a cost to be paid, in that our church planters are being ineffectively trained. A decision has been made by default to prefer the nineteenth century university model of academic training over the way in which Jesus and Paul trained the Twelve. Not surprisingly, we are turning out academics but not world changing apostolic evangelists who are planting churches into all the unreached parts of the country. Wholesale cultural change is required. It is not right to criticize the T.E.I.s for this situation, as they are trapped in the assumptions and systemic practices of a wider culture and institution.

One last surprise has been how to view the personal preparation of the church planter. I had brought to the study a commitment to see church planters formed in habits of prayer and rhythms of life that would see them leading in holy and healthy ways and planting churches that reflected these habits and values. It has been striking to me to see what one might call an approach to a far more apostolic formation. The literature from around the world and the two questionnaires showed up a sense of lack in church planters about who and how they should be in this role and in obedience to this calling. Clearly there are substantial areas of overlap between church planting and other types of church leadership, but there are also profound differences which go to the heart of a calling to plant churches. These differences require gifts and resources that more

regular training of church leaders do not cover, or least not in any applied way. A phrase which stays with me comes from one of the Best Practice Interviews that the training of church planters necessitates the creation of an environment in which “extreme courage” can develop and flourish. Church planters are starting something new, often from within a conservative, risk-averse, hidebound, institutional context, which requires them to take steps of great personal sacrifice and risk. They find themselves leading in challenging circumstances with very little by way of resources and where there are very few received scripts to guide them into what they should be doing. They are caring for their families in what may be uncongenial environments and leading teams who are probably even more scared and bewildered than they are. They face opposition which can be as spiritual as it is social. It is a real firestorm. Any training which is congruent with such realities must have a determined focus on the emotional, mental, physical, social, and spiritual life of the planter and should view itself not in terms of preparation for some future ministry but as an integral part of the actual ministry. Such a view requires a posture from the church planting trainer which is far more personally engaged with the heart and life of the planters than is usually seen, as much a mentor or even fellow worker as trainer. It also necessitates a closer relationship with the church planter and expects that the trainer has experience of church planting in life as well as the library. Who is sufficient for these things? Only by God’s grace.

Recommendations

As to future research that might build on this study, good work could with advantage be done by focusing more particularly on those aiming specifically to plant churches, rather than those preparing for more general church leadership, within which church planting might or might not feature. Such research should take in the increasing number of networks and, in particular, larger city-centre churches which are taking the lead in the planting of churches in England. The research could dig deeper into what aspects of training are the most necessary and effective. Work with younger church planters and those from non-white British backgrounds would be useful. If it were possible without endangering or harming those concerned, there is valuable research to be done around those plants which fail, so the church can learn how better to prepare and train church planters for their work, both personally and in terms of the task.

In terms of the practice of ministry, the findings of the study lend themselves to the following recommendations:

1. A body of theological material around church planting should be generated, which could be useful in the preparation of curricula for the training of church planters. There are books to be written for an English context, which are theologically robust, and which put the case for church planting. They would embrace the theological approaches discovered in this study. There are courses to be designed which take the findings of this study and which provide active models from these principles.

2. There are conversations to be had between T.E.I.s and those churches, networks, and courses which are developing alternative training models more akin to those recommended by this study than to the current methods and practices offered by T.E.I.s. There are vast resources available in T.E.I.s, but they are not currently

connecting effectively with the new wave of church planting. There must be some kind of approach possible that combines the strengths, experience, expertise, and powerful place in the world of theological training that T.E.I.s bring with the insights of and anointing on many current church planters.

Another recommendation for T.E.I.s would be the adoption of more of a singular focus on church planting. The specifics of church planter training currently get lost in the generalities of general training for church leadership. Church planters do have a particular calling which requires particular training. There are considerable pressures on T.E.I.s which make this difficult, but, at the moment, the lack of differentiation between church planter training and general missional training is making for a lack of effectiveness. To have distinct pathways for the training of church planters would allow for the nurturing of a robust identity for church planters and might make easier the praxis-based training advocated here. Maybe there could be scope for partnerships between specific T.E.I.s and some of the larger church-planting movement churches of their region, such that training could be shared between the relevant T.E.I. and the sending churches of that region.

3. At the same time, the church planting being carried on by larger churches, networks, movements, and courses is to be encouraged and resourced, and the kind of theological training discovered by this study can be developed and applied. It is these kinds of contexts which best integrate actual practice, a supportive cohort, the spiritual power and fervour, and the boldness and faith which launches effective church plants. If these churches, networks and movements could be encouraged to reflect more

theologically, along the lines that have come to light in the findings above, then church planting will become all the richer, effective, sustainable and glorifying to God.

4. There needs to be a raising up of a body of theological educators who can deliver this kind of effective training. Many are already serving within T.E.I.s. There is scope for the recruiting of practitioners, who can bring their experience to bear but who also can be envisioned and trained to add in the kind of theological approach advocated from the findings of this study. Such theological trainers could work within T.E.I.s, larger churches, and movements and co-ordinate and mutually encourage their work. A loose national network could be established, and such trainers could work with groups of church planters within the contexts of their church plants. Regional hubs could be established, such that it becomes easy for “seminary to come to the church” rather than to expect church planters to come to seminary.

5. The Church of England’s Ministry Division could legitimize and authorize alternative ways of accrediting the training of church planters, such that an essentially academic grid is no longer necessary for the starting and growing of new churches. A feature of the research that has gone into this study has been that church planting is yet to happen at scale in England. There are very many encouraging signs, but there has yet to be the kind of break through which makes church planting normative for every church in the land and which sees the planting of churches on a scale and at a rate that sees the changing of a nation. That will require systemic backing and intervention. There is already notable support for church planting amongst sections of the House of Bishops and at the heart of the institution, but this has yet to translate into widespread action. I am not sure of the most effective form this should take, but it would be good if there

were some body or group with sufficient profile and authority to generate and guarantee real institutional traction. The Bishop of Islington and his team may well be central to this.

Postscript

This has been a real journey for me. When I started at Asbury, I led a church plant in the centre of London, and we had planted two churches, with aspirations to plant a third. I was volunteering a day a week with Bishop Ric Thorpe, hosting the church planting course which he had started in 2010. Now, I work full time in his team, and my work centres around the theological training of church planters. The plan is I will do quite a bit of writing, not least around the kind of themes which this study has opened up for me.

It has been a huge privilege to engage in this study. It has given me the opportunity to read both more widely and at greater depth than would otherwise have been possible for me. I have spent quality time with the most able of church planters from all round the world and been exposed to high calibre teaching and coaching. With hindsight (always a wonderful thing), I can see how the Lord was moving me more into the field of the theological training of church planters. My new role has given me the opportunity to see more of the national picture of church planting in England, whilst my studies have enabled me to reflect on my own experiences of church planting and to bring something of more depth to the wider role. Both my job and my studies have combined in an inspiring and faith-building way and enabled me to grow in a sense of fulfilling my own personal calling.

Church planting is at a crucial stage in England. Amazing things are happening, and, like Barnabas, it is not difficult to see “the grace of God” and to be “glad” (Acts 11.23). Much more needs to happen, though, and the training of church planters in ways which are theologically robust and responsible is crucial to that enterprise. The design and the delivery of content are equally significant, and finding ways of multiplying the scale, pace, and numbers of church plants is a core task. That will require training new people in new ways to start new kinds of churches in new places (and a few old ones too). This study has opened up solid biblical principles to me to do just this, whilst the literature has illumined and critiqued theories and practices of how this can be done. The questionnaires and interviews have been a new way of working for me, which I have loved, and served to ground the theory right into the rich soil of reality. I look forward to developing and applying this work, sharing what I have learned, and continuing to teach and write about this exciting and invaluable ministry.

Nationally, the next few years will be deeply significant for the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ in England. Much will depend on the momentum and maturing of the church planting movement. It is a privilege to play some small part in it.

APPENDIXES

A. The Research Instruments – the questionnaires and questions for interviews

A questionnaire for those training church planters (“TQ”)

John Valentine MTP

“Theology that works”:

An analysis of those aspects which best equip church planters for their work

RI1: A questionnaire for those training church planters (“TQ”)

Thank you for taking part in my research into the theological training of church planters with a view to developing robust theological training for church planters in the Diocese of London. I am very grateful.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, please just answer “no” to the first question in the questionnaire below, which asks if you are willing to participate, and it will take you out of the questionnaire. Similarly, if at any point you decide not to continue with the questionnaire, just exit. Please be assured that this will not affect any relationship we may (or may not) have.

The Questionnaire is anonymous, so your identity will not be known or published. There is always a slight risk that your answers will enable your identity to

be known, and so you become associated with the findings of the research. Every effort is taken to ensure that this does not happen.

The research forms the major part of my Doctor of Ministry at Asbury Theological Seminary, where it will be written up and published. There is a possibility that the research may form part of a book in the future. The hope is that the research will contribute to the planting of more and healthier church plants in London and the UK.

The Questionnaire is purposely short, and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Please do not over think your answers – your initial impulse is probably the correct one. Do please be entirely honest and answer from the heart. That will be the most useful for the research.

For clarity's sake, I should make clear that there are no financial or other inducements to completing this questionnaire.

Thank you very much for your time and thought in taking part in this research. I am extremely grateful.

John Valentine

Voluntary participation

Do you wish to take part in this research by filling out this short questionnaire?

If you answer “yes” below, that will be deemed that you have given your consent to do so, and that you are informed of the procedures and risks of so doing.

Yes

No

Demographic information

This will help the researcher understand your context and background

Please click on the buttons below which describe you

I am a man

I am a woman

I am over the age of 18

I am aged between 18 and 25

I am aged between 26 and 40

I am aged between 41 and 55

I am aged over 55

I am white British

I am not from the UK (please specify)

I am from a BAME background

I am from some other ethnic background (please specify)

I am ordained

I am not ordained

I am Anglican

I am from another denomination (please specify)

I am an evangelical

I am a charismatic

I am a pentecostal

I am broad church

I am Anglo Catholic

I am other (please specify)

I teach in a theological college or equivalent

I have an undergraduate degree

I have a postgraduate degree

I have planted a church

I have been part of a team that planted a church

I have some form of regular church ministry

Those being trained for church planting

1. At which level do you train church planters?

- certificate
- diploma
- degree
- masters
- doctorate

2. How many church planters do you train each year?

- 0-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 21 +

3. To what extent is the training of church planters part of a wider training (eg ordination training or a theological course)?

- It is a small part of a wider training
- It forms a substantial part of a wider course
- The training is entirely focused on church planting

4. What percentage of the church planters you train are ordained or are going to be, and what percentage lay?
 - Ordained
 - Lay

5. How percentage of those you are training are in the following age brackets?
 - 18-25
 - 26-40
 - 41-55
 - 56 +

6. What percentage are men and what percentage women?
 - Men
 - Women

7. Of the church planters you train, roughly what percentage come from these backgrounds?
 - BAME
 - No education beyond school
 - Have already done a degree
 - Have some kind of theological education
 - Have already planted a church

- Have been part of a church planting team

8. Of the church planters you train, roughly what percentage come from these church backgrounds?

- Evangelical
- Charismatic
- Broad church
- Anglo-Catholic
- Other (please specify)

The training you offer

9. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is spent on academic theology, spiritual formation and the teaching of skills?

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|------|-------|-------|--------|
| - Academic theology | 0-25 | 26-50 | 51-75 | 76-100 |
| - Spiritual formation | 0-25 | 26-50 | 51-75 | 76-100 |
| - The teaching of skills | 0-25 | 26-50 | 51-75 | 76-100 |

10. Indicate which are the main topics covered in the training you offer to church planters:

- New Testament
- Old Testament
- Systematic theology

- Ecclesiology
- Missiology
- Church history
- Ethics
- Leading worship
- Preaching
- Spiritual formation
- Character formation
- Leadership
- Management skills
- Team building
- Innovation
- Other (please specify)

11. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is spent on leadership development?

- 0-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- 51% +

12. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is spent on evangelism or other missional training?

- 0-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- 51% +

13. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is spent on how to train others?

- 0-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- 51% +

14. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is spent on health, wellbeing, healthy relationships and practices, family life and resilience?

- 0-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- 51% +

15. How is the training delivered?
- In the classroom by lectures Yes / No
 - Online Yes / No
 - In small groups Yes / No
 - Through mentoring Yes / No
 - Through theological reflection in the midst of ministry Yes / No
 - Other (please specify)

What happens afterwards

16. Of the church planters you train, roughly what percentage go on to the following work within the next 3 years?
- To plant a church
 - To be part of a church planting team
 - To leadership in a church
 - To work in a church (eg children's or youth ministry)
 - To further study
 - To teach theology
17. Where you have been able to stay in touch with those you have trained, roughly how many do you know of in the following categories?
- They are flourishing in church planting

- They are struggling in church planting
- They have planted another church
- They have planted more than one other church
- They are in regular church leadership (not specifically church planting)
- They are now doing something else

More open-ended questions

18. What would you say are the main obstacles you face in designing and delivering the training of church planters?

19. What you have found that works and what has not worked in the training you have offered to church planters?

22. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Thank you so much for your time and thought in completing this questionnaire. If you would like to follow up at all with the researcher, then please feel free to email me at John.valentine@asburyseminary.edu and I shall be pleased to correspond with you.

A questionnaire for those being trained for church planting (“CPQ”)

John Valentine MTP

“Theology that works”:

An analysis of those aspects which best equip church planters for their work

RI2: A questionnaire for those being trained for church planting (“CPQ”)

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Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, please just answer “no” to the first question in the questionnaire below, which asks if you are willing to participate, and it will take you out of the questionnaire. Similarly, if at any point you decide not to continue with the questionnaire, just exit. Please be assured that this will not affect any relationship we may (or may not) have.

The Questionnaire is anonymous, so your identity will not be known or published. There is always a slight risk that your answers will enable your identity to be known, and so you become associated with the findings of the research. Every effort is taken to ensure that this does not happen.

The research forms the major part of my Doctor of Ministry at Asbury Theological Seminary, where it will be written up and published. There is a possibility that the research may form part of a book in the future. The hope is that the research will contribute to the planting of more and healthier church plants in London and the UK.

The Questionnaire is purposely short, and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Please do not over think your answers – your initial impulse is probably the correct one. Do please be entirely honest and answer from the heart. That will be the most useful for the research.

For clarity's sake, I should make clear that there are no financial or other inducements to completing this questionnaire.

Thank you very much for your time and thought in taking part in this research. I am extremely grateful.

John Valentine

Voluntary participation

Do you wish to take part in this research by filling out this short questionnaire?

If you answer “yes” below, that will be deemed that you have given your consent to do so, and that you are informed of the procedures and risks of so doing.

Yes

No

Demographic information

This will help the researcher understand your context and background

Please click on the buttons below which describe you

I am a man

I am a woman

I am over the age of 18

I am aged between 18 and 25

I am aged between 26 and 40

I am aged between 41 and 55

I am aged over 55

I am white British

I am not from the UK (please specify)

I am from a BAME background

I am from some other ethnic background (please specify)

I am ordained

I am not ordained

I am Anglican

I am from another denomination (please specify)

I am an evangelical

I am a charismatic

I am a pentecostal

I am broad church

I am Anglo Catholic

I am other (please specify)

I teach in a theological college or equivalent

I have an undergraduate degree

I have a postgraduate degree

I have planted a church

I have been part of a team that planted a church

I have some form of regular church ministry

Your previous experience

1. Please answer “yes” or “no” to whether or not you have had the following experiences:

- A conversion experience Yes / No
- Growing up in a Christian home Yes / No
- You have already planted a church Yes / No
- You have planted more than one church Yes / No
- You have been part of a church planting team Yes / No
- You have done a degree Yes / No
- You have some previous theological education Yes / No

2. Do you have a sense of call to any of the following?

- To plant a church Yes / No
- To be part of a church planting team Yes / No
- To plant more than one church Yes / No
- To be part of a church planting movement Yes / No
- To reach a particular place or group of people Yes / No
- To innovate new forms of churches Yes / No

- To reach those the church is not currently reaching Yes / No

Your theological training (if you are currently being trained)

3. Would you say your current training (if applicable) is equipping you to plant churches?

Yes / No

4. Which of the following subjects is proving most helpful to you in your training, as you think about planting churches?

- New Testament
- Old Testament
- Systematic theology
- Ecclesiology
- Missiology
- Church history
- Ethics
- Leading worship
- Preaching
- Spiritual formation
- Character formation
- Leadership
- Management skills

- Team building
- Innovation
- Other (please specify)

Your theological training (if you have been trained previously)

5. How long ago were you trained?

- Within the last 2 years
- 3-5 years ago
- 5-10 years ago
- More than 10 years ago

6. Where were you trained?

- In an Anglican theological college
- Through a church planting or fresh expression of church course
- The Church Planting Course at the Centre for Church Planting and Growth
- Other (please specify)

7. Were you trained to be ordained or for some other form of leadership?

- Trained for ordination Yes / No
- Some other form of leadership Yes / No
(in which case, please specify)

8. Do you feel your training equipped you to plant churches? Yes / No
9. Which of the following subjects has proved most helpful to you in your training, as you think about planting churches?
- New Testament
 - Old Testament
 - Systematic theology
 - Ecclesiology
 - Missiology
 - Church history
 - Ethics
 - Leading worship
 - Preaching
 - Spiritual formation
 - Character formation
 - Leadership
 - Management skills
 - Team building
 - Innovation
 - Other (please specify)

For all (about your training courses)

10. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is / was spent on academic theology, spiritual formation and the teaching of skills?

- Academic theology 0-25 26-50 51-75 76-100
- Spiritual formation 0-25 26-50 51-75 76-100
- The teaching of skills 0-25 26-50 51-75 76-100

11. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is / was spent on leadership development?

- 0-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- 51% +

12. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is / was spent on evangelism or other missional training?

- 0-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- 51% +

13. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is / was spent on how to train others?

- 0-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- 51% +

14. Roughly what percentage of the course or teaching is / was spent on health, wellbeing, healthy relationships and practices, family life and resilience?

- 0-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- 51% +

Some more open-ended questions

15. What is / was the most transformational aspect of your training? Was it in the classroom, on a mission, talking informally with your peers etc? What actually changed in and for you?

16. What is / was the least transformational aspect of your training?

17. Are / were there any particular obstacles in being trained to plant churches?

21. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Thank you so much for your time and thought in completing this questionnaire. If you would like to follow up at all with the researcher, then please feel free to email me at John.valentine@asburyseminary.edu and I shall be pleased to correspond with you.

Questions for the semi-structured Best Practice Interviews (“BPI”s)

John Valentine MTP

“Theology that works”:

An analysis of those aspects which best equip church planters for their work

RI3: Semi-structured interviews on Best Practice (“BPI”s)

Thank you for taking part in my research into the theological training of church planters with a view to developing robust theological training for church planters in the Diocese of London. I am very grateful.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, please feel free simply to withdraw at any point. Please be assured that this will not affect any relationship we may (or may not) have. I will ask you to sign an Informed Consent Letter when we meet, ahead of the interview itself, which I attach so you can read it though ahead of time.

The interview will be just the two of us. I will record it on my phone. I will send it though to my computer (and immediately delete the recording from my phone). I will transcribe the interview myself. The transcript will identify you only by initials. The transcript will be typed out, stored on my laptop computer and (in hard copy) in a

locked filing cabinet in my study. The laptop is password protected and only I have the password, and the filing cabinet is locked, and only I have the key.

The research forms the major part of my Doctor of Ministry at Asbury Theological Seminary, where it will be written up and published. There is a possibility that the research may form part of a book in the future. The hope is that the research will contribute to the planting of more and healthier church plants in London and the UK.

The interview is around those best practices which you can identify for the theological training of church planters. I will ask five set questions to get you going and we will discuss these. The whole interview should last no more than 60 minutes, including a break after 30 minutes, if you so wish.

For clarity's sake, I should make clear that there are no financial or other inducements to completing this questionnaire.

Thank you very much for your time and thought in taking part in this research. I am extremely grateful.

John Valentine

The Interviews (“BPI”s)

1. What is your experience of church planting and of training church planters?
2. What obstacles are there to the training of church planters?
3. What do you think the people receiving the training would highlight as the most important aspect of the training?
4. What does “best practice” look like for the training of church planters?
5. Do you have any views on *how* and *by whom* church planting training might best be delivered?
6. Is there anything else you would like to say?

B. Ethical Considerations Worksheet

Consent Forms Templates

Informed Consent Letter for the Trainers' Questionnaire ("TQ")

John Valentine

Asbury Theological Seminary

204 North Lexington Avenue

Wilmore

Kentucky 40390

John.valentine@asburyseminary.edu

May, 2019

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

"Theology that actually works"

You are invited to be in a research study being done by John Valentine from the Asbury Theological Seminary by kindly filling out your answers to a questionnaire.

The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of theology on potential church planters – how much theology do church planters need, and which areas of theology have the most impact. The study is in two stages. The first revolves around two questionnaires (one for those who offer training for church planters, the second for the

church planters themselves) designed to discover what training is currently offered to church planters and what is most effective; to identify obstacles to the training of church planters; and to explore what best practice in the training of church planters might look like. The second stage of the research is a few interviews to look more closely at best practice. The aim of the study as a whole is to make suggestions, based on a study of the current literature and the evidence from this two-stage study, which could go towards the most effective training possible for church planters in the Diocese of London, and maybe further afield.

If you agree to be in the study, I should like to invite you to help me by completing one of the questionnaires. It will be extremely helpful to have your responses.

The questionnaire is anonymous, and should take about 10 minutes to complete and submit.

The results of the study will be written up in my Doctor of Ministry for Asbury Theological Seminary, which will be published. The findings may be described in articles, blog posts and possibly a book. Your identity will not be revealed in any of these.

Participation in all these activities is totally voluntary, and no financial payments will be made.

The risk to you of participation in this study is that your identity and opinions may become known to others. Every effort to mitigate this risk will be taken. Your identity will not be known to me, as the responses to the questionnaires come through to me anonymously. The results of the questionnaires will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally required to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse or suicide risk. The data will be stored on my laptop computer, which is password protected, and only I have the password. I will also print out hard copies of the questionnaires, which will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my study, to which only I have the key. The electronic versions will be deleted and the hard copies destroyed one year after the completion of the research.

It is hoped that there will be the direct benefit to you of self-understanding from taking part in the study and also some conceptual and practical tools for approaching church planting. It is also hoped that there will be wider spread benefit from an increased understanding of how church planters may better be equipped theologically for their work, which can lead to better health and greater effectiveness in church planting in the future. It is also hoped that church planting may gain a better-informed and more enthusiastic reception in all sections of the church as a result of the study, and that valuable lessons can be learned about how church planting can be engaged with by those sections of the church which currently have reservations about it.

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you have adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided at the top of the first page. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

The questionnaire begins with a question about whether or not you give your informed consent to taking part in the research. If you click on “yes”, that will be deemed to be you giving your informed consent. If you click on “no”, then you will be taken to the last page (the “submit” page) – in other words you will not be taking part in the research.

Even if you start the questionnaire, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with me. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be destroyed.

I hope you might be happy to fill in the questionnaire, as I should very much value your responses, but please feel under no pressure to do so. If you are happy to take part, might I ask you to do so within the next three weeks? Thank you.

Here is the link to the questionnaire:

<https://forms.gle/xYfhFDaH7dv3SuHV8>

Thank you so much for your help, and with all good wishes,

John

**Informed Consent Letter for the questionnaire for those being trained in church
planting (“CPQ”)**

John Valentine

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204 North Lexington Avenue

Wilmore

Kentucky 40390

John.valentine@asburyseminary.edu

May, 2019

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church planters and what is most effective; to identify obstacles to the training of church planters; and to explore what best practice in the training of church planters might look like. The second stage of the research is a few interviews to look more closely at best practice. The aim of the study as a whole is to make suggestions, based on a study of the current literature and the evidence from this two-stage study, which could go towards the most effective training possible for church planters in the Diocese of London, and maybe further afield.

If you agree to be in the study, I should like to invite you to help me by completing one of the questionnaires. It will be extremely helpful to have your responses.

The questionnaire is anonymous, and should take about 10 minutes to complete and submit.

The results of the study will be written up in my Doctor of Ministry for Asbury Theological Seminary, which will be published. The findings may be described in articles, blog posts and possibly a book. Your identity will not be revealed in any of these.

Participation in all these activities is totally voluntary, and no financial payments will be made.

The risk to you of participation in this study is that your identity and opinions may become known to others. Every effort to mitigate this risk will be taken. Your identity will not be known to me, as the responses to the questionnaires come through to me anonymously. The results of the questionnaires will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally required to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse or suicide risk. The data will be stored on my laptop computer, which is password protected, and only I have the password. I will also print out hard copies of the questionnaires, which will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my study, to which only I have the key. The electronic versions will be deleted and the hard copies destroyed one year after the completion of the research.

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Even if you start the questionnaire, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with me. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be destroyed.

I hope you might be happy to fill in the questionnaire, as I should very much value your responses, but please feel under no pressure to do so. If you are happy to take part, might I ask you to do so within the next three weeks? Thank you.

Here is the link to the questionnaire:

<https://forms.gle/C4PQf1qEmw7PDRr69>

Thank you so much for your help, and with all good wishes,

John

Informed Consent Letter for the best practice interviews (“BPI”s)

John Valentine

Asbury Theological Seminary

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Wilmore

Kentucky 40390

John.valentine@asburyseminary.edu

May, 2019

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church planters and what is most effective; to identify obstacles to the training of church planters; and to explore what best practice in the training of church planters might look like. The second stage of the research is a few interviews to look more closely at best practice. The aim of the study as a whole is to make suggestions, based on a study of the current literature and the evidence from this two-stage study, which could go towards the most effective training possible for church planters in the Diocese of London, and maybe further afield.

If you agree to be in the study, I should like to invite you to help me by being one of those interviewees helping to identify best practice. The interviews will be at Catherine's and my home and will last for around 60 minutes (maximum 90 minutes). There will be 6 questions to get you talking in a semi-structured interview framework. If you are happy, I shall record the interviews on my phone, and subsequently send that recording through to my laptop, deleting the phone recording when I have done so. I shall then transcribe the interview personally, storing the transcript on my laptop, and also printing it out, keeping the hard copy in a locked filing cabinet in my study. A year after the completion of the research, the recording will be deleted and the hard copy destroyed.

The results of the study will be written up in my Doctor of Ministry for Asbury Theological Seminary, which will be published. The findings may be described in articles, blog posts and possibly a book. Your identity as an interviewee will not be revealed in any of these.

Participation in all these activities is totally voluntary, and no financial payments will be made.

The risk to you of participation in this study is that your identity and opinions may become known to others. Every effort to mitigate this risk will be taken. Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally required to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse or suicide risk.

It is hoped that there will be the direct benefit to you of self-understanding from taking part in the study and also some conceptual and practical tools for approaching church planting. It is also hoped that there will be wider spread benefit from an increased understanding of how church planters may better be equipped theologically for their work, which can lead to better health and greater effectiveness in church planting in the future. It is also hoped that church planting may gain a better-informed and more enthusiastic reception in all sections of the church as a result of the study, and that valuable lessons can be learned about how church planting can be engaged with by those sections of the church which currently have reservations about it.

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you have adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact

information is provided at the top of the first page. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

Signing this paper means that you have read this, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. After you sign this consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

Date Signed

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