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[CHURCH PLANTING WITHIN HISTORICAL REFORMATION CHURCHES IN EUROPE]

Church Planting within Historical Reformation Churches in Europe

Europe has a Christian heritage reaching back to before Constantine. Since the 4th Century AD, the established church has shaped political, social and religious structures of Europe and impacted the lives of ordinary people in deep ways.

But the influence of the Church on society has declined in recent years, causing commentators and theologians to call this era 'post-Christendom'. For some, the future for the established church looks bleak.

In 2005, only 6% of the population usually attended church on a Sunday in the UK,¹ and surveys appear to show that 'organised religion is in near terminal decline in Britain'². In the Lutheran church of Northern Europe there is a greater identification with the church through baptism and confirmation but actual Sunday attendance is as low as 2.7% in Denmark.³

But in recent years, new life has appeared in these historical churches, like grass growing through cracks in paving stones.

This paper will look at examples of new life in the Church of England and Lutheran churches of Northern and Western Europe, using specific examples to illustrate more general points. The churches featured fall into four broad categories:

1. Church planting within the parish system
2. Church planting at diocesan level
3. Parachurch revivalist movements transitioning to fully functioning churches

4. Mid-size communities leading to the creation of church planting movements.

Collectively they are discovering several keys to church planting within a historical church context:

1. Be prepared for tension when you try to change
2. Communication is vital within and outside your movement
3. It is possible to work within the system, and sometimes the system will change to accommodate what you are doing
4. Lay leadership can help to facilitate church planting within this context

1. Church planting within the parish system

Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB), London UK (www.htb.org.uk) has a long history of being passionate about church planting. The vision of the church is to play a part in the re-evangelisation of the nation and the transformation of society⁴. Along with the development of the Alpha course, Holy Trinity Brompton's leadership sees church planting as more than just filling churches – it has the potential to transform the nation.

While churches like HTB have seen considerable and sustained growth over many decades, (HTB has around 3000 people attending its Sunday services every week) many other parish churches face closure. In the last 22 years, HTB has brought new life to nine such churches by sending not only a leadership team but a congregation to the church.

"The model is completely dependant on the bishop giving permission to plant," says Archie Coates, HTB's curate. "The current bishop of London is very supportive. We want to plant within the established church – for as long as we

have these buildings available, it would be a shame not to use them.”

The bishop identifies a church that is about to close because the vicar has left and isn't going to be replaced or the congregation is down to a handful of members. HTB has curates on the staff who come to the church intending to get involved in church planting. It is planned they will be trained in 'mixed mode' with theological studies at St Pauls, HTB's theological centre, alongside practical placements.

Over the two or three years they are at HTB they begin to gather a team. Once a potential church is identified, the congregation is told a plant is going to take place. HTB tends to start a plant in September or January, so the calling out of people from the congregation begins a few months earlier.

“The curate organises a series of meetings for people interested, and begins to form a group around a team who want to go,” says Archie. “Usually 50–100 people leave to begin the new plant – some volunteer and some are handpicked, such as the worship leader and administrator. They commit for a year initially. Some may return to the main congregation after that time, but the hope is the plant will have become established within that year and the congregation will have grown up to be supportive.”

HTB also give financial support at the time people are sent off as the church plant may need some help getting things in order e.g. a sound system. But they don't have a trust fund for this purpose – according to Archie, the money given comes from the congregation 'digging deep'.

The church planting group is 'sent off' and although it may informally be known as a 'HTB plant', legally and ecclesiastically the recipient church retains its autonomy and

separate identity within the parish system. Archie likens the process to sending off children – you hope they have picked up your DNA and values while they are with you so they continue once they have left, but you can't insist on it when they are independent.

As a church planting church, HTB meets on two sites, with seven services across the venues. “Both venues have a live band, live leader and live ministry, but in one of the venues the talk is videocast (e.g. we have services at 5pm, 6pm, and 7pm). The 6pm service is the video of the 5pm talk,” Archie explains. “The leadership is also all one team with Nicky Gumbel as vicar of all the sites/services. Through being a multisite church we are trying to make our base larger enabling us to plant faster.”



Holy Trinity Brompton's services are attended by around 3000 people across two sites.

Vineyard D.A.CH⁵ is another example of a church planting movement choosing to plant within an existing parish system (www.vineyard-D.A.CH.net and www.vineyard-gemeinschaften.de). Their vision is to give 1% of the German speaking population in Germany, Austria and Switzerland a spiritual home, and see people transformed through the grace and power of God. The two arms of the movement are to bring renewal to the established church, and planting new fellowships.

Some of their plants are independent Vineyard churches in their own right, but others are based as a lay movement

within already established state churches. While legally these lay-led churches are Lutheran, Reformed or Catholic, senior leader Marcus Hausner says they have the 'look, feel and touch of a Vineyard church'.

So why did Vineyard D.A.CH choose to use this model? Jochen Hackstein from **Vineyard Berlin** (www.vineyard-berlin.de) works in East Berlin, formerly part of communist East Germany.

"After the wall came down in 1990, a lot of Christian and non-Christian sects went in with very little success because people were suspicious. People see the established church, Catholic and Lutheran, on the one side, and consider everything else as a sect. If it is Christian they say it has to be a Lutheran or Catholic Church. We realised that and said we want to be part of the established church.

"In German society (and in Europe) it is part of our mentality to want to see Christianity in the established church. We feel called to the renewal of the whole church, which is why we church plant in the state church as well."



East Berlin, where Vineyard D.A.CH is church planting

Vineyard Berlin functions as a lay movement within the Berlin Brandenburg Schlesische Oberlausitz church. An

agreement with the Lutheran church authorities in Berlin (see the related document *Church planting by historical churches – examples of church laws and contracts*) gives Jochen the mandate to baptise previously unbaptised believers and celebrate communion. Once baptised, new Christians officially become members of the Lutheran parish church but attend the Vineyard groups.

Currently there are two projects in areas where people have little contact with the church. Jochen has a two-year contract with the bishop, which is currently being re-evaluated and renewed. Marcus Hausner (www.vineyard-filstal.de) says they are introducing the concept of building Vineyard within a state context to several other groups.

We feel called to the renewal of the whole church

"For a couple of leaders it is a definite option," he says. "For many reasons they don't want to leave church so this is part of our dream to give access to this kind of people and also to accelerate the spread of the idea in other churches."

Evangelisch Werkverband (www.ewv.nl) works within the United Protestant Church of the Netherlands (a coalition of the Netherlands Reformed Church, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands). It is a network movement working alongside the churches and aiming to contribute to their spiritual renewal. The movement has a variety of ministries including initiating and supporting *Church Growth Groups* (CGG), small groups within local churches, who meet together fortnightly to pray, study the bible and have fellowship.

Another initiative is *Protestant Pioneer Places* (PPP) which has been influenced by the UK 'Fresh Expressions' model of

church planting, and which has the support of the church synod. 'Mother' churches will be encouraged to give birth to 'daughter' churches. EWV's aim is to start at least 10 PPPs by the end of 2008, and that eventually it will be normal to ask a parish church board 'how is your daughter church doing?'

According to Evangelisch Werkverband, the strength of the PPP vision is that the old, traditional thinking group in the church are not asked to change, but instead the renewers in their midst are encouraged to find new ways to reach out to groups of people who are not attracted by the existing forms and liturgies of the church. This model, they say, allows both groups to stand together in the call to reach the nation with the message of Christ.

2. Church planting at diocesan level

Within the parish system, church planting activities that cross parish boundaries can be perceived as a threat. In 2004 a Church of England report called *Mission-Shaped Church*⁶ was published, which put forward the case for the unit of the Church being the diocese rather than the parish. Following this report, changes are being implemented to facilitate church planting at diocesan level.

Bishop's Mission Order

A major new change is the Bishop's Mission Order, which aims to *affirm, enable, encourage and support a new mission initiative within the overall ordering of the life of the Church*⁷ through giving an means of legal recognition for fresh expressions of church⁸.

Mal Calladine, a church plant leader in the contemporary monastic movement **Order of Mission** (www.missionorder.org) in Bristol, UK, has been working with Bishop Michael of Bristol diocese to facilitate

church planting across the whole diocese, rather than in individual parishes.

"The bishop is saying he will ratify as many mission orders as he can around the city," says Mal. "We are trying to pull together the pioneer churches into a network, and in Bristol to do things as a group of communities. Currently we have five communities each working in different settings who are at various points of conception to infancy."

One of these communities is led by Nick Crawley, who is licensed as a mission priest and leads a fresh expression of church meeting in a city centre café (www.crossnet.org.uk). Because a mission priest operates within a diocesan boundary rather than the parish boundary, **Crossnet Church** is not a parish church.

"We want to be defined by relationships, with the communities as our primary places of being," explains Mal.

"The order in which they happen is relationships, leading to identity, leading to event, whereas most churches put on an event to lead to community and then relationship.

We want to be defined by relationships, with the communities as our primary places of being

"If you organise around a big celebration it is all about the worship and the word, and hopefully it leads to some mission. The guiding principle becomes up (worship) and in (fellowship), not out (mission). Our organisational principle is 'out' or mission. It doesn't mean we don't do up and in but the worship and community that we do comes out of an organisation that is mission focused.

Extra Parochial Place

While Nick is planting church in a pioneer setting, Anne Maclaurin, executive team leader at **St Thomas Philadelphia**, (www.stthomaschurch.org.uk) Sheffield, UK, is a mission priest working within an already established church context. She has the freedom to operate within the whole city of Sheffield, and therefore could do mission in any parish.

“It has taken a huge shift in the Church of England to bring this kind of cross-parish ministry about,” says Anne, “because before that parish priests could say ‘no, not in my back yard, you can’t do it’.”

The shift has been brought about through the *Mission Shaped Church* report, the work of the Fresh Expressions team and the agreement of synod to bring in the Bishops Mission Order.

St Thomas Philadelphia’s vision is to be church for the whole city of Sheffield. It is a joint venture between a Baptist, Anglican and housechurch, and its mid-size communities operate in localities and networks that cross parish boundaries.

As it came into being before the Bishops Mission order was formulated, the leadership worked with the Anglican Church to create an *Extra Parochial Place* to establish the legal framework for the new church at Philadelphia.

EPP’s are not a new provision having been around since 1967.

An EPP may be described as “a geographical area which is not within the boundaries of any parish... An EPP may be very small, with no resident population – for example, it may cover only the area of a building used for worship.. thus creating an EPP can be used to provide for a congregation outside the normal parish system drawn from a wide area by a common factor. The

[Anglican] minister needs the Bishop’s licence, but does not require the consent and is not subject to the control of any incumbent or priest in charge. This makes for flexibility, but also means that separate ad hoc arrangements have to be made for the Bishop to exercise oversight over the EPP and its minister and congregation”⁹

“Technically we form separate churches – Philadelphia Baptist Church, St Thomas at Philadelphia and the Kings Centre and then we have gone through a legal process to bring these three churches together,” says Paul Maconochie, Baptist minister and senior team leader of St Thomas Philadelphia. “We have taken council from the diocese and registrars and Baptist Union solicitors and we are forming a charitable company which will provide us with all our accountability and legal structures to be able to operate as a church. We describe ourselves as multidenominational. We have just added our third denomination and we could add more.”



Worship at St Thomas Philadelphia

The Lutheran church in Germany and Scandinavia has many lay-led parachurch organisations working alongside them. Some, described below, are planting churches within parishes, whilst others such as **Ev. Jugendwerk im Württemberg** (www.ejwue.de) are working at diocesan level.

EJW is the official youth work organisation of the Lutheran Church of Württemberg in South Germany and also part of the YMCA, so it has the advantage of being a free church organisation as well as part of the state church. They have been planting youth churches at diocesan level since 2003.

"We have great roots in the earth of the historical church and we try to use their incredible resources to get fresh expressions and fresh growth," explains Reinhold Krebs, EJW's regional youth worker. "The parish system covers the whole landscape in Germany and to transform it would be a huge thing, so we have to go up to a second [diocesan] level and try to get enough freedom and space to work at this level.

"In our region of 4–5 million people, we are one of the biggest youth organisations there with about 42000 volunteers involved and about 200,000 young people reached. Our main advantage is we can reach out to each Protestant girl or boy, especially during their confirmation year, because we are the official church youth work – that's maybe 500-800 young people from one diocese."

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Reinhold says the original strategy of the movement was as a typical German YMCA movement with a lot of youth clubs, camps, and youth cafes – even brass bands. But now they feel it isn't enough to run a club or enough to send young people out to reach their peers. "We have to build up spiritual centres," he says. "They need a place where we can show them 'look, that's Christian life and worship', because the historical church

isn't a model for them anymore. If we want to reach out to youth culture, you have to live your Christian faith in the youth culture and you have to live in their culture. It has been a long process over the last 8 years to convince people that are necessary, and now we are at the point that most of the people are convinced."

The process has included working with the regional synod. In 2001, they founded a new organisation called *Kirche für Morgen (KFM)* meaning *church for tomorrow*. www.kirchefuermorgen.de and members stood for election to the 90 seat-synod. That year they gained two seats, however the November 2007 elections saw growth by 350% to seven seats, with a small decline in seats for established groups. KFM's numbers have also doubled in fifteen months to around 130 members.

"But we are still very little," says Reinhold. "In 2001, as a new organisation with two seats the established groups didn't take us seriously, however that has changed during the last years. During the 2007 election campaign three-quarters of the 'parties' standing said they would support youth churches. With KFM gaining seven seats they know now they have to deal with 'fresh expressions of church'.

"Synod work needs patience and staying power - but we will knock at the walls and one day they will come tumbling down. But it is from above when it happens."

Normisjon Storsalen (www.storsalen.no) is working amongst young people in local churches in the Oslo area. 'Missional fellowships' or teams of people are sent from Storsalen to work with local congregations, primarily in the Norwegian Lutheran Church (Den Norske Kirke www.kirken.no).

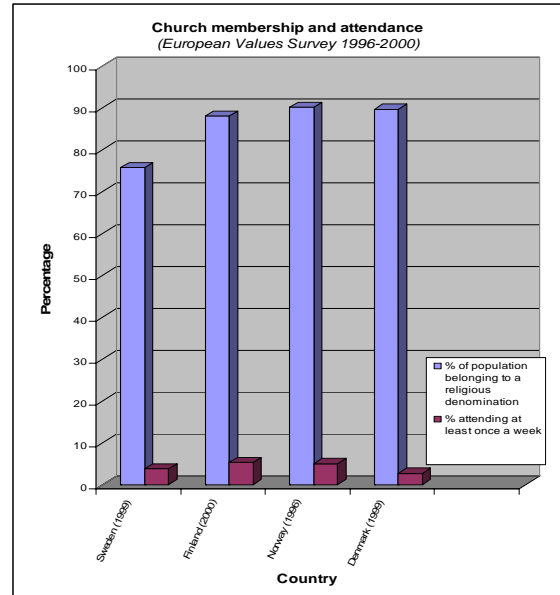
"These teams run or help with confirmands and children's or youth work

in the local congregation,” explains Bertel Hjortland, one of Storsalen’s pastors. “We call them ‘missional fellowships’ because there are a high percentage of non-believers in the groups we work with, and where the ministries are efficient a lot of them will be saved. The groups then form communities which either leave Storsalen and become attached to the local church, or remain with a connection to Storsalen.”

These groups are less independent than the small church model, also identified by Storsalen. In ‘small church’, groups of a least 12 people meet in a community that is defined as their primary fellowship, where they also have teaching and communion. While some individuals are connected to Storsalen, in reality the groups are able to survive and thrive as an independent unit.

3. Scandinavian revivalist organisations becoming church planting movements.

The state churches of Scandinavia are known as folk churches, that is the ‘church of the people’. While membership is high, the majority of members attend church only once or twice a year, and for rites of passage, such as baptism, confirmation, weddings or funerals. Religious practices and faith do not play any part in the daily lives of the majority of the population. (see figures 1 and 2, also appendix 1)



Country	% of population belonging to a religious denomination	% attending at least once a week
Sweden (1999)	75.8	3.8
Finland (2000)	88.1	5.3
Norway (1996)	90.3	5.0
Denmark (1999)	89.8	2.7

Figure 1 – church membership and attendance from www.worldvaluessurvey.org

Recently published figures from the Lutheran World Federation for 2006 and 2007 show how even membership is declining:

Organisation	Members 2007	Members 2006	Percentage change
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark	4,493,168	4,506,442	-0.29
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland	4,533,629	4,556,612	-0.50
Church of Norway	3,871,513	3,939,044	-1.70
Church of Sweden	6,893,901	6,895,840	-0.03

Figure 2 – 2006-7 membership details for Lutheran churches from Lutheran World Information (LWI) No. 01/2008 www.lutheranworld.org

During the mid-1800's a series of revivals swept the established church. While each had a differing emphasis on aspects of theology, they were on the whole concerned with the renewal of the church and personal piety. Out of these revivals formed parachurch lay-led organisations such as EFS in Sweden, and Norway's IMF and Inner Mission, which met in prayerhouses separate from the parish church building. Baptism and the sacraments were celebrated in the parish church, whilst the prayerhouse meeting focused on mission work and prayer.

Normisjon formed in 2000 from the merger of Inner Mission and an overseas missionary organisation Santalmisjonen. Svein Høysæter from **Normisjon Norkirken** (www.norkirken.no) says this helped to set a new direction for the organisation :

"Instead of just seeing mission as something you go to different countries with we now had to see it as something we had to do in our own country. For a church planting movement – it is very important for us to have the reproductive thing going on. Because if not, we are not a movement – we cannot be a movement without reproducing."

He feels the transition from prayer house to church "had to happen". "In the old days people would go to the prayer house in the evening and the church service in the morning. They could keep those things together, but young people think differently. They want everything in one place, in one church and with one leadership."

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Martin Cave leads **IMI Kirken** (www.imikirken.no) in Stavanger, which functions fully as a church.

"We started in 1989 with 24 members, now we have more than 700 members. Before we came to the church, the participants went to the state church in the morning, and in the evening to the prayer house. As our church grew they stopped going to the state church because of time pressure – and we recognised that no one was going and getting communion."

Martin made an agreement with their local bishop for communion to be celebrated during their services, and some time later for baptisms and weddings to take place. "Our understanding of being a church was many years before though," he says – "because we communicated that we are a church, even though we were not doing the 'church stuff'."

IMF-Byrne (www.saron.no/imf) grew out of a youth group associated with the IMF movement, another of Norway's revival movements.

"We wanted to build a more congregational style of youth ministry," says Thomas Rake, who started as a youth leader nine years ago. "The teenagers did some stuff in the state church and they went to the prayer houses during the week. But it didn't really function as the church, it was very 'nothing' - we did some meetings and some children's stuff and youth stuff but it didn't really work very well.

"Over 3 or 4 years the group began to look like a church with young people, and we saw ourselves as church as well. My aim was not to do church for them, but with them - on their terms – wanted a very teenage feel of what we did."

Several years later, IMF Byrne has grown from a youth group of around 50 to a church of between 200 and 250 people attending, with the teenagers becoming adults and families and on the way gaining some older members as well.

“Most people seem to think that to be a church you have to have a service and an employed pastor – we would say you don’t have to do all that stuff to be a church. We do mission, we do worship, we do fellowship and we do discipleship. Although lay led, we have a very strong identity as a church. The prayer house we grew out of is still focused on the things they did twenty years ago and they are very floating and not defined.”

Like Norway, there here are several revivalist movements dating from the 1800s within Finland, each emphasising different aspects of personal prayer and piety. The challenge, according to Hannu Vuorinen of **Cell Group Network Helsinki** (www.verkosto.net), is that these movements have ‘partly lost their flavour’. Some new groups have begun, including the **St Thomas Mass movement** (www.tuomasmessu.fi) and more recently the Cell Group Network Helsinki.

“90% of fifteen-year-olds go through confirmation camps, and most of the population are members of the Lutheran church,” says Hannu. At the same time the weekly attendance is maybe 2%. People feel in a way that they belong to the Lutheran church, but they don’t have a living relationship with the church body. There have been no country-wide revivals over the last few decades, maybe just some small local ones that only affect a city.”

Hannu says he feels people are very open to something new emerging inside the Lutheran church and there is a great need for new kinds of fellowships.

“The original aim of Cell Group Network Helsinki was to create more spiritual homes and new kinds of services within the Lutheran church. We had an understanding of the cell churches in a different part of the world and understood that that kind of approach is needed in Finland. So we have tried to find a way to start without confronting and conflicting, and by moving slowly we have earned trust within the church.”

The Network has several approaches to church planting, including the concept of ‘simple-churches’, supporting five church plants within the Lutheran church, and creating a cluster-based network church in Helsinki Metropolitan area. Although they have been careful to call their groups ‘fellowships’ rather than churches, members celebrate communion and are allowed to baptise, within the legal framework of the Lutheran church in Finland. In fact, says Hannu, even some of the Lutheran officials speak about Cell Network as a church, at the same time understanding that most of the members also belong to the parochial church.



Hannu Vuorinen, one of Cell Group Network Helsinki’s pastors with a member of the congregation

AAVM (www.valgmenighed.dk) in Aarhus, Demark is using the cluster model of church planting to grow the church in the local area, with the vision of becoming an ‘Ephesians-like’ resource church providing coaching for cluster leaders planting churches all over Denmark. “Part of our vision from when the church was planted that it should inspire the rest of the state

church to become missional and renewed,” says Pastor Keld Dahlmann. “We want to change from a local church to become a movement and a resource church.”

In Denmark a group of 50 or more people from the Danish *folkekirche* can form their own church, but still be members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. So when AAVM grew out of the YFC movement in the 1990’s there was no problem with it being a ‘state church’ which was independent from the parish structure, although still under the supervision of the bishop.

“We wanted the freedom to do church service and church life from a charismatic renewal perspective,” explains Keld. “This included freedom in using the spiritual gifts, more contemporary services, modern worship style. But on the other hand we can use the state church ‘brand’ which is quite big in Denmark. 85% of people in Denmark are members of the state church, but most rarely attend, except for infant baptism or Christmas.

“We share the same beliefs as the state church – we are Lutheran, we have infant baptism and the sacraments, but this system means we can have our own profile as an evangelical charismatic church that is hopefully becoming more and more missional. Of course, people can feel provoked when we are very missional or expansion or focused on planting churches but they can do nothing with it because the legal structure in Denmark allows it.”

Between 500 and 600 people attend AAVM’s two Sunday services, and the church is in the process of planting new congregations in Copenhagen and Horsens.

EFS (www.efs.nu) in Sweden is a revivalist movement with the original vision of bringing renewal to the national church.

Its earliest beginnings were as a church planting movement, but it became instead a prayerhouse movement within the Church of Sweden. Today EFS has 450 prayerhouses and 16000 members across Sweden and many of their members have become influential leaders in the Lutheran church.

The official church structures are more or less falling apart

EFS works within the church of Sweden but are not under it. Some prayerhouses have administered the sacraments for many years, but increasingly EFS associations are ‘standing for themselves’ as separate congregations. In 2003 the board took the formal decision to begin church planting within the Lutheran context. In 2006 EFS established a ‘Pioneer fund’ with 1% of the national funds going towards it (around £20 000).

Six church plants are now underway and in November 2007, the EFS board also decided to use the pioneer fund to support a church plant during 2008-11 in the city of Haparanda the very north of Sweden, close to the Swedish-Finnish border.

EFS Pastor Torbjörn Larspers says the decision to start church planting was missional. “There is a big need for new churches in Sweden. There are a lot of nominal Christians who are baptised but don’t live their baptism and many many people live without knowledge of Christian faith. Only about 5% of people go to church regularly across all denominations.

“The official church structures are more or less falling apart¹⁰ – and EFS could play a part in revitalising the church. We may have only 16000 members, but we have produced some real quality leaders within the church of Sweden.

“Six years ago we were asked to start a church again from scratch. After a year or so preparation we started again and now we are celebrating six years. We are working with small groups and holding relevant services for a new generation. We are also working a lot with Alpha and Beta courses to bring the seekers into the church and into the faith.

“We are winning acceptance both within the Church of Sweden as a whole and within EFS for church planting. When a church plant is planned in an area contacts will be taken both from Church of Sweden parish and the neighbouring EFS-church if there is one close by.”

4. Mid-size communities leading to the creation of church planting movements.

Unlike HTB or Vineyard D.A.CH who are church planting within parish boundaries, **St Thomas Crookes** (www.stthomascrookes.org) and **St Andrews Chorleywood** (www.st-andrews.org.uk) are parish churches whose influence spreads much further than the parish boundary. Their mid-size communities/MSCs (also known as Clusters) are groups of up to 50 or 60 church members who are defined by a missional purpose, such as outreach to a particular area, or to young adults or families. MSCs are lay-led and vary as to where and when they meet. At these churches, the MSC's remain part of the mother parish church, but they often meet within other parishes or even neighbouring diocese.¹¹

‘St. Andrews church members come from a wide geographical area that has been outside the parish and indeed outside of the Diocese,’ explains Andrew Williams, associate vicar of St Andrews Chorleywood. “The introduction of MSCs at St. Andrews has enabled them to be part of St. Andrew’s congregation where they return for celebration services, but

they can also look for opportunities to serve and share their faith in their neighbourhood. In one diocese where this happened the bishop has been very accommodating and encouraging of us.”



A Sunday morning service at St Andrew's, Christmas 2007

Mick Woodhead, St Thomas Crookes Sheffield rector adds, “Our clusters don’t just meet in the parish – they meet outside the parish. The bishops know we operate in this way and have been very supportive.

“We do say to our groups that if they are in a neighbouring parish then operate in grace. If they are going to hire a big building or whatever, then it might just be appropriate to give the local vicar a ring and let him know.”

So what are some of the keys to planting churches in historical reformed churches?

1. Be prepared for tension and misunderstanding in what you are trying to do.

If you are church planting in a historical context, what you do may be seen as challenging already established structures.

“There have been people who aren’t happy,” says Stephanie Schwarz, youth pastor of **Domino**, one of EJW’s youth churches in Württemberg. “They are fearful because they are part of the parish

system, but they realise the parish system will not be the future system and there will be a lot of upheaval. You have to deal with these fears and to give people a new vision of what could be in the future, otherwise they feel they are losing and not see what they will gain."

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As EJW works mainly with young people, Stephanie says she is often asked whether having a youth church will stop the teenagers going to the Sunday morning service – "but what they don't recognise at this moment is the young people aren't going to the Sunday morning service anyway." Trond Loberg from Storsalen, Normisjon is also aware of people thinking they were 'sheep stealing' from other churches, given that up to half of Oslo's church going population now attend one of their four Sunday services. In fact, the parish church numbers didn't go down, as Storsalen's growth came from the town's 'sleeping' population – people who were sleeping on a Sunday morning and not attending other churches in the town.

"We are not trying to share the 'cake' of people already attending," he says. "In our opinion if you are sharing you fight for the biggest bit. But we are taking people who are not already in the cake."

And if vicars in parishes surrounding St Andrews Chorleywood initially felt threatened by midsize communities meeting in their patch, the passage of time has shown them they do not have to worry. According to associate vicar Andrew Williams, the mid-size community model does not elicit much if any transference. "People who might be predisposed to seeking the big church experience do not find MSCs very

attractive. We have found that the genuine sense of community and belonging that MSCs provide make them very attractive to those who don't ordinarily go to church."

The bishop can influence how a church plant is received in an area. In Finland, the bishops are positive about what Cell Group Network Helsinki is trying to do, but at the same time they aren't telling the churches to throw open their doors to the organisation. The movement is recognising that in order to grow, they can't be solely dependant upon churches working alongside them but they need to start new fellowships themselves where they are needed.



Between 3-400 people attend the Holy Communion every Sunday at G2, Storsalen.

The local Church of Norway bishop did allow Martin Cave, IMI Kirken's pastor to begin celebrating communion during their services in 1992, but the other bishops and all the vicars in the diocese went out against him, because he was not ordained at the time. He persevered however, and when baptism was introduced eight years later there was no problem.

The changes required when church planting can also bring internal tensions to some churches or organisations.

"Because we are a centralised and decentralised organisation, the head office will say 'we will plant churches' but members have the freedom to say 'we don't want to do that'," says Svein

Høysæter of Norkirken. “There are a lot of old people who stay in small groups and collect money for foreign mission, but they are getting older and older without their groups growing. More and more people see the hope is in the new things coming.”

Holy Trinity Brompton’s model of church planting means up to 100 people leave the mother church at a time to start a new church. While this doesn’t make a huge difference numerically, the people who tend to leave are the very committed entrepreneurial types and so it takes time to build that back up. ‘We constantly have to find new leaders to replace the ones who have left,’ says HTB’s curate Archie Coates. “Change is difficult and you almost have to oversell the vision to the church to compensate.”

*More and more people see
the hope is in the new
things coming*

2. Communication is vital.

A vital key in dispelling tension at all levels is good communication, as Paul Maconochie from St Thomas Philadelphia observes.

“We had to go to the deanery synod of local parish churches and answer questions, and over the last two year we have had meetings with the bishop and archdeacon. They have started to understand what we are about but other vicars who have preconceived ideas about us just go with the old myths and preconceptions, such as that we are trying to empire build or be mega church, because we have a lot of people. Mega church is about attractational church and we are not that.

“There are many vicars in the city who are very friendly, but there are many who feel we just want to be an attractational church and get the money, credibility and people

– including their people. We have had to work quite hard to dispel those myths. We are now at the stage where the church leaders who have bothered to get to know us realise this isn’t true. The ones who have kept a distance are the ones who have never actually entered into the conversation.”

For Marcus Hausner from Vineyard D.A.CH the key is to be ‘available, open and transparent, with an open door policy’ so people from the Lutheran church can come at any time and ask questions. “At the moment we are not seen as a threat by the established church, although I don’t know what would happen if we grew to one or two thousand,” he says. “For our part we are trying to be reliable, and not raise unreasonable expectations within the church.”

Building personal relationships and meeting face to face is important. Although Martin Cave of IMI Kirken had experienced opposition after deciding to celebrate communion he invited the canon in the diocese that had gone out against him publically to meet his staff. “He really enjoyed it,” says Martin. “He told us ‘of course you had to [start celebrating communion]’ - but that was only after he had met us. Three weeks after this he asked me to preach in the cathedral.”

*The key is to be available,
open and transparent, with
an open door policy*

The leadership of St Thomas Crookes also works hard at relationships with local bishops and clergy.

“We invite the local clergy and minsters once a term for a lunch just to bless them and say we think you are doing a great job in small church and at times in difficult

circumstances,” says their rector Mick Woodhead.

As for the relationship with the diocese, Mick says he is aware it is made up of people who are trying to do their best, “really good guys who love the Lord and are working hard, often with limited finances and resources.”

But building relationships takes time. When the team from EJW wanted to set up the youth churches in the diocese, they took more than a year to engage in what Reinhold Krebs of EJW calls ‘the long run’ in order to be transparent and let everyone know what they wanted to do.

“What did we do – talk, talk, talk! We already had confirmation camps and monthly youth services with four- to six-hundred young people. But the board felt there was the need for something more and not just a monthly youth service or annual confirmation camp. So when the Lutheran Church offered the opportunity to build these youth churches, Kirkheim said ‘we want to have one of these.’ We started with a small group exploring what we could do that is different from the usual youth services and camps.

“We also visited every church and each parish and parish board in the area to give a presentation. We said we wanted to be in touch with the adults in the different regions and not just a youth church that is separated from the main Lutheran church. Out of 26 parish churches they invited us to 23 or 24 and we had good discussions and talks with people in these church boards and pastors. Through this we got a positive response and people said ‘go for it’ so it was really good for us that we worked hard at communication from the beginning.”

3. It is possible to work within the system - and sometimes the system itself will change.

In Scandinavia, the parachurch organisations relate locally to the bishop. They are ‘in the church’ but not under the authority of the bishop. This means they have a lot of freedom to change things as required. However one of the main issues for these groups becoming churches in their own right is whether they can baptise new members, and another issue for some is whether they can celebrate communion and if so, who officiates at it.

“The move from a parachurch to church is a process of equipping the people in the prayer house and faith community,” says Norkirken/Normisjon’s Svein Høysæter. “Some fellowships already celebrated communion, but one of the clearest signs is baptism. For others it is also communion and having a more defined leadership with a pastor and not only a board.

“One of the key things is that Normisjon decided to have a network, and to give models and examples through network the, so others could see that ‘we can do this too’.”

Cell Group Network in Finland used the legal precedent of St Thomas Mass to create a parachurch organisation that is independent of the Lutheran church but working with them. As they have chosen to function according to the Lutheran understanding, an ordained person will organise communion and baptise, but lay people help with the communion.

Other churches, such as IMF Byrne in Norway have no problem with lay leaders baptising or celebrating communion.

“We can do whatever,” says Thomas Rake. “When we baptise a child, one of the leaders leads the whole liturgy, but it is one of the parents who does the

baptism. We think this is really important – the mother and father are responsible for the kids, so why shouldn't they do the baptism?"

As churches face up to these and other challenges associated with being 'church' in the 21st Century, there is a growing recognition that new structures need to be put in place

Sweden's EFS began in the 1850's. Although lay-led, by the early 1900's, some groups started to have services and celebrate communion in prayer-house gatherings, leading to tension with Church of Sweden. The problem was resolved in 1989 when all EFS lay pastors were ordained as Lutheran pastors.

While they must have ordained people to administer the sacraments, church laws allow lay people to start at church – they can establish 3 or 4 homegroups, then discuss with clergy about becoming a recognised church. "While many of us don't see having someone ordained as the only way of offering the sacraments, we have no problems if we hold within this limit," says Torbjörn Larspers of EFS.

"Church laws allow lay people to start homegroups. The normal way to start a fellowship is to establish 3 or 4 homegroups then discuss with clergy about becoming a recognised church. These leaders may not be ordained – so in the future there may be tension if we have a strong house group leader who isn't ordained."

As churches face up to these and other challenges associated with being 'church' in the 21st Century, there is a growing recognition that new structures need to

be put in place, such as the Bishops' Mission Order discussed earlier.

Vineyard D.A.CH in Berlin created a one page contract with their bishop, which is evaluated and renewed every two years. The diocese agreed that they could decide their finances and leadership independently, but everything else was kept as per the existing structures. (see the related document *Church planting by historical churches – examples of church laws and contracts*)

And EJW's cause has been greatly helped by a document called 'Church of Freedom' (*Kirche der Freiheit*) published by the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) outlining what the church should look like in 2030.¹²

"It was a really future vision stating that half of the local churches will be in parishes, but half will be network and 'profile' churches – this was completely new for a lot of the regular church members," says EJW's regional youth worker Reinhold Krebs. "We of course had discussed these concepts five or more years ago, but now the Lutheran church is talking about it, and that helps us a lot.

"Our task in the next five years will be to get good regulations but a lot of freedom. It is good like this – we are staying in the structures of the Lutheran church but have opportunities to try things, to make mistakes and to start new."

4. Releasing lay leadership can help facilitate church planting in this context.

Many Scandinavian parachurch organisations have a history of lay leadership. In Norway, the revivalist movement was greatly influenced by men such as Hans Nielsen Hauge, a farmer and industrialist who walked the countryside during the early 1800's bringing revival. "At that time the church in control of

society and the priests were the main authorities in the cities and smaller places,” explains Halvor Lindal of IMI Kirken. “The hierarchal system was clear. He gave normal people the belief they could preach the gospel. The church was closed to him so he started to have meetings in their homes – that was illegal by law but after several years the law was repealed.

“He was one of the men who really put faith to the people, telling them ‘you can read the Bible, you can preach the gospel in your home and you can lead your family to Jesus’.”

“In our church we have more than 20 paid staff, not ordained,” adds senior pastor Martin Cave. “We are talking about the priesthood of all believers and often talk about the fact it is not only the staff or leadership that is IMI Kirken. Every member plays a vital role in being the church where they live and in their day to day lives. We are now trying to build up an understanding of this much stronger than we have done before.”



Members of IMI Kirken

One of the most important things AAVM’s Keld Dahlmann says that you need in church planting is to have an environment and culture that stimulates a pioneer mentality amongst the congregation, including a willingness to take risks.

“Key things are to create a culture where people can actually share their dreams, a culture where it is OK to make mistakes,

and where the pastor is not just focusing on meeting peoples needs, but challenging people to recognise ‘what is your dream; what is the passion God gave to you?’”

You need to have an environment and culture that stimulates a pioneer mentality amongst the congregation, including a willingness to take risks

Lay leadership has been part of the DNA of St Thomas Sheffield for over 30 years. Many of the people leading cluster communities the size of some small Anglican churches also have full time jobs and families, says team rector Mick Woodhead.

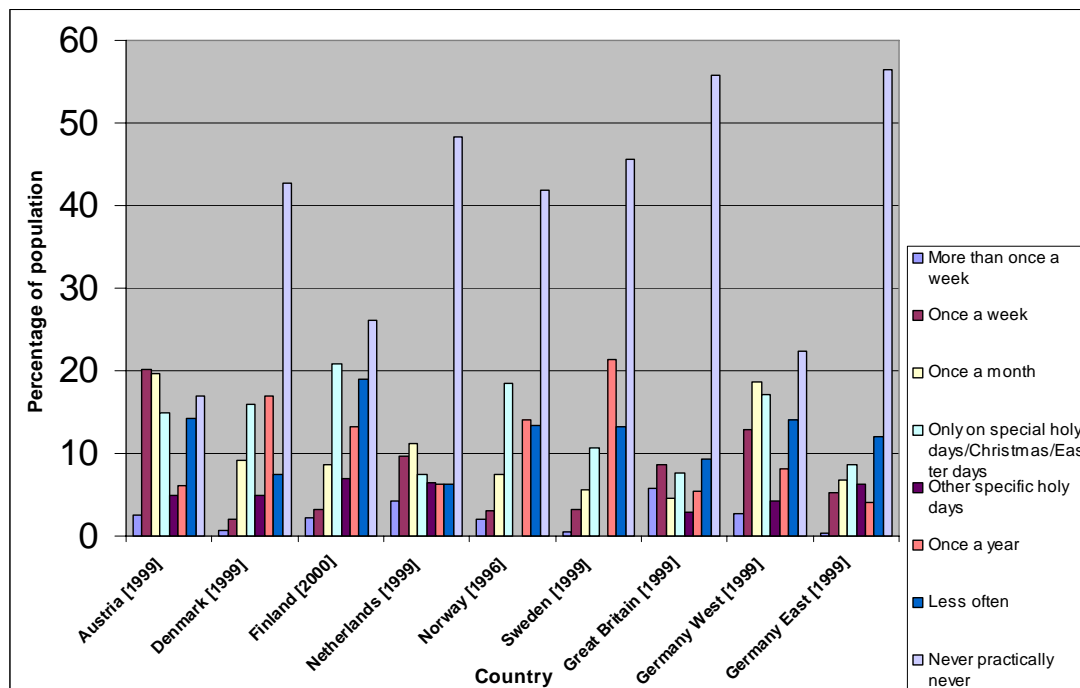
“Raising them up and releasing them into leadership is something we have always done. Inside every person is a dream and part of the job is to help them fulfil it. Church planting is the way we can help them release it. It is wonderful when you see these guys in groups of 20 or 30. What I have learnt more and more that this thing, the God-life, is tremendously released through them. Their God-life impacts other people and they see the God-life happen in ways that it could never ever do if they were just there on a Sunday. Never, never underestimate the wonderful potential of ordinary people.”

Never, never underestimate the wonderful potential of ordinary people.

Appendix 1:

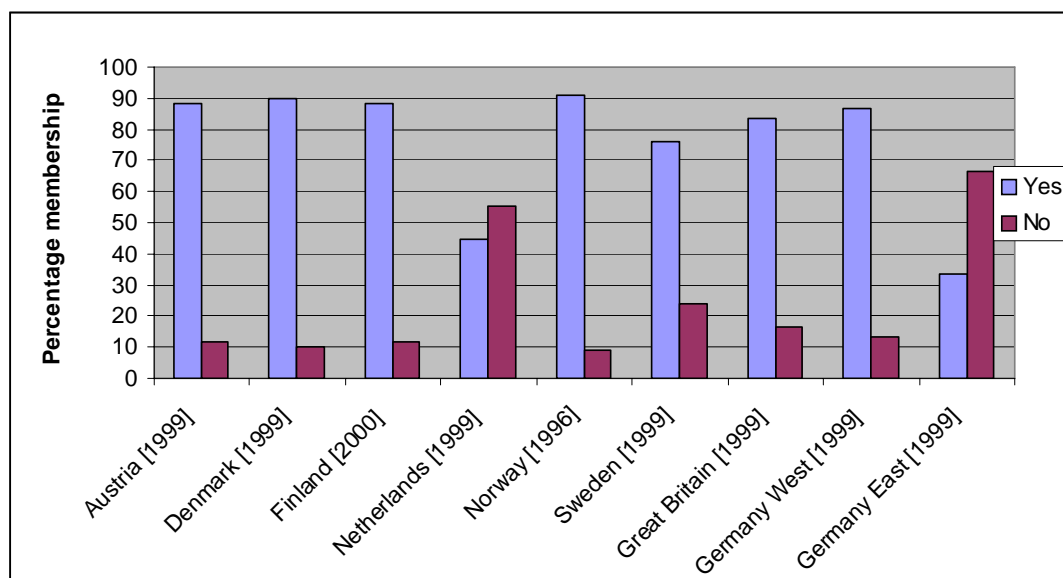
Detailed tables of church membership and attendance 1996-2000 from World Values Survey
www.worldvaluessurvey.org

Percentage church attendance from World Values Survey 1996 - 2000



Attendance	Austria [1999]	Denmark [1999]	Finland [2000]	Netherlands [1999]	Norway [1996]	Sweden [1999]	Great Britain [1999]	Germany West [1999]	Germany East [1999]
More than once a week	2.6	0.7	2.2	4.3	2.0	0.5	5.8	2.7	0.3
Once a week	20.2	2.0	3.2	9.6	3.0	3.3	8.6	12.9	5.3
Once a month	19.7	9.2	8.6	11.2	7.5	5.6	4.5	18.6	6.8
Only on special holy days/Christmas/Easter days	15.0	16.0	20.8	7.5	18.4	10.6	7.7	17.2	8.7
Other specific holy days	5.0	5.0	6.9	6.5	0.0	0.0	2.9	4.2	6.3
Once a year	6.1	17.0	13.3	6.3	14.0	21.4	5.4	8.1	4.0
Less often	14.3	7.4	18.9	6.2	13.4	13.2	9.4	14.0	12.1
Never practically never	17.0	42.7	26.1	48.3	41.8	45.6	55.7	22.4	56.5

Church membership from World Values Survey 1996 - 2000



	Austria [1999]	Denmark [1999]	Finland [2000]	Netherlands [1999]	Norway [1996]	Sweden [1999]	Great Britain [1999]	Germany West [1999]	Germany East [1999]
Yes	88.1	90.0	88.1	44.8	90.7	75.8	83.5	86.6	33.5
No	11.9	10.0	11.9	55.2	9.3	24.2	16.5	13.4	66.5

Related documents: (see www.ecpn.org)

- Mid-sized mission: the role of mid-sized groups as a vital strategic component of church planting.
- Church planting by historical churches – examples of church laws and contracts.

Endnotes

¹ <http://www.eauk.org/resources/info/statistics/2005englishchurchcensus.cfm>

² <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/08/17/nrelig17.xml>

³ European Values Study 1999/2000 quoted in 'Europe: The Exceptional Case' Grace Davie 2002

⁴ www.htb.org.uk

⁵ D.A.CH stands for Germany, Austria and Switzerland

⁶ *Mission Shaped Church* Church House Publishing 2004 pdf can be downloaded from http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/papers/mission_shaped_church.pdf

⁶ according to the draft code of practice in *Draft Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure Part V: Mission Initiatives* discussed at the Synod in February 2007 see: www.freshexpressions.org

⁷ See: www.England-legislation.hmso.gov.uk/uk-church-measures/2007/ukcm_20070001_en_5

⁸ *Mission Shaped Church* pg 68

⁹ “Approximately 77 percent of the population belongs to the Church of Sweden. More of people have left the Church of Sweden each year since it separated from the state in 2000. During 2006, 59,302 persons left the church, 0.9 percent of the members. Church of Sweden studies found that individuals left primarily for economic reasons; membership carries a tax of 1.19 percent of members' incomes. In 2005 the Church of Sweden baptized 67.7 percent of all children, a figure that has steadily declined over the past two decades. Confirmations declined more sharply; according to the latest available figures, less than 36.5 percent of 15-year-olds were confirmed in 2005, as opposed to 80 percent in 1970.” <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/90202.htm>

¹⁰ For more about how mid-size communities are used in church planting, see ECPN paper 1 ‘Mid-sized mission: the role of mid-sized groups as a vital strategic component of church planting’ www.ecpn.org

¹¹ See http://www.ekd.de/download/ekd_bulletin_03_06.pdf pg 4 - 9 for more details.

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