

New Charge Development

Short History and New Approaches

Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge:

"God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age."

(Matthew 28:18–20 The Message)

This Committee is the current incarnation of church planting within the Church of Scotland. Standing in a long tradition of outreach it is tasked with planting and nurturing new churches from birth through to maturity, whilst also looking after the last remnants of a previous incarnation; namely Church Extensions.

Present Work

Church Planting:

There have been 12 new churches planted over the previous 7 years predominately in urban/sub-urban areas of either new growth or regeneration. These are reminiscent of traditional church models where there is a distinct geographical parish although they have not developed the consequent structures/flavour associated with traditional models.

We are responsible for their development through to full status, the provisions of appropriate worship space, their initial resourcing and staffing and through a process of review seek to keep their missional focus to the fore.

Extension Churches

Nine Extension Churches are still under our care and differ from New Charge Developments in that our locus is strictly with regard to property. The missional operation of the church resides with the Kirk Session and the Presbytery in which they are found.

It was agreed at the last assembly that all church extensions would be presented to the assembly by 2007 for elevation to full status. No more extensions can be created and it is envisaged the number will diminish until by 2008 all have transitioned to full status congregations.

Future Work

Every single Church in the Church of Scotland was at some point deliberately placed and planted where it is today. Whether there was a Parish Appraisal process that set them where they are we do not know. However we do know their position was determined only after careful consideration by the people of the day with regard to how best the Church's Mission might be achieved. Coupled with many duplicate churches which arose as a result of the various schisms in our history this has led to Scotland being extremely well churched through the land.

However over the years/decades/centuries since many of these churches were planted the very factors that decided their placement have in turn meant many of them are no longer best placed for effective mission. Population movements and cultural changes have resulted in churches being out of place and also out of sync with where people are today. They are no longer at the centre of our population but for these reasons find themselves marginalized.

This has given rise to the following situation:

- The Church is losing 125 members from church per week.
- 11% of Scotland attend church on a Sunday
- 80% of the population affiliate themselves with the Church of Scotland

- 89% are untouched by the efforts of the church
- Positively the church has begun to address this in a variety of ways including New Charge Development

Such a situation demands a response and the Church has been diligent in finding ways to shape itself in a more appropriate way so as to reclaim its effectiveness for mission. This has not been easy, necessitating much pain across the whole church as cherished congregations disappear and familiar names become forgotten.

For the past 5 years New Charge Development has been working with Presbyteries to help define what that shape might be. In many instances this has been on an ad-hoc basis as Presbyteries recognised the need for new charges in response to particular situations. Predominately in urban areas this has been driven by the explosion of private housing ownership and the ever increasing need to reach whole generations no longer touched by traditional expressions of church.

We now recognise the need to move away from an ad-hoc approach to make the renewal of the whole church a priority, through strategic engagement with these lost generations.

Current understanding of Generational Theory suggests the diversity of approach between generations is actively hindering the communication of the gospel from generation to generation. What does 'it' for one generation leaves another cold. We must therefore understand the differences between generations, both in their outlook and expectations of life / church if we are going to be effective in mission.

It has been found that the following is broadly true of the current generations most active throughout our church:

Builders (58 – 76):	Respect Status Can manage with minimal support Are happy to do anything Consider Church a 'good habit' Think in linear and logical terms
Boomers (39 – 57):	Respect Competence Like to feel supported Prefer to specialise in particular fields Want their gifts to be used in Church Think in linear and logical terms
Gen X (20 – 38):	Respect Openness Need Support Prefer to work as part of a team Attend Church when they feel like it Think Creatively
Mosaics (1 – 19):	Respect Involvement Get support by constant mobile use Want to own their business Most don't know about Christianity Think fragmentally

There is now a need to find effective ways of communicating the gospel message across these generational barriers.

We also recognise with the advent of the 'National Plan' and in conjunction with Presbyteries own 'local plans' there is a real opportunity for NCD to become part of the normal approach to future 'Presbytery Planning.'

Expressions of New Charge / New Churches

The following are various types of N.C.D. which are available and some of the major characteristics associated with each method:

New Housing Development (Greenfield):

One of the traditional methods employed by the Church of Scotland, this has been associated with new/expanding population centres where it's recognised that the new housing area required ministering to beyond that which the existing parish could effectively cope with.

- New Housing & Predominately Incomers to the Community
- New Parish Area created by separation from an existing Parish
- Characteristically a lack of developed community facilities

Changed Status Charge (Brownfield):

The second traditional method employed by the Church of Scotland where a previously established church has reached the point where it can no longer sustain itself and Presbytery deems a re-birthing the best option.

- Established community boundaries
- Existing Parish area as historically understood and agreed
- Often must deal with 'remnant' of previous congregation

Sector Church:

An approach enabled by the current Act for New Charge Development, this recognises specific strategies will have to be adopted to reach previously untouched groups within society.

- Culture based not Geographical
- Targeted at particular cultures or groupings
- May cross parish boundaries
- Existing Church of Scotland still at work in Ministry Area
- Vertical relationships between Parishes/Sector

Parish Grouping:

An approach where groups of parishes are encouraged to recognise the need to work communally towards a shared vision/mission with regard to previously agreed areas of responsibility. Particular emphasise may be placed on the emergence of a new church that is distinct from any of the existing churches.

- Parish areas stay as previously agreed
- Presbytery approved framework for joint working
- Team Ministry orientated
- Mutual responsibility and accountability
- Agree strategy for new initiative

New Alongside the Old:

An approach currently being formulated by New Charge Development that is born from the local church's desire to reach a formerly un-reached group within their ministry area or across parish boundaries in conjunction with others.

- Locally resourced from congregational desire for mission
- Complimentary with existing church
- Can be geographical or sector
- Mutually beneficial to both Parent and child congregations
- Allows strong congregations to take ownership for mission

We have found that a one size fits all approach does not best suit mission in today's world but that each local context must be allowed to give shape to whatever expression of church is suitable for that area.

Of course the results can be described as messy since there is not a single structural or administrative approach taken. However we are convinced our primary calling as a church is to partake in God's Mission to the world; not get all churches to fit into a particular category for ease of management.

Based on our experience over the past years we are now advocating an alternative approach to compliment the existing practice of church planting, by sharing this burden with existing churches. In doing so we have come to recognise the primary role of central administration is to help local churches engage with the people of their parish in mission.

Therefore:

The benefits of this approach are many:

- A shared risk amongst the national and local church
- A shared vision rooted both nationally and locally
- A shared responsibility for mission to Scotland
- A shared celebration of what was, what is and what is to come.

This process of birthing contemporary expressions of church promises to be a far more sustainable approach than is currently the case.

These are only some of the options which are possible. Indeed we are limited only by our imagination and the willingness to embrace what may be unfamiliar yet necessary for the future health of the Church both 'of' Scotland and 'in' Scotland.

If, after reading this paper you wish to take further action then please contact:

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