

The House of Bishops has published a paper on church planting and the mission of the Church.

Church planting is one among a variety of ways by which the Church of England seeks to share in the apostolic mission by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The paper gives a set of principles for church planting and also offers practical suggestions and theological grounding for this work.

The Bishop of Chelmsford, Stephen Cottrell, said: “A few years ago there was a wonderful series on the radio called ‘Things we forgot to remember.’

“It explored various ideas and movements through human history that simply got forgotten.

“If the church were to construct such a list, then church planting would be near the top. It only feels like something new, because we forgot to remember it. Every church was planted once.

“Every church had a beginning.

“This beginning arose out of a response to God and the desire to reach out to a community of people who did not yet know Christ.

“Forming a new Christian community was the best way to serve these people and share the gospel. In our own day we are beginning to remember how to plant churches. This is a great movement of the Spirit and a huge blessing to the nation we are called to serve.

“This brief report gathers together some insights from our recent experience and offers guidelines for parishes and dioceses encouraging us all to put church planting at the centre of the missionary agenda.”

The Bishop of Islington, the lead bishop for church planting, explained why this paper has been published now: “In every generation, and with every tradition, the Church of England has planted new churches to reach new people in new places in new ways.

“Most recently, a number of dioceses have now committed to planting over 2,400 churches of all shapes and sizes by 2030. There is a real desire to see this work grow and gather momentum.

“This paper brings together learning from recent experience and the theology of church planting in order to provide guidance for everyone and everywhere in the Church of England.”

The bishops hope that this can also be a helpful tool for dioceses, deaneries and parishes, in thinking about establishing a new church plant or working with others who are in the process of church planting in their area.

The Bishop of Aston, Anne Hollinghurst, said: “This House of Bishops paper is very timely as interest in church planting as an important aspect of

mission grows across the Church of England.

“In Birmingham we are conscious of how important a great wave of earlier church planting was in the mission of our diocese.

“In the last century many new Christian communities were established throughout our city and region in response to a rapidly growing, changing urban population and new industrial developments.

“Today dioceses, deaneries and parishes find themselves seeking to respond to many new changes in society and the context in which they are set.

“We hope they will all be encouraged by this short paper which gathers together principles based on good practice which will be invaluable to those considering planting a new church as well as those working with neighbouring church plants.

“We hope these principles will inspire confidence to explore opportunities for establishing new Christian communities in different contexts and across the diverse traditions of the church.”

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