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Egypt Hospital Children

Since World War II, Egypt has been struggling to house its citizens properly. The main reason for this is that over 95% of the population live within the Nile Valley, which is less than 5% of the country's land. This leads to severe overcrowding and an acute shortage of housing.

To tackle this, new cities have been built outside the valley. However, they often aren't attractive enough to encourage people to move across the country. This is where the Church has been able to help. Helping keep communities alive is the bread and butter of church.

So, the Anglican church in Egypt asked itself what these new cities needed. They realised that they often lacked healthcare facilities. The Anglican church had already run the well-respected Harpur Memorial Hospital in Menouf for a hundred years, so they had the expertise to help. In 2010 they opened another hospital in Sadat, a growing industrial city north-west of Cairo. They also bought blocks of flats to house staff, without which many would not be able to work there.

The advantages of the new hospital go beyond healthcare. It has helped to put Sadat City on the map, providing an alternative to the cramped Valley. It also gave them the chance to establish a new congregation alongside the hospital, to ensure a Christian presence in the city from the start.

Bishop Mouneer explained that the church sees the provision of healthcare facilities as a key witness to the love of God.

In many of the new cities, the Church has also been establishing community centres. Part of the reason for this is to provide a space for church meetings, but they are providing several other services to ensure that these new cities thrive. Many of those arriving in these new developments struggle to find work, so the centres provide a wide range of services. They build people's employability through English lessons, train people in life skills and even offer microloans for those who need them.

So, what can we learn from this in England? For one thing, churches should engage with new housing developments – we can meet the needs of the community flexibly. More generally, it reminds us to be holistic in our mission. The thoughtfulness behind the church's mission in Egypt is inspirational – meeting health and education needs, building community, helping to address some of the big structural issues of the housing market in Egypt, and bringing people to God. How can your church target its work to address the needs of your area?

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