Growing ministry on social estates and areas of income deprivation

**Estates Evangelism**
The Estates Evangelism Task Group (EETG) takes as its basis the words of Jesus in Luke Chapter 4, ‘I have come to proclaim good news to the poor.’

We contend that, unless we renew church life amongst income deprived communities and most especially on our nation’s social housing estates, we are not being faithful to the words of Jesus and the renewal we long for will never come.

In February 2019, the General Synod took a historic decision as it backed a motion that commits the Church of England to having a loving, serving, worshipping Christian community on every significant social housing estate in England.

Delivery of this aspiration will mean offering enhanced support to existing estates churches and finding ways of planting back onto the hundreds of estates from which we, and other ecumenical partners, are absent.

The EETG, chaired by Bishop Lynne Cullens (Bishop of Barking), whose members are estate practitioners and representatives of key partners, offers support to Dioceses and to the wider church as we respond to the challenges of implementing the 2019 decision through the following ways:
How we support dioceses and the wider church

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**Strategy**

We support the delivery of the Church of England’s six bold outcomes through the lens of the 20% most income deprived parishes in which over 22 million people live.

Learn more about our plan of action for estates evangelism.

**Research**

We have a detailed list of ‘estate parishes’ across the country (i.e., parishes with 500 or more social housing homes) and have mapped those areas where church life currently appears to be weak or non-existent. We are using this data to target where we can work with a range of partners at national, regional and local level to address the gaps. If you would like a copy of the data please contact dave.champness@blackburn.anglican.org.

We have worked with the National Estate Churches Network and Church Army Research Unit to review the lessons from four leadership identification/formation pathways from Birmingham, Blackburn, London and York specifically aimed at growing leaders from estates. The report was launched at a fringe event during February 2023 General Synod. Read more in the Growing Leaders on Urban Estates report.

You can also watch a brief video about the Diocese of York’s ‘Stepping Up’ pathway.

**Partnership**

We have developed partnerships with diocesan focal leads across the mainland and organisations who share our commitment to renewing church life on estates. Partner organisations include mission agencies, resource and training providers, other denominations via the Churches Together in England Urban Mission Group.

A key partner is the National Estates Churches Network (NECN), an ecumenical charity that provides a support network and useful resources for estate leaders, both lay and ordained.

**Consultancy**

Dave Champness works as the EETG’s part-time Project Officer. Part of his work is to collect examples of good practice in estates evangelism and share these with others. He is available to support dioceses and others engaged in this work and can be contacted via dave.champness@blackburn.anglican.org.

**Theology**
The Estates Theology Project brought together pairs of practitioners and theologians to ask the question, ‘Finding the treasure: What is the good news from the estates?’ You can listen to some of their findings in the mini-podcast series here.

The accompanying book (in partnership with SPCK) is due for publication in spring 2023.

Innovation

In summer 2022, the Archbishops’ Council allocated a substantial amount of innovation funding for the EETG to distribute to dioceses, deaneries or individual parishes who have ideas that they wish to trial or replicate that plant or grow a loving, serving worshipping Christian community, of any tradition, on an estate or another income-deprived community. If you would like to know more about this funding, contact dave.champness@blackburn.anglican.org.

Weekly Sunday Services from estate churches

2023

- A Service for Low Sunday (Church of the Cross, Thamesmead, Diocese of Southwark)
- A Service for the Sixth Sunday of Easter (St Luke’s Church, Peckham, Diocese of Southwark)
- A Service for the Seventh Sunday of Easter (St Bartholomew’s Church, Roby Diocese of Liverpool)

2022

- A Service for the Third Sunday before Advent (Sutton Hill Church, Telford, Diocese of Hereford)
- A Service for the Fourth Sunday After Trinity (St Christopher’s Church, Hanwell, Diocese of London)
- Learning to cherish (All Saints, Kings Heath, Diocese of Birmingham)
- Sunday before Lent (Holy Nativity Church, Mixenden and Illingworth, North Halifax, Diocese of Leeds)
Bishop of Burnley, Philip North, previous chair of the Estates Evangelism Task Group, talks about his experience of ministry in disadvantaged areas. Bishop Philip says, residents living on deprived estates urgently need to hear “a language of hope”. He provides advice on how the Church can achieve this.

A leader on the estates church - church@five in North London - Revd Helen Shannon says her experience of estates evangelism has been “wonderful”. However, Helen who also oversees estates church planting for the Bishop of Islington, says estates work can be challenging, at times. In this podcast, she recounts speaking with residents who felt unworthy of God’s love. Helen explains how church@five wholeheartedly encourages residents to “come as they are”.

Dawn Lonsdale is the Chief Officer of Unlock. Unlock is a non-denominational charity based in Sheffield that supports inner-city churches in making the gospel more accessible to local communities. In this podcast, Dawn explains that Unlock encourages the people they work with, to speak about their personal experiences, and then link them “to the bigger story of God’s people in the Bible”. Dawn describes this approach as “setting the gospel free in urban communities”.

“I have the best job in the Church of England” declares Revd Robb Sutherland. Robb is the vicar of an estate parish in Halifax. In this podcast, he talks about how becoming a Christian at eighteen changed his life. And dispels misconceptions about living and ministering on an estate - “this is not a bad place, this is a wonderful place, with wonderful people who support each other”.

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Urban Estates Conference 2017

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Finding the Treasure

Finding the Treasure is the fruit of two years of ‘deep listening’ in five different estate neighbourhoods across England, bringing together local ministers and academic theologians to attend to the voices of estates residents. What do they love about the place they’re in? What brings them joy as well as grief? And what do hope and good news look like?

Rooted in the real-life contexts of these local communities, rich in theological insights, and bold in the challenges it presents to the wider Church, the four Finding the Treasure podcasts (listed below) and the accompanying book to be published in April 2023 – *Finding the Treasure: Good News from the Estates* - Al Barrett - SPCK Publishing – offers inspiration and practical guidance for those willing to engage in similar deep listening.

In areas and churches that have all too often been labelled ‘needy’, ‘failing’ and ‘deprived’, these resources shine a spotlight on an abundance of wisdom and resourcefulness, faith, hope and love.

- Episode 1: Wythenshawe
- Episode 2: Twydall
- Episode 3: Rubery
- Episode 4: Discussion
Estate Evangelism stories

• New lease of life for parish in restored church

09/06/2023

• Church’s social prescribing deal with NHS

04/04/2023

• A life changed by Jesus

15/02/2023

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