

 THE CHURCH



en and young people at church is to be expanded to more parishes.

The Centre for Theology and Community (CTC), based in east London, has been awarded £453,000 by the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) to extend its work to more than 50 parishes across the country.

The award follows a successful three-year pilot project backed by Strategic Development Funding and run by the CTC, with support from community organisers and churches in Citizens UK.

This helped six parishes in the Barking and Stepney areas in community organising, rooted in prayer and life of the church, to renew their congregations and develop leaders.

More than 100 more worshippers now attend these churches every week, 40 of whom are under 18.

Parishes taking part in the pilot included Holy Trinity Church in Leytonstone, east London, where the 17-strong congregation committed to having 100 conversations across the community and the church as part of a listening exercise for Lent.

As a result, more than 500 people became involved in a campaign on youth safety, and average Sunday attendance has more than trebled, with most of the growth among children and families.

St Andrew's N16, in north east London, had a congregation of 15 when it started the project. A community organising campaign around a children's play area helped congregation member Keisha Nembhard-Andrade (pictured third from left in group photograph, above) to grow in confidence and leadership. She went on to build a new worshipping community with 15 new young members, as well as four young people who already attended the church. Sunday morning services are now also growing.

Rev Charis Enga - previously part-time priest in charge - was licensed last week (pictured fourth from left in group photograph, above) as the first full-time Vicar of St Andrew's N16 for 18 years.

She said: "This approach is showing the gifts already present in inner-city parishes which faced an uncertain future. We've seen grassroots leaders emerge from our pews and our local streets - and disciples deepening in faith and in sharing their confidence in Christ."

Fr Angus Ritchie, Director of CTC, said: "Community organising is best-known for its campaigns. But its greatest strength is the way it develops leaders and relationships within local communities. This project is showing what happens when that work is anchored in prayer and worship - and how it can help churches grow in number, depth and impact."

The Church Army is also to receive £189,000 for the Missional Youth Church Network (MYCN) to develop plans to scale up MYCN's work with young people in deprived areas. Further funding will be made available subject to approval of these plans.

Over the past four years the Network has pioneered 25 New Worshipping Communities for young people who had not previously been to church, in areas from Bradford and East London to Thamesmead in south London with congregations of around 30 young people on average.

Neville Willerton CA, Church Army Director of Mission Operations, said: "Church Army is delighted that the Missional Youth Church Network will be able to expand thanks to support from the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board.

"MYCN has grown significantly during the past four years even during Covid and the lockdown period. Church Army now has 25 Missional Youth Churches across the network.

"This initiative by Church Army is key to young people finding faith in areas where the church often struggles to minister."

Other awards include a [£1.2 million grant for the Diocese of Portsmouth](#) to develop churches on the Isle of Wight including a new congregation in Ryde. It will also equip churches to have more engagement with schools and explore new ways to serve the local community.

This initial project aims for All Saints Church, Ryde, to grow from its current faithful congregations to include up to 300 new worshippers attending different styles of church service. This would include a new family worship service planted with the help of Harbour Church, Portsmouth, and a Café Church, traditional Eucharistic worship, and an intern scheme for young people.

The five Church of England churches in Ryde – All Saints, St John's and St Michael's – along with St Peter's, Havenstreet and Holy Cross, Binstead – would work together to engage with the seven schools across the town along with community partners and churches of other denominations to serve the local area better.

Carl Hughes, Chair of the SMMIB, said: "It's hugely encouraging for the Board to see projects that have been successful in reaching children and young people, particularly in inner city and deprived areas, with the message of the Christian faith.

"We know how hard all these projects have worked – and will work into the future – to ensure the Good News of Jesus Christ is heard by all."

Funding of £1,019,257 towards the first two parish renewals in the Diocese of Worcester was awarded under plans approved in principle earlier this year by the SMMIB.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/community-organising-scheme-be-expanded-more-churches>