



The Church Growth Research Programme explored some of the factors that might explain church growth in the Church of England. Findings from this research can help equip and resource those in parish ministry and provide decision makers at every level of the Church with valuable evidence on how resources can be allocated to support growth.

	<p>From Anecdote to Evidence The summary report from the Church Growth Research Programme</p>	<p><i>From</i> Evidence <i>to</i> Action</p>	<p>From Evidence to Action How can I apply the findings from the research programme in my church?</p>
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Further links

<p>The Church Growth Research Programme</p> <p>Further information on the programme</p>	<p>Church Growth Research findings</p> <p>Reports from each of the research strands</p>
<p>Church of England statistics</p> <p>The Research and Statistics unit collects, analyses, and publishes data relating to a wide range of aspects of the Church of England.</p>	<p>Further research on church growth</p> <p>The Church of England has commissioned other research studies into church growth</p>



The Church Growth Research Programme

What do we know about church growth? Is the church growing? Where is there particular growth? What do we know about why some churches grow and some decline? What factors are likely to be present in growing churches and declining churches? What strategies appear to make no difference at all?

Commissioned by a Task Group which reported to the Archbishops' Council and the Board of the Church Commissioners, the Church Growth Research Programme addressed some of these questions along with many others in a comprehensive study of the factors relating to numerical church growth.

The programme, which ran for 18 months between 2011 and 2013, sought to investigate the factors influencing church growth within the context of the Church of England. It explored three strands and focussed on finding areas of ministry which are showing numerical growth – and finding out why.

The findings of the research provide rich and wide-ranging insights into church growth. Although they haven't provided full answers to every question, the research teams have provided a substantial body of evidence and have not only made a significant contribution to the field of church growth research but also provided a firm foundation for researching further some of the associations found. Our hope is that the findings continue to stimulate on-going discussion and that these will enable us, together, to take more steps forward on the journey towards evidence-based decision making in the Church of England

What is mission and growth?

The Concept of Church Growth

The Mission of the Church and the concept of Church growth

The five marks of mission of the Anglican Communion, of which the Church of England is part, are:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

In line with this mission purpose, it is the responsibility of the Church of England to offer, with its ecumenical partners, to every person and every community in England:

- the proclamation of the Gospel in worship, word, sacrament and service;
- pastoral ministry,
- access to public worship,
- witness to Christian truth at every level of public life.

The Church of England is the Established Church in England and has a legal obligation to deploy licensed ministers with the care of souls over every part of the country and provide a place of worship accessible to every person.

The Church, in undertaking its mission, seeks to grow in the following interrelated ways:

- The holiness, transformation and commitment of her members (growth in depth) - both individuals and churches.
- Increased number of disciples of Jesus Christ (growth in numbers).
- The fruit of social righteousness and a transformed society (growth in the outworking of our discipleship).

It is God alone who gives the growth in the church (1 Cor. 3: 5-9). So growth is not to be fulfilled for its own sake. It is only good growth when it comes through faithfulness to the gospel. Sometimes, in history, the Church has been faithful and not grown; and at other times, it has been unfaithful, but also proved to be relatively popular.

God gives His Church gifts to undertake His mission and the Church needs to steward these gifts in order to shape and develop the effectiveness of the Church's work, and thus the extent to which it is growing (in terms of any of the dimensions and concepts set out above).



From Anecdote to Evidence

The report 'From Anecdote to Evidence' provides a summary of the findings from the Church Growth Research Programme.

[Download the Summary Report here](#)

[Click here for an overview of the research findings](#)

How can I apply the research findings in my church?

The findings from the Church Growth Research Programme were used to create practical materials which churches can use. You can find this material on the From Evidence to Action website.

Findings and reports

From Anecdote to Evidence

The report 'From Anecdote to Evidence' provides a summary of the findings from the Church Growth Research Programme. [Download the Summary Report here.](#)

Numerical Change in Church Attendance

An analysis of numerical change in church attendance within the Church of England - Research led by Professor David Voas of the Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex for the Church Growth Research Programme.

This was known as Strands 1 and 2 of the Church Growth Research programme.

Church Growth: Cathedrals & Greater Churches

An analysis of Cathedrals and Greater Churches - Research conducted by The Revd Canon John Holmes as part of the consortium led by Cranmer Hall, St John's College, Durham for the Church Growth Research Programme.

This was known as Strand 3a of the Church Growth Research programme.

Church Growth: Fresh Expressions

An analysis of Fresh Expressions of Church - Research conducted by The Revd Canon Dr George Lings (Director of the Church Army's Research Unit at that time) as part of the consortium led by Cranmer Hall, St John's College, Durham for the Church Growth Research Programme.

This was known as Strand 3b of the Church Growth Research programme.

The Church Army's Research Unit went on to conduct a larger piece of research into fresh expressions of Church, *The Day of Small Things*.

Church Growth: Amalgamations & Team Ministries

An analysis of Amalgamations and Team Ministries - Research led by The Revd Dr David Goodhew as part of the consortium led by Cranmer Hall, St John's College, Durham for the Church Growth Research Programme.

This was known as Strand 3c of the Church Growth Research programme.

Church Planting

An analysis of Church Planting by OxCEPT, Ripon College, Cuddesdon as part of the Church Growth Research Programme.

This was known as Strand 4 of the Church Growth Research programme.

Further research relating to church growth has been commissioned on behalf of the Archbishops' Council and the findings can be accessed [here](#).

Further research into church growth

Building on the Church Growth Research Programme, further studies into aspects of church growth have been commissioned on behalf of the Archbishops' Council.

'The Day of Small Things'

The Church Army's Research Unit built on their research into fresh expressions of Church and published a [set of reports](#) in November 2016. They provide a broad insight into how fresh expressions of Church develop, who attends them and how they can be sustained.

'Not as difficult as you think'

The Research Unit also explored examples of successful, unsuccessful and unproven mission with young adults between 18 and 30 years old. [Their website](#) contains a summary report, a set of case studies and reflections on forms of mission that were 'tried and died'.

'Playfully Serious'

The Church Army's Research Unit conducted a two-year study into the effect that the Messy Church movement was having among Church of England churches. Were Messy Churches growing disciples and how were Messy Churches maturing as church? The findings from the research can be found [here](#).

Talking Jesus

The Church of England worked with other organisations to commission research into people's perceptions of Jesus, Christians and evangelism; the first stage of research with adults was extended into a second stage with 11 to 18 year olds. The results are summarised on the [Talking Jesus website](#) which offers other resources relating to evangelism.

The Church Growth Research Programme consists of three inter-related strands

Data Analysis

The Church of England already collects data from parishes and dioceses such as that collected through the annual parish returns. Given that this data has been collected for a number of years the data set as a whole can be analysed in order to shed light on what factors are associated with church growth. This strand used a range of sophisticated statistical methods to explore what could be learned from data that we already hold.

Church Profiling

The researchers were keen to understand what is fruitful on the ground. The data that we routinely collect inevitably does not cover all the relevant factors related to church growth. This strand therefore involved a large survey of churches in order to collect data which enabled the researchers to develop a profile of growing churches from a wide range of contexts and traditions.

Structures

The third strand of the research involved an investigation of growth amongst cathedrals, a comparison of cathedral growth with that of other city centre or greater churches, an investigation into the impact of church planting/Fresh Expressions on growth, and research into the effect of Team Ministry and Grouped Benefice structures.

What is mission and growth?