

**WELCOMING ETHNIC
MINORITY CONGREGATIONS:
Church-Sharing and the Church
of England**

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A Report from the Council for Christian Unity 2020

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Introduction

Christianity in England is changing. Of course, that is always true, but since the 1970s one of the most striking changes is in the ethnic profile of those identifying as Christian. The number of White British Christians is declining, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the Christian population, while the number of UK Minority Ethnic Christians is increasing on both counts, most notably in the case of those whose ethnicity is Black or Asian. The headline numbers reflect the intersection of two well-attested developments going back to the end of the nineteenth century: the long-term decline in religious affiliation across the White population of Western European societies, and the dramatic growth of Christianity in some other parts of the world. As was stated in the Foreword to a previous report from the Council for Christian Unity, 'The Global Church has now well and truly taken root in England, not just in London and other metropolitan areas, but right across the country.'¹

All churches in this country need to reflect on the fact that Christianity here is more ethnically diverse than ever before – and on the likelihood that the trend of diversification looks set to continue, even if restrictions relating to the current global pandemic cause a temporary slowdown in the dynamics of migration. The Church of England has specific reasons for thinking especially hard about this development, however. To begin with, it seeks to be the church of and for the whole nation, and that nation is changing, and the church of Christ is changing within it. Yet the proportion of the white British population that identify as Anglican has for some decades now been much higher than the proportion who identify as Anglican within other ethnicities making up the British population. This contrasts with figures for both the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian churches taken together, where the proportions for affiliation from white British and UK minority ethnic groups are similar.² How then is the Church of England to relate effectively to the diversity of the church of Christ in this country – and what responsibilities does it have to address the under-representation of UK Minority Ethnic Christians within its own life?

There are other reasons too for urgent reflection by the Church of England on the diversification of English Christianity. Awareness of continuing unconscious bias in the ecclesiastical institution and instances of racism, alongside its chequered history of involvement in the slave trade, colonialism and the expansion of the British empire has prompted calls for urgent and serious attention to be given to far-reaching change. These were powerfully expressed in the debate at the General Synod in February 2020 on a Private Member's Motion regarding

¹ Church of England Council for Christian Unity, *Changes in the Ethnic Diversity of the Christian Population in England between 2001 and 2011: Summary*, 2014, p. 1.

https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/east_anglia.pdf (accessed 30/11/2010).

² Ben Clements, 'Socio-Demographic Groups and Religious Affiliation in Britain', *British Religion in Numbers*, 3 June 2015, <http://www.brin.ac.uk/socio-demographic-groups-and-religious-affiliation-in-britain/> (accessed 30/11/2020).

'Windrush Commitment and Legacy'.³ In June 2020, the House of Bishops then backed the formation of the Archbishops' Racism Action Commission, setting the date for it to begin its work early in 2021. The brief for the Commission is simple and far-reaching: on the issue of race to implement 'significant cultural and structural' change within the Church of England.

The challenge of overcoming injustice is not, however, something that the Church of England could or should address in isolation from other churches in this country. Five Presidents of Churches Together in England (among whom is the Archbishop of Canterbury), with the support of Churches Together in England's Fourth Presidency Group, issued a statement in July 2020 in the wake of the killing of George Floyd in the United States. The text highlights one thing in bold type: '**We call upon all churches to travel together on this journey of racial justice so that together, as one community of churches in England, we may reach out in love and respect to one another in pursuit of our common witness.**'⁴ Racial justice is thus seen as an ecumenical matter. The churches in England need to pursue racial justice together in society and demonstrate it in their relations with one another. Various initiatives among member churches, including the Church of England, are mentioned in the statement, which is being followed up by the establishment of a Racial Justice Working Group for Churches Together in England to assist the churches in addressing the matter ecumenically within the English nation and to complement the existing work undertaken by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland across all four nations.

Given the scale of these issues, the scope of the report that follows may appear relatively modest. It looks at eight cases where Church of England parishes provide meeting space for congregations drawn predominantly from UK Minority Ethnic groups, who use languages other than English for worship (with one exception). In two of these cases, the congregation is Anglican and fully part of the parish. In one, it belongs to a church in communion with the Church of England, and in the remaining five it is part of a different church tradition. The question of how to describe this category of congregations has not been easy to answer satisfactorily. The term eventually chosen, 'Ethnic Minority Congregations' (abbreviated hereafter to 'EMCs'), is simply intended to signal that one of the distinguishing features here is representation of UK Ethnic Minorities. Its limitations will become clear at various places in the report.

Four key points might be highlighted from the report as a whole, as having particular significance in the light of the situation facing the Church of England at this time:

1. the phenomenon of Church of England parishes providing space for EMCs is widespread, and not only confined to major cities;

³ The papers relating to this debate are available on the Church of England website at <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/work-general-synod/agendas-papers/general-synod-february-2020#na> (accessed 30/11/2020).

⁴ 'CTE Presidents call all churches to address racial injustice in church life and wider society,' 28 July 2020, https://www.cte.org.uk/Articles/584547/Home/News/Latest_news/CTE_Presidents_call.aspx (accessed 16/09/2020).

2. the range of relationships between the Church of England parish and the EMC varies very widely, not just in terms of the formal and ecclesial character of the relationship but also in terms of the levels of interaction and engagement;
3. relationships between Church of England parishes and EMCs that are Anglican or in communion with the Church of England can provide powerful examples of what it means to be the local church in and for an increasingly diverse society, and what it means to be part of the universal church as it flourishes in many different parts of the globe;
4. relationships between Church of England parishes and EMCs from other church traditions can present significant challenges in overlaying ecclesial with linguistic and cultural differences, but for precisely this reason also constitute precious opportunities to make visible the unity that is Christ's gift to the church for the sake of the world.

The report is being published as a contribution to a conversation that very much needs to continue and develop further. At present, the Church of England's Department for Research and Statistics does not survey linguistic diversity or church sharing practices, so there is no central database that can be used to determine the frequency of such arrangements and thereby begin to generate a reliable picture regarding point (1) above and thereby a basis for evaluating more thoroughly points (2), (3) and (4). While it is to be hoped that there may be some larger-scale studies in the future, the CCU also hopes that it can continue to gather information and promote better understanding as people read and respond to the report. If you are part of an EMC that meets on Church of England premises, or of a parish that makes its buildings available to an EMC, it would therefore be very much appreciated if you could find time to complete the brief questionnaire that may be found in the Appendix. This report is not being presented as a definitive account of what is happening, but rather as a catalyst for greater understanding of these sometimes fragile relationships and fuller realization of the potential that they carry for the whole church of Christ in this nation.

1. Context

The growth of Ethnic Minority Congregations

As noted in the Introduction, World Christianity has changed profoundly over the past hundred years. It has been estimated that in 1910, 66% of the world's Christians lived in Europe; in 2010, that figure had reduced to 26%.⁵ This is a remarkable transition, and Christianity has become a truly global faith in a way that has not been the case in previous centuries. At the same time, patterns of migration into Western Europe from other parts of the world have over many generations brought with them Christians from a diversity of ethnicities and cultures, who have not always found a welcome within the historic and predominantly White churches.⁶ That is one reason why some choose to create and be part of new congregations, where minority ethnicity within a Western European country may be a significant common factor. This may be especially true of Christians – including Anglicans – who would identify with global communions other than Roman Catholicism or Orthodoxy, which have in different ways been relatively successful at integrating those from different ethnicities within existing structures, including through the intentional formation of new EMCs.

Measuring changing levels of migration is a complex task,⁷ but since the so-called 'crisis' of 2015, migration has become the focus for sustained attention in Western Europe, not least because of the way it has become linked to political populism. Restrictions because of the global pandemic still under way at the time of writing may slow migrant flows in the short term, but the longer-term trend of substantial movement of peoples across and within continents is likely to continue. As the proportion of different ethnic groups within the population of some Western societies, including the UK, continues to change in the direction of greater diversity, so too does the profile of the Christian presence in those societies.

Research conducted by the Council for Christian Unity into data on religion and ethnicity from the National Census in 2001 and in 2011 yielded the following conclusions:

⁵ David Sang-Ehil Han, 'Changing Paradigms in Global Ecumenism: A Pentecostal Reading', in Peter Hocken, Tony L. Richie, and Christopher A. Stephenson, eds., *Pentecostal Theology and Ecumenical Theology: Interpretations and Intersections* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 112.

⁶ Anthony G. Reddie, *Theologising Brexit: A Liberationist and Postcolonial Critique* (London: Routledge, 2019); for a survey of views from more recent migrants encountering European churches, see Darrell Jackson and Allissia Passarelli, *Mapping Migration, Mapping Churches' Responses in Europe. Belonging, Community and Integration: the Witness and Service of Churches in Europe* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2016), pp. 115–21, <https://www.ceceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/2016-01-08-Mapping Migration 2015 Online lo-res 2 .pdf> (accessed 06/10/2020).

⁷ Jackson and Passarelli, *Mapping Migration*, chapter 1, 'Measuring the Phenomenon of Migration in Europe', pp. 13–29.

- a. In the ethnic categories Black, Asian, White (European and Other) and Mixed Ethnicity there has been an increase in the number of Christians in all eight regions.
- b. The largest proportionate increase has been in the Asian Christian population, a fourfold increase in the period 2001–2011, and a doubling of the percentage of people of Asian heritage who are Christian.
- c. The rates of increase (percentage increase) in the Black, Asian, White (European and Other) and Mixed Ethnicity categories in all regions of England are greater than in the London Boroughs.
- d. London still has the greatest numerical increase in the Christian population.
- e. In the White (British) and Other Ethnicity categories, there has been a decrease.⁸

What is perhaps most striking here is the consistency of the pattern of greater diversification in the ethnic make-up of the Christian population across England as a whole, together with the finding that the largest proportionate increase was in the number of Asian Christians. While the figures used in this study are not based on current data, the general picture they present is unlikely to be divergent from continuing trends as evidenced from the next National Census in 2021.

The broad picture sketched in the Council for Christian Unity's report is filled out in more detail in other work. A recent study, for instance, estimated the increase in African churches in Barking and Dagenham at 307 percent between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, while the median for England and Wales was 244 percent.⁹ It has been suggested that the London Borough of Southwark may have the largest concentration of African congregations outside of Africa.¹⁰ London continues to show greater levels of religiosity than the rest of the country, but growth in this particular area is by no means solely a London phenomenon.¹¹ A study of *New Churches in the North East* confirms

⁸ Council for Christian Unity, *Changes in Ethnic Diversity*, p. 2). For an explanation of the 'eight regions', on each of which a further and more detailed report was issued, see p. 4. The lead researcher for this report was the Revd Dr Roger Paul, the National Ecumenical Officer for the Church of England at the time.

⁹ CAG Consultants, *Faith Groups and Meeting Places: Evidence base study* (London: London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council, 2017), p. 36, <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/Faith-groups-and-meeting-places-evidence-base-study.pdf> (accessed 06/10/2020).

¹⁰ Andrew Rogers, *Being Built Together: A Story of New Black Majority Church in the London Borough of Southwark* (London: University of Roehampton), 2013, p. 39, <https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/globalassets/documents/humanities/being20built20togethersb203-7-13.pdf> (accessed 06/10/2020).

¹¹ See Paul Bickley and Nathan Mladin, *Religious London: Faith in a Global City* (London: Theos, 2020), <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/Religious-London-FINAL-REPORT-24.06.2020.pdf> (accessed 06/10/2020).

the growing number of UK Minority Ethnic churches there, with the most representative continent being Africa.¹² The growing number of UK Minority Ethnic congregations in the North East has partially offset the decline of white British church attendance. Fundamental to this growth has been the increase in UK Minority Ethnic populations across key areas of the North East including Newcastle, Sunderland and Middlesbrough.

So how do Christians whose presence in Western Europe is linked to migration over the past century in particular relate to the historic churches within these societies? A major research exercise from the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) into responses to migration from the churches in Europe used three key terms in the major questionnaire exercise it undertook with European churches to help categorize the emerging forms of congregations and churches. These were:

- *Ethnic Minority Church*: A significantly mono-ethnic local parish or congregation in membership of a mainline church or denomination and different from the ethnic, cultural, and national traditions of a majority of the wider church membership.
- *International Church*: An ethnically diverse local parish or congregation that worships using a common language such as English, French, Spanish or Chinese.
- *Intercultural Church*: A local parish or congregation whose ethnically diverse composition is reflected in the culturally and linguistically diverse content of worship as well as in the life of the congregation as a whole.¹³

The Church of England contains examples of all three types of churches. Where the current report has a different focus, however, is in attending to congregations (a) most of whose members are from a UK Minority Ethnic group, (b) who meet for worship on Church of England premises, and (c) who use a language other than English as their main language for worship. This grouping therefore includes some Anglican congregations that are fully part of the Church of England and would therefore count as 'Ethnic Minority Churches' for the CCME & WCC report (as with case H below), or as part of 'Intercultural Churches' (as with case G). It also, however, extends to congregations from other denominations and church traditions that, because they meet in Church of England buildings, have some form of relationship with the Church of England. The decision to look at such congregations together, despite the significant differences between them, was based on the hypothesis that there could be important commonalities between their experiences, and also on some evidence for mobility between different ways in which an EMC might relate to the Church of England.¹⁴ Hence the use here of the term 'Ethnic Minority Congregation' (rather

¹² David Goodhew and Rob Barward-Symmons, *New Churches in the North East* (Durham: Centre for Church Growth Research, 2015), p. 41, <http://community.dur.ac.uk/churchgrowth.research/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/NCNereportFINAL.pdf> (accessed 06/10/2020).

¹³ Jackson and Passarelli, *Mapping Migration*, p. 97.

¹⁴ Adam Barnett, 'Stratford's Bulgarians join church in ceremony at St Paul's', *Newham Recorder*, 14 July 2014, <https://www.newhamrecorder.co.uk/news/stratford-s-bulgarians-join-church-in-ceremony-at-st->

than 'Church'), intended to leave open the nature of the relationship to the Church of England parish with which premises for worship are being shared. There are inevitably limitations to this terminology, some of which will become apparent from the case studies in the following chapters, in particular the definition of a congregation in terms of common ethnicity.

As already indicated, there are many EMCs in this country that relate to churches other than the Church of England. An increasing number of Filipino and Keralan Roman Catholics have made their home in England and Wales, for instance, alongside those arriving from other European countries. While they often worship in their own language and with their own liturgical Rite, they also integrate with English-speaking congregations, with opportunities for each to learn more about each other and share different cultural aspects of their faith experience. This might be compared with the situation of the United Reformed Church, which released a report in 2014 on developing relations with 'newer migrant churches' that sought to share church buildings without wanting to become part of the United Reformed Church.¹⁵

EMCs, as thus defined, are a phenomenon across Europe, and not confined to England. Indeed, it is important to remember that the Church of England includes the Diocese in Europe which not only contains significant examples of 'International Church' as defined above, but whose chaplaincies have always functioned to some extent in a way that parallels the situation of EMCs, not least insofar as language serves as a critical marker of 'a different ethnic, cultural or national tradition from the majority of the wider church.'¹⁶ Elsewhere in Europe, other churches have already given significant attention to considering how to engage with the changing ethnic make-up of Christianity in their societies, including the proliferation of EMCs. For example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark has sought to work in Denmark with African migrant churches on ministry to teenagers, and with the Eritrean Orthodox Church on children's education as they navigate between two contrasting cultures. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark has also experienced a significant increase in the number of baptisms since 2015, as many of those arriving as migrants wish to have their children baptized in the 'local' church. Yet there are also questions about what it means for those from other Christian groups to join the Church of Denmark, how accommodating it can be of church traditions that are not Lutheran,

[paul-s-1-3683303](#). See also the comment of one of the clergy participating in the study by Demelza Jones and Andrew Smith, *Minority Congregations' Use of Anglican Church Spaces in the Birmingham Diocese* (Birmingham: The Church of England, 2015), https://publications.aston.ac.uk/id/eprint/26109/1/Minority_congregations_use_of_Anglican_Church_spaces_in_the_Birmingham_Diocese.pdf (accessed 06/10/2020), that 'The relationship has been one of tenancy for most of the time but since their pastor left has developed a deeper relationship, with them potentially becoming a third congregation in the parish unless they find a replacement for me!' (p. 12).¹⁵ United Reformed Church, *Better Church Hosting: Intentionally Exploring Life together on an Intercultural Journey*, 2014, https://urc.org.uk/images/mission/racial/RJ-Resources/Intercultural_booklet_-_Better_Church_Hosting_14.pdf (accessed 06/10/2020).

¹⁶ See the comments of Jackson and Passarelli, *Mapping Migration*, pp. 10–11.

and how to open up routes into ordained ministry for an increasingly diverse membership when this normally requires a minimum of six years training at a Danish university.¹⁷

As the case of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark shows, EMCs can have varying types of relationship to an established, or historic 'state' church. Some may find a home within it, with others there may be various forms of partnership, while others may have nothing to do with it at all. The recent launch of texts for public worship in Persian (or Farsi) is evidence of some EMCs finding a secure place within the mainstream life of the Church of England.¹⁸ There are some well-established examples of Persian congregations that are very much part of their parish or, in the case of Liverpool, cathedral.¹⁹ Indeed, it would appear that Iranians constitute possibly the fastest growing UK Ethnic Minority group within the Church of England, without necessarily always forming EMCs as defined in this report.

A degree of overlap also exists between Church of England relations with EMCs and what are sometimes referred to as 'chaplainscy' relations between Church of England parishes and congregations belonging to churches with which it is in communion, either as part of the Anglican Communion or through various agreements. At an early stage, the CCU team working on this project became aware of the informal national network for such relations and its work in gathering relevant information. These contacts have been an important source of both awareness and encouragement, while the CCU also has a specific interest regarding EMCs representing churches with which the Church of England is not in communion.²⁰

A study of the African-Christian Diaspora in Europe, focusing on Germany, concluded that there were three phases through which the churches it was considering tended to move – not necessarily in a linear way: 'seclusion', 'opening-up', and 'interculturalisation'.²¹ This is a helpful way of mapping the different perspectives on relations with the Church of England and other churches that may exist on the part of EMCs. Those that are in the 'seclusion' phase may be quite happy to keep things very much at arm's length, while those that are in the other two phases may be disappointed if they do not find a readiness to engage with them on the part of a Church of England parish in whose buildings they have chosen to meet. An EMC may not necessarily be fixed in one of these phases, especially if its membership changes significantly over time, perhaps

¹⁷ We are grateful to Søren Dalsgaard, Coordinator for the Christian Migrant Network in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark, for a discussion on these matters.

¹⁸ 'Church of England launches Persian language Communion Service', Church of England website, 2019, <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/church-england-launches-persian-language-communion-service> (accessed 06/10/2020).

¹⁹ <https://www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/home/worship-here/iPersian-congregation.aspx>. For a parish example, see <http://www.stphilemons.co.uk/#/Sundays>, which also hosts gatherings in Sorani Kurdish. (Both websites accessed 16/09/2020).

²⁰ A meeting of those involved in 'Ethnic and Linguistic Chaplaincies' was convened by the Bishop of Islington at Lambeth Palace on 11 May 2018; this network has also gathered on other occasions.

²¹ Benjamin Simon, *From Migrants to Missionaries: Christians of African Origin in Germany* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), chapter V, 'The Search for Identity'.

as a result of migration. A willingness to respond to such shifts would seem to be important on the Church of England's part.

Origins of the project

The Council for Christian Unity is conscious that Christianity in England is changing. One feature of this change is simply that there are many more church denominations and groupings in this country, with the number likely to continue to grow. One index of that is the rise in the number of member churches for Churches Together in England from nineteen when it was founded in 1990 to fifty in 2021.²² Active participation in Churches Together in England continues to be critical for how the Church of England engages with the diversity of the church of Christ in this country. Many – perhaps the majority – of EMCs in the UK belong to national and indeed international denominations, while others will relate to parachurch bodies; strengthening relations with them is also a vital part of this task. Nonetheless, there are also EMCs whose churches do not have a well-established national profile and corresponding structures; taken together, they also represent a significant part of the Christian presence in our society. They may well nonetheless engage quite richly in more local expressions of ecumenism within, e.g., town-wide or borough-wide expressions of Churches Together. The Church of England needs to find ways to ensure it includes them within its ecumenical horizons – a point that will be picked up again in the final chapter.

Various conversations suggested, however, that there was one respect in which the Church of England had considerable engagement with EMCs as part of this broader picture: through the sharing of church buildings. Not only does it have by far the greatest number of buildings of any church in this country, but many of them are significantly under-used for public worship, with perhaps just one service on a Sunday.²³ It also appeared that in some cases, strong bonds were formed between the Church of England parish church and the EMC, and a real sense of partnership had been created. Such partnerships could be crucial for the Church of England in understanding and relating to all the people of a given parish, including those from UK Minority Ethnic groups who identify with other religions as well as other churches. The potential here was therefore not just for enhancing the Church of England's ecumenical relations and its inclusivity, but also for learning what could contribute to effectiveness in evangelism, discipleship, and seeking the common good together. Yet what also became apparent through these initial conversations was that there was a lack of research into such relationships and perhaps with that at times a lack of understanding and appreciation for how they might be nurtured and grown.

²² See <https://www.cte.org.uk/>, especially information about the beginning of CTE https://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/276931/Home/About/The_CTE_story/Why_and_how/Why_and_how.aspx (accessed 30/11/2020).

²³ In some urban areas, local councils are becoming conscious of the difficulties that faith bodies may experience in finding appropriate meeting space; see, e.g., the report from CAG Consultants, *Faith Groups and Meeting Places*.

That is not to say, however, that no relevant work has been done before. A report in 2015 on *Minority Congregations' Use of Anglican Church Spaces in the Birmingham Diocese* drew on a survey of 100 Church of England clergy, who 'identified a total of 38 ethno-linguistic minority-focused congregations operating in Anglican spaces across the city-region.'²⁴ They were not necessarily evenly spread; eleven clergy reported relating to more than one such congregation, and while some were present in suburban and semi-rural parts of the city-region, the majority met in inner-city areas. Of these thirty eight, twenty five were using a language other than English as the main language of worship.²⁵

The decision was taken at an early stage to focus the envisaged study on EMCs using a language other than English as the main language for worship. This was partly pragmatic, in order to limit the scope of the research, but also because language is a uniquely powerful marker of cultural difference, indicating the importance for the EMC of maintaining its cultural distinctiveness within the unity of the church, as within society more generally. Moreover, insofar as the language of worship is also the common language of a congregation for everyday life, particular challenges are likely to exist for relations between congregations that may worship in the same space but which are most at home in different languages. This is not to deny the importance of EMCs where other languages may be spoken in the home and in the community, but English is used for shared worship. Case H below is included as an example of this.

Approach

Three key objectives were identified for the research project into EMCs using a language other than English for worship and sharing church buildings with the Church of England:

- to understand better the range of different EMCs that are meeting regularly on Church of England premises by conducting a qualitative study that explores a number of these relationships;
- to outline the current situation regarding how Church of England parishes relate to EMCs, in terms of
 - formal parameters
 - provision of support and resources
 - sharing in worship, discipleship, and witness;
- to identify opportunities for the Church of England to show hospitality to EMCs in a range of ways and to address potential challenges in seeking to grow in partnership, including those that may arise from cultural differences.

A decision was taken to include a range of different kinds of EMCs in terms of church identity and relation to the Church of England. The cases considered include an EMC that is fully part of a Local Ecumenical Partnership where the Church of England is one of the partners, another

²⁴ Jones and Smith, *Minority Congregations' Use of Anglican Church Spaces*, p. 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

where it exists alongside an English-speaking congregation within a single parish, and another where it belongs to a church in communion with the Church of England and there is much interchange between the two. It is notable that of the remaining ten EMCs covered in this study, three are Eastern Orthodox, four are Pentecostal, and three are described as ‘non-aligned’, though it is possible that they too are influenced by Pentecostalism. An informal list of EMCs meeting on church premises in the Diocese of London, produced in 2016, also suggests a predominance of Orthodox and Pentecostal churches.²⁶ One factor here is likely to be that these churches are not necessarily part of denominations that have an established network of church buildings spread across the country, as would be the case, for instance, with Baptists, Methodists, or Roman Catholics. Another is continuing Pentecostal growth in the Global South, together with its tendency to keep producing new churches and groupings as the movement spreads.²⁷

The research project was designed to build critical and diverse case studies and conduct semi-structured interviews. The interviews produced first-hand accounts of the spectrum of relationships possible in the church of England. The project covered a range of responses from EMCs themselves and representatives of the parishes in whose buildings they meet. There is a limitation in the responses of the EMCs selected here in that most of them were contacted through the Church of England parish, which presupposes that the relationship was working reasonably well. However, the responses gathered suggested that EMCs were confident in expressing themselves with regard to any disagreements that had taken place.

The interviews centred on areas that are of key interest: an assessment of current arrangements and the state of relationships, a consideration of any guidance that was in place, and an appraisal of any contact and exchange between the congregations. The interviews selected reflected a variety of denominational practices and relationships. The questions were organized in three categories: ‘Context’, ‘Current Relationship’ and ‘Resources and Advice’. The ‘Context’ questions were aimed at understanding how the relationship had emerged and sought to understand the parameters established for it both formally and informally. These questions were slightly abstract and aimed to ease participants into a gentle interview and to create a productive environment where they felt confident and safe enough to express their opinions fully.

The interviews elicited a broad spectrum of responses, all of which were informative and none of which could be held up as the single model for good practice, as one would expect in this kind of survey. The responses include instances of stark contrast in the level of intimacy between the sharing congregations, and in the kind of formal arrangement that frames the relationship, raising questions as to the extent to which relationships between EMCs and other congregations

²⁶ See also the list in Jones and Smith, *Minority Congregations’ Use of Anglican Church Spaces*, pp. 8–9.

²⁷ Joe Aldred, ed., *Pentecostals and Charismatics in Britain: An Anthology* (London: SCM, 2019): ‘Pentecostals and Charismatics in Britain are an ethnically and denominationally diverse faith expression that dates back to the early twentieth century and is now nationally and internationally among the fastest growing religious groupings’, p. xvi.

using the same buildings are characterized by mutual support, shared learning and partnership in mission. They illustrate the range in duration of such relationships, from one case study where it has now lasted over forty years to another where it was only five months old.

As with many other projects in 2020, this research encountered challenges caused by Covid-19. Interviews and focus groups were required to be cancelled due to the risk of travelling, and it was not possible for all of them to take place virtually. Furthermore, there were limitations to resources in that access to background literature was restricted because of the closure of libraries. Therefore, this report is somewhat less ambitious than was originally intended. It is with the hope that it can nonetheless offer some insights and stimulate further exploration and understanding that it is now being released.

2. Perspectives from EMCs Meeting in Church of England Buildings

Representatives from four different EMCs were interviewed as part of the project. This chapter contains a report of the interviews, concluding with some initial comments on issues that arose. As will become clear, one obvious point to emerge is the diversity in terms of expectations of the Church of England from EMCs, as well as their range in terms of church tradition.

A. Non-affiliated Nepalese Congregation

The arrangement began the previous year, five months prior to the interview taking place, when the Nepalese congregation approached the Church of England parish with a request to share its building. Prior to the arrangement being accepted, the Nepalese congregation had been asked to demonstrate that they were Trinitarian in belief. Terms and Conditions for hiring of the premises were then agreed. The participant explained that his congregation had met at a different church prior to this arrangement, so this was not a new experience for them. The current building was also shared with a Baptist church. The interviewee reported that the majority of Nepalese congregations share with local churches and expressly prefer to do so over secular buildings such as community centres or school halls.

The interviewee was very positive about the relationship, saying that he felt 'comfortable' in the present church sharing arrangement. He reported that the Anglican minister had emphasized that he was also very happy with the current arrangement; he believed that the minister was doing everything possible to ensure that the Nepalese congregation felt welcome. Direct communication between the two church leadership teams was an important part of the relationship.

Generally speaking, practical arrangements were said to be working well. The congregation appreciated being able to use all the facilities in the building, including the kitchen. Good communication had proved especially important. For instance, the congregation had been hoping to host a night vigil on New Year's Eve, as is customary in their church tradition, but because of licensing agreements the parish could not permit this. The EMC had explained its request and the parish had responded by setting out why it had to be refused. The EMC was able to accept this and no damage was done to the relationship.

At present, contact between the congregations is minimal. They do not normally encounter one another on a Sunday, as one meets in the morning and the other in the evening. There have not been opportunities for sharing in ministry or in worship, with language identified as the primary reason for this, rather than theology or forms of worship; there is a generation within the Nepalese congregation who struggle to communicate in English, with it being assumed that English would need to function as a common language for any joint worship. There is hope that in the future there could be scope for a joint community event between the Church of England

and Nepalese congregations, although at the moment practical considerations around scheduling appear to be impeding that.

B. Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI)

The Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI), the Philippine Independent Church, has been in full communion with the Church of England since 1963 when Archbishop Michael Ramsey and Archbishop Isabelo de los Reyes signed the Concordat. The IFI is also fully in communion with all other churches in communion with the See of Canterbury. The IFI priest who was interviewed can therefore be, as he is, the vicar in his Church of England parish where the congregation of the IFI and other Filipinos meet. While there are currently three IFI chaplains in the UK, as well as four IFI communities in as many Church of England dioceses, he commented that the IFI wish to expand and create more communities across the UK where there are significant numbers of Filipinos.

Shared worship takes place on a regular basis. The IFI congregation is familiar with English as the *lingua franca* of the Filipinos, while the relationship of full communion with the Church of England means there are no barriers to this in terms of church order. They often participate in Sunday services, including the eucharist, with the Church of England, while having some services in Tagalog specifically for members of the IFI and other Filipinos. The IFI priest also takes services and preaches for the Church of England congregation, reporting that he had been fully welcomed by them.

The concerns expressed by the IFI priest during the interview did not relate to the local Anglican parish, but rather to the wider relationship between the IFI and the Church of England. In his perception, there is a lack of understanding of this relationship on the part of the Church of England. Thus there is a need for the Church of England to be more open to the Filipino community and acknowledge the Concordat between the two churches. He feared that this lack of understanding affected the response from those in positions of relevant responsibility to attempts to expand the Filipino Chaplaincy using additional Church of England church buildings, including those where there was no longer a regular congregation. He was hoping to obtain greater support at episcopal level for this and had a vision for a Filipino Chaplaincy reaching out to the IFI and the Filipino community in the UK and beyond.

C. Romanian Orthodox

This Romanian Orthodox congregation had been invited by the Church of England parish to share its building, with the arrangement dating back five years (it had outgrown its previous location). At the time of the interview, it was the only 'guest' congregation at this small church. Currently the relationship operates on a memorandum of understanding, and hope was expressed by the representative who was interviewed that a contract can be created in the future outlining more fully the commitment and expectations of both parties. This would include specifying the rights and obligations about using the space. Furthermore, it is desired that it would include a schedule of events and clear aims about what the two congregations could

undertake together. That the Romanian Orthodox Church was now part of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland made a difference to what would be possible in this respect.

When asked to describe the relationship, the person being interviewed stated that there was 'a positive attitude and positive expectation on both sides.' He felt that in order for such relationships to remain healthy and mutually beneficial, there needed to be a channel of open communication; in this case, this happened partly through counterparts from the two congregations meeting several times a year for 'coffee and a catch-up'. While there is frequent email contact, it was clear that this was not sufficient: 'It is always a work in progress, and we try not to take the relationship for granted.'

Such communication had proved important for addressing issues that had arisen in terms of practical arrangements, e.g., around recycling and parking. It was also invaluable when a question had arisen about service times. The original timing that had been agreed for the Romanian Orthodox congregation to meet soon proved to cause problems in attending for some members. To accommodate them, the service would need to begin earlier – which would mean also moving forward the time of the regular Sunday service for the Church of England congregation. The PCC had agreed to do this, with the representative of the Romanian congregation commenting: 'that type of generosity is rarely seen, and I will carry it with me all my life.' He stressed the need for ecumenical openness and awareness on all sides in setting up and sustaining such relationships.

There is some contact between the congregations. Although this does not include regular Sunday worship because of the differences between Anglicans and Orthodox, there is joint carol singing at Christmas, when some of the Orthodox children also enjoy the parish's Christingle service. Remembrance Day provides an opportunity for both congregations to share a non-denominational service at the memorial cross.

Community activities have provided the most important opportunities for the relationship between the two congregations to grow. These activities have been initiated by the Anglican church with the Romanian church then invited to participate. Examples would include running a shelter for the homeless in the church over the winter period and fundraising for a new sound system for the church. The Annual Church Fête was highlighted as a particularly valuable opportunity to share cultures while working together on a common endeavour: some members of the Romanian congregation attended in traditional dress, while different foods could be shared. Such cultural exchange also took place around the church's festivals, e.g., with painted eggs at Easter and homemade drinks at Christmas. Over time, through such regular interactions the congregations had grown to know each other, which increased awareness of culture and belief organically. Yet the differences between the two congregations also place certain limitations here: many of the Romanian Orthodox congregation are students or young professionals, and many are also on short-term contracts. It is therefore generally younger and more transient than the Anglican congregation, as well as being drawn from a much wider geographical area.

The person who was interviewed also expressed some reservations about too tight a fit between culture and congregational life. The presence in the EMC of members of other Orthodox churches (currently Greek and Russian) and of converts to Orthodoxy from the White British population was noted as a relevant factor. Bilingual service booklets are provided, and generally a third or so of the service will be in English. The aim is not to support any particular cultural identity over another, but rather to build a community of faith. It would not be helpful, it was suggested, to shore up a sense of 'living in two worlds' for the Romanian-speaking community. Although the representative noted that a Romanian school had been started in London, linked to the Romanian Orthodox church there, to address the concern of parents that with the loss of language and culture comes a loss of identity for their children, for him this was separate from the work of the church.

D. Russian Orthodox

In this case, the arrangement was reported as being initiated by the Church of England diocesan bishop over five years ago. The interviewee reported that he and the bishop had a 'very good relationship'; he had been invited to the bishop's home, while the bishop had visited one of their services and 'spoke a little Russian, greeting all the members'.

When asked how the interviewee would describe the arrangement, he said he was 'very happy' as the parish allowed them to worship authentically in the Orthodox tradition. The building was a 'comfortable and nice' place to worship, used by the guest congregation approximately five or six times a year. The location of the church is very convenient for his congregation and attracts members from a wide variety of nationalities, including Scottish, Bulgarian, and Ukrainian.

Some negotiation over practical arrangements had been necessary when the Anglican congregation began to use the church hall for children's ministry, meaning that it could no longer be used by the Orthodox congregation for refreshments. To compensate, the Orthodox congregation was allowed to use the main church building for refreshments. This was presented as a compromise that had been well received and contributed to the sense of a good relationship between the Anglican parish and the EMC in this case.

Review

Even from this small sample, the variety in how relationships are set up between parishes and EMCs is apparent. Sometimes the EMC initiates things, as in A, and perhaps that is most common, though in case C it was the parish and in D the Church of England bishop. The relationship may be framed by a formal agreement: in case A this was a standard contract for hiring the building, while in C it was a memorandum of understanding, with aspirations from the EMC to move to something that would be both more detailed and also potentially more ambitious in setting out some goals for the relationship. The kind of relationship that is possible is influenced to some extent by ecumenical relations at national and international level. The full communion agreement between the Anglican Communion and the IFI makes possible a far

greater degree of integration than is possible in the other cases, for instance, while in case C there was consciousness that with the Romanian Orthodox Church joining Churches Together in Britain and Ireland new possibilities had emerged in terms of formal arrangements.

Since these relationships are based on the sharing of buildings, careful attention to the detail of practical arrangements is clearly important, along with open channels of communication and regular contact. There is always scope for tension and conflict to develop over what may seem to one congregation but not necessarily the other to be minor matters; indeed, this may be a significant factor in relationships between Church of England parishes and EMCs not continuing, or parishes being reluctant to begin them.²⁸ Case C gave a positive example of the Anglican parish being prepared to make changes to accommodate the EMC, rather than expecting it to be always the EMC that fits in with the parish's patterns.

In cases A and D, there was minimal contact between the EMC and the parish's congregation. Clearly, the level of integration in B depends on the two churches being in communion with one another, but the contrast in this respect between the two Orthodox EMCs in cases C and D shows that it is not simply a matter of ecclesial tradition. While joint worship is bound to be limited in such instances, it does not need to be completely non-existent, and there remains considerable potential for building relationships through other kinds of activity, as case C shows. Even here, however, it is notable that the examples given are of activities that the Church of England parish would be doing anyway, in which the EMC is invited to share. Would it be conceivable that the EMC would invite the Anglican parish to share in some of its activities outside Sunday worship – or perhaps these are limited? Could the two congregations initiate a new, joint endeavour of some kind? It may be that this is what was being envisaged as a new step for the congregations in case A, where the lack of a common language was seen as the critical factor in preventing joint worship. It might be noted that in case B, sharing in worship and sacraments, though supported by the ecclesial communion between the Church of England and the IFI, still hinges on the good levels of understanding of English as a second language within the EMC, with the expectation that it can function as the common language for all.

Different configurations of ecclesial, cultural, and national identity are also hinted at in these brief accounts. The interviewee for case C was clearly concerned that the EMC's primary identity should be ecclesial and not ethnic – raising questions about the terminology we are using in this report. Moreover, the role of language in Orthodox worship is different from its role in the Church of England or indeed for the EMCs in cases A and B: the rites will in many cases use a version of the 'national' language that dates back many centuries and is at some remove from everyday speech in the present. Different worshippers may therefore have different levels of comprehension, especially in a diaspora setting where fluency in the contemporary vernacular may itself vary across the generations. Yet the rites of the different churches within Eastern Orthodoxy are all versions of the same liturgies inherited from the early centuries, and hence the

²⁸ Jones and Smith, *Minority Congregations' Use of Anglican Church Spaces*, pp. 9–12.

rites of one church will have a discernible familiarity to those from others – helpful when, as in England, those who want to attend an Orthodox service in many cases will attend the one that is closest to them even though it is the rite of a different church, in a different language. The fact that more than a third of the liturgy is normally in English in case C shows that the ‘fit’ between congregational membership, common language, shared culture, and ethnic identity should not be assumed to be always a tight one, even if in many cases it is.

Finally, it is notable that the EMC in case B articulated a desire to engage in mission activities (associated with the third, inculturation phase of EMCs in the analysis noted in the previous chapter) and sought the Church of England’s support for that. It would be interesting to know whether the EMC in case A, for instance, also has a strong commitment to mission within its ethnic community – but the nature of the relationship here means that if so, they would be unlikely to see the Church of England parish as a partner (let alone consider contacting its bishops for help). How far is there scope for such relationships to have a missional dimension, in which different congregations seek to support each other in sharing the good news and perhaps even consider what they might do together that they could not easily do apart?

3. Perspectives from Church of England Parishes with EMCs

Representatives from different Church of England parishes that provide meeting space for EMCs were also interviewed – with no overlap between them and the EMCs described in the previous chapter. The chapter, like the last, contains a report of the interviews, concluding with some initial comments on issues that arose. The variety of such arrangements is apparent in these perspectives too, although some common themes begin to emerge. The first two cases are of parishes that relate to EMCs from different denominational traditions, while the second two concern cases where the EMC is fully part of the Church of England parish.

E. Three African congregations

The interview was with a Church of England vicar and the church's administrator. The arrangement is that the church hall is rented out to three small international churches, each of around 20 people. The vicar had established that the three churches were Trinitarian in belief and African in ethnicity but was unsure as to more detailed information about church affiliation. He believed that some elements of 'prosperity gospel' were prominent in their teaching.

An agreement letter to each congregation set out the terms of hire. As Christian churches, the three congregations are charged at a slightly discounted rate compared to other groups; the reason given for this was the common aim of advancing the Christian mission. At one point, there had been a general increase in all rental charges; one of the international congregations had wanted to negotiate a lower level of payment, which had caused some tension.

Other practical matters had also needed to be addressed. Congregations had on some occasions stayed beyond the agreed times, for instance, while the local council has received complaints about loud singing at 3 a.m. during an all-night vigil. A comment was made that the three congregations caused more problems for the church than any other groups to whom premises were hired. Nonetheless, it was felt that it had been possible to address these concerns effectively.

No significant contact was reported between the Church of England congregation and the three African congregations, which were treated primarily as hirers of the church hall. Communication concerned practical matters only. Shared worship had not been discussed in the past, and the Church of England representatives stressed the depth of the cultural as well as theological differences between the Church of England and African churches. They were open to the possibility of a service involving all four congregations but not sure if the EMCs themselves would welcome this.

F. Seven guest congregations

The vicar and the churchwarden of a Church of England parish that makes available building space for seven different congregations were interviewed. It was reported to the researcher that there is no contact between the seven congregations, each of which relates

separately to the parish. They had been worshipping there for various durations, ranging from two that had been there for over forty years and one for whom it is less than three months. While the vicar's view of another EMC was to treat it like any other booking to an external organization, there was an active relationship between the parish and two of the EMCs using its buildings: one Romanian Orthodox and one Pentecostal (Church of God of Prophecy). Each of these churches was represented for a period of the interview by a member of their church council. At least one of the other congregations using the church buildings for worship, described as Indian Orthodox, was also an EMC, but the relationship in that case was minimal.

The Romanian Orthodox congregation shares the church building by faculty, which allows them to have their own altar; this was encouraged by the Church of England bishop and approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee. The Romanian Orthodox services were well attended, particularly at Easter time, when services are attended by over 3,000 people. By contrast, for over forty years the Pentecostal congregation has had an unwritten agreement with the parish to use the church hall, though it is now seeking to establish a more formal arrangement.

The catalyst for this has been an increase in the number of services held in the church building, resulting in some pressure on its availability on Sundays. That was also creating another practical issue around competition for parking spaces, though the representative for the Pentecostal church expressed happiness with the current relationship generally. One problem that had arisen with the Orthodox congregation concerned items within the church being moved, including the font, and not returned afterwards to their original location. One of the factors here identified by participants in the interview was the difficulty experienced by both Anglican and Orthodox congregations in being able to explain to one another where the relevant items should normally be; as in case C in the previous chapter, the Romanian Orthodox congregation was much younger than the Anglican, so that generational differences had to be taken into account in communication as well as ecclesial and cultural ones. During the interview, it was proposed that a face-to-face meeting be set up to discuss how this issue could be resolved, and it was also noted that in the future more such meetings would be useful, not just for representatives of each EMC with representatives of the parish, but for representatives of the EMCs with one another.

The representatives of the Pentecostal and Orthodox congregations present during the interview felt that there had been some miscommunication between their congregations in the past that this was largely due to the lack of any direct relationship. The different congregations do not encounter one another in community activities or in joint worship, with the exception of an annual joint carol service between the Church of England, Pentecostal and Romanian Orthodox congregations. Although members of the three congregations tend to sit separately from one another, it was reported that the event is much appreciated by them. There is a conscious effort to bring together different traditions of worship, including different types of music.

It was noted that in the early stages there had been some concerns from the members of the Church of England congregation about the arrangement with the Romanian Orthodox church,

focused on fear of losing both the Anglican and English identity of the church in the context of wider cultural anxieties about immigration from Eastern Europe. Once the relationship began to be established, however, these concerns quickly dissipated. It was now widely felt by Anglican members that the Orthodox congregation had brought great benefits to the church. The churchwarden gave the example of how the decoration and iconography brought in by the Romanian Orthodox had enhanced the character of the church building.

The Anglican minister and the churchwarden stressed the importance of working out the mechanics of church sharing in careful detail at the outset, and of ensuring on-going channels for reciprocal communication as inevitable adjustments needed to be made. They also emphasized the value of understanding guest congregations, including their history and how they worshipped, as well as customs relating to that. For instance, some members of the Romanian Orthodox congregation liked to arrive well in advance of the service time for personal prayer in the church, while the Anglicans were still using it for post-service refreshments.

G. Spanish/English bilingual parish

The person interviewed was representing a Church of England parish that had been formally established as bilingual three years previously. The model is of two communities within one parish, one Spanish-speaking and one English-speaking, with a churchwarden from each and a single PCC; many PCC members are bilingual, but not all are able to speak both languages. The aim is to respect and honour both communities equally, rather than having one that is primary and one secondary – or one ‘host’ and one ‘guest’.²⁹

The origins of this arrangement lay in concerns to meet the needs of the Hispanic community in London, for whom there are occasions of profound significance as ‘folk religion’ or ‘popular religion’, regardless of personal religious belief or regular church attendance. Such events mix the sacred and the profane, bringing together devotion and religion with celebration, joy and feasting, so that people come to encounter the transcendent though in a very informal context. It was hoped that a parish would be able to provide scope for addressing such needs within the Hispanic community as part of the church’s witness in a way that a chaplaincy operating outside the parish system could not, demonstrating that the Church of England is for everyone living in this multi-ethnic country. For instance, a Nativity is set up every year at Christmas in a traditional Latino style, and people who do not otherwise attend church will visit it to connect with their Hispanic cultural roots, in some cases then attending Christmas services and joining the regular congregation.

²⁹ On the inadequacies of host/guest language, which has been used in this report to express the practical reality of some relationships, see Conference of European Churches and Churches’ Commission on Migrants in Europe, *The Church – Towards a Common Vision: A Response of the Conference of European Churches and the Churches’ Commission on Migrants in Europe Based on the Consultation on Migration and Ecclesiology – Being the Church Today*, 2018, §9, pp. 5–6, <https://www.ceceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/MigrationEcclesiologylayout.pdf> (accessed 06/10/2020).

The two congregations normally worship separately, though they come together on special occasions such as Holy Week, including an Easter Vigil service at which the bishop had presided and used both languages. Bilingual services were trialled at one point but had not been continued as part of regular worship, because they were felt to lead to confusion and constant interruption to the flow of worship. Instead, other church activities were considered to provide the best opportunities to build relationships between the congregations, such as social gatherings, pilgrimages (including a recent trip to Lourdes), and community outreach projects. As noted already, the PCC would be a further example of a shared activity.

There was a strong sense for the person interviewed that the parish was providing a positive model for the Church of England as it seeks to respond to a diversifying nation. It is hoped that the integrated model can be used and adapted in other contexts as an alternative to 'chaplancy' arrangements for distinct linguistic and cultural groups. The parish also shows awareness of the wider context by producing its own resources for Spanish speakers within the Church of England that can be used elsewhere too – requiring significant time and effort but very important for ensuring there can be fully Anglican worship in both languages.

H. West African united congregation

This example differs from the others that have been considered in two critical respects. First, it is the only congregation in the parish, and second, the main language of worship is English. It has been included, however, because it overlaps with the EMCs on which we are focusing in this report in some respects. Formally, the church is a part of an ecumenical partnership involving the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the United Reformed Church. The Roman Catholic congregation meets separately, while the 'united' congregation for the other three denominations includes Pentecostals as well as Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians. One thing that unites most of them, however, is West African ethnicity, with around 95% of the united congregation being of Nigerian or Ghanaian descent. Many speak Yoruba, Igbo, or a tribal language among themselves and in their homes, with English functioning as a lingua franca between them. The priest for the congregation is White British and is therefore in a situation of cross-cultural encounter, as is inevitably the case with the kind of relationship between Church of England parishes and EMCs that we have been considering so far.

The priest reported that the experience had been a positive one for him and, he hoped, for the congregation. This was underpinned, however, by the time and energy he had given to understanding the cultural context for his ministry, including visits to Nigeria and Ghana, and by willingness to adapt what he had previously taken to be the norm in various areas. He noted differences from other churches where he had worked in approaches to preaching³⁰ and music,

³⁰ See Benjamin Simon, "'Prepare the Way of the Lord...'" The Role of Sermons in Churches of African Origin in Germany,' in Frieder Ludwig and J. K. Asamoah-Gyadu, eds., *African Christian Presence in the*

but also in attitudes towards family and social relations, in church social activities (a quiz night early on had not gone well), and in theological beliefs (expectation of divine action in response to faithful prayer, including for some material blessing). Accommodation to the cultural context was also reflected in the church's marking of Nigerian Independence Day and Ghanaian Independence Day.

It is clear that building relationships with EMCs that meet on church premises could be invaluable preparation for parish ministry in situations where there is significant ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity within the Church of England congregation or congregations – and vice versa.

Review

As in the four cases described in the previous chapter, careful attention to practical arrangements and to regular communication is evidently vital, to minimize tensions that can easily arise in this context on both sides. Safeguarding was noted in the interview for Case F as a potential area where different approaches and attitudes may become evident. In communication about this project, it was emphasized that for one of the dioceses with a high concentration of EMCs, ensuring understanding of safeguarding practices is seen as an essential aspect of establishing relationships, at the level of both parish and diocese, with a willingness to offer support and training where appropriate.

The question of which church building is being used by the EMC might also be noted. Case E represents perhaps the most minimal relationship between the Church of England parish and the EMCs involved, and it may be significant in this regard that the EMCs use the church hall and therefore are 'present' as external organizations wanting to rent the church's space, even if the difference between them and other organizations is acknowledged. In case F, while the Romanian Orthodox EMC uses the main church building and even has its own altar there, the Pentecostal EMC has been meeting in the church hall for 40 years with no formal arrangement in place.

By contrast, cases G and H represent examples of EMCs that are fully part of the Church of England and are therefore represented in its governance structures. As was noted, where the EMC *is* the primary congregation for the Church of England in that place, it is questionable whether the term is applicable. Although there are important overlaps, it ceases to make sense to talk about a relationship between the Church of England parish and the EMC, as one still can in a case such as G where the EMC is very much 'within' the parish.

Cases E and F tend to confirm the picture from the previous chapter that where the EMC is not within the Church of England or part of a church in communion with it, relations between the congregations tend to be thin. Case C looks like something of an exception here, and it is interesting that in this chapter also the 'thickest' such relationship is again with a Romanian

West. New Immigrant Congregations and Transnational Networks in North America and Europe (Trenton, N.J.: African World Press, 2011), pp. 303-15.

Orthodox congregation, in case F. Although there is far less interaction than in case C, again sharing the main church building provides something of a catalyst: even if at times this also led to friction, it has also resulted in positive appreciation on the part of some members of the Anglican congregation for the EMC's contribution to the church's interior.

The cases described in this chapter bear out that difficulties with regard to joint worship are felt on both sides of the relationship.³¹ The minister interviewed for H described how he had needed to understand the different approaches to a whole range of issues affecting worship when working in a different cultural context, even though there was not the immediate language barrier that might be perceived as the major problem in other situations. In G, although the EMC and the English-speaking congregation are fully integrated within a single parish, worshipping together is reserved for special occasions only. That is not necessarily a bad thing – after all, it would be true of most churches with multiple congregations, where relationships are built through sharing in a wide range of other church activities. What is especially interesting for our purposes here is the expectation in case G that a joint service will be a bilingual service, i.e., English will not function as the lingua franca, as appears to be assumed in every other case looked at in this report where joint worship or indeed joint activities of any sort are envisaged.

The determination of the minister in case G that the church should be truly bilingual and not treat either language as the norm raises questions about the language of 'minority' and 'majority' in this context, and about the relationship mentioned at the end of the previous chapter between ecclesial, cultural, and ethnic identities and how language is used as a powerful signifier for all three. In case G, the goal is one church *without* a single, common language; moreover, it is likely to be true that both the English and the Spanish congregations include people from different nationalities and ethnicities, though with the latter sharing a certain cultural substratum in terms of what the minister called 'folk religion'. As with case B, one might question how far it is right to categorize what we are calling an EMC here through ethnicity, though in this instance it is evidently language and not ecclesial identity that is the common factor. By contrast, in case H English functions as a common second language used for worship by people who regularly speak different languages, but for the most part share a strong sense of affiliation to one of two neighbouring West African countries and with that certain bonds of common culture. The expression of national identity through marking the two countries' independence days nonetheless indicates an important distinction within such unity, and one that needs proper attention. The minister had worked hard to include West African culture within the structures and practices of the British churches that were responsible for the united congregation. His confidence that this was fully achievable might be compared with case E, where although those interviewed were not actually sure which languages were used by the EMCs in worship, they

³¹ Jones and Smith record clergy responses that with regard to the 38 EMCs identified, shared worship happened sometimes in 16% of cases, rarely in 22% and never in 63% (*Minority Congregations' Use of Anglican Church Spaces*, p. 8). No respondent said it happened frequently.

were clear about the perceived divergence between African churches and the Church of England with regard to theological beliefs and wider cultural behaviours.

Attitudes towards race and migration are part of the context for these relationships. Anxieties about Eastern European immigration were acknowledged as a factor for the Anglican congregation in the very early stages of the relationship with the Romanian Orthodox EMC in case E, for instance. At the same time, there is some evidence in all of this to support the contention of Cheryl Bridges Johns voiced in 2007 that ‘the future of Christian unity rested in reconciling Christianity of the Global North with that of the Global South’.³² Of course, this report is based on a small sample, but the impression is that relations where the EMC has its roots firmly in the Global South tend to be ‘thinner’. There will doubtless be various reasons why the relationship between the Church of England parish and the Romanian Orthodox EMC in case F is much ‘thicker’ than that with the Indian Orthodox EMC, though it is the latter that would represent an opportunity for addressing the central challenge for Christian unity in our century as Johns sees it. Can the Church of England find the energy and the confidence to address that challenge in the everyday context of sharing its buildings with EMCs, the majority of which may well have roots in the Global South?³³

Finally, again, it seems worth reflecting on mission. One might describe the EMC in case G as a congregation ‘planted’ for the sake of evangelism and discipleship with a particular linguistic and cultural group, whereas more typically a Church of England will encounter an EMC as something already formed. To what extent, however, do EMCs represent a necessary part of any effective strategy for mission by a church of and for a multi-ethnic and linguistically and culturally diverse nation? As already pointed out, the Church of England does not generally assume that there is a problem with congregations that have distinct micro-cultures of worship that exist side by side – so long as there is some relation between them as part of one parish or at least part of one diocese. We are familiar with such micro-cultures being defined by theology, liturgy, age, and interest; why should there not be space in the Church of England for congregations that are marked rather by ethnicity and language within its overarching unity? If there can be a positive answer to this question, then moving beyond shared buildings with existing EMCs may represent very valuable learning for mission on the part of the Church of England.

There may also be scope for learning about mission together. In case E, the EMCs were charged a lower rent because they shared with the parish the aim of advancing Christian mission. How might a Church of England parish move beyond that bare recognition to asking: what might we learn about God’s mission from one another, and how might we share in God’s mission with one

³² Cheryl Bridge Johns, ‘Remodeling our Ecumenical House’, in Hocken et al., *Pentecostal Theology*, p. 138.

³³ This would be supported by the breakdown in the study by Jones and Smith of the ethno-linguistic and national identities of the 38 EMCs identified in their research in Birmingham (*Minority Congregations’ Use of Anglican Church Spaces*, p.3).

another? Indeed, might it even consider reserving the money given for rent for spending on mission, including shared mission activities? Clearly, if such conversations are ever to happen, then there has to be some investment in seeking to develop the relationship beyond one focused solely on managing the practicalities of sharing buildings – though perhaps they might also make it easier in the long run to do that too, with growth in mutual understanding and partnership in the gospel.

4. Sharing buildings, building relationships

The Church of England has many buildings – some ancient and some modern, some powerfully numinous and some designed for maximum flexibility of use. Many parishes have halls and separate church rooms as well as worship space. Given the proliferation of EMCs that are looking for suitable premises to gather for worship and other activities, it makes sense for Church of England parishes to be willing to help them in this regard. The Church of England should be ready to share its historic riches in terms of buildings, with a responsibility also to ensure they are well used for the purposes for which they were given, of worship and witness in the name of Christ.

Of course, there needs to be careful communication to establish clear agreement and maintain good relations. Financial arrangements are an integral part of that. Costs are likely to need covering, including those of ongoing administration; but beyond that, decisions taken about finance will reflect and embed expectations about the kind of relationship that exists between the EMC and the parish. That is the subject at the heart of this report.

The cases discussed in the previous two chapters indicate that there may be a significant divergence with regard to such expectations between relations with EMCs that are Anglican or in communion with the Church of England, and relations with EMCs that belong to a different church family that is not in communion with the Church of England. It is quite possible that this divergence would need some qualification if a broader range of cases were taken into account. Nonetheless, the broad picture that is emerging still seems worth sketching out at this point and indicates that the opportunities and challenges only overlap to a limited extent.

With regard to EMCs that are Anglican (as cases G and H) or in communion with the Church of England (case B), the evidence reviewed here indicates that there is likely to be a strong relationship with the parish and indeed with the diocese, and an appreciation from some at least that something is being modelled here that is of wider significance for the Church of England. Such relationships provide a context within which fundamental questions can be explored for the Church of England's participation in God's mission in this present moment. English society encompasses a range of cultures and a range of ethnicities: what does it mean to belong together, and to share a common life? To what extent are there historic norms – including the use of the English language – that all must accept if such commonality is to be possible? Or should we be shaping a vision for an 'intercultural' society in which exchange and interaction between different cultures can unfold without the need for a dominant centre? What kind of borders do we need to place around ourselves, and to what extent is relationship with others beyond them integral to our identity? Churches such as those in cases B, G and H have the opportunity to work at such social, cultural and political questions in the context of being a church community, seeking to live out faithfully the calling of the church flowing from the Pentecostal event as described in the New Testament. The church in case B, for instance, is consciously seeking to show how common life in Christ does not require a single common language and can embrace different cultures. By

contrast, the church in case H has been successful in providing a home for people from a variety of ecclesial traditions who share a common cultural background, including the use of English as an additional language, but without the same kind of commitment to interaction between congregations with different cultures and languages as an inherent part of the life of the local church. It is not being suggested here that one model is superior to the other, but rather that EMCs in the Church of England give scope for the exploration of matters that are critical for its self-understanding – its ecclesiology.

It seems likely that such relations with Anglican EMCs and EMCs in communion with the Church of England will become increasingly important for mission on the part of the Church of England, as has begun to be explored in the ‘Review’ sections at the end of chapters 2 and 3. This is not simply a matter of effectiveness in reaching different ethnic groups, drawing in faithful Christians from them and seeing others entering the journey of discipleship. It is also about the Church of England being able to embrace in its own life the richness of World Christianity, and thereby show in this place and time the beauty of the gospel that is addressed to every place and time. Hence the third key point noted at the end of the Introduction: relationships between Church of England parishes and EMCs that are Anglican or in communion with the Church of England can provide powerful examples of what it means to be the local church in and for an increasingly diverse society, and what it means to be part of the universal church as it flourishes in many different parts of the globe.

The last of the four points made towards the end of the Introduction struck a more cautious note: relationships between Church of England parishes and EMCs from other church traditions can present significant challenges in overlaying ecclesial with linguistic and cultural differences, but for precisely this reason also constitute precious opportunities to make visible the unity that is Christ’s gift to the church for the sake of the world. What the evidence considered here indicates is that there are some specific issues that need to be highlighted regarding relations with EMCs in this category, which are likely to be very much the majority nationally.³⁴ Such relations can properly be described as ecumenical, and there is well-established guidance on how arrangements for sharing church buildings should be set up in this case. There is a section on this, for instance, in the 2019 Code of Practice on Co-operation by the Church of England with Other Churches, which is to be read alongside the ecclesiastical law that governs relations between the Church of England and other churches.³⁵ Yet despite the range of support materials available and the existence of the networks of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers (DEOs) and of County Ecumenical Officers, parishes that find themselves in this situation often seem to be operating with a sense of isolation, without awareness of guidelines or other information available to them.

³⁴ See Jones and Smith, *Minority Congregations’ Use of Anglican Church Spaces*, p. 7.

³⁵ The Code of Practice on Co-operation by the Church of England with Other Churches can be found at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/Ecumenical%20Code%20of%20Practice%202019.pdf> (accessed 06/10/2020).

Why might this be the case? One reason may be that many of the parishes that provide meeting space for EMCs simply do not think of those relations as 'ecumenical' at all, and hence would not immediately look to networks and resources labelled 'ecumenical' for assistance. While this could be regarded as primarily a communications issue, it may also reflect the fact that parishes do not necessarily recognize such relations as opportunities to affirm the common life we share with all who have been united with Christ in faith and baptism, to grow together in discipleship, and to share together in worship and witness. Congregational interaction aside, in the Birmingham based study referred to in chapter 1, over a third of the clergy surveyed said that they rarely or never met with the leader of the EMC meeting in their buildings.³⁶ It is not altogether clear why this should be the case. If the local Methodist or Roman Catholic Church were flooded and approached the Church of England parish for help with space for worship, would the response be different? Of course, one hopes there would definitely be a pre-existing relationship, but it seems possible that in the case of EMCs, ethnic as well as cultural and linguistic differences in some situations may make it difficult for predominantly White British Anglican congregations to see, rejoice in, and respond to the common life they share in Christ with the EMC. That is not to say, of course, that the EMC may also not be resistant to perceiving and acting from that common life in Christ with the Anglican congregation either, for all kinds of reasons, as was noted in the first chapter.³⁷

It may also be true, however, that those who are focused on ecumenism do not immediately recognize such relations with EMCs as belonging within their area of concern. In setting up this study, a number of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers were contacted to locate suitable case studies. One reported that there were no EMCs sharing church buildings in his area, attributing this to the absence of such congregations given the ethnic makeup of the county. In fact, one of the case studies we have used is from that county, and it became evident during the interview that there were more examples in the same area. Again, there could be many reasons for the ecumenical invisibility of relations with EMCs, this time on the part of ecumenists rather than parishes directly involved with EMCs. The uncomfortable truth, however, is that one factor in both cases could be unconscious bias that creates resistance to establishing relations of equality and mutuality with non-White church communities.³⁸ As noted in the Introduction, the Church

³⁶ Jones and Smith, *Minority Congregations' Use of Anglican Church Spaces*, p. 7.

³⁷ See pp. 9–10 above.

³⁸ See Simon, *Migrants to Missionaries*, p. 5, on the situation in Germany: 'The arrogance of the established churches may express itself more strongly or more faintly, depending on the country of origin and the theological conviction of the denomination concerned. Among the "churches and congregations of other languages or origins" it has been Christians from Africa in particular who have had to, and still have to, bear the brunt of vehement prejudices. Due to their skin colour, their frequently low social status in continental Europe, especially in German society, their rather lively devoutness and their mostly Pentecostal theology, they have seldom been visible or been noted by the established churches, until now.'

of England has recognized the need for urgent action to tackle unconscious bias and racism within its own life, and there is a case for saying that this area needs to be considered in that context also.

The combination of linguistic and cultural with ecclesial differences undoubtedly presents particular challenges in church relationships. Yet it also presents particular opportunities to discover more of the depths of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, in which all of humanity, reconciled to God in Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit, is united in prayer and praise. At an institutional level, it may be that greater communication and cooperation are needed between those whose focus is ecumenical relations, including understanding of the diversity of contemporary Christianity, and those whose focus is on the Church of England's relations with UK Minority Ethnic communities. Together, they should have the knowledge and the skills to give confidence to local parishes in moving beyond shared buildings with EMCs to building one another up in discipleship, worship, and witness, and making visible to the communities around them the unity that is Christ's gift.

Taking seriously the ecumenical responsibilities that come with sharing church buildings with EMCs properly raises questions about how to shape 'common' space for congregations to meet with one another, including, though not only, space for worship – which the case studies have made clear may not be the best place to start and is unlikely to work well unless it happens alongside other joint activities. Is such common space inevitably about the Anglican parish opening up its territory to outsiders? Or can it involve each one being ready to invite the other into some part of its treasured home? What assumptions are made about contexts for communication and encounter, including language and style of meeting? Can it be imagined that new things will grow from this shared space of meeting, including new encouragement and new ideas for mission? Does being the Church of England make it naturally the majority, the givers, the hosts, the representatives of the norm – or does it come with a particular responsibility for attending to the diversity of human communities in the parish and in the diocese, and in a special way to learning from and with the variety of church communities present there as partners in the gospel in that place? It seems important to recognize that while the Church of England may indeed own the buildings that provide the common space for meeting with EMCs, in any true encounter the common ground must be shaped by all the participants if it truly is to yield a common home.

It is also the case that recognizing another community of Christians as a church brings with it the responsibility for seeking to make visible with them the church's unity, so that in its common life as well as in word and deed it may witness to Jesus Christ. An analysis of relations between Churches of African Origin in the Diaspora and established denominations in Germany proposes three types of relationship: the Parallel model, the Sister-church model and the

Integration model.³⁹ Moving towards the last of these raises in a local setting all the questions about 'organic union' that the ecumenical movement has been considering for over a century in terms of national relationships – which are neither easily addressed nor necessarily insoluble. It should not be so difficult, however, to move from the Parallel model, where there is no congregational contact and even the rent that changes hands 'has nothing to do with a partnership between brothers and sisters in Christ, rather the rent is used for the budget deficit'⁴⁰, to the Sister-church model, where there is exchange and encounter between the congregations on a range of levels. We hope that this report can make some small contribution towards helping that movement to happen where it needs to and enriching it where it already has.

What might such movement from sharing church buildings to building relationships look like? Drawing on the cases surveyed in this report, building good ecumenical relations between a Church of England parish and an EMC from a different church family could involve some or all of the following activities:

- Regular meetings between key people with responsibility for ministry in each congregation
- Regular meetings between key people with responsibility for practical arrangements relating to worship and congregational life in each congregation
- Opportunities for members of the different congregations to meet one another informally
- Opportunities for members of each congregation to do things together that express and witness to their common life in Christ.

Such activities should be characterized by:

- Careful and respectful listening to one another
- Explicit acknowledgement of common faith in Jesus Christ
- Prayer together, perhaps quite brief and informal
- Making space for the distinctive culture and practices of each congregation
- Concern to learn about and from each other as part of Christian discipleship
- Openness to seeking what the congregations may be called to do together in that locality.

³⁹ Benjamin Simon, 'Identity and Ecumenical Partnership of Churches of African Origin in Germany', in R. Drew Smith, William Ackah and Anthony Reddie, eds., *Churches, Blackness, and Contested Multiculturalism: Europe, Africa, and North America* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 133–144.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Appendix: Questionnaire

If you are part of an Ethnic Minority Congregation (EMC) using a language other than English for worship that meets in a Church of England building, or part of a parish that provides space for such an EMC to meet, we would appreciate it very much if you were able to complete the following brief questionnaire and return it to us. This will help us build up a fuller picture of what is happening in this area and of the potential for greater sharing together in worship, witness, and discipleship.

A Word version of this document is available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/work-other-christian-churches>. Please post it to us at the Council for Christian Unity, Church House, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3AZ, or email it to info.ccu@churchofengland.org.

You are also welcome to adapt this questionnaire as the basis for conducting a survey within your local area, town, city, deanery, or diocese about EMCs – though we would love to know about it if you do.

Church of England parish and diocese:

Name of EMC:

Contact person:

Email address on which you are happy to be contacted about this project:

Your congregation:

If you are replying on behalf of a Church of England parish that provides space for more than one EMC, please use separate versions of this questionnaire for each.

Don't worry if you don't know the answers to all the questions – we'd still like to hear from you.

About the EMC

1. Does it belong to a recognized denomination or family of churches?
2. How would you describe the ethnicity of the congregation?
3. Which languages does it use in worship?

About the relationship

4. How would you describe the relationship between the EMC and the Church of England parish in general terms (e.g., fully part of the Church of England, valued partner, friendly neighbour, renting organization)?

5. Is there a formal framework for the relationship and, if so, what is it (hiring contract, memorandum of understanding, full communion, part of the parish)?

6. How long has the relationship existed, and how has it changed during that time?

7. Is there contact between the congregations in relation to:
 - (a) Joint worship (please give examples)

 - (b) Church social activities (please give examples)

 - (c) Mission activities (please give examples)?

8. Is there contact between the leadership of the congregations, and if so, what does it include (e.g., prayer and bible study, social time, business meetings, planning for joint activities)?

9. Is there anything you would like to see change or develop in the relationship between the EMC and the parish in the future?

Please feel free to add anything else you would like to tell us