

# CENTRAL NEWS

## CHURCH MISSION REVIEW EDITION

Last year, the Association Grants Committee began to ask how to usefully assess the effectiveness of grants? The committee came up with seven what were called 'fruitfulness indicators' that in due course all Home Mission churches will be asked to reflect upon. The word 'fruitfulness' was chosen as a flexible and appropriately Biblical analogy for what they thought churches should be looking for.

It struck the Committee and the Regional Ministers that it should not only be Home Mission churches that are encouraged to think upon how they are doing in terms of their mission, but ALL churches.

Hence this SPECIAL EDITION of CENTRAL NEWS. We are sure that many of our churches are already seriously pondering these matters, but maybe not all. And so we offer this 'starting point'. We feel that considering these fruitfulness indicators may not only give

encouragement concerning what IS happening, but also open up an important discussion about how a church may respond more effectively to what is a rapidly changing culture.



to the challenge, celebrating the past and engaging creatively with the future."

The previous Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, is quoted as saying: *"My brothers and sisters in Christ. If we think we are here to save the church of England, may God have mercy on our immortal souls.*

*We are here to serve the Kingdom of God and, behold, God is doing a new thing among us."*

We similarly believe that we are not in the business of saving an institution or a particular building, but serving the Kingdom of God, and seeking to join in with what God is already doing. This is what we are hoping to see individual churches explore by engaging with this document.

**Colin Pye**

Regional Minister Geoff Colmer, comments "It would be wonderful if all of our churches were in an ongoing conversation about their fruitfulness and effectiveness within the local community; and we would encourage you in your particular situation to rise

***"It would be wonderful if all of our churches were in an ongoing conversation about their fruitfulness and effectiveness"***

*Rev'd Geoff Colmer*

# FRUITFULNESS INDICATORS

This tool uses seven indicators to help give an insight into where your church is NOW, today. Please read the brief explanation of what is meant by each indicator below, and then place an 'x' on each line of the diagram to give an indication of where you think the church is at this point in time. If you would then like to write comments on a separate sheet of paper upon why you think the church is at that certain point that will be useful. Stories, pictures, links are all welcomed. The diagram will give a helpful visual representation and starting point for reflection and discussion.

The seven indicators are not intended to be a rigid tool, but a way for a church to reflect seriously upon where they are at in terms of their mission. We think the best way of using the material is for individuals to work on expressing their own thoughts on each of the seven indicators first, and then for a group to come together to compare notes and see what happens!! The hope is that out of such discussions will come both a realistic appreciation of current realities, and some clear thinking around what the church needs to give its energy to in the future.

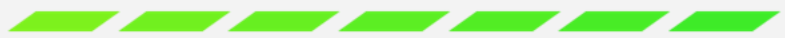
Statistics



Presence



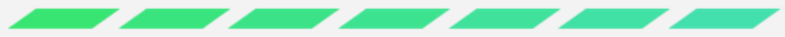
Proclamation



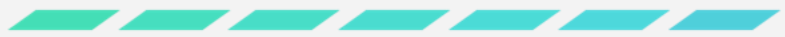
Prayer



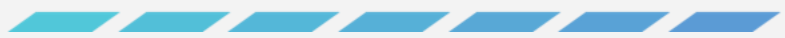
Unity



Equipping



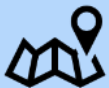
Communication



Statistics



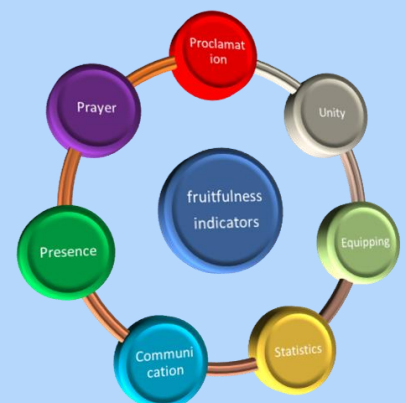
**Focus on any statistical information that *you* think would be useful to reflect upon:** for example: baptisms, children & youth, toddlers group, coffees served, children at messy church etc. or maybe small groups & the extent to which people meet together other than on a Sunday? Or Mission events held during the year? Or perhaps geographical factors – location/ type of neighbourhood/ what percentage of congregation live in the locality around the church/ how many travel in? etc. What story do the statistics tell or perhaps hide (meaning stats can be used to present a glowing picture, while the truth may be somewhat different or vice versa)?



Presence



**In what ways are 'church people' involved outside of the church building and in the local community and beyond,** being salt, light, and yeast? What are the opportunities being taken to serve or bless the community? Is there an intentionality about this? Who are your 'partners' in the community (this might be other Christian or secular organisations)? Examples might include things like fun days for the community/ pop up events / involvement with local schools, councils, local groups & ways in which the church is making its community a better place to live in. It might be helpful to ask some 'neighbours' who are not part of the church how their perceptions of the church have changed in the last x years?





## Proclamation

**If, when and how is something of the message of the way of Jesus being communicated?** We are aware that this happens in a variety of ways both verbal and non-verbal, that it needs to be contextualised (appropriate to a people group), and will happen at different levels depending upon where someone is on their personal journey. Questions might include, is the gospel being proclaimed in some way? What is proving most effective? What doesn't seem to work?



## Prayer

**In what ways is prayer for mission encouraged?** We appreciate that this will have varying 'flavours' in different contexts, and may happen as part of a broader prayer practice. Our thought is that prayer should lean more towards adventure than chore. Questions you might like to ask: Is there a particular prayer concern/ practice that focuses on mission? Is this done with imagination & creativity or out of a sense of duty? Is prayer accessible to the many or the preserve of the few?



## Unity

**This is a question about ownership:** Is there a unity of purpose, or is there a small frazzled group trying to keep the good ship x Baptist Church afloat? How is Unity / ownership expressed? Is a focus upon mission a cause of tension in the church (sometimes churches can become like pastoral communities that focus mainly upon the needs of those within the community and when this shifts it can cause tensions)?



## Equipping

**Is any training / preparation being given to people for the task of mission?** How is the church equipped? There are a number of helpful courses around, but we think it vital that every church seriously considers doing a course that explores what it means to do mission in the current cultural context. We would also like the churches to ponder how new leaders are encouraged and mentored so that a dependency culture upon 'the few' is broken, and a multi-gifted, multi-voiced church encouraged.



## Communication

**How & what does your local community get to know about the church and how effectively do you communicate?** It would be good to share some examples of these with your facilitator. Questions might include how do you think your communication could be improved? What does your building communicate? Do you have an online presence, is it any good & does this matter?



## Planning an event this summer?

Events can be one of most rewarding activities you undertake as a church. To give yourself the best possible chance of making your event successful, you need a robust and realistic plan. Taking some time at the start of the process will definitely pay dividends later. Our 'how to' guide on events is really worth a look, and provides some top tips to help you along the way. You can find it at <https://www.baptist-insurance.co.uk/Images/bic-organise-events.pdf>

Without adequate planning and organising, the running of events can lead to accidents and injuries. As event organiser, you have a lot of responsibility regarding safety and there are many aspects to consider. For example, things like First Aid, electrical installations, food & drink, crowd control, fairground rides, cash handling etc. all take some careful thinking about.

The guide referenced above and further advice on the web site <http://tinyurl.com/yahl697t> are a really good place to start.



# NEXT STEPS?

**AS INDIVIDUALS** reflect on your own and make notes. i.e.do some work *before* meeting together! Consider each of the seven fruitfulness indicators and as a minimum mark the graphic to indicate how you think your church is doing.



## THEN MEET AS A GROUP

preferably **with a wise, mission minded facilitator**, to creatively reflect, explore and imagine. Choose a relaxed location, perhaps somewhere away from your normal setting. Provide extravagant refreshments! Plan for a full day or several evenings and seek to cover the 3 questions below. Try to allow time between each to give space to consider responses.

## STARTER QUESTIONS

- **How do you respond to the quote on the first page from the Archbishop?**
- **Ask 'what is OUR GOAL as a church?'** Not 'what do we claim is our goal?' but 'what IS our goal?' The truth for some churches may be that they are simply seeking to survive. We may have grand vision statements but the reality on the ground may not reflect this. It may be worth revisiting this question at other points in the process to see if your thinking has developed.
- **Read some Scriptures that speak of fruit / fruitfulness** (e.g. John 15:16; Matthew 7:15-20; Psalm 1; Isaiah 5:1-10; Gal 5:22-23). How do they set the scene for your thinking?

## THREE AREAS TO COVER

### 1. Where are we now?

Being truthful about our REALITY both as a local church and also the culture in which we find ourselves is an essential stage to go through if we are to become missionally effective. Truth telling is important. So for example if we pretend that our 6 O'clock Gospel service is working when no unchurched person ever comes to it we are living in dream land. **This key part of the journey begins with listening to one another**, and it is at this point that everyone needs to be given an opportunity to reflect upon each of the seven 'fruitfulness indicators'. The facilitator will seek to draw out key points and common threads, and this will become the springboard to further discussion.

### 2. Where could we be?

What are our OPTIONS? This is a 'brain storming' moment where ideas are generated, discussed and it may be that two or three rise to the surface as those that 'have legs'. It is where a sense of the dream of God for your community rises to the surface. A question: what does it look like to put flesh on the love of God in this community? An example: one pioneering situation on a new build estate asked the simple question '**how can we bless this community?**' Not, how can we run a service on a Sunday, or a Bible study or Alpha course. Those might all emerge at some point. But the starting point was 'how can we bless?' It started with a question and has resulted in a thriving faith community.

### 3. Where will we be?

WHAT are we actually going to do, WHO is going to do it & WHEN (what is our time scale)? These are big questions. Sometimes a process such as this reveals some great ideas but they need to be practical in terms of who is going to do them, and whether there is the energy to sustain them. This may mean firstly letting go of much loved, but ineffective and energy sapping initiatives in order to release the community to do **ONE THING** really well.



**Lastly, plan in a REVIEW:** Come together every Six months or so to review how you are doing. One possibility is that you go through this process with one or two other church leadership teams, and you could then meet with them every six months to check on progress. This will generate its own energy and encouragement as you journey with others.