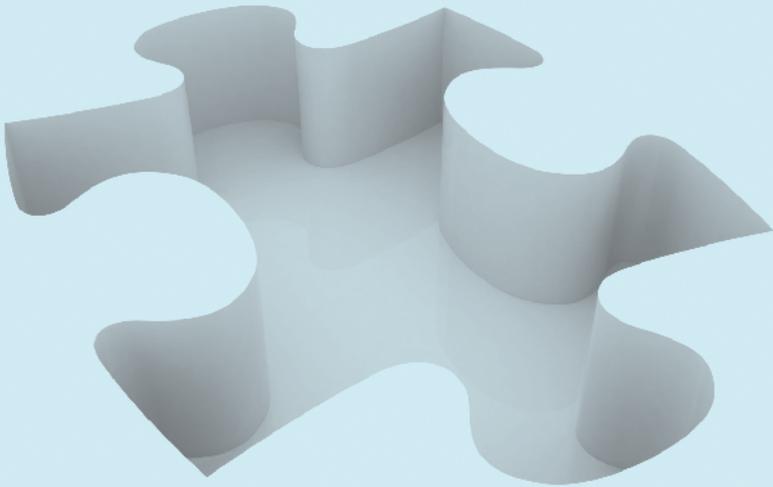


# **The Missing Generation Research Project -**



Case Studies for the  
2010 Conference



## Introduction

This booklet contains case studies for the Conference discussion groups to explore. Each tells a unique story of the worship, witness and work of a Methodist congregation. It certainly is not the full story, but it does offer a brief insight into that church's life through the lens of the author.

Each Conference group will be asked to concentrate initially on one case study, and try to identify elements of church life and structure which appear to support the fact that this local church has a relatively smooth age profile - ie there is no significant 'missing' generation. It will be especially useful for each group to reflect on lessons from the case study which may be helpful for other churches which do have a missing generation, and for group members to share experiences from their own area.

If the group feels it has exhausted avenues of discussion in the first study, it may select another (preferably contrasting) one and so continue. Notes will be taken of the discussion and fed into the Missing Generation Research Project, as well as being published on the Methodist Church website after the Conference.

We hope that these case studies will offer real insights into the life of a small sample of churches in the Connexion. Through the research project, we hope to get a much larger sample and develop a deeper understanding of the dynamics of local churches which appear to be successfully engaging with the 25-40 year age group. We also hope that these case studies will in themselves be encouraging and stimulating for Conference representatives.



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## Case Study One

The Potter's House – Stoke-on-Trent (Burslem Mission) Circuit 11/18 (Brian Barber

**Note:** *The name in brackets by each case study is the person who submitted the material.*)

**Pastoral contact:** Philip Barber • **2009 membership:** 189

This church has been in existence for 18 years, and was formerly a church plant from Burslem Mission. It is situated in a secondary school, now owned by an independent charitable body, whose work is driven by the church.

There are two morning services every Sunday with congregations of 100 and 240, though the worshipping congregation is probably made up of some 450 people. The morning children's work is called The Lighthouse and has about 50 children. The youth group, for teenagers, meets on Friday and has about 60 attending. Many of these have found faith and consequently attend church regularly, while others have taken on roles in the life of the church. About 30 to 40 young adults (aged 18-30) attend spiritually based meetings called The Foundry. There are 2 weekly prayer meetings with members from teenagers to senior citizens, with about 12 in each meeting. There are 20 to 25 children under 4, plus their parents, who meet at a weekly parents and toddlers group. There is also a weekly meeting for 9-14s called 'The Gap'.

We have three worship bands and two youth training worship bands, each with nine or ten members. 30-40 senior citizens meet in 'Open House' each Friday morning. J4K has about 30 children aged 8-11. 120 people meet in life groups in homes or at the church - this includes a span of ages from teenagers upwards. Seven of these are small groups and one is a Bible study for around forty teenagers. Our Family Support Services see about 30 clients a week - these are people with severe social, domestic or personal problems.

We estimate there are about 90 people in the age range 20-40 attending worship each week. The age profile has grown up over 18 years. We seek to pass on the realities of the Christian faith in a manner with which people can connect, with a culturally relevant style, and a strategy to design programmes for the whole age range - for single people, married people, young families, the middle aged and the elderly, as well as children and young people.

There are three nearby churches with a similar age profile - Burslem Methodist Mission (Swan Bank), Bethel Church (AOG) and The Hope Centre (AOG.)

We are affiliated to the Bradford Abundant Life Network and our pastor attends our own local ecumenical city leaders' prayer and strategy meetings.

## Case Study Two

Plymouth Central Hall – 24/2 (John Libby)

**Minister:** The Revd Paul Smith • **2009 membership:** 339

Plymouth Methodist Central Hall is situated in the heart of the city centre and will this year celebrate its 70th anniversary. The church is very active throughout the week: the premises used by a variety of people, from babies to the elderly. The church has a membership in the region of 340, although it would be fair to say that not all of these members are actively involved. However, a more significant number of non-members are.

With regard to the missing generation our church has a vibrant group, although proportionately small when compared to the over 40s. Whilst there is a danger of basing statistics on Sunday attendance, here are some figures: on the Sunday morning of 14 March our church congregation of around 250 consisted of 71 people aged 20-40; 20 of whom were students, 25 were parents of young families and 26 were young adults. Our evening congregation, whilst lower, would indicate less proportionately of the missing generation, given family responsibilities

During the week however, a variety of activities see many more of this target group using our premises. For example, the mothers and toddlers group engages with over 50 family units per week, the pre-school has a register in excess of 25. Our youth work is vibrant and growing. Additionally, a Bible study group for young adults attracts around 25 young people, roughly half of which are drawn from the university population.

Whilst this is hard to quantify, the number of young adults in our church has grown over the past five years. One step our church took in 2006 was to appoint a lay worker with specific responsibility for developing work in this age range. The provision of age-specific groups who meet both socially and to study the Word of God has seen more young adults engaging with the church. Additionally, encouraging young adults to assume responsibility within the church and not simply consume what is provided is key in our strategy. Our church members' engagement in our 'adopt a student' scheme has provided a necessary 'home from home' environment for many young adults. Additionally, the appointment of a families worker for our circuit sees us engaging with many young families who largely have no connection with the church.

There are a plethora of churches within a two-mile radius of Plymouth Central Hall. Most would have less young adults proportionately making up their congregation than ours. However, the local Baptist church has a much higher number of young adults as part of its worshipping community. Having spoken to some of the members of this church, the provision of a more contemporary style of worship is foundational to this. We have close links with this and other churches in our locality and are engaged in initiatives that seek to bring young adults together.

In conclusion, we are doing our best, although acknowledging that there need to be more creative ways explored in which we can engage more effectively with this generation.

## Case Study Three

Trinity Methodist Church, Long Eaton – Nottingham Trent Valley Circuit 22/4  
(Vivienne Gray)

**Ministers:** The Revd Judith Smart and Deacon Vivienne Gray • **2009 membership:** 134

Long Eaton is a busy town between Nottingham and Derby. There has been a Methodist church on the current site since 1884, but in 1961 three Methodist societies united to form Trinity. Six years ago a new church building was opened, which has an upstairs worship area with a downstairs hall and meeting rooms. Of the 134 members, about 15 are in their 20s and 15 in their 30s. Another dozen people in their 20s (not members) are connected through family or leadership in uniformed organisations, and another larger group of young parents and childminders come to the toddler group.

The church has, for decades, had a real heart for work amongst young people. There are lively uniformed organisations and children are catered for from crèche to teenagers. The 20s and 30s have said they like the style of worship. On Sundays there is contemporary morning worship led mainly by a worship band, where words of songs are projected on a screen, and video clips and PowerPoint are often used. The worship area is modern and has comfortable, moveable seating. Worship leaders work with the preachers to aid continuity and all-age worship takes place once a month. Three times a year there is a 'Friends and Family Service', which has replaced the old parade service, when the children are invited to take part in drama, dance and music to contribute to the worship - sometimes the Sunshine Puppets group perform. This service is usually packed. Evening activities include film nights, some experimental forms of worship and discussion groups.

In 2004 a deacon was appointed to build up the work with those in their 20s and 30s. This has involved spending time at our regular 'Family Morning' (toddler group) and Crossways coffee shop; building up relationships with the young parents; following up baptismal families; making contact with those who are new to the church, welcoming them and inviting them to social events, home groups, and introducing them to others to integrate them into the family of the church. In 2006 a youth development worker was appointed who has encouraged leadership among the 20s and 30s to work with the teenagers.

Prayer is a vital part of life at Trinity. There are several different opportunities scheduled for group prayer and a weekly prayer bulletin is produced with suggestions for prayer topics. Prayer ministry is available weekly after the service. We try to involve the young people in shaping the vision for the church.

Regular activities in the church include the 'Family Morning' toddler group; house groups – three of which particularly nurture the under 40s; GLO Street Pastors – which many of those in their 20s are involved with; the Crossways coffee shop; Sunshine puppets and an Alpha course that runs in the autumn.

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There is a good fellowship of churches in the town and the clergy work well together. The Oasis (Pentecostal) Church also has many young people. Several of Trinity's younger people also go to the Vineyard Church in Nottingham on a Sunday evening.

*Case Study Three*

## Case Study Four

Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, Epworth – Epworth and Crowle Circuit 17/1 (David Leese)

**Minister:** The Revd David Leese • 2009 membership: **120**

This is a rural church (120 members and an active Community Roll of 320) which has existed in its present location since 1889, when it was built to celebrate the work of John and Charles Wesley. It is a Grade II listed building, set in a prominent position behind manicured formal gardens in the small North Lincolnshire market town of Epworth (population 4000). It is the location for 30-50 baptisms/dedications, 10-25 weddings/ blessings/renewal of vows and 20-30 funerals a year.

Elsewhere in the local community is the St Andrew's Parish Church and Epworth Baptist Church, the latter being a gathered community of Baptists. Ecumenical links are minimal.

Wesley Memorial is a community-based church which uses its unique heritage, formal building and superb location as mission tools. The chapel is predominantly, but not exclusively, conservative evangelical, preaching Christ crucified as the only way to God (Acts 4:12). It focuses on its mission with families, and seeks to be:

**Open:** Church premises are unlocked with unrestricted public access every day of the year, at the centre of this community. We do not claim to know the answers to the missing generation but try to listen and learn.

**Welcoming:** We are not bound by ecclesiastical bureaucracy or professional ministerial pretensions. For example, we have no problem with photography during weddings or services, baptisms on any day of the week or maximum lay participation. Innovative ideas are readily accepted. Children are especially welcomed at all-age worship – not just to be present but to take part in unscripted ways. Though the legal title rests with The Methodist Church, this is the house for God's people to meet.

**Flexible:** For example, the inclusion of infant baptism, dedication, or baptism by immersion, in worship. Sunday service times move around depending on the congregation's wishes, with times at 9.00am, 9.30am, 10.45am, 4.00pm or 6.00pm. A wide menu of worship styles is on offer, including formal liturgical communion, Messy Church and multimedia (puppets, DVDs, gospel magic, dance) all-age worship. The latter attracts young families and is numerically the best attended and still growing (120 to 190), with many asking for baptism during this particular service.

**Easily accessible:** Some of the services aim to be paperless. Most Communion and Baptisms are non-liturgical and we remove ecclesiastical hurdles. The Worship Book is not allowed to be a barrier to new contacts, whilst recognising that it can be a route through for regular attendees.

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**Community Based:** The church is linked with two playgroups and a primary and secondary school in the town - all of which use the church as venue for worship services and lessons where appropriate. High input is given to local schools. The church runs a mums' and toddler group which continues to outgrow the physical facility we provide (20-30 families attend).

**Mission:** Heritage links are used as a positive tool with all activity viewed as outreach, from weekly coffee mornings (which operate all year round, even on bank holidays) to special West Gallery Music weekends, agricultural show services and bread making mornings.

In terms of the missing generation, although the figures are only one aspect of the actual situation, of the 120 members 18 are in the 21-41 age group and a further four are under 21. It is the only church in the circuit to have members in these age groups. Additionally there are 40 others in this age group who are regularly in the congregation, especially for all-age worship and Messy Church.

The church uses the 'old methods' where they still work, or there is a need, such as junior church and class meetings, but has a regular children's programme of events during the course of the year with a holiday club in the summer. We hope we are like the householder who takes out of his store both the new and the old.

## Case Study Five

Hexthorpe Methodist Church - Doncaster Circuit 25/14 (Richard Iball)

**Minister:** The Revd John Hartley • **2009 membership:** 104

Primitive Methodism began in Hexthorpe, Doncaster, as missionaries used open-air preaching followed by cottage meetings. Buildings opened in 1869. Hexthorpe's terraced streets were built to house railway men at the local works, later famous for The Flying Scotsman and Mallard. Wesleyan work began later, and their chapel opened in 1898. They agreed to unite in 1955, opening a new chapel in 1960. They could have continued separately but chose to unite to forward the work.

Hexthorpe is a very deprived area facing enormous challenges. Part of Hexthorpe is in the top 1% of the most deprived areas in the UK Employment Domain and overall in the top 5% deprived, by all statistics.

This church has a vigorous spiritual life. It lives under the authority of the Bible and seeks the empowering of the Holy Spirit. It aims to grow in every way: in numbers through sustained evangelism; in the quality of its individual and corporate life; in the commitment of every member; in involvement with the World Church and through positive influence in the community.

### Worship and Preaching

- Worship is spiritually serious, relaxed, informal, expressed in modern language and includes contemporary music and song. A projection system is fully utilised.
- Organised, expository preaching works through books of the Bible or particular themes. Many hours have been spent training preachers and worship leaders to make worship our best possible offering to God. Preachers and worship leaders are assessed annually ensuring that skills improve.
- Easy access all-age worship happens monthly on the first Sunday, welcoming families and giving a clear message. Children are valued, not simply tolerated.

### Outreach:

- Building relationships and welcoming people into a loving community breaks down fears. Various monthly events are designed to appeal to members and friends. Some feature straight talking about the gospel; good food always appeals.
- Clubs for ages 5-7, 7-11 and 11-14 are run with about 80 on the roll. They are both fun and an opportunity to share Christian truths.
- Regular assemblies are taken in the primary school in which our puppets often feature. These build on positive relationships with the school and parents.
- A weekly adults and toddlers group is fully subscribed. All are welcomed. This provides an opportunity to share the gospel informally, simply by chatting.
- The Junction - our community outreach base - is staffed by four employees and

volunteers and is based in a converted pub. Enjoying enormous local support it meets lots of needs, demonstrating and telling the love of God. Occasional worship celebrations are held. A small number of 20s-40s have joined the church membership.

**Numbers:** On the Sunday morning of 21 March, 21 of the missing generation were in worship amongst a total of about 80 adults. There is also contact with others in this age group. Our Iranian Fellowship attracts 40–50 to worship weekly. Most are of the missing generation.

**Prayer:** We prayed for more men and many Iranians came. We prayed for more families and the number has increased over the last three years. A good number of parents were born in Africa. Monthly church prayer nights and prayer in all house groups supports all we do - well over half the members belong to a group.

There is a high-church Anglican parish church in the local area which is not strong in numbers and has been without a vicar for over a year.

**Future needs:**

1. Training new leaders from the 20s-40s.
2. Rebuilding the premises to twenty first century needs (over £1million more needed).
3. Seeking to end the cycle of young adults leaving this needy area.

## Case Study Six

Wonford Methodist Church – Exeter Circuit, 24/4 (Mark Gilborson)

**Minister:** The Revd Mark Gilborson • **2009 membership:** 97

A Methodist church has existed in this community since 1966. There was previously a 'mission' for 10 years on the same site and prior to that, for 25 years on a neighbouring site. Sunday morning worship has a congregation of approximately 100 adults and children (on special occasions 150-170). The evening service has around 15 people attending. The church also has a vibrant prayer life, including weekly and monthly meetings, a prayer team and an annual 24-hour prayer event.

Activities held by the church cover a wide range of age groups and interests. There are uniformed organisations, a youth club (with strong links to the local estate), toddlers, and a recently established Messy Church service (75 people attended the first one). Many younger adults are involved in the leadership of these groups. There are a variety of fellowship opportunities - largely frequented by the more middle-aged members of the congregation - including house groups, film club and book club. In recent years the *Emmaus* course has been run annually with 12-20 adults and young people taking parting each year. Social activities are also important with a variety of events held throughout the year including film shows, quizzes, karaoke, dancing and talent shows which 60-100 people of all ages attend.

Recent growth within the congregation has been at the middle-aged, family level and, as a result, we are actively trying to encourage more older people to get involved in the life of the church. We are also quite low in the under-tens. We have a significant number of teenagers (more than 20) and 30% of the membership falls into the 30-50 age range. Due to the wide range of activities and youth work we are in regular contact with the missing generation in large numbers. We have also reached the point that because we have a good number in their 20s and 30s, new people from this age group are also more likely to stay. Growth has been gradual, largely through families from the estate. Some are coming 'back to church', others have changed denomination and some are finding faith for the first time.

The main strength of Wonford has been its willingness to include all who come and allow newcomers to integrate into the life of the church. The style of worship has been important, with a variety of music and a range of musicians, as well as an appreciation of hymns old and new. The worship consultation plans monthly all-age worship, has a monthly prayer and praise service, two annual 'sets' of themed preaching and is undertaking a re-evaluation of evening worship to encourage younger people to come. Discussion groups, topics of interest, healing services and creative worship are just some of the ideas that are already finding fruit. Building a brand new worship area (having outgrown the previous one) has been of great benefit too, as we now have modern facilities and much more room.

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The local Anglican church is 'Forward in Faith' and has lost families, some of whom have come to us. We have also benefitted from local people wanting more 'substance' to their worship.

*Case Study Six*

## Case Study Seven

Bramhall Methodist Church - Bramhall Circuit 19/15 (Leslie Newton)

**Minister:** The Revd Leslie Newton • **2009 membership:** 381

Bramhall Methodist Church in the Manchester and Stockport District, was established in the mid-1880s, and has developed through the years in tandem with the growth of the village. For the last four decades the church's membership has been in the range of 350-410 and is currently on an upward trend at 380.

The church has sustained a wide range of mid-week activities for many years. Quite a number of these were established around 30-40 years ago, such as pop-in lunches, a day centre (for the elderly), a thrift shop, some well-established house groups and long-standing social groups. These are primarily run by and for older people. However, in addition to these, there has been a sustained commitment to children's/youth work which continues to include girls' and boys' uniformed organisations, mid-week youth clubs, pre-school and a parent/toddler group as well as junior church.

In the early 1990s an old church building was demolished and a new community building (Centrepoint) was constructed in its place. This provided a new home for the thrift shop and scope for a new venture - a coffee shop - which is now a thriving meeting place.

Although the church had managed to sustain the missing generation through the last 40 years, it was becoming clear 8 years ago that this was becoming a weak area. Children's and youth work continued to thrive, comparatively, but the numbers of worshippers and church members within the 20-40 age group was diminishing.

A first response was made with the revision of the Sunday morning worship pattern. From having an early traditional service followed by a 'mixed bag' main service, the church moved to a parallel arrangement. Now at 10.00am there is a traditional service in church, and a much more contemporary-styled service (Praise @ the Point) in Centrepoint. Praise @ the Point began with a small group of committed people and a vision for 30 worshippers. We are now looking to identify the next steps as Praise @ the Point regularly fills the hall with 80-100 worshippers. Not all these are in the missing generation, but many are - and there is a feeling that we are now truly a church for all ages.

Our work with the missing generation has also developed through our strategic efforts (as expressed in our 'church vision') to be deliberately family friendly, and to arrange activities to suit and support this age group. There have been, for instance, family fun days, social events, new housegroups which younger people are especially encouraged to be involved with, courses to support families, and efforts to build connections with Cradle Roll families and those attending the parents and toddler group.

We have recently appointed a children and family worker to help us develop this work further. Additionally, there has been active encouragement to those in the missing generation to take on leadership of many of the activities noted above. This has

deepened belonging through engagement and growing involvement in the ministry of the church. All of this, undergirded by prayer and pastoral care, has helped to create an environment of welcome and faith for those in the missing generation.

Around us is a broad range of churches. The parish church in Bramhall with an Anglo-Catholic tradition also has a fairly good age spread, and a neighbouring Methodist church, Cheadle Hulme Methodist Church, is also experiencing growth in this age range through similar work.

## Case Study Eight

Easton Methodist Church - Portland Circuit, Southampton District, 26/22 (Christopher Briggs)

**Minister:** The Revd Christopher Briggs • **2009 membership:** 97

Easton Church was opened 102 years ago. Over the last three years the church has moved increasingly into areas of fresh expressions of church and now has innovative and ecumenical Sunday evening worship, Café Church during the week and multiplex-style worship on Sunday mornings. It is the latter that has had the most pronounced affect on increasing attendance, membership and attracting a wider age range, including the missing generation.

The church buildings consists of a large set of premises which have a Grade II\* listing. It sits in the centre of the community and is well used by various community groups, as well as being open as a social meeting place. Linked to this church is one other, which makes up the Portland Circuit. The circuit has one minister, one assistant minister (a retired Church of England minister who is authorised to serve by the Conference), a full-time and part-time youth worker and a gap-year student.

The circuit also ensures there are mid-week groups for prayer, nurture and study, *Alpha* courses, and joins in ecumenical mission work in the area. While most age groups are represented across the activities of the church, it is the Sunday morning multiplex where this is most marked.

Multiplex worship means that those attending worship on a Sunday morning choose how they seek to engage with, and worship, God. It starts with a choice of arriving at 10.00am (for more informal worship) or 10.30am. At 10.30am there are a number of choices - Messy Church, The Upper Room (discussion based), multi-sensory worship or the Sanctuary (where the normal preaching plan operates with a rich variety of styles of worship in itself). Everyone in these various groups is invited to come back together at the end of the morning for a final time of worship, which is an opportunity for people to share God stories, news, or whatever has been going on in different parts of the building. Throughout the morning the coffee bar is open, providing space for those who need it, and an opportunity for those on the fringe to be around without having to make the big jump straight into worship.

The principle behind the elements of multiplex is that we should aim to make everything open to all ages and that there should be liquid edges so people can flow between the different parts.

Multiplex has existed for around two years. The aim was to create an environment that meant new people were more likely to stay rather than leave because they found worship too predictable, stifling, or along one particular style. What we found was that the congregational numbers grew almost overnight, including teenagers and younger adults. We also developed the worship styles so there was much more variety. This, combined

with choice, was enthusiastically received and has drawn people towards Jesus. The various elements of multiplex are loosely held together by the use of the *Roots* material.

Before these changes, a large congregation on a Sunday numbered around 50 (the majority over retirement age). That grew almost overnight to around 80-90 as the upper figure for a Sunday morning (spread across virtually every age group). This then settled to around 70-80 and is gradually growing. The circuit, and this church in particular, has grown numerically in terms of worship and membership over the last five years. This has been partly through transfer from other congregations and denominations, and partly through new people coming to discipleship (dechurched and unchurched). Growth has been small each year but consistent.

The circuit has good ecumenical links with the other churches in Portland and works together on a number of projects. The Salvation Army Corps now meets on Easton Church premises.

## Case Study Nine

Trinity Methodist Church, Chelmsford – Chelmsford Circuit 34/9 (Viv Gasteen)

**Minister:** The Revd Vivienne Gasteen • **2009 membership:** 280

The present building was constructed in 1961, an amalgamation of the High Street and Rainsford Road churches. The church hosts a wide range of activities and fellowship groups, including babies and toddlers, uniformed organisations, house groups and a coffee shop. Of these, the 20s-40s age group are represented at the music and drama group, Singles' Lunch, the Coffee Shop and house groups – including one set up in the last year specifically for those in their 20s and 30s. Bible studies and prayer groups are also regularly held and attract the full age range of the congregations. It is estimated that somewhere in the region of 100-120 members of the missing generation come into contact with the church, depending on the activities taking place.

This age profile has grown in number over the last two years mainly due to an increase in the numbers of young couples/families worshipping regularly with us. Twenty-two adults in this age bracket have joined in the last eighteen months in addition to new older members. There were three young families two years ago, and we were then joined by a young engaged couple and a young single man who say that were made to feel so welcome that they stayed. Thus, when other younger people came, they saw that they were not alone.

The church has made some changes to its worship style, becoming more child-friendly and using modern technology - screen, computer and data projector. We have also developed a completely new style for the first Sunday in each month - Sunday Special - which begins at 9.00am with breakfast and finishes around 11.15am with coffee and chat. This involves folks choosing from a variety of activities on a central theme, eg discussion group, Bible study, drama, music, craft, prayer/quiet room, cookery - across the age range - but with specific activities for the very young children. This has proved extremely popular and provides an easy way into church for those on the periphery.

The fact that two of the church stewards are 22 and 31 also encourages other potential young leaders to come forward. Phrases such as “We’ve tried that and it didn’t work” are not heard at Trinity. “Let’s give it a go and see” is much more likely to be on people’s lips. One of our local preachers in his 70s remarked, “It’s exciting to be at Trinity these days.”

The local Baptist church has traditionally had large number of people in this age range. We are in Covenant with Chelmsford Cathedral and the Church of the Ascension and are actively seeking ways of working together more effectively.

## Case Study Ten

Wrekenton Methodist Church – Gateshead and Jarrow Circuit, 20/14 (Steve Lindridge)

**Ministers:** The Revd Stephen Dallin and Deacon Kina Saunders • **2009 membership:** 95

Wrekenton Methodist Church has existed for over 130 years. In the 1960s the church was due to close as it had a very small elderly congregation struggling on. The church membership has only started growing in the last 10 years.

In the late 1960s the Boys Brigade started running activities every night of the week, and this continued through the 1970s. The Sunday morning service was given over to the BB to run their Bible class. The contemporary worship that takes place in the church today is still facilitated by the BB officers, of whom two are local preachers. Many of the families within the current congregation are a result of boys from the BB marrying locally and remaining with the church.

In the early 1990s the church started a rebuilding process, which culminated in a complete rebuild in 2007 costing £1million. These purpose-built premises, together with modern worship styles, multimedia, missional values and cell groups have, in the last 15 years, been significant factors in helping this sociable community grow in discipleship and numbers.

Activities within the church cover a wide range of interests and age groups. There is a full spectrum of youth and children's work, including uniformed organisations and youth groups. The primary engagement with the 20-40 age group is through cell groups, as well as a fitness and spirituality group and singing group. There is also a coffee fellowship whose membership is largely aged above 40. In terms of the church's membership there are 25 aged 20-40 and another 25 aged between 40 and 50.

The closest Anglican, Catholic, and Methodist churches do not have interaction with the missing generation. However, Anglican, Methodist (Windy Nook), Baptist and Free churches a little further away all do. The North East also networks youth and young adults very well through Xlth Hour monthly celebrations. Locally in Gateshead churches of all denominations work well together for clergy fellowship and missional tasks.

## Case Study Eleven

Penrith Methodist Church - Penrith Circuit, 9/9 (Richard Hall)

**Minister:** The Revd Richard Hall • **2009 membership:** 356

PMC was established in 1873. It has a history of work with children, young people and families going back well over 50 years. Whilst PMC has been a church with a wide age range for many years, the current growth can be traced back to a major renovation scheme which took place 13 years ago and the increased provision of relevant contemporary worship.

On Sundays we have three different services. At 9.00am traditional worship takes place, and is attended by around 80 people generally aged 50 plus. Contemporary worship is held at 10.45am to which 250 come, with an age-range of 0-90, but at least half are young families. In a straw poll on 25 April, 21 people were identified as being within the missing generation. The evening service consists of a variety of styles from traditional to Café Worship, changing week to week, but with a regular pattern. The congregation usually numbers between 30 and 60, including teenagers and a few in their 20s and 30s.

In terms of church activities there are 10 house groups for all ages, with approximately 25 in the missing generation age range attending regularly. Throughout the week, all age groups and many interests are catered for including Tiddlers and Tiddlywinks (young mums and babies/toddlers), football, youth cell groups, Sanctuary Youth Café, *Alpha* course, Youth Club and mountain biking. Many of these reach out to the local community and have a pre-evangelistic intent. PMC also maintains a chaplaincy to the local high school and is involved with a local primary school.

Overall, the church has regular contact with approximately 85 in the missing generation age range plus the school chaplaincy, so it could be around 150 in total.

Key factors in reaching a wide age range and the 20-40 age group in particular include: conducting 'niche worship' (using one style per service and doing it well); meeting specific needs without compromise – eg hosting mums and toddlers but with evangelistic intent; socially based pre-evangelistic activities (mountain biking, curry nights etc); extensive youth and children's work (we have two full time youth workers, our own dedicated youth centre and an army of volunteers) and a regular programme of residential events for specific age groups, from 5 to 95, including annual group visits to New Wine and Soul Survivor. In addition, a relaxed atmosphere in worship is encouraged along with youth participation at every level (including worship leading) and an intentional focus on growing disciples. We have also found that because we already have a wide age range we attract a wide age range. Our current second minister is in the missing generation age bracket and this is usually the case.

Other churches within two miles attracting the missing generation include King's Church Eden and Church in the Barn, both of which are independent evangelical churches. We are members of Churches Together in Penrith (CTIP) but do not have regular ecumenical links with any other church. CTIP activities do not, in the main, attract people aged 25-40.

## Case Study Twelve

Methodist Central Hall – Westminster 35/3 (Dov Whittle)

**Minister:** The Revd Martin Turner • **Pastoral contact for The Sanctuary:** Dov Whittle  
**2009 membership:** 378

In 2005 the Central Hall founded a specific ministry for the missing generation called The Sanctuary. This has its main meeting on a Thursday evening from 7.00pm, with around 45 minutes of socialising and then a service for around an hour and a half. The service, consisting of prayer, music, talks, reflections and activities in response to the talk, is different each week as many members contribute - thus ensuring a constant flow of new ideas and expressions of faith. Up to 30 individuals attend each week. There are also small groups that meet throughout the week, the age range of which is 20-40, and usually include 4-8 members.

The Sanctuary has proved to be successful with the 20-40 age group for two reasons. Firstly, by being intentional about it and putting resources and planning into the needs of that age range. Secondly, by ensuring that the whole church supports it by making it part of the overall vision of the church that all members can buy into. This support will be financial, in prayer, and in allowing the space and freedom to worship in a style that is more appropriate for that group.

Sunday worship at Westminster Central Hall has over 200 people in its congregation each week, with a further 70 (on average) worshipping mid-week - including The Sanctuary. Approximately 5-10 members of The Sanctuary attend Sunday worship, some of whom were already members of the regular Central Hall congregation and joined The Sanctuary when it began. Any visitors or new members of the church in the missing generation age bracket are also encouraged to visit The Sanctuary. While there may not be a significant number of 20-30s in Sunday's congregation, they are well represented within the church's community.

In terms of other local churches who engage with this age group, being in central London means that there are a wide variety of churches of all denominations that are well attended by the 20-40s.

## Case Study Thirteen

High Street Methodist Church - Harpenden Circuit, 34/14 (Jenny Dyer)

**Minister:** The Revd Jenny Dyer • **2009 membership:** 446

At High Street Methodist Church in Harpenden the age group least represented is 20-35, but this is partly because Harpenden is an area of expensive housing and younger adults do not tend to live here unless they live with their parents. Young families, however, are well represented in church - here 'young' parents tend to be in their late 30s or even 40s - and more are arriving all the time, so much so that we find it difficult to keep track of them.

How does this happen? Of course, nothing succeeds like success: there are already young families here, so people coming through the doors with young children do not feel that they are in the wrong place. But there are other factors. We have a full-time deacon whose job description is to be outreach and families worker. She runs Building Blocks - a twice weekly toddler group, a regular teatime praise service for young families and special events such as big Christingle services at Christmas. She also conducts most of our baptisms. Together these mean that there is a young families 'scene' and a pastoral care network before people even get as far as thinking of coming to church. We also have a coffee shop, open every morning, which is popular with young families as well as with pensioners, and this reinforces the message that this is a building where families are welcome.

We have two parallel (or 'complementary') services at 10.30am: a traditional one in the church with organ and choir and a more informal one in the hall with a worship band. The hall service provides an atmosphere which younger families tend to prefer, where no one tuts if children make a noise. We have welcomers at the door (as distinct from the door stewards who give out books). The welcomers spot newcomers, chat to them and introduce them to people, take their details, keep in touch with them on succeeding weeks, and sometimes visit them at home. Every few months, a newcomers lunch is held on a Sunday, with some established members there to help welcome the newcomers, and a presentation about things going on in the church. There is a rolling programme of *Alpha* courses and, as each *Alpha* course finishes, we encourage participants to continue to meet so that either a new post-*Alpha* group emerges, or participants join existing home groups.

Some things work well, but we do face challenges. We struggle to find leaders for the post-11 age groups on a Sunday morning, and have no male helpers in any of the under 11s age groups. We do not do well at keeping those families who come to us for a while in order to get a child into a church school. And we find that more and more children, and often their parents too, become committed to sports activities on a Sunday morning. We are exploring at the moment when else in the week we could provide family-friendly worship that such families could, and would want to, attend.



The **Methodist** Church 

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