

A future with hope: Diaspora churches in Scotland

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Introduction

This article presents the findings of a comprehensive study that sought to explore the nature and contributions of, and challenges faced by ethnic diaspora Christian congregations in Scotland. The study involved the analysis of responses from an online survey in which 65 participants took part, as well as in-depth interviews conducted with selected church leaders.

The objective of this project was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and dynamics of diaspora Christian congregations in Scotland, shedding light on their current and future roles within the broader Scottish religious landscape.

By examining the perspectives of their church leaders, this research aimed to provide valuable insights into the diverse and evolving nature of diaspora Christian communities and their impact on Scottish society. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of knowledge in the field of diaspora missiology and contemporary mission studies in general. It is further hoped that this project would enable an understanding of the scale of ethnic diaspora Christianity in Scotland, whilst highlighting the latest missional advancements, changes and opportunities in Scotland's contemporary Christian religious landscape.

This article begins with a short overview of the existing literature on ethnic minority and diasporic Christianity in Scotland, with an emphasis on the present study's unique contribution. The study's research methodology is then discussed, followed by a discussion of the main findings. Lastly, we conclude with an analysis of the theological implications offered by our findings and offer some recommendations for fruitful collaboration between these emerging diasporic congregations and the wider church.



Literature review

This study is the first study of ethnic minority and diasporic congregations in Scotland.¹ It is based on Sheila Akomiah-Conteh's PhD thesis which identified 110 new churches in Glasgow between 2000 and 2016, of which 65% were ethnic minority churches.² A similar project discovered 70 such

¹ Previous work on this subject focused primarily on England. See Andrew Rogers, *Being Built Together: A Story of New Black Majority Churches in the London Borough of Southwark* (London: University of Roehampton, 2013); David Goodhew and Rob Barward-Symmons, *New Churches in the North East* (Durham: Centre for Church Growth Research, 2015), <https://csmc.webspace.durham.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/144/2021/04/NCNereportFINAL.pdf>.

² Sheila Akomiah-Conteh, "The Changing Landscape of the Church in Post-Christendom Britain: New Churches in Glasgow 2000–2016", PhD thesis (University of Aberdeen, 2018), https://abdn.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/delivery/44ABE_INST:44ABE_VU1/12153102350005941.

churches in Edinburgh in 2023³ and 32 in Aberdeen.⁴ This study builds upon the previous work but represents a unique contribution through its employment of mixed research methods and its coverage of the entirety of Scotland. This research uncovered how Christians of majority world heritage have established numerous new churches across the country; the geographical distribution of such churches; their social demographics; and their experiences and challenges.



Methodology

Our original contact list of diaspora congregations was based on Akomiah-Conteh's doctoral thesis, supplemented with more recently identified churches and an expanded survey of locations across Scotland. We identified these congregations through online searches, focusing on various regions and types of churches. Some were found through word of mouth or advertisements. We are aware of many more groups, especially those sharing premises, that lacked an online presence and which did not respond to our invitations. We used publicly available contact details to email each group, followed by reminder emails or phone calls if needed. We are grateful to Rev Dr Ibidun Daramola and Dr Stefanie Conradt for their assistance.

We used SurveyMonkey to collect data regarding meeting location and type of property; demographics of congregation; denominational and network affiliations; characteristics of church leaders such as age, gender, qualifications; and ministry activities and challenges. Quantitative data was analysed using the statistics program R⁵ and qualitative data including interviews was coded and analysed by the researchers.

³ Alexander Chow, Emma Wild-Wood, and Nuam Hatzaw, "Global Christians in Edinburgh" (Edinburgh: Centre for the Study of World Christianity, 2023), <https://www.cswc.div.ed.ac.uk/projects/global-christians/#:~:text=The%20project%20reminds%20us%20that,critical%20issue%20in%20Scotland%20today>.

⁴ Emma Percy and Joel Pierce, "The Changing Face of Church in Aberdeen" (Aberdeen: Centre for Ministry Studies, University of Aberdeen, 2024), <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/sdhp/documents/Changing%20Face%20of%20Churches%20in%20Aberdeen%20-%20Initial%20Research.pdf>.

⁵ R Core Team, *R: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing*, R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, 2023, <https://www.R-project.org/>.

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There were 65 responses, making up 32.5% of those we contacted.

	TOTAL	African	Asian	European	Mixture
Responses	65	47	10	4	4
% of Responses	100%	72.3%	15.4%	6.2%	6.2%
Congregations	200	139	34	19	8
% Response rate	32.5%	33.8%	29.4%	21.0%	50.0%

Given the conservative nature of some groups, and general difficulty in researching ethnic minority groups⁶ we are happy with this response rate.



Findings: Key statistics

Numbers

Online searches resulted in a list of over 200 diaspora congregations in Scotland. We are aware of more congregations for which we did not have contact details, such as those meeting within other churches, and those without an online presence. Of the 200, 139 were composed of primarily those of African descent, 34 were of Asian descent, 19 were European, and 8 were Mixed (churches with a balanced mixture of people from different nationalities with none dominating).

Denominations

35 denominations were identified within the 200 congregations. 61 congregations were independent, and 57 were from the Redeemed Christian Church of God, a Pentecostal denomination from Nigeria. Other denominations with at least five congregations include Christ Embassy (5, Nigerian, Pentecostal), the Church of Pentecost (6, Ghanaian, Pentecostal) and the Church of God Scotland (12, Pentecostal, United States).

Languages

Seventeen different languages were used by the 65 congregations. 54 (83%) used English, 4 worshipped in Yoruba, 4 Cantonese, 2 Mandarin,

⁶ Sabi Redwood and Paramjit Gill, “Under-representation of Minority Ethnic Groups in Research – Call for Action”, *British Journal of General Practice* 63, no. 612 (July 2013): 342–43, <https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp13X668456>.

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and 2 Spanish. 12 congregations (18%) used English as well as another language. Other languages used in worship were: Akan (Twi), Igbo, Farsi, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Korean, French, Greek, Romanian and German.

Geographical spread

Almost all (96%) of diasporic congregations were found in the most urban parts of Scotland, with 80% in ‘large urban areas’ (settlements of over 125,000 people) and 16% in ‘other urban areas’ (over 10,000 people). We identified congregations in 20 of the 32 Council Areas in Scotland, with Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Glasgow hosting congregations of each ethnic grouping.

Meeting space

Only 28% of diasporic congregations owned their own meeting space. Nearly half (42%) hired a public space, and a quarter (25%) shared a sacred space. African churches were most likely to hire a public space, Asian churches to share sacred spaces, and European churches to own their own property.

Ecumenical networks

53% of respondents were part of an ecumenical network, either local or national. 16% mentioned their denomination and 25% spoke of a local group, e.g. ‘Motherwell Churches’. 22% mentioned Scotland-wide networks such as Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) or Minority Ethnic Churches Together in Scotland (MECTIS), and 9% mentioned national bodies such as the Evangelical Alliance. 16% said that they were not part of a network, but would like to be, and only 2% stated that they had no wish to be part of a network.



Findings: Mission engagements and challenges

Our study also sought to uncover the motivations, activities, and challenges faced by ethnic minority congregations. We asked our participants to share with us the reason for starting their church in Scotland, the highlights of their ministries, any challenges they faced, and their engagement with the wider public.

Motivation

Three primary reasons emerged as for why diasporic congregations were formed in Scotland: missional imperative; community need; and the absence of a vibrant Christianity in their area.

Missional imperative

The majority of respondents highlighted a ‘divine call’ or ‘leading’ from God as the primary reason for starting their church. Individuals mentioned being called, instructed, or led by the Holy Spirit to specifically establish a church in Scotland. This theme emphasises the spiritual rationale for starting a church and the strong belief of many founders that they were following divine instruction. One pastor who felt called to mission in Scotland after settling elsewhere in Europe noted passionately, ‘Scotland was expressly chosen for me by the Holy Spirit. Left alone, I’d rather be in Germany.’ Such statements emphasise a strong missional imperative to simply preach the gospel, and bring the good news to the people of Scotland who some believe have ‘lost the faith’. These individuals see starting a church as a means to meeting the spiritual needs of local communities, as well as reviving Christianity in Scotland. One church leader narrated:

After arriving in Scotland many years ago, it was disheartening to see the dearth of faith and vibrant Christian expressions across Scotland. The traditional churches which once housed great testimonies of faith, holiness and sacrifice for the truth of God’s Word were seemingly now unsure and even unwelcoming in many matters of the same faith. Although we were for a while part of a very lively church in Edinburgh, a time came when I felt a strong call of God to go up to our present location to start a new work of ministry with a mission to create an environment where God can meet with people and they can be transformed by His Spirit through the accurate and sincere teaching of God’s Word. And this we have continued to do by His grace.

One church leader captured what researchers of this phenomenon have sometimes described as the missional attitude of African Christians in

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particular⁷ when he said, ‘God expects us to preach the gospel, and establish churches wherever we find ourselves across the world. That’s simply what I did’.

‘Our communities need us’

Some churches were started to cater to the spiritual and social needs of specific groups, such as African and Caribbean communities, Hong Kong refugees, or other minority ethnic groups. They address unique needs and challenges often missed by mainstream churches and civil organisations. These include overcoming language barriers, promoting social integration, navigating immigration issues, addressing culture shock, maintaining cultural identity, and worshipping in one’s preferred original language. Thus, there are new churches which exist solely ‘to cater to the spiritual needs of Chinese-speaking communities in Edinburgh’, and ‘to meet the specific needs of Hong Kong refugees in Scotland’.

Others also spoke of being called to accomplish specific tasks. One pastor explained:

I was a minister in Nigeria for several years. When I came to Scotland I felt called to continue in ministry – but God also gave me a specific burden to raise worthy and efficient servant leaders for the kingdom. Good Christian leadership is lacking at the moment in many areas, sectors and groups, and my ministry’s burden is to train others to lead faithfully and effectively.

Lack of vibrant Christianity

Several individuals expressed a concern about the lack of vibrant Christian expressions and a decline in faith within traditional churches in Scotland. They felt called to create an environment where God could transform people through sincere and ‘unadulterated’ Bible teaching and a vibrant spiritual experience. An example is one group which said they were started ‘to help integrate Ghanaian Methodists living in Scotland into the British Methodist Church, and to help make it [the British Methodist Church] more dynamic.’ Here, the motivating factor is the reversal of a perceived

⁷ Rogers, *Being Built Together*.

decline in Christianity and the reanimation of dying churches in Scotland – what some researchers have termed ‘reverse mission’.⁸

Summary

In summary, the primary motivations for starting new churches in Scotland include a divine call, a passion for spreading the gospel, addressing specific community needs, revitalising the Christian faith and fostering community and integration with native communities. These themes reflect a combination of spiritual, social, and missional imperatives and underscore the diverse ways in which diasporic Christians seek to contribute to Scottish society through their church-planting efforts.

Highlights of ministry

We asked our participants to share highlights from their ministry. Responses ranged from personal transformations of congregants to the joyful sharing of the Gospel and engagement with local communities.

Evangelism

Many respondents highlighted the importance of evangelism and winning souls for Christ. Diaspora churches spoke of a strong desire to reach the spiritually lost and lead them to a Christ-centred, Spirit-filled, and mature faith. One participant’s comments reveal how this desire informs both their motivation and their measure of success:

We exist to establish responsible and self-sustaining churches filled with committed, spirit-filled Christians of character, who will impact their communities, share the good news of God’s love, his forgiveness of sin, healing and deliverance from the power of darkness, provision for today and hope for eternal life after death.

⁸ Afeosemime U. Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora: New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Joseph Bosco Bangura, “Reverse Mission? *Missio Dei* and the Spread of African Pentecostalism in the West”, *Ecclesiology* 16, no. 3 (October 2020): 379–99; Hun Kim, “Receiving Mission: Reflection on Reversed Phenomena in Mission by Migrant Workers from Global Churches to the Western Society”, *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 2011): 62–67.

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Personal transformations

This passion led many respondents to express joy and satisfaction in witnessing personal transformations, including seeing people saved, disciplined, and growing in faith. They highlighted the impact their ministries have had on the lives of individuals, families, and communities. This includes empowering refugees, supporting vulnerable populations, and helping individuals overcome challenges as ethnic minorities.

Church planting and growth

On a related note, the establishment of new churches and the growth of existing ones were highlights for some. One respondent spoke of the successful church-planting efforts of their denomination:

The ministry in Scotland started in Aberdeen in the early 2000s with Glasgow and Edinburgh following in 2007 approximately. We now have 6 churches in Scotland. Our mission is to reach out to the people of Scotland and raise a generation of men and women who will come into their inheritance to fulfil God's dream as they are taught the undiluted word of God.

A vast majority of diaspora churches seek to church-plant in different cities, integrate ethnic communities, and provide a dynamic worship environment in different styles. There is a focus on discipleship, maturity, and seeing the congregation grow in faith and numbers.

Community engagement

Several respondents highlighted community-building activities as a key strength of their ministry. These include outreach programmes, collaboration with local Scottish ministers and churches, social care, nursing home visits, food banks, and involvement in community services. These activities demonstrate how diasporic churches aim to show God's love by addressing both spiritual and practical needs.

Diversity and inclusivity

Finally, a few respondents emphasised their ministry's role in bringing together different communities, such as the Ghanaian community, Hong Kong immigrants, and Chinese believers. The focus is on creating a space

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where individuals from diverse backgrounds can come together, worship, and support one another, finding solidarity and understanding. These answers underscore the importance of such churches in reaching and meeting the needs of those who might otherwise struggle to find belonging in Scottish society.

Summary

These themes reflect the diverse and impactful work carried out by these ministries to spread the gospel, meet practical needs, and foster spiritual growth in Scotland. Diasporic churches attest to vibrant and active ministries and a dedication to evangelism and community outreach, understanding themselves as playing a critical role in the transformation of Christianity in Scotland.

Challenges

We also asked about some of the challenges ethnic minority congregations faced. Answers ranged from practical issues to social and cultural barriers that prevented a sense of wider belonging.

Lack of buildings

The lack of suitable worship spaces emerged as a major challenge for nearly all ministries. Many churches struggled to find appropriate venues for worship – only 28% of congregations owned their own building.

This is worsened by the lack of support from mainstream denominations and the government – participants mentioned the limited opportunity to purchase available church buildings and the absence of subsidies or assistance from local councils. One respondent said, ‘No support from mainstream denominations in terms of access to spaces to worship or even the opportunity to purchase available church buildings – buildings that are available for sale.’

Subsequently, some churches have had to move entirely online or share spaces with other churches, resulting in difficulties in establishing a sense of belonging in the community. One respondent noted that, ‘We struggle to belong in the community because we don’t have stable connections.’ The lack of a meeting space therefore hinders the congregation’s ability to establish a physical presence, limits their growth and outreach, and affects their integration into the community.

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Immigration and relocation issues

Further practical obstacles included the unique challenges that arise from the impact of immigration, work relocation, and the busy schedules of members. These factors disproportionately impact migrant and ethnic minority Christians, who are more likely to be economically vulnerable – 68% of congregations identified in our survey were in more deprived areas. They also affect church attendance and commitment, as individuals may prioritise economic concerns or face difficulty in maintaining stability and continuity within their ministry.⁹

Cultural and language barriers

Cultural and linguistic differences created significant challenges, such as designing a widely accepted mode of worship, contextualising the ministry's worship style, and resolving misunderstandings due to diverse cultural backgrounds.

Integration into Scottish society was another challenge. Several responses highlighted how cultural differences, isolation, and a lack of connection with the local church prevented effective integration and involvement. Some responses mentioned encountering prejudice, mistrust, and racism due to racial or cultural differences, further hindering the acceptance of their message and services. Language barriers also hinder access to essential services like immigration aid, employment, education, and housing.

Resistance and indifference

The secular nature of society was also identified as a challenge, with individuals prioritising other activities or commitments over church attendance. Some respondents mention secularism in society and the prevailing perception of Christianity as a myth. Others note the resistance encountered when 'preaching the Gospel and addressing sin according to the Word of God'. The lack of interest, busy schedules, and competing priorities such as sports events and work commitments on Sundays

⁹ See further: Emmanuel Chiwetalu Ossai, "Nigerian Christians in Britain: Post-migration Religious Change Among the First Generation in Edinburgh", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2023): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2023.2277345>.

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contribute to the challenge of attracting individuals to church. These responses reflect the influence of the wider Scottish context of a declining communal religiosity, but may also further motivate the evangelistic efforts of diasporic Christians.

Summary

These major themes provide a snapshot of some of the challenges faced by ethnic minority churches in Scotland. They reflect the complexities of operating a ministry in rapidly diversifying contemporary Scottish society, and the need to navigate cultural, logistical, and social barriers to effectively spread the gospel and engage with communities.

Missional engagements

Finally, we asked about the wider community engagement of diasporic churches.

Outreach and Evangelism

Missional outreach activities were frequently mentioned, including distribution of tracts, organising joint events, conducting worship conferences, evangelism through street outreach and social media, and holding crusades and outreach programmes. The churches actively sought to reach out to the public, share the gospel, and engage in evangelistic efforts.

Community and social activities

Many diasporic congregations also reported engaging with their local community through various social activities to foster interaction. These included community clean-up exercises, social events, organising concerts, providing support to care homes, attending community events, participating in cultural celebrations, and holding special events during festive periods.

Support and service

Some churches also provided support and service activities. Initiatives included operating food banks, donating to local charity groups, volunteering in community activity groups, offering free services like car washes, visiting prisons and care homes, and addressing issues like loneliness and homelessness. Churches actively sought to meet the practical

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needs of individuals and the community, displaying responsiveness to their local context.

Education and empowerment

Some churches also engaged in educational outreach, mentoring, and capacity building. These included English classes, educational programmes for youth, supporting new immigrants, and empowering individuals through prayer, skills development, and workshops.

Summary

These themes demonstrate the various ways in which diaspora churches engage with the public. Whether through evangelism efforts, social welfare activities, or educational and skills workshops, they seek to connect with individuals, meet practical and spiritual needs, and foster a sense of community and belonging. These activities reveal a picture of churches deeply invested in their local communities and their own congregants, and eager to make a lasting impact where they are.



Analysis and recommendations

The findings from our report indicate the growing presence of vibrant and flourishing diasporic churches in Scotland. They reveal a picture of a diversifying Scottish Christianity, representative of wider changes in society. The importance of responding proactively, intentionally, and with humility to the presence of these diasporic churches cannot be overstated. To that end, we draw out several themes from our research that warrant particular attention and present a number of recommendations for the wider church in Scotland.

Fruitfulness

The first theme of note is the fruitfulness of diaspora churches. In a time of numerical decline, where church attendance dropped by 40% between 1986 and 2016,¹⁰ diaspora churches stand out as success stories of mission in contemporary Scotland. This fruitfulness ought to be celebrated by the

¹⁰ Peter Brierley, “The Fourth Scottish Church Census 2016”, <https://saintthomas.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=217905>.

whole Scottish church. Diaspora churches are connecting with people that majority white churches are not reaching, while also serving the majority white population in various ways. This is most evident by the ‘re-sacralisation’ of public spaces by diaspora Christians, who repurpose abandoned churches, retail units, and office blocks, thus raising the visibility of faith among all people, regardless of ethnic background.¹¹

Understanding the reasons for this success is crucial. Primarily, diasporic churches fulfil the social, spiritual, and practical needs of diaspora Christians by offering places to meet and worship in their native language and cultural context. As such, diaspora churches represent one of the primary ways identified by Grace Davie in which religion can survive in contemporary western cultures.¹²

The importance of monocultures for church growth is well attested in both sociology and missiology. Homogeneity of culture is likely to be conducive to growth, while heterogeneity can multiply disagreements, confusion, and a feeling of disunity. Yet this is not uncontested. Paas, Milbank and Davison all have pointed out that homogeneity *contradicts* the vision of the Church revealed in Scripture, and should not be settled for, no matter its results.¹³ Rather, God calls us to unity-in-difference today.¹⁴

Godly diversity

Importantly, God’s desire for heterogeneity is recognised by our respondents. Drawing on Richard Middleton’s reading of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9), rather than a uniformity of culture and language,

¹¹ 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>.

¹² Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox*, 2nd ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015).

¹³ Stefan Paas, *Church Planting in the Secular West: Learning from the European Experience* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016), 121; Andrew Davison and Alison Milbank, *For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 71–72.

¹⁴ Liam Jerrold Fraser, *Mission in Contemporary Scotland* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2021), 170–71.

God rejoices in worship from a multiplicity of languages and cultures.¹⁵ This is enforced by the story of Pentecost, which shows that redemption does not flatten human difference, but celebrates it. The people of God continue to be from the four corners of the world, and continue to speak a range of languages, but importantly, now enjoy mutual understanding, and unity of faith and purpose (Acts 2). This unity in difference is articulated further by Paul in his description of Christ as being one body with many diverse members, who are to care for each other and are essential to one another (1 Corinthians 12). Crucially, this includes people of all races and cultures (Colossians 3:11). Thus, we are called to worship, serve, and witness as a unified yet diverse Body until the New Jerusalem comes, where all peoples and races will worship God together (Revelation 5:9, 21:24).

The growth of diaspora churches in Scotland presents an opportunity for the Scottish Church to further God's mission through multicultural and multiracial partnerships. Previously, missionaries left Scotland to evangelise the majority world; now, descendants of those converts come to Scotland to found new worshipping communities and engage in mission. If, in previous centuries, we see a centrifugal motion, with missionaries leaving Scotland to evangelise the majority world, we now see a centripetal action.¹⁶ This shift allows for the possibility of the Great Commission becoming the 'great unification'. Through the presence of diverse cultures and races in Scotland, and the prospect of a new missional unity, we have an unprecedented opportunity to witness and show the people of Scotland what heaven looks like today.

Ecclesial division

Ethnic minority Christians desire fellowship and shared worship, ministry and mission with their white brothers and sisters, yet some of their white brothers and sisters do not seem to share this desire. This is not only a theological or ecclesiological problem but a missional one. Diaspora churches, sometimes the most vibrant in their localities, struggle to reach

¹⁵ J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 221–28.

¹⁶ On the categories centripetal and centrifugal, see Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003).

the native Scottish population, while white majority churches fail to reach ethnic minority communities. The result is ‘missional blind spots’ that hamper the Church’s ability to reach the whole people of Scotland.

These missional blind spots are exacerbated by another problem identified by our research: the failure of the Scottish church to properly steward its buildings.

Stewardship of buildings is often considered in terms of charity law and the supposed need to maximise profit for the charity. However, stewardship here should focus on using properties for the glory of God and the needs of the Church and the world (Psalm 24:1; 1 Peter 4:10–11). Our research has uncovered vibrant diaspora churches seeking worship spaces while an unprecedented number of church buildings are being disposed of.¹⁷ Yet, diaspora churches are being frozen out due to a lack of consideration from majority white denominations, or by prohibitive costs. The result is that ‘missional leashes’ are being placed on churches that are able and ready to grow.



Recommendations

In light of our findings, we offer several recommendations for fruitful collaboration between diaspora and native Scottish congregations.

First, churches currently sharing buildings with diaspora Christians should seek genuine fellowship with them that goes beyond simply using the same space for worship. White majority churches should also be encouraged to explore ways to share prayer and worship with diaspora Christians where possible, and to extend invitations to diaspora leaders to attend ministry fraternals and socials, which can sometimes become private members clubs rather than gatherings of the Body of Christ in a particular area.

Second, churches ought to collaborate in mission. At a minimum, this could mean tracking which congregations are targeting which groups in a locality, also noting which groups are not being reached. Some ministries, like English language classes or community meals, are particularly well-suited for collaboration between diaspora and white majority congregations.

¹⁷ BBC News, “Hundreds of Churches Will Have to Close, Says Kirk”, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-65645891>; Scottish Churches Trust, “Scotland’s Closing Churches” <https://www.scotlandschurchestrust.org.uk/blog/scotlands-closing-churches/>.

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Third, our research has discovered that while some diaspora churches are part of networks, many are not. Suitable networks for diaspora churches might include the Scottish Church Planting Network and MECTIS. The Scottish Church Leaders Forum and the Scottish Christian Forum should ensure the inclusion of diaspora Christians, further integrating them into the Body of Christ.

Fourth, the disconnect between diaspora and white majority congregations could be mitigated through building use. The Church of Scotland is currently disposing of hundreds of redundant properties, which could instead serve as the basis for new missional partnerships. Buildings could be offered for free or at reduced rates, fostering mutually beneficial partnerships and preserving ministry and mission in under-churched areas. This would also achieve the dream of many of our respondents: diaspora and white majority congregations working together in mission to a secular Scotland.



Conclusion

Our study has revealed the presence of diaspora churches in almost every area of Scotland. We detailed their mission, their experiences of ministering in Scotland, and the challenges they face. In contemporary Scotland, the ministry and mission of the Church has been turned upside down and inside out, with the majority world now coming to Scotland to minister and evangelise, where once Scotland went in mission to the world. This is a cause for celebration and for hope. Yet if the Church is to overcome the failures of the past, it is essential that all the people of God – with all their cultural and linguistic differences and treasures – work together as a united body to glorify God and serve Scotland and the world. While this will require adjustment from diaspora Christians, the onus is primarily upon white majority denominations and congregations, who all too often are unaware of their ethnic minority siblings or unwilling to work with them. While we hope that this report has illuminated the experience and importance of diaspora Christians, if the problems it has uncovered are to be remedied, it will not only take research and words, but determination and action.

We are grateful for editing assistance from Nuam Hatzaw.