

# Church Hub 16 Apr 2023 Q+R

At our Church Hub on 16<sup>th</sup> April we spoke about People, Pounds, and Places – you can watch again on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/l7VZdTitHko> or via the App and you can find the script [here](#). In the answers below, we'll point to a document the Elders shared earlier this year, "Responding to Growth" regarding how we're planning on moving ahead from here and why which addresses a number of these questions. You can find and read that document [here](#).

## **Q: I thought the hope was when we outgrew this place, we would plant and send out. Why has that vision changed?**

We wrote about this in Responding to Growth under the heading "Changing Plan" - I can expand on and update our response somewhat, though, since it's multifaceted:

- We're still committed to planting and we're working hard on that (well, primarily Pat is). We had set 2023 as our goal but we're not going to force that date at the expenses of planting well which currently we feel may take us into 2024. We remain committed to planting, however – and planting repeatedly. We think the opportunity to recontextualise that planting gives us is an essential part of reaching our diverse city.
- We overestimated the capacity of our present space – we think the peak is more like 220 than the 250 we'd targeted for the main space. We didn't account for ancillary space like lifts/stairs/loos in our calculation and the shape of the room makes some of the floor space hard to use efficiently vs. a big rectangle. We also didn't really consider capacity in Hope City Kids as a limiting factor or circulation/connection space – both of these are extremely pressed at 220 also.
- We overlooked the variability in weekly attendance: our peak Sunday is about 1.25x our average Sunday and we're "full" when we can't fit everyone on a peak Sunday and this really limits the ability to grow – that means at an average attendance of 176, we'll struggle to grow further – right about where we are now.
- We targeted planting with around 35 adults or about 50 people total in order to launch with "critical mass" to deliver church, wanting to ensure "doing church" wouldn't suffocate mission which would be our fear with a smaller core group trying to deliver a typical family church experience. We still think that's about right – but note that a "simpler" church (e.g. without a kids' programme) would have a lower critical mass.
- A lower venue capacity makes planting repeatedly much more difficult. Sending out 50 from a group averaging 176 is much more challenging proposition than sending 50 from 250; a larger proportion of the church leaving a smaller "parent" behind: more fragile, harder to re-grow ready to plant.
  - You're hoping to grow back to being ready to plant again over three years – with 50-from-176 based on our actual venue ceiling, that's ~60% growth – and wanting ~40% of those who were already part of the parent to be ready to go as a plant within 3y.
  - Compare that to the originally envisaged 50-from-250 meaning ~25% growth to full size, and 25% of those already part of the parent ready to go as a plant over 3y.
  - And note our relatively high rate of growth means many of our number haven't been at Hope City for that long – they're less likely to be ready to be sent out with a plant in the first place.

## **Q: Seems a bit excessive, do we really want to go towards a mega church?? isn't planting more important??**

We're not setting out to become a megachurch - but we are thinking we should significantly increase our "ceiling" on the planned size of Hope City. This larger size target is not about avoiding planting, though – quite the opposite; instead, it's driven by seeking to enable and accelerate planting, particularly better facilitating the leadership development that we now see as one of the key challenges in planting. Planting is the driver here.

We'd started out with a model imagining we could plant repeatedly from 250 but we're now feeling a larger "base" to plant from would be preferable and we've suggested a 400-capacity space might get us there. We picked 400 as a revised ceiling on size in part because it's around the next key scaling point in church structures and systems once you're over 200 (e.g. in the Church Size Dynamics paper by Tim Keller you can read [here](#)) – we'd be over the 200-barrier where systems and structures have to change fundamentally from small church and we'd remain over that even after planting - but we'd not have to cross into the next level of complexity.

There's definitely a risk we haven't got the right number here, though – not ready to get a 400-or-bust tattoo. The space we're talking about probably has the potential to accommodate an even larger group if necessary but if we ultimately determine the optimal size is 300, it's probably the wrong space. So there's risk here.

**Q: With a church the size of 400 how will we facilitate leadership development better than we would at the size of 200?**

We think a larger size is the right direction as it means we'll have more capacity for leadership development. How specifically would that be different at a scale of 400? The principal change we anticipate is being able to fund specialised positions tasked specifically with driving and overseeing the different stages of leadership development within the church (first step into leading; leading leaders; training to lead in a plant).

As Director of Multiplication, Dustin has developed and pioneered the Leadership Path which we think will be a key part of this - but we've struggled to find the time to roll out these ideas broadly, having only launched a relatively small number of team leaders, and we've struggled to find the time to support those leaders once we've asked them to step in, or to help them grow into broader stages of leadership.

Dustin was able to donate his time for a season – a larger scale will give us the ability to pay for more time to be consistently put against what we see as a key enabler for church planting – and to do that without starving other crucial areas we anticipate needing to staff as we grow.

**Q: If capacity for current building was over-estimated - look again at the new Seating Layout slide. Needs tech team space; and a walking route along back wall.**

We only got a quick sketch from our architect to get a sense for the capacity of the space at this stage since their time is rather expensive and there's a lot of risk about the particular building option but yep, the new main space won't reach our proposed scale ceiling without some alternations. It will, however, obviously give us all the space we could ever need for ancillary rooms like Hope City Kids and for mingle/connection space.

That said, we're not worried about the main space being limiting because with minimal work the main space could be extended into the surrounding blocks: simply taking down non-structural walls. That will add hundreds more seats with limited cost and difficulty. Further expansion could be accomplished by using some of the first floor as a balcony overlooking the main space in the atrium – again, just requires removing non-structural walls then making the balconies child-safe.

So although we don't think it'll have vastly larger capacity without some edits, it will immediately have increased capacity, and the next steps ahead are quick and simple.

**Q: So does that building have enough toilets?**

One of the particular challenges with our current building was achieving the capacity numbers we wanted – limited by fire escape width, but also by toilet provision, would you believe! Female loos were one capacity factor we haggled with the planners over as we planned capacity for our current place and we know we'd be asked to provide a LOT of them in a space for significantly large numbers of people.

We think there's an advantage in the new space that we have the loo provision for all four huge floors of the building in place already which can help to get us to that capacity – so we're starting from lots of loos – but also our architect noted that the loos are positioned so as to make it

relatively simple to “double them up” through a wall, all plumbing being already in place nearby. So we think we’ll be able to make this work.

**Q: Do we have to keep the building name confidential**

Yes please at this stage – the current landlord is still negotiating with their previous tenant and does not have the potential for a new occupier in the mix yet. So please don’t talk about the specific building widely.

**Q: You mentioned if the doors stayed closed we’d consider plan B. Can you outline plan B**

We are thinking we would move to a multi-site gathering as a plan-B, starting simple and developing over time. This would be something like finding another gathering space, perhaps a hotel again like at the beginning, and asking people to choose between that location and our current building, beginning there with a simple offering such as watching the livestream with an in-person kids’ programme and growing the local offering over time as resource allowed towards a full-service gathering.

We feel this would be an excellent base for a church plant – but it’s worth noting it’d be a different kind of plant, more like a clone than a fresh plant as even though it would almost certainly diverge over time, it’d be starting from exactly the style and design of Hope City rather than being a new church specifically imagined for a particular missional context as we’d hope for in a “full” plant. Although we think clones can be useful, we think we need these “full” plants as a part of the mix to reach the diversity and breadth of our city.

Please see the “Responding to Growth” document [here](#) for the various options we considered and evaluated as a plan-B and for reasons we settled on the particular proposal we eventually rated as next best to a larger space.

**Q: Would we be double paying our current venue as well as the upkeep of the new one if we were to go forward with it?**

We signed a 10-year lease on our current building with “break options” (which allow us to leave) in years 3 and 6. The next break option is May 2025 which is still a while away so we will be paying for this venue for at least two years even if we were to move somewhere else.

That said, the rent on this building is relatively low (£38k/year) and there is the potential for a very low rent on the new building to begin with (once we occupy, we could save the landlord taxes of hundreds of thousands of pounds a year so they might give it to us very cheap) so we don’t think it will be unaffordable to rent both at the same time.

It’s still very likely to be stretching. Based on an anticipation of a very low rent to begin with on a new venue, we believe that it is not an inappropriately large stretch, however – and we do want to stretch our faith to believe God will provide for the work he wants done.

**Q: Where is the ‘document’ about buildings you mentioned kept if folks want it?**

You can find and read that document [here](#) or look on the app homepage for the “Responding to Growth” section and all the docs are there too.

**Q: What does our giving need to look like if we are to increase space/leadership team?**

A full-time team member would be in the region of £40k once all costs were accounted for – that’s about a 20% increase from our current regular giving base of around £200k. Typically we’ve seen regular giving grow by about this 20% year of year in the past, to give a sense of the realism of taking on that cost.

A larger space could be relatively modest if it’s what we’re currently hoping for in the new building candidate we’re looking at: design / planning / adaption works / operations cost of somewhere we get on low-rent in order to save the landlord taxes – maybe £50k could cover all of that, depending on how significant the works required are; we just don’t know yet. Costs so far are under £10k but we’ve barely started.

At the other end of the spectrum, a new space could be an eye-watering amount for a purchase and significant refit. We roughly calculated £2.4MM to buy a warehouse, take it down, and

rebuild a suitable space for church. We believe the new building we're considering could also be on the market for a similar price – but that'd be just buying the building, not taking it all the way to working well for us. So it's hard to say until the specific plan becomes clear.

**Q: How are plans for planting churches progressing?**

Pat and Dustin will share more details at our next Multiply Sunday – May 7<sup>th</sup>!

**Q: Do we have plans to partner with overseas churches?**

The elders have talked a number of times about the potential for forming a small number of deep partnerships with other churches and we've had a first go at this with Gracemount Community Church over the last few years. We're thinking both of partnerships where we'd be predominantly the "receiver", so perhaps with a church from the USA, and where we might be more of the "giver", so perhaps with a church in the developing world – though ideally any partnership would be truly bidirectional and would be significant and beneficial to both sides.

We concluded we'd like to begin a partnership from a relational connection if that were possible but we haven't had time to get beyond discussing the concept so far. We do have some active leads with potential partners in the USA but we've not "sealed the deal" with anyone or even got into detailed discussions so far. We expect to make progress on this front this year.

**Q: What's the difference between a director and an elder? Thanks!**

Elder is the bible word for church leader and we believe the bible teaches that churches should have more than one elder as they are always spoken about in the plural in the bible, and also because the Apostle Paul warns us that false teachers can rise up even among church elders; having at least three means we can "vote down" one elder if they were to "go rogue."

We believe the bible teaches that church elders are to be male, and this is a position we're required to hold to be a part of the FIEC (<https://fiec.org.uk>). The elders lead the church as a team and none of them has more authority or power than the others. This is why Matt always tries to introduce himself as "one of the leaders here" and he does not believe he has a special role compared to the other elders, or power over them.

Director is more of a business-word from our current world of work than a typical church role. We're using this name to describe a senior leading role in the church under the elders (our goal is each quarter each director meets the elders to share what's happened in their area, and what's planned for the quarter ahead, seeking input and feedback).

We give our directors significant authority and responsibility for a whole key area of church life. We call them directors as we are asking them to create direction not just to deliver specific projects we've given to them. We want to give them high level goals like "keep the church focused on every-member mission" and set them free to figure out the best way to deliver that.

Directors oversee Ministry Leaders and Team Leaders who lead, coordinate and connect our volunteer teams in doing the work of church together. Participation is one of our key values at Hope City so if you're not a part of a team, you can change that now by filling out the simple form at <https://hopecityedinburgh.org/serve> and if you'd be interested in leading a team, please speak to one of the elders and we'd love to talk more.