



CHURCH PLANTERS' COURSE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

PURPOSE

The Great Commission is to take the gospel to neighbourhoods and the nations. The timeless and primary New Testament strategy for this is church planting.

Planting churches is hard. Planting healthy churches is harder. Repeating the process on a regular basis is harder still. Jesus must be driving it from start to finish. From a human perspective, four things need to be in play to plant a healthy church: a called and capable leader, a core team, finance, and various types of meaningful support from a church and/or movement of churches such as Advance.

The Advance Church Planters' Course (ACPC) exists to help produce the first of these four things – called and capable church plant leaders.

WHO

The ACPC is for those who are due to church plant or take on the leadership of a church/site within the next two to three years.

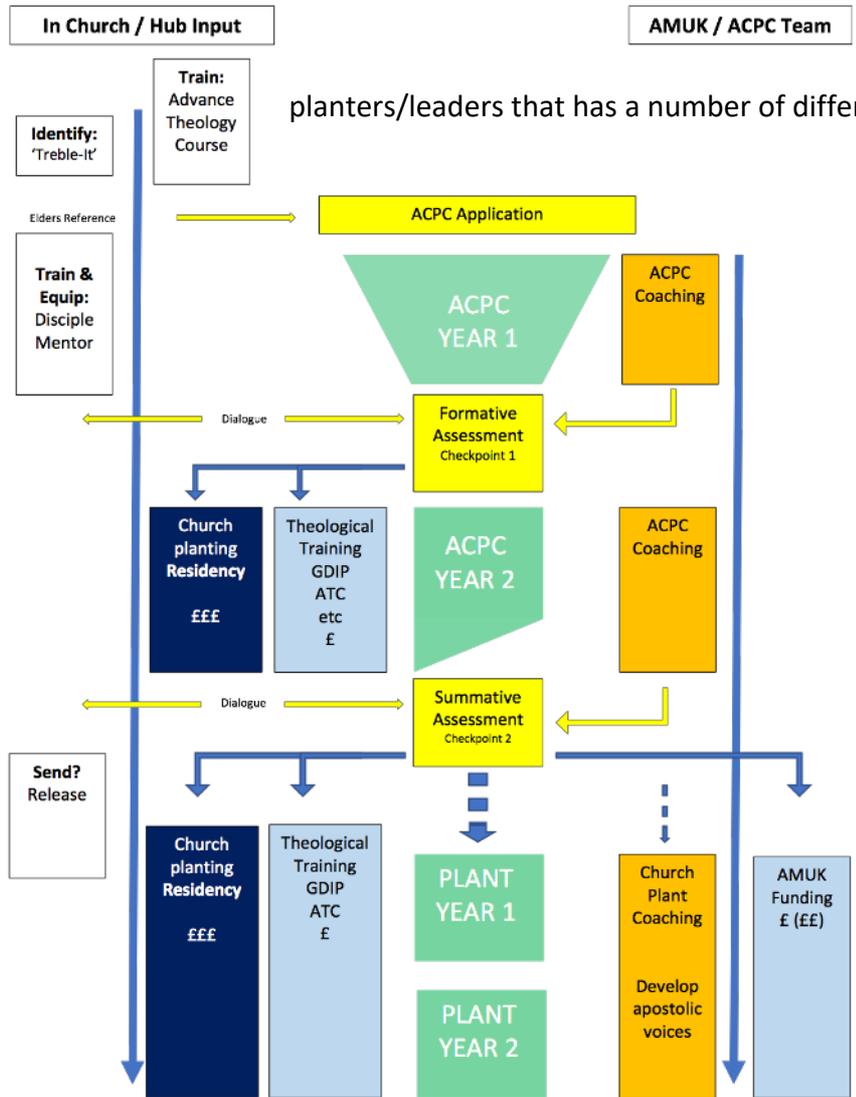
OBJECTIVES

The ACPC has a specific focus, namely to equip and inspire participants in the essential skills and attitudes for church planting and church leadership. Although it involves theology, it is not a theological course per se. The ACPC pursues the following objectives:

1. *Character:* Tools to develop spiritual, emotional and marital health.
2. *Calling:* Assessment and strengthening of calling to plant or lead a church.
3. *Competencies:* Opportunities to learn, practice, and develop core competencies.
4. *Context:* Equip participants to think and act contextually, with a missionary mindset.
5. *Community:* Develop friendship and relationship with other leaders.

COMPONENTS

The ACPC process of church



is part of a preparing planters/leaders that has a number of different components:

The main components are as follows:

1. *Teaching (green)*: Input comes from readings, podcasts, videos, assignments, cohorts and teachers. Further detail on this component can be found below.
2. *Coaching (orange)*: Each person on the course will be assigned a coach, who will help by encouraging, questioning, clarifying and supporting throughout the process
3. *Assessment (yellow)*: Personal, peer-to-peer and formal assessment will help people reflect, learn, shape and decide their future.

4. *Input from local church and hub (white)*: Each candidate will be developed and stretched within their home environment. Further detail on this component can be found below.

The expectation is that anyone leading a plant identified as an 'Advance partner plant' will complete the ACPC as this provides consistency of content, assessment and coaching.

In addition to the four main components above, there are two components (in blue) that will be relevant to some developing church planters/leaders:

5. *Theological Training*: The ACPC is designed primarily to provide *practical* advice and coaching in church planting. *Theological training* is expected to happen largely elsewhere. Some partner churches are more equipped than others to provide this in-house than are others, but all sending churches would be expected to work with the ACPC coaching team in identifying what theological training a potential planter needs and deciding how this can be provided.

As a minimum, we would expect those planting an Advance partner church to have completed the **Advance Theology Course**, or equivalent, and to have demonstrated sufficient competence in that material.

In many contexts it will be necessary for church planters to have more theological depth than the Advance Theology Course provides. We are increasingly partnering with **Union School of Theology** and will be encouraging planters to follow USTs GDip or MTh programmes. These courses may be pursued either before or after the ACPC – or in exceptional circumstances, alongside the ACPC.

6. *Church Planting Residencies*: As part of our developing ACPC programme we are exploring options for church planting residencies – the equivalent of full-time (or potentially part-time) employment in a local church. It is often very helpful in the identifying, training and equipping process for a potential planter to gain this kind of experience.

Some of our partner churches are in a position to do this in-house by choosing to employ a potential planter themselves. In other settings a church might have the financial resources to employ someone but lack a potential planter, or vice versa.

There is also a strategic dimension to this: if someone wants to plant in a city centre location then it would make most sense for them to undertake a residency in a city centre church. If called to a more 'Small Town Jesus' context then experience in that kind of setting makes sense. This might mean sending churches being willing to release 'their man' to serve in another church for before they are sent out to plant. This will require some humility and generosity!

Residencies are financially costly and will not be appropriate or possible for every potential planter. We are working on systems and funding models to develop this important area.

DETAIL ON TEACHING

The ACPC is a two-year course (comprised of twelve modules) that centres on personal study, cohort collaboration, and weekend intensives.

1. *Personal Study*: Each week you will be expected to read, watch, and/or listen to various experts on the topics we're exploring. Periodically you will be given projects to practice implementing what you're learning.
2. *Cohort Collaboration*: Participants are expected to communicate regularly with other participants. The aim is to build friendships and to learn by communicating what you have been reading, hearing, and doing.
3. *Intensives*: Three times each year, participants will meet for three days of building relationships and being trained. Intensives will include a significant amount of input from key leaders as well as adequate time for conversation, relationship formation, and practical outworking of the material.

The topics covered over the two years are as follows:

Year 1

Module	Content
1 The Gospel of Grace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the gospel? • What is grace and how can I experience it? • What does it look like to live a grace-fuelled life? • How does grace change a person? • Can a Christian lose their salvation?
2 Spirit-Empowered Church Life and Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does a Spirit-filled Church look like? • What does the Bible teach about people being filled with the Spirit? • How can we recognise and catalyse the gifts of the Spirit? • What does a Spirit-filled leader and eldership look like? • What does a Spirit-filled Sunday meeting look like?
3 Soul Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self knowledge • Spiritual disciplines and formation • Applying the gospel
4 Marriage and Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage • Parenting • Being a pastor's wife
5 Church to Church Partnerships and Ephesians 4 Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What gifts has God given? • What does Scripture say about the application of these gifts for today? • What do Ephesians 4 and church-to-church partnerships look like today? • How do I engage Ephesians 4 gifts?

6 Raising Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and pastoral development • Leadership pipeline and paths

Year 2

Module	Content
7 Practical Shepherding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical and gospel-centred counselling • Depression and addiction • The Holy Spirit in counselling • Grief and lament
8 Leading an Elder Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theology and practice of eldering • Practical logistics for elders
9 Church Planting Practicals and Church Growth Stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finances • Stages of growth • Venues and software • Creative ways to love the city • Church planting apologetics
10 Preaching and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion and power in preaching • Sermon preparation • Applying the gospel • Small group leading
11 Discipleship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toward disciple-making disciples • Evangelism and discipleship •
12 Contextualization and Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining contextualisation • Missional leader • Contexts to consider

DETAIL ON INPUT FROM LOCAL CHURCH AND HUB

Local churches have hubs have a key role to play in identifying, training and equipping church planters:

1. *Identify*: Initially, and primarily, this happens in the local church where elders are keeping their eyes open for those in their congregation with the potential (and calling) to church plant.

Beyond the local church there is a role for both hub leadership and the UK team to play in identifying potential planters. Local elders and hub leaders should be saying to members of the UK team, “We’ve got this great guy in our church/hub – I think you should meet him.”

2. *Train*: Local churches will be expected to support those on ACPC by:

- Helping them work through and apply course content.
- Helping them work through and apply what is revealed by the assessment process – this might include giving more opportunities to the potential planter to further stretch them; or it might mean helping them process an assessment that they are not yet ready to plant.
- Helping them work through and apply coaching by taking seriously what this process reveals and liaising with the coach about how to best train and develop the potential planter.
- Considering whether they can help with the costs of someone in their 'patch' (in their congregation or their hub) doing the ACPC.

3. *Equip*: Any experience in ministry the potential planter gains will, by definition, take place largely – or entirely – in their home church. This means the elders of that church have a responsibility to equip the potential planter to the maximum of their ability and capacity. This would include things such as:

- Inviting the potential planter to sit in elder meetings and pastoral situations.
- Giving them opportunity in public leading and teaching.
- Looking for opportunities to send them on horizon expanding visits – to other churches, conferences, overseas trips, etc.

In order to plant an Advance partner church it would be expected that the potential planter will have led a substantial ministry in their home church. This would be more than just leading a mid-week small group – they need to have been tried and tested in an area that carries real weight.

EXPECTATIONS

To get the most out of this experience, our expectations of participants in the ACPC are as follows:

1. *Participants prayerfully pursue the question and direction of their calling*: Rather than assuming that they’re called to a certain type of ministry, we ask that they actively engage in the question of their calling. It will be vital, especially in the future when times are tough, that our church planters can say with confidence that God himself has made them for this mission.
2. *Participants create space for relationships with their cohort and actively seek them out*: Brotherhood takes time and energy and intentionality.
3. *Participants are all in with the process*: “Busy students” rush through assignments, cram months’ worth of work into a couple of days, and give minimal effort in contributing to the conversation. Participants who desire to get the most out of this course will: spread the

content out evenly over the time span, consider the spirit of assignments and what is intended through them, and visualize ACPC as a team sport in which everyone is here to help everyone grow.

Very practically, active involvement in ACPC will mean at least the following:

1. Completion of assignments
2. Contribution to the ongoing dialogue
3. Attendance at intensives

We recognize that this is a high level of expectation. However we're not crazy and militaristic in our adherence to these expectations and will happily discuss every personal situation.

ASSIGNMENTS

For each module participants are given a number of things to do:

1. *Read, Listen, Watch & Respond*: Participants are given about 1.5-2 hours of material to read, watch, or listen to each week.
2. *Projects and conversations before the intensive*: Participants are given several assignments to complete before each intensive. Individually they don't take a lot of time. We advise participants to try and do one project each week.
3. *Voice Messages*: Every session participants will be asked to send a few "2-minute voice messages" responding to various prompts. In the first week of ACPC, the cohort determines the best app to facilitate these messages.
4. *Preparation for the Intensive*: Participants show up to each intensive with a contribution (e.g. completion of a personality profile; preparation for leading a mock training).

DATES

Term 1

Starts Monday 2 October 2023

Intensive 23 / 24 & 25 November 2023

Ends 15 December 2023

Term 2

Starts Monday 15 January 2024

Intensive 29 Feb, 1 & 2 March 2024

Ends 22 March 2024

Term 3

Starts Monday 6 May 2024
Intensive 20, 21 & 22 June 2024
Ends 12 July 2024

HOW MUCH

The fee for each year is £500.

This covers the tutors, food for residential training and required assessment. Our hope is that generally sending churches would assist with the course fees as we are aware that additional costs include any holiday from work, travel, accommodation and books to be purchased.

PROCESS

The process to join the course is:

1. *Application:* Please complete an initial application form and email this to pete@redeemerlondon.org.
2. *References:* Please organise and submit the following references:
 - An elder's reference for your local church
 - A spouse reference (if you are married)
 - Another supporting reference
3. *Interview:* There will be a follow up interview, generally via zoom.
4. *Assessment:* You will be asked to complete the initial assessment form.

QUESTIONS

Should you have any further questions then please do not hesitate to get in touch with Pete Cornford (pete@redeemerlondon.org) or Howard Kellett (howard@godfirst.org.uk).