

## Fresh expressions in the UK's Asian churches?

As the church in the UK considers its witness in a complex and sometimes hostile environment, South Asian Christians are taking steps to come together and increase their contribution to mission.

The church faces multiple challenges – responding to the visible and confident presence of other faiths, while also tackling the moral and spiritual confusion of Britain's traditional culture. South Asian Christians in the UK - around 75,000 - have already faced similar challenges.

### Fresh expressions?

A growing number of South Asian Christians are first generation believers from Hindu, Muslim and Sikh backgrounds. They have developed different forms of church, some reflecting traditional Christian groupings from the sub-continent, others attempting 'fresh expressions' like 'satsang' (religious gathering with music, discussion and teaching), or 'followers of Isa Al-Masih'. Some argue that the church must be multi-cultural from the beginning.

### Generation gap?

Like all immigrant communities, South Asians face significant changes between the generations.

"I've grown up in my Asian Church my whole life" says a youth leader. "But friends I attended youth group with 15 years ago are no longer part of our church. I don't want the same to happen with our current group of young people! If this carries on I wonder where the next generations of young Asian Christian leaders in this country will come from. How will the Asian Church move on and connect with young people if they no longer want to attend?"

### Jewels in His Crown

This debate is the focus of a major conference in June, **Which Way the UK Asian Church?** (25-27 June at Swanwick conference centre in Derbyshire. Full details at [www.jewelsinhiscrown.co.uk](http://www.jewelsinhiscrown.co.uk)). The conference is organised every two years by Jewels in His Crown, a consortium of church and mission agencies. Speakers this year include Pastor G I Ebenezer of the large and growing Tamil 'Emmanuel Christian Fellowship' in East London, Clive Thorne, co-leader of Lighthouse International Church in Southampton, Kumar Rajagopalan of the London Baptist Association, and Pradip Sudra, former Director of the Alliance of Asian Christians. The conference will share case studies of different models, hear Biblical perspectives and celebrate what God is already doing.

Krish Kandiah, the Evangelical Alliance's Executive Director Churches in Mission, sees the conference as a key resource for unity and equipping for mission. He believes that theology, evangelism and the practice of the church must always be closely connected. So "it is vital that this conference explores the shape and direction of the church, not just for Asians but for all of us."