CAL Undergraduate Research Scholarships Scheme 2017
Project Proposal Form

Project Proposer/s:	Jeremy Kidwell
School/Dept:	PTR – Theology and Religion
Project Title:	Finding Common Ground

Project Summary

The AHRC/ESCR funded project 'Ancestral Time' opened up the investigation of religious environmentalism in Scotland. The study revealed that many religious groups active in environmental care were unable to establish efficient links with each other and with external organisations due to perceived differences in purpose and perspective and in some cases due to a lack of accessible knowledge of other proximate community groups. A follow-on project is now being undertaken to mobilise knowledge and understanding generated by the Ancestral Time project in order to find common ground between practitioners and groups and enable them to work towards common goals to tackle environmental issues – especially between religious and secular activists that may have unrecognised common cause on environmental issues.

One area that needs development alongside the user engagement activities involved in this broader project lies in the development of geographical data on where churches and other community groups (including transition towns, permaculture communities, etc.) are located across Britain. The element that the UGRS researcher would be involved with would enable me to accelerate the identification and mapping of these churches, which is a key element to bringing religious and practitioner groups together in logical geographic partnerships.

What the researcher will do

The researcher will undertake the following tasks:
- Preliminary research, based on recommended reading, into the sociology, geography of religion, congregational studies in order to develop a basic understanding of the topic.
- Where needed, undertake developmental training in the use of GIS mapping technology and software such as QGIS
- Create a geocoded data set of churches meeting the criteria of the project.
- Check the dataset for accuracy and analyze overlaps between this new data set and other existing sets.
- Publish the dataset online through the http://mapping.community project.

Skills required by the Scholarship holder

Some skill training will be available for a suitable candidate to build skills in using specific software, but skills required are as follows:
- Ability to handle, understand, and interrogate complex datasets and databases.
- Ability to work with large datasets (more than 10k records) in Microsoft Excel
- Ideally experience with mapping and statistical software (but training would be available).
- Attention to detail.
- Ability to complete given tasks under own initiative.
- Interest in the relationship between religion and ecological issues.

How will your Project benefit the Scholarship holder?

By the end of the Scholarship the researcher will have gained the following:
- Experience in the data collection stage of a large scale research project.
- Experience in complex data handling.
- Proven ability to complete tasks to specification, check work for accuracy, work with attention to detail, present complex data in an accessible format.
- An in depth knowledge of a topical, emerging area of research in religion.

How will the Scholarship benefit your Project?

The Ancestral Time project opened the discussion on religious ecological activism in Scotland, but following this the focus needs to reach out to other areas of Britain. There is currently no satisfactory data on the location of British churches. Collecting this data is essential to the progression of this research, but is time consuming and requires intense focus in this area in order to gather the data together in a usable format. I aim to create a hub for furthering

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the understanding of this area at UoB, and the UGRS researcher would help me to begin to build the understanding of statistical and mapping systems within PTR and enable the establishment of a unique group of interested students and researches with the technical knowledge to undertake research in this area.