The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, believes fresh expressions encourage churches and parishes to keep looking outwards and to focus on mission.

**Writing**

in this edition of *expressions*, the Archbishop acknowledges that ‘when the needs of church members can become all-consuming’ fresh expressions of church help clergy and laity to ‘maintain their focus on looking outwards, serving their communities and sharing the gospel day by day.’

The article is Dr Sentamu’s most clear backing yet for Fresh Expressions and comes at the start of a year where the true impact of Dr Rowan Williams’ original vision for a mixed economy of traditional and new ways of being church is being felt across the life of the Methodist and Anglican churches.

The President of the Methodist Conference, Dr Martyn Atkins, in a new year interview with the Methodist Recorder, had already urged Methodist churches across the country to share the vision of what Fresh Expressions is all about. And the Archbishop is equally upbeat.

He writes: ‘More and more traditional churches are trying new patterns alongside the old. It is all about growth and thriving on what the Archbishop of Canterbury has called a ‘mixed economy’ of mission.

And the effect of Fresh Expressions across the Northern Province is acknowledged by the Archbishop: ‘In the Province of York we are blessed with fresh expressions of church that display a range of creative ideas and approaches. This is not a ‘one size fits all’ situation – we need to engage with people in ways that are relevant to their lives’.

Archbishops’ Missioner, Dr Steven Croft, who heads up the Fresh Expressions team, this week welcomed Dr Sentamu’s support and said that 2008 promises to be the most exciting year yet for fresh expressions, particularly in the areas of teaching and nurture.

Dr Sentamu acknowledges that there are key questions which the Fresh Expressions team continues to explore. They are working towards finding long-term and sustainable answers.

The emphasis on sacramental was key, ‘how can they make the transition from community-based initiatives to fully responsible sacramental communities in their own right, nurturing life-long disciples of Christ?’

But, with characteristic Sentamu enthusiasm, he warns against any short-term fix; ‘as [fresh expressions] grow and become settled into a style and way of being and working that is effective for them, how can they maintain their mission imperative?’

Dr Sentamu, who recently visited a fresh expression himself in York (see below), is upbeat about the future: ‘My hope is that, in the next few years, we will hear more stories of fresh expressions of church that are growing to maturity in their own right – but are also sending out shoots of new growth. The main thing is that people are hearing and responding to God’s call to join in a community that is good news, bringing healing and hope’.

Rob Marshall

---

**on the settee**

A Royal Marine commando, a Christian skateboarder, a probation worker and the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu. These are just a few of the guests who have been interviewed ‘on the settee’ at an alternative Sunday evening service called The Lounge, at St Paul’s Church, Holgate, York. The monthly meeting is helping to spread the Christian message among young people and those on the fringes of church.

The atmosphere is informal and spontaneous, and recent services have tackled relevant issues like temptation, forgiveness and serving others, using videos, drama and worship. In a style crossed between Parkinson and Songs of Praise, guests are interviewed about their life and faith on a settee at the front of the stage, while powerful images and modern music are used to get the Bible message across.

The Lounge team often creates its own ‘video parables’ based on Bible stories and uses icebreaker games to generate a relaxed atmosphere.

Dr Sentamu spoke at the service about growing up in Uganda, coming to faith as a ten-year-old and his experiences working as a lawyer and magistrate during the bloody regime of dictator Idi Amin. ‘Dr John’ also embraced the lounge’s spontaneous vibe by inviting a ten-year-old boy from
new ministry

Bishop

Jack Nicholls and his wife Judith are looking forward to new challenges and opportunities later in 2008 when they leave Bishops croft as Bishop Jack steps down as Bishop of Sheffield.

‘Retirement was always kind of there in the future but it does feel strange when you suddenly realise that it’s actually here!’ he told expressions. Bishop Jack, whose whole ministry has been about renewing and mission, is already looking forward to leading retreats, conducting missions and offering spiritual direction into the future.

As the diocesan bishop representative on the Board of Fresh Expressions, Bishop Jack has been a vigorous supporter of the archbishops’ initiative from the start.

I have always been careful to stress that Fresh Expressions is about the whole church and that it represents all kinds of congregations and people of every background. But what I have seen and heard thus far is extremely encouraging and I know that Archbishop Rowan is delighted with the progress which has been made.

Bishop Jack will certainly take some of the knowledge from Fresh Expressions with him into his retirement ministry. ‘Mixed economy’ is a term he likes: ‘It sums it up really doesn’t it? A church which has emerged and is emerging under God’s grace for the renewal of ministry for mission.’

A web of partnerships and training relationships is developing between the Diocese of Lichfield and the Methodist Districts of Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury and Chester and Wake.

The three partners have worked together to present four vision days attended by over 300 people and to run the mission shaped ministry (MSM) course in Stafford.

The triumvirate is seeing a deepening symbiotic relationship between vision days and MSM. People come to vision days, are inspired by the vision and values, and see MSM as a natural next step to deepen their thinking and accompany their prayerful planning. Those doing MSM are keen to encourage others to catch the Fresh Expressions vision and so invite them to a vision day.

Gordon Crowther, pioneer priest and leader of Church Without Walls in Stoke-on-Trent, is thrilled with what he sees:

‘It excites me to see how individuals and teams are being well equipped through vision days and MSM to develop new expressions of church for parts of the culture where we aren’t connecting well.’

A fifth vision day is planned for Shrewsbury in June and in September 2008 the provision of MSM will be doubled with courses in Telford and Stoke-on-Trent.

All this is supported by a dynamic and ever-evolving local ecumenical team and backed by strong support from senior church leaders. John Howard, Chair of the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District has attended the vision days and says of MSM:

‘The course is precisely what we need to enable the enthusiasm seen in the church for mission, to be translated into action’.

Andrew Roberts

joined up training

on the settee

the congregation onto the sofa with him to share his experiences of walking with God at school. The Archbishop then gave an impromptu drumming lesson before joining in with the Lounge’s worship band.

St Paul’s community evangelist Matt Woodcock started the service three years ago after being inspired by the church youth worker Helena Kittle. ‘It was fantastic to have Dr Sen-tamu with us at The Lounge – he is an absolute live wire and so inspiring,’ said Matt, 31. ‘It’s great that he was prepared to come to something which is so different to what he is used to. I think he recognised that we are essentially trying to spread the gospel in a fresh way that non-church people can relate to. Ultimately we are all about people coming to know Christ.’

The Vicar of St Paul’s, the Revd John Lee, commented that ‘the Lounge is a service where you can invite people of all ages and they will feel comfortable, particularly teenagers. In the interviews and videos people share real experiences of God.’

Youth leaders at a neighbouring church in the York area and another in Greater Manchester and Barnsley have already adopted the style of The Lounge to great effect after visiting St Paul’s with their leaders and youth groups.

The service is held at St Paul’s on the first Sunday of the month at 6.30pm. For more information log on to the church website at www.stpaulsyrk.org.uk

Anu Aiira

 grew up

A few days ago my two-year-old son came home from nursery and proudly told me that ‘C is for Curly Carol’, it all became clear – Carol is his key worker at nursery and had taught him these letters. My son was learning without me; there will be a time when he can teach me and a time when our relationship will be one of reciprocal learning.

The challenge now for Sanctus1 – a six-year-old fresh expression in Manchester City Centre – is to develop relationships of reciprocal learning both internally and externally.

We need relationships that move beyond the excitement of childhood, through the liminal period of adolescence and into an adult relationship of mutual respect and learning.

Over the last few years Sanctus1 has sought to do this externally by being more fully involved in the life of the local diocese and district. This has meant financially contributing to the diocese, proactively working towards greater structural recognition and being positive local advocates of Fresh Expressions.

Internally Sanctus1 has established teams and adopted a set of values. The teams encourage indigenous members of Sanctus1 to take positions of responsibility in the community. We now have an elected planning team and an AGM where decisions are taken regarding the future direction of Sanctus1, the values affirmed and the relationship with the Churches is nurtured.

Some have found the development of structures antithetic to Sanctus1, preferring to remain in the exciting stage of childhood. The first word and the first step are momentous occasions, yet the challenge is to keep growing, walking, learning and developing, as childhood – whilst exciting and fun – is not a period of reciprocal learning. It is a time of dependence and of gentle nurture and, whilst this is vital in all forms of life, to remain in it would not only be frustrating for the parent but also damaging to the child.

www.sanctus1.co.uk/sanctus1home.htm

... on the settee continued from front page
The Bishop of Lincoln, John Saxbee, says: ‘The Fresh Expressions movement has had a significant impact on church life and mission in Lincolnshire. A thoroughly ecumenical working group has worked hard to promote a wide range of initiatives supported by generous grants from denominational mission initiatives funds. The mission shaped ministry course has been running for four years with large numbers attending and sharing their learning and enthusiasm with their local communities. More than 600 people participated in a vision day in Lincoln Cathedral last year. It is fair to say that Fresh Expressions has generated more mission-focused energy than anything else attempted over the years – and it has also served to reinvigorate ecumenical cooperation where it matters most.’

During the late 1990s, in response to the large new housing developments to the north of Calne in North Wiltshire, the Parish of Calne and Blackland considered how best to serve both this new community and the existing one, of largely social housing. In 2000, the PCC bought one of the new houses and appointed an associate priest to build up a church presence in the area.

Philip Bromiley (now an Associate Missioner for Fresh Expressions) was appointed in May 2001. He gathered a team that met for six months to pray and seek guidance. The opening of a new community primary school provided a possible venue. After considering the busy lives of people in the area, it was decided to hold a term-time informal service on Wednesday evenings. There was a clear sense that a baton had been handed to the team. It was acting on years of prayer for the area. Its mission was to push out the boundaries of God’s kingdom, as it sought to listen to a new and diverse community.

Very soon, attendances were regularly between 30 and 40 each week, with a service loosely structured around musical worship, an address and prayer. Through experience, team members have gradually found their own specific gifting. For the team and many of the congregation, Open Door meetings remain an exciting opportunity to see and participate in God’s sovereign work. Spiritual awakenings, conversions, healings and maturing disciples are the more obvious signs of this work.

Local ministers, evangelists, and experts on specific topics are regularly invited to speak. There has been a wide range of colourful visitors: choirs, reformed ex-prisoners, rock musicians to name but a few. Specific outreach events have been held for invited guests, e.g. an evangelistic supper and a St Valentine’s quiz night. Many Open Door members have been sent out to ministries elsewhere. Philip Bromiley took up a new post in 2005. Since then the team has successfully continued the ministry. In September 2007 the diocese recognised the unique identity of the Open Door and decided to give it a bishop’s mission order.

This is in line with the present thinking on a ‘principled and careful loosening of structures’. A vacant post at Lyneham and Bradenstoke will incorporate specific oversight for the Open Door, and mission within the whole Deanery of Calne. This post will be advertised in 2008, a great opportunity for someone called to apostolic and innovative ministry, combining the old with the new. Open Door will extend its boundaries, to become a deanship rather than parish-based fresh expression.

The Open Door team has discovered that mission is indeed finding out what God is doing and joining in; the congregation and team are now embarking on a period of prayer and reflection to seek God’s will for the next stage.

Rachel Dickinson, The Open Door Team Leader

South Witham remains part of a liberal catholic tradition of the parish, and its services follow a fairly traditional Anglican structure, with Communion on alternate meetings. Simon is planning to hold special services on occasions in the church year that might be missed by the fortnightly pattern. South Witham has introduced an informality into its worship, PowerPoint, drama and some kind of direct involvement by the congregation, such as offering a pebble to represent a prayer, present new ways to share in worship. Simon and the church work hard to get to know people. ‘Talking to baptism families, listening to local people, just being with people in South Witham, talking at the school gates, for example,’ says Simon. ‘We’ve asked how to make worship accessible to them. The school is nearby, it’s not a daunting venue, and the service style is relaxed. It’s about welcome, which is vital to growth. The next stage is to encourage new people to come regularly and perhaps try weekday and evening events.’

His plan is to hold a midweek reflective service in his vicarage study, which could alternate with a Bible study group.

‘These kinds of services and activities could help people to develop their faith in a way that’s not possible in a school hall,’ he says.

Keeping faith with the tradition of the parish while listening for ways to welcome newcomers to church life means that South Witham is set to grow with its local community.

Emma Garrow
becoming normal

Every week it becomes clearer that fresh expressions of church are taking root now in many parts of the Church of England and the Methodist Church. The stories in this edition of expressions are just a snapshot of a rising tide of adventures in mission leading to new communities.

The pioneers involved in fresh expressions of Church are doing what Christians have always done: going to new places and making disciples. The gospel is changing lives and beginning to change communities.

The fresh expressions of church that emerge are part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. They are to be valued and treasured alongside chapels, cathedrals and traditional congregations as a vital and lively part of God’s household (literally God’s ‘economy’).

These new arrivals will take time to mature. As the Archbishop of York argues, they will need to grow up into a full sacramental life and they will need to work hard to ensure they keep a focus on mission. But fresh expressions of church are here to stay as a new part of the family.

The next stage of the journey is to help fresh expressions of church move from being unusual or exceptional in a circuit or deanery to being a normal, understood and accepted part of church life. Although some fresh expressions of church need special people or resources, many don’t. Anyone can do this on a small scale and it’s surprisingly fruitful.

If you are still waiting for something to emerge where you are then make sure that it’s on the agenda of your church council. Think and pray about where to begin. For essential ideas on how to get started go to Share (www.sharetheguide.org). Every bit of wisdom there has been gathered by pioneers who got there before the rest of us.

If you’re already working on a fresh expression in your own church – spread the word to the rest of the deanery and circuit. Give away your copy of expressions!

This movement can only grow from the bottom up. Each of us can play a part. Make sure you tell the rest of us – through Share – what you are learning.

Steven Croft
mission shaped intro course

Six weeks to rediscover mission and to reimagine church.

The aim of this course is to explore the ‘why’ of creating fresh expressions of church rather than the ‘how’. The six-week course takes us on a journey looking at the ever-changing nature of our social communities and why the church needs to rethink its approach to those communities in meaningful and relevant ways.

The course is designed to present those changes in an informative and interactive way, and is suitable for both clergy and lay alike. The ninety-minute to two-hours sessions are delivered through verbal presentation, PowerPoint, movie clips and stories with group participation.

The six sessions cover such areas as:

SESSION ONE
Rediscovering mission and what that means for church
Aim: to explore the mission of God as the foundation for any expression of church.

SESSION TWO
Changing world, changing church
Aim: to explore how the rise of consumerism and networking have affected our culture and how the Church might respond.

SESSION THREE
Reimagining Church – community
Aim: to explore the need for fresh expressions of church to be community-focused.

SESSION FOUR
Reimagining church – worship
Aim: to explore how fresh expressions of church are reimagining worship.

SESSION FIVE
Reimagining church – leadership & discipleship
Aim: to explore the type of leadership needed in fresh expressions of church and how to facilitate discipleship.

SESSION SIX
Where do we go from here?
Aim: to provide space for people to consider their response to this course and what they might do next.

A number of positive feedbacks have been received from the pilots conducted around the country.

"Thanks. Really looking forward to downloading all the materials, God bless you."

The course has now concluded its pilot stages and is available as a free download from the Fresh Expressions website. It is designed to provide a next step from vision days for those who wish to discover more and can lead creatively on to the mission shaped ministry course. It is in demand not just in this country but in a number of places overseas. The Fresh Expressions team is indebted to all those who have spent a great deal of time and energy in the production of this course, particularly our partners from CPAS, whose team members Tony Hardy and Sally Thornton wrote the original course.

For further information contact:
"Worthwhile coming and a challenge – opened my eyes to many aspects that are possible."

expressions met up with Christian Selvaratnam

How did you come to be training as an ordained pioneer minister?

It’s a long story. Since becoming a Christian at university in 1988, I always wanted to be involved in church for people that don’t go to church. Over the next few years, I nearly went forward for selection twice, but I just couldn’t see myself being like any of the clergy I knew!

Two years ago I felt God speak to me again about being ordained and conversations with wise advisers convinced me that there was a place for me in the Church of England as someone passionate about mission and change.

What is the most exciting thing about the pioneer ministry you are engaged in at the moment?

I’m very excited by Fresh Expressions, I’m also one of the leaders of G2, a café-church fresh expression in York, which keeps me busy. We’re currently thinking about what Eucharist and Christian initiation look like in this new context.

What are your hopes for your future ordained pioneer ministry?

It’s hard to look too far ahead. I know that I want to start my ordained ministry self-supporting, which will bring some constraints but, I think, will set a good principle of not being restricted by budgets and money. I’m going to take more responsibility for G2, particularly looking at what maturity looks like for a fresh expression of church.

I’m also one of the leaders of G2, a café-church fresh expression in York, which keeps me busy. We’re currently thinking about what Eucharist and Christian initiation look like in this new context.

What are you reading at the moment?

I’m reading The Year of Living Biblically (AJ Jacobs) the amusing journal of someone following every commandment in the Bible for a year. I’m also re-reading Scripture and the Authority of God (Tom Wright) and thinking about evangelism. I’ve got the revised Pagan Church (George Barna) on order – it looks like it will be a controversial read. My next read will be Religious Affections (Jonathan Edwards) thinking about the Holy Spirit and mission.
For many years Christians all over the United Kingdom have been taking new initiatives of different kinds. They are responses to the love of God (on the one hand) and a growing distance between much of our society and much of the Church (on the other). Our culture is changing and becoming more diverse. It’s no longer enough to sit in church and invite people to come and join us. We need to go to where people are, to listen and serve and shape community in new ways. As Christians have done this, these new initiatives have often led to new communities of Christians meeting on different days of the week, in different places, learning to be church together.

In 2004 the Church of England published the report the Archbishop of Canterbury has called a mixed economy church: traditional parishes alongside fresh expressions of church. We are not attempting to create new congregations at the expense of traditional congregations but alongside them. The Methodist Church in 2004 adopted similar priorities to develop fresh ways of being church alongside and as part of Methodist circuits.

Many of these new initiatives are modest in terms of resources but high in terms of the passion and energy of a small team of Christians wanting to make a difference and do something new for those who cannot connect with the existing churches. A small number involve high investment in either buildings or staff. Across the country as a whole the movement is already very fruitful. In consultation with lots of people working in the field we published the definition in the box in May, 2006. So far it’s been well received but no doubt we will refine it further in the years to come.

A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.

- It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples.
- It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.
- The key elements are a rooting in mission as the main motivation; incarnational mission in terms of the way things are established and a sense of journey, growth and development.
- It is a fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.

WHAT’S MEANT BY INCARNATIONAL MISSION?

Essentially we mean mission after the pattern and in the style of Jesus. People beginning fresh expressions of church are generally speaking not going with their hands full of what they have to offer. Nor do they have in mind a particular set pattern of what a fresh expression will look like. This is much more like a journey. That journey begins and continues with listening to the context and the wider community. It continues with loving service – exactly the pattern Jesus commends and demonstrates. As people listen and serve, so new communities are formed. In those new communities, people come to faith. Only at a late stage in the process does worship begin.

HOW MUCH OF THIS IS GOING ON?

We’ve been mapping it for three years and we are still discovering new things. There are over 600 examples now on our database. Anyone can search it by diocese, district, county or category. Those 600 examples alone involve over 30,000 people. I doubt that we have caught up with a third of the total so far. It’s a small but visible proportion of the Church of England and the Methodist Church and it seems to be growing.

The Church of England published some new research a year ago that suggests around a third of parishes are already involved in some way – and that more are planning their first fresh expression of church.

BIBLICAL ROOTS

Is this kind of thing really fresh? Haven’t we been doing some of these things for a long time?

Since New Testament times, Christians have been called to see the gospel fresh expression of church has moved from being highly desirable to vitally important if we are to connect with more of our culture.

PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

There are lots. I wouldn’t want to pretend for a moment that everything is neatly sorted. There is a general sense that we are learning as we go. Three loom large at the moment.

The first is that we are attempting these new developments in mission at a time of considerable anxiety. An emphasis on one thing (fresh expressions) can easily be “heard” as diminishing something else (traditional parish ministry). There is absolutely no doubt that we need both in order to serve the whole of our changing society and that both need each other.

Second, we do not yet
Gracespace

church, café, church, churches meeting in leisure centres, are all offering new ways to meet in community across the country. Gracespace in Bradford, however, is a church that meets in all three kinds of venues.

Its monthly pattern of gatherings includes reading and discussing the newspapers in a pub, meeting for a meal with Holy Communion in a café owned by the church, and playing sports in a local gym.

Gracespace is a community of around 30 adults and children, whose strapline is, ‘Church for people who don’t go to church’. Its members devised the pattern of gatherings by reflecting on how their personal interests could be used to bring life to others.

GRACE GYM

The Sunday at the sports centre ‘has been the easiest to invite people to,’ says pioneer minister of Gracespace, Andy Bowserman. As well as using the sports centre for the church, Andy has taken pains to get to know members of a local gym.

With a fellow gym and Gracespace member, Helen Black, Andy distributed a questionnaire on ‘mental, physical and spiritual health’ to the gym’s 2,000 members. Around 200 people responded, describing their use of the gym, lifestyle, interests and faith life.

A final question asked whether respondents would be interested in meeting with someone to pray one to one, joining in a group to explore faith, receiving life coaching or seeing someone for spiritual direction.

Around 30 per cent of respondents confessed an interest in at least one of these options.

“We joked with the centre manager that we were offering prayer as an alternative therapy,” Andy says.

Andy gathered a small team of gym members who were already churchgoers to pray about how to follow up the results of the survey. A subsequent parenting course and a life coaching class both attracted ‘a handful’ of people.

Gracespace has now employed Helen to work 15 hours a week as a Lifestyle Coordinator at the gym, with the help of a diocesan grant and the goodwill of the gym. Helen has rooms to use and her photograph on display with other staff. This notice board states specifically that she is there to offer one to one prayer, spiritual direction and life coaching.

A fitness expert with experience of pastoral listening in church contexts, Helen offers her services for free, except the life coaching, in which she has been trained and which helps to fund the whole service. She continues to run lifestyle classes for Gracespace at the gym, including parenting, life-shapes and marriage skills.

GRACE FEAST

When Gracespace wanted to connect with the gym, it had to negotiate with the management. When it came to sharing meals in a café, however, it had its own venue to use.

‘My wife and I love to enter- tain, we believe in hospitality as a way to build community and introduce people to faith,’ Andy says. ‘I’m often preach- ing about this and so some- one challenged me to follow it up.

‘I’d always had a vision of a bistro that could be used for outreach.’

At the same time Andy and the church were thinking about the concept of a ‘third place’. A café space became available at a nearby Victorian model village, Saltaire (a World Heritage site). Andy, his parents, and another local vicar bought the café, did it up and opened Vicars – food for thought (named by the local primary school) in June 2007, with a commitment to using Fairtrade products.

Community groups, such as a young mums meeting and a knitting club, use the café as a meeting place, while local churches use it as a venue for their own courses, such as Marriage Preparation.

On Friday and Saturday evenings Andy cooks for up to 26 paying customers. A single sitting around long refectory-style tables makes it both a dining out and a community-building experience.

Andy says one of his inspirations was Taste and See café church in Kidsgrove (featured in the first Fresh Expressions DVD) with its idea that ‘you can grow a community of faith’. Andy introduces the menu to customers and is ready for their question, ‘Why is a vicar cooking our dinner?’

Occasional special events focus more acutely on spiritual topics, such as the spiritual themes in a popular novel, or a charity evening with proceeds donated.

‘A café-bistro is a good space for people,’ believes Andy. ‘It’s comfortable, relaxed and it’s a place where it’s easier for people to talk.’

Emma Garraway

have a depth of wisdom and maturity in how to do this well. Everyone is learning as we go forward. The lessons being learned in one part of the country need to be captured and made available to everyone as quickly as possible. Together with Church Army, in October 2007 we launched a new website: Share, which is helping to encourage the sharing of this good practice and the development of wisdom.

Finally, reflection on fresh expressions of church demands a great deal of thinking in two key areas of theology; missiology and ecclesiology. There are some good resources now to help us think about mission – not least the Anglican Communion’s five marks of mission, which present a well-balanced, holistic view.

But I think we are much further back in terms of thinking creatively about the nature of the Church. Ecclesiology is a hugely significant endeavour raised by fresh expressions. How (for example) is a youth group or a midweek service for toddlers and parents really church? How can it develop a common life? In what sense is a church school an ecclesial community?

How do we define the essence of church? How do we describe and understand the richness of the church? How do we decide what is and what may not be church? How do we chart a specific Anglican or Methodist identity within these frameworks?

How do we rightly order ministry and the administration of word and sacraments within fresh expressions of church? And how do we ensure unity, holiness, catholicity and faithfulness to the apostles’ teaching and mission?

Last year we ran a series of lectures across the country by leading theologians to address these Hard Questions. The outcome of that is a new book of essays – Mission-shaped Questions – published in February, 2008 (see the back page).

SO HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

The best way is through our website: www.freshexpressions.org.uk. There is a link to Share there and details of training courses and publications. Let us know what you get up to!

Steven Croft
Archbishops’ Missioner and Team Leader of Fresh Expressions

Jesus Christ, Son of God, be mercy on me a sinner.
SHOWING GOSPEL THEMES

1. Fresh expressions of church embody powerfully several important theological motifs – birth, life, death, resurection, hope, fragility, engagement. While such motifs are not all the gospel, they are all gospel motifs and emphasise valuable and core themes without which Christian witness and life are poorer and imbalanced.

While aware of the danger of stereotyping, it is the case that such gospel themes as these seem to arise naturally out of fresh expressions in a way that is not always evident in the life of inherited church.

Fresh expressions incar-nate naturally different aspects of Christian faith and values – and we need that.

MODELLING THE MISSION OF GOD

2. In particular, fresh expressions are often able to model the theology of the Missio Dei. That is, the understanding of God as primarily and essentially a missionary God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It arises from Scripture and (mission) theology alike, and is modelled clearly in many fresh expressions. The missionary nature of God is now widely accepted among many, if not all, churches. In fresh expressions, however, we see, more powerfully and regularly then in many inherited churches, a move beyond a nodded theological assent or lip service to the doctrine.

Fresh expressions, perhaps with the advantage of beginning afresh, often become church communities whose life and lips agree about the defining nature of this doctrine.

In terms of shaping their life. This is not to say that recent fresh expressions have a monopoly in being ‘mission-shaped churches’; they do not. It is to say that contemporary fresh expressions, in a variety of forms and expressions, seem in- stinctively to seek to model church that incarnates and expresses the Missio Dei. This is a profoundly important ecclesiological example for the whole Church.

FOCUSING ON THE KINGDOM

3. Further to this, fresh expressions are often able to model the generally agreed goal of Missio Dei thinking, namely the coming of the kingdom – or reign – of God. This focus upon sharing in God's mission, the chief end of which is the coming of the kingdom, shapes what might be termed the ‘natural ecclesiology’ of very many contemporary fresh expressions.

As stated above, fresh expressions seem naturally to embody doctrine rather than simply speak assent to it. In this case fresh expressions incarnate the conviction that missiology shapes ecclesiology, and not vice versa.

The effect of this, in a variety of subtle ways, is a sense that the Church is for God and the world and only then, in any sense, for itself. This contrasts sharply with the impression given (deliber- ately or not) by many inherited churches, especially those in decline, or wrestling with the costs of keeping huge build- ings running, or appealing for large sums to sustain historic ministries, that the main aim of church is keeping the show on the road, maintaining a status quo, focusing inwards rather than outwards.

Again, this is not to sug- gest that all inherited church- es are configured around maintaining their life, and all fresh expressions are com- pletely altruistic. It is to sug- gest that fresh expressions, through their very existence, embody a ‘kingdom’ rather than ‘Church’ mindset.

NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

4. It is a source of enor- mous embarrassment to all children of a certain age that they came into being from an act of sexual intercourse by their natural parents! There is a sense in which rejecting fresh expressions is like denying how we got to be here at all.

Churches in every age, place and time, whether 10, 100, 1,000 years ago, were in the cosmos and everything God has created.

If so, that includes the Church: Church, in all its forms goes through death and resur- rection just as its Lord did. Fresh expressions of church are currently the key means of incarnating ecclesial resurrec- tion, and, by implication, death, constantly changing church.

Contrary to those who declare of their churches that ‘nothing changes here’, forms and expressions of church change over time. The New Testament bears testimony to Temple-church, synagogue church, and a variety of ‘home churches’ in different social and geographical settings, catering for quite different groups of Christian believers.

As a part of the arrival of ‘Christendom’ came dedicat- ed sacred spaces modelled on basilicas and ‘cathedrals’ – seats of power.

Communities of monks produced their own ‘fresh expressions’ partly in rejection of the opulence and perceived decadence of Christian Rome, and hundreds of years before those magnificent medieval monasteries and abbeys, now in ruins, were built.

The Reformers developed their own forms of church out of a revised ecclesiology, and whether Catholic or Protes- tant, ‘Christian Europe’ fol- lowed the essentially territorial pattern of diocese and parish, with its dedicated buildings of a certain form.

Seventeenth- and eighteenth- century England developed as- sociations, classes and societies as fresh expressions of church, supremely of course through the Methodist movement.
Why Fresh Expressions?

and Principal of Cliff College

by Martyn Atkins, on Christ the light of the world

St John’s Harbourne, on

or

St Mary the Virgin,

St Wilfrid’s Church,

ism in our contemporary plural Christian witness and evange

potentially invaluable method of

WITNESS AND EVANGELISM

8. Particularly important aspect of this ‘difference’ is the ability of certain fresh expressions to offer what I call ‘flat servanthood’.

Of course the notion of a serving church is far from new. What is new are subtle but important differences in the mode and mood of that service. Inherited church, particularly that shaped by an emphasis on ‘presence’ as a part of a dialogic theology with the world in the 1960s and 1970s, has tended to ‘invite’ people to its property, space or event.

But as John Robinson once commented ‘The Church is the servant, and the first characteristic of a servant is that he lives in someone else’s house, not his own.’

Fresh expressions, especially the many that take root somewhere other than in ‘their’ buildings, naturally playing landlord while all others are tenants, have the advantage of naturally exercising the crucial ministry of ‘flat servanthood’.

This is the ability to be ‘in partnership with’, or ‘alongside’ rather than ‘over and above’. It is about being able to share not dominate, and so communicate a different expression of Christianity from the power and ownership of an older kind of service offered in the name of Christ.

BEING REPRODUCTIVE

9. Fresh expressions produce fresh expressions. They remind us that church is, God intentionally, reproductive.

The imagery of reproduction is interesting. Increasingly today organic rather than arithmetic thinking is used to describe church growth and vitality. Older church growth literature often tended to the language of maths: addition, multiplication, division, and so on.

More recently the organic language of ‘natural’, ‘healthy’ church prevail. Like other organisms, fresh expressions are young, and it is usually the young who have babies – they reproduce while fertile rather than barren.

That is why, systemically, traditional denominations have more problems with fresh expressions than others – because, in subtle ways, old folk find it more difficult to reproduce.

ENGAGING WITH CULTURE

10. Finally, then, fresh expressions express different models of ecclesial to inherited church, and some of these models are especially significant in relation to our constantly changing cultural context.

Like it or not, growing amounts of empirical evidence suggest that the inherited church model – itself not as monolithic as is sometimes suggested, but by no means as varied as is required today – is enabling the worship and discipleship of fewer and fewer people, and fewer types of people.

Fresh expressions, as part of the ‘mixed economy’, offer valuable means of enabling new and different people to become Christian disciples.

Martyn Atkins’ book, Resourcing Renewal, was published in 2007. See page 10 for further details.

Where is all this going?

It demonstrates that fresh expressions of Church are not new, but are natural to Christian faith and history. Indeed it might be noted that it is nearly always the case that every major renewal of the Christian Church involves discovery or re-discovery of models of Church through fresh expressions.

WITNESS AND EVANGELISM

7. Fresh expressions are a potentially invaluable method of Christian witness and evangelism in our contemporary pluralist, multi-faith cultural context.

Inherited church has the advantage, in this, the twilight of Christendom, of still being recognised as ‘Church’: church, which Robert Warren caricatures by the formula ‘building + priest + stipend’!

But this advantage is also a disadvantage. Being recognised as ‘church’ in the twilight of Christendom means that such a church represents and embodies Christian history and a Christendom outlook. Warts and all, as, for many people today, of all faiths and none, it is the abuse of power and the horror stories of history that come most quickly to mind.

As a result, inherited church is quickly regarded as tarnished in terms of its ability to incarnate authentic, humble, often very local, Christianity.

Fresh expressions are, of course, not technically absorbed from their place in the great tradition of the Church, but the fact that they often do not fulfill the ‘building + priest + stipend’ stereotype of inherited church enables them to operate differently. They can offer a different model of being Christian and being church.

In these days where religious sensitivities run high, fresh expressions that are able to look different and feel different from that which is normally accepted and encountered as ‘church’ are able to communicate Christianity differently to non-Christians and other faith groups alike.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

8. A particularly important aspect of this ‘difference’ is the ability of certain fresh expressions to offer what I call ‘flat servanthood’.

Where is all this going?

It demonstrates that fresh expressions of Church are not new, but are natural to Christian faith and history. Indeed it might be noted that it is nearly always the case that every major renewal of the Christian Church involves discovery or re-discovery of models of Church through fresh expressions.

WITNESS AND EVANGELISM

7. Fresh expressions are a potentially invaluable method of Christian witness and evangelism in our contemporary pluralist, multi-faith cultural context.

Inherited church has the advantage, in this, the twilight of Christendom, of still being recognised as ‘Church’: church, which Robert Warren caricatures by the formula ‘building + priest + stipend’!

But this advantage is also a disadvantage. Being recognised as ‘church’ in the twilight of Christendom means that such a church represents and embodies Christian history and a Christendom outlook. Warts and all, as, for many people today, of all faiths and none, it is the abuse of power and the horror stories of history that come most quickly to mind.

As a result, inherited church is quickly regarded as tarnished in terms of its ability to incarnate authentic, humble, often very local, Christianity.

Fresh expressions are, of course, not technically absorbed from their place in the great tradition of the Church, but the fact that they often do not fulfill the ‘building + priest + stipend’ stereotype of inherited church enables them to operate differently. They can offer a different model of being Christian and being church.

In these days where religious sensitivities run high, fresh expressions that are able to look different and feel different from that which is normally accepted and encountered as ‘church’ are able to communicate Christianity differently to non-Christians and other faith groups alike.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

8. A particularly important aspect of this ‘difference’ is the ability of certain fresh expressions to offer what I call ‘flat servanthood’.

Of course the notion of a serving church is far from new. What is new are subtle but important differences in the mode and mood of that service. Inherited church, particularly that shaped by an emphasis on ‘presence’ as a part of a dialogic theology with the world in the 1960s and 1970s, has tended to ‘invite’ people to its property, space or event.

But as John Robinson once commented ‘The Church is the servant, and the first characteristic of a servant is that he lives in someone else’s house, not his own.’

Fresh expressions, especially the many that take root somewhere other than in ‘their’ buildings, naturally playing landlord while all others are tenants, have the advantage of naturally exercising the crucial ministry of ‘flat servanthood’.

This is the ability to be ‘in partnership with’, or ‘alongside’ rather than ‘over and above’. It is about being able to share not dominate, and so communicate a different expression of Christianity from the power and ownership of an older kind of service offered in the name of Christ.

BEING REPRODUCTIVE

9. Fresh expressions produce fresh expressions. They remind us that church is, God intentionally, reproductive.

The imagery of reproduction is interesting. Increasingly today organic rather than arithmetic thinking is used to describe church growth and vitality. Older church growth literature often tended to the language of maths: addition, multiplication, division, and so on.

More recently the organic language of ‘natural’, ‘healthy’ church prevail. Like other organisms, fresh expressions are young, and it is usually the young who have babies – they reproduce while fertile rather than barren.

That is why, systemically, traditional denominations have more problems with fresh expressions than others – because, in subtle ways, old folk find it more difficult to reproduce.

ENGAGING WITH CULTURE

10. Finally, then, fresh expressions express different models of ecclesial to inherited church, and some of these models are especially significant in relation to our constantly changing cultural context.

Like it or not, growing amounts of empirical evidence suggest that the inherited church model – itself not as monolithic as is sometimes suggested, but by no means as varied as is required today – is enabling the worship and discipleship of fewer and fewer people, and fewer types of people.

Fresh expressions, as part of the ‘mixed economy’, offer valuable means of enabling new and different people to become Christian disciples.

Martyn Atkins’ book, Resourcing Renewal, was published in 2007. See page 10 for further details.
books

Lots of good material has been published in the last few months. We are now seeing some really high quality reflection on the changing shape of Britain and developing fresh expressions of church. Here is our pick of the crop in no particular order:

Changing church for a changing world: fresh ways of being church in a Methodist context by Pete Pillinger & Andrew Roberts Methodist Church, 2007, £4.95 ISBN 978 1 85852 335 4

An excellent and concise summary of what is happening in the Methodist Church in Britain produced for the 2007 conference. There are stories, reflections, comment and a spoonful of history.


The first textbook for the mixed economy church and the fruit of many years of research and teaching in church life. Chapters on conflict, on difficult people, on growing healthy communities, teams and empowering leadership. Essential reading for anyone leading a fresh expression (or any other kind of church).


A stimulating collection of short essays, which looks at the continuing impact of Christianity over a wide range of areas of national life.

PunkMonk: New Monasticism and the Ancient Art of Breathing by Andy Freeman and Pete Greig Regal, 2007 ISBN 978 0 8307 4368 1

From two of the key figures in the 24-7 prayer movement, Punk Monk explores a vision for living out the values of the monastic movement in the 21st century, lively, challenging and potentially life changing.


A midweek ‘service’ takes place on Wednesday lunchtimes. ‘Café Worship’ is half an hour of reflection on a passage of Scripture, accompanied by opportunities for discussion and prayer, and some music or poetry or visual imagery to make the worship as accessible as possible.

Paul & Barny’s Place is a coffee shop-based meeting place within the local community. It is an expression of the life of St Paul & St Barnabas Church - an anglican church plant that meets for Sunday worship in a local scout hut. Paul & Barny’s Place offers a place for fellowship between Christians and other members of the community. It is a place where relationships form over cups of coffee and conversations, or through small groups activities ranging from craft groups to Alpha courses. Opportunities for faith sharing, caring, prayer and worship for both disciples and seekers arise out of these relationships.

Leaflets

Resourcing church for a changing culture

Thought-provoking perspectives from leading thinkers...

Available from all good Christian bookshops or www.chpublishing.co.uk
The answer is the God-sent vision of a former primary school teacher, Caroline Holt, and the ten remaining members of Howden Clough Methodist Church, Batley, West Yorkshire.

Two and a half years ago their beloved church building was about to be sold off to pay for the refurbishment of another church. Of course they were unhappy about this, but they asked themselves what the purpose of their church was and whether it was serving the local community.

Why didn’t people in Howden Clough come to church?

The answer from the community was ‘What has the church ever done for us, except for ask us for money?’

So Caroline set about providing something that the local community needed – a soft play area in the body of the church. The result is Wesley’s Playhouse, which opened on 20 October last year. This is not just a conversion of a building; this is a living, worshipping church that is bringing the gospel to 21st century families.

When we visited the Playhouse we were struck by the high quality of the work done, with beautiful paintwork and gorgeous mugs of latte and cappuccino. Every detail in that place said, ‘We value you and we want you to come and spend time with us.’

Caroline is clear and passionate about her aims: ‘We want to show Jesus’ love to people. When they ask us why we’re doing it we will say because Jesus loves you. We want to build a new congregation, which might worship midweek while the children are playing, or might follow an Alpha course. Whatever we do, Jesus will be at the centre of it.’

The project, which has so far cost £110,000, could surely only be undertaken by a church that was already vibrant and rich.

Caroline laughs at this: ‘There are eleven of us in this church, most of whom are over 60. We could never have achieved this through our own efforts; God has provided for us in the most amazing ways.

‘The first confirmation of God’s blessing was when Biffa gave us £50,000 because they were working in the community. Through this grant, others began to see that this dream could happen and over the next few months over £90,000 was pledged to the project, from individuals and the wider community.

The first confirmation of God’s blessing was when Biffa gave us £50,000 because they were working in the community. Through this grant, others began to see that this dream could happen and over the next few months over £90,000 was pledged to the project, from individuals and the wider community. The result is Wesley’s Playhouse, which opened on 20 October last year. This is not just a conversion of a building; this is a living, worshipping church that is bringing the gospel to 21st century families. The young women were busy booking a christening service with Caroline. The party and the service can happen in one place. They couldn’t wait to bring their friends back in. We left Caroline as she prepared to train up some of the older members of her congregation in using the cappuccino machine. But we will be back!’

Ruth Jones attends a joint Methodist/URC church in Ilkley, West Yorkshire. She is married with two children.

Have you been to www.freshexpressions.org.uk recently? With at least one new story each week of how people are getting on with their fresh expressions of church, there is always something new to discover. New in the course of 2008 will be a programme of podcasts and a section dedicated to pioneer ministry. And if you haven’t registered your fresh expression in our directory, this is the time to do it.
Over 3000 Christians have shared in the Fresh Expressions vision day experience. Vision days are ideal, with opportunities for learning about and engaging with fresh expressions. For 2008, vision days have been given a complete makeover to incorporate the latest learning.

In addition, lots of creative enhancements have been woven into the core presentations. These include film clips, worship and prayer materials and various activities. Character cards help people consider how church needs to be so that the different characters can come to, and grow in, faith. The new materials have been very warmly received. The first core session celebrates what God is doing through fresh expressions and provides theological reflection on why this is so important. The second focuses on the core values of fresh expressions and how fresh expressions form.

Optional seminars explore a range of issues including, children, older people, rural needs, city dwellers, discipleship and finance. Towards the end of the day, a guided reflection helps participants to consider what God may be calling them to do.

"Vision is incredibly important. Through shared stories, encouragement and input Fresh Expressions vision days are facilitating renewal and generating hope."
Methodist President Mary-Alice at the Central East Fresh Expressions Vision Day

"I've been waiting for a day like this for ages. The subjects that were discussed have been what I've wanted to do but I didn't know how to go forward. It has given me lots to think and pray about. I'm very excited."
Ellen Barkley, Methodist, at the St Helens Fresh expression vision day

"Fresh Expressions vision days are an important place where Christians meet and have the opportunity to explore the future. We've not done it before, because we're scared of going out of business, this is a calling to us—to be very joyful and wake up to the wonderful resources we have."
The Very Revd Dr. Stephen Cottrell, Dean of Bermondsey and Cathedral

"In a church where our mission intention is much more clearly on the agenda than it has been, days like this scratch where we are itching and give us the encouragement to have a go."
Revd Bill Anderson, Birmingham District Chair

Dr John Sentamu spoke of his support for the Fresh Expressions initiative.
Over 400 people have been working hard on the mission shaped ministry course, which ran in 7 centres last year and looks set to run in an additional 10 this year.

On average 50 students, both lay and ordained, have enrolled at each centre for the one-year part-time course, which aims to help establish fresh expressions of church across the country. According to Norman Ivison, Fresh Expressions’ Director of Training and Events, the course is ‘gathering momentum and exceeding all expectations’.

The course generally takes place over a year, and includes weekend, evening and residential sessions. Joining in during 2008 are Cumbria, Lancashire, Cheshire, Taunton, Greater Manchester, Lincoln (for the second time) along with Leeds, Rugby, Kent and Cambridgeshire. Many other regions were also in various stages of planning.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, has offered his support to the course: ‘The next big step in taking fresh expressions of church forward is making the right kind of training available in every part of the country. The mission shaped ministry course looks set to make a major contribution here and I’m delighted to commend it.’

Martyn Atkins, the President of the Methodist Conference (2007/8) believes the mission shaped ministry course is a ‘crucial means by which the Holy Spirit is preparing people to plant, sustain and lead fresh expressions of church’.

‘We are really surprised and thrilled by the way in which the churches are taking up the challenge of fresh expressions and sharing the vision by taking training seriously.’

Norman Ivison said.

He claims the course has a number of unique selling points. For example, clergy and laypeople learn side by side in teams and are able to go back to their churches and together put into practice what they have learnt.

Already a number of fresh expressions are starting, led by people who have done the course. The course is also unusual in offering team coaching throughout and also provides someone to guide and encourage teams for the year following the end of the course.

Norman believes this should really help individual fresh expressions to take root. The Salvation Army, Baptist Church, Congregational Federation, Ground Level Network, Anglican Church Planting Initiatives and Church Mission Society are amongst other denominations and organisations backing the course.

For more information go to:
www.freshexpressions.org.uk/missionshapedministry

one simple idea

What is HOPE 2008?
It’s very simple really. HOPE is an idea offered to the whole Church by a group of friends. They were Soul Survivor’s Mike Pilavachi, Andy Hawthorne of Manchester’s The Message, and Youth For Christ’s Roy Crowne.

It wasn’t a specific, bossy idea. Not Do this! Or Do that! Or Do what I do! Not a project, or a programme or a franchise or another national initiative to get us all exhausted. Simply a suggestion that the Church might do more, do it together, do it in word and action.

DO MORE
 ‘Do more’. Mmm... Do more of what? HOPE08 truly isn’t prescriptive. It’s just one idea, encouraging local Christians to ask the mission question, and to find something to do mission about. Do more of what? Well, do more of what God needs done – not in the Church, but beyond it. How do we find out what that is? Well, as fresh expressions people know very well, it helps to get together, and listen out.

DO IT TOGETHER
I know a market town in the Home Counties that is as close as England comes to the Bible belt. Most of the churches are thriving, doing just fine. In the past, this hasn’t done much for Christian unity. Leaders have got on with their own church’s growth, and have been impatient whenever they were asked to give time or prayer to living and working together. But in that town, the gentle impetus of HOPE 2008 has already made a difference. Because the focus is on mission, unity has fallen into place. In the words of one new-church leader, ‘We’re talking more and praying more together than we’ve ever done before, because we can see what needs to be done together.’

DO IT IN WORD AND ACTION
God’s mission is all one thing. Without a desire to see Jesus proclaimed, without a desire to see people flourish and justice done, it isn’t complete. From the New Testament to the Five Marks of Mission, the holistic work of God and the vision of Jesus as a word/worker have been normal in the Church. The HOPE idea stands firmly in the mainstream tradition of mission in the church.

IT’S CATCHING
That’s it. Just one simple idea. It’s catching on. Over 1,100 local churches and fresh expressions are already running with the HOPE vision. Yours may well be one. But if it isn’t, why not get on board? Visit www.hope08.com or the youth site www.hope-revolution.com, or phone HOPE at 01273 571939, to find out more.

Paul Bayes is the Church of England’s National Mission and Evangelism Adviser. Parts of this article first appeared in the Church of England Newspaper.

home from home

Home is a small Christian faith community, trying to create patterns of prayer and formation that connect with spiritual seekers in the East Oxford area. We gather for a weekly eucharist at 5pm on Sundays.
The fresh expressions movement is a central and hugely exciting result of that missional imagination. Meanwhile the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure (DPM) seems long, dry, legalistic, detailed, more of a thumping headache than a thumping good read. Please don’t be fooled. The DPM is a key tool for missional change. As it is used, it will change the way Church of England dioceses work. It provides the building blocks to make fresh expressions of church permanent, integrated and valued parts of the whole work of God in any diocese.

BISHOPS’ MISSION ORDERS

The tool that will bring about this change is provided by the Measure. It’s the Bishop’s Mission Order (BMO). This part of the Measure will come into force on March 31 this year, and dioceses that want to move quickly will be able to use the new law from that date. In any case by autumn 2009 every diocese will have the structures in place for bishops to issue Orders for their fresh expressions, if they so wish.

Ever since Theodore of Tarsus sowed the seeds in 668AD, the English parish system has been blessing the Church. It has been a flexible, helpful way to do mission. But in a fast-changing network society it’s no longer enough, and fresh expressions of all kinds are now straining the legalities of the parish system to their limits. Bishops’ Mission Orders are a way to deal with that fact, “a principled and careful loosening of structures’ in the words of Archbishop Rowan. Their purpose, as the Measure’s Code of Practice says, is “to affirm, enable, encourage and support a new mission initiative within the overall ordering of the life of the Church”[1].

In a nutshell BMOs will be useful wherever boundaries are crossed – not only geographical boundaries, but also structural ones. Many fresh expressions, for example new midweek congregations within a multi-congregation parish, may never need an Order as such (though all fresh expressions will benefit from the advice about mission accompaniment and support that the Measure provides). But if a fresh expression develops its work beyond a single parish or benefice, or if a newly planted church reaches the point where it needs to be structurally independent of its sending church, then the BMO is available to help. In some cases, for example where a diocese wants to inaugurate new work across parish or deanery boundaries, a BMO will be helpful from the very beginning.

GETTING STARTED

The Church of England understands itself as a relational, episcopal church, where the bishop is a leader in mission. Therefore, at the risk of stating the obvious, Bishops’ Mission Orders are always instituted by bishops. The bishop himself may suggest a BMO as a way forward for a particular fresh expression, but the Code of Practice also expects local leaders to be making proposals to the bishop where it seems right to do so.

It’s part of the core work of leaders of fresh expressions to keep the lines of communication with the bishop and the diocese open and healthy, and to take the initiative in making suggestions about the right legal framework for what God is growing. The Code of Practice assumes that a formal, written request to the bishop will always trigger formal explorations as to whether the proposed Order should in fact be made. A ‘Bishop’s Officer’ will be asked to do this exploratory work and to report back to the bishop.

The bishop will be consulting his senior staff, the diocesan mission and pasto-

committee, diocesan missionary or fresh expressions officer, and others (including ecumenical partners) with an interest in the matter. Again, the leadership of a healthy fresh expression will have built good relationships with these stakeholders.

VISITING, AND ACCOMPANYING

The ongoing support of a community with a BMO is the work of the Bishop’s Visitor. Appointed by the bishop, he or she is responsible for exercising oversight on the bishop’s behalf, and keeping the bishop in touch with how things are going. The Code also expects that every community with a BMO will be accompanied in their mission – that is to be in relationship with a person or people ‘who will walk with them as supportive and critical friends, both encouraging and challenging their development’.

A BMO once made will be in force for an agreed time, up to five years. The fresh expression concerned will be able to play its full part in the life of the diocese. The Visitor will conduct regular reviews and there will also be a full review as the period of the Order comes to an end. At this point the bishop has a number of options including making a second order for a term of years, making an ‘indefinite order’, or drawing the Order to an end.

PEOPLE GET READY

All this is good news for the mixed economy church and for fresh expressions across the country. The way to get ready for it is relational and personal, like all that really matters in our faith. People in fresh expressions need to be talking to their archdeacons, bishops, missioners and ecumenical colleagues to see what the options are in their own situations. Lots of advice and training will be on offer from the Church Commissioners’ and the Archbishops’ Council’s staff and the commissioners. Above all, these things need to be soaked in prayer. So in the next few months please pray for this change in the way the Church of England shapes itself for its mission.

1 At the time of writing (early January) the Code of Practice still needs final approval from the House of Bishops and the General Synod. This should be completed when the Synod meets in February.

The Church of England is at serious risk of doing some joined-up thinking. With these words in 2004 Andreas Whittam Smith, the First Church Estates Commissioner, pointed to the links between Mission-shaped Church and the complex revision of legal structures that has now become law.

In a nutshell BMOS will be useful wherever boundaries are crossed – not only geographical boundaries, but also structural ones. Many fresh expressions, for example new midweek congregations within a multi-congregation parish, may never need an Order as such (though all fresh expressions will benefit from the advice about mission accompaniment and support that the Measure provides). But if a fresh expression develops its work beyond a single parish or benefice, or if a newly planted church reaches the point where it needs to be structurally independent of its sending church, then the BMO is available to help. In some cases, for example where a diocese wants to inaugurate new work across parish or deanery boundaries, a BMO will be helpful from the very beginning.

GETTING STARTED

The Church of England understands itself as a relational, episcopal church, where the bishop is a leader in mission. Therefore, at the risk of stating the obvious, Bishops’ Mission Orders are always instituted by bishops. The bishop himself may suggest a BMO as a way forward for a particular fresh expression, but the Code of Practice also expects local leaders to be making proposals to the bishop where it seems right to do so.

It’s part of the core work of leaders of fresh expressions to keep the lines of communication with the bishop and the diocese open and healthy, and to take the initiative in making suggestions about the right legal framework for what God is growing. The Code of Practice assumes that a formal, written request to the bishop will always trigger formal explorations as to whether the proposed Order should in fact be made. A ‘Bishop’s Officer’ will be asked to do this exploratory work and to report back to the bishop. The bishop will be consulting his senior staff, the diocesan mission and pasto-

committe, diocesan missionary or fresh expressions officer, and others (including ecumenical partners) with an interest in the matter. Again, the leadership of a healthy fresh expression will have built good relationships with these stakeholders.

VISITING, AND ACCOMPANYING

The ongoing support of a community with a BMO is the work of the Bishop’s Visitor. Appointed by the bishop, he or she is responsible for exercising oversight on the bishop’s behalf, and keeping the bishop in touch with how things are going. The Code also expects that every community with a BMO will be accompanied in their mission – that is to be in relationship with a person or people ‘who will walk with them as supportive and critical friends, both encouraging and challenging their development’.

A BMO once made will be in force for an agreed time, up to five years. The fresh expression concerned will be able to play its full part in the life of the diocese. The Visitor will conduct regular reviews and there will also be a full review as the period of the Order comes to an end. At this point the bishop has a number of options including making a second order for a term of years, making an ‘indefinite order’, or drawing the Order to an end.

PEOPLE GET READY

All this is good news for the mixed economy church and for fresh expressions across the country. The way to get ready for it is relational and personal, like all that really matters in our faith. People in fresh expressions need to be talking to their archdeacons, bishops, missioners and ecumenical colleagues to see what the options are in their own situations. Lots of advice and training will be on offer from the Church Commissioners’ and the Archbishops’ Council’s staff and the commissioners. Above all, these things need to be soaked in prayer. So in the next few months please pray for this change in the way the Church of England shapes itself for its mission.
The city centre of Liverpool is changing and the Church is coming alongside its new residents.

People are moving back into the centre of a city that has declined in population since the beginning of the 20th century, a time that saw many church closures.

Now with new flats being built to house students, young professionals and the retired looking for a city pad, there is a growing need for the Church to rediscover a home in the city centre, too. Pioneer minister, Neil Short, began work in July 2007 with a vision to grow a church that would grow young leaders.

Neil has spent the first months of his new role ‘getting to know what is happening in the city’ both in its churches and secular life, and building a core team with whom he can share and discover more about a developing vision.

‘One idea is to grow small, purpose groups’ among young professionals. ‘My role is supposed to be at the traditional end of fresh expressions.’ Neil explains. He asks himself where the difference between this kind of church and the churches he used to lead, from which different kinds of fresh expressions sprang, lies.

His answer: ‘The difference is that I now have a blank piece of paper. We can look at things in a different light. We spend a lot of time looking at whether we could just go out, wrap the in bit round the out bit. I’m realising that when I was a vicar of a reasonably large and growing church, we encouraged people to go out. Why not start with the out? I’m enthusiastic about the support he has had from Liverpool Diocese.

‘It is an inspiring environment to work in,’ he says. ‘It’s great to be working in a diocese where the bishop and structures are pressing ahead.’

As Neil and his team press ahead, they plan to keep in mind the vision to ask their new church members as they grow, ‘What is the shape and ministry God has laid on your heart and how can we help you to do that?’

Promoting dialogue

October 07 the first gathering of pioneer ordinands and theological educators took place.

The 50 or so pioneer ordinands had all recently been selected to train as ordained pioneer ministers and this was the first opportunity that they had to meet together. The gathering took place at Lambeth Palace and was hosted by Fresh Expressions with Steven Ferns from Ministry Division and Right Revd Graham Cray in attendance to listen to concerns and respond to questions that were raised.

As people gathered there was a tangible sense of excitement, both at being at Lambeth Palace but also the anticipation of the day to come. The day had many elements to it, including a short address by Rowan Williams and question and answer sessions focusing on curacies, and theological training and selection processes.

Ministry Division did not come with pre-packaged answers to the questions raised but were there to listen to the people experiences and to give responses when appropri- ate. It was clear throughout the day that when new ground is being broken we must walk together as fellow travellers.

Rowan Williams’ address encouraged the development of fresh expressions of church and also promoted dialogue between traditional churches and fresh expressions.

This dialogue, Williams said, would ensure that fresh expressions and traditional churches are nourished by one another rather than seeing one another as competitors.

Perhaps the greatest value was in the meeting and sharing with fellow pioneer ordinands; the opportunity to share our faith stories, our passions and our enthusi-asm for fresh expressions of church was invaluable.

The day finished with an act of worship focused on hope during which Graham Cray en- couraged missional imagination that was inspired by the Spirit.

On the screen an image was projected that read: ‘Hope is a place somewhere between take off and landing.’

This one sentence seemed to encapsulate the mood of the day, as friends left full of hope and missional imagination.
The much anticipated follow-up to the hugely successful Fresh Expressions Hard Questions tour is now here. Mission-shaped Questions. Don’t miss it.

In 2004 Mission-shaped Church presented a challenge to church leaders. Now Mission-shaped Questions addresses the big theological and practical issues that have arisen as ministers and leaders have sought to apply its lessons.

Mission-shaped Questions tackles questions such as:

- What exactly is church?
- What is the role of sacramental ministry in fresh expressions?
- What sort of theological and scriptural justification is there for a mixed economy Church?
- Can we develop churches that can transform culture?
- What sorts of question does a Catholic approach to the Church pose for fresh expressions?
- Can we be mission-shaped and kingdom focused too?

With contributions that are both incisive and practical, these contributions will influence the thinking and practice of the whole Church. Church leaders and ministers at all levels will benefit from the rich insights in this timely volume.

If we are to grow and mature as a mixed economy Church, there are hard questions to be asked and answered. We need first-class thinking to back up and support all that is happening at local level. I hope this collection will get the attention it richly deserves.’

Archbishop Rowan Williams

www.sharetheguide.org

Available from all good Christian bookshops or www.chpublishing.co.uk

Pam Macnaughton – mission administration
Simon Downham – Vicar /Senior Pastor, St Paul’s, Hammersmith
Vivienne Faull, Dean of Leicester
Robin Lovett, Associate Missioner for Fresh Expressions and part of the leadership team of Wesley Church

The team

Steven Croft – team leader
Rachel Westall – Steven’s PA
Pete Pillinger – mission accompaniment
Norman Ivison – training & events
Mike Moynagh – Share
Andrew Wooding – Share
Colin Brown – prayer & spirituality
Bob and Mary Hopkins – msm course
Andrew Roberts – discipleship & vision days
Rachel Matthews – vision days
Ben Clymo – team administration
Ben Gardner – festivals
Pam Macnaughton – website & expressions
Rob Marshall – media
Owen Edwards – media

www.freshexpressions.org.uk

useful email addresses

General enquiries
contact@freshexpressions.org.uk

vision days
training@freshexpressions.org.uk

mission shaped intro
missionshapedintro@freshexpressions.org.uk

mission shaped ministry
course@freshexpressions.org.uk

Further copies of expressions
expressions@freshexpressions.org.uk

expressions is the newspaper of Fresh Expressions
Fresh Expressions was set up in 2004 as an Archbishops’ Initiative with the support of the Methodist Council of Great Britain. Our aim is resource the growing movement of fresh expressions of church in every Anglican diocese and Methodist district and beyond.

Edited by – Pam Macnaughton, Steven Croft, Rob Marshall
Proofing – Lesley Butland

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, and Martyn Atkins, President of the Methodist Conference, invited Christians around the country to pray during this year of HOPE08. This is a prayer we can take with us through the year.

‘I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.’

Ephesians 1:17-19 NRSV

Gracious God, you created this world in love and for love. Yet we see much need all around us; need of love, peace, justice and hope. We see this especially in the poor, those on the margins of our society. We see this in the poor in spirit, those who suffer and hurt. Grant us strength every day; fill us with boldness according to your promises, that we may reach our needy nation, with your love, in this year of Hope.

We humbly acknowledge our weakness and failure, but our eyes are fixed on you. Fulfil your purposes and plans that your name may be honoured in our land. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.