

## What makes a Fresh Expression of Church fruitful?

### Introduction:

In 2010, with the help of the Church Army Research Unit, I carried out a survey of thirty-four Fresh Expressions of Church which I divided into four different categories. The purpose of this research was to see what progress they were making towards viability and maturity. Another period of sabbatical leave in 2017 gave me the opportunity to re-visit these fxC, to see what had happened to them in the intervening seven years, and whether any lessons could be learned about what might have contributed towards their sustainability and fruitfulness.

Fourteen common types of fxC were identified in the report from the Church Army report called 'The Day of Small Things', which appeared in November 2016<sup>1</sup>. The four categories of fxC I used in 2010 – Café, Age-related, Interest-related and Community - do not easily map onto these fourteen types. However, I decided to stay with my original four categories for the 2017 survey, to make it easier to compare like with like.

In 2010, I considered assessing the viability of fxC against the four classical marks of the Church - One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic – often reinterpreted as 'Up, In, Out and Of'<sup>2</sup>. However, the allegations often levelled against FXC - that they do not last, are too dependent on the resources of the wider Church for finance and leadership, and are generally ineffective at making disciples - were the very concerns faced by Henry Venn when evaluating the 'Mission Churches' planted by CMS in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, i.e. concerns relating to maturity rather than authenticity. So, I decided to assess FXC against the '3-self' criteria developed by Venn in response to this situation, with the addition of a fourth criterion, to assess adaptation to the target culture. Bob Hopkins has called this fourth criterion 'self-theologising'<sup>3</sup>, but I decided, for simplicity, to use the term 'self-adapting'.

The '3-self' criteria have since been judged to be more applicable to classic church plants than other fxC<sup>4</sup>, but they were included as a measure of progress towards maturity in 'The Day of Small Things'<sup>5</sup>. Also, in order once more to facilitate a like-for-like comparison with the data from the survey in 2010, I thought it better to stick with these criteria in the 2017 survey. However, I expanded the questionnaire to include questions about how the fxC had developed over the intervening seven years<sup>6</sup>. If it had 'died', I tried to find out why, because I believe that we learn at least as much from 'failure' as 'success'.

My research in 2010 had led me to the conclusion that a Fresh Expression of Church needs three things in order to become viable and fruitful: a compelling vision, consistency of leadership, and continuity of funding and resourcing<sup>7</sup>. I wanted to test out this theory in 2017. However, based as it was on the 3-self criteria, the questionnaire did not enable me to answer these questions directly, so I had to make a qualitative judgement on whether this theory held true, based as much upon personal observation as upon the data from the questionnaire survey. I am very grateful to Canon George Lings, who both guided my research and gave a very helpful critique of my draft report on the last but one day before he retired from the Sheffield Centre! I have revised the report in the light of his comments and hope that it will add something to the ongoing discussion about the sustainability of Fresh Expressions of Church.

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Day of Small Things' p.94, etc.

<sup>2</sup> 'Mission-shaped Church' pp.96ff, 'emergingchurch.intro' p.148f, and 'Refreshing Expressions' (CEN article, July 2009)

<sup>3</sup> B. Hopkins: 'The 3 self principle – which end of the telescope?' ([www.acpi.org.uk](http://www.acpi.org.uk))

<sup>4</sup> 'Sustaining Fresh Expressions of Church' p.48

<sup>5</sup> 'The Day of Small Things' p.108, p.120, etc.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 1

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 2

## The questionnaire survey:

In ten cases, the fxC had died or disappeared. This is a much higher attrition rate (29%) than the estimated 11.1% national average for the fourteen most common types of fxC<sup>8</sup>. This may be partly because my very limited sample contains a much lower proportion of Messy Church fxC than the national average, which has a very low mortality rate. Related to this is the fact that, in trying to cover a wide spread of types of fxC, I probably had a higher percentage of 'exotica' than would be the case nationally, which may have introduced a bias into the sample, which is already too small to be statistically reliable. Another factor is that many of the fxC included in 'The Day of Small Things' had only been going for a short time, whereas I was measuring over a period of seven years or more, so you would expect the mortality rate to be higher. Indeed, four of the fxC had already ceased to exist before I completed the survey in 2010, which means that the mortality rate from 2010 to 2017 was 20% (six out of thirty), which is closer to the national average.

Among the twenty-four still in existence, a further seven (21%) could either no longer be classified as fxC, or probably didn't strictly qualify as such in the first place. Over time, most of these fxC had become an established congregation or default to a missional activity within an existing church. (They would be described as a 'seed' rather than a 'runner' in classic church planting terminology). It's worth saying that the Church Army Research Unit has also struggled with expressions of Church being wrongly classified as fxC<sup>9</sup>.

Of the remaining seventeen, seven had grown, seven had plateaued and three had declined since 2010. However, these overall results mask the fact that some had oscillated between growth and decline, e.g. Re:generation grew then plateaued, and Moot plateaued then declined. Only when you get to the stories behind the statistics, do the reasons for these varied patterns become more evident, and I will turn to this in the next section.

Twelve questionnaires were completed and in most other cases I was given the information either by email or through a telephone conversation. However, in four cases, I had to make a best guess with limited information. In the table below, I have summarised the results of the survey.

Type of fxC	survey form	phone/ email	growth	plateau	decline	died/ gone	no longer a fxC
<b>Café</b>							
Terminus Café, Sheffield		√					√
Café Plus, Haddenham		√					√
Taste and See, Kidsgrove		√					√
Xpressions Café, Chedgrave	√			√			
Café Church, Shap	√			√			
Café Church, Ulverston	√				√		
River Café, St Helens		√		√			
<b>Age-related</b>							
Sorted, Bradford	√		√				

<sup>8</sup> 'The Day of Small Things' p.132

<sup>9</sup> 'The Day of Small Things' p.47, etc.

Type of fxC	survey form	phone/ email	growth	plateau	decline	died/ gone	no longer a fxC
St Laurence, Reading		√	√				
Eternity, Warfield		√					√
The Beacon, Chulmleigh		√		√			
Church Without Walls, Hanley		√					√
3:08, Nailsea		n/a				√	
Re:generation, Romford	√		√				
Tiddlywinks, Penrith	√			√			
Messy Marks, Barrow in Furness		√				√	
<b>Network</b>							
11.57, Liverpool		√				√	
Oasis, Uxbridge		n/a				√	
Intermission, Knightsbridge		√					√
C3, Stockport		√				√	
Tuesday Special, Reading	√			√			
Tubestation, Polzeath	√		√				
Rezurgence, Farnham		n/a				√	
Loving Hands, Warrington		√					√
<b>Community</b>							
Community of St Jude, London SW5		n/a				√	
Safe Space, Telford		√			√		
Chill Out, Bootle		√				√	
Moot, London EC3	√				√		
Harvest, Broadstairs		√		√			
Eagles Wings, Kettering		√				√	
Rooted, Leeds	√		√				
Dream, Liverpool		n/a				√	

Tango, Haydock	√		√				
Streetwise, Sheffield	√		√				
<b>Total</b>			<b>growth</b>	<b>plateau</b>	<b>decline</b>	<b>died/ gone</b>	<b>no longer a fxC</b>
<b>34</b>			<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>

The research by the Church Army indicates that, of the fourteen most common types of fxC, typical progress towards 3-self responsibility is as follows: self-reproducing 45%, self-financing 58%, self-governing 74%<sup>10</sup>.

I assessed the progress of the twelve fxC for which I had received completed surveys against the 3-self criteria (with the addition of self-adapting). As in 2010, I did this on a sliding scale:

- 1 - inadequate
- 2 - satisfactory
- 3 - good
- 4 - outstanding

Two caveats are worth mentioning at this stage. Firstly, the leaders of the fxC which had made most progress are the most likely to have completed a questionnaire. This is reflected in the fact that all of them (100%) have made some progress towards 3-self responsibility, whereas others included in the survey, who did not complete a questionnaire clearly have not. Secondly, my assessment is doubly subjective, as it is based on their self-analysis and my interpretation of it! Nevertheless, the results give an interesting snap-shot of a variety of fxC, and are tabled below, with a brief description of the fxC in question:

fxC	Self-adapting	Self-reproducing	Self-financing	Self-governing
<b>Café Church</b>				
<b>Xpressions Café,</b> Chedgrave, Norfolk (meets monthly from 10-12 in three separate spaces on church premises: all-age)	Target group is unchurched and dechurched in rural communities; this has remained the focus; trust has been built through relationships and shared values 3	35% of attenders unchurched and 35% dechurched. Discipleship through leadership policy has produced steady stream of leaders 3	Functions as one of six congregations in a rural benefice. Costs are minimal and are met by donation or benefice mission fund 2	Independent leadership team with an agreed set of values. Decisions made at monthly open planning meetings under Rector's oversight 2
<b>Café Church at Shap</b> (meets monthly in local primary school)	Aimed at unchurched local families 2	Has attracted about four families with no other church involvement, but level of discipling uncertain 2	Self-financing in terms of running costs, covered by donations, but led by Methodist Minister and his	Led by Methodist minister, with 2-3 meetings a year with stake holders from the churches 1

<sup>10</sup> 'The Day of Small Things' p.120, etc.

			wife, and the Vicar 2	
<b>Café Church, Ulverston</b> (meets weekly in café area of church, with breaks during school holiday)	Originally aimed at youth and unchurched adults; has lost focus on youth, but still draws young adults 3	Several young people have gone on to positions of leadership in the church nationally; several have grown as disciples/leaders 2	It is treated as one of the congregations of UPC 1	The congregational leader organises regular, open team meetings to refine the vision and plan ahead, but it is under the PCC 2
<b>fxC</b>	<b>Self-adapting</b>	<b>Self-reproducing</b>	<b>Self-financing</b>	<b>Self-governing</b>
<b>Age-related</b>				
<b>Sorted, Bradford</b> (a youth church which meets weekly and has several small groups also meeting regularly in different locations)	Aimed at non-churched and de-churched teens in N Bradford; out of this has come three youth congregations, a church for young adults, and Thrive for young parents 4	Sorted 1 was replicated in a neighbouring school to form Sorted 2; Sorted 1 is now for young adults; there are now Sorted 3, Thrive and a plant in London (TYM) 4	The bulk of members are teens with little cash, so the 3.5 staff are funded by Church Army, the Diocese and trusts; however, Sorted pays parish share and gives to mission 2	As a charity with a Bishop's Mission Order, Sorted is led and overseen by a directors group and a church council; the overall founder/leader is a Church Army Evangelist 3
<b>Re:generation, Romford</b> (a youth-oriented, multi-age church, meeting at half four and half six on Sundays and in different groups during the week)	Originally for young people between 13 and 18, but has gone through several iterations and now a multi-age church, well networked into the local community 3	Re:generation has several different ministries and has seen a number of people come to faith; they have tried to plant out, but unsuccessfully as yet 3	Although it began as a ministry of Romford Methodist Church, Re:generation is now independent, fully self-financing, and gives away at least 10% of income to mission 4	There is a board of trustees and a leadership team, mostly aged under 32, with a constitution and an agreed system of governance 4
<b>Tiddlywinks, Penrith</b> (a toddler focused fxC, meeting weekly during term time in the youth café at Penrith Methodist Church)	For toddlers and their parents/carers, with links through social services, CAP centre, and use of social media 3	Tiddlywinks has grown new disciples, leaders and a home group of ladies whose children are now too old to attend, and is part of the 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday Adventure 3/4	Free use of the church with all other costs coming from donations; led mainly by volunteers, but overseen by paid staff member 3	Team leads itself under authority of church council, reporting quarterly to youth and community outreach team, overseen by YCOT staff worker 2/3
<b>Network</b>				
<b>Tuesday Special, Reading</b> (meets weekly in Greyfriars Church, Reading; in partnership with five community groups)	Originally for adults with learning disabilities; has adapted to include carers, and to give ministry and training opportunities for church members 2	Never intended to reproduce because there are other similar groups in the town; team members have grown as disciples and have seen lives impacted for good 2	Not intended to be self-financing; given a budget of £1,000 a year by the church, which finances several activities each year 1	Weekly meetings of the leadership team; more a congregation of the church than a fxC; accountable to the PCC 1
<b>fxC</b>	<b>Self-adapting</b>	<b>Self-reproducing</b>	<b>Self-financing</b>	<b>Self-governing</b>

<b>Tubestation, Polzeath</b> (café / centre in former Methodist Chapel on Polzeath seafront: Sunday meetings, midweek groups and special events)	For surfers and those in the 'surf culture', and seeking to serve the community, including gallery for local artists, skate ramp in cafe 3	Despite a low key approach to evangelism, Tubestation has grown mainly among de-churched and non-churched, has four midweek discipleship groups 3	Set up through grants by the Methodist Church but now fully self-financing through the café, giving a tithe to the Methodist Church and to mission 4	Tubestation is a registered charity with trustees and a constitution; the leadership team is 50% trustees and 50% church council, overseen by the Methodist Circuit 3/4
<b>fxC</b>	<b>Self-adapting</b>	<b>Self-reproducing</b>	<b>Self-financing</b>	<b>Self-governing</b>
<b>Community</b>				
<b>MOOT, London</b> (a 'new monastic' community, which meets weekly on a Sunday at 6pm, with midweek Taize Chant and Meditation Groups, with a monthly Forum)	Aimed at young adults in the City of London wanting to 'go deeper' into matters of faith and explore Christian community 3	There has been an emphasis on a 'rule of life' and contemplative worship, but it has proved hard to build community and grow disciples 1/2	MOOT is largely self-financing through the coffee shop, but its 'chaplain' is also stipendiary priest-in-charge of two churches 2	There is a monthly Forum (open meeting) but MOOT is accountable to St PCC of St Mary Aldermary and the Guild Church Council 2/3
<b>Rooted, Leeds</b> (a group set up for the marginalised in Headingley / Leeds by South Parade Baptist Church)	Aimed originally at the homeless community, but has broadened out; working with other churches and agencies 3	None have become church members though some attend on Sundays; more aimed at friendship than discipleship: no plans to reproduce 1	Not self-financing at all; instead a cost to the church of £1,200 a year 1	There is a debrief after meetings, but really seen as a ministry of the church 1
<b>Tango, Haydock</b> (a community project set up by St Mark's Haydock, with a furniture warehouse and community centre)	Set up for the marginalised and needy in Haydock, e.g. single mums and those needing to set up house; has evolved into a business on two sites with 10 employees 4	There is a 15 minute reflection slot three times a week for employees, who are expected to adhere to agreed Christian values 2	TANGO employs 10 staff, some of whom were unemployed; in 2016, £5,000 was given to St Mark's and £3,000 to mission 4	TANGO is a registered charity with a Steering Group and a Constitution; a Co-ordinator manages the project on a daily basis; a TANGO representative is on the PCC 3
<b>Streetwise, Sheffield</b> (an outreach to the homeless, marginalised and those with addictions, from Network Church Sheffield)	Has stayed consistent to vision. Originally included children but this proved inappropriate 3	Have seen miraculous changes as people receive Jesus' love and feel part of a family. 3	Volunteers pay for the food needed. Room provided by the church 1	Independent leadership team, but accountable to St Thomas Church Philadelphia 2

## **Indicators of fruitfulness:**

In 'Sustaining young churches', Andy Wier puts the case for a more in-depth understanding of sustainability in young churches which are growing towards maturity. He proposes evaluating fxC against four conceptual components - durability over time, organisational capacity, ecclesial maturity, bearing fruit that lasts – each of which goes deeper than the one before <sup>11</sup>. The 3-self criteria relate mainly to the 'ecclesial maturity' component. Arguably, however, the most important criterion against which to measure Fresh Expressions of Church (or any other expressions of Church) is that of 'bearing fruit that lasts', not least in terms of growth in disciples and impact on society.

To explore this a little further, I decided to look at the six fxC – Xpressions Café, Sorted, Re:generation, Tiddlywinks, Tubestation and Tango - which had scored at least 10 out of a possible 16 in their progress towards 3-self (or 4-self) responsibility. This progress in itself indicates a high level of 'ecclesial maturity'. Also, by lasting for at least seven years, they had demonstrated 'durability over time' and the 'organisational capacity' to avoid burnout of leaders and volunteers, and to adapt to growth and changing circumstances.

As can be seen from the table above, which is only a brief summary of what could be said, all six of these fxC have been fruitful in a wonderful variety of ways; they have produced new disciples, grown new leaders, and had a positive impact on society, including partnerships with local community organisations. This indicates a clear connection between being self-producing and 'fruitfulness'. The remaining question was whether these six fxC had any common factors which facilitated their 'fruitfulness'. Now is the time to examine the viability of the thesis that there are three key factors which lead to a Fresh Expression of Church which is viable and fruitful:

1. a compelling vision
2. consistency of leadership
3. continuity of funding and resourcing.

Let's look at each of these six fxC in turn to see how they measure up:

### ***Xpressions Café***

1. Vision – this has always been to be church for 'the un-churched and de-churched in our communities' and is reflected in the inclusive approach, undergirded by shared values (Jesus at the Centre, Extravagant hospitality, Including everyone, Working together, Encouraging creativity) and reflected in the high percentage of de-churched and non-churched people who attend
2. Leadership - there is the same overall leader, which gives consistency of approach; the leadership style has always been collaborative and has drawn out new leaders, through a conscious 'discipleship through leadership' policy; most decisions are made at the monthly open planning meetings, but the leadership team is accountable to the Rector and PCC
3. Resourcing – it is treated as one of six congregations within a rural benefice, with a leadership team drawn from across the benefice; any extra funding needs are met through the benefice mission fund

### ***Sorted***

1. Vision – the original vision was to plant a youth church for mainly non-churched teens in North Bradford, with the local secondary school and parks as the mission field; 'Sorted' has remained faithful to this initial vision, but it has expanded to plant two new youth congregations (one in London), and a group for young parents; the original Sorted is now a church for young adults
2. Leadership – the founder/leader is a Church Army Evangelist, who has provided continuity of oversight and vision; as a charity with a Bishops Mission Order, 'Sorted' has both a group of directors who oversee strategic decisions and a church council who oversee day to day running

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<sup>11</sup> 'Sustaining young churches', p.56ff

3. Resourcing – as a church composed mostly of cash-poor teenagers, ‘Sorted’ is not financially self-sufficient, but has benefitted from consistent resourcing by Church Army, the Diocese, and other funders

### ***Re:generation***

1. Vision – Re:generation was set up by Romford Methodist Church for young people aged 13-18; it is still a youth-orientated church, but as the original group of young people married and had children, it has evolved into a multi-age network church
2. Leadership – the leadership team consists of members of the congregation, the majority of whom are under the age of 32; Re:generation is now an independent church, and the leadership team is accountable to a board of trustees
3. Resourcing – Re:generation is not only financially self-supporting, it gives a tithe to mission and sends people out as long and short term mission partners

### ***Tiddlywinks***

1. Vision – ‘Tiddlywinks’ was set up for 0-5s plus parents/carers, especially those who are de-churched or non-churched; it has moved from monthly to weekly meetings (in term time) and has forged links with social services and the CAP Centre; 1/3 of attenders have English as a second language; 95% are de-churched or non-churched; there are off-shoots, such as a house group for those who used to attend, but whose children are now too old to attend
2. Leadership – it is led by a dedicated team under the oversight of a staff worker and accountable to the Church Council; new leaders have been developed or drawn in from the main church congregation
3. Resourcing – costs, such as lunches provided, are met by weekly donations; the parent church provides the facilities free of charge; money raised by fundraiser social events are given to mission

### ***Tubestation***

1. Vision – ‘Tubestation’ is a church for surfers and those in the surf culture; from the start, it has also been committed to meeting the needs of the local community, and the art gallery showcases local artists; it has remained committed to this founding vision; ‘Tubestation’ has a principle of involving people before they come to faith, ‘gentle about evangelism, but lifting people in prayer’
2. Leadership – the two founder/pioneer leaders are still in place; in addition, there is an ordained pastor, who has been a Baptist and is now a Methodist; ‘Tubestation’ is part of the local Methodist Circuit and provides local preachers; it is a registered charity with a leadership team composed of trustees and church council members, all of whom are part of the church
3. Resourcing - the project was initially funded by the Methodist Church, and ‘Tubestation’ is based in a converted Methodist Chapel, but it is now fully financed by the café and a ‘community of givers’; it now gives a tithe to the Methodist Church and a tithe to mission

### ***Tango***

1. Vision – T.A.N.G.O. was set up by St Mark’s Haydock to help people in need, especially the marginalised and the lonely, e.g. single mums and others having to set up home; it aims to be a community for the community; it has links with Social Services, a local women’s refuge, family centres, Helena Partnerships (housing), Prince’s Trust and Salvation Army
2. Leadership – The Steering Group provides broad oversight, makes policy decisions, and is accountable to the PCC. A Co-ordinator is appointed to manage the Project on a day-to-day basis; it comes under the umbrella of the Church for Charitable Registration purposes
3. Resourcing – T.A.N.G.O. employs 10 people, including catering staff, and the income generated is used to pay staff; it has been replicated in at least three places in Merseyside; it originally met in the church hall, but now has its own premises in a former school



## Section Summary:

Each of these six fxC are strong in all three areas of vision, leadership and resourcing (although some are still very dependent on external sourcing rather than being able to resource from within). Although the causal link between these strengths and fruitfulness cannot be easily proven, there seems to be a strong connection. Moreover, if you look at the fxC which have died to see what can be learned from them, you will see that their demise can at least be partly attributed to a corresponding weakness in one or more of these areas. It is to this that we now turn.

### Indicators of a lack of fruitfulness:

- a) It is probably not helpful to identify individual cases, but looking at the ***ten fxC which have died***, from the information I have been given, these were the main areas of weakness:

Vision – 6/10 (either this was unclear from the start, or there was a change of focus)

Leadership – 8/10 (the departure of a founder leader without an adequate succession plan, the failure to build a team, the burnout or loss of volunteer leaders)

Resourcing – 1/10 (the withdrawal of key funds or other resources, and/or the failure to develop alternative sources of income)

In other words, a failure or discontinuity of leadership is the most common reason for the demise of a fxC, followed closely by a failure or lack of vision, with lack of resources being only a marginal factor.

- b) Turning to the ***seven examples in the survey which could no longer be described as fxC***, it seems that this was almost always due to a failure of vision or of leadership, and usually it was a combination of the two. These were identified as the main areas of weakness:

Vision 6/7 (either it was unclear from the start or it changed over time)

Leadership 5/7 (either it was too dispersed or a key leader moved on)

So, an unclear or changeable vision is the most common reason for a fxC losing its identity as a fxC, followed closely by poor leadership or the removal of a key leader. Resourcing is not mentioned as a critical factor.

In summary, therefore, it could be said that when a fxC dies or ceases to be a fxC, this is mostly attributable to a lack of vision and/or leadership, rarely to a lack of resources. This seems to confirm the adage that 'money follows vision'. In other words, where there is a clear vision and strong leadership, resources usually follow, but where they are lacking, resources are not a critical factor either way.

It is also noticeable that there was a higher rate of failure among network and community fxC. Although there is not enough evidence in this survey to prove this, it seems that network churches will tend to fail if participation in an activity (be that biking or knitting) is given a higher priority than creating Christian community, and that community churches will tend to fail if the desire to create a relevant form of alternative worship draws those who are disaffected with inherited church rather than attracting those who are non-churched spiritual seekers.

Even so, it is helpful to learn the lessons that these examples can teach us in their attempts to reach the huge sections of the population who have no meaningful contact with the Church. They are often either 'heroic failures' or successes in their own way. It is important, therefore, that these stories are recorded and, where possible, celebrated. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

## Some concluding remarks:

The small sample size, and the fact that the questionnaire responses involved a high degree of subjectivity, demands that any conclusions drawn from this research are hesitant and provisional.

Nevertheless, here are some thoughts and questions for consideration:

1. If they are a genuine attempt to reach out to those for whom Church is irrelevant (i.e. more than a rebranding of something that's already happening), fxC are necessarily vulnerable and liable to fail. So, a 20% attrition rate over seven years is neither surprising nor especially disappointing. In fact, I suspect that entrepreneurs involved in business start-ups would say that this is a surprisingly low percentage. Also, we should remember that, in God's providence, we learn just as much from our failures as from our successes, if not more.
2. That roughly one in four of the fxC (6/34) have been especially fruitful in a variety of ways reminds me of the parable of the Sower. Although some fxC have fallen to the ground, seen limited growth, or withered away, a significant minority have multiplied and produced fruit in surprising and unpredictable ways. To take the analogy of the parable a little further, this fruitfulness seems to be the result of a happy and productive coming together of seed (a Gospel-centred vision), soil (ability to adapt to the context) and sower (inspiring and enabling leadership). This also seems to suggest a strong correspondence between a fxC being self-reproducing (growing new disciples) and being fruitful.
3. Another way of looking at it would be to say that, although vision, leadership and resources are the key to the sustainability of fxC, it is the 'X factor' of the Holy Spirit which produces fruit. After all, as the apostle Paul said of the Church at Corinth, 'I planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the growth'.
4. That several fxC have morphed into either additional congregations or a means of community engagement bears out my conviction that we need a 'mixed economy' of both inherited and emerging models of church and that much of what is being pioneered now will become mainstream within a generation - so the two models are inextricably linked.
5. Vision, leadership and resourcing are three key ingredients for a thriving fxC, and one or more of these ingredients will inevitably be missing from those fxC which have not thrived. Would it be too much to apply this rigorous analysis to inherited Church? The factors associated with growth identified in the 'From anecdote to evidence' report <sup>12</sup> are very much linked to leadership and vision (although there is less emphasis on resourcing, which is arguably a less urgent priority for inherited church, protected and supported as it is by diocesan and national structures), so this idea may have some merit. If so, the criteria for recruitment and training of lay and ordained church leaders should be adjusted accordingly. It also calls into question the tendency of dioceses to close down or withdraw leadership from a fxC which may not yet have reached maturity, and yet to continue to provide leaders and resources for inherited churches which may lack vision and show little or no signs of growth or fruitfulness.

My overall conclusion is that Fresh Expressions of Church have a good chance of success when they have a compelling vision, consistent leadership and continuity of resourcing, and are especially fruitful when this is combined with the 'X factor' of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>12</sup> The factors identified in the 'From anecdote to evidence' report are: context, leadership, having a clear mission and purpose, being ready to self-reflect and learn continually, being willing to change and adapt, assigning roles to lay people as well as ordained clergy, actively engaging children and teenagers, actively engaging with those who might not go to church / are outside the existing community, good welcoming and follow up for visitors, and committed to nurturing new and existing Christians. (See 'From anecdote to evidence' pp.7-11)

**Books:**

Allen, R., 'Missionary methods' (Gospel Truth Ministries, 2005 - first published 1912)

Dalpra, C., and Vivian, J., 'Who's there?' (Church Army, 2016)

Grundy, M., 'Multi-congregation ministry' (Canterbury Press, 2015)

Moynagh, M., 'emergingchurch.intro' (Monarch, 2004)

Keith, B. 'Authentic Faith' (Fresh Expressions, 2013)

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## Appendix 1

### Fresh Expressions of Church Survey 2017

#### ***Self-adapting***

##### **What was the primary 'mission task' of your fxC?**

What was its original target group?

Has this changed over time? If so, please explain why and how.

##### **How has your fxC taken shape / adapted over time?**

To what extent has it adapted to suit the needs of its target group?

To what extent has the local context formed the shape and ethos of your fxC?

##### **To what extent has your fxC produced social transformation?**

What partnerships, if any, do you have with other community organisations?

How have the local community and the lives of individuals been positively changed through the influence and activities of the fxC?

#### ***Self-reproducing***

##### **To what extent has your fxC grown new disciples and new leaders?**

What percentage of its current membership are part of the planting team [    %], from other churches [    %], de-churched [    %], non-churched [    %]?

What 'stepping stones' to faith and service do you offer, and how effective are they?

To what extent have members of the fxC become Christian disciples, i.e. learning to follow Jesus in the company of other believers, and to love God and others?

##### **How has your fxC developed?**

Has it grown [    ], declined [    ], plateaued [    ] come to an end [    ]? (*Please tick one.*)

Please give a brief account of how, why, and when this has happened.

Please estimate average numbers attending meetings in 2010: adults [    ], under 16s [    ]  
in 2017: adults [    ], under 16s [    ]

##### **What progress has your fxC made towards becoming self-reproducing?**

Have you started up, or been involved in, other fxC?



## Appendix 2

### Key Points from 2010 survey of Fresh Expressions of Church

#### *Self-adapting*

FXC are more likely to succeed if leaders identify with or are part of the target group.

When you focus on youth, you attract adults too, but it does not usually happen the other way round.

Youth Churches (and FXC generally) are more effective in both discipling existing members and reaching the non-churched when they engage seriously in serving others and in social transformation.

#### *Self-reproducing*

FXC need to provide 'stepping stones' to faith if they are to produce disciples. These are distinct stages, each of which contributes to a FXC being fully 'church'.

A shared Rule of Life and Rhythm of Life helps give coherence to a dispersed community.

With a few exceptions, FXC have not created further FXC.

#### *Self-financing*

Even where successful, FXC require both finance and committed people at the setting up stage, and continue to require committed volunteers.

Where a FXC can be seen to provide tangible benefits for the local community, it tends to attract secular funding.

The capability of a FXC to be self-financing is affected by its context; it can rarely bear the cost of a full time stipendiary minister.

#### *Self-governing*

Continuity of leadership/oversight and its ability to self-govern are crucial to the longevity and healthy growth of a FXC.

Where FXC are planted by an established, well-resourced church with a clear vision, this tends to give continuity of leadership and resourcing.

The best examples of Youth Church empower young people to take leadership roles, albeit under the ongoing oversight of adult leaders.