

five reasons to start a fresh expression of church

2

essential
fresh
expressions

1. God is missional and wants us prayerfully to join him

That's one of the big themes of Scripture. God's mission - his salvation plan - is to bring creation to perfection (e.g. Genesis 12.3; John 3.17; Revelation 21.1-4).

Mission has always been vital to God. The Father did not wake up one day and say, 'Let's do mission'. He couldn't say that because God's character is the same yesterday, today and for ever (Hebrews 13.8). There is no before and after in God. There cannot be a time when God was not missional and a time when he is.

Mission therefore is not a second step for God. So it cannot be a second step for Christians. Mission must be a priority, not an afterthought. Fresh expressions of church are one approach to mission.

2. God wants mission to be done by communities in life

As far as possible, we are not to do mission alone, but together - like the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus, for example, was constantly in touch with his Father (John 8.28) and was led by the Spirit (Luke 4.1).

Jesus also did mission in community with his disciples - in the middle of everyday life. They attended the wedding at Cana, for instance

(John 2.2). When he taught his disciples how to do mission, he sent them in pairs - in community - to the villages and towns, to ordinary life (Luke 9. 1ff; 10. 1ff).

The first churches were in people's homes, which were the epicentre of family, networks and often work. These communities witnessed to Jesus in day-to-day life. Fresh expressions of church follow this example. They are communities for mission in the everyday.

They herald the time when Jesus will fill 'all things' - all slices of life (Ephesians 1.23). He will be in every part of existence.

example

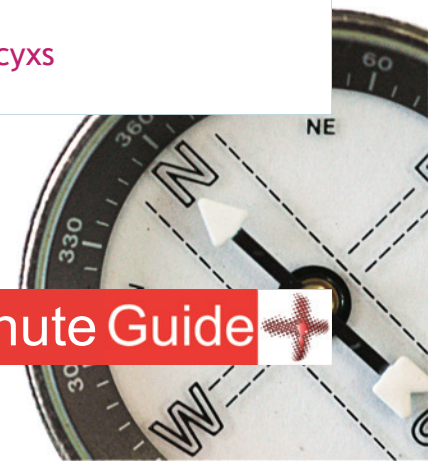
LegacyXS on a skateboard park is one example of how fresh expressions point to a future where Jesus will fill 'all things' and make Christ's body, the church, visible in every segment of society.

freshexpressions.org.uk/stories/legacyxs

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Three-minute Guide

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3. Fresh expressions offer the gift of being community with Jesus

Like any gift, this must suit the recipients. Would a bottle of wine be much of a gift if the other person was tee-total?

Offering community appropriately could mean inviting someone to an existing church. But other people will need something different.

Say a church meets at a time, place and in a style that is inaccessible. It won't be a gift if it can't be reached. In these cases, the gift of the church will take the form of a new community with Jesus - a new expression of church that's available to them in their circumstances.

example

Saturday Gathering, for instance, offers Christian community to clients of a food bank who find existing congregations practically or culturally inaccessible.

freshexpressions.org.uk/stories/saturdaygathering

Fresh expressions echo holy communion: a piece of the church is broken off to become a new community, which is shared with others.

4. Fresh expressions are a rounded form of mission.

They hold together the great commandment (to love others) and the great commission (to make disciples). Jesus combined the two and so did the early church, which cared for the poor alongside sharing the gospel.

Fresh expressions unite both today. Many start with loving service - from providing a place to chat, to passing on skills, to working with homeless people.

Community is formed with those being served, individuals are introduced to Jesus if they want and something with the character of church emerges.

The aim is to see individuals - and their neighbourhoods and networks - transformed by the Spirit.

5. Fresh expressions work - numerically!

Over 3,500 have been started in the UK across the denominations.

Research suggests that in 2014 they existed in 13.5% of Church of England parishes. Their leaders said that three quarters of people attending came from outside the church.

Fresh expressions help grow the kingdom by strengthening the church's mission.