

Church Growth Research Project

Report on Strand 3b

**An analysis of fresh expressions of Church
and church plants
begun in the period 1992-2012**

October 2013

Conducted by

Church Army's Research Unit

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Executive summary

Between January 2012 and October 2013 over 1000 cases supplied from 10 dioceses were examined. Records were taken of 518 examples that met the criteria set for what counts as a fresh expression of Church. The data came from interviewing the leaders. The dioceses were chosen to reflect variety in relation to context, to geographical spread and different stances towards the fresh expressions of Church phenomenon. It is not certain that they are entirely representative.

Their impact upon diocesan and national Church life

On average those studied make up 15% of a diocese's church communities and 10% of overall attendance. Their average size is usually smaller than average parish church congregations, which partly accounts for this difference. In 7 out of the 10 dioceses, their numbers added equates to reversing the AWA decline in those dioceses over 2006-2011 and in two other dioceses nearly does so. The attendance, coming from around a quarter of the English dioceses, adds the equivalent of one further average sized diocese. By 2012, four to five times as many per year were being started compared to 2004 which saw the launch of *Mission-shaped Church*. 44% of them started in the period 2010-2012. Evidence suggests that for every one person sent out to be part of beginning a fresh expression of Church, now there are two and half more people. Nothing else in the C of E has this level of missional impact and adding further ecclesial communities.

The leaders' opinion of who comes

In rough proportions 25% are Christians, 35% are de-churched and 40% non-churched. This view should subsequently be tested by surveying some memberships. 37% of cases said networks were the major or total factor in how people came, not because it was their parish or local church, yet 82% were totally or mainly typical of the background area or context.

Those who lead them

52% are lay led and what is new is 40% are people without any official badge or training. They are equally likely to be led by women as men. Most often the men are ordained, working full time and paid, while the women most often are lay, spare time & voluntary. The data shows that women are equally effective in this leadership as men. It is too soon to tell what difference pioneer ministers are making as they are as yet only 2% of the picture.

This is a world of varied and smaller communities

There are at least 20 different recognizable types of fxC. Messy Church, child focussed Church and Café Church are the most common types. Most are relatively small, with an average size of 44 people. The classic team size sent to begin them is 3-12 people. Large teams and all transplants are less than 1.5% of the picture. They occur in all kinds of social context, are begun by all traditions in the Church of England. They meet in all manner of venues and across a wide variety of days.

The leaders interviewed indicate both some depth and some frailty

78% are taking some steps to grow disciples, not just attract attenders. Over a third have communion services and a third have had baptisms. Half are taking some steps toward responsibility for their finances and two thirds for how they are led, yet very few have any legal status within the Church of England, which is one source of vulnerability. 62% either continue to grow numerically or maintain the growth gained. However 19% did grow but are now shrinking. 10% have died – those meeting fortnightly being the most vulnerable. The data reveal that growth patterns vary according to a wide combination of factors: the kind of fxC, the social area served, frequency of meeting, and the time available to, gender of and status of the leader.

1. Historical and staffing introduction

This sub-strand is but part of the work of a consortium of specialists put together by St John's Durham for the overall research project. It has been undertaken by three team members of Church Army's Research Unit in Sheffield, with the Church Commissioners funding one full time member, Mrs Elspeth McGann MMath, and Church Army supporting the time of Mrs Claire Dalpra MA and the team leader Canon Dr George Lings.

In December 2011, the latter pair had already embarked on this direction of research, with an established methodology for data collection, and criteria for inclusion and exclusion. This was in partnership with Liverpool as the pilot diocese. It seemed to the Commissioners that the Church Army team's aim and method met the criteria sought in the January 2012 research tender, and that this should be extended and speeded up by the provision of a dedicated additional staff member for 16 months.

By the time the formal agreement to proceed had been agreed, following documents issued in May 2012, work with Liverpool and also Canterbury diocese had been completed and research already started with Leicester. Mrs McGann was selected and began work at the beginning of August 2012. In addition in 2013 the team have had the voluntary assistance one day a week of Mr John Vivian MA who focused on the analysis available by the correlations.

Since then the pattern of research has been completed on ten dioceses. One further one has been completed since the report was submitted and the twelfth begun. 11 out of 43 (excluding Europe) is an intended and plausible representative selection. From this it became clear that dioceses engage with the agenda of fresh expressions of Church (fxC) in different ways and to differing extents, so there must remain a level of doubt as to whether this selection is entirely typical and therefore should not be regarded as a definitive national picture. However, these research findings are wider and contain far more detailed information than that previously possessed by the national church.

It so happens that the report comes into the public domain a decade after the publication of the report *Mission-shaped Church*. To some extent it acts as an evidenced commentary on how far the content and recommendations of that report have been taken up, and it is the widest enquiry into the effectiveness of the fresh expressions of Church that have begun since then.

2. The rationale for the research and its methodology

Two sources of thinking have come together in partnership.

2.1 The Church Commissioners' brief

Firstly, the Church Commissioners, in seeking research partners, had noted the rise of church planting in previous decades as part of church growth patterns. They were keen to learn to what extent it deserved the plaudits of its enthusiasts and the hesitations of its critics. This section of the January tender document focused on the story in London and it was important to gain a wider view and demonstrate whether the dynamics in the capital operated elsewhere.

Questions posed for research study included the following:

- evaluations of what transfer growth was occurring;
- whether newcomers were existing Christians, the de-churched or the non-churched;¹
- what proportion of newcomers came from the surrounding area;
- what progress the young churches were making towards financial viability;
- how typical those coming were of the area and what ethnic diversity was present;
- evidence of indigenous leadership emerging;
- how training affects outcomes and what role pioneers are playing.

In the event, quantitative work was sought from Church Army and qualitative study of some 30 church plants, half within London, was to be done by the OXCEPT team from Cuddesdon.²

2.2 Church Army's research experience

Secondly, George Lings, leading Church Army's Research Unit, who were seeking research resources, had studied church planting since 1984 and created a database to record and analyse examples found. He also served on both working parties leading to the reports *Breaking New Ground* (1994) and *Mission-shaped Church* (2004). Aware of this history, 1992-2012 was selected as the period of study. 1992 was chosen as the start year because events of that year began the setting in motion of the 1994 church planting report that brought the topic and practice to the attention of the wider Church of England.

Since 1999, he and Claire Dalpra had also written more than 50 ethnographic studies of fresh expressions of Church, in the *Encounters on the Edge* series of booklets. Their judgment was that the most pressing need of the Church of England, in relation to the future consideration of fresh expressions of Church and church planting, was to complement the considerable qualitative work already done in this field with quantitative studies. Their perception was that stories tended to inspire only certain stakeholders in the wider Church. This qualitative approach still left open opportunity for serious enquiry by those with responsibility for overall resources, as to whether

¹ These terms follow the usage of *Mission-shaped Church* which sought to distinguish the last two categories and thereby avoid the unclear term - and by some even deemed rude - the unchurched.

² The Oxford Centre for Ecclesiology and Practical Theology (OXCEPT).

the wider picture of new developments showed that they ‘worked’ and if so in what ways and for whom. Only harder, wider and more robust data could begin to answer such tougher questions.

They knew that, following the profile gained by *Mission-shaped Church*, the newly formed Fresh Expressions team operated a self-registering online database from 2005. However, the team of Church Army’s Research Unit considered that the integrity of this quantitative material was seriously compromised in that the bar for inclusion was low.

Church Army’s research team requested and inherited this set of 926 records which had been collected until May 2009. When non-Anglican examples and patently bogus entries (including a few from hackers) had been stripped out, it left 647 possible cases. These were then merged with their own overlapping source of database records. Work during this research period has further heavily pruned that inherited list.

By late 2011, it was prudent to assume and test whether considerable confusion existed in the wider Church as to what constituted a genuine fresh expression of Church.³ Thus the team worked firstly on a set of criteria surrounding both the missional and the ecclesial identity of any case presented, as well as devising some markers towards its maturity or sustainability. The criteria were tested with leaders in Liverpool diocese and thought fair and acceptable. Secondly, they devised a questionnaire to collect data on the key dynamics of every fxC included.

A copy of the questionnaire is found in appendix one.
The ten criteria are found on the following page.

³ The use of the uncial in Church is deliberate. It is indicative of the theological claim that those cases included are genuinely Church. The miniscule use would refer to particular local examples, for instance St Paul’s church.

2.3 What is an Anglican fresh expression of Church? (fxC)

Ten parameters

1. Was something Christian and communal brought to 'birth' that was new and further, rather than an existing group modified?
2. Has the starting group tried to **engage with non-churchgoers**? There was intention to create a fresh expression of Church, not begin an outreach project from an existing church. The aim was for the Christians to change, to fit a culture and context, not make the local/indigenous people change, to fit into an existing church context.
3. Does the resultant community meet **at least once a month**? In cases of monthly meetings further questions about how to deepen community, build commitment and increase discipleship follow.
4. Does it have a **name** that helps to give it an identity? An active search, not yet yielding a name, is allowed.
5. Is there **intention to be Church**? This could be from the start, or by discovery on the way. This admits the embryonic fxD (fx of developing community) and cases of fxE (fx of evangelism) and even some fxW (fx of worship). The key is that they are *not* seen as a bridge back to 'real church'.
6. Is it Anglican, or an **Anglican partner** in an Ecumenical project? 'Anglican' here means the bishop welcomes it as part of the diocesan family⁴, not whether it only uses centrally authorised worship texts, or has a legal territory such as a parish.
7. There is some form of **leadership** recognised within, and also without.⁵
8. At least the majority of members (who are part of the public gathering) see it as **their major expression** of being church.
9. There is **aspiration for the four creedal 'marks' of church, or ecclesial relationships**: 'up/holy, in/one, out/apostolic, of/catholic'. We question validity in an absence of 'mission/out'. (Our Church Army team see the two dominical sacraments as a given consequence of the life of a missional community which follows Jesus, but not the sole or even best measure of being church.)
10. There is **intent to become 'three self'** (self-financing, self-governing and self-reproducing). These factors need contextualisation, but are some marks of advancing maturity. They are not to be interpreted as indicators of congregationalist independency, or breakaway tendencies.

⁴ This instinct is early: cf Ignatius, 'but whatever he (the Bishop) approve, this is also pleasing to God.' Smyrna. VIII

⁵ Jay argues from pre 3rd century texts that 'the possession of an ordered and recognised ministry is integral to the nature of the Church.' Eric G. Jay, *The Church its Changing Image through 20 Centuries*, Volume 1 (London: SPCK, 1977) p. 49.

Application and use of the criteria

Examples failing to qualify on questions 1-7 were deemed not Anglican fresh expressions of Church. Nevertheless, in the interviews their work was affirmed in their true identity, whether as existing services, further provision for existing Christians or taking on new missional tasks. Factors 8-10 are more about 'health' or developmental issues, rather than identity questions. Their absence indicated the need for further maturing; they warn of weaknesses and dangers, but did not necessarily indicate exclusion. Their presence was thought healthy and acted as indicators of maturing and sustainability.

Two further practicalities operated. Examples that had since died, but did not complete at least two years of life, were excluded. Those that had since died but had a longer span of life were included and brief notes taken on likely causes of their demise. Those begun before 1992, and those started during 2013, were excluded from the analysis, although the latter were noted for possible future work.

This list of criteria of what is to be counted as a fresh expression of Church is proving both robust in use, and sharp enough in practice to call marginal cases with careful but sufficient confidence. See sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3. In addition, it is proving accessible and helpful to those who encounter it, both at the local and diocesan level. In some places it has raised a specific but positive challenge to those meeting its questions.

The list has therefore remained largely unchanged since 2011, despite minor amendments of phrasing to assist clarity and the provision of a few cited precedents. All this may be some test of its enduring validity. Some terms used in it and the questionnaire are further explained in a glossary within appendix two.

2.4 The relational approach

In addition to tighter and consistent criteria, in order to address issues of coverage, a two level relational basis to data collection had been decided upon, which propelled the team towards working diocese by diocese rather than attempting a scatter operation nationally. It was reasoned that more complete data, from a more limited number of dioceses, was likely to be of better quality than partial information across the whole Church of England. We also thought that sending out a questionnaire on a national basis had three serious problems: coverage error, no quality control and the danger of a non-response bias.

The first relational level was to build confidence in a key contact in each diocese whom would know, or find out, a reasonably complete list of alleged fxC in that diocese. To assist this, time was taken to draw on or create such relationships. Within it, more time was taken to explain the proposed method; existing Church Army lists of known examples in that diocese were sent to them, and the listed leaders of initiatives on the agreed list forewarned of the impending research. The second level was to ensure, as far as possible, that a telephone conversation would be held with the nominated leader of the fxC, with them having previously received both the criteria and questionnaire. That has been the basis upon which data has been acquired. We estimate that we have achieved this goal in at least 95% of cases, with a few done only by email, and that we have successfully contacted 98-99% of the cases supplied to us.

When all the data was collected and analysed, a report has been written for the key contact person who was free to circulate it to the diocesan senior staff. We have then been invited to present this material, usually to that staff team and sometimes also wider groups. After securing permission an illustrated version of the results and its analysis was put onto the Church Army Research Unit website. The fuller process and an example are found at appendix three.

We also have a small but steady stream of evidence, from both those on the ground as well as corroborated by third party diocesan officials, that this approach has been appreciated, informed the understanding of those contacted and spurred them on in their work. We have reflected that this is evidence of helpful congruity between the subject matter of the research and the method chosen; it is plausible to understand churches primarily as relational communities. We have kept a log of what we deemed pertinent comments made to us and a few are put into appendix six.

More detailed examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the method chosen are evaluated in section three of the report. In addition, appendix four has addressed a further coverage issue reporting on a pilot group exploring what they knew of the topic and why they might, or might not, have started a fresh expression of Church.

The agreement with the Commissioners noted that the approach of Church Army's Research Unit would thereby offer a more robust set of criteria by which to identify legitimate fresh expressions of Church, avoiding badging minor mission initiatives as such. It would work far wider than in London and unearth data on a wider set of dynamics of fresh expressions of Church, than those initially listed by the Commissioners. This range of data has included information about who leads them, team sizes taken, venues used, frequency of meeting, church traditions involved, whether there are ecumenical partners, any ecclesial legal status they have, and various indicators of steps taken towards maturity, as well as comparison between how the many different types of fresh expressions of Church fare.

One downside of the relational approach has been that it was both unwise and impossible to proceed with a few dioceses approached that, for various understandable reasons, did not think they should be researched. This meant that neither London nor Southwark could be explored, nor did Hereford think the time was right, although with the latter two, a welcome to explore this research being done in the future has been offered. Tactically, the team also excluded some dioceses geographically adjacent to those already covered. The upside has been that there is some level of interest from officials in nine further dioceses, should this method be extended after this discrete research period has elapsed.

2.5 Some present challenges concerning criteria for church

Our set of ten criteria fitted the desire expressed in the May 2012 agreement and schedule of research between the Church Commissioners and the research partners, which stated: 'a robust definition of church is required, to avoid minor mission initiatives being badged as 'fresh expressions'. Church Army's Research Unit concurred entirely with that desire and have found it is even more needed than its team members initially supposed.

Since that time, a yet more demanding set of eight criteria, all of which must be explicitly fulfilled 'as a necessary and sufficient condition for a particular Christian community to be

recognised as a church', has been posited by the report of an Anglican-Methodist working party on fresh expressions of Church.⁶

Our team accept that the search for such definitions is entirely proper. We salute its repeated emphasis on community and that their list begins with the Church's vocational calling. We are glad that it names the place of Scripture and wish in hindsight that we had included some questions about Scripture's role in the ongoing life of the fresh expressions of Church that were studied. It is progress that teeth are added to the dimensions of mission and wider belonging within the overall church. However, for many reasons we find it unhelpful and even unrealistic.

At root it belongs within the stable that holds that practices are determinative of church identity, rather than relationships being foundational, which only then lead to practices that embody and fortify those relationships.⁷ This practice based approach is significantly prejudicial against young churches whose identity lies deeper than their performance, although that identity may be closer to their intentions and potential. The same critique would be true of arguing that children are not fully humans, because they are not yet adults with attendant possessions, employment, earning power or social patterns.

Moving into more detail reveals our research team's further hesitations; as this is an apparently definitive and tougher standard than our own, it is astonishing there is no reference whatever to the person or work of the Holy Spirit. This is both a theological and characteristic omission. It is all too possible that in many so-called churches, if the Spirit of God should take an extended sabbatical then absolutely nothing would change as a result. We ourselves did not set such a criterion because, although theologically vital, quantitative methods would be most unlikely to be able to disclose it.

In many existing and long standing 'churches', the first and second admirable criteria about discipleship lived out in the world and people being sent to engage in mission and service are very far from being fulfilled. David Watson, a peaceable Anglican renewal leader from the 1960s to 1980s, noted that most people in church may be anything from pew fillers to born-again Christians – 'but not true disciples of Jesus'.⁸

Despite criteria 3 and 4, about the roles of Gospel and the teaching of Scripture, it is arguable that there is considerable biblical illiteracy in existing churches, as well as deep ignorance of how the Gospel is understood, and some intolerant liberalism, parts of which may be heretical. Moreover, there is nothing explicit in this list about Church people learning individual spiritual disciplines, growing into a life of holiness or seeing a rise of fruits of the Spirit, let alone naming love and forgiveness as intrinsic to the kind of Christian community that would be worth joining.

In many areas of the list it would be entirely a value judgement whether the criteria were being fulfilled. As such it could not be a basis for a quantitative research project, which made it unusable for our purposes and may even be too characteristic of being born in an ivory tower.

Lastly, if these are such good and self-evident criteria, and they are what the Church of England and the Methodists have been living by, how do the authors explain the previous century of steady decline? What has been missing?

⁶ A. Smith & R. Walton (co-chairs) *Fresh Expressions in the Mission of the Church* (London: CHP, 2012) p. 114.

⁷ The case for the priority of relationships is explored in M. Moynagh *Church for Every Context* (Norwich: SCM, 2012) pp. 104-118.

⁸ D. Watson *Discipleship* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1983) p. 16.

Our team concluded that if these criteria were applied across the country then many so-called churches would not qualify, let alone that they may well cause a number of fresh expressions of Church to stumble. It could be debated whether that might be a good thing in both cases.

A report of this kind should not be devoid of theological thinking and operate only at the level of statistics. Deeper questions are going on. This sub-section therefore draws attention to what this team considers are the theological and spiritual limitations to an approach which is both practice-based but also hard edged. We have given some reasons to question a current example of this way to handle the inclusion or exclusion of alleged fresh expressions of Church.

Whatever our critique of this list of eight, and doubtless their riposte to our own ten criteria, we concur that it is desirable that there should be movement towards an agreed standard and more consistent use of the term 'fresh expression of Church', thus our ten criteria are included in the report, in order to make them better known. At the least, it shows that what has been consistently worked with, is now shown to have been accessible, and thus it is hoped they will contribute to the ongoing debate.

3. Investigating the methodological design

This section delineates the main strengths and weaknesses of our research of which we are aware. We divide them into two categories. The 'protected weaknesses' are ones that we have done something about and 'unprotected weaknesses' are more inherent and we can do very little about them.

3.1 Protected weaknesses

3.1.1 Sampling

There is danger of a bias in the way dioceses have been selected ('convenience' sampling). This could include working with those we knew had many good examples of fxC in order to seek a higher impact for the topic and its research. We have tried to protect ourselves from this bias by our choice of dioceses to give a balance across the following three variables: firstly north/south and east/west, secondly across an urban/mixed/rural spectrum and thirdly across those dioceses held to be pro/ambivalent/anti fxCs.

The geographical factor is least debatable. To arrive at the second we used both the Arthur Rank Centre's classification of dioceses into urban, semi-rural and rural, and also the population density figures from the Church of England's Research and Statistics department list of diocesan figures. We notice that the two sources do not correlate closely, and the Arthur Rank Centre do not have a category 'semi-urban'. Yet the two factors taken together have enabled us to select a range of population density variables.

The third variable is the most subjective. By what criteria does one decide that a diocese is pro/ambivalent/anti fresh expressions of Church?

Sources of evidence could include a long list:

- What is the published attitude of the diocesan bishop? Is their private view known and congruent with this?
- What of the views of the senior staff surrounding the bishop?
- What has been the diocese's investment in fxC training – is this known or measured?
- What level of financial investment has been made in deploying staff to lead fxC?
- Does the diocese have a dedicated staff member to enable and support fxC and who has a track record in this field?
- Has there been a diocesan synod or conference on the topic? What were any conclusions or actions?
- Is there a policy, and even a background paper, about planting fresh expressions of Church and how old is it?
- Are OPMs used in this diocese, and if so, how many and with what result?
- Is there a support network for leaders of fxC, who leads it and how often does it gather?
- What use has been made of *msm* or *msi* and on whose initiative?

This report reveals the result of research into what proportion of church communities in the diocese are fxC, but in itself how far is that an indicator of central initiative or grass roots action?

The difficulty is that such a long list of diocesan features could have made a qualitative research project in itself, with little security that all the data needed from dioceses would be disclosed by them. Such findings might be too sensitive to be allowed to make public.

For manageability reasons and because closer attention to it suggests qualitative research, the Church Army team have not gone down that route. Thus one of the specific questions about the effect of diocesan structures and also national bodies has not been addressed but is worthy of future subsequent work, and might well occur on the back of the quantitative and relational bases now built. Such future research is commended.

To protect ourselves from this potential weakness, we obtained the independent opinions of three national figures whom we deemed to be key strategists, and gained their private assessment as a way of ensuring we have corroboration on how we were working, with at least an informal measure for this variable.

We do not deem it prudent to publish any data of this last variable, but the first two are served by a map of the dioceses covered. Their overall numbers, decline or growth, population changes and densities appear in an adjacent table.

The twelve dioceses covered, bearing in mind all these factors, in chronological order of study are: Liverpool, Canterbury, Leicester, Derby, Chelmsford, Norwich, Ripon & Leeds, Blackburn, Bristol, Portsmouth, Gloucester and Exeter. It has been possible to add data from the 11th one of these as the report nears publication, as appendix 9.

It has not proved possible to achieve the initial hope of 15 dioceses, as finding convenient times to interview leaders proved more elusive than hoped and chasing late respondents more time consuming than anticipated. In the process the team chose to opt for having less but complete records from fewer dioceses, rather than more records from partially completed dioceses.

Map of the dioceses covered and agreed to cover

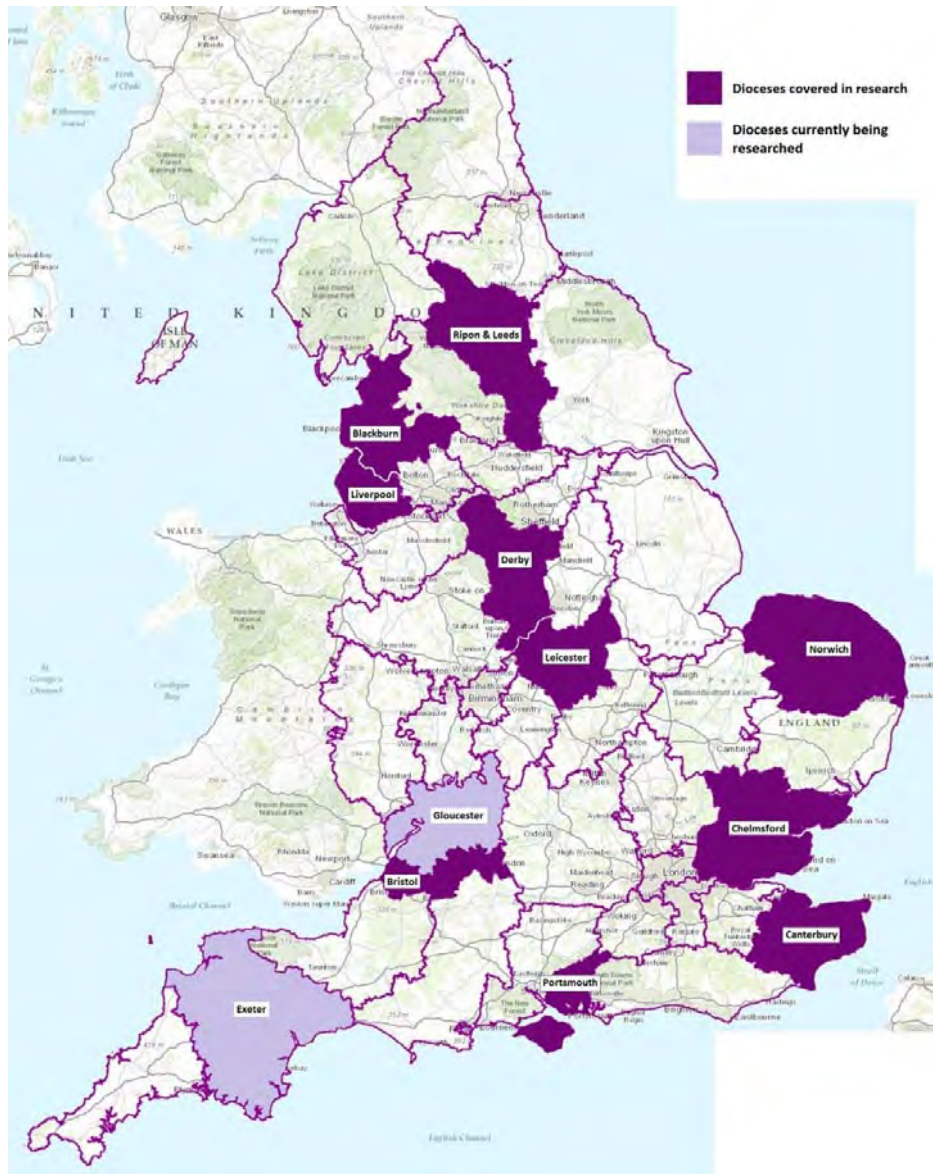


Table 1: Background data to the dioceses surveyed

Diocese	Population 2011	Population density per sq.mile	Dioc no. of Churches	AWA 2011
Liverpool	1561000	4013	258	28600
Canterbury	913000	941	328	19900
Leicester	984000	1179	313	15900
Derby	1027000	1030	330	18000
Chelmsford	2991000	1954	598	41500
Norwich	871000	483	638	21500
Ripon & Leeds	819000	603	256	16100
Blackburn	1314000	1497	278	27200
Bristol	968000	2043	205	17200
Portsmouth	760000	1864	173	13700

3.1.2 Inclusion/exclusion

The decisions made about including a particular case as a fxC run the risk of being affected by team members' subjectivity. An example would be a researcher wanting to include more of a certain type of fxC, if they have a preference for any particular fxC types. However, such subjectivities and inconsistencies are protected by the framework of the ten criteria, given in section 2.3, and also the invariable practice of group decisions being sought with concurrence achieved on all marginal cases. We pass on to the wider Church that the marginal cases are indeed difficult to call, and we were glad to be to handle them as a group. We give four examples of features of marginal cases presented to us and how we came to decisions about them in appendix five.

3.1.3 Inclusion/exclusion and data collection

There is a weakness in the considerable potential for respondents to misunderstand the complex terms and technical vocabulary in our criteria and questionnaire. Even frequently used words in church life such as 'worship' will mean different things to people, let alone terms used in a 1994 Church of England report, like runner, graft, transplant, seed. This weakness is protected, to some extent, by the way we chose to take data within the context of a phone conversation. We have consistently noted that with those people who actually prefer to fill in the form themselves and return it by email or post, we almost always have follow-up phone call, or an email, to double check suspicious data where it looks as though there is misunderstanding of terms, or apparent paradoxes in the answers.

3.1.4 Low return rate

There was the danger of a low return rate, due to the complexity of our questionnaire, dislike of surveys and the busyness of people's lives. This has been protected by our persistence, good humour and flexibility in offering as much help as has been needed in completing the form, and the 98.75% return rate confirms this. We have no data from 14 out of 1124 cases offered by the nine dioceses analysed by the time of writing. Four were not contacted, for pastoral reasons, on the advice of our diocesan key representative. Five never responded despite our countless phone calls and emails, and five by their name or frequency, such as Harvest Festival, excluded themselves.

3.2 Unprotected weaknesses

These are areas within which we know our research is vulnerable.

3.2.1 Sampling

Returning to the issue of 'convenience' sampling, while we have sought to achieve a balance across the three sets of variables mentioned, we can only work with the dioceses that want to work with us. Thus both Hereford, with the lowest population density, and London with the highest among all the English dioceses, have not been covered.

3.2.2 Data collection

We are aware of two kinds of 'coverage errors'. Firstly, we cannot know that we have followed up all possible leads in any given diocese. This is partly due to the length of the research period which, going back to 1992, exceeds the direct experience of the diocesan officers. To mitigate this, we have always fed back to the diocese when further examples have been unearthed of which they were unaware.

Secondly with the dioceses surveyed most recently, and our research parameter of 1992-2012, we met a growing list of examples begun in 2013. For example, while Bristol diocese has 33 confirmed cases in the period 1992-2012, there were six alleged cases in 2013. If that proportion were extrapolated across all the dioceses, this would make a significant number. We admit that all we have been able to do, to use an analogy, is to take a set of historical and recent stills of what is a moving picture. It is the case that over 40% (228 of the 518 cases considered) of fxC were begun in the three years: 2010-2012. In five dioceses (Leicester, Norwich, Ripon & Leeds, Bristol, Portsmouth), cases from that period made more than half their totals. This suggests a rising trend since *Mission-shaped Church*. Further future work on post-2012 cases would test this.

3.2.3 The influence of temperament and handling complex issues

Our team is aware of the 'complexities of people' that might lead to inconsistencies. The temperament and confidence of the fxC leader could affect how they report (either negatively or positively, sharply or vaguely) on questions affecting the potential of their embryonic fxC to become fully-fledged. Answers may be affected by interviewees' desire to please, feeling defensive, or feeling awestruck perhaps, depending on which team members unconsciously evoke such reactions. The team have sought to be both friendly and professional, but not to trade on title or reputation. In addition the church tradition, and ecclesial status, of the interviewed leader can affect their answers to a wide range of the questions posed.

3.2.4 Singularity of source

The biggest weakness we are aware of concerns the capturing of 'truth'. In nearly all cases we have only one data source, the nominated leader of the fxC. Often we speak to more than one person if there is a difficult process of deciding whether something is to be included. However, in clear cases of inclusion, we usually speak to only to one leader and have no way of testing the accuracy of their perceptions. This could be addressed in future qualitative study.

3.2.5 Analysis of data collected

We have been sharply aware that the scoring methods used are very simple. This was done assuming - and finding - that anything more sophisticated would not be manageable. Greater accuracy of data keeping over time by the fxC leader is not common and such an attempt would shade over into qualitative work. Therefore, we have always reported findings in internal interim reports, and in feedback to diocesan teams, with modesty about how the figures are derived and how secure they are. The problem is commented on in full in relation to the proportions of Christians, de-churched and non-churched in section 4, but it does not only apply there.

Under the consideration of 'numbers taken compared with numbers attending now', we were aware there could sometimes be a shift of volunteers/team back and forth between a sending church and its fresh expression of Church. Thus findings reported in that area need to be handled with that proviso.

In addition, as with parish churches, there is a disparity between average numbers attending and total numbers the church is in contact with, from which any average attendance is drawn.

Another difficulty is that in contrasting fxC attendance figures with those of existing expressions, we have only a limited way of knowing whether attendance at fresh expressions of Church has already been counted in diocesan returns. This is explored further in section 4.2.3. We now have evidence that the answer in practice is uneven, both within and across dioceses. All we have been able to do is make explicit what we have had to assume.

3.3 Strengths

3.3.1 Overall methodology

This research suits the skills and interests of Church Army's Research Unit. It builds on significant research done by them in this field. The earliest extant form of the questionnaire dates from 1993 and, in the face of the phenomenon changing and enquiries about it, has been revised in various periods, including adding a few extra questions in the light of the Commissioners' requirements. The database has also evolved since being started again from scratch in 2003 to keep pace with the considerable changes of understanding from church planting to fresh expressions of Church, first delineated in chapters two and three of *Mission-shaped Church*. The earliest form of the ten criteria goes back to 2010.

Another strength is that this research method and experience has allowed for minor changes to the questionnaire and database during the process, if further data was deemed to be needed. We are grateful to Mr Andy Giddins, of Dynamic Data Systems Ltd, for his work on the database design in many of these stages to enable these kinds of developments.

This research is now reproducible in any number of dioceses, but it is also possible to repeat and update the research with the same dioceses in future, personnel resources permitting. Having trusted relationships with many in the wider Church and the smaller world of fresh expressions of Church has enabled the process to happen very easily, not just with the pilot with Liverpool diocese, but with the subsequent dioceses also.

In terms of auditability, the detail of our notes, completed questionnaires, spreadsheet data, and database records means full examination of our research process, data, findings and conclusion is possible by an external party if that was deemed necessary.

3.3.2 Inclusion/exclusion and data collection process

Considerable neutrality is ensured through the set of ten criteria, and the researchers' subjectivities were managed within the team by discussion of marginal cases.

The aim to be as relational as we can in our preferred method of collecting data within a phone conversation has, we think, yielded better quality data, and a higher response rate, than imaginable alternatives. Genuine care and concern on the researchers' part communicates positively and has enabled sensitive but accurate inclusion/exclusion - and data collection - processes.

3.3.3 Data input, analysis and findings

Accuracy of data collected (and therefore findings deduced) has been double-checked by a cleaning process, always involving two people of the team, and meticulous record keeping of corrections made.

There is now ample opportunity for further qualitative and quantitative research with existing data collected, including deeper examination of relationships between the variables acquired, and beyond that into new work.

Summary of 3.1 to 3.3

On balance, through consideration of these strengths and weaknesses, the team suggest they have taken most reasonable precautions and are aware of the remaining weaknesses.

In addition, through our interaction with our academic research partners, and their benign treatment of our material, we have some degree of confidence to suggest the data is reasonably robust and the inferences drawn stand up to scrutiny.

The report now turns to the findings.

The shape to the findings

The findings are grouped into three successive major sections.

Section 4 moves through the original queries set in the Church Commissioners January 2012 tender, folding into them an expanded list, from the May 2012 agreement with the Durham consortium and its attached schedule, as well some data not originally requested but necessary to these elements of the overall picture.

Section 5 covers findings from further dimensions of the life of fresh expressions of Church, which Church Army's research unit considers give a more rounded picture of their missional and ecclesial life, as agreed in principle in the May documents.

Section 6 examines correlations with observed patterns of growth and decline across the fxC, followed by a subsection covering further examination of their vulnerabilities and any patterns of closure.

4 Variables identified in the January 2012 tender

4.1 Evaluation of growth experienced in fresh expressions of Church

The brief was to examine what was attributable to transfer growth and to genuine newcomers, and also what the proportions were of the de-churched and of the non-churched.

This section combines the wishes of the first two points identified by the tender document. A number of elements contribute to a response that is both clear and striking, if the limits to the research method are understood and proper modesty used to describe the results.

4.1.1 What groups of people attend fresh expressions of Church?

Analysis of the first ten dioceses studied shows that in approximate terms, in the opinion of the interviewed leader, 25% of attendees were Christians, 35% from the de-churched and 40% were non-churched. It is arguable that these are proportions quite unlike those known in parish life and is good news about the effect of fresh expressions of Church within the mission of the Church of England.

Of the Christians present, two contrasting factors are to be borne in mind.

Firstly, those sent out to begin fresh expressions of Church make up a high proportion of the Christians present and they are not to be regarded as what is commonly thought of as transfer growth. That term is usually reserved for those Christians who join a church after it has begun, and is not applied to those beginning it.

Secondly, it is also true that the leaders thought that around 75% more Christians came to them than they aimed for. But that feature only applies within the 25% minority overall figure. In addition in some contexts, like urban deprivation or new housing estates, aiming for Christians made missional sense, for there was in effect nothing to transfer from and a resource to garner. A third relevant feature is that neither London nor Southwark dioceses were part of this study; these two dioceses are known to have large transplants from even larger churches.

However, Chelmsford was covered, in part serving east London, and its proportions of Christians attending are very similar to the average.

4.1.2 Modesty about the methodology

The most important headline not to misrepresent is this low proportion of Christians, and higher proportions of de-churched and non-churched thought to be attending. As a standout finding it is in especial danger of being thought to prove more than it does. We do not want this good news to be devalued because others may be tempted to claim more than the method can justify.

The simple scoring system used, on a range of zero to three, enabled leaders to indicate rough proportions of all three groups present. In this system, writing 0 meant a group was not a factor, 1 disclosed a group was thought to be a minor reality, 2 inferred the group was a major reality and 3 indicated it was the only or overriding factor. We accepted that sometimes overall scores might not add up to a total of 3, yet resisted, queried and modified anything scoring more than 5 overall. Because the system has these limits, it cannot provide exact percentages as they would not be known. When the scored data is totalled it gives a fair representation of the leaders' perceived proportions, but not accurate percentages of the three groups. Nevertheless, the team are confident that the combined de-churched and non-churched attendees greatly exceed the presence of the Christians, and in proportions never seen in established parish churches, with the possible exception, in some places, of attendance at Christmas communion services.

Nor is it asserted that all those attending are now convinced Christians. Anglicans value relaxed borders towards finding faith, and when they count numbers, they choose the category 'attenders' rather than 'believers'. What Church Army's Research Unit thinks is being created is a new, large, relationally based fringe, the kind of grouping that John Finney's research 20 years ago⁹ found was the most fruitful over time. Subject then to these caveats, the first table in this section shows the rough proportions across the diocese surveyed.

Table 2: Proportions of Christian, de-churched and non-churched

Diocese name	Rough proportion of attendees deemed by the leader to be Christian	Rough proportion of attendees deemed by the leader to be de-churched	Rough proportion of attendees deemed by the leader to be non-churched
Liverpool	25%	36%	39%
Canterbury	21%	39%	40%
Leicester	26%	39%	36%
Derby	20%	36%	45%
Chelmsford	25%	29%	46%
Norwich	24%	30%	46%
Ripon & Leeds	28%	29%	43%
Blackburn	26%	36%	38%
Bristol	30%	37%	33%
Portsmouth	23%	43%	35%
Average	24.5%	35.2%	40.3%

This data is of limited depth, derived from the opinion of the fxC leader, not surveying individual attendees. It should be treated with caution, as explained above. However, it offers refutation of

⁹ J. Finney, *Finding Faith Today* (Swindon: BFBS, 1992) especially Chapter 4, pp. 36-47.

the charge that fresh expressions of Church primarily attract existing or bored Christians by transfer. It would be very rare that a parish church has these high proportions of de-churched, and certainly non-churched, as attendees. This contrast is noteworthy. To complete the data of this element of the leader's response, the scored totals from them are listed, which reveals where there is disparity and congruence between aim and result, as both were asked for.

Table 3: Raw scores for fxC leaders' view of the aims and resultant mix of Christian, de-churched and non-churched

Diocese	Aimed for Christians	Result thought to be Christians	Aimed for de-churched	Result thought to be de-churched	Aimed for non-churched	Result thought to be non-churched
Liverpool	35	68	93	98	135	107
Canterbury	40	53	89	101	131	103
Leicester	24	52	70	77	98	71
Derby	22	34	65	62	87	77
Chelmsford	22	44	49	52	106	81
Norwich	29	54	66	69	128	106
Ripon & Leeds	22	43	58	45	76	66
Blackburn	38	58	68	79	107	83
Bristol	23	39	51	48	53	42
Portsmouth	9	19	34	36	44	29
Totals	264	464	643	667	965	765
Disparity %		75.8%		3.7%		-20.7%

It can be seen that the picture across the dioceses has both differences and similarities. In all of them, more Christians have come than aimed for, but to different extents.

The picture with the de-churched is more varied. In the majority of cases there is more than hoped for and in a third of dioceses less than expected. On balance the difference is slight. With the non-churched the picture is consistent, with less coming than hoped for and 21% being the average of that gap.

This last feature may be evidence that, as one could imagine, the gap to the non-churched is wider than other groups in society and it remains one of the English Church's most pressing mission fields, not least because it is increasing over time as so few children and young people have a Christian upbringing.

4.1.3 What was meant by de-churched and non-churched in the survey?

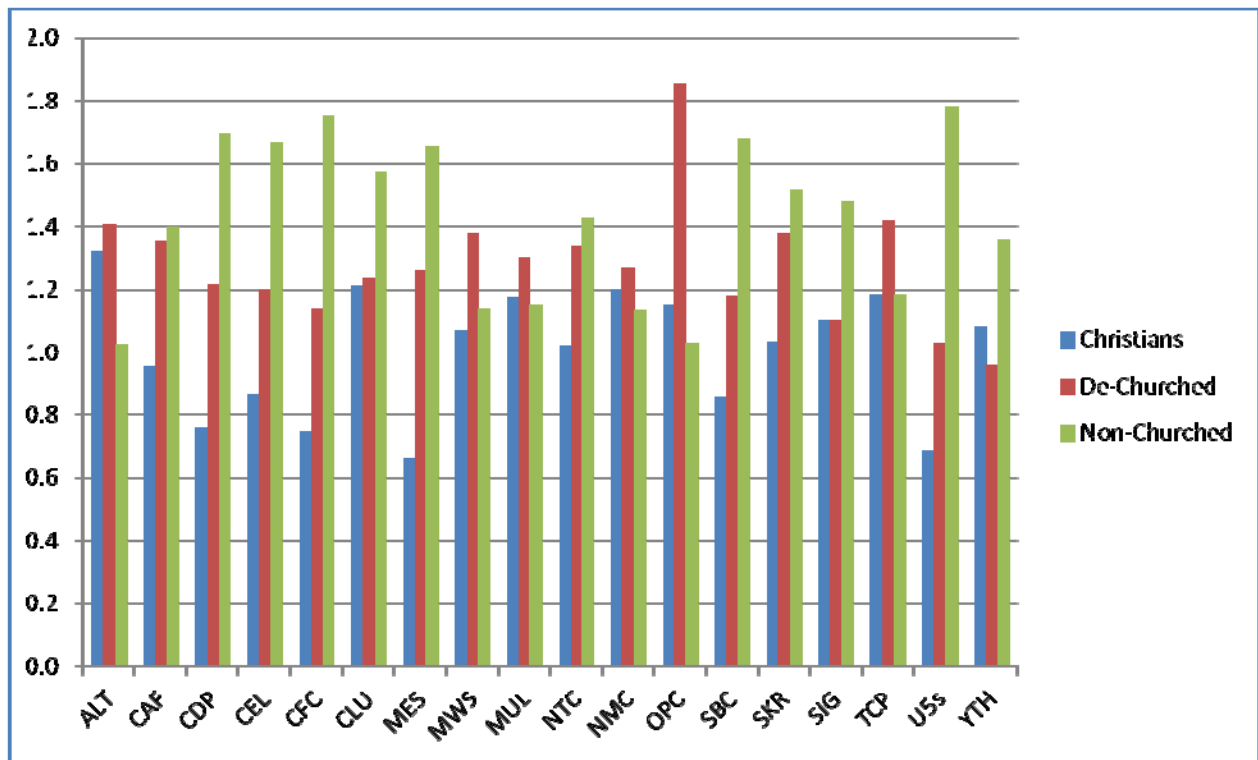
The team took as their broad understanding the meanings unpacked in *Mission-shaped Church* pages 38-41. The glossary in appendix two, comments further. In interviews, the team found they were very seldom asked what the terms meant and this inferred they were reasonably self-explanatory.

Our own perception is that the borders between churching, de-churched and non-churched are neither entirely clear nor fully agreed. For example, we would exclude from being classified as churching or de-churched those who have only attended an occasional office (baptism, wedding or

funeral), much less a concert or civic function in a church building, at all of which the local Christian community were not present. Nor would we necessarily include all who have attended a church school. Our view is that the thinking that deems such people thereby ‘churched’ owes more to the long shadows of Christendom than realism of the current mission climate and task.

We are able also, subject to the same limitations above to consider how different kinds of fxC fare in relation to these three groups.

Graph 1: The leaders’ average scores of different groups, viewed by kinds of fxC



Abbreviations:

ALT	Alternative worship	CAF	Café church	CDP	Community development plant
CEL	Cell plant	CFC	Child focused church	CLU	Cluster
MES	Messy Church	MUL	Multiple congregation	MWS	Midweek church
NMC	New monastic community	NTC	Network church	OPC	Older people’s church
SBC	School based church	SKR	Seeker church	SIG	Special interest group
TCP	Traditional church plant	U5s	Church for <5s & carers	YTH	Youth congregation

The Y axis is derived from the 0-3 scoring system used to record leaders’ opinions.

Some correlations are what might be expected. Older people’s church draws back in many de-churched older people, as do forms of midweek church and multiple congregations.

Similarly, today many under fives, those of school age, and young people and their parents are among the group we call the non-churched.

The statistics confirm what earlier ethnographic work suggested, that community development plants and Messy Church contact significant proportions of non-churched people. It has also been suspected from such work that alt.worship and those who find some identity in new monasticism

draw more de-churched people than from other groups and our findings suggest there is truth in such assertions.

It would be unfortunate if at this point certain kinds of fxC were discounted by either the wider Church or potential practitioners. It is possible to assert that the variety of kinds is needed in order to connect with more elements of the diverse mission field represented by the United Kingdom as it is. What then is advisable, among strategists and practitioners, is the best possible matching of mission aspirations and the most likely kinds of fxC to work with these hopes and plans. We also wish for, but do not have, a set of figures that could be inserted which showed the proportions of these three groups for a control group of parish churches.

4.1.4 The contribution of transplanting to this growth

Two further sources contribute to evaluate this. Table 4 shows the different team sizes sent or taken, and Table 5 shows the choices made about the variety of mission support dynamics.

Table 4: Team sizes taken to begin fxC

Diocese	1 to 2	3 to 12	%: 3 -12	13 to 19	20 to 49	50 plus	Total fxC
Liverpool	15	57	73.1%	2	4	0	78
Canterbury	4	53	73.6%	5	8	2	72
Leicester	4	36	69.2%	9	2	1	52
Derby	2	38	82.6%	5	1	0	46
Chelmsford	3	36	72.0%	4	6	1	50
Norwich	6	49	77.8%	3	3	2	63
Ripon & Leeds	8	29	74.4%	2	0	0	39
Blackburn	7	46	71.9%	5	6	0	64
Bristol	3	24	72.7%	2	4	0	33
Portsmouth	0	12	57.1%	5	4	0	21
Totals	52	380		42	38	6	518
	10.0%	73.4%		8.1%	7.3%	1.2%	

It is evident that the most common choice is to send a team of between 3-12 people. This in turn implies that this step in mission is within the range of a much wider group of existing churches than some church planting literature asserts, some of which suggests 50 is the advisable minimum to be sent out.¹⁰ The table shows this option is but 1% of the overall story. Even when the 20-49 size is added, their combined influence is 8.5%. Doubtless if London diocese had been included that figure would rise, but we suggest only marginally in view of the total number of fxC begun.

¹⁰ An example is M. Robinson, *Planting Mission-shaped Churches Today* (Oxford: Monarch, 2006) pp. 68-70, recommended for where the aim is not cross-cultural planting.

Table 5: Mission support dynamics for fxC

Diocese	Runner	Graft	Transplant	Seed	n/a
Liverpool	90%	1%	0%	9%	0%
Canterbury	85%	3%	3%	10%	0%
Leicester	90%	4%	0%	4%	2%
Derby	93%	2%	0%	4%	0%
Chelmsford	94%	0%	0%	6%	0%
Norwich	97%	0%	0%	2%	2%
Ripon & Leeds	92%	0%	0%	5%	3%
Blackburn	95%	0%	0%	5%	0%
Bristol	85%	3%	0%	9%	3%
Portsmouth	90%	0%	0%	10%	0%
Average	91.3%	1.4%	0.4%	6.2%	0.8%

Table 5, using a classification around for 20 years,¹¹ fills out the national picture which is that transplants, and even grafts, are a rare occurrence, contributing only 2% of the total. Our team holds no view that they are in any way wrong, but we think that the opportunities for them and the resources needed are equally rare. They usually require a church building surplus to requirements or one much in need of rescue, a large team of committed and prosperous volunteers, and the income from the start for a full time and ordained leader, all of which require a large sending church and support from the diocese if needed to trump injured local feeling. The picture outside London usually does not possess this set of required features. The evidence supports the view that in the rest of the country the picture is quite different. It is one of many varied small things growing up, rather than a few large ones, as shown in table 6.

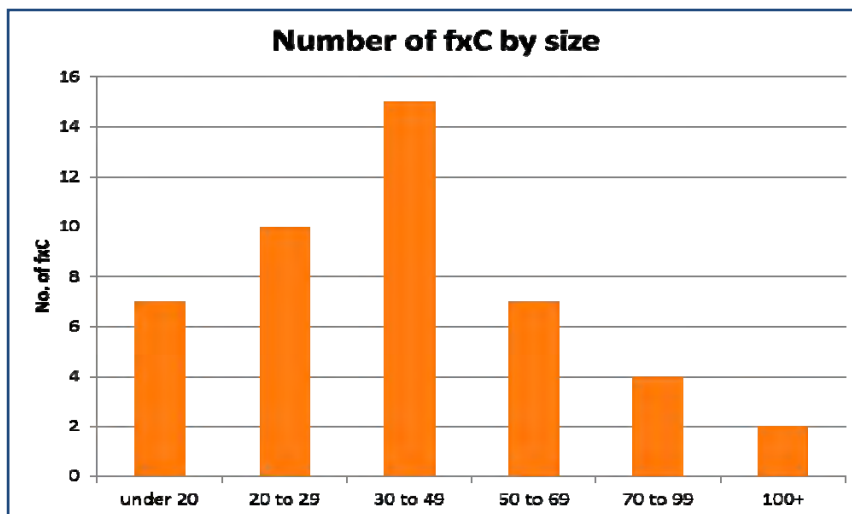
¹¹ The meaning of the terms is found in *Breaking New Ground* (London: CHP 1994) pp. 6-7 and 49. They are explained a little in the glossary.

Table 6: Average congregation sizes of fxC

Diocese	Nos. fxC begun	No. live in 2012	Attendance 2012	Mean fxC size
Liverpool	78	77	2933	38.09
Canterbury	72	64	3177	49.64
Leicester	52	48	1811	37.73
Derby	46	40	1465	36.63
Chelmsford	50	45	1830	40.67
Norwich	63	60	2864	47.73
Ripon & Leeds	39	36	1083	30.08
Blackburn	64	56	2702	48.25
Bristol	33	32	1727	53.97
Portsmouth	21	19	1271	66.89
Totals	518	477	20863	
Average				43.7

The range of attendance met varied from 500 to 5. However, that needs qualifying with what is deemed typical. Leicester diocese illustrates a typical range of sizes.

Graph 2: the range of sizes of fxC in Leicester diocese

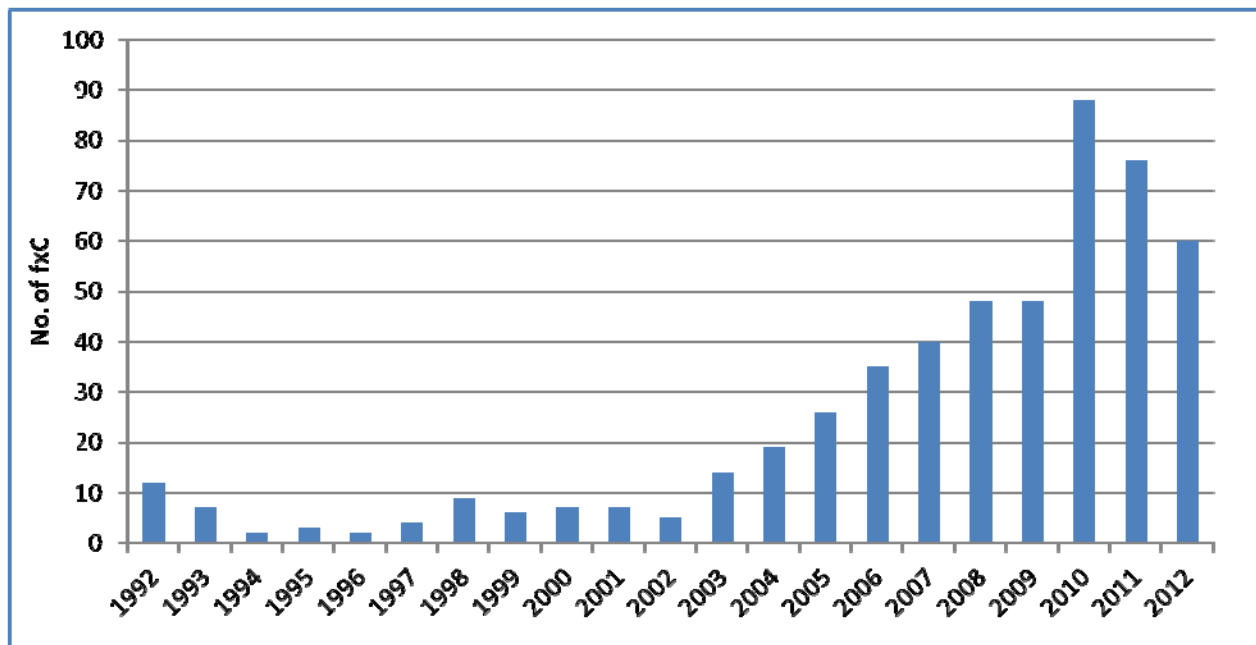


The grouping of size chosen are uneven to attempt to pick up the variations in size of those groups under 30 attending, but no special other significance should be attached to it. It is not certain or fixed at what number a small group should be deemed a congregation. A congregation of six in a remote rural setting might be normal but smaller than a vigorous suburban house group of eighteen.

4.1.5 The number of fxC per year in the research period

This was not specifically requested in the brief, but it is one apt measure to assess a trend of growth in the mission of the Church of England.

Graph 3: The increase in frequency of starting fxC



Two salient features need to be borne in mind to interpret this bar chart.

Firstly, this only shows the data gleaned from ten dioceses and does not show the total national picture. It is simply unknown whether this data, being from about one quarter of the dioceses, means that the national figure is four times these totals. However, results from previous regular research conducted by George Lings up until 1997 are congruent with what is shown above in 1992-1997. It was then known that in the earliest years of the '90s around 40 church plants per year were being registered by him, and then this number began to fall.

Secondly, the figure for 2012 is known to be incomplete because data from the dioceses surveyed earliest in the process only went up to the date of the survey, which began in late 2011. Thus no examples from Liverpool in 2012 are included, nor any from Canterbury after March 2012. A calculation was made, of which months were excluded in each diocese worked with, up until Ripon & Leeds records began to be taken in 2013. We also assumed a steady start rate, to give a measure of consistency. On that basis, it would be reasonable to assert that 33% of the 2012 examples are missing. Thus a projected figure of 80 examples for 2012 is plausible.

Despite these caveats, a few clear impressions are created. Firstly, that the growth of this phenomenon precedes *Mission-shaped Church*, as the report asserted. Secondly, since that report in 2004, the rate of continued increase has been steady for some years, such that it is now at least four times what it was in 2004. Thirdly, the pattern has been more varied since 2008 and only continued research will be able to put it in context. It may be that a low 2009 figure and high one for 2010 should be smoothed and the rate of increase continues, or it may mark the beginning of a plateau to the number of new starts. Even if the latter proves true, this should not mask that the

Church of England is in a significantly different position to where it found itself ten years earlier in 2003, and gratitude is appropriate. One possible inference and way to put it is that the Church of England is now starting four to five fxC every week.

Summary of 4.1

- Even allowing for the methodological vulnerabilities discussed, the proportions of de-churched and non-churched present at fxC are far greater than critics allowed, and worthy of attention by the national Church.
- The team sizes taken are a diagnostic indicator that the world of fxC is one of diverse sets of small Christian communities. We strongly suspect that even adding the number of large examples in the capital would not fundamentally alter this overall picture.
- The vast majority begin from, and stay within a parish (see section 5.4 for more details). They have ongoing connection with this sending church. Grafts and transplants together only account for 2% of the story.
- The modest sized resultant communities formed strongly underline that the whole phenomenon is best understood as a large varied collection of small things. Small is a relative term and here we mean in contrast to the average congregation in dioceses. This factor puts the enterprise of starting a fxC within the range of many more existing congregations.
- The rise in the incidence of starting fresh expressions of Church across the years shows significant growth in the decade since the publication of *Mission-shaped Church* in 2004. It is hard not to think the two are strongly connected, in view of how widely the report has sold, a stream of further ‘mission-shaped’ titles in books, the coining and adoption of new vocabulary, production of training materials and existence of a national team to take forward this agenda, although this research did not specifically ask those questions to demonstrate precise causality.

4.2 The contribution of the fxC compared with an overall diocese

At this point it is relevant to disclose and explore a feature not originally explicitly requested, which is the number of people attending the fxC and the proportions of fxC to churches in each diocese. This provides for the first time an assessment of the scale of their contribution to the mixed economy. Table 7 should be considered in the context of Table 8 which lays out some background features of the dioceses surveyed.

Table 7: fxC as a proportion of diocesan churches and AWA

Diocese name	No. of fxC	Diocese no. of churches	fxC/dioc churches	fxC attendance (all ages)	Diocese AWA 2011	fxC/dioc attendance
Liverpool	78	258	30.2%	2933	28600	10.3%
Canterbury	72	328	22.0%	3177	19900	16.0%
Leicester	52	313	16.6%	1811	15900	11.4%
Derby	46	330	13.9%	1465	18000	8.1%
Chelmsford	50	598	8.4%	1830	41500	4.4%
Norwich	63	638	9.9%	2864	21500	13.3%
Ripon & Leeds	39	256	15.2%	1083	16100	6.7%
Blackburn	64	278	23.0%	2702	27200	9.9%
Bristol	33	205	16.1%	1727	17200	10.0%
Portsmouth	21	173	12.1%	1271	13700	9.3%
Totals	518	3377	15.3%	20863	219600	9.5%

Conclusions from this table alone are drawn out after comments are made on the background, on page 31.

Table 8: AWA changes contrasted with population shifts¹²

Diocese	Population 2006	Population 2011	Change in population 2006-2011	AWA 2006	AWA 2011	Change in AWA 2006-2011	fxC/dioc attendance	Difference: Population change & AWA change
Liverpool	1573000	1561000	-0.76%	29400	28600	-2.72%	10.3%	-1.96
Blackburn	1282000	1314000	2.50%	32400	27200	-16.05%	9.9%	-18.55
Derby	981000	1027000	4.69%	18800	18000	-4.26%	8.1%	-8.94
Ripon&Leeds	780000	819000	5.00%	16200	16100	-0.62%	6.7%	-5.62
Portsmouth	710000	760000	7.04%	15200	13700	-9.87%	9.3%	-16.91
Norwich	797000	871000	9.28%	22100	21500	-2.71%	13.3%	-12.00
Leicester	891000	984000	10.44%	16500	15900	-3.64%	11.4%	-14.07
Canterbury	819000	913000	11.48%	24300	19900	-18.11%	16.0%	-29.58
Bristol	867000	968000	11.65%	17600	17200	-2.27%	10.0%	-13.92
Chelmsford	2651000	2991000	12.83%	42700	41500	-2.81%	4.4%	-15.64

¹² The raw figures are taken from central statistics of the Church of England.

4.2.1 A challenge to face and positive contribution made

Table 8 is ordered according to population growth and confirms that population growth is generally more vigorous in the south than in the north, with Leicester as the exception.

Secondly, it is clear that none of these dioceses are keeping pace with population growth which is of concern and nuances their attendance figures as shown in the right hand column.

Thirdly, taking a longer view as illustrated in the change of AWA (Average Weekly Attendance) over six years, all are in various measures of decline, occasionally rapid, which is exacerbated when compared to population change. We suggest this is one measure of the scale of mission challenge presently faced.

It is then striking and notable that in 7 out of 10 cases the growth attributable to fxC attendance more than offsets that decline and in two further cases nearly does so.

4.2.2 Conclusions drawn from table 7

The first correlation is between the number of fxC in each diocese and the overall number of *churches*.¹³ Throughout this research, the comparison made has been with the number of churches, not parishes, because they are more alike. Parishes may well contain more than one church and we now know that most fxC meet within the existing parish that sent them out. It is not definitively known which dioceses include the fxC in their count of churches, so it was assumed that they have been, as this would be desirable. We are aware this calculation renders the figure vulnerable to the danger of over-claiming.

The resultant range of percentage varies widely from 8.4% – 30.2%. The team do not know why this more than threefold range occurs and why one diocese has twice the average figure of 15.3%. Anecdotally it is known that Liverpool diocese has an energetic and well-resourced church growth team, but that is to foist causation onto correlation. Before any conclusions of unusual effectiveness are drawn, the table also shows that the Liverpool proportion of fxC attendance is only a little above average. Hence both measures - churches and attendance - are needed to arrive at a more nuanced estimate of their contribution.

518 examples from ten dioceses yield an average of fxC per diocese of 52. As the team suspected, when only six dioceses had been analysed, the average number started to fall from the previous figure of 60. We know also that one other diocese initially contacted said it had none, but there may yet be others with many. If it should prove to be the case that there were as many as 47 per diocese, that would mean there are more than 2000 Anglican fxC round the country. The table shows that on average the fxC are 15.3% of diocesan churches. As central data for 2011 asserts, there are 15924 Church of England churches; a ratio of about one in seven to one in eight of them being fxC seems a reasonable estimate of that contribution. In that English church growth and decline is sometimes inferred from small percentage points, an increase here of 15% has greater significance.

The table also plots AWA, fxC *attendance* and the resultant fxC percentage. Then another measure of what fxC contribute to a diocese appears. Once more the range is wide, a nearly fourfold difference from 4.4% to 16.0%. Once more we do not know why this has occurred.

¹³ We have no data on whether those churches have more than one congregation.

However, what is obvious is that the dioceses are performing differently in this aspect of their overall mission and arguably it would be in their interest, in view of the general effectiveness of fxC, to be as effective as they can. Some dioceses at the higher end of the range are showing what is possible.

The difference across the dioceses is certainly not as simple as alleging an urban prevalence of fxC and a contrasting rural absence, as the Norwich and Canterbury figures exemplify. Generally the statistics reveal that the percentage of fxC churches is higher than the attendance. This is congruent with what we know, that the average size of fxC is smaller than corresponding existing churches. However deeply rural Norwich reverses that pattern, where we found the size of fxC was greater than the average of inherited congregations, many of whom serve tiny rural communities.¹⁴ Further research into the mission history of dioceses, and the climate surrounding fxC, including appointments made, creation of policies and resourcing of them would be needed to suggest convincing interpretation of this varied data. Recommendation 4 takes this forward.

Both measures give harder data than possessed before to the Church of England and are one measure of the contribution made by fxC. In most cases, excepting attendance in Chelmsford, it would be harsh to write it off as marginal. In the overall scheme, clearly fxC are the minor partners compared to parishes, yet as a measure of overall growth or decline they are significant.

One slightly startling measure of this effect is that if the overall fxC attendance figure of 20863 has some meaning, then this is the equivalent to the addition of a new whole medium sized diocese to the Church of England. The 2011 AWA figures show the diocesan average is 25100, but 21 out of 43 are under 20,000. Also, if this research with one quarter of the dioceses was repeated with another quarter of them, and its findings were consistent with what is found here, there would be more validity in thinking that the overall difference nationally is the equivalent of having four new dioceses. If the tougher view over frequency of attendance, set out in table 9, is asserted, this would still equate to two new dioceses.

4.2.3 Assessing the fxC contribution to a diocese

In evaluating the fxC attendance figures in table 7, we highlight two kinds of uncertainty that qualify the figures and consequent conclusions.

Firstly, at the time of data collection it was not known whether either the existence of our list of fxC, or the attendance at them, had been included in all the diocesan AWA. (This measure was chosen rather than usual Sunday attendance as fxC meet on many days of the week.) Even our key contacts in each diocese were not certain whether or not this was the case. We have now tested this with the freely given co-operation of the Church's national Research and Statistics department, looking at all our chosen dioceses. We were aware that examples could fall into any of the following categories of overlap or disconnection:

- 1 One party included where the other excluded
- 2 Both parties agreed on particular exclusions or inclusions
- 3 Only one party had a particular record

It was found that the overall picture is very uneven and the research and statistics department are very aware they can do little better than the quality of data they receive. One diocese that we

¹⁴ It is not known when and if those attending a fxC also attend the sending church.

studied (and known to have many examples of fxC) submitted no records of fxC whatsoever. In the cases of only two dioceses studied there were very few examples known nationally that we did not know of; in most others they reported alleged cases that we were unaware of. Many of the latter the national team elected to exclude. In all dioceses we covered, we assessed and then recorded many examples of which national records were unaware. Our methodologies differ, which partially accounts for these variances. Whereas we assess each case via our criteria, at the national level they are obliged to have a simpler yet more limited system which uses the name and label attached to the case presented. Comparison with our data suggests can therefore lead to inaccurate although understandable exclusions. We have found in practice that some cases with imaginative names that may not be fxC, and others sounding prosaic and unpromising which very clearly meet all our criteria. Both teams agree that it is desirable that data submitted to national returns should be more rigorous and consistent. We are glad to welcome a jointly agreed flow chart that we think will be of help (see recommendation 2).

For the sake of consistency and simplicity, the figures of table 7 have assumed that in all dioceses the figures of numbers of fxC churches were included, and the attendees were included in the AWA, as this should be normal practice. This takes the contribution of fxC seriously.

In addition, a technical difficulty in comparing the two sets of data has been that our count has been incremental, as dioceses have been covered since January 2012. The central count derives from October 2011 data. Curiously, when the same periods are compared, the overall number of fxC is fairly similar. There is, however, great disparity, for all the reasons above, when it comes to assessing the number of attenders, and the central records posit only half the number derived from our research, despite our both using the same method of counting, not including the calculation used below in table 9.

Secondly, there is the complicated question of how numbers at fxC are affected by frequency of attendance. Initially, it seems reasonable to assert that monthly attenders are equivalent to ¼ of a weekly person and a fortnightly attender is ½. This recalculation is shown below.

Table 9: Adjusted attendance by frequency

Diocese	2011 AWA	Previously reported fxC attendance	Adjusted fxC attendance	% difference	Previously reported % of AWA 2011	Adjusted % of AWA 2011
Liverpool	28600	2933	1910	-35%	10.3%	6.7%
Canterbury	19900	3177	2142.25	-33%	16.0%	10.8%
Leicester	15900	1811	1317.5	-27%	11.4%	8.3%
Derby	18000	1465	594	-59%	8.1%	3.3%
Chelmsford	41500	1830	1072.75	-41%	4.4%	2.6%
Norwich	21500	2864	1650	-42%	13.3%	7.7%
Ripon & Leeds	16100	1083	641.25	-41%	6.7%	4.0%
Blackburn	27200	2702	1500	-44%	9.9%	5.5%
Bristol	17200	1727	964	-44%	10.0%	5.6%
Portsmouth	13700	1271	365.75	-71%	9.3%	2.7%
Totals	219600	20863	12157.5		Averages 9.5%	5.5%

Examining each case ...	if fxC meets monthly then attendance was divided by 4 if fxC meets fortnightly then attendance was divided by 2 if fxC meets weekly then the attendance remained unchanged
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However, what is less certain is whether this revised view truly compares like with like.

Anecdotally, it is now often heard that in existing parishes ‘regular’ now means something like fortnightly. When what regular meant was put as a question to a residential meeting of Winchester diocesan synod in September 2013 they came up with it meaning monthly. In addition, in both existing and fresh expressions of Church, leaders report that the numbers with whom they are in active touch is greatly in excess of numbers on any given day of public worship. However, the former are not usually officially counted.

Furthermore, most leaders (and national figures) hope that those only coming monthly will increase their depth of Christian commitment and frequency of attendance, and set out to work for that. In practice they treat each number not as a fraction but as a person. In that latter sense, what we have quoted as ‘attendance’ for the fxC means the number of people that the fxC have some regular and meaningful contact with, not counting a wider fringe. Some fxC have told us that such fringes may be twice the size or more of the cited attendance.

4.2.4 A return on the investment in people sent

Table 10: Numbers sent out and numbers now at fxC

Diocese name	Team sent	Attendance now	Ratio: of sent to attendance now
Liverpool	595	2933	4.9
Canterbury	1044	3177	3.0
Leicester	643	1811	2.8
Derby	373	1465	3.9
Chelmsford	616	1830	3.0
Norwich	719	2864	4.0
Ripon & Leeds	309	1083	3.5
Blackburn	702	2702	3.8
Bristol	502	1727	3.4
Portsmouth	317	1271	4.0
Totals	5820	20863	3.6

Table 10 has remarkable content. 5820 people have been part of starting something new, which is good news and not what is normally associated with the life of the Church of England. But it is the resultant ratio that is the most telling. Any parish that grew over time by 25% would be considered effective and advocated as a good example. The fxC steadily outperform that. For every one person sent, at least another two and a half are now present. This is a 250% increase over time. There is nothing else in the Church of England that can do anything like this.

Summary of 4.2

- The contrast of tables 7 and 8 shows that the increase in attendance brought by fxC is greater than the prior AWA decline in seven of ten dioceses in the period 2006-2011.
- Addition of nearly 10% attendance and 15% increase in the number of churches contributed by fxC is a significant addition to the missional and ecclesial life of our dioceses.
- Results from ten dioceses alone show the equivalent of one medium sized diocese has been added through fxC attendance to the Church of England.
- The return on the investment made in people sent out is very promising.
- Variations shown across the dioceses merit further research.

4.3 What proportion of newcomers came from the surrounding area and how wide is their reach in terms of culture, class and ethnicity?

This form of the research question elides two areas asked for in the original research brief. The report offers four complementary ways to assess this question.

4.3.1 Geographical/social setting

The first discloses the variety of geographical and social settings in which the fxC began. Eleven broad categories were chosen aiming to represent a spectrum from city centre to rural, used in table 11. It should be noted that none of the three most populous English conurbations, London, Birmingham and Manchester were covered, the largest and most densely populated studied being Liverpool. Also only four dioceses studied had any New Towns.

We were aware that some working in rural ministry thought only having two different rural designations was limiting. We knew there are several more complex systems such as four concentric rings from urban centre to remote, and another fivefold designation according to varied economic function. In addition there is another by standing and history in a village.¹⁵ We opted for something simpler on the basis that those interviewed might not be familiar with this array of choices and unable to select meaningfully and consistently.

In practice interviewers and interviewees found having our variety of choices helpful, not least because many parishes span more than one type of area which could all be registered using more than one category. It was found that the designations chosen seldom had to be explained.

Table 11: Social areas served by fxC

Area served	1992-1998		1999-2005		2006-2012		Totals	
		%		%		%		%
City Centre	1	1.6%	2	1.8%	22	3.8%	25	3.3%
Urban	4	6.5%	12	10.7%	50	8.7%	66	8.8%
Urban Priority Area	5	8.1%	10	8.9%	52	9.0%	67	8.9%
Local Authority Estate	6	9.7%	5	4.5%	38	6.6%	49	6.5%
Local & Private Estate	9	14.5%	6	5.4%	54	9.4%	69	9.2%
New Town	2	3.2%	1	0.9%	2	0.3%	5	0.7%
Private Housing Estate	7	11.3%	7	6.3%	15	2.6%	29	3.9%
Suburban	11	17.7%	22	19.6%	77	13.4%	110	14.7%
Town	6	9.7%	17	15.2%	103	17.9%	126	16.8%
Expanded Village	9	14.5%	15	13.4%	92	16.0%	116	15.5%
Rural	2	3.2%	15	13.4%	70	12.2%	87	11.6%

Ordering the results from 10 dioceses in a rough list from city to rural, and in the three seven year periods studied, discloses some discernible patterns for comment.

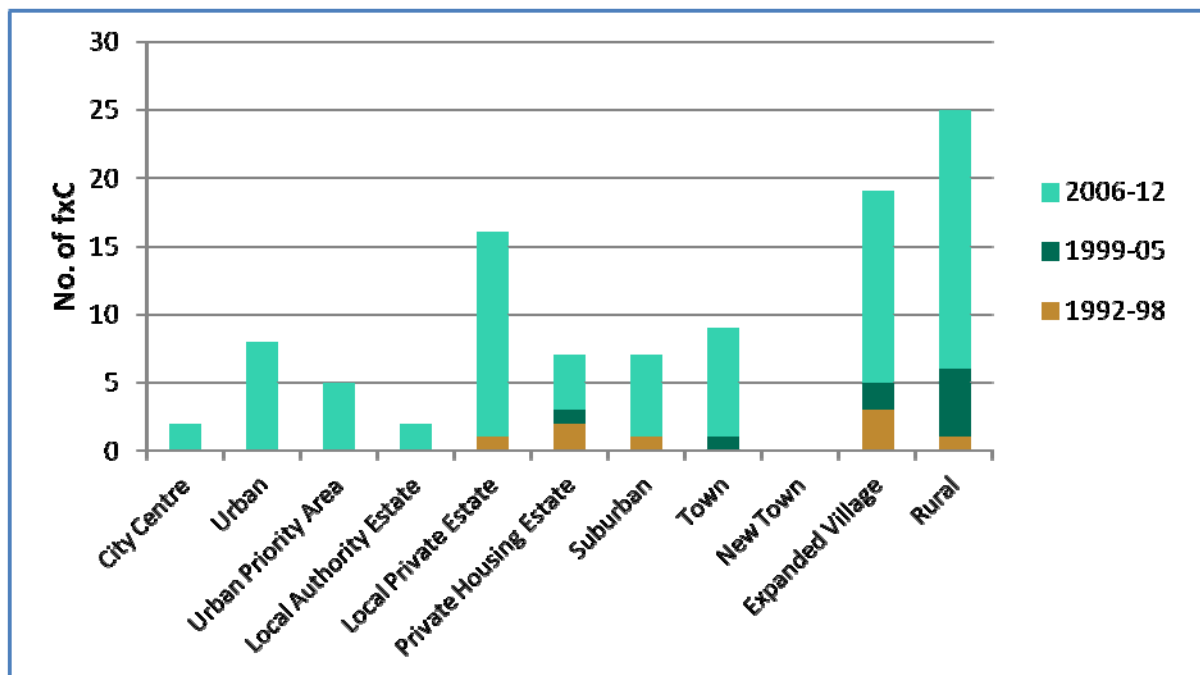
¹⁵ All these are unpacked in G. Lings, *The Village and Fresh Expressions Encounters on the Edge* No. 27 (Sheffield: Church Army, 2005) pp. 4-8.

The percentage totals broadly show that locations towards the foot of the table have a higher incidence of fxC. Indeed, the list from private housing estates down to expanded villages and then adding city centre makes over 54% of the total. Some could see this as favouring middle England. However, while there could be debate about which categories constitute the more demanding contexts for the fxC type of mission, it might be admitted that what used to be called UPA areas, other inner urban contexts, outer local authority estates, new towns and the more deeply rural contexts, all present discernible challenges and together make up just under 37% of cases. In the majority of these latter contexts the less affluent and less mobile are to be found.

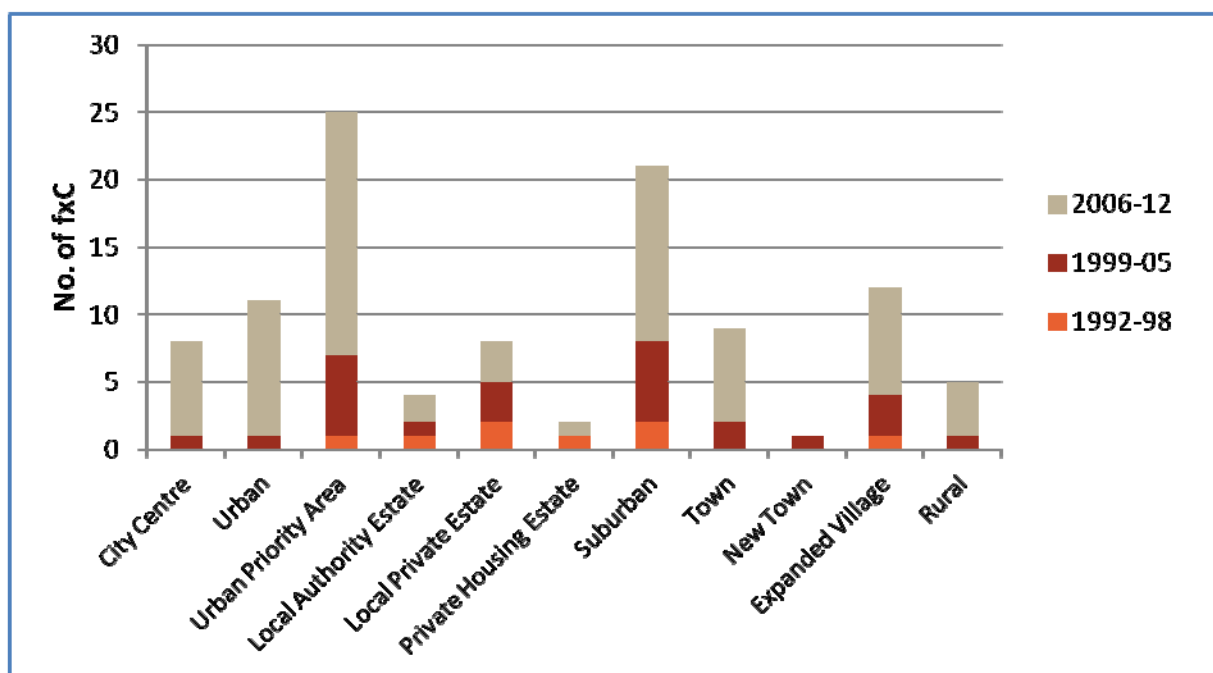
This is evidence that the fxC do make significant engagement with less comfortable Britain. That very broad division into easier and harder mission contexts leaves the 9.2% mixed estates unclassified as by definition it straddles them. This report suggests that the very low figure for new towns is attributable to them only occurring in under half the dioceses surveyed. It is not known what that figure might be in a fully national perspective. This taxonomy is far simpler than others used in social sciences and government statistics that vary over whether they assess wealth, levels of education, types of employment status, different kinds of housing, indicators of urban or rural identity, or indicators of class. It was chosen for manageability and anticipating a modest level of sophistication in this subject matter among interviewees. With that limitation, the report asserts that fxC can be born and grow in all these eleven contexts. We investigated comparison with national data to see if these proportions are typical but the data was not available at the same level of detail.

Table 11 cannot show the effect of regional context, by which dioceses differ, not least in population density. The range was from 4013 people per square mile to 483. Thus Liverpool had five rural examples and Norwich 25, and conversely Liverpool had four times as many city centre examples. The two following bar charts of the two dioceses illustrate this and other differences, attributable to context.

Graph 4: Norwich diocese and fxC by geographical context



Graph 5: Liverpool diocese and fxC by geographical context



It is to be expected that each diocese will have a different profile in such a taxonomy and that is very much what has been found, as illustrated above. Had they all been very alike it would imply that fxC only appeal to certain kinds of social groups and neighbourhoods. This is not the case. By contrast it looks like evidence of engagement with broad social context.

4.3.2 Neighbourhood or network?

The second measure of whether those who came to fxC were from the area was to ask the leaders to what extent newcomers had been drawn from the neighbourhood or from wider relational or social networks, such as a school catchment. The latter might or might not be co-terminous with parish boundaries. The question pursued the nature of why they came, not whether parish boundaries were being crossed. The scoring system was the same as explained in relation to the leaders' view of people being Christian, De-churched or Non-churched in section 4.1.2.

Table 12 & Graph 6: Network as a proportion of how people came

Diocese	% Network as main or only factor
Liverpool	35%
Canterbury	43%
Leicester	46%
Derby	35%
Chelmsford	48%
Norwich	25%
Ripon & Leeds	49%
Blackburn	23%
Bristol	36%
Portsmouth	24%
Average	36.5%

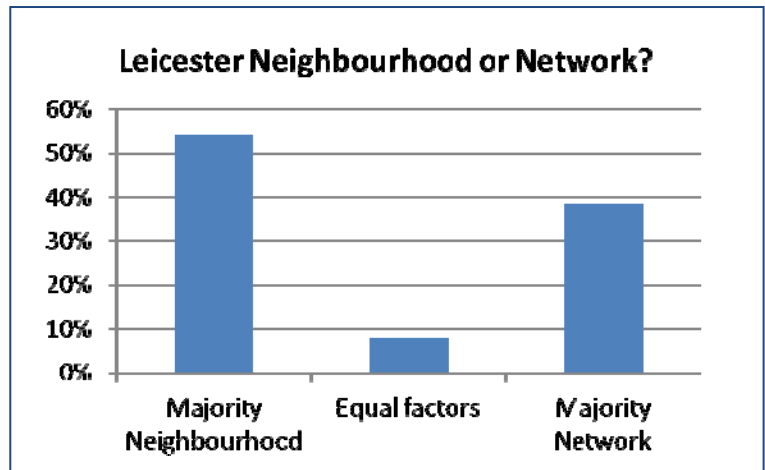


Table 12 shows the variety met across the fxC in the dioceses surveyed and Leicester diocese is chosen as an example illustrating in graph 6 the average results found. The range is wide from 23% - 49% and flies in the face of any simplistic view that network is a solely urban phenomenon. In Norwich diocese, one quarter of the fxC found network to be a major factor, but in almost equally rural Ripon & Leeds, where the vast majority of examples were not in Leeds city itself, half of the fxC found network to be a major factor.

Tables 13 and 14 show distinct links between neighbourhood and network variables and the variety of types of fxC. Some were almost by definition, others as might be expected, while further ones had some element of surprise.

Table 13: fxC types with high network scores

Kind of fxC	% with a high network score	Commentary
Network church	94%	This is how they aim to work, through their members' links, not through territory. However, this shows there is still a minor part for area to play.
New monastic community	73%	They do not advertise or have distinct areas. People find such groups through relationships and the internet.
Clusters (mission-shaped communities)	68%	They form by identifying a common mission task, often wider than a parish. They therefore sometimes meet outside the parish, or in cities even beyond the deanery boundary.
Youth church	64%	We noted they often serve more than one parish and their secondary school catchments are similarly wide.
Special interest group	62%	This was our term for a whole range of highly specific cultural groups: arts / goths / skaters / learning disabilities, etc. We infer from this finding that they are drawn by similarity, not proximity.

Table 14: fxC types with high neighbourhood scores

Kind of fxC	% with a high neighbourhood score	Commentary
New traditional service	90%	By definition meeting in the existing church, but valuing tradition may also mean attending the local parish church.
Messy Church	90%	We had no idea how strongly locally focused these were. Perhaps having large numbers of children within an all age aim fosters that area/neighbourhood factor.
Community development plant	89%	Ethnographic study of these shows they chose to work and form in closely defined needy areas. Once again in such groups lack of mobility and choice are endemic.
Older people's church	88%	Lack of mobility is inherent for this group, so the nearer the church the better. Also we saw the parish forming church in their retirement homes.
Multiple Sunday congregations	85%	They meet in the parish church and now we learn that they draw mainly from the immediate area.
Child focused church	84%	It may be the case that this feature overlaps with attendance at local schools and the ability to walk to the venue.

4.3.3 How typical the attenders are and what ethnic diversity is exhibited

The third perspective was asking leaders how typical those coming were of the area, in terms of social-economic dynamics and what ethnic diversity was present among them. In retrospect, the writers regret that this particular data only began to be collected halfway through the overall process and it was impractical then to go back to several hundred contacts. Thus it only exists for five dioceses so far. This means it is far less representative.

Table 15: Ethnicity and how typical attenders were

Diocese name	Wide range of ethnic backgrounds	A few ethnic backgrounds	One ethnic background	Prefer not say
Norwich	0	25	37	1
Ripon & Leeds	1	13	25	0
Blackburn	0	18	46	0
Bristol	3	19	11	0
Portsmouth	0	11	10	0

Diocese name	Totally typical	Mainly typical	Moderately typical	Slightly typical
Norwich	18	28	15	2
Ripon & Leeds	14	22	2	1
Blackburn	27	22	12	3
Bristol	15	15	3	0
Portsmouth	9	10	2	0

In interpreting this data it is suggested that the two features, typicality and ethnicity, are understood by interviewees to nuance one another. Often, when interviewees said that those coming to the fxC were from one ethnic background, they added that it was typical of their area. Those selecting the option ‘a few ethnic backgrounds’ would comment with some frequency that EU migrant workers made this difference.

Table 16: Ethnicity over time and overall proportions

Ethnicity	1992-98	1999-05	2006-12	Totals	%
Wide range ethnic b'grds	1	1	2	4	1.8%
A few ethnic b'grds	6	10	70	86	39.1%
One ethnic b'grd	10	15	104	129	58.6%
Prefer not say	0	0	1	1	0.5%
Totals	17	26	177	220	

It can be seen that proportions of the three options have remained similar over time. While there is no reason to think this picture distorts what the leaders perceived, several caveats need entering. The team had no way to compare this data with what might be true of other denominations in those regions, nor an easy way to assess how these figures compared with state statistics. We were also aware that many areas with known multi-cultural identity like London, Birmingham or Bradford were not included.

Table 17: Typicality over time and the overall proportions

Typical	1992-98	1999-05	2006-12	Totals	%
Totally typical	8	6	69	83	37.7
Mainly typical	6	13	78	97	44.1
Moderately typical	3	5	26	34	15.5
Slightly typical	0	2	4	6	2.7
Totals known	17	26	177	220	

Across these fxC, in 82% of cases the leaders thought the membership was totally or mainly typical of the area. It would have been concerning if a significant proportion were deemed moderately or slightly typical, but this is not the case.

4.3.4 The ages that are served by fxC

A fourth measure was to assess in very broad terms to what extent the fxC were drawing children (deemed as under 16), adults only, or serving all ages. Looking at their attendance figures, especially when they covered a few years, the data was usually clear enough to split them into ‘child focused’ (including a few adults to lead and supervise), ‘adults only’ and ‘all age’.

Table 18: Age groups and fxC

Diocese name	Child focused	All age	Adults only
Liverpool	13.2%	55.0%	31.8%
Canterbury	3.3%	86.2%	10.6%
Leicester	4.8%	66.7%	28.6%
Derby	8.0%	73.3%	18.7%
Chelmsford	10.4%	66.7%	22.9%
Norwich	0.9%	89.7%	9.3%
Ripon & Leeds	13.9%	66.7%	19.4%
Blackburn	7.7%	76.9%	15.4%
Bristol	5.4%	76.8%	17.9%
Portsmouth	0.0%	96.3%	3.7%
Average	7.2%	73.7%	19.2%

One factor stands out: most of the fxC by intention and attendance are all age, with that average being 74%. It is not the case that most of them serve specialised niches, which critics, perhaps nervous of a creeping consumerism, have feared. It is also true to a lesser extent that they can be specialised if needed, as shown by the child focused column. Within the adults only grouping we found those serving older people, new traditional services and some special interest groups.

The second factor is the puzzle indicated by the 14-fold difference across the range of child focused examples in these dioceses and the lesser but still striking eight-fold difference in the ‘adults only’ cases. We think it is possible that there is some link to dioceses having significant urban areas, or most fxC in other dioceses being either urban or town. It may be that in such areas there is more scope and need for specialisation. But this is conjectural and further research is needed to test this.

4.3.5 Under 16s at fresh expressions of Church

Tables 6-10 all disclosed the all age attendance figures for the ten dioceses covered. This was derived from the leaders' estimate of the average attendance, for each year, subdivided by them between those over and those under 16 years of age. Among all those under 16, we do not know the proportions of pre-school, junior and secondary age young people, although some inferences might be drawn from the different fxC types, some of which are aimed at such life stages. We now show these overall figures and their proportions.

Table 19: Attendance of over 16s and under 16s

Diocese	fxC attendance [all ages]	Adult	<16	% Adult	% <16
Liverpool	2933	1693	1240	57.7%	42.3%
Canterbury	3177	1958	1219	61.6%	38.4%
Leicester	1811	1229	582	67.9%	32.1%
Derby	1465	858	607	58.6%	41.4%
Chelmsford	1830	1143	687	62.5%	37.5%
Norwich	2864	1703	1161	59.5%	40.5%
Ripon & Leeds	1083	648	435	59.8%	40.2%
Blackburn	2702	1474	1228	54.6%	45.4%
Bristol	1727	1069	658	61.9%	38.1%
Portsmouth	1271	625	646	49.2%	50.8%
Totals	20863	12400	8463		
Averages				59.4%	40.6%

Several inferences are clear and others may be reasonably asserted. Firstly, there is range exhibited. Leicester has the highest proportion of over 16s and the lowest proportion of under 16s, and Portsmouth is at the other end of that scale. Secondly, all dioceses are seeing significant proportions of under 16s attending fxC.

This significance is highlighted by reference to the national context. For some years the Church of England has been concerned at its declining influence among children and young people, as well as its poor record in retaining them. The Strands 1 & 2 report from David Voas underlines this. To put the figures of table 19 in context, the 2011 census informs us that around 19% of the English population are under 16. The Statistics for Mission 2011 report tells us that 19.9% of AWA attenders are under 16. Voas notes that it is the midweek figure that raises the Sunday one from around 15%.¹⁶ Neither of these figures is very far away from the census figure. However, they are in marked contrast to fxC data on under 16s attending, which ranges from 32% to 51%.

Table 45 shows that fxCs meet across all the days of the week, with the majority not on a Sunday. This may contribute to the higher under 16s figure. Nevertheless something more is going on to give these markedly higher under 16 attendance figures.

Another part of the explanation for higher attendance among under 16s is to explore the influence of some types of fxC that are deliberately focused on younger age groups, and the one on youth. Yet against this bias, one fifth have only adults attending, as shown in table 18. That table also underlines that in nearly 74% of cases fxC serve a range of ages including adults. Thus to allege

¹⁶ D. Voas and L. Watt *Numerical change in church attendance: national, local and individual factors* p. 16.

an overall bias to fxC working principally with children is overdrawn. If anything there is a bias is towards working with families.

Table 20: Age group percentages by fxC kind

fxC Kind	Over16 %	Under 16 %
Youth church	44.8%	55.2%
Child focused church	48.2%	51.8%
Church for under 5s	48.3%	51.7%
Messy Church	49.4%	50.6%
School based church	52.7%	47.3%
Multiple Sunday congregation	59.1%	40.9%
Alt Worship	63.3%	36.7%
Cell church	63.4%	36.6%
Mid week church	65.1%	34.9%
Community development plant	66.1%	33.9%
Cluster based church	66.6%	33.4%
Network church	67.1%	32.9%
Seeker church	69.9%	30.1%
Café church	70.9%	29.1%
New monastic community	75.4%	24.6%
Traditional church plant	76.2%	23.8%
Special interest group	80.8%	19.2%
New traditional service	82.2%	17.8%
Older peoples church	99.3%	0.7%

This table discloses several dynamics. The first five entries at the top of the list are all inherently connected to work with under 16s and so have the highest under 16 percentages. One background feature is that ONS give the present national average of 1.7 dependent children in a family, or 54% adults and 46% under 16s.¹⁷

When the data on under 16s is compared to the 17% of under 16s at inherited Sunday church, then all but the last entry in the list attract more under 16s. Moreover, it is obvious why the last one falls below it.

The picture then is neither that any kind of fxC deals exclusively in under 16s, and that most kinds draw many more than in inherited church.

The data of tables 19 and 20 neither guarantee these young attenders will be retained, nor that they have all come to an active committed faith. It may be more realistic to see it as a promising beginning. Yet it needs to be added that one cannot retain what is not present in the first place. This high under 16s attendance figure could make the contribution of the fxC towards both the present and the future life of the Church of England yet more significant.

Summary of 4.3

- fxC can begin in all kinds of geographical and social settings, with only a limited inclination for their birth occurring in the kinds of areas in which the Church of England has flourished.
- They serve neighbourhoods and networks, with the latter being 2/5^{ths} of the overall picture. Different kinds of fxC show a marked propensity to serve one or other type of mission field.
- The results, albeit from a limited number of dioceses studied, nevertheless suggest that those drawn to fxC are mainly typical of the surrounding area. Data about ethnicity is less secure in that dioceses with higher proportions of many ethnic backgrounds were not included.
- The vast majority of fxC attract all age communities, but they also have demonstrated the capacity to work with more specific groups if the need arises.
- On average at the fxC, 41% of the attendees are under 16. This is significantly higher than in inherited church and is a promising beginning.

¹⁷ This figure assumes the presence of two parents in the family and the ONS figures include 16-18s still at school.

4.4 What progress the fxC are making towards sustainability and viability

This heading has been widened beyond the original financial remit for several reasons.

It is recognised that parishes with generously endowed congregations, who thus are financially secure, are not always known for generosity to others, openness to appropriate mission challenges or courage in the face of risk. It appears that financial security and Christian maturity are not identical. The gospel teachings of Christ on money might be said to concur.

Lessons from the historic study of world mission, and the creation of young churches, suggest that maturity is indicated by three dimensions. These are taking governmental responsibility, engendering reproductive growth and reaching self-determined financial viability, in order to assess growth towards maturity in a more rounded way. It is known as three-self thinking.¹⁸

Moreover, the centrality of the topic of discipleship, and enabling people to grow as disciples of Christ, has been emphasised by several authors over the last few decades and by some diocesan bishops in promulgating strategy for their dioceses.

Furthermore, the two sacraments, being dominical, are thereby not negotiable in corporate Christian life and the practice of them contributes to ecclesial identity. Therefore, they too need to be added to this list of features associated with this section.

The questionnaire therefore included some questions in relation to all these areas.

4.4.1 Steps towards 'three self' maturity

Our ten criteria never demanded that any of these three-self dimensions should be completely achieved, knowing both that the process towards them can be long, while the life of many fxC as yet has been short, and also that such a view would bar a number of existing parishes. Rather, we asked for intention to move in these directions as befits a young church with aspirations towards ecclesial adulthood.

In addition, we did not take the view that achieving a three self identity must be interpreted narrowly as meaning covering all full on costs of a stipendiary minister, having a PCC and having sent out a further fxC. Accordingly, our questions firstly explored whether there was intention, and if so, what steps in the three areas were being taken towards its realisation. If some steps were underway then intention was registered, with notes made on the individual confidential record to assist the researchers to check their assessment.

With those provisos the next table shows, by dioceses in the order surveyed, the extent to which there was registered intention, as well as where no such intention at present exists.

¹⁸ The works of Henry Venn in the 19th century and Roland Allen in the 20th are often cited in support of this view. Some people add a fourth dimension - self-theologising - but this is even harder to measure and was omitted. The glossary of appendix two comments further.

Table 21: Steps towards ‘three self’ maturity: numbers of cases

Diocese	Number of fxC	Not at this stage	% Not at this stage	Self-financing	Self-governing	Self-reproducing
Liverpool	78	30	38.5%	33	43	23
Canterbury	72	22	30.6%	37	37	21
Leicester	52	8	15.4%	28	37	24
Derby	46	22	47.8%	15	19	9
Chelmsford	50	18	36.0%	21	28	18
Norwich	63	16	25.4%	23	38	22
Ripon & Leeds	39	9	23.1%	14	26	18
Blackburn	64	6	9.4%	37	55	29
Bristol	33	3	9.1%	24	29	23
Portsmouth	21	3	14.3%	14	18	7
Average			26.4%	47.5%	63.7%	37.5%

The evidence about ‘not at this stage’ shows that overall only 26% of the cases are not making any strides in this direction and conversely nearly three quarters of them are. It then needs to be borne in mind that we know that 228-518 examples only began since 2010 and thus are at best only three years old. Some latitude should be granted for time towards developmental maturity. However we have concerns in those dioceses where a third or towards half of the cases said they had no intentions towards any three-self identity. Sometimes it was true that the questionnaire, having raised the area, acted as a prompt to begin to address this problem. We comment further on this weakness, when examining mortality rates among fxC. Conversely, it looks like good news when in other dioceses nearly 90% of the fxC are embarked on these steps.

Among those moving towards the goal of being self-financing, which on average is 47.5% of the total, there is within this a range of stances: from those that do take a collection, those whose team members are the major givers, those which fully cover all running costs, to the few who also cover all leader costs and the rare examples that are net givers to the diocese.

Examining the self-governing aspect, which is the most common and on average is 64% of all cases, our records show that in practice most commonly this means there is a team around the leader(s), who meet at least monthly and take the day to day operating decisions. In many cases the person interviewed was keen to stress that this group deferred to the sending church’s PCC for major strategic decisions. Whether that state of affairs should long continue, for it can embody ongoing dependency, will be one issue to watch for in the next ten years.

The other clear indicator is that consistently this self-governing feature is the most commonly adopted of the three. However, where in the few dioceses this feature is relatively absent, it needs addressing. Groups that do not take responsibility for their shared life are vulnerable, both to external challenges and internal changes such as the nominated leader stopping or moving.

The third feature, self-reproducing - and the least chosen at 37.5%, which nonetheless is over a third of instances - is capable of wide interpretation. Our questionnaire cited the raising up of indigenous leaders as well as starting a further fxC. The majority of evidence revealed the first suggestion, though a minority had been involved in inspiring yet others to begin something elsewhere, with a few following the path of some of the fxC themselves leaving what had been begun and bringing to birth a further fxC.

One link between the self-governing principle and that of self-reproducing is the emergence of indigenous leadership. We have seen some evidence of this through the interviews with the fxC leaders, but it would take more qualitative work to establish the extent to which it is occurring.

We also found a clear correlation between the three self dynamic and fxC types.

Table 22: Correlations between three self elements and fxC types

Most likely to be 'not at this stage'		Shown to have taken some three-self steps	
Type of fxC	%	Type of fxC	%
Midweek church	52%	Network church	94%
Older people's church	44%	Cluster based church	89%
School based church	39%	Traditional church plant	88%
Seeker	35%	New monastic community	87%
Child focused church	33%	Community development plant	82%

We do not know and cannot demonstrate the causation, but it may be plausible to suggest that behind the left hand figures are factors like inherent dependence on the sending church and lack of resources among the considerably old and distinctly young. However, examples of church for under-fives fares a little better than this with only 28% taking no steps. With the right hand grouping there is a likely reversal of the dependency dynamic. Evidence from stories¹⁹ suggests that those kinds in this list are likely to have had to take steps towards greater interdependence in relations to any sending church, and in some cases even be independent of it. They will not all be financially well endowed, but in cases like the new monastic or clusters their ministerial costs will be low, as it is not diagnostic that they are led by stipendiary clergy.

4.4.2 Steps towards discipleship

A criticism is that fxC are actually, or even necessarily, church-lite.²⁰ Rightly a consensus exists that processes of discipleship are intrinsic to being Christian and being church. Obtaining some measure of the intention may be easier than trying to assess the results of such processes, with the latter requiring qualitative work and establishing what would be widely accepted criteria. Being committed to quantitative work, the team chose the former task of establishing some intention of this direction and selected four avenues commonly employed in existing churches to try and deepen the lives of congregation members beyond their normal attendance.

¹⁹ Such as the 56 issues in Church Army's *Encounters on the Edge* series which ran from 1999-2012.

²⁰ These and other questions are raised by A. Davison & A. Milbank in *For the Parish*, by A. Tilby within *Mission-Shaped Questions* and by M. Percy within *Evaluating Fresh Expressions*.

Table 23: Steps in encouraging discipleship at fxC

Diocese	Taking some steps	Not at this stage	One to one	Small groups	Running courses	Serving in teams
Liverpool	79%	19.2%	44.9%	44.9%	21.8%	19.2%
Canterbury	81%	19.4%	54.2%	56.9%	43.1%	36.1%
Leicester	85%	15.4%	67.3%	59.6%	32.7%	63.5%
Derby	54%	45.7%	32.6%	28.3%	17.4%	15.2%
Chelmsford	80%	20.0%	48.0%	50.0%	26.0%	28.0%
Norwich	71%	28.6%	49.2%	39.7%	28.6%	31.7%
Ripon & Leeds	87%	12.8%	35.9%	51.3%	38.5%	35.9%
Blackburn	81%	18.8%	45.3%	34.4%	32.8%	26.6%
Bristol	82%	18.2%	51.5%	51.5%	27.3%	42.4%
Portsmouth	71%	28.6%	19.0%	28.6%	33.3%	42.9%
Averages	78%	22.4%	46.9%	45.4%	30.1%	32.6%

Table 23 shows the percentage of the fxCs taking some steps to grow disciples beyond what their main gathering may achieve. The right hand side four columns show what proportion of fxC selected each of four avenues. As respondents were asked to tick any of these four options that were true in their case, the percentages do not add up to 100%. The phrase ‘serving in teams’ does not refer to the ecclesial deployment of some clergy, but only the simple co-operation between some local church members to achieve a task that serves other people. This contributes to their growth in faith.

The second column shows that in six dioceses the average of their fxC taking at least one of these steps is 80% or more. Knowing the background external criticism, suspecting that fxC inherently fail to pursue discipleship, the report asserts that this can no longer be held to be intrinsically true. This message is no brief for complacency, only evidence that a definite beginning has been made.

We noted that in Norwich and Portsmouth dioceses the proportion was a little lower and Derby was markedly so. In our local reporting back to their leaderships we asked them to take notice of this potential weakness, and advised that it should be addressed.

It would have been interesting to see what comparisons might have been made if there had been a control feature testing a range of parishes in these dioceses alongside this work. If there were further research commissioned this would be a worthwhile and informative lead to follow.

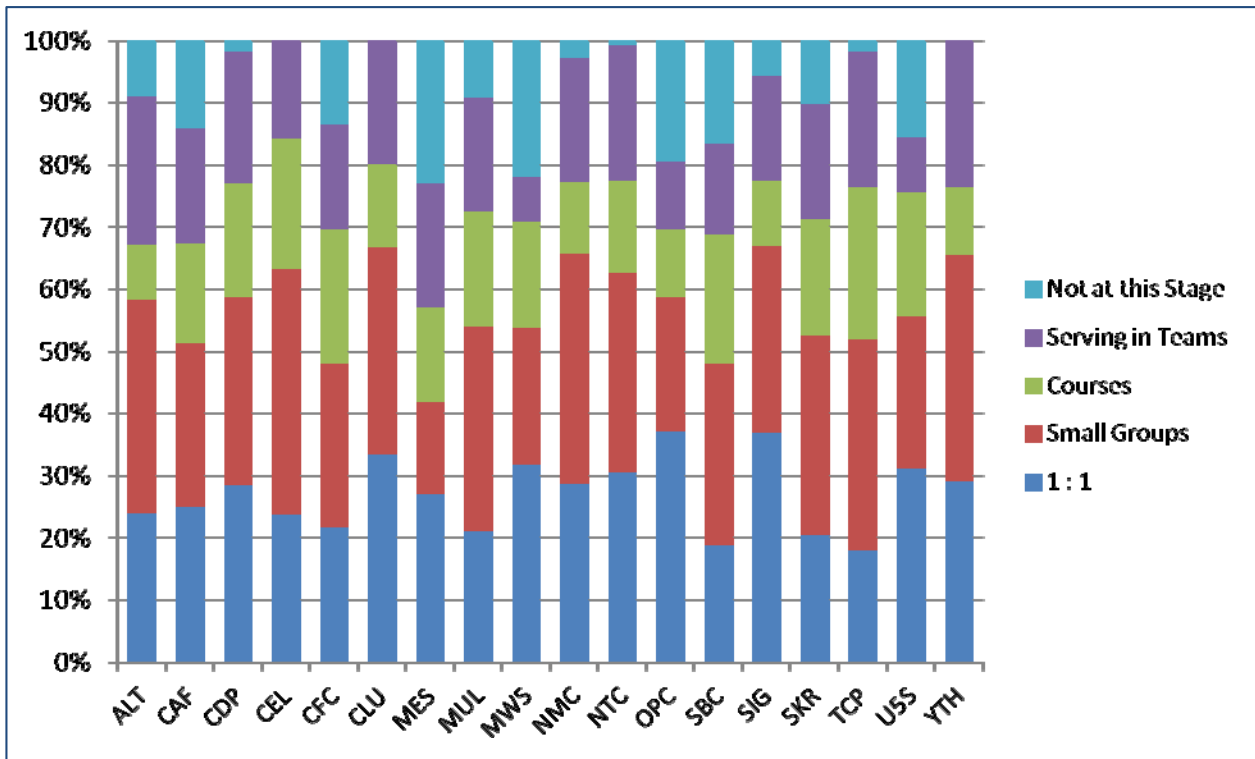
We think there may be a correlation between Leicester’s unusually high figure for serving in teams and correspondingly high proportion of lay led fxC. (Lay leadership is explored in section 4.5.5.)

The table also indicates that, across a diocese, nearly always the first two options (one to one and having small groups) are selected more often.

We do not know the reasons for this, but are aware from conversations with leaders that some difficulties are found today in running courses. This could be partly because of the increased level of busyness in people’s lives, including a higher unpredictability, making settled patterns more difficult to achieve. We also think that we detect in certain kinds of fxC that any move from attendance to further courses does not sit easily with their ethos of open enquiry.

We therefore ran a correlation between the types of fxC and choices made about discipleship.

Graph 7: Choices re steps towards discipleship, and types fxC



Abbreviations:

ALT	Alternative worship	CAF	Café church	CDP	Community development plant
CEL	Cell plant	CFC	Child focused church	CLU	Cluster
MES	Messy Church	MUL	Multiple congregation	MWS	Midweek church
NMC	New monastic community	NTC	Network church	OPC	Older people’s church
SBC	School based church	SKR	Seeker church	SIG	Special interest group
TCP	Traditional church plant	U5s	Church for <5s & carers	YTH	Youth congregation

Note that a few types of our 21 fxC are not listed here at all because the sample size was tiny.

Readers may detect further connections, but the report highlights the most obvious features. Those kinds most frequently taking some steps in discipleship include: cells, clusters, community development plants, network churches, traditional church plants and youth congregations. While some of these would automatically select the feature of small groups, the stacked bar chart shows it was not their only choice. Those kinds least likely to have embarked on any of these routes include: Messy Church, midweek church and older people’s church. Having said that, even then they are doing something in over 75% of the cases. Once more, to assert that fxC are not interested in discipleship is unfounded.

Those least likely to run courses include alt.worship, new monastic groups, older people’s church, special interest groups and youth congregations. We infer, from having studied selected cases of such groups over the years, that in most of those types such an approach does not sit easily with their ethos and is felt to be too programmatic. With older people, which in practice meant the elderly frail, there is perhaps lack of desire or energy.

Messy Church is notably low on having small groups and is reliant on 1-1 contacts as well as serving in teams to give its overall figure. The whole topic of how to pursue ‘messy discipleship’ is one of acute interest and some recent publishing.²¹

4.4.3 Fresh expressions of Church and the sacraments

Table 24: fxC and sacramental life

Diocese	Average fxC size	FxC holds communions	FxC do baptisms	Confirmations
Liverpool	38.1	47.4%	19.2%	Not known
Canterbury	49.6	48.6%	36.1%	Not known
Leicester	37.7	40.4%	26.9%	Not known
Derby	36.6	21.7%	26.1%	Not known
Chelmsford	40.7	36.0%	34.0%	Not known
Norwich	47.7	33.3%	47.6%	19.0%
Ripon & Leeds	30.1	43.6%	33.3%	25.6%
Blackburn	48.3	35.9%	42.2%	34.4%
Bristol	54.0	33.3%	42.4%	27.3%
Portsmouth	66.9	28.6%	47.6%	23.8%
Average	43.7	38.4%	34.4%	26.4%

Table 24 firstly reminds readers that these fxC are not very large in size and we know from their start date that 44% are less than three years old. It is also relevant to bear in mind from earlier tables that the significant proportion of non-churched people usually present means there is a prior induction and catechetical task to engage in, before a development towards sacramental practice becomes appropriate.

Nevertheless, there is some level of engagement by the fxC with the dominical sacraments, on average between three and four in every ten. It is a value judgment whether this is sufficient progress. In addition, in the 318 cases without communion 68% said their fxC was not yet at this stage, whereas only a further 21% of them said they saw no need. It is then more certain that neither can it be alleged that fxC, as a whole genre, are quite uninterested in the sacraments. Nor can it be claimed that no further progress need be made.

It is beyond the remit of this research to adjudicate across a divergence in the wider Church between those who argue that without sacramental practice something cannot be church in the first place, and others who think certain communities can be regarded as churches who will therefore over time, move towards sacramental life. Our team hold the latter view, which is reflected in the ten criteria. What this data establishes is that the process towards sacramental practice has begun. FxC are not devoid of this feature, though a longer view will be needed to assess further progress.

²¹ P. Moore, *Making Disciples in Messy Church* (Abingdon: BRF, 2013) and G. Lings (Ed) *Messy Church Theology* (Abingdon: BRF, 2013).

It is also noticeable that there is considerable variety of occurrence across the dioceses, such that in some only one in five fxC hold communion services, while in others nearly half do. The same range, but with different dioceses, is exhibited in regard to whether the fxC hold baptisms. In addition, the examples in these dioceses are nearly evenly split as to whether holding communions or conducting baptisms is more common. We detect these swings in practice but are not sure how to account for them. It might be linked to the prevalence of different fxC types in a diocese.

Communion variables

What the table does not disclose is the frequency of communion, nor did our questions request that it was disclosed. However, notes of the conversation enable us to say that in some cases, usually with a significant number of children, this is but annual and linked to Maundy Thursday; many more revealed a monthly celebration, while weekly communion is rare.

Where regularity of practice was established, most often the president was both episcopally ordained and seen as a member of the fxC. In the occasional or regular absence of such a person, in 43 examples (20%) an imported priest was found, or in a further 33 fxC (15%) the service that day was lay led, using communion by extension, or the event was deemed to be an agape. It was noticeable that higher proportions of lay led ‘communions’ appeared in dioceses where the cluster model of fxC is adopted. While there is no widespread overt practice of lay presidency; as over half the fxC are lay led, such questions in future might increase.

The correlation of Holy Communion with fxC types shows some fairly clear links.

Table 25: Some fxC are more/less likely to hold communion services

Most likely to have communion		Least likely to have communion	
Type of fxC	%	Type of fxC	%
Traditional Church plants	100%	Messy Church	10%
Alternative Worship	68%	Church for under 5s	16%
New Monastic Community	67%	Seeker Church	31%
Network Churches	66%	Child focused Church	31%
Older People’s Church	62%	School Based Church	39%

In the more likely category, the traditional plants have greater longevity and meet usually weekly, (see table 26 for the connection) so have moved to this practice. Alt.worship invests significantly in symbol and ritual so this could be expected. We are less sure why Network church scores highly, but suspect new Monastic Communities build on their intention for growing community among their members to include communion. For some older people’s churches this is their only chance of receiving sacramental ministry.

Examination of the less likely category offers evidence that having a significant proportion of children disinclines such groups. However, we did record that a number of leaders in these categories had thought of, or were actively considering, developing their worship in this direction. Seeker has a different but obvious link; it is designed for what suits the enquirer, although we add that we never found a single example that was solely ‘Seeker’ for the model is too resource hungry for the UK. It was always combined with some other categorisation.

It is also clear that frequency of meeting affects the likelihood of holding communions.

Table 26: Variance of fxC meeting and holding communions

Frequency of meeting	% of fxC cases with communion	% of fxC 'not at this stage'
Weekly	60.8%	20.4%
Fortnightly	36.4%	38.6%
Monthly	16.2%	64.1%

Those that have weekly meetings are far more likely to include communions within their overall pattern of worship, and those only meeting monthly are the least likely to do so at all. It is conjectural but coherent to suggest that those which meet more often come more quickly to the questions of how those communities are to mature and develop.²² These figures may be further evidence of such a progression. The table also demonstrates an inverse feature which is that those meeting monthly are the most likely to say they are not yet at this stage.

The context behind this variety of frequency of meeting is that 45.2% of the fxC meet weekly, 8.5% meet fortnightly and 46.3% meet monthly. It is also true that the incidence of monthly meeting has increased across the twenty years surveyed. It was 10.3% in the 1992-98 period, 25.0% from 1999-2005 and 52.9% in 2006-12. It is not known what progression from monthly to weekly has taken place in individual cases.

Confirmation variables

Table 24 shows that this data was only collected beginning with Norwich diocese but it reveals variety across the five surveyed. Comments made in individual phone calls underline that dioceses differ as to the practice of admitting children to communion and the age of confirmation. Those that did not yet have confirmations were asked why this was so and 68% said it was a case of not yet being at that stage, but on average 25% of cases said they thought there was no need. This may link to the national fall in confirmations over the past decade.

²²Chapter 10 in G. Lings, *Messy Church Theology* (Abingdon: BRF, 2013) explores something of these dynamics in a Messy Church in Australia.

Baptism variables

Correlations with fxC type are as follows:

Table 27: Which fxC are more/less likely to hold baptisms?

Most likely to hold baptisms		Least likely to hold baptisms	
Type of fxC	%	Type of fxC	%
Traditional Church Plants	77%	Older People’s Church	9%
New Monastic Communities	67%	Mid-week Church	17%
Multiple Congregations	60%	School based Church	21%
Network Churches	53%	Messy Church	22%
Community Development Plants	50%	Youth congregations	32%

Once again in regard to sacraments, the traditional church plants score highest, and we do not know why those influenced by new monastic thinking score high. It is plausible to suggest an appeal to the spiritually aware non-churched. Multiple congregations use the traditional church building which may positively affect this figure. Network churches have a strong sense of their own identity and their members tend not to belong anywhere else, so baptism would be sought there. We do not know why the community development plants come next; it might be, as we have discovered, that they connect strongly with the non-churched who are more likely to be unbaptised.

It is unsurprising that older people’s church is least likely to baptise, and perhaps noteworthy that nearly 10% do. We suspect that midweek church is often a worship option for those who cannot make Sunday and we have found it scores low in result for attracting non-churched people. With Messy Church and School based Church, quite commonly in phone conversations our team picked up comments which indicated that the practice of baptism is more strongly linked than communion to residual Christendom sentiments about where it should take place, and thus a proportion of baptisms, emanating from fxC and their members’ children, take place on Sunday in the parish church, and here are unrecorded. In some cases, the style of baptism at the parish church that day borrows some elements from Messy Church values. Whether these then are Messy Church baptisms is a moot point.

Once more it is clear that increased frequency of meeting affects the likelihood of baptisms occurring, although to a less marked extent than with communions. It may well be the underlying causes are similar.

Table 28: Variance of fxC meeting frequency and having baptism

Frequency of meeting	% of fxC holding baptisms	% of fxC ‘not at this stage’
Weekly	44.6%	27.9%
Fortnightly	31.8%	47.7%
Monthly	25.2%	55.1%

Summary of 4.4

- 74% of fxC have taken some strides towards three-self maturity, which is commendable seeing how new 44% of them are. The most commonly taken step towards three-self maturity and identity is self-governing, but such steps are not taken evenly across the fxC types.
- 78% of the fxC have taken steps to encourage discipleship, with meeting 1-1 and forming small groups normally being the more common choices. Once more the different types of fxC exhibit strengths and weaknesses in relation to fostering discipleship, some of which are attributable to the age groups served and proportions of the non-churched attending.
- Between one third and two fifths of fxC offer the dominical sacraments. Two thirds of those who did not do so, reported this as 'not at this stage', rather than the 21% who saw 'no need'.
- Practice of communion, baptism and also confirmation varies significantly, including with type of fxC and also with frequency of meeting. It is not yet known whether it also changes significantly with length of life of the fxC and the ecclesial status of the leader.

4.5 How training affects outcomes and the part of pioneers

4.5.1 The presence or absence of training for fxC

As with the factors of how typical attenders were and what variety of ethnicity was present, data regarding training only began to be collected with Norwich diocese. From then on all leaders, lay and ordained were asked what specific planting of fxC training they had received, what previous experience they possessed, whether they received any help through consultancy, whether they had any further relevant training, or whether they had begun without any input of these kinds.

Table 29: Kinds of training received – or none

Kind of input	Ripon &					Average
	Norwich	Leeds	Blackburn	Bristol	Portsmouth	
<i>mission shaped ministry</i>	18.5%	3.7%	4.9%	2.5%	3.2%	8.0%
<i>mission shaped intro</i>	0.0%	9.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
Church planting module	4.9%	1.9%	4.9%	2.5%	0.0%	3.5%
Training event	23.5%	18.5%	25.6%	25.0%	29.0%	24.0%
Consultancy provided	3.7%	0.0%	2.4%	5.0%	22.6%	4.9%
Previous experience	12.3%	13.0%	8.5%	20.0%	3.2%	11.5%
Other	11.1%	7.4%	7.3%	7.5%	6.5%	8.3%
None	34.6%	42.6%	39.0%	40.0%	25.8%	37.2%
Not known	13.6%	16.7%	17.1%	5.0%	25.8%	15.3%

Note: The figures do not sum as leaders could indicate they had taken more than one source of training.

As is often the case with dioceses, different policies are in force, different enthusiasms prevail, and so it can be seen that the spread and use of the two official training sources, *mission shaped ministry (msm)* and *mission shaped intro (msi)*, is variable. Overall they contribute, with church planting modules (CPM) offered in colleges, less than 15% of the known picture. It is not known how representative this picture is, but at least to some readers it will seem a lower level might have been expected ten years after the publication of *Mission-shaped Church* and the work of the national Fresh Expressions team.

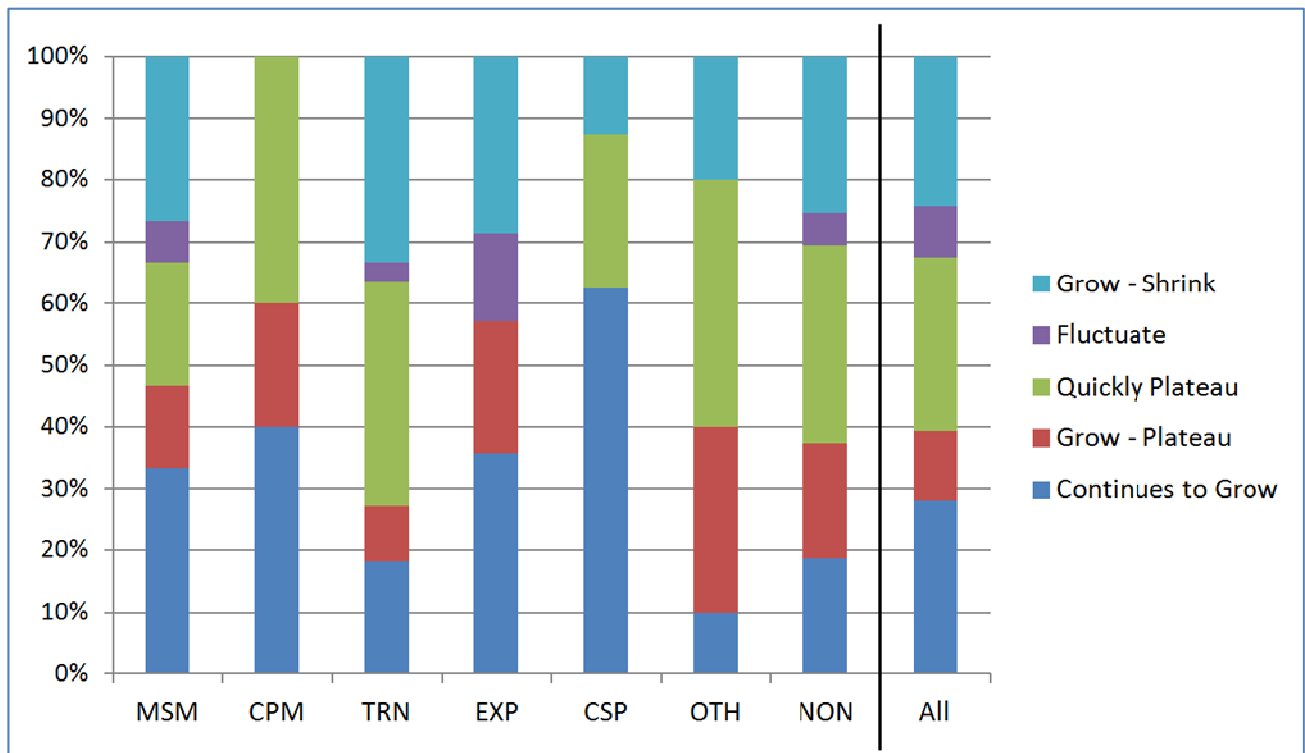
It is of interest that 11.5% is the figure for those bringing previous experience (EXP). If, as table 7 infers, fxC are around 15% of the overall number of churches and 10% of the attendance in the life of the national church, then for levels of previous experience to be similar may be congruent. This proportion does not however explain the low level of official training taken from these FE team sources.

The 24% of training from other events (TRN) were from two principal sources: either those laid on by a diocesan figure and of a more general nature, or more specific and provided by a member of the national Messy Church team. We do not know whether the low consultancy figure (CSP) indicates a lack of resource or a lack of intent to seek it. We suspect that if demand increased it would exceed supply.

37.2% of those who responded indicated they had taken no training whatever (NON), although some cited their secular experience, either in skills with people or in education. We could see the value of these but did not include them in the category 'other' (OTH) as that was reserved to sources that were specific to this church planting discipline.

4.5.2 Training and growth

Graph 8: Correlations between training and patterns of growth



Criteria to determine the categories within the key in this table used are as follows:

Continues to Grow	Yearly attendance increases at least 5% a year, averaged over time
Grow - Plateau	Yearly attendance increased for at least two years then flattened
Quickly Plateau	Attendance increase occurred in the first year and then has remained flat
Fluctuate	At least two cycles of attendance going up and down by >5%
Grow - Shrink	Initial growth over several years, followed by at least 10% per year decline

Three factors have significantly limited the extent to which this data is representative. Firstly it is derived from the 220 records of the last five dioceses, beginning with Norwich. Secondly, in relation to the growth patterns we had to exclude all the cases under two years old, which turned out to be 39% of them as there were insufficient longitudinal attendance patterns to examine. There were also a few cases where longitudinal data was not given to us. Furthermore, in 44 cases no information on this topic was forthcoming, most often when it concerned details about previous leaders no longer at the fxC.

Care must be taken as to what this bar chart means. For example, the information in the second column does not mean that 40% of all fxC continue to grow. It means of all the examples, where we have more than two years of attendance, in which leaders studied a church planting module,

40% of those continued to grow. It is then noteworthy that none with this input have shrunk and all are at least stable.

In interpreting the data, several factors stand out. Note firstly that the contribution of MSI is not shown, as there were only 5 examples, although all cases did continue to grow.

Secondly, the clearest indicator that leads to high proportions of continuing growth is the provision of consultancy, which scores twice the average. The pity we suspect is that this resource is still scarce.

Thirdly it is salutary that around 30% of those who brought previous experience, or those who have been through *msm*, have seen the fxC they serve shrink. It seems clear that continued growth cannot be taken for granted. However, all these named do better than where no training has been taken.

Section 6 of this report reveals a number of correlations between these broad patterns of growth, plateau and decline and other variables.

4.5.3 What role ordained pioneers are playing

This report provides a context for this question in that the data obtained covers whether the leaders were ordained or lay as well as various designations in both cases. In addition, we took data on gender, whether they were technically stipendiary, locally paid or volunteers and, in addition, whether their status was deemed full time, part time or spare time. We add at this point that those who were stipendiary and full time were by no means devoting all that time to the fxC. However, if they had that status, we suggest it gave them some gravitas and additional influence in their leadership, as well as flexibility on how to use their time.

Table 30: The variety of ecclesial status of fxC leaders

Diocese	Incumbent / priest in charge	Assistant ordained	Ordained pioneer minister	Reader / licenced lay ministry	Church Army Evangelist	'Lay-lay'
Liverpool	25.0%	19.0%	6.0%	8.0%	3.0%	39.0%
Canterbury	25.3%	18.7%	0.0%	8.8%	4.4%	42.9%
Leicester	18.5%	10.8%	1.5%	13.8%	3.1%	52.3%
Derby	31.3%	15.6%	1.6%	10.9%	1.6%	39.1%
Chelmsford	18.5%	26.2%	3.1%	7.7%	3.1%	41.5%
Norwich	29.6%	24.7%	0.0%	11.1%	2.5%	32.1%
Ripon & Leeds	22.2%	33.3%	3.7%	3.7%	1.9%	35.2%
Blackburn	29.3%	18.3%	2.4%	9.8%	3.7%	36.6%
Bristol	17.5%	30.0%	2.5%	15.0%	0.0%	35.0%
Portsmouth	29.0%	12.9%	3.2%	3.2%	0.0%	51.6%
Averages	25.0%	20.7%	2.4%	9.4%	2.7%	40.0%
	Ordained	48.1%		Lay	52.1%	

4.5.4 The mix within the ordained leadership of fxC

It will be noted that both the categories 'ordained' and 'lay' have been subdivided. The sheer variety of designations through curate, NSM, SSM, OLM, etc. are too unwieldy, and unevenly applied across dioceses, to be of diagnostic use here.

In relation to the ordained, it is clear by their status that half of the ordained leaders of fxC are also the leaders of a nearby church. We did not detect any correlations here with urban and rural differences. This is instanced in the adjacent and fairly similar Leicester and Derby dioceses. Further evidence shows on table 31 that Ripon & Leeds (59%), together with Norwich (54%), both of which are dominantly rural, have the highest proportions of clergy led fxC, while Leicester, which has significant rural areas, has the least (31%) by a significant margin.

Our conversations with leaders led to the impression that in some cases the clergy were giving an inspiring lead to a hitherto unaware laity, and in other cases, over starting something new, the laity had taken matters into their own hands in the face of clergy exhaustion, apathy or even extended absence.

Examining the 20 year period shows some changes: the proportion of incumbents leading a fxC has almost halved from 30% to 16%, particularly in the last seven years; the priest in charge designation remains stable at around 6%; the figure for curates more than halved between 1992-98 (21%) and 1999-2005, to 7% and has recently increased a little to 9%. Other designations are not very frequent, making comment tendentious, but a half a dozen to two dozen of each among the NSM, OLM, SSM designations now lead a fxC.

The contribution of designated pioneers - ordained or lay

It is clear from these ten dioceses that it is too early to judge the statistical input from the pioneers. Their present contribution (2.4%) is little more than that brought by the graft and transplants. Church Army Evangelists, many of whom are pioneering types though not officially called that, are at much the same level of contribution (2.7%). Liverpool is shown to have almost three times the average of ordained pioneers leading a fxC. This may be a straw in the wind. In several other dioceses we were told stories where they had only just been appointed and it was not yet even certain what exactly they would begin. Those cases could not be included in this survey. By 2015 we may have a good point of comparison, if this research work were extended. This leads to specific recommendation 7.

4.5.5 The significant lay contribution to leading fxC

Table 31: Ordained and lay - by diocese

Diocese	No. of fxC	Ordained leader %	Lay leader %	'Lay-lay' %
Liverpool	78	50.0%	50.0%	39.0%
Canterbury	72	44.0%	56.0%	42.9%
Leicester	52	30.8%	69.2%	52.3%
Derby	46	48.4%	51.6%	39.1%
Chelmsford	50	47.7%	52.3%	41.5%
Norwich	63	54.3%	45.7%	32.1%
Ripon & Leeds	39	59.3%	40.7%	35.2%
Blackburn	64	50.0%	50.0%	36.6%
Bristol	33	50.0%	50.0%	35.0%
Portsmouth	21	45.2%	54.8%	51.6%
Averages		48.0%	52.0%	40.0%

It is clear, as predicted by Steven Croft when leader of the Fresh Expressions team (2004-08), that the number of fxC being begun, and arguably needed, would necessitate many being lay led. We now have a measure of how far this has been true. The proportion of lay led fxC varies from 41% in Ripon & Leeds to 69% in Leicester, so patterns vary, but the average is just over half of the total.

4.5.6 The rise of the 'lay-lay' leader

The term is one we admit to inventing. By it we connote people without formal licensing and quite possibly without designated training to lead a fxC, who nevertheless are doing so, usually in their spare time. This group, and its size, constitutes a major surprise within the overall findings. The reason to highlight it is that it is also clear, when data across the 20 year period is surveyed, that the proportion of such lay led examples is increasing.

In the figures that follow it should be borne in mind that, because over time fxC may have had more than one leader, percentages are given as proportions of 670 leader records, not the 518 fxC. In 1992-98, being lay-lay was a minor factor, true in only 9.4% of the 53 leaders among the 39 fxC started in these dioceses. Yet as the number of fxC increased in the next period 1999-2005 with 84 more fxC, the proportion of the 121 leaders who were lay-lay had tripled to 33.1%. In the most recent period, 2006-2012, which saw 395 fxC begun, with 496 leaders, the increase in the lay-lay continues to rise by a further quarter and in that period is 44.4%.

We also know, from work lying behind table 29 about training, that of the 89 lay-lay leaders in these five dioceses, 42% had no training and in a further 10% of cases we do not know. 30% had received some training from either diocese or a person from a type of fxC such as Messy Church. Only 7% had done *msm* and one case received *msi*. 6% had received some form of consultancy and 5% had previous experience. To put this in context, with the 76 incumbents or priest in charge category, 41% of them leading fxC said they had no training to do so, and with a further 21% it is not known. 11% had taken *msm* and 9% had previous experience.

There is a need to honour what the lay-leader group have done, bearing in mind from table 30, that this is the single largest group who are leading fxC. Writers in the field of fxC have urged that the size of the mission task facing the Church of England will require many lay leaders and this is evidence that it is already occurring. The wider Church may need the difficult combination of humility to learn from them, as well as wisdom to give them the kind of support, training and recognition that does not lead to any unintended emasculation of their essential contribution.

All this suggests that prior training has only played a minor role up till now in what has occurred. Table 29 shows no training received is easily the single highest category in all five dioceses surveyed.

Summary of 4.5

- Any form of training was only accessed by 37.2% of fxC leaders, of which *msm* and *msi* account for only 9.7%. Receiving consultancy or having previous experience adds only another 16.3%.
- With such a relatively low take-up in training, the effect on growth patterns is more conjectural. However, graph 8 shows those leaders having taken church planting or *msm* training, or with previous experience, are more likely to see continued growth in their fxC than those who have none of these inputs.
- It is equally common that fxC are led by lay or ordained people.
- The trend over the 20 year period is the sharp increase in lay leaders, the largest group of whom are not formally licensed, and evidence shows only 39% were in any sense trained. Nevertheless, what they have done is more to be celebrated than regretted.

5 Further dynamics disclosed from the fxC database

5.1 Leaders by gender and ecclesial status

These variables and also time available within the leaders of fxC reveal distinct patterns, but there is less certainty about causation behind these differences.

Table 32: The gender and ecclesial status of leaders at fxC

	Male	Female	Male %	Female %
Lay	118	231	33.8%	66.2%
Ordained	206	117	66.4%	33.6%

What is clear is that both genders can lead fxC, but at first glance the headline seems to be that male ordained leaders and female lay leaders are more likely to do so, in both cases they are 2/3rd of the picture.

One background factor is that of all diocesan licensed clergy, the most recent figures show 68.7% are male and 31.3% are female, which is not far from the ordained percentages above. However, recent ordinations have seen something more akin to a 50-50% split, which will contribute to changing the overall proportions over time and may do so in relation to who leads fxC.

It has been conjectured whether the relatively high proportion of Messy Churches, at some 30% of the total depending on the counting method – see table 43 – skews the whole picture. Are they, as might be imagined, dominantly led by lay women?

Table 33: Messy Church leaders

Kind of fxC	Status	Male	Female	Male %	Female %
Messy Church	Lay	19	101	15.8%	84.2%
Messy Church	Ordained	27	47	36.5%	63.5%

The ordained percentages do affect the overall pattern as they are almost a direct reversal of the national picture and that of the totality of the surveyed fxC. The predominance of lay female leaders also will contribute strongly to the overall picture of many lay women leading fxC. Wider comparisons reveal the following leader differences by gender, this time not separated into lay and ordained.

Table 34: List of those fxC most and least likely to be led by women

Kind of fxC	Male	Female		Kind of fxC	Male	Female
Church among u5s	21.4%	78.6%		Traditional church plant	83.5%	16.5%
Messy Church	24.1%	75.9%		New monastic community	76.5%	23.5%
Child focused church	39.8%	60.2%		Youth congregation	74.2%	25.8%
Older people’s church	43.6%	56.4%		Alternative worship	73.5%	26.5%

In the left hand list, after child focused church and Messy Church, the differences between various kinds of fxC and which gender leads become more marginal. We note all those in the left hand list are strongly linked to either an early or late stage in life.

The right hand list shows an equally strong distinction between which gender leads. Why these four appear we do not know. What can be said, however, is that we now have evidence that certain kinds of fxC are much more commonly being led by a particular gender.

5.2 Leaders by gender, time available and remuneration

Once more, differences are clear.

Table 35: fxC leaders correlating gender and time available

Time	Male	Female	Male %	Female %
Full time	221	105	67.8%	32.2%
Part time	30	90	25.0%	75.0%
Spare time	73	153	32.3%	67.7%

The predominant picture is that 2/3rds of those who are full time are male. In the context of this survey it means they will nearly all be ordained, partly indicated in the next mini table below.

By contrast with those serving part time, ¾ are females, while 2/3rds of those serving spare time are also women. It is more conjecture whether this disparity is driven by the kinds of fxC and the gender correlation to different kinds as shown above, or more influenced by wider social factors including work patterns, time available and lack of equal opportunity.

Table 36: fxC leaders correlating time available and lay/ordained status

Time	Lay	Ordained	Lay %	Ordained %
Full time	53	273	16.3%	83.7%
Part time	83	37	69.2%	30.8%
Spare time	213	13	94.2%	5.8%

The table confirms that those leading fxC full time (although not necessarily with all of that time) are predominantly ordained. Also, those leading in their spare time are nearly

always lay. We only know of two studies of this disparity in relation to fxC and only one that explores how the latter scenario works out over time, which affects issues of sustainability.²³

Table 37: fxC leaders correlating gender and remuneration

	Male	Female	Male %	Female %
Stipendiary	201	84	70.5%	29.5%
Locally paid	32	39	45.1%	54.9%
Voluntary	91	225	28.8%	71.2%

National figures tell us that 73% of all clergy are stipendiary, but this shows the male/female split of stipendiaries, a result again not dissimilar to the overall proportions of each. The table

also shows how few of either gender are locally paid. Usually these are children’s and family workers or youth workers. When it comes to the voluntary group, there are 2.5 times as many women as men.

Overall, even though the male-female split is 48.2% to 51.8%, if there are typical leaders of fxC, there are two stereotypes. One is an ordained male stipendiary in full time ministry, but almost as common is a woman who is lay and unpaid and leading in her spare time. Compared to the church plants which this team’s leader researched in the 1980s and early 1990s, the latter is a new feature.

How she is thanked, supported, encouraged and developed are important considerations in the patterns of future training and diocesan networking. Too often training favours those able to take time off or who see such things as part of their working life. This should be addressed. See recommendation 8.

Summary of 5.1 and 5.2

- Both genders can lead fxC, though male ordained and female lay are the most common
- The proportions of ordained women and men leading fxC are similar to national figures for all category of licensed ministers
- Messy Churches are mostly led by lay women
- There is strong linkage between certain types of fxC and which gender leads them
- The males are more likely to be full time and the women giving their spare time
- The men are more likely to be paid and the women working voluntarily

²³ G. Lings, *A Golden Opportunity: Encounters on the Edge* No. 50 (Sheffield: Church Army, 2011) pp. 14-18 tracked 57 examples of fxC for their leadership patterns and noticing which survived and which died. C. Dalpra, *A Spare Part?: Encounters on the Edge* No 54 (Sheffield: Church Army, 2012) devoted a whole issue to less than whole time leadership in fxC and how it affected patterns of their church life.

5.3 Why people started a fxC

The interviewers explained what was meant by the list in table 38 and asked people to select up to three variables from it, if they needed to. Some chose only one and others used the three. The scores have not been weighted to compensate for this. We only present the number of times a motive was identified and cited. The low number of ‘other’ scores suggests the simplicity of method has been acceptable. It does result in the number of motivations listed being about double the number of fxC.

The most significant columns may be said to be the three on the right because they reveal the trends over time and a comparison with the overall percentage column. In unpacking the results to individual dioceses we have worked through the rows of the table explaining that the first two share a value of seeking growth. The next two are features about the local geographical area, or parish, while the third pair is best understood as two cultural factors. The seventh ‘full up’ speaks for itself, as does other of which the results were so variable as to restrain comment.

Table 38: What motivated the start of the fxC

Motive to start	1992-98	1999-05	2006-12	Totals	%	92-98%	99-05%	06-12%
Diocesan initiative	2	7	22	31	2.7%	2.3%	3.9%	2.5%
Growth philosophy	17	34	217	268	23.7%	19.5%	19.0%	25.1%
Inadequate penetration of parish	17	27	96	140	12.4%	19.5%	15.1%	11.1%
New housing opportunity	10	6	15	31	2.7%	11.5%	3.4%	1.7%
Provide increased diversity	9	39	184	232	20.5%	10.3%	21.8%	21.2%
Unreached people group	24	61	286	371	32.8%	27.6%	34.1%	33.0%
Full at existing church	8	3	11	22	1.9%	9.2%	1.7%	1.3%
Other	0	2	35	37	3.3%	0.0%	1.1%	4.0%

We suggest that in relation to the local church seeking growth, this motive dipped in the period that church planting fell out of some favour from the end of the 1990s, but is now more assertive than before. Both of the area factors have decreased markedly over time, partly as the housing boom waned. It may be linked to the fact that most of the dioceses surveyed are not notable for either new towns or the massive housing developments in the greater south east around London.

However, we suggest there may be another reason. The joint areas of increase over the whole period are the cultural factors, with the one about diversity doubling and the other about unreached groups rising somewhat and remaining the most common. This pair from seven to eight possible choices accounts for 53% of the total. Our inference from this is that a shift is occurring in the nature of Anglican mission, from a simple reliance on territory to adequately define the nature of the task, to the realisation that cultural diversity and identity contains its own mission call. It is not helpful to translate this as only ethnic diversity, but should include the old term ‘class’ or its equivalent today and the extent to which generational differences are significant. *Mission-shaped Church* raised the way that the growing predominance of network means that reliance on parish alone will be inadequate to fulfil an Anglican mission calling.²⁴

²⁴ G. Cray (ed.) *Mission-shaped Church* (London: CHP, 2004) p. xi.

Here is further congruent evidence of a similar change in practice, but still within a world of both/and, not a lurch to either/or.

This can be related to another dynamic which nuances motives. It draws on early church planting thinking that teased out there could be quite different, but equally valid, reasons for starting a church plant. These were called pioneer and progression dynamics and attributable to Revd Bob Hopkins.²⁵ The two are code: the first for responding to a perceived weakness and the second for building on strength either of presence or history. Once more we used a simple scoring system for respondents to shade the extent to which either or both were factors in their story.

Table 39: Pioneer and progression fxC scores - by diocese

Not all figures add up to 100% as occasionally other scores were entered and the two could have an equal part to play.

Diocese name	Progression was main or only reason	Pioneer was the main or only reason
Liverpool	31%	72%
Canterbury	40%	56%
Leicester	38%	75%
Derby	57%	48%
Chelmsford	42%	68%
Norwich	49%	56%
Ripon & Leeds	51%	62%
Blackburn	53%	55%
Bristol	45%	64%
Portsmouth	76%	62%
Average	45.6%	61.6%

What the figures disclose is that on average in over 60% of cases the local people were taking a level of risk by choosing to strike out in new directions or into contexts in which they realised a brand new start was being made. This is to be commended. Dioceses must themselves decide what the range of scores here, from 75% to 48%, may mean. The contrast in pioneer score between Leicester and Derby is sharp. Leicester also has the highest score on growth motive. These two seem congruent. It is then intriguing that it also has the highest lay leader factor, but proving causation beyond that correlation is not secure.

It is equally true that in over 45% of cases there was a positive past history to build upon - for example, contact with a school or a long running holiday club. Both dynamics, pioneer and progression, can be seen as deserving praise and the latter exhibits the virtue of longstanding engagement by a parish.

²⁵ B. Hopkins, *Church Planting, Models for Mission in the Church of England* Grove Evangelism booklet no. 4 (Nottingham: Grove, 1988) pp. 17-21. It was taken into *Breaking New Ground* (London: CHP 1994) in simplified form and into *Mission-shaped Church* pp. 110-111.

Summary of 5.3

- A significant shift has taken place in the motives identified. Cultural factors are now more significant than territorial ones, although not excluding them.
- The desire for churches to grow through starting further ones continues to thrive, despite a dip at the end of the 1990s.
- It is equally valid for churches to build on their strengths as to respond to perceived weaknesses, but they must understand that the dynamics and resources of each are different.

5.4 fxC and parish boundaries

Since 1991 the issue of whether these developments in mission threaten the intended integrity of the parish boundary has been an issue and contributed to commissioning of the first church planting report, *Breaking New Ground* in 1994. Two measures can be taken of this from the new data.

Table 40: Where fxC meet in relation to Anglican church boundaries

Boundary	Total	%	92-98%	99-05%	06-12%
Within diocese	28	5.4%	2.6%	4.8%	5.8%
Within deanery	58	11.2%	12.8%	10.7%	11.1%
Within parish	432	83.4%	84.6%	84.5%	83.0%

Several features stand out. The first is that the proportions over time have not changed that much. Fears that the overflowing of parish boundaries was a creeping wave, rendering these markers meaningless and spreading unprincipled competition, have no more fuel for that view than before. Fears for the parish look exaggerated.

If anything we sense there is less concern about this issue than was true 20 years before. Moreover, our contact with a link person in each diocese and the local leader of each fxC, revealed no sign or cases of adversarial, or unwanted cross boundary planting. We are aware of more difficult cases elsewhere, often linked to the difficult issue in the overall communion of two Anglican integrities, but they did not occur in these dioceses and therefore this kind cannot be construed as typical of fxC in our research.

The small changes, across the years in table 40, balance things out. While the number that fall within the diocese has risen, the number within the deanery has correspondingly fallen. We explore below which types are more likely to cross boundaries. Their commonality is that all of these fxC are more culturally focused than geographically, and by network rather than neighbourhood. It is plausible that these types may have a draw which is even wider than the immediate area that could more easily overflow a parish or even deanery boundary. The next table shows how this affects differences between dioceses.

Table 41: Location of fxC by ecclesial boundary and diocese

Diocese	Parish	Deanery	Diocese
Liverpool	86%	8%	6%
Canterbury	72%	28%	0%
Leicester	65%	12%	23%
Derby	96%	2%	2%
Chelmsford	76%	22%	2%
Norwich	95%	2%	3%
Ripon & Leeds	82%	13%	5%
Blackburn	94%	5%	2%
Bristol	76%	12%	12%
Portsmouth	95%	5%	0%

The team note from their awareness of individual records the higher presence of Cluster, Special Interest Group and Network kinds of fxC in those dioceses where higher deanery and diocese percentages are registered. In some cases these types overlap with being in significantly dense areas of population and which all the more then tend to overflow existing parish boundaries. On occasions in conurbations an example will even cross a diocesan boundary. Liverpool has one of these and its figure is conflated into the column, within the diocese.

Alongside investigating whether the meeting place crossed parish boundaries, we took data on the kind of meeting place used.

Table 42: Venues used for fxC meetings

	Venues	%
194	Churches	37.5%
33	Church and hall	6.4%
82	Church hall	15.8%
58	Mixture of venues	11.2%
15	Houses	2.9%
136	Public	26.3%
518	Total	

Although on average 83% of the meeting place of fxC remained within the parish boundary, a much lesser figure used only buildings associated with the church. When the figures above are modified by apportioning the mixture choices, only 43.7% used churches, and of these 6.4% used both church and hall, as is typical Messy Church practice, 20.9% used a church hall and 35.4% used secular venues. 11.2% deliberately used a variety depending on the kind of event put on and sometimes the stage of the fxC's existence.

These proportions varied across the dioceses but with no obvious correlations to either rural and urban context, or being in the north or south. Our inference is that choice by context is wise. Sometimes we were told in rural contexts that there was little to no choice about where to meet.

These patterns in relation to ecclesial boundaries, when correlated with types of fxC and the variety of places of meeting, suggest an interpretation. This could be said to be nascent Christian communities responding to a diverse missional reality, doing what came naturally in context, not out of an inherent desire to challenge inherited structures.

At the same time, the use of the church as the place of meeting is around 2/5th of the story. This challenges the view that the whole public truly find our buildings, and the communities that inhabit them, culturally accessible. However, it also shows that for that 44% they still work and play their traditional attractive role. It is not the case that all fxC turn their backs on church buildings, as some wrongly assume they must in order to be classified as 'fresh' or to worship in a distinctive way.

Summary of 5.4

- 17% of the fxC in these dioceses cross a parish boundary and this proportion has remained fairly steady for 20 years.
- Those fxC that do so were designed to serve wider networks which inherently cross boundaries.
- In this research, no fxC crossed an ecclesial boundary without consent.
- The choice of venue varies and should be chosen by context, not assumption.

5.5 What kinds of fxC exist and when they meet

Table 43: The variety and propensity of kinds of fxC

fxC kind	L'pool	Cantb	Leics	Derby	Chelmf	N'wich	Ripon	BlackB	Bristol	Ports	Totals
Alternative worship	8	6	2	5	1	7	3	1	3	1	37
Base ecclesial community	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Café church	6	11	11	9	6	17	11	8	4	2	85
Cell plant - scratch or parallel	3	3	3	1	1	1	3	0	0	0	15
Child focused church	12	11	7	10	6	11	12	16	10	2	97
Cluster based church	9	8	15	0	6	1	8	0	0	0	47
Community development plant	7	9	5	2	8	5	2	5	1	2	46
Intentional community	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Messy Church	16	26	11	16	17	25	10	16	14	14	165
Midweek church	5	3	4	5	3	1	0	8	0	0	29
Multiple Sunday congregation	4	9	3	3	2	7	2	5	5	0	40
Network church	8	5	13	1	9	3	4	1	3	0	47
New monastic community	2	2	1	1	5	1	1	0	2	0	15
New traditional service	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	5	1	0	10
Older peoples church	10	3	3	5	4	2	3	3	1	0	34
School based church	7	5	3	3	1	1	3	2	2	1	28
Seeker church	2	1	1	6	0	5	3	5	3	3	29
Special interest group	11	7	12	2	8	4	2	3	1	0	50
Traditional church plant	7	8	5	0	8	4	1	5	3	2	43
Under 5s church	7	1	0	4	5	6	2	5	2	0	32
Youth church	4	3	3	1	4	5	1	3	1	0	25
Totals	129	123	102	75	96	107	72	91	56	27	878
Actual Cases	78	72	52	46	50	63	39	64	33	21	518

Several features can be immediately detected - see the glossary in appendix two for these terms.

Firstly and most obvious is the sheer range, with 21 kinds listed. They are the twelve from *Mission-shaped Church* and other kinds have been added since then, suggesting continued creativity and imagination at work.

Secondly, it is noticeable that some kinds are barely represented, despite an attempt at representative national coverage. Where instances were miniscule we excluded them from further correlations work.

Thirdly, it can be inferred from the bottom two rows that many examples draw on more than one type of fxC to inform and understand what they themselves are. In many cases the team had to explain certain labels and then the leaders were able to designate their fxC with greater accuracy. We were aware of being theorists placing a grid of understanding over a more untidy and less defined reality.

It also is apparent which types are the commonly chosen. Across the dioceses Messy Church was nearly always the most frequent choice. Depending on the calculation, they make up 32% of the

actual cases or 19% of the total types selected. Child focused church came next and then café church. After these top three, the differences are less marked.

Table 44: Frequency of meeting in fxC – shown by diocese

The most obvious feature is that fortnightly is the least popular choice. Factors that may well contribute to this are that for those kinds of fxC which demand significant resource for their public gathering such as alt.worship, Messy Church, or café church, to meet weekly and fortnightly is usually simply too much.

Diocese	Monthly	Fortnightly	Weekly
Liverpool	34.6%	11.5%	53.8%
Canterbury	33.3%	6.9%	59.7%
Leicester	28.8%	5.8%	65.4%
Derby	63.0%	8.7%	28.3%
Chelmsford	48.0%	10.0%	42.0%
Norwich	63.5%	4.8%	31.7%
Ripon & Leeds	38.5%	15.4%	46.2%
Blackburn	40.6%	7.8%	51.6%
Bristol	51.5%	12.1%	36.4%
Portsmouth	81.0%	0.0%	19.0%

There is also the problem with the fortnightly frequency that it lacks a clear marker when the next meeting is. The first Wednesday in every month is reasonably clear, as is the even simpler ‘every Friday’. If one meeting is missed on the fortnightly basis, remembering when the next one is requires a clear memory and some tidy diary work.

If the more commonly chosen frequencies are monthly and weekly, comparison across the dioceses shows very different patterns. In our feedback to both Derby and Norwich dioceses we asked them to note that their much higher proportions of fxC meeting monthly deserved their thought and attention²⁶. In observing fxC for as long as they have been around, one alleged conclusion is that monthly can be an excellent place to begin, but it can also be a vulnerable place to end up. The rationale behind such a view notes that those who miss one meeting then face a two month gap. Also keeping in touch with people who miss is tricky. Moreover, it seems, through our past ethnographic work, that making moves towards increased frequency, after a pattern of monthly is well established, is difficult.

An alternative interpretation based on informal conversations, not formally researched work, is drawn from hearing an increase in reasons behind the value of monthly gatherings, some of which are pragmatic, others may be deeper. Many concur that the word ‘regular’ in relation to church attendance no longer means weekly; the discussion is whether it means fortnightly or monthly, so we do detect that the culture surrounding frequency of church going is changing. This shift is thought to reflect how full Sundays have become and how pressured modern life is, making the absence of further weekend commitments more attractive.²⁷ Another virtue of a monthly gathering is that if a big or deep theme is chosen, its impact may be better assimilated and applied on this frequency, rather than it having to compete with different messages sent the following week. A simple contrasting control test could be to ask existing weekly church goers what the sermon was about a fortnight ago and noting how little has been retained.

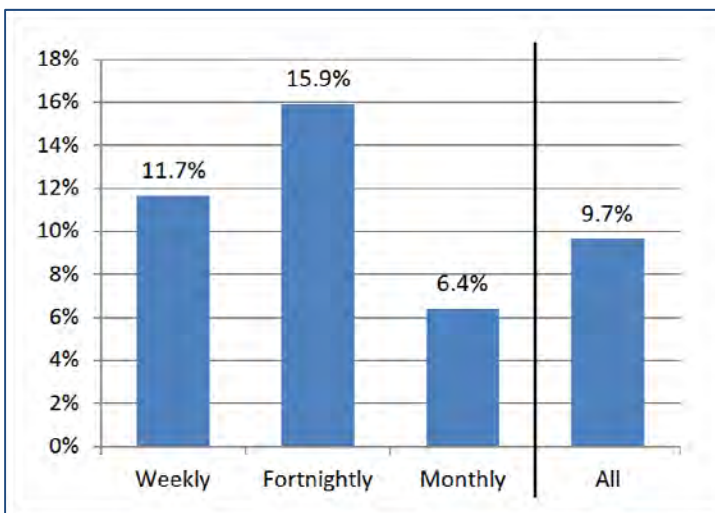
More resource-hungry kinds of fresh expression of Church all tend to have a monthly frequency, not just out of manageability but also with some sense of intention. There may also be an inverse relationship between the size of a celebration and its frequency. The notion of having a full Easter

²⁶ There has not been time to feed back our findings to Portsmouth diocese as of yet, but the same comment would be made acknowledging the influence of Messy Churches in that diocese.

²⁷ Two case studies are found within G. Lings, *Never on a Sunday: Encounters on the Edge* No. 11 (Sheffield: Church Army, 2001).

service monthly is barely credible and holding Christmas monthly even less so. Months are themselves named and they can be better markers of rhythms and intervals than weeks, by which performance figures are gathered. Some practitioners meeting monthly are suggesting that the virtues of weekly meeting may be exaggerated, not least by those employed to run them. The nature of more profound celebrations is that they are spaced out. Something substantial has happened between them. Weekly worship was not an Old Testament practice until the invention of the synagogue in the Exile. Before then the vast majority of Jewish people, who did not live near where the Ark currently rested, or latterly in Jerusalem, may at most have made annual pilgrimage, but otherwise said their prayers, and recited learnt texts, at home or in the fields. Others today begin to urge that monthly gathering for worship would leave more time for living life, serving others outside the church community, and applying new learning. Thus this data may fuel the debate about the virtues and vices of monthly gathering.²⁸

Graph 9: The proportion of fxC that died - by frequency of meeting



Returning to examination of the minority of fortnightly meetings, it was only when we ran a correlation between frequency of meeting and the mortality rates that we made a discovery. To our surprise, it was those that were meeting fortnightly which were the most vulnerable, whereas a guess might have suspected monthly was the least sustainable. Conversely we found again to our surprise that the monthly ones were the least likely to face the prospect of dying.

We cannot know how running this correlation in a few years' time will compare the fortunes of the three. We would not wish to argue from this chart that monthly is necessarily the safest option, as the jury is still out on whether the pattern of monthly meeting is sustainable to create a cohesive sense of community in the long term. It is too soon to know enough about the relationship between frequency, longevity and mortality, in relation to fxC.

²⁸ G. Lings (ed.), *Messy Church Theology* (Abingdon: BRF 2013) has chapters that contribute to this debate.

Differing frequencies of meeting across kinds of fxC

Correlating types of fxC against their frequency of meeting already suggests distinct differences. Those most likely to meet weekly are: traditional church plants (95.3%), cell churches (86.7%), midweek church (79.3%), community development plants (76.1%), youth congregations (72.0%).

The kind most likely to meet monthly is: Messy Church (84.2%). Then with less certainty come a group of kinds: seeker church (51.7%), café church (50.6%), older people’s church (50.0%), child focused church (47.4%) and alt.worship (43.2%). This latter list adds some substance to the assertion that there is a connection between resource hungry models and meeting with lesser frequency, although not all in this list, such as church for older people, come into that high resource category.

Choice of day and fxC

Table 45: fxC and their day of meeting – in percentages

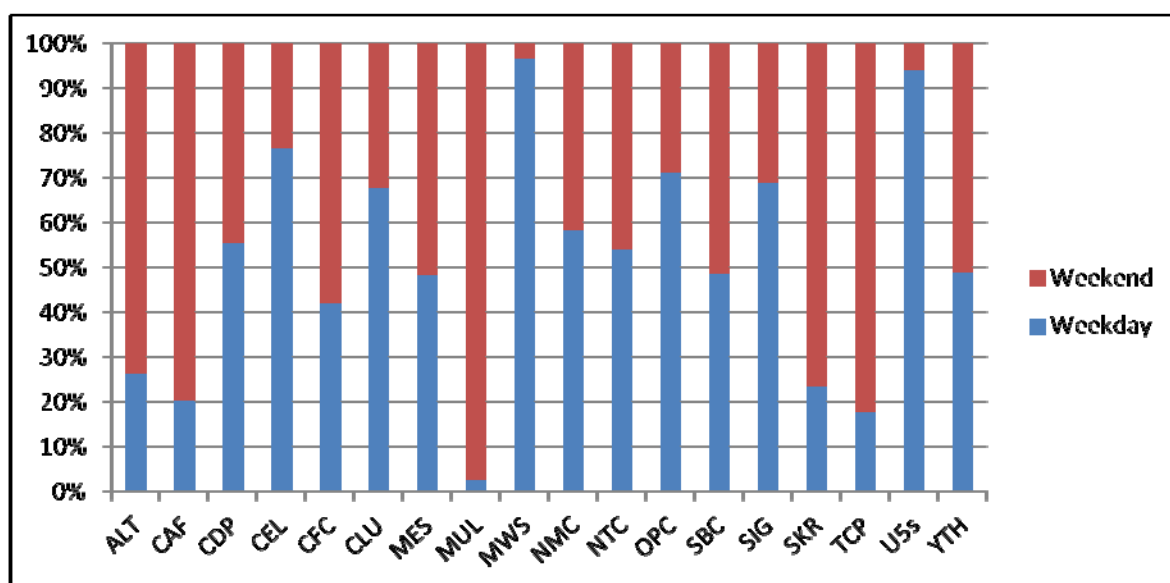
Diocese	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	other than Sunday
Liverpool	66%	5%	29%	71%
Canterbury	40%	12%	48%	52%
Leicester	52%	15%	33%	67%
Derby	48%	4%	48%	52%
Chelmsford	54%	5%	41%	59%
Norwich	40%	4%	56%	44%
Ripon & Leeds	56%	11%	33%	67%
Blackburn	53%	7%	40%	60%
Bristol	27%	19%	54%	46%
Portsmouth	43%	14%	43%	57%

We have not shown here columns for individual days of the week, although there is evidence across a wide range of types of fxC to suggest that Wednesday is the single most popular weekday. This may mean that being furthest away from Sunday it both offers the greatest respite from the demands of the weekend and is the most different from it. Yet the Wednesday figure at most only accounts for less than a third of the choices made. We have not seen any other distinct correlations between days chosen to meet and the variety of dioceses.

It may be helpful to interpret this data by holding two factors in balance. Firstly, the single most common day chosen remains Sunday and this is derived from comparing the Sunday figure with one fifth of the weekday one. That reality is nuanced by considerable variety across the dioceses as to how dominant Sunday is as the choice of meeting day. However, secondly, the right hand column indicates the proportion of fxC that do not meet on a Sunday and in all but two dioceses it is more common not to meet on a Sunday.

We see no correlations with dioceses being north or south, nor even a connection to a diocese being dominantly urban or rural. Leicester and Derby are arguably fairly similar in social setting yet they score very differently at this point. Rather, we show below that there is a closer link between choosing weekday or weekend by the type of fxC.

Graph 10: fxC day of meeting: week or weekend?



Abbreviations:

ALT	Alternative worship	CAF	Café church	CDP	Community development plant
CEL	Cell plant	CFC	Child focused church	CLU	Cluster
MES	Messy Church	MUL	Multiple congregation	MWS	Midweek church
NMC	New monastic community	NTC	Network church	OPC	Older people’s church
SBC	School based church	SKR	Seeker church	SIG	Special interest group
TCP	Traditional church plant	U5s	Church for <5s & carers	YTH	Youth congregation

In exploring which meet during the week, one link is definitional. Midweek church held on a Sunday is simply a contradiction. Beyond that, those most likely to meet during the week are church among under fives (94%), cell church (77%), older people’s church (71%), special interest groups (69%) and clusters (68%). Both cell and cluster usually exist in relation to a ‘celebration’ event held perhaps monthly on a Sunday, thus they would be likely to choose a different day.

Those most likely to meet on a Sunday include some expected candidates. Multiple congregations, again almost by definition, are Sunday based. Traditional church plants (78%) are often provided to serve an under-churched area or where the existing church is some distance away. These can be factors leading to Sunday being a plausible choice of meeting day. Our previous case study research on café church which here scored at 75% showed this is often a way to diversify and make more accessible what is offered on a Sunday, so keeping the day is then axiomatic.²⁹ The seeker (70%) instinct is to take existing patterns of worship and make them more accessible so this too is likely to retain the day, and alt.worship (68%) is normally held in a church building to emphasise the transcendent and have access to a variety of spaces. Thus a Sunday evening is a frequent choice.³⁰

Summary of 5.5

We suggest the lesson to be inferred is that making the right choice of meeting day in context is more important than having a preconception of what that day must be. This properly should also affect the choice of kind of fxC, rather than uncritically importing a preference for a popular kind.

²⁹ G. Lings, *Encounters on the Edge* Nos. 33 and 34 (Sheffield: Church Army, 2007) and No. 45 in 2010.

³⁰ G. Lings, *Encounters on the Edge* No. 12 (Sheffield: Church Army, 2001) and C. Dalpra *Encounters on the Edge* No. 54 (2012).

5.6 fxC: traditions and ecumenical partners

Table 46: Traditions participating in fxC

Diocese	Evangelical	Charismatic	Central	Anglo-Catholic
Liverpool	73.1%	23.1%	24.4%	9.0%
Canterbury	63.9%	44.4%	41.7%	5.6%
Leicester	76.9%	44.2%	30.8%	3.8%
Derby	60.9%	41.3%	47.8%	4.3%
Chelmsford	80.0%	34.0%	28.0%	8.0%
Norwich	50.8%	23.8%	58.7%	14.3%
Ripon & Leeds	43.6%	41.0%	46.2%	23.1%
Blackburn	53.1%	10.9%	50.0%	14.1%
Bristol	60.6%	21.2%	54.5%	12.1%
Portsmouth	47.6%	38.1%	57.1%	4.8%

Attempting to collect data on theological traditions owned at a fxC is complex. Despite a search, we found no breakdown of proportions of traditions owned across the Church of England. At the outset we accepted various limitations to the meaning of the data above. It is to be understood as what the leader told us was the background of the incoming team and the sending church. Such labels were not known by those for whom church attendance was new. Nevertheless, that theological tradition brought was part of the inheritance of faith being handed on. We also expected that in many cases the leaders would identify with more than one tradition and our form made provision for this. All table 46 shows is how often a tradition was named, whether as part, or as the whole, of some sense of shared identity. Furthermore, we did not go down the road of subdivisions within each of these chosen four categories and some readers may feel it even leaves out whole strands such as the term liberal. In a few cases discussion over the phone led to agreement that the most accurate reply would be ‘not applicable’.

Therefore all that is presented here is how often a particular tradition was named at least as part of that young church’s identity. Despite those real limitations, three features are noticeable, some of which may be thought surprising by readers of this report.

Firstly, all four are represented to some extent. It is not the case that the world of fxC is totally inhabited by evangelicals, although it does appear that overall this tradition is the most frequently named.

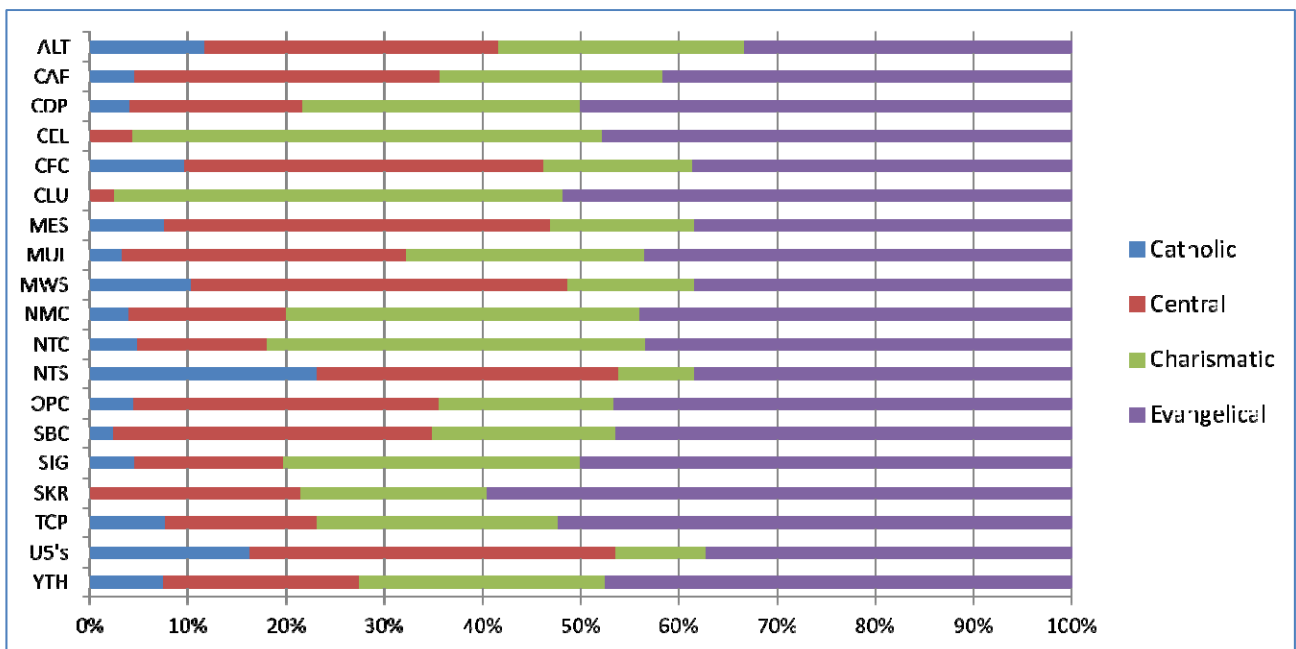
Congruent with this diversity we are bound to draw attention secondly to the fact that reading down the list from Norwich to Bristol shows that the Catholic contribution need not be miniscule, with Ripon & Leeds having the highest incidence. It is well beyond the scope of a quantitative report to claim what the reasons for this are; our role here is but to simply note that this tradition can participate.

In keeping with this theme, thirdly we found initially to our surprise that the central tradition can, as with Norwich, Ripon & Leeds and Portsmouth be the most common tradition present.

Correlations between Traditions and types of fxC

In practice many examples cited allegiance to, or inheritance from, more than one tradition. 218 cases from the total of 518, across 10 dioceses, chose more than one tradition. Thus the division below is to that extent artificial. An additional factor is that the types of fxC are also often combined. Across the 518 actual cases 878 choices of type were made, which is an average of 1.7 for each fxC. We explore the significance of the choices of fxC type which are shown not to be uniform across the traditions being claimed, if only in part.

Graph 11: Different traditions in correlation with chosen types of fxC.



Abbreviations:

ALT	Alternative worship	CAF	Café church	CDP	Community development plant
CEL	Cell plant	CFC	Child focused church	CLU	Cluster
MES	Messy Church	MUL	Multiple congregation	MWS	Midweek church
NMC	New monastic community	NTC	Network church	OPC	Older people's church
SBC	School based church	SKR	Seeker church	SIG	Special interest group
TCP	Traditional church plant	U5s	Church for <5s & carers	YTH	Youth congregation

Some correlations are noticeable although causation is conjectural. All four traditions engage with all but three of the 19 kinds shown. Two other kinds of fxC were excluded from the chart, because the sample size was only two.

Clusters and Cells are almost totally practiced by those claiming a charismatic or evangelical tradition, or where the two are combined. **Seeker** also scores highest with Evangelicals. The national advocates of all these methods are from these stables and the first two types value lay leadership highly, which operation of those kinds require.

Network Churches and Special Interest Groups are the next highest for this combination of traditions. It might be argued that these two traditions are less wedded to seeing mission totally defined by parish boundaries. The same may apply to **new monastic** communities, which features nearly as strongly.

The Central tradition is strongly associated with all kinds of fxC in which **children** play a significant part. It also features strongly in **mid week church**. **Messy church** is equally followed by Central and Evangelical and less by Catholic or Charismatic.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the Catholic tradition is more often linked to **New Traditional Services, Mid week Church** and has a part to play in **Alt. Worship**. We also note this tradition is second highest in **church for under 5s** and their carers.

In summary, most traditions, except the Catholic, can use all the types shown, but some traditions have more characteristic choices.

On this basis and subject to the limitations spelt out, it is plausible to assert that across the breadth of the traditions of the Church of England, fxC are making some mark.

Table 47: fxC and any ecumenical partners

Diocese	Church of England only	Informally ecumenical	Formal ecumenical partnership
Liverpool	87.2%	12.8%	0.0%
Canterbury	94.4%	5.6%	0.0%
Leicester	92.3%	7.7%	0.0%
Derby	89.1%	8.7%	2.2%
Chelmsford	88.0%	12.0%	0.0%
Norwich	76.2%	22.2%	1.6%
Ripon & Leeds	92.3%	7.7%	0.0%
Blackburn	92.2%	7.8%	0.0%
Bristol	81.8%	15.2%	3.0%
Portsmouth	90.5%	9.5%	0.0%
Averages	88.4%	11.0%	0.6%

The picture that has emerged about fxC and ecumenical partners has one dominating message. It presents a contrast between a national impression and a local reality. The national background is of strongly favouring ecumenical partnership, as modelled by the ecumenical makeup of the national Fresh Expressions team, backed up by its literature and their practice of delivering its most substantial course, *msm*, to people from a mixture of denominations. However, in practice, fxC connected to the Church of England have very largely taken the route of doing this without ecumenical partners. Were it not for a variant in both Norwich and Bristol dioceses, over 90% of cases would be classed as Church of England only.

This does not mean only Anglicans were present, for by definition the non-churched who now came had no meaningful denominational allegiance. Furthermore, we observe anecdotally that the de-churched return from a variety of denominational backgrounds. Sometimes we were also told that there were a few members coming from other denominations, but we only deemed cases either informally or formally ecumenical where either the leadership of the fxC came from more than one Christian church, or when a mixture of denominations were involved in the overall starting up or continuing governance of a fxC.

The next clearest message is that where there is ecumenical partnership it is most likely this is of an informal nature. We stress that our enquiries only took data on what was the case, not why that choice had been made. We suspect but cannot show that it might be for a variety of reasons. Sometimes the local partnership was with a newer denomination outside the formal processes; at other times, as hinted by *Mission-shaped Church* ten years ago, the formal ecumenical process appears arduous and burdensome for a young and necessarily emerging church to take on. Conversations also indicate to us that the request for light touch in seeking formalised partnerships, made by *Mission-shaped Church*, has not been able to be delivered.

Norwich is the obvious exception to the pattern and we surmise that with less resource in its many rural locations, allied to those contexts where the Anglicans are the only denomination left on the ground locally, people of that area sensibly get together when starting something new. We have looked at the Bristol examples and cannot detect an obvious correlation with area type.

Summary of 5.6

- All traditions can initiate fresh expressions of Church
- The considerable majority of fxC do not do this with ecumenical partners

5.7 Learning from the inclusion and exclusion rate in fxC

Table 48: Inclusion and exclusion rates with alleged fxC

Diocesan name	Alleged fxC cases	Excluded % of cases	No. of cases included
Liverpool	135	42.2%	78
Canterbury	115	37.4%	72
Leicester	90	42.2%	52
Derby	117	60.7%	46
Chelmsford	120	58.3%	50
Norwich	163	61.3%	63
Ripon & Leeds	103	62.1%	39
Blackburn	177	63.8%	64
Bristol	72	54.2%	33
Portsmouth	32	34.4%	21
Totals	1124		518
Average		53.9%	

Table 48 tracks the order in which the dioceses have been researched, giving the number of alleged cases, the percentage of examples excluded and the resultant number included. As it happens, the first three dioceses are more similar to one another and the next six dioceses reveal and share the higher exclusion figures, followed by the lowest figure in Portsmouth. The team expected that a number of cases would not meet the criteria, but they were formulated primarily for the sake of theological integrity and operational consistency, and only secondarily to provide some measure of the degree of existing confusion around the term ‘fresh expression of Church’.

The percentage for ‘excluded’, with its average of 53.9%, reveals the disturbing extent of that confusion and so warrants comment. Here we go beyond material covered when the criteria for inclusion were listed and explained in section 2.3 and the complexity of applying them explored through marginal cases in appendix five.

Exploring reasons for exclusion

Reasons for exclusion were varied and they are listed in the table below.

The less frequent cases are dealt with first. One reason was practical which was discovering a name had changed over time creating a duplicate record. Two reasons were set by our parameters to only cover the period 1992-2012. The dioceses researched later inevitably had examples from 2013 that we noted but did not include.

Table 49: General categories for exclusion

	Arch to fxC	Infrequent <Monthly	Not an fxC	Duplicate record	Not Yet started	Outside 1992-2012	?	All exclusions
Liverpool	11	5	38	1	0	0	2	57
Canterbury	9	3	18	4	9	0	0	43
Leicester	6	4	20	3	4	0	1	38
Derby	5	3	55	1	6	0	1	71
Norwich	19	11	57	9	3	1	0	100
Chelmsford	17	10	37	3	2	1	0	70
Ripon & Leeds	12	2	44	3	1	2	0	64
Blackburn	14	4	80	7	2	6	0	113
Bristol	9	1	20	2	1	6	0	39
Portsmouth	2	4	5	0	0	0	0	11
Totals	104	47	374	33	28	16	4	606
%	17.2	7.8	61.7	5.4	4.6	2.6	0.7	

The remaining reasons were due to application of our ten criteria. Firstly we excluded some for infrequency of meeting. More testing was coming to the assessment that something had the potential to become a fxC, yet with local agreement that it was not yet that. We thus coined the shorthand term an arch, being legitimate, but not yet the bridge it was intended to be. It is clear from the table that the single largest category for exclusion was that a particular example simply was something else and had in effect been mislabelled as a fxC.. In all dioceses this was the most common occurrence at 62% of cases but this happened for a variety of reasons as the next table explores.

Table 50: Unpacking the ‘not an fxC’ category

Diocese name	Rebadged Service	Rebadged Group	Outreach Project	New event for Christians	Chap- laincy	Never C of E	Did not last 2 years	No info or never started	Total
Liverpool	3	13	7	9	1	0	3	2	38
Canterbury	4	3	2	6	1	0	0	2	18
Leicester	4	2	9	4	0	1	0	0	20
Derby	11	14	19	10	0	1	0	0	55
Chelmsford	11	8	27	7	0	2	1	1	57
Norwich	4	5	19	7	0	0	2	0	37
Ripon & Leeds	4	6	16	7	2	0	3	6	44
Blackburn	12	15	27	9	0	4	4	9	80
Bristol	1	6	7	4	1	1	0	0	20
Portsmouth	0	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	5
Totals	54	73	136	63	5	10	13	20	374
%	14.4	19.5	36.4	16.8	1.3	2.7	3.5	5.3	

Several comments are needed to tease out the strands this second table reveals. The examples in the first two columns, and the fourth one, may well be ecclesial, useful and needed. Together they are 51% of the total. But if it was clear that they were neither aimed at, nor actually bringing any outsiders, they were deemed not missional. We admit some ambivalence about these. We accept that in some cases they may enliven or renew the existing church which we applaud. We nevertheless wish they would not call themselves fresh expressions of Church as this is confusing

at best, and could be dishonest or delusional at worst. In some of the rebadged cases we suspected that an exercise in box ticking or being thought trendy was going on.

By direct contrast it can be seen that the third column, and single most commonly excluded type, being 36% of the whole, were those that were missional, but which had no ecclesial intentions or features. We regard these as admirable, but their purpose was to bring any new people back into the very church putting on these projects. No new church either occurred or was envisaged.

When it came to chaplaincy only some examples examined were excluded. Where an ongoing, reasonably settled, worshipping and witnessing community resulted, they were included as fxC. Where chaplains were exercising doubtless valuable ministry to individuals or groups but no ecclesial community would, or could, form as a result, then they were not included. The latter are pieces of mission at the edge, and to be welcomed, but not fresh expressions of Church.

In a few cases we were given leads where there was no Anglican partner involved and for that reason alone they fell outside the remit of our investigations. In another number of cases the example cited simply was not known locally, or it was an idea that nothing ever came of.

The high exclusion rate demonstrates that the research team has not been afraid to insist on the term 'fresh expression of Church' being used as meant in *Mission-shaped Church*. It would have been possible but not desirable to apparently increase the number of cases by lowering the bar. We did not wish to do this suspecting the term had been borrowed and used indiscriminately since 2004. We also wish to minimise any dangers of over-claiming. The exclusions then have the power to reveal the results from one attempt at greater consistency and robustness.

Some might posit that to dismiss over half of the alleged cases reveals the term has become meaningless, but we hold to the reverse view. Our argument is that new vocabulary takes time to settle; it is very likely in a church as diverse as the Church of England to go through a period of unsettled and uneven reception. That will involve a sifting process that helpfully discloses what is not meant by the term. In 2004 when it was coined in *Mission-shaped Church*, that could not be authoritatively anticipated. Reception has been a feature of Anglican life, for example the transition over time from tractarian re-invention to the parish communion movement, or the ordination of women. While of a very different order to all these, only centuries of theological dispute and consequent exclusions enabled the early church to progress towards clarity over Christology.

We also assert from our qualitative studies of other new initiatives that similar distortions have occurred over what counts as café church, cell church or Messy Church. We detect a disturbing tendency for increased use of any new label that becomes popular to be in inverse proportion to accurate understanding of its meaning. The same could be said for the use of the word 'mission' in parish and diocesan literature. It is almost now there by default, and as has been said 'when everything is mission, nothing is'.

Our team's view is that inventing a further term will not rescue the Church from this tendency to uncritically borrow new terms and thus obscure their meaning. Our view is that we should not abandon the term now in view of the confusion, but urge that it be used correctly, drawing on an Anglican Reformation tag: 'The abuse does not take away the use'. It is likely that any further invented term would be subjected to a similar process of debasement and it would also clash with the existing nomenclature. Our research, using consistent and agreed criteria, that is now becoming known, is a good chance to recover this unhelpful situation, at least in the dioceses surveyed and whose officers now have a useful measuring device.

Our team has been heartened, in the period of writing this report, to be in close contact with the Research and Statistics department of the Church of England. They have sought to design and disseminate a flow diagram to accompany requests for data about fxC. We are appreciative of their generous working with our comments on its shape and text to produce what would be diagnostic, accurate and readily understood by those who fill in the forms. We are glad to recommend that the final version be adopted and used in collection of national data returns and be adopted universally by the dioceses. We are now in a better position to have greater clarity which will aid future research and decisions about the allocating of resources.

The report is also glad to draw attention to co-operation for some years with Dr Rachel Jordan, the national Mission and Evangelism Adviser. She shared our guess that this high exclusion rate does not fundamentally question past claims of overall numbers. In updates for the Church of England General Synod, Dr Jordan estimated there might be some 1500-2000 examples nationwide. We now have a more secure mechanism to demonstrate, beyond reasonable doubt, what is the case in one quarter of the dioceses. That figure when grossed up is congruent with her estimates from hitherto less secure sources.

Summary of 5.7

- The overall exclusion rate is high, although it varies across dioceses.
- The most common reason for exclusion was that an example proffered was something different to a fresh expression of Church. Either they were for the existing people and thus not missional, or they were outreach projects which had no intention to be ecclesial.
- Progress is being made towards clarity and consistency by use of a diagnostic flow diagram, through partnership with the central Research and Statistics team.
- The argument to retain the term ‘fresh expressions of Church’ remains coherent.

6 Correlations with patterns of numerical growth

One reason for choosing to research a period stretching over 20 years is the hope of identifying longitudinal patterns in relation to growth at younger churches. To recognise these, reliable data over a period of time is needed and here there are limits. Our research team is aware that the kind of people who start new ventures may not be those enamoured of close statistical record keeping in relation to attendance. With that in mind, and the principle of manageability to moderate what we could achieve, we asked the respondents to submit average annual attendance figures for each year of their existence, separated out into those under and over 16 years of age.

Where we had more than two years of those two sets of figures, we added these two age groups together and began to examine the trends, leading us to posit some different patterns by which to interpret the data. The categories, which we confess have some degree of arbitrariness, are as follows and appear in the key below.

Continues to grow: overall the fxC attendance has risen by more than or equal to 5% a year.

Grow then plateau: at least two years of numerical growth occurred before a plateau followed.

Quickly plateau: after growth from the beginning in the first year, numbers attending remain constant within 5%.

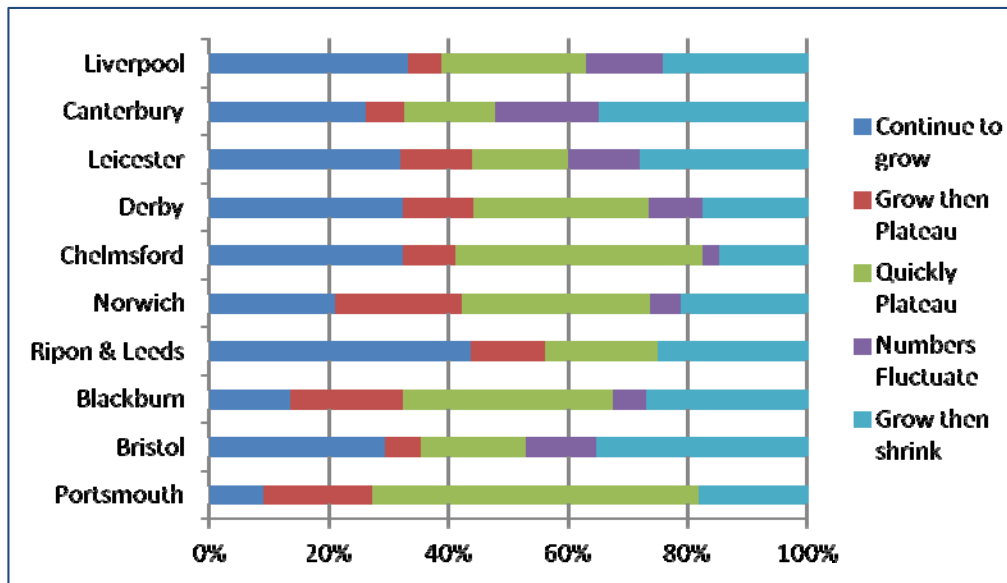
(In both the cases involving plateau this analysis masks the equalising of outflow and inflow of people and quite often notes on the returned questionnaire indicated this.)

Fluctuate: at least two cycles of more than 5% growth and decline are observable.

Grow then shrink: after a period of growth, numbers have declined by at least 10%, and in some cases may now be less than the start.

6.1 Growth patterns of the fxC of a diocese

Graph 12: Patterns of growth in fxC in their dioceses



One factor limits the extent to which this data is representative. There is a further category we named as ‘insufficient data’: this means we do not yet have more than two years of figures to compare. This usually is because the fxC have only lived that long, or in a few cases have not been able to give us older information. This category turned out to be 36.5% of the cases, itself part of the evidence of how many are very recent. However, unlike data about the training of leaders, this data applies to all the dioceses surveyed.

Graph 12 is not intended to be an *OfChurch* performance league table between dioceses. There are similarities here to the critiques of that approach in education. Such a table makes no allowance for variables such as context, resources available, or a differing prevalence of kinds of fxC within each diocese. Nevertheless, dioceses such as Blackburn, Norwich or Portsmouth where few fxC continue to grow, or Canterbury or Bristol where higher proportions grow then shrink, may wish to investigate further.

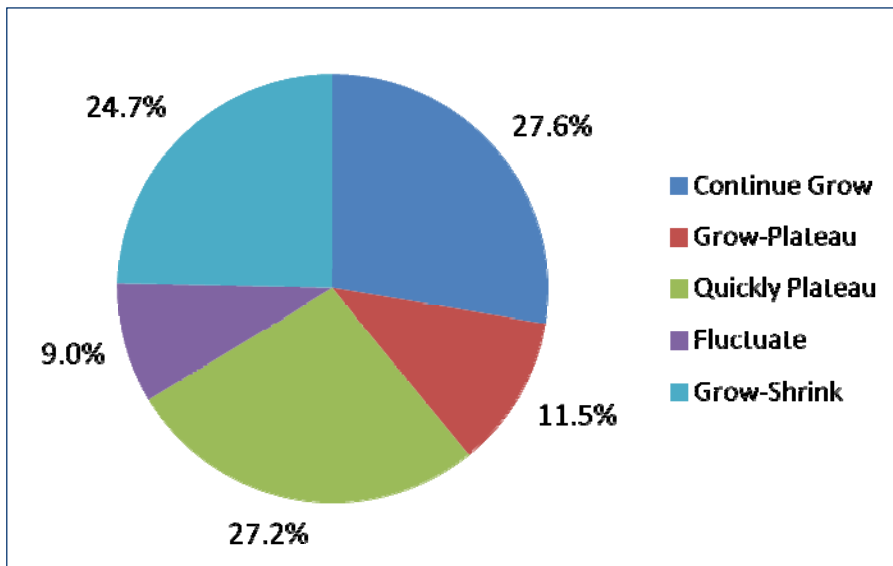
What it does reveal is the stark fact that by no means all fxC continue to grow. This could be deemed the obverse side of the coin that showed the considerable return on investment of people sent which added on average 2.6 people for every 1 sent out. This variable performance in relation to growth is capable of wide interpretation. One pertinent question is whether the wider Church is right to think that all fxC should be able to do so, when it is apparent that very many parish congregations do not change size in a marked way. An overview produced by the Research Strategy and Development Unit tracked parish attendance growth or decline. Half of all the examples had shifted less than 12% from their start size ten years before.

In this research, table 6 and other factors in section 4.1 gave evidence that the world of fxC is a diverse one, made up of many smaller things. A crucial question and unproven answer is whether certain ways of being church have a natural unit size. It is but an analogy from another discipline, yet we know human beings have a range of ‘normal’ height, with some exceptions, and also that the height of human beings increased markedly with changes in public health and diet in the 19th century. Further growth since then is sadly more attributable to factors such as: middle aged

spread, the prevalence of poor diet, social pressures and poverty, and in even worse cases to cancers. Such an analogy about further growth, when linked to the topic of planting fresh expressions of Church, raises the question as to whether it is more strategic for churches that reach their normal size to think about the dynamics of church reproduction than to focus just on church addition, the latter of which usually gains more attention.

However such an argument is received, the variety of patterns of growth we detected through attendance over time, and that they were so different across the dioceses surveyed, led the team to investigate whether there were other correlations that cast light upon them and which suggested demonstrable causes. The backcloth of growth across all kinds of fxC put together is as follows:

Graph 13: Proportions of growth, plateau and decline in fxC

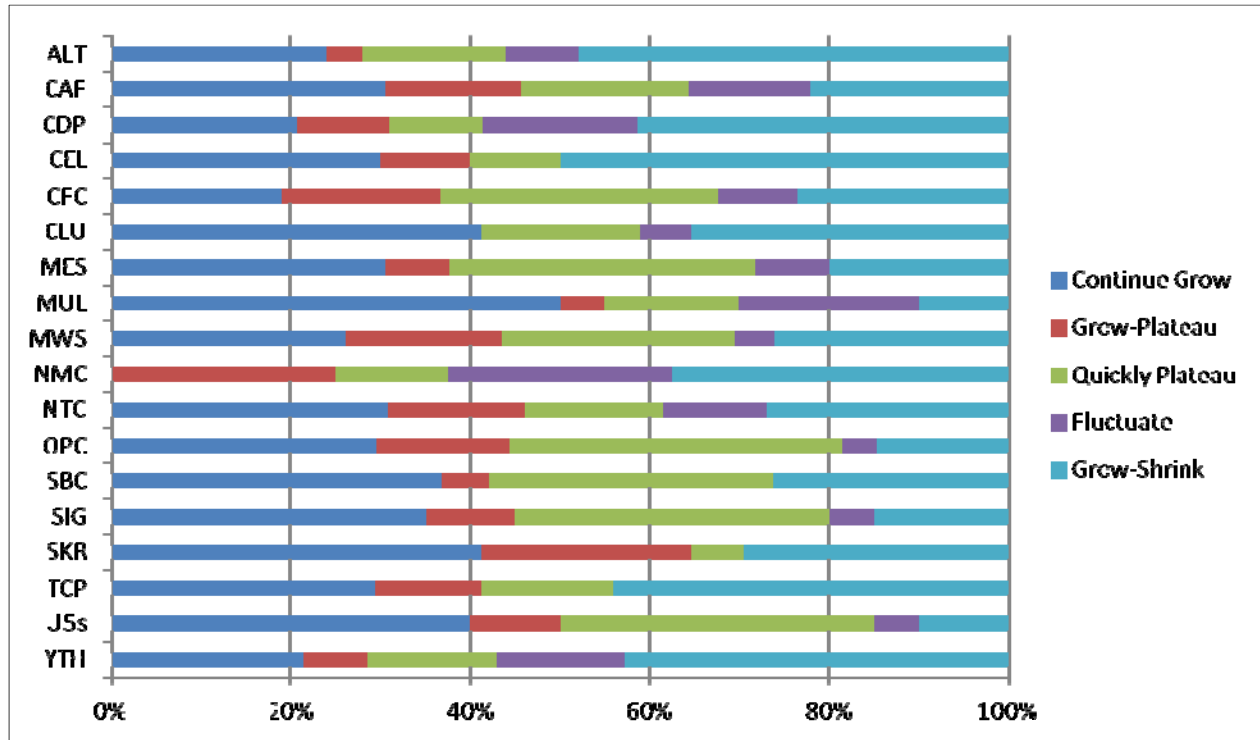


Once more the interpretation of the data could be wide. Some could argue that the 66% which either grow or maintain their size are healthy. Others might comment with scorn that less than 30% continue to grow. All might well have concerns over the 25% that now are shrinking.

6.2 Growth patterns across different kinds of fxC

Our first correlation was to link the growth patterns to kinds of fxC.

Graph 14: Types of fxC and growth patterns



Abbreviations:

ALT	Alternative worship	CAF	Café church	CDP	Community development plant
CEL	Cell plant	CFC	Child focused church	CLU	Cluster
MES	Messy Church	MUL	Multiple congregation	MWS	Midweek church
NMC	New monastic community	NTC	Network church	OPC	Older people's church
SBC	School based church	SKR	Seeker church	SIG	Special interest group
TCP	Traditional church plant	U5s	Church for <5s & carers	YTH	Youth congregation

The bar chart shows those kinds most likely to continue to grow to be multiple congregations, clusters, seeker church, church for under fives, and school based church. Those most likely to grow but then shrink are cell, alt.worship and traditional church plants. The data also reveals that with 8 of the 18 kinds listed around 40% of them plateau either quickly or after a time.

Our inference is that there is some truth that different kinds of fxC do grow differently; in some cases their very name such as cell, cluster or café gives the clue that their internal dynamics flourish better at certain unit sizes. When that size is reached, our view is that is best transcended by starting yet another one, if there is the leadership resource to do so. Such thinking fits with the recognition that the world of fxC is diverse, comprised of different smaller things. The key will be to understand how each kind flourishes and what constrains them.

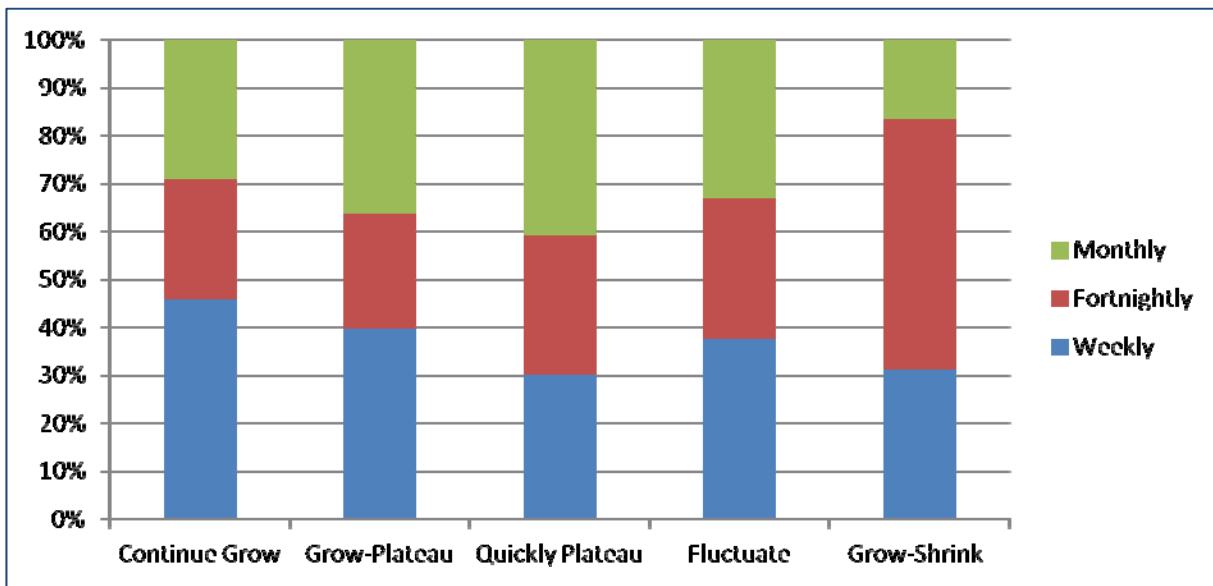
Therefore, we doubt this chart is a knockdown argument in favour of certain kinds that are more likely to promote numerical growth. Resources of leadership and team vary, as does the nature of the social context for any fxC, as well as what the mission task is discerned to be, and the history

of investment in the area by the wider local church(es). In addition, some leaders interviewed said their plateau problem was having a waiting list because they were constrained by the size of the building and no prospect locally of finding another larger one.

6.3 Growth patterns and frequency of meeting at fxC

The next correlation explores whether, and in what ways, frequency of meeting affects growth.

Graph 15: Frequency of meeting and growth patterns



The correlation between frequency and growth patterns gives a basis for saying that if weekly is feasible to resource, that is the most likely frequency to see continuing growth. It is not difficult to imagine a greater sense of continuity, clarity about when it meets and maintaining sharpness of direction all being aided by a weekly meeting pattern.

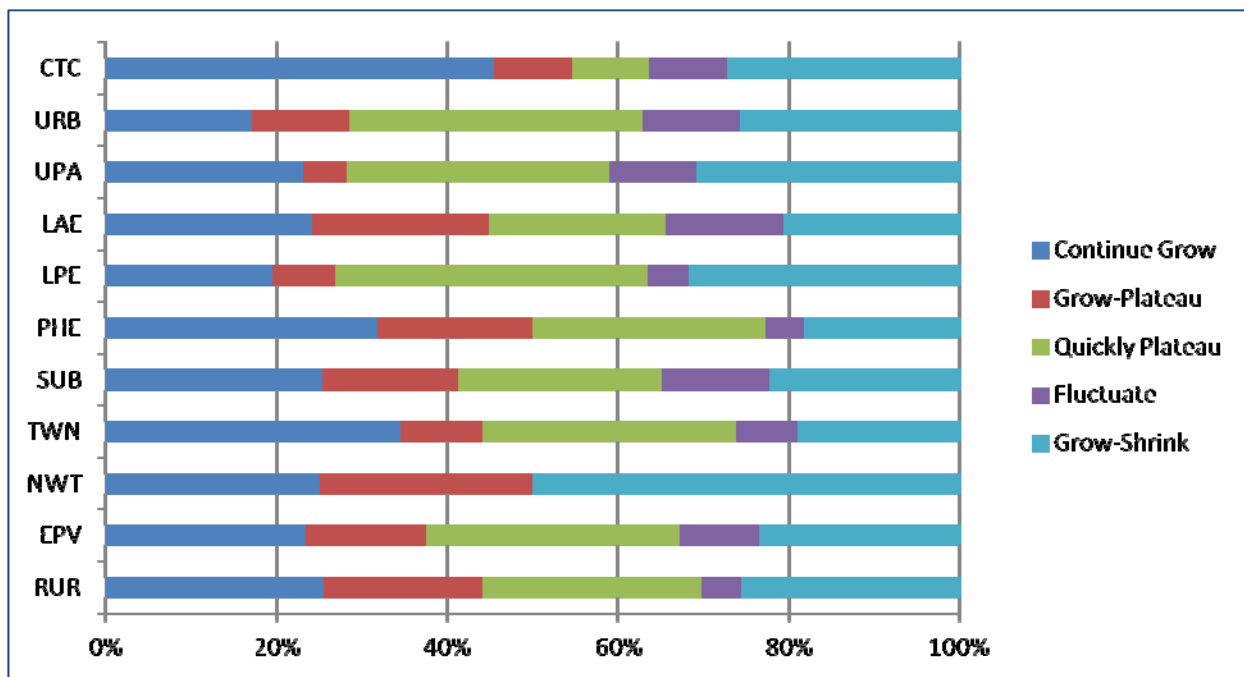
The chart also demonstrates the vulnerability of the fortnightly pattern, which has the lowest continue to grow factor, and furthermore we suggest that with half of them having a pattern of growth then shrinking, this fits with what we also know: that this frequency of meeting is linked to a higher propensity to them dying (see graph 9 on page 72). Beyond this we have also detected a possible congruent factor that they have slightly smaller average sized attendance than the other frequencies.

It may also be significant that the monthly examples are seen to have the highest tendency to plateau quickly. We also know from other analysis that monthly cases have higher initial rates of growth among children, which is to be significantly attributed to the high proportion of monthly Messy Churches. This feature of reaching a plateau may not matter if there is continued growth in depth, but in the long term it could be a source of vulnerability. Our team also found that teams which begin monthly patterns have smaller team sizes than others. Thus they are growing from a smaller start size, and which may mean they have a smaller circle of others to influence and attract. Such small teams also more quickly reach a ceiling of how much they can do, which may lock them into the monthly pattern.

Rightly, much is made of the importance of relating to context in fresh expressions of Church writing.³¹ Our own understanding is that the term ‘fresh expression’ is well understood as a kind of code or shorthand for the desire for contextual missional engagement. It needs the second half of the term ‘of Church’ to complete what is meant by the whole. This report has urged that earlier correlation tables should not be taken on face value alone, for they cannot account for differences created by context. This then is the next correlation we explore in relation to the growth patterns seen across the 500 plus fxC examined.

6.4 Growth patterns in fxC by where they occur

Graph 16: Growth patterns and geographical/social context



Abbreviations:

CTC	City centre	URB	Urban	UPA	Urban priority area
LAE	Local authority estate	LPE	Local & private estate	PHE	Private housing estate
SUB	Suburban	TWN	Town	NWT	New town
EPV	Expanded village	RUR	Rural		

The bar chart broadly moves downwards from a base, considering the denser or larger urban contexts towards the rural ones at its bottom. The varied patterns of growth and decline occur in all these contexts, thus it may be safe to say none of them is impossible to work in and none are guaranteed unbroken success.

It then becomes plausible to notice that city centre contexts seem to make continuing growth at fxC markedly easier. In addition, as might be expected, such growth is the least common in the next grouping of urban contexts – from urban to mixed local and private estates. This suggests that starting a fxC is itself not a magic cure for a hitherto struggling church in such a location.

³¹ One example would be M. Moynagh, *Church for Every Context* (London: SCM, 2012). The Fresh Expressions website and its publications would be others: www.freshexpressions.org.uk/shop

Private estates and towns see more continued growth than the more deprived urban contexts. It is intriguingly that this is not matched by similar growth in the suburbs that might have been thought to be particularly fertile, but here are on a par with what occurs in new towns and the two different rural contexts. There is some logic to think that sustaining fxC in new towns is particularly demanding in that those fxC operating there exhibit easily the highest grow then shrink pattern.

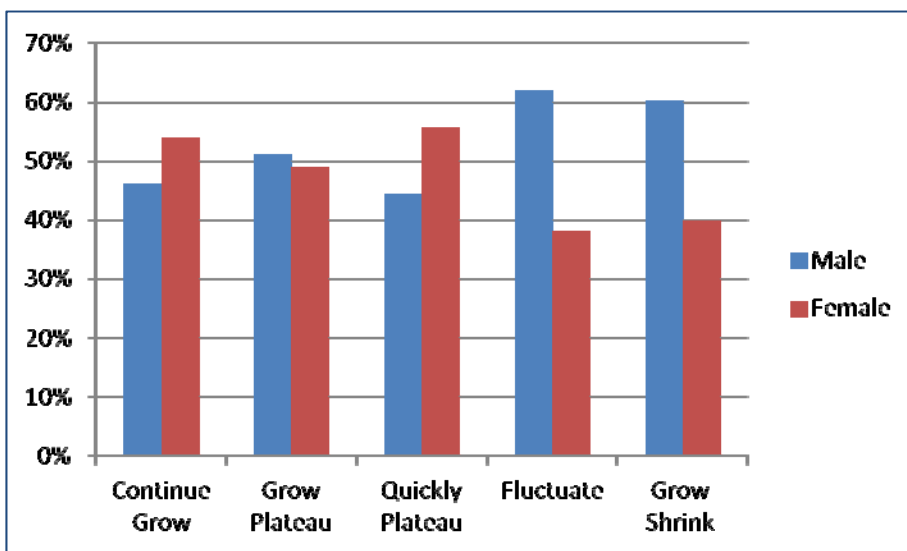
With all these observations we can see correlations between social context and church growth and could venture guesses at causation, but that would be to press the data further than it was designed to reveal. Rather, it may be better to see the data as indicating topics for further research into what occurs in these differing contexts that causes these positive effects and whether anything may be done to mitigate the negative ones.

However, it is within the scope of this research to note that here is harder evidence that it is unwise to have one universal set of expectations about how quickly a fxC should grow, either in size or to maturity. Clearly context affects the pace, growth and sustaining patterns.

A common view is that success is all down to good leadership. We suggest that the correlations already covered question how far that is true. We encountered no reason to doubt that the quality of leadership is fairly evenly distributed across the range of dioceses, kinds of fxC and their social contexts. To complete this loop, we correlate some facts about leaders with the growth patterns.

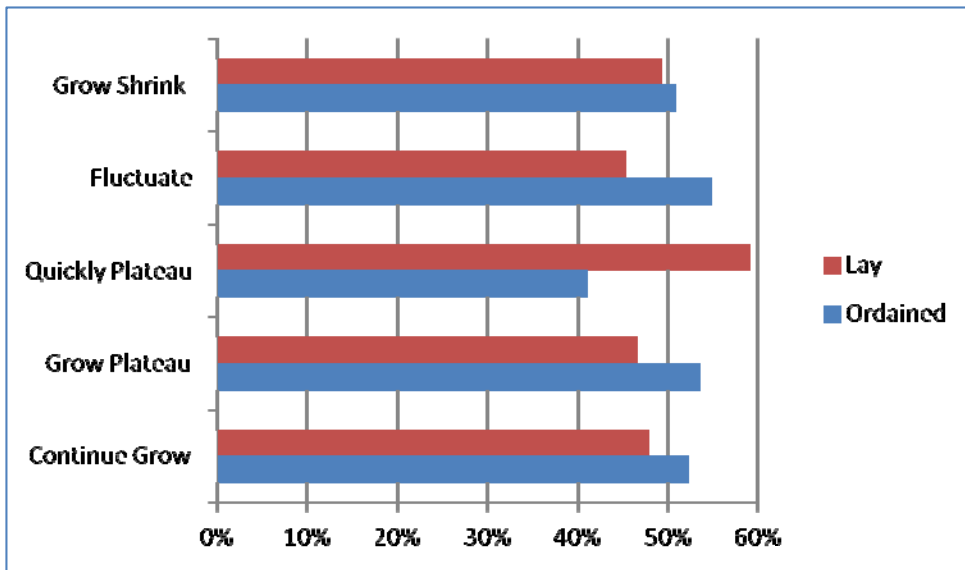
6.5 Growth pattern in fxC compared to leadership variables

Graph 17: Growth and gender of the leader



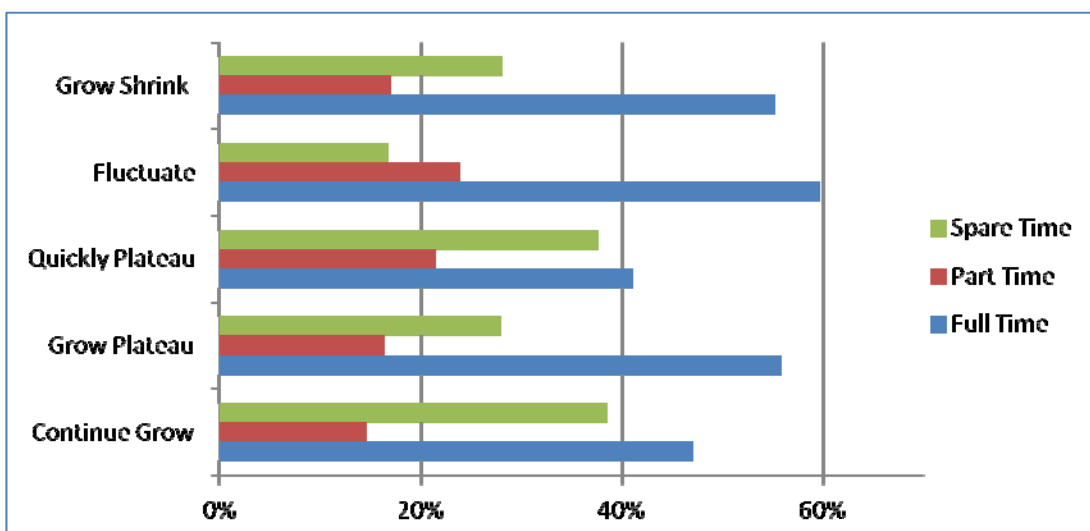
It is apparent that in nearly all these ways the women do better than the men. They are more likely to see continued growth, or growth then plateau, and far less likely to see either fluctuation or later shrinking. The men are less likely to lead those which quickly plateau. We do not know why this is the picture but are able to say that it makes abundantly clear that women are as effective as men in leading sustainable fxC, if not more so. This is worth noting as it accompanies a change. 20 years ago it was uncommon that women led what were then called church plants. Our records nationally for 1992 show women led only 7 out of 37 known cases, 5 out of 37 in 1993 and 5 out of 20 in 1994.

Graph 18: Growth and lay / ordained leaders



The clergy do slightly better when it comes to continued growth or growth then plateau. We suspect it is because some of them are working at this full time. There is little difference when it comes to subsequent shrinkage. In that one major disclosure of this research is that over half of fxC are lay led, which up until now was guess work but not demonstrated, this data suggests that the differences ordination makes to growth patterns at fxC is marginal. This graph needs to be interpreted alongside the next one which examines time available.

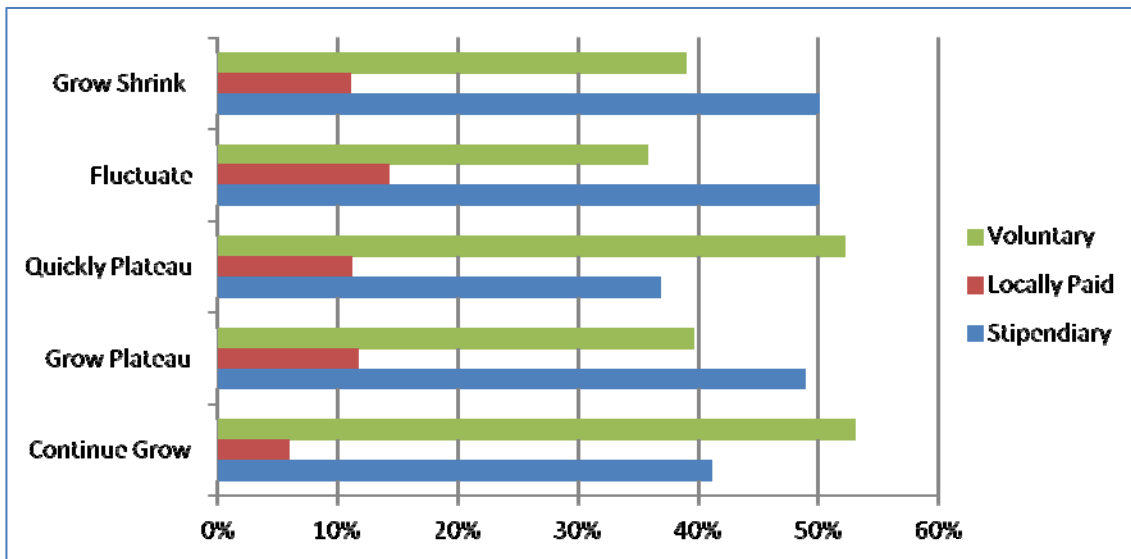
Graph 19: Growth and time available to leaders



The bar chart needs specific interpretation. We have 672 leader records: 33.6% of the leaders are spare time, 17.9% are part time and 48.5% are full time, although not all that time is necessarily available to the fxC. Therefore it looks as though full time scores highest in every growth pattern. (We do not have separate data on growth patterns for those ordained leaders who are free to devote their full time to leading a fxC, as we had not anticipated the equivocal nature of the designation full time.)

Thus the three sets of coloured bars are best compared taking each colour in turn, rather than within each growth variable. It then appears that the full timers see more fluctuation in numbers and later shrinkage than continued growth. By contrast, it is those working in their spare time, mainly women (see Table 35) who are more likely (38.5%) to see growth than shrinkage, although a significant proportion (37.6%) have experienced plateau. This is an indicator that, as far as we can see, the future of working with spare time leaders is no worse than with those described as full time.

Graph 20: Growth and remuneration



As above, it is the proportions within the three coloured sets of data that deserve comment.

The stipendiaries see more shrinkage and fluctuation than continued growth. This has some overlap with the connections seen among those with full time status, although we recognise these two sets are not identical. Similarly, a higher proportion of the voluntary spare time people are seeing more continued growth than decline.

This section thus provides some evidence behind the headline that the typical fxC leader today is a spare-time voluntary lay woman, who by this assessment is doing rather better than her male paid ordained full time counterpart.

6.6 Growth and discipleship; growth and the sacraments

We ran a correlation between the growth variables and the steps in discipleship being taken. To our surprise, our finding is that though these steps are admirable in themselves, those fxC who have yet to take any of them fared no worse than the average in relation to numerical growth. However, those kinds that laid on courses and encouraged serving in teams did marginally better.

The growth correlations in relation to which fxC held the sacraments were also somewhat equivocal. While it was true that those having communions within their pattern of worship continued to grow more often than those saying they were 'not at this stage', the data also showed that the self-same group (holding communions) were more likely to shrink, and by the same proportion of difference to those not at this stage.

Summary of 6.1 to 6.6

- It is not the case that all kinds of fxC grow in the same way; all kinds exhibit a variety of patterns on a five point spectrum, from continued growth to growth followed by shrinkage.
- The variety has some correlation to the type of fxC chosen and its likely unit size.
- Frequency of meeting affects growth patterns, and fortnightly is the least likely to experience continued growth and most likely to meet subsequent decline.
- Social context has a correlation with growth patterns. Awareness of this and the other variables should affect diocesan and local expectations.
- Both lay and ordained, male and female, can lead fxC. By this evidence, female leaders are shown to be more effective than their male counterparts.
- Those working in their spare time, which is mostly women, appear on several counts more effective than those working full time.

6.7 Setting growth in a wider perspective

Our understanding is that a proper interest in growth should be held within a wider brief. An excessive interest in numerical attendance has long been one critique of church growth thinking and need not be chronicled here. A more fully orbed view would see it as but one factor within a more holistic understanding, which might be either be called the pursuit of sustainability, or health and maturity. Our view is that the latter words are freer of reduction to solely economic categories and very pertinent to understanding the church within an interpersonal rather than institutional paradigm.

In the work with the dioceses covered, whenever we detected vulnerability, either in patterns of conversations with leaders or conclusions from the overall statistics derived, we fed this back to the dioceses in our individual reports to them. Similarly, when higher than average overall scores were registered we passed on this sign of health. This report now adds a list of the kinds of vulnerabilities in young fresh expressions of Church, highlighted from the interviews with leaders of fxC in the representative dioceses.

In the paradigm of maturity and health, vulnerability is a term that indicates possible weakness but which may not be fatal. However, the wider the range of vulnerabilities exhibited, or more severe the absence of one desirable feature, the higher the risk to ongoing life involved. The

report also considers in this section those cases that no longer exist and in effect are local churches that have died.

6.7.1 Elements indicating vulnerability in fxC

1. Is discipleship being ignored? This term includes a wide range of attributes: becoming committed to Christ, working at being authentic community, serving others, practicing giving, establishing personal patterns in spirituality, exercising gifts and ministries, witnessing to the faith, applying faith to life. Our work could only detect external steps taken to promote these, as the deeper ones would require qualitative work. We recognise that these desirable developments are all the more difficult to foster where the gathering pattern is only monthly, which applies to 45% of all the cases we studied. Where the diocesan list showed both a high percentage of monthly fxC and a low figure for taking some steps in discipleship, as compared to elsewhere, we drew the diocese’s attention to it.
2. Are certain kinds of fxC so resource hungry that they cannot, and should not, increase their frequency of gathering above monthly? We sense this is a potential trap for alt.worship, thoroughgoing forms of café church,³² Messy Church and seeker instincts. If this ceiling exists, how do such types of fxC find different ways of gathering and building being a church community between their monthly high points, which then are more sustainable?
3. 52% of cases are lay led, and the further 21% led by assistant clergy. What proper assurance of continued existence does the fxC have in the face of a change of parish incumbent? Anecdotally over 30 years, one recurring pattern has been that this change has too often led to closure of the fxC on the say so of the newcomer and not because it was unsustainable. We note from responses to a specific question within the questionnaire that in the overall 20 year period, 91.9% of fxC have no legal identity of their own.

Table 51: Legal identities and fxC

Legal status of fxC	1992-1998	1999-2005	2006-2012	Totals	%
Bishop's Mission Order	1	1	8	10	1.9%
Charitable trust	3	4	8	15	2.9%
Conventional district	2	3	0	5	1.0%
Extra-parochial place	1	0	1	2	0.4%
Parish status	2	0	3	5	1.0%
Team district church	2	0	3	5	1.0%
No legal identity	28	76	372	476	91.9%
Totals	39	84	395	518	

Note: in table 51, the totals for the BMO row include fxC that have been granted a BMO and those taking steps down this road, encouraged by the diocese to think it would be forthcoming.

We know that the BMO is now available, but it is often not suitable as it was designed for those kinds of fxC that, by mission design and ecclesial agreement, operate beyond parish

³² Thoroughgoing means those versions that offer a whole café experience (not just coffee), involving a team and even paid staff. See G. Lings Encounters on the Edge Nos. 33 and 34 (Sheffield: Church Army 2007).

boundaries. An analogy, designed to provoke further discussion, is that many fxC are like immigrants doing good work who have not yet been given the right to remain, let alone acquired British citizenship. There is active debate about whether they are church or not, but little to nothing is said about giving them rights and legal identity within the Anglican family, unless they can become indistinguishable from existing churches which would remove their *raison d'être*. Further comment on the meaning and use of these possible legal designations is found within the glossary of appendix two. We recommend that this present imbalance of so many fxC having no legal status, and thus no right to remain or working representation, be addressed. This problem also can occur when a curate moves on and is not replaced.

4. Is responsibility being taken towards attaining greater maturity? This would include the financing of a fxC, for proper governing of its life, and steps towards producing more disciples of Christ, further gifts, ministries, leaders, and in time a further fresh expression of Church. Once again, when our team were meeting the complete absence of such features in particular cases we sensed vulnerability, and where such overall figures were low in a diocese, in our overall report to the diocese we passed on our concern.
5. What simplicity of inner church life will be necessary in cases with the 34% of spare time and 18% of part time leaders, such that both the leaders and communities they lead have time to engage with their wider community? What support will the leaders need from wider national, diocesan or local networks?
6. If most fxC are small, with an average size of around 44, where are leaders for further reproduction of churches to be found or grown within such a small group? This dynamic also applies to the cases where the founder moves on, retires or even dies in post. Many fxC appear to have no succession plan, nor are their leaders deliberately apprenticing others to follow them or begin something further.
7. In the cases where the membership is mainly composed of junior school aged children or younger, what plans and resources are there for the next stage when these members are 11+ and moving through the teenage years? By failing to have a long-term strategic view, such fxC could be inadvertently planning to fail those young people.
8. Does the high exclusion rate of 53.9%, indicate more than confusion and a lack of fxC being truly embedded in a diocese? If so, how could that be changed for the better?

Either at the stage of taking the record, or entering the data, members of the research team sometimes were aware that particular stories exhibited several of the above vulnerabilities. Although our criteria meant they could be included, we had real concerns about how long they might last.

With that vulnerability in mind, the report turns to examination of which cases had ceased to meet and in effect had died.

6.7.2 Mortality within fxC

In the research, we have included and subjected to the same analysis all those examples that lived for at least two years and began within the 1992-2012 period. The very few drawn to our notice that lived less than two years we deemed to not have built lasting patterns that merited tracking.

The mortality rate across these dioceses is 50 out of 518, or 9.7%. This compares with earlier estimates of 8% in the 1990s, when an attempt at national records was kept by Dr Lings until 1998.³³ This research work happens to act as an attempt to cover the gap since then and bring it up to date. It may be that there are some other earlier examples now lost to the corporate memory.

We are hesitant to say whether this rate is acceptable. Compared with much higher losses in other denominations in previous decades, this result is encouraging. Some writers have urged that any entrepreneurial culture in relation to the church must embrace risk,³⁴ while conversely the ending of a community of faith should not be taken lightly.

For completeness, the report also tracks if any fxC went independent from the Church of England and we find only two cases. We note with sadness that they are now divorced from the life of the Anglican church, but in an ecumenical world, this hardly constitutes ecclesial death.

Some contributory factors

We then correlated the features of those that had died with some dynamics we hold to be endemic to church maturity and sustainability. One is engagement in discipleship. The data shows that of those that died, 36% were taking no steps in that direction which is two-thirds more often than the average (22%).

We did the same, linking records with whether steps towards three self maturity had been taken. The figure for those taking no steps was 36% compared with a rating of 26% for those still living, which means this gap occurs roughly one third more often. We infer from this the stark lesson that failure to plan for maturity contributes to likely mortality.

We note also that sacramental practice, statistically speaking, appears to work the other way round. 54% of those fxC that died had celebrated communion, whereas only 38% of those still alive had done so. We infer that holding such services does not confer ecclesial immortality, but otherwise offer little explanation for this statistic. It is quite possible that the considerable proportion of fxC that are less than three years old, many of which have not yet got to the stage of holding communion services, has an effect on these overall figures.

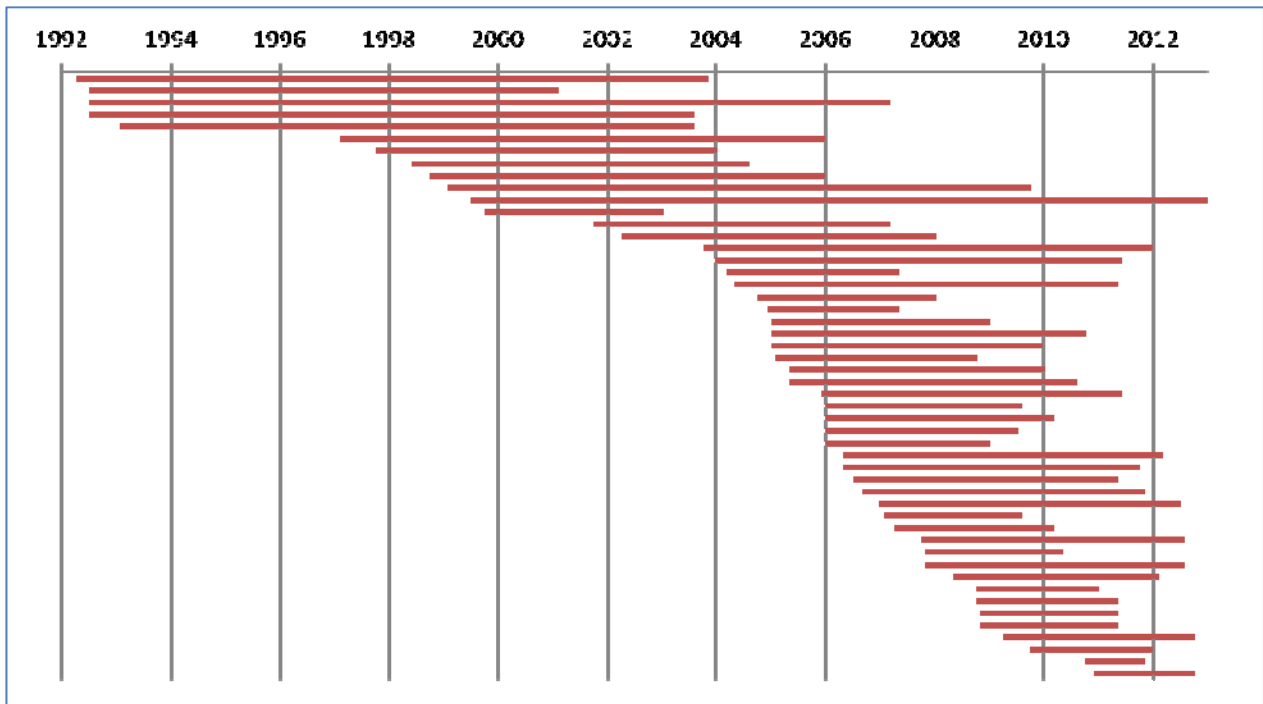
³³ G. Lings and S. Murray, *Church Planting, past present and future*, Grove Evangelism no. 61, (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2003) p. 7, and the same authors, *Church Planting in the UK since 2000*, Grove Evangelism no. 99 (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2012).

³⁴ An early example in relation to contemporary UK Anglican mission would be R. Warren *Building Missionary Congregations* (London: CHP, 1995) p. 35, citing the call to 'let a thousand flowers bloom'.

Length of life

By comparing the year and month of start with the year and month of ending we can measure how long they existed for and investigate if there are patterns to note.

Graph 21: Length of life of the 50 cases that ceased



The Gantt graph above shows the length of life of the 50 examples that eventually died. On first glance it looks as though the examples begun in earlier years have a longer shelf life than the recent ones.³⁵ Two caveats then need considering.

One is from our approach which breaks the overall 21 years into three seven year periods. While this is somewhat artificial, it sharpens possible inferences. There is some truth that the earliest period 1992-99 was dominated by the type now termed traditional church plants, as opposed to other kinds of fxC, many of which had not yet been thought of. These church plants were usually designed to serve geographical areas and often could be the only expression of the Anglican Church for that local area. As such the hope for their longevity was embedded. Against this, it is possible that short lived examples have been lost to the corporate memory but this is in the realm of supposition.

Returning to the three seven year periods, Church Army's ethnographic work and the literature from that time espousing particular varieties of approach tell us that the 1999-2005 period saw a widening of approaches, including Café church, Cell church, Messy Church, more Network churches. By 2004 *Mission-shaped Church* named 12 extant approaches.

It could be argued that the most recent period, 2006-12, has been more marked by the following of particular brands, or the rise in starting something out of its popularity, both of which are equivocal features, as well as the further widening of kinds of fxC known to exist. These years could be characterised as having a climate of experimentation in which it would be expected that

³⁵ The chart contains two recent examples which lived less than two years. They were from our pilot diocese, before we decided that two years was the minimum length of life needed for inclusion.

there would be a higher failure rate, including what was short lived. Does all this mean a drift from stability to greater uncertainty?

The second caveat now needs adding because it lives in tension with the first one. From the ten surveyed dioceses, in the 1992-98 period we know of 39 examples of which 9 died, or 23.1%. The 1999-2005 period has 83 cases, of which 19 died, or 22.9%, which is a very similar figure. By contrast the 2006-12 tranche contains 395 fxC of which 22 died, which is only 5.6%. Rather than a climate of experimentation leading to higher rates of death, it seems at present that a higher percentage are surviving, although we do not know for how long. What that percentage might be five years hence nobody knows.

In summary, the earliest period shows that those which did die lasted longer but there are a higher proportion of them. The middle period with the wider advent of variety of type sees the beginning of shorter life spans but reveals great variety of life length. The most recent period has a much lower proportion of deaths, but those that died did so relatively quickly.

Table 52: How long the fxC lived

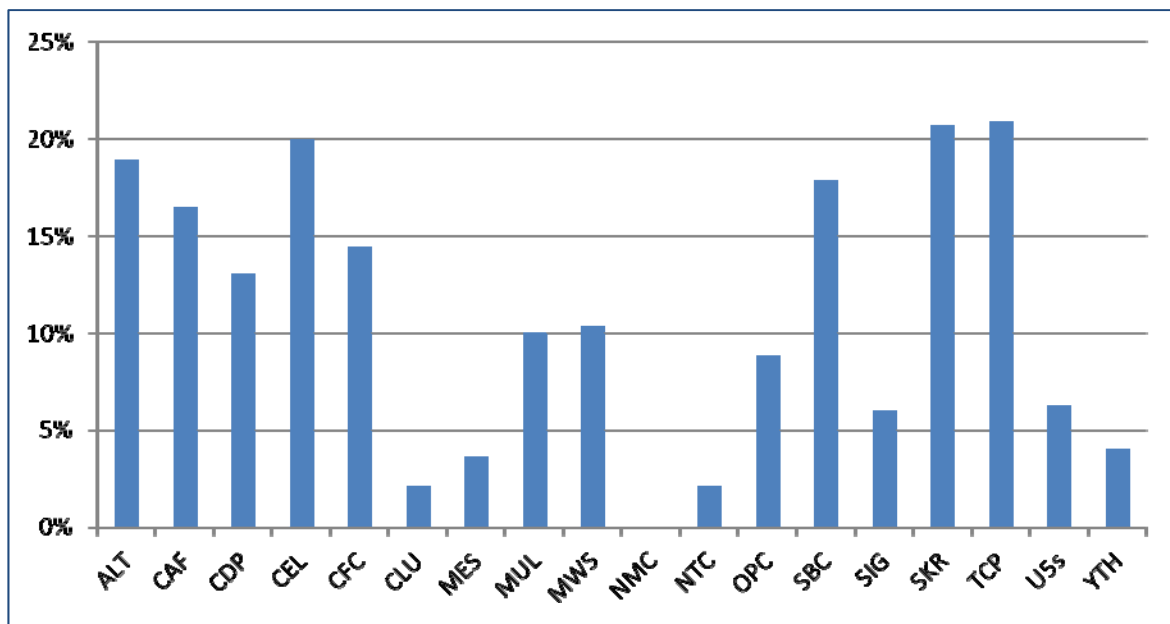
Length of life	No. of Cases
Less than 3 years	9
3- 4 years	16
5- 7 years	14
8- 9 years	3
10 or more years	8

In this table, from across the whole period, we see a variety of length of life. It might be argued that once the first eight years are navigated, prospects for continued existence are brighter. There may be some truth in this for then a tradition and patterns exist, not just a short story. But this ignores what we know from individual stories that endings can be caused by a very wide range of factors, some of which are unpredictable. The latter can include moral scandal, being shut by the incoming incumbent, or the unforeseen depopulation of an area. More commonly there are features like the founder moving on, key lay leaders moving away, exhaustion of ideas, as well as benign factors like sensing the job had been completed.

We also examined whether the size of the initial team affected longevity and mortality. It was clear that there are no significant correlations of that kind.

We also considered whether certain kinds of fxC are more prone to ceasing.

Graph 22: Mortality rates and kinds of fxC



Abbreviations:

ALT	Alternative worship	CAF	Café church	CDP	Community development plant
CEL	Cell plant	CFC	Child focused church	CLU	Cluster
MES	Messy Church	MUL	Multiple congregation	MWS	Midweek church
NMC	New monastic community	NTC	Network church	OPC	Older people's church
SBC	School based church	SKR	Seeker church	SIG	Special interest group
TCP	Traditional church plant	U5s	Church for <5s & carers	YTH	Youth congregation

With an overall average of 9.7%, clearly there are differences between the fxC types. Yet no types have a higher than 21% mortality rate and one scores zero. So on average, 90% of all types continue their existence as of the time of writing.

It should be borne in mind that a few kinds are newer, like clusters and school based church. Here it may be too soon to tell how their stories will unfold and what history will show the eventual survival rate has been. Already the school based examples are among those at higher risk. Some kinds such as alt.worship, cell, multiple congregations, seeker and traditional church plants have been known for 20 years and many in that category register the higher mortality scores. We do not know the precise causation for this, although we are aware of anecdotal conjectures. This would merit further investigation.

It might be thought that there is a distinct relationship between some types being resource hungry and not being able to continue. With alt.worship, café church, and seeker church that analysis is plausible, but Messy Church at 3.6% appears to refute this. Here we must bear in mind that though the first Messy Church is ten years old, many are more recent.

7. Learning from this research

The overall framework of understanding to work within, at all times, is that fresh expressions of Church are made of two elements. Just as water is composed of hydrogen and oxygen, so fxC are made of missional and ecclesial elements. Take either one out and the result may be of value but it is not a fresh expression of Church.

7.1 False assumptions to avoid

- *Buying a fxC off the shelf really works.* It can be done, but is usually a mistake. We urge readers not to slavishly copy, or replicate, what others have done.
- *Only big urban congregations can do this.* We have seen fxC started even by small rural churches, which went well.
- *It takes a team of 50 to do it properly.* This is not true. The most common team size is 3-12 people, see p 26. The evidence of subsequent growth in size and maturity is not mainly dependent on team size.
- *Only evangelicals can do this.* Again this is not true; all traditions can do this, see p 77, but it is wise to consider what kind of fxC each church can work with in integrity.
- *Laying on an act of worship is the best starting point.* A steady flow of reflective writing commends a longer process of loving and serving people, making relationships that naturally include spiritual conversations and only then evolving public worship.
- *All fxC do the same job.* The evidence denies this. They can be likened to different tools; a hammer should not be used to put in a screw. All the kinds have attendant strengths and weaknesses; they take different resources and have different natural unit sizes.
- *The point is to get new people to the main church.* That can be a by-product, but it is not the aim. The call is to add to the diversity and number of interdependent churches, in order to express the mission of God.

7.2 Missional lessons to learn

- Be clear on the groups of outsiders the fxC is for. Ensure the leader[s] and team are focussed on those not attending church and proactive in connecting with them. Studies elsewhere reveal the downside of disaffected Christians joining.
- Different kinds of fxC connect better with different missional groups in society, see p 25.
- Discern and discover what God is calling for in your context and its mission. There is much variety to choose from, see section 5.5, and the following bullet points.
- Discern how often you plan to meet, see pp 72-73. Fortnightly is the most risky, p. 88. Either weekly or monthly can work. Local stories suggest changing to meeting more frequently later can be difficult.
- FxC can start in any kind of geographical context pp. 37-39 though it may be slower work in some of them, see pp 89-90.
- Think about whether the calling is to reach a neighbourhood or a network, see pp. 40-41 and if the latter ensure it is not a wide range of different networks.
- Think culturally not just territorially, see p 65. What social or cultural groups are missing from your existing church and which of those groups do you have relational links with?

7.2 Ecclesial lessons to learn

- We are part of the wider church, in which there is further wisdom, so access national or diocesan training, see section 4.5. In particular explore whether someone could have an ongoing consulting role for your fxC.
- Consider what size community your fxC should grow to. Small, healthy and vigorous is fine. Most fxC are not large, being less than 50 adults and children see p 28. Some have a natural unit size; beyond that the best question to ask will be how to start yet another one.
- Choose the venue by what suits the context and its people, not by habit or the preference of existing Christians, see pp. 68-70. The same is true for day of meeting, page 74.
- Start with the end in mind. The goal is a community mature in Christ. As soon as it is appropriate encourage the young church to take responsibility for its finances and local leadership. Look for gifts and ministries in the newcomers. How far and fast to go down this path will be affected more by the type of fxC than its size, see pp. 46-48.
- Start with discipleship, not just attendance, in mind, see p. 48-50. Being apprentices of Jesus can happen in many ways, but it should be intentional and relational.
- Discern when and how, to introduce the two sacraments, but explore how they are practiced in culturally suitable ways, see pp 51-54 onwards.
- Leadership matters, and ideally it will be as part of a team, but it can be exercised by either gender, lay or ordained, full time to spare time.. All of these have been shown to work, see section 6.5 pp. 90-92.

7.3 Traps to avoid

About starting

- Do not choose the kind of fxC to begin by its popularity, but pray and think through what fits with where you are, and what resources the people sensing a call to do this have.
- Do not start something for and with young children without any thought about what will be needed when they become 11 and change schools. Have a longer term view.
- Just because you are lay doesn't mean you can't do this. Over half the fxC are lay led and 40% have no formal badge and few have any specific training, pp. 62-64.
- If you are ordained and very busy maintaining what there already is, do not dismiss putting down some responsibilities and being renewed in ministry by being part of starting something new.

Keeping going

- Do not let the rest of the Church dismiss you because your church is young, small and still maturing.
- Do not get cut off from the wider church but let them know your progress and struggles.
- Do not go it alone, having a critical friend, or consultant, is very helpful, see p. 57.
- Especially if you are leading spare time or part time, keep the life of the fxC simple, share out the tasks and make it a working boat not a passenger ship, see section 5.1.
- Do not think because you have started that you have arrived. Continued growth in size and depth depends on many things – see section 6. There are known factors that make closure more likely; shape the church's life to avoid them.
- Consider the elements that make for vulnerability, section 6.7.1 as a kind of health check.
- Finding ways to develop discipleship can take time and involve trying a number of approaches. The test is fruit not ease of method.

8. Possible future research

Further qualitative research

For further qualitative research it would be advisable to return to selected cases within those already interviewed, as there is every indication of an existing trusting relational link and the assurance that the cases studied further are genuine fxC.

Some other sources of qualitative work suggest that leaders may be overestimating the non-churched percentage attending fxC.³⁶ Both these, and this set of findings, need further testing. Further work should include interviewing members and wider leadership teams within the fxC, beyond the one leader.

Future research would need to work with agreed parameters about what is meant by the terms de-churched and non-churched. Sensitivity would be needed in introducing these terms used to newcomers, seeking to avoid giving any offence.

This work would test what appear to be the standout inferences of this research, including:

- the proportions of the Christians, de-churched and the non-churched;
- the ratios of those sent to attending now;
- steps taken towards discipleship, three-self maturity and attendant sustainability.

Specific further topics

- 1 What causes fxC not to continue to grow in size or, if that is not appropriate, to further reproduce? Graph 13 shows that on average, 38.7% either immediately reach a plateau or within a couple of years, or their numbers fluctuate, while 24.7% subsequently shrink. Beneath this lies a wide range of leadership, contextual, missional and ecclesial factors. Further research is needed to disclose and name both the advantageous and the inhibiting ones.
- 2 How are the fxC taking people on the journey from attendance to Christian commitment? What place does evangelism have alongside the life of a fxC, and what varying forms might it take in different kinds of fxC?
- 3 What are the effects on the starting and sustaining of fxC in the light of the ecclesial environment created by a wide list of diocesan features, as delineated in section 3.1.1?

³⁶ John Walker and Kerry Thorpe have done this in Canterbury diocese. George Lings and Claire Dalpra did such an analysis some years ago with a small sample from a large church in Sheffield.

4 What would be learnt by having a control group of existing parishes?
Many variables could be chosen, of which these are some:

- Their steps taken in discipleship;
- Their proportions of Christians, de-churched and non-churched;
- Their proportions of drawing from neighbourhood and network;
- Their leadership patterns;
- How all and any of these affect their growth patterns.

5 We are aware that there are a large number of further correlations that could be run on this data set, some of which may prove significant. Our initial exploration of some of these possible links suggests there is more to learn about their connections and about the dynamics across the whole range of fxC, as well as within particular kinds. Examples of correlations run that may warrant comment include the following:

How does *the kind of fxC* correlate with:

- The ratio between those sent and now coming?
- Their characteristic size?
- What motivated the start of the fxC?
- What leader variables are present and significant?
- How typical of the area their attendees are?
- Which tend to pioneer and which build on progression?
- Their choices of where to meet?
- Any links to church tradition or ecumenical identity?

We have already shown that *frequency of meeting* has an effect on mortality rates in fxC. We have not yet explored how that might correlate with the above range of further factors.

We have also demonstrated how *the area served* has an effect on the growth patterns. As yet we are not sure what underlying causes may be operating. Analysing further correlations may give some clues, as well as being able to discount some prior guesses. This would include running correlations with factors in this report in connection with fxC type, such as three self identity, use of the sacraments, the proportions of Christians, de-churched and non-churched, and frequency of meeting.

9. Recommendations

Better data

1 Make wider use of the ten criteria re fresh expressions of Church

Using the ten criteria would help counteract the widespread confusion we have found in all dioceses surveyed associated with the term ‘fresh expression of Church’, which tends to devalue the currency of the term.³⁷ The list of criteria gives sinews to the important link between identity and expectations. If there is lack of clarity about what something is and how that is known, it is less likely to be able to fulfil aspirations and more prone to have unrealistic ones – either too low or too high. It could act as a national standard, thus creating a framework for better future training and practical planning, both in theological colleges and diocesan events.

2 Adopt the flow diagram of the Research and Statistics department

To obtain cleaner data in future, the diagnostic flow diagram proposed to accompany the future collection of national church data returns should be adopted and universally used, without local amendment, by all the dioceses. See appendix 7.

3 Track examples from 2013 onwards

The 40%+ of examples started in the last three years, and a growing awareness of those started in 2013, suggests this may well be a rising trend. It would make sense for a competent team to track this while there is interest, energy, experience and skill to do so. Involving a partnership drawing on the experience of the current researchers, but also with the central research and statistics team and diocesan officers, commends itself.

4 Conduct future qualitative work from the basis of this material

The content of the various suggestions is indicated in section 8, but the relational basis of enquiry that has been shown to be fruitful and appropriate should be retained.

Learning lessons from recent practice

5 Balance the claims of the large and small models about fxC

There is a need in publicity to balance the better publicised claims of the small number of large churches with the more unsung performance of the many small ones. The survey data shows that the vast proportion of what has been done outside London is of the latter kind, and this is more within the range of future churches considering whether to embark on fxC.

6 Note the lessons about network

We now have a nuanced view of the 37% proportion that working with network brings to the national mission of the Church of England. The Church needs to apply the discovery that certain

³⁷ A. Davison and A. Milbank rightly criticise this vagueness in *For the Parish* (Norwich: SCM, 2010).

kinds of fxC best serve networks and others better serve neighbourhoods. Diocesan strategies should warmly and deliberately include the legitimacy of both approaches.

7 Keep track of the pioneers

The Church needs to keep an effective and up to date national list of where ordained and lay pioneers are deployed, and to use the form of analysis in this research to compare their effect in three to five years' time with the base of 2012.

8 Recognise and affirm the role of the lay fxC leaders

Dioceses, knowing they have a set of fxC, should give attention to devise patterns of future training, networking and mutual support, at times and in ways that will suit the high proportion of all fxC leaders, not least those who are female, lay and spare time. These are the nearest the Church has to what is currently typical.

9 Devise a further new category of legal ecclesial identity for fxC

There are advantages to giving legal status more widely to fxC. This will offer them deeper Anglican identity, a sense of being welcomed in the diocese and protection against the advent of those with parochial power who are not disposed towards them. Those to be included will be *bona fide* fxC in that they meet the ten criteria of this research and they and their existing parish wish them to be thus recognised.

10 Build on the support given to specific kinds of fxC

Messy Churches and their leaders are helped by a regional system of co-ordinators and Messy Fiestas. Where a diocese, or adjacent group of them, now discover through this research that they have a discernible set of a particular kind of fxC, there would be advantage to gather such a group together for mutual learning and wider mutual accountability. In particular, all such meetings would provide support given to the voluntary lay leader, and would also address issues of either ecclesial or missional vulnerability.

11 Flexibility is needed re expectations of growth

The correlations explored in section 6 all show that fxC grow and flourish at different rates according to type, frequency of meeting, social context and leadership resource. Awareness of this needs to be built into planning and financing of new ventures, otherwise unrealistic expectations may be created that will frustrate dioceses and unduly pressure those starting out.

12 Give accurate descriptions of fxC in parish profiles

Diocesan guidelines on writing parish profiles should be updated to give help to church wardens in making explicit the identity of each distinct worshipping congregation (fxC or traditional) within a parish or benefice. Interviews should put specific questions about how their futures are seen by potential incoming clergy.

Appendix One: The questionnaire

Church of England fresh expressions of Church (fxC): questionnaire 2012 v.10

1. Basic data about this expression of Church

What is its name..... | Its address (The normal meeting place or contact point)
 Diocese | Road & Number
 Public start (yyyy.mm e.g. 2009.02)..... | Town/Village
 Name of sending Church | Postcode
 | Website if any

2 Leadership

2a Name the leader or key contact person [not usually the incumbent]
 Address
 Phone Email
 Founder's name if different from above year left:

2b What status has the current leader, or key contact? Preferably tick one designation
 Chaplain Church Army Curate Incumbent Lay person
 Lay Worker NSM OLM Pioneer Minister Permanent Deacon
 Priest in charge Reader SSM Team Vicar Other
 In addition, is the current leader Stipendiary Locally paid Voluntary
 Full time Part time Spare Time
 Indicate the gender of the leader or key contact Male Female
 What TRAINING has the leader for starting/planting fxCs? MSM MSI Planting Module Training event
 Consultancy provided Previous fxC experience None Other.....

3 Characterize this expression of Church

How is it best described? Please put the number 1 by its primary identity. You may rank numbers up to four boxes.

3a Alternative Worship Base ecclesial Community Café Church Cell Church
 Child Focused Church Church based on <5s Cluster based church Community development plant
 Messy Church Mid Week Church Multiple Sunday Congregation Network Church
 New Monastic Older Peoples' church School based Church Seeker Church
 Special Interest group: e.g. Arts /Goths /workplace /helping addicts /learning disability. Describe it ...
 Traditional Church Plant New Traditional service Youth Church Other – contact us

3b Would you describe it as a **fresh expression of Church**, or on the way to that? If you think of it as only a stage, which of the following is most accurate. (If it is fully a fresh expression of Church please tick all three)
Fresh expression of ... developing community evangelism worship
How often do you meet?
 Weekly Fortnightly Monthly Less **Which day(s)** **What time?**

3c Identify the **GEOGRAPHICAL area** planted into. Use numbers to rank relevant categories – two boxes should do.
 Expanded village Rural Local Authority Estate Private Estate
 Suburb Town City Centre Local and Private Estate
 Urban Urban Priority Area New Town Other – specify ...
 How **typical** are the people in your fxC of the social area(s)/context?
 Totally Mainly Moderately Slightly
 How ethnically **diverse** is your fxC?
 Wide diversity of ethnic backgrounds A few ethnic backgrounds One ethnic background Prefer not to say

3d **WHERE** is the fresh expression planted in relation to the "sending" church? Tick only one box
 Within the parish Within the Deanery Within the Diocese Across Dioceses

3e Tell us the **TRADITION** of the planting Team. Preferably select 1, or rank them by number, but no more than 3.
 Anglo-Catholic Central Charismatic Evangelical

3f Which of these **MOTIVATIONS** was most significant? Rank them up to 3 relevant boxes
 Bishop / diocesan Initiative Grow is what Church should do Inadequate Penetration of the Parish
 New Housing opportunity Physically restricted at sending Church Provide increased diversity
 Unreached People Group Other – please email or phone us

3g What are the **DENOMINATIONAL** features? Tick one option
 Church of England only Formal Local Ecumenical Partnership Informal Ecumenical Co-operation

3h What kind of **BUILDINGS** are used for public gatherings? If there is a regular venue, tick 1 option on lines 1,2,3 below. If there is deliberate use of a variety of locations, then leave lines 1 - 3 blank and go to line 4.
 1. Ecclesial Public House
 2. Owned Rented Loaned
 3. Licensed for public worship Unlicensed
 4. A variety of locations are deliberately used. Please list them

- 3i What level of **Diocesan PERMISSIONS** does the fresh expression have? Tick only one
 Full Reluctant Unsecured Denied
- 3j What **LEGAL STATUS** does the fresh expression planted have. Please tick one option below
 None Team District Church Conventional District Charitable Trust
 Parish Status Extra Parochial Place Bishop's Mission Order Proprietary Chapel
- 3k How do you **DISCIPLE** people? Tick as many options as apply in your case.
 Small groups One to One Running Courses Serving in teams
 Not at this stage yet Other: please email/phone and explain
- 3l Is there **intention** to help this fresh expression grow to **THREE SELF** identity? Tick boxes as needed
 Self financing Self governing Self reproducing Not at this stage
 If applicable:
 - What progress has been made towards **self-financing**?
 - What steps have been taken towards **self-governing**?
 - What developments are there of **self-reproducing** via indigenous leaders, starting a further fxC, etc
- 3m Does your fresh expression of church [fxC] offer **THE SACRAMENTS**?
 Communion services? No Yes
 Baptisms? No Yes If yes, no.s Adults Children
 Have there been Confirmations? No Yes If yes, no.s Adults Children
If you wrote No; for what reason(s)? Tick which are true where you are
 Communion: Not at that stage Lack of authorized person Don't see the need Impractical
 Baptism: Not at that stage Lack of authorized person Don't see the need Impractical
 Confirmation: Not at that stage Lack of authorized person Don't see the need Impractical
If you wrote Yes; Who presides? Tick which are true where you are
 Communion: Imported Clergy Clergy member of the fxC Lay member of the fxC
 Baptism: Imported Clergy Clergy member of the fxC Lay member of the fxC

4 Mission factors

We aim to record what was intended (**the task**), what **resulted** and what **resources** were available in the following ways. Please weight your responses to each set of questions as follows: (try to make the total score not more than 4 for each row)
0 = not true: 1 = minor reality: 2 = major reality: 3 = the only or over-riding factor

- 4a The Mission **TASK** was a neighbourhood [Score 0-3] or a network [Score 0-3]
 Overall the **result** was through neighbourhood [Score 0-3] through network [Score 0-3]
- 4b Was the Mission **TASK** to reach Christians [Score 0-3] the de-churched [Score 0-3] or the non-churched [Score 0-3]
 The result [Score 0-3] [Score 0-3] [Score 0-3]
- 4c Was the Mission **RESOURCE** (not those who sent them but those who went and did it) – measured in two ways:
 Congregation [Score 0-3] or Clusters [Score 0-3] or through Cells [Score 0-3] or Individuals [Score 0-3]
 Was the mission resource a 'Pioneer' work [Score 0-3] or 'Progression' from existing presence [Score 0-3]
- 4d Which Mission **SUPPORT** dynamic applied? Contact us if you need to for what this means. Tick only one box
 Runner Graft Transplant Seed

5 Numbers involved

Adults: Children <16:
 What was the number of people taken, including you or the original planter
 If the venture has been **going some years**, please give us an estimation of average attendance at meetings
 2006 Adults Children & Youth (<16) 2007 Adults Children & Youth (<16)
 2008 Adults Children & Youth (<16) 2009 Adults Children & Youth (<16)
 2010 Adults Children & Youth (<16) 2011 Adults Children & Youth (<16)
 2012 Adults Children & Youth (<16)

6 Is this fresh expression/ church plant still meeting?

If not, please give the year and month of closure (in the format yyyy/mm)
 What were the major reasons for stopping

If you are stuck we would prefer you to make a phone call, than give us inexact information. You could speak to Claire Dalpra (0114 252 1643), George Lings (0114 252 1641) or Elspeth McGann (0114 252 7276), or email ask@churcharmy.org.uk.

Questionnaire designed by George Lings, Director of Church Army's Research Unit.

This information will be stored on computer and used within national church statistics. It could be passed to another church which could benefit by being in contact with you. If you don't wish the information to be used in the latter way, tick here

Appendix Two: Glossary

Rather than list all the entries alphabetically, they are by category and then listed A-Z. The order is:

- Kinds of fresh expression of Church
- Dynamics differentiating mission resources available to fxC
- Types of support to fxC
- Two groups in the UK mission field
- Three elements contributing to their maturity
- Various legal designations for fxC
- Some ministerial categories of those who lead them

Kinds of fresh expression of Church

Where a type of fresh expression of Church is further explained in *Mission-shaped Church*, the letters 'msc' are put in brackets after it. Where there are ethnographic studies on types not covered in that report, these are footnoted, although some of these are now only available as pdf files.

Alternative worship (msc), often spelt alt.worship and sometimes using other labels such as emerging church, these communities first were seen in the late 1980s. In worship they use a variety of media to explore Christian faith and discipleship, with a style of offering participants space and options. A small community core prepares for these. Their history is one of connecting well with disenchanted Christians, but now they also have links to new monasticism and attract spiritual seekers.

Base ecclesial community (msc) This model, originating from South America in the 1950s, is led by local lay people, with a focus to connect church and life and tackle its inequalities. It has only been tried in a few English locations and we know none that have continued. Its excellent values continue to attract interest.

Café church (msc) is a catch all term for a range of levels of engagement. At its trivial end, the introduction of serving coffee has been known to be cited. More seriously, it picks up the proliferation of cafés in society as safe gathering places. Characteristic are locations set out with tables, drinks and sometimes food. Conversation predominates over presentation; being or becoming community over providing worship. Discussion is more apt than lecture. People are freer to come and go. Sometimes an optional further venue is used at which another style may occur such as alt.worship.

Cell church (msc) can occur as standalone or in parallel to an existing congregation. Arriving in the UK in 1995 from the Far East, classically lay led groups of people meet in a home, share their lives to grow as disciples and seek to bring outsiders into this quality of relationships. The leaders also meet with one another and a person who supervises and supports them. Difficulties have been to invite newcomers to such an exposed environment and to grow further leaders to begin new groups as old ones expanded.

Child focused church. This label was invented after 2004, noticing the beginning of groups based around the primary school age group. The content is such that both parents and children

can engage, and the style is such that the children may move around. Locations can be in schools, halls or churches. They are one kind of fxC linked to a stage of life.

Church based on under 5s. Similarly to child focused church, this term was coined post 2004 and as per the name is based around the pre-school age group, but open to parents, grandparents and carers. The best examples are educationally aware and take the spirituality of the child seriously.³⁸

Clusters. Severally called clusters (CLU), mid-sized communities or mission-shaped communities, this model combines serious identity of those involved in a 20-50 sized group, and membership of a larger church is complementary and may be secondary to this. Each CLU is seen as church in its own right and born out of shared specific mission focus. They may meet weekly or fortnightly, with a monthly larger gathering or celebration.³⁹

Community development plant (msc). These grow, sometimes by accident, from forms of Christian social engagement, most commonly in deprived areas and among communities with high proportions of the non-churched. At best they discern and discover, with local people, what would be suitable forms of worship and they search for indigenous leadership.

Intentional community. These, by their high demands and vocational processes, are still rare. Often there is some overlap with new monasticism. Classically there will be shared purse as part of a shared rule, and there may be a joint household or a row of adjacent ones. Usually they will be involved in the social issues of their context.

Messy Church. The prototype began in 2004 and within ten years has seen 2000 more registered worldwide. Its values are Christ-centred church for all ages, drawing on human instincts for hospitality, creativity and celebration. Its popularity has led to unwise unthinking copying, and splendid creative adaptation. BRF, its sponsors, have taken a light touch to this but wish it were well understood.⁴⁰

Midweek church (msc). By definition this is a midweek congregation as part of an existing church and in the same building. At best it has its own sense of identity, humour, membership, pastoral structures and ownership by those who attend. They are often begun to try to reach a group that the existing church congregation(s) does not engage with, either by age or day of availability.

Multiple Sunday congregation (msc) is very similar to midweek church but on a Sunday. Once more, at best it has its own identity, membership and ownership by those who attend. Often the point of diversity that led to its start is the need to provide a different style of worship, not least music, rather than run a monthly rota which alienates one group every week.

Network church (msc) is begun to connect with people and contacts that are not defined by a geographic or parochial area but by coherent patterns within a shared life, whether derived from work, school, a common interest, or a stage of life, or even among people who gather for a common purpose e.g. outreach to a specific group. If a possible network is too diffuse and transient, such as clubbers, it has been hard if not impossible to form community, and chaplaincy models are more suitable.

³⁸ C. Dalpra, *Small Beginnings: Encounters on the Edge* No. 31 (Sheffield: Church Army, 2006).

³⁹ A book of one story in a large church is M. Stibbe & A. Williams, *Breakout* (Carlisle: Authentic, 2008).

⁴⁰ G. Lings *Messy Church: Encounters on the Edge* No. 46, 2010 and *Sweaty Church: Encounters on the Edge* No. 56 (Sheffield: Church Army, 2012).

New monastic community. These draw inspiration from a variety of monastic traditions (e.g. Celtic, Benedictine, Franciscan). They have a strong focus on forming and sustaining intentional community, patterns of prayer, hospitality and engaging with mission. This leads to the distillation of a rule of life (though not always called that) and involves a vocational process and making some form of vows for members to join.⁴¹

Older people's church. These are more than providing communion services in old people's homes. There needs to be pastoral contact, engagement with ongoing discipleship and encouragement to older people to exercise ministries in their own right. Their worship is varied depending on context, from the familiar BCP to what is appreciated by the boomer generation.

School based church (msc) This further kind of stage of life church are those fxC that not only meet in a school but which are *for* the school, in that they engage with the pupils, teachers and parents, and are part of the life of the school, outside the time of meeting which can just as easily be at the end of the school day or week, rather than at the weekend.

Seeker (msc). It would be accurate in hindsight to say that in the UK this is an instinct to present the Christian faith in an attractive way to the willing newcomer, more than a whole way of being church. We have found no examples where this is the sole identity of a fxC, not least because it is too resource hungry. However, a number draw on its approach and resources, that originated in Chicago.

Special interest group. This is our invented term for a variety of fxC based around a specific group or subculture. Examples are wide e.g. the arts, goths, workplace, those suffering addiction, those with learning difficulties. The fxC engages with the interests and needs of the group and aims to be a Christian worshipping community born out of the subculture it is based in and in mission to it.⁴²

Traditional church plant (msc). These have been known since the early 1970s and this set were started to provide a focus of worship and community in areas of large parishes with discernible areas at a distance from the parish church. In the 1980s and early '90s they became more known, and that era saw them occur much more frequently which prompted investigation by the wider Church. They were often not so different in style to the congregations that sent them out, being led by authorised ministers and meeting on a Sunday, but some tended to greater informality and the use of secular venues, while others took over existing buildings and formed relationships with the existing congregations there.

New traditional service (msc). These began realising that in the midst of change, a significant group in society still valued the old and it was just as mission-shaped and legitimate to provide for them. These are new congregations, not all meeting on a Sunday, with traditional worship held in churches, not secular venues, and forming community.

Youth church (msc). At best these will be by youth for youth, taking seriously that the mission factor here is not age but cultural change and identity. Equally, they will not be mainly trendy church for Christian young people, but churches that grow out of making connections with non-

⁴¹ This is but tangentially covered in *Mission-shaped Church* p. 74 and can be explored further in G. Lings, *Northumbria Community: Encounters on the Edge* No. 29 (Sheffield: Church Army, 2006).

⁴² Some of these have been explored by C. Dalpra in the *Encounters on the Edge* series. No. 17 examined work with addicts and No. 44 churches for those with learning disabilities. G. Lings covered one aiming to be workplace church in No. 24 and for the performing arts in No. 25.

churched young people. Some are now finding it is necessary to reproduce yet another but connected expression which is a related church for young adults, as they outgrow their teenage years.

Dynamics differentiating mission resources in fxC

Pioneer. An assessment of what a church is currently doing could reveal age or cultural gaps in its cover, or geographical areas from which few if any people come to church. As such a weakness would have been identified, and awareness of little to build from. To respond would be to pioneer, to be the first to address this need. Thus what begins would feel more like starting from scratch.

Progression. By contrast, an assessment might reveal the possibility of being able to build upon existing good foundations laid by the church. These could be existing good relationships (for example, with a school, or mothers and toddlers group) or previous initiatives in the community that the church has been involved with (e.g. a debt counselling service, a holiday club or Alpha course). Thus what would follow would be to make progress from what already existed.

Both are equally valid but have very different characteristics and need different approaches.⁴³

Types of support to fresh expressions of Church

Graft. This botanical allusion refers to when the fresh expression of Church crossed a parish boundary, by agreement, to assist another church, but the incomers were numerically the smaller player in the resultant church, although very significant in bringing new life.

Runner. This term, taken from the propagating habit of strawberry plants, normally means the fresh expression of Church started within the parish of its sending church and has strong existing supportive links with that church.

Seed. This is based on a horticultural analogy by which small seeds can be blown on the wind some distance to start a new plant. It means the situation when people are sent out, and in that sense with support, but usually have to move area and house to begin a new work elsewhere, with permission, but largely on their own.

Transplant. Another botanical picture conveying a similar dynamic to graft, but with the important difference of the incomers being the major players and clearly taking the lead.

All four are equally valid and each contain strengths and challenges.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Mission-shaped Church* pp. 110-111 develops this more.

⁴⁴ *Mission-shaped Church* pp. 111-115 spells out these features.

Two groups in the UK mission field

Both terms are explained more in *Mission-shaped Church* pages 36-41. Since then a few further factors have become clearer. There are of course others groups like those of other faiths and other classifications such as theist and atheist.

De-churched. We mean a person who has had some previous meaningful contact with the church congregation but currently does not. This group is further significantly divided into those open to return to church as they know it or those not open to do so. Evidence from Tearfund research since *Mission-shaped Church* indicates the closed group is the far larger one. The term de-churched is not meaningfully applied to, nor necessarily includes, those who have only been attenders at occasional offices or used the building for a civic or secular purpose. Neither does it indicate whether a person has Christian belief. Our team is becoming more aware of what may be termed the de-churched believer. All in this group may or may not call themselves Christian in either a cultural or spiritual sense.

Non-churched. We mean a person who has had no meaningful contact with the church community and its corporate life. The decline in church attendance, paucity of children in Sunday schools, diminishing content of Christianity in schools, and its marginalisation in some media, all mean that the non-churched are the growing proportion of the population. They are also the majority of its younger segments. It is also the case that those closed to coming to church as they understand it massively outweigh those open to try. Among this group it would be rare that they call themselves Christian, or even religious, but might well be open to spirituality.

Three elements contributing to maturity in fxC

Self-financing. All healthy fresh expressions of Church should take responsibility for how they are financed. Only occasionally will this mean them financing a full time stipendiary minister of their own, but it could mean negotiating an appropriate diocesan parish share, bearing in mind they deal with a large proportion of newcomers and as has been said, 'The last part of a person to be converted is their wallet'. For fresh expressions of Church planted within a parish context, 'self-financing' instincts include keeping costs low, being led by self-supporting leaders and encouraging a culture of regular giving (even if modest to begin with). The key is that a fresh expression should not be overly dependent on its sending church for financial resource.

Self-governing. All healthy fresh expressions of Church should be able to take responsibility for their own strategic decisions within the overall governance structures of the parish church. Self-governing does not necessary or usually mean the fresh expression will be utterly independent of its parent church. 'Self-governing' instincts include growing a stable leadership team (that can survive the departure of a founding leader or a change of incumbent), planning for the longer-term and gaining representation on appropriate church councils e.g. PCC or deanery synod.

Self-reproducing. All healthy expressions of Church, fresh or inherited, should include the potential for reproduction. More than growth of the fresh expression of Church by addition ('producing' more Christians), 'self-reproducing' instincts go further to see developments in nurturing further leaders or multiplying ministry gifts, establishing new mission projects, and in time planting further fresh expressions of Church.

Various legal designations for churches and fxC

Bishop's Mission Order (BMO). *Mission-shaped Church* requested that a form of legislation be passed that enabled a bishop to approve a mission plan desirable to the diocese that crossed existing ecclesial parish boundaries, but which other local clergy might not favour, despite consultation. It was thought that an episcopal church should not be held back by concerns that were parochial, in the negative sense of that word. The BMO has been used and found valuable. However, our team received comments on how complex achieving one still is, and that unless the diocesan bishop is in favour, the chances of securing one are slim.

Charitable trust. There are a few fxC, who by reason of significant outlay on staff, premises and resources need and value accountability to a wider body. However, they find themselves without any ecclesial legal standing and without prospect of obtaining one, so they select this route.

Conventional district. This arrangement can be employed where new housing developments make it desirable for parish boundaries to be re-drawn. Or it can be where a distinct area of existing housing crosses existing boundaries but needs its own church. Then part of one of more parishes may be designated a Conventional District. In a Conventional District, a priest-in-charge can be appointed directly by the bishop in place of the incumbent. On change of incumbent the arrangement must be renewed, which makes it in theory a vulnerable situation.

Extra-parochial place. This denotes a geographically defined area considered to be outside any ecclesiastical or civil parish. In the 1990s, it was the only device available to give legal status to network church plants that were wanted by the diocese. Still being construed around place, they were a kind of least worst solution and in our study have not been used for that purpose since the invention of the more flexible BMO.

Parishes. These normally, but not always, have one geographically bounded area that they serve and a consecrated building within it for public worship. The group of Christians who gather there are led by an episcopally authorised minister. For many centuries this has been the standard way in which local Anglican ministry has been delivered to the English nation. A few longstanding fxC serving significant areas of housing have become parishes.

Proprietary chapel. This device from earlier centuries is a term for a chapel that originally belonged to a private person. They are anomalies in English ecclesiastical law, having no parish area, but being able to have an Anglican clergyman licensed there. The device has been used usually by those relatively rare examples of church plants that do not enjoy harmonious relations with either the surrounding parishes or the diocese in which they find themselves.

Team district church. The creation of groups of churches, in theory to give their leaders more support, are usually called teams. The senior leader is the rector with the parish church and a few team vicars then have charge of other usually smaller ones in surrounding areas. Their team district churches will have limited local governance but be subject to the PCC of the overall church.

Some ministerial categories of those who lead fxC

Church Army Evangelists have been trained and commissioned by Church Army since 1882, and they are admitted by a Bishop into the Church of England lay office of Evangelist. They can be deployed directly by Church Army or employed by a diocese or parish. They not only do evangelism by seeking to make Christ known through words and actions, but also evoke and enable the gift of evangelism in others. As part of an acknowledged mission community, they can be lay or ordained.

Lay-Lay is a term invented during the research. It is shorthand for those lay people discovered to be leading fresh expressions of Church, but who do not have an official church status for this (such as Reader or Licensed Lay Minister), nor in the vast majority of cases do they have any diocesan training for this role.

NSM. Non-stipendiary ministers are ordained people who offer their time, whether alongside having another job or not, as parish priests but without financial remuneration. Like stipendiary ministers, they are deployed by agreement with the license of the bishop.

OLM. Ordained local ministers are similar to NSMs in that they do not receive financial remuneration. They differ from NSMs in that they are people whose local parish has put them forward for selection and training and ordination to be 'local' ministers in their home parish. Their calling is to return to their home parish and be a minister there, rather than to go somewhere else.

OPM. Ordained pioneer ministers are individuals who are clear that their vocation is to serve and guide the whole Church in the particular role of starting and developing fresh expressions of Church.

Readers are licensed lay ministers who are trained as preachers, catechists and facilitators of learning. They are encouraged to be examples to other laity as bearers and interpreters of the word of God in daily working life.

SSM. Self-supporting minister is the term favoured over NSM, in the sense of positively affirming their own self-support, as ordained people, as opposed to defining them negatively against stipendiary ministers.

Stipendiary. These clergy receive a stipend and housing such that they do not need to have other paid work and they can give their working lives to the Church.

Locally paid. Locally paid individuals are paid by individual churches or other non-diocesan sources.

Voluntary. Individuals who receive no financial remuneration for their role, in this case in relation to the church and the work they do.

Appendix Three: Reports and support to the dioceses surveyed

The process

The relational link with a diocese surveyed has been built upon in several stages. First, a report on the statistics derived from the research was written and then sent to the key contact person. This was illustrated by graphs, and could be up to ten pages in length. In addition, the key contact person received a copy of the statistics themselves in a set of spreadsheets, and another spreadsheet listing all the contacts made and which examples of alleged fxC were excluded and why.

The key contact person then enquired of the senior staff how they would wish this material to be shared. Usually the result was that members of Church Army's Research Unit travelled out to the diocese and met some or all of the senior staff team and presented the material. Sometimes further wider groups received a subsequent presentation.

The diocese was thus furnished with a researched view of the contribution made by the fxC to the life of the diocese, and our interpretation of the strengths and vulnerabilities of these fxC from the data. Each diocese also now possessed a working list of the fxC as a good basis for future effective diocesan record keeping. We also checked if they were content that the report be put onto the website of Church Army's Research Unit for other interested parties to view.

The shape to the reports

Our conviction, expressed through the ten criteria, has been that by definition fxC are both missional and ecclesial. It was therefore natural that the set of reports used those categories to create a structure to the feedback. All the reports share a common skeleton; they begin with headlines about attendance, when the fxC started over time and what slice of diocesan life they represented. Some missional factors were then examined, followed by some ecclesial ones. A further section, called 'Other Data Collected', dealt with features that belong to both categories.

One sample report is included as being illustrative of this shape. Although the diocese of Norwich is significantly rural, it is not untypical in terms of the results.

Finding the reports

The url is: http://www.churcharmy.org.uk/ms/sc/reimaginechurch/sfc_database.aspx

Not all the dioceses surveyed have yet seen their report, let alone been able to agree to its wider release. As this process continues to unfold, further reports will be added to the website.

The example written for Norwich follows.

Fresh expressions of Church in Norwich Diocese

This research is part sponsored by the Church Commissioners, in partnership with the Archbishops Council, towards a national report in Autumn 2013, therefore we seek to honour their request that little or no detailed comparison is made with named other dioceses already surveyed, until the final report.

By the end of March 2013 all the 163 leads supplied had been contacted. Data obtained from all the cases that qualified were analysed in April. In all cases there was a phone call with the leader of the fresh expression of Church [fxC] or in some cases the incumbent who knew the story. Thus we are dependent on the accuracy of their information. The results bring a mixture of encouragement, evidence of vulnerability, and patterns that intrigue. They pose additional questions for further qualitative study that others might take up.

It must also be noted in assessing the overall impact on diocesan numbers, that only 32% of cases meet weekly, 5% fortnightly and 63% monthly. Only 32 % weekly is one indicator of the frailty of what has been started. Indeed in the most recent cohort [2006-12] the figure is 22%. Monthly gathering is a very useful starting place, not to be despised, but it is a weak end point.

A growing trend

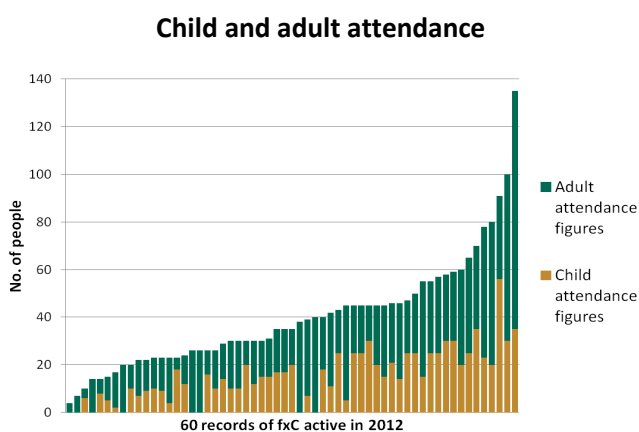
51 fxC were begun between 2006 and 2012, whereas only 8 between 1999 and 2005, and 4 from 1992-98. Unlike some other dioceses, the rapid increase in the rate at which they have been started is relatively recent. Thus longitudinal comparisons have limited value.

Some Headlines

Attendance figures: 2864 people

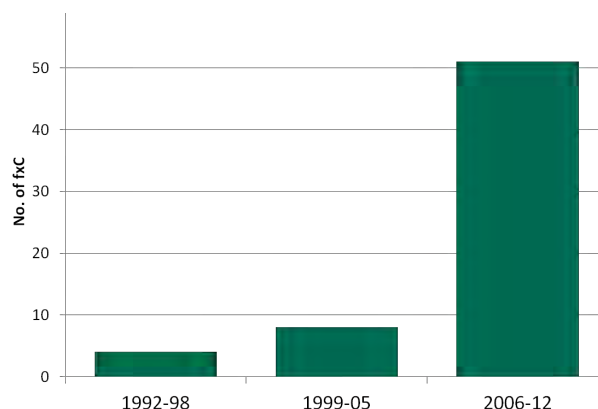
How many attend

From 60 examples of fxC, still alive in 2012, the totalled attendance is 2864, being 1703 adults and 1161 children. This comes from 602 adults and 117 children who set out. This is an above average four fold return that is worth celebrating. However, the number of new children does boost that overall figure, and the ratio for just adults is one matched elsewhere.



NB This graph does not include one very large fxC of 500 people for reasons of scale.

When were fxC started?



A wide variety of fxC kinds

The form listed 20 different kinds of fxC to select from and 19/20 were represented

- 23% are in the *Messy Church* stable, congruent with a national anecdotal impression
- 33% have a major focus on children or youth
- The former overlap with the 82% which deliberately serve all ages, including *Messy Church*
- 9% are designed for, or drawing, only adults
- 2% are for people in infirmity or old age

These percentages are similar to results elsewhere.

We are grateful that this research is funded, in part by Church Army and in part by the Church Commissioners. Both work with the Church of England in areas of need and opportunity.

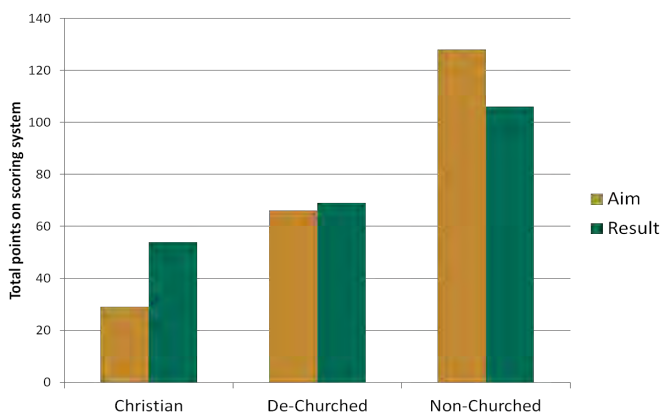
Church Army's Research Unit

Two Missiological factors

Christians, De-churched or Non-churched

We asked each fxC leader what was the main group they intended to reach: Christians, De-churched or Non-Churched [the categories employed in *Mission-shaped Church*]. Then we asked them to compare this intention with what happened. The scoring offered on a scale of 0-3 is simple, perhaps crude. 0 means not true, 1 indicates a minority reality, 2 denotes the majority and 3 signifies the only or over-riding factor. Such simplicity was chosen because we recognized the research depth would be limited by what respondents could be expected to know.

Leaders' view of the Mission Task



The simple scoring system used enables leaders to indicate rough proportions of all three, but cannot seek exact percentages as they would not be known. When the data is totalled it gives an approximate representation of those proportions, but not accurate percentages of the three groups. The results indicate surprise and disappointment, with some aspirations never met.

The graph shows an overall picture of fresh expressions of Church drawing many more Christians than they aimed for, 5% more de-churched than they tried for and under a fifth less non-churched than they hoped for. The proportions are closest to those of our other East-Anglian diocese and not unlike other dioceses, although the rest have slightly more de-churched and less non-churched attending.

Overall the Christians present are just under a quarter of the attendance. It needs to be born in mind that this includes the team members sent to begin the work.

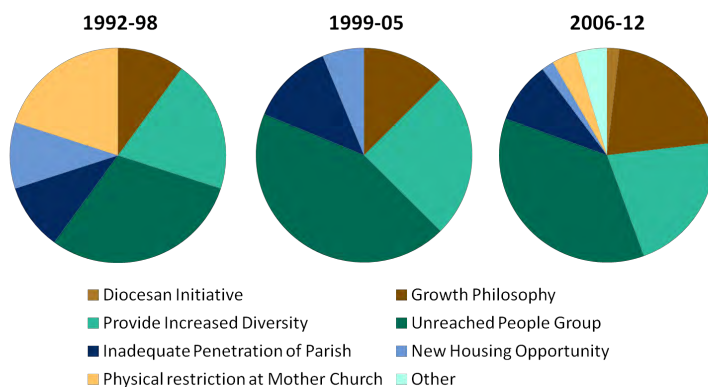
From the statistics known of those sent out, these teams are the predominance of Christians present. The de-churched are towards under one third of the overall number and as usual slightly more than hoped for. However the non-churched are largest group present, and the highest non-churched attendance percentage yet seen. This is an indicator of a commendable missional desire and some promising leads from it. The data in Norwich diocese continues to contradict an impression, given by some, that the impact of fresh expressions of Church is to attract overwhelming numbers of existing Christians and some de-churched.

It may be that different kinds of fresh expressions of Church connect better with different parts of this missional spectrum. Only when we have yet more dioceses will it begin to become meaningful to make such comparisons.

Motives to begin an fxC

Seven options (plus 'Other') were offered and we can compare their patterns with similar national data and trends from 1984-1997. It is less common now for initiatives to begin because of church buildings being full, or finding an *area* of a parish without easy access to a church.

Motives for starting fxC



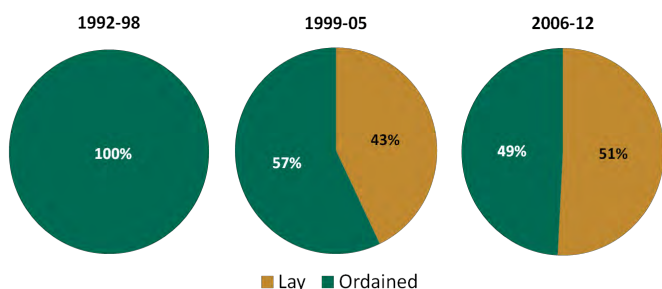
These results continue to support what is clear, across all the dioceses surveyed so far, that the motives are more likely to be *cultural* factors such as identifying a distinct people-group, or the desire to provide increased diversity of ways of being church. It is encouraging that here, over the 20 year period, the desire to grow has steadily increased, and now in the most recent period occupies joint second place.

Two ecclesiological factors

Leaders

Leadership of fresh expressions of Church in Norwich diocese is 46% Lay and 54% Ordained, with the former including CA evangelists and Readers. At the national level, what is historically new, compared to figures collected from the 1980s and early 1990s, is the rise of the local lay person [32%] which we have termed the lay-lay, who are without any other ecclesial badge or centralised training. This figure across dioceses examined ranges from 32 - 58%.

What was the status of the leader?



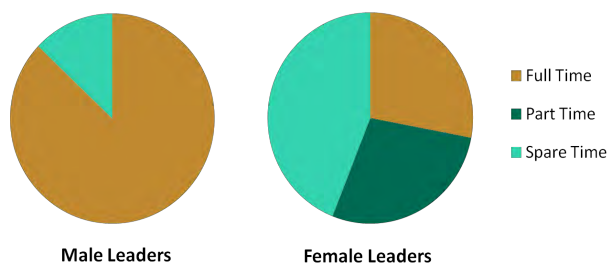
With Norwich we have our first data on training taken by all the leaders. This included courses like *Mission Shaped Ministry*, as well as other sources, including previous experience or consultancy provided. Only 15% had taken the MSM course, though 38% had done some form of relevant training. 10% had some previous experience, but 28% had no training whatever for what they were now doing.

In respect of the 'lay-lay', four had done MSM, seven some training in relation to Messy Church, one had taken a church planting module, but ten had no input at all. A question then is what plans there may be to support their ongoing training and leadership. They deserve honouring for what they have done and have support provided. Care should be taken that their pioneering abilities are not domesticated, nor are they exhausted by additional training requirements.

31 of the leaders are male, 50 are female. 41 are full time [though not necessarily with all their time devoted to the fresh expression], 14 are leading part time and 26 in their spare time.

It is clear here and also in other dioceses that the men tend to be full time and ordained with the women working part or spare time and remaining lay.

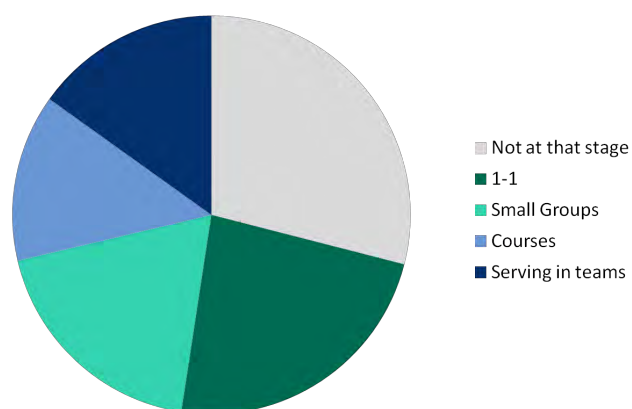
What was the work status of the leader?



Attempts at discipleship

Leaders were asked if they mentored people 1-1, provided courses, ran groups, or drew people into working teams. As few as 29% of cases did none of these as yet, of which some were very recent starts. 71% doing something in discipleship continues to indicate that fxC are not merely interested in attendance and the clear majority are trying to form disciples. Yet even this is 5% lower than the average across the spread of dioceses. Of those who provided something, working 1-1 and providing small groups were the more common choices, as happens elsewhere.

How do fxC disciple people?



Discipleship is an area of growing concern in all churches and deeper questions of what works will continue to matter.

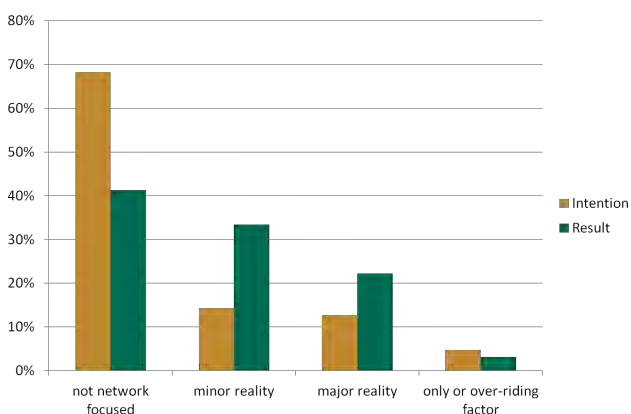
Other Data Collected

Neighbourhood and Network

97% began from parishes and in 95% of cases their meeting place remained within the sending parish. This might mean that parish structures and their boundaries are all that is needed in the mission of Norwich diocese. Yet it does not account for all that has happened.

This became clear as we probed where the fresh expressions of Church drew people from. It turned out to be a more complex picture than parish and surprised those starting the fxC. We asked about their expectations, and also about the results, over what proportion of attendees came from a neighbourhood roughly coterminous with the parish, and what proportion came out of wider relational networks. 68% expected that all the new people would come solely from a neighbourhood or parish. But that was the result only in 41% of cases. This more diverse picture was also shown by the 25% of cases where the majority of all the new people came from wider relational networks. And even in cases where the majority were from the parish, still a half of these cases contained some element of people coming from a network.

Mission focus being Network—intention and result



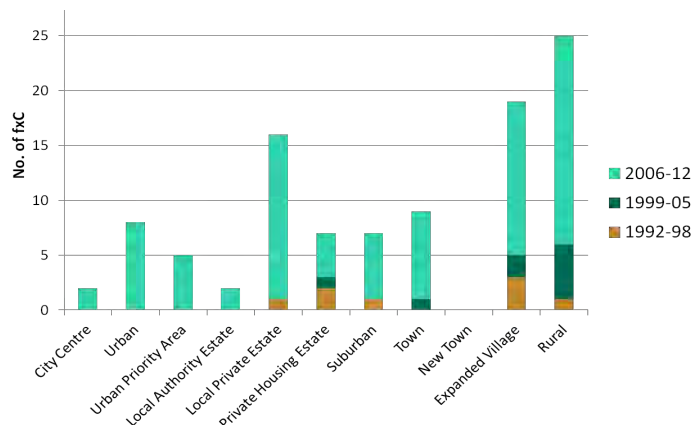
Two factors need holding together here. Firstly the proportion from networks is lower in Norwich than other dioceses. But secondly there is still evidence that both neighbourhood and network matter, even in the mission of a predominantly rural diocese. Reliance on geographic parish alone will be an error.

Type of social/geographic area

Those interviewed selected from 11 possible urban to rural combinations. The spread was wide and respondents can choose more than one designation to more fairly describe their area.

- The single largest group of 25%, served rural areas, followed by expanded villages at 19% and mixed local/private estates as a further 16%. These make up 60% of the total.
- 9% were in towns, 2% in the city centre, 7% in suburbs, with another 7% on private housing estates.
- 8% occurred in urban areas, 2% on local authority estates and 5% in designated UPA areas.
- None served a new town (as far as we know there are none in the diocese).

What was the geographical area planted into?



Depending on which contexts are included, 40% were in social settings that the Church has historically deemed demanding for starting new congregations, which includes rural settings. The list shows much more rural engagement by fxC than we have seen thus far, but this fits well with Norwich having the lowest population density of all the dioceses surveyed up till now. It seems the fxC can put down roots in all contexts. Only local knowledge can verify if this spread is typical of the diocese and where there are gaps.

We compared data of the last few years, with that from the two previous cohorts: mid nineties [1992-98] and before the impact of *Mission-shaped Church* [1999-2005]. In Norwich diocese the diversity of contexts in which fxC start has considerably widened, and where there is detectable widening from the previous periods, it is in the urban areas and mixed local and private estates.

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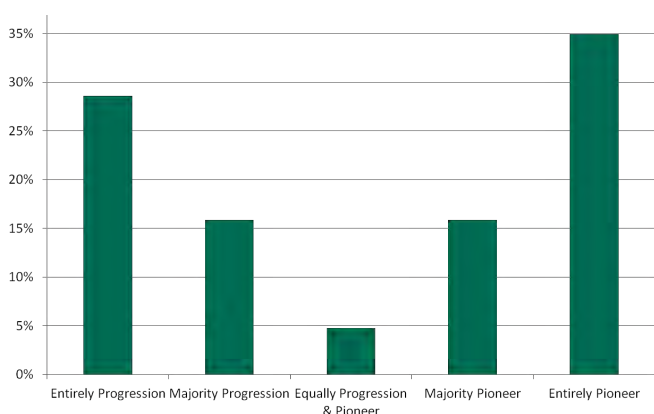
Ethnicity

For the first time we asked questions on how typical attendance was of the area and what range of ethnicity was exhibited. 73% of attendees were deemed to be totally or mainly typical of the area, and only 3% slightly typical. 40% of cases had a few ethnic groups represented, but 59% were from one ethnic group. In the vast majority of these cases respondents told us that was itself typical of the area.

Pioneer-progression features

Leaders were asked to what extent they were responding to a context of admitted church weakness or absence [pioneering], or alternatively building on existing effective presence and strength [progression]. Both are equally valid. Various combinations between the two could be selected, (thus the percentages do not total 100%) yet clearly the two largest groups were either totally progression or totally pioneer. Those who felt they were planting exclusively in a pioneer context were 33% and a creditable 56% described a pioneer context as the majority factor or total reality. Pioneering applies not only to significant areas of new housing without a church. It is needed for reasons of cultural distance from church and to penetrate particular networks. People taking risks and embarking on adventure in mission is to be celebrated.

Pioneer and Progression

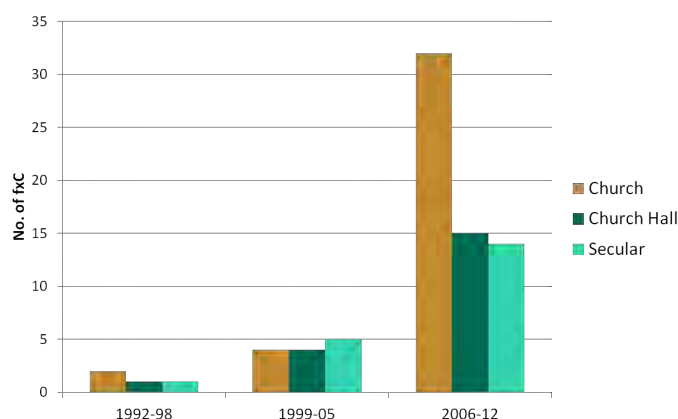


In that both features have commendable aspects, it is good that 49% recognised that there was previous work that could be built upon, shown by 'progression' being the majority factor or total reality. Both dynamics have their part to play.

Locations used

48.7% of cases used an existing church, 25.6% met in a church hall and 25.6% utilised secular venues including houses. A few used a mixture of venues, mainly secular. Thus nearly 52% of fxC are not in the parish church, but at some distance, culturally or geographically, from it. The high use of church buildings resonates with the rural identity of this diocese but it would be a mistake to assume it must be the venue used. Once more this is some evidence of the need to rethink what is meant by church and parish.

Where does the fxC meet?



Days of meeting

Congruent with this is that although examples spread across the week, 56% meet on a Sunday, with 40% classified as weekday, and 4% on Saturday. Norwich diocese has a highest percentage of fxC held at weekends. We notice a curious direct correlation between population density and weekend attendance. The lower the density, the higher is the weekend attendance. Lower population density is one indicator of rurality, with its known affection for traditional church patterns. We wonder if lower resources in the countryside may lead to an fxC replacing a traditional service once a month, rather than being started in addition to it. Yet here 44% meeting outside the Sunday slot reveals another way forward and points up the facing of social factors that militate against meeting on Sunday, like sport, and divided or extended families.

Church Army's Research Unit

Dynamics of mission support

In 97% of cases ongoing support came from the sending parish, which has some links to the 95% of cases whose meeting place was still within its boundaries. However in one case the leader had relocated, moving house to some distance away and was starting from scratch. In similar fashion to the five other dioceses surveyed thus far there were no transplants, and none could be termed a graft. In one fxC we concluded the mission support dynamic did not apply.

Team sizes taken

As we have found elsewhere most teams were small, with 3-12 members being true in 78% of cases and 13-19 team members in another 5% of cases. 5% had more than 20 team members, with two examples of 50+. This is yet another diocese where the stereotype of the large team sent out from a larger church to begin a transplant elsewhere does not apply.

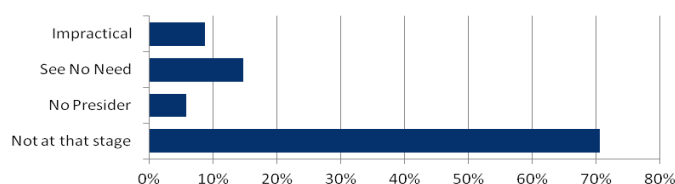
The Sacraments

Our team do not think this is the best and certainly not the only measure of being church. But being dominical, the sacraments rightly demand inclusion, at some stage in the maturing of all fresh expressions of Church. 33% of the 63 cases have held communion services. 48% have held baptisms. The baptism figure is far higher than elsewhere, but the Communion incidence less than usual though not the lowest, which may reflect the relatively high percentage of monthly fxC and the high proportion begun recently. 70% of fxC without communions described themselves as 'not at that stage.' This acts as another indicator of either a short history or of ecclesial frailty. It may also be that different kinds of fresh expression either set a different value on this, or that they mature ecclesially at different rates, depending on the people and age group they work with.

Here those kinds of fxC most likely to hold communions were Alt worship, multiple congregations, all network churches, all special interest group churches, all traditional church plants and youth congregations. There is both overlap with and difference from what held true in other dioceses. Those least likely to hold communions were more similar to elsewhere: Messy Church, child focused church, under five's church and those influenced by Seeker thinking services.

Those kinds most likely to baptize fell into two broad categories: those aiming for significant proportions of children or young people and those most like traditional church. Once again many [71%] said they were not at the stage of considering this, or that if there were baptisms, the cultural pressure was to hold them in the parish church and on a Sunday, to invite the wider family. As might be expected, most cases with confirmations also held baptisms or communions.

At fxC that haven't had a Baptism, what is the reason?

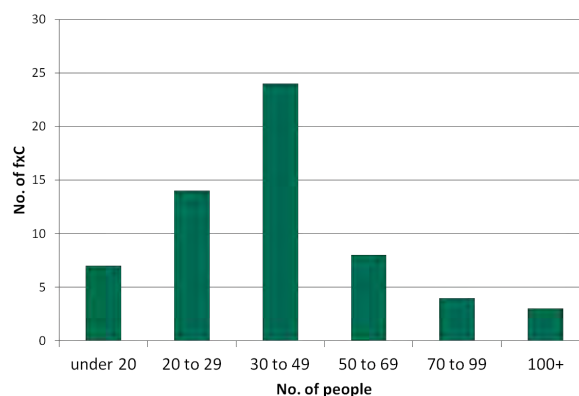


In relation to both kinds of sacrament some of these fresh expressions of Church simply have not been going long enough to explore sacramental provision. In addition the low numbers of each type makes comparisons between types of fxC tenuous.

Patterns in attendance

A few things stand out from the attendance log. The fxC are considerably varied in size. The average size of a fxC is 47.7, higher than average elsewhere. However the range is from 500 attendees to two cases under 10. When we exclude the very large case of 500 attendees, the mean size reduces to 40.1 which is more typical. Three congregations are 100+, four are 70-99. Eight draw 50-69, and 24 average between 30-49. 14 are 20-29 and seven less than 20.

Number of fxC by size



Longitudinal attendance reveals different patterns. One sixth of examples immediately grow to a size and then plateau at that point and another one in ten grow over time to a plateau. One sixth continue to grow in size and another sixth experienced growth followed by decline. This last group includes the four that died. With two fifths it is too soon to tell. In 3 examples attendance fluctuated.

This data cannot tell what factors operate in determining which expand and which plateau. [For example it would take comparison across all the dioceses surveyed to explore correlations to fxC type.] But it could be prudent for the diocese to find out why there is this variety. We think factors leading to a plateau could include: limited capacity of lay spare time leaders, no suitable public buildings to grow into, the lack of a relational fringe in a small congregation, reaching the natural unit size of either the particular social grouping served, or the choice of a particular kind of fresh expression of Church, and the lack of vision or leadership resources to aid reproducing elsewhere.

Wider church considerations

Ecumenical partnerships

There was one early formal LEP and 14 examples of informal ecumenical co-operation; 48 were Church of England initiatives. 24% with some ecumenical identity is by far the highest we have met across the dioceses surveyed, and for the first time greater than that known from previous decades; the late 1970s to 1991. It is outside the scope of this research to investigate or know why this change has occurred, but local knowledge may supply the clue. Perhaps in a very rural diocese, local small Christian groups are more aware of one another and open to joint working.

The influence of participating traditions

The traditions of Anglicanism are not evenly split in any diocese. Nor are the traditions usually in neat distinction, but are often combined. In these cases, figures are given for each instance owning a tradition in part, or as a whole: evangelical 51%, charismatic 24%, central 58%, catholic 14%. For the first time the central tradition was the most frequently cited and all are represented to some degree. Once more it is shown that all traditions can do this but the catholic dimension re-

mains the least participative, although here the figure is three times that of some other dioceses.

The affect on diocesan attendance

Norwich diocese's average weekly attendance in *Church Statistics 2010/11* is listed as 19900, a 10% decline since 2006. We do not know if attendance at fxC was included in the figures of either year. Assuming they were, the fxC attendance figure then equates to 14.4% of the diocese. This contribution is greater than the previous decline over 5 years, and is the highest percentage met in dioceses surveyed thus far. A contextual factor may be that Norwich diocese is above diocesan average in a table showing the percentage of its catchment reached, drawing 2.26% of the population it serves. It should also be noted too that the significant number of children added and a good proportion of cases intended to be all-age suggest that these fxC are making an impact on whole families.

What proportion of the diocese's churches are fxC?

63 cases, which are a 38.7% minority of all those submitted to us, qualified for inclusion and all but four are ongoing. If 63 is compared with the 567 parishes, (the number cited in the national *Church Statistics 2010/11* for Norwich) it comes to 11.1%, which is a noticeable aspect of diocesan life. The proportion of the 59 live examples to parishes is a little less at 10.4%.

We think it is more meaningful to compare the number of fxC with the 638 churches of the diocese. This is partly because this figure represents not just organisational units, but ecclesial gathering points and communities occupying them. It is also a better point of comparison because parishes may contain more than one church, as is the case if a parish contains a fresh expression of Church. This better comparison figure, including all the fxC started is 9.9%, with the 59 live examples being 9.2%. It should be born in mind that this diocese has a significant number of small rural churches. This lowers the percentage contributed by the fxC.

Depending on the calculation used, about one in eleven to one in nine of the ecclesial bodies in the diocesan family are current, or recent, fresh expressions of Church. This gives more precise information in relation to the dismissive view of some that fresh expressions of Church are but peripheral to the life of the Church of

England. These proportions do vary across dioceses, with 30% being the highest met so far.

Overall

This diocese, with just over half the population density of the nearest other example has given us a snapshot of fxC in a more deeply rural context. Yet the impact on overall diocesan attendance is not less than other more urban dioceses, reversing gradual decline. For the first time it is greater than the contribution made to the number of churches. The 40.1 average size of fresh expression of Church congregation also compares very favourably with the diocesan average of 31.2 and it is the first time the fxC size exceeds the overall diocesan one. Please note that in this paragraph the figures discount the single large case of the fxC with 500 attendees which would raise those figures but perhaps skews the calculation. Thus there is a success story here to be celebrated, including high proportions of non-churched people now attending.

However, significant confusion exists about the term fxC shown by the high proportion of cases [61%] that were excluded. The rural context may also be reflected in the following features compared to other dioceses: Norwich has the highest proportion of clergy led fxC and the lowest figure for lay-lay. It demonstrates a greater use of Sunday and of church buildings as venue. It also has a low figure for the number of examples meeting beyond a parish boundary.

Vulnerabilities are hinted at by a variety of features: the relatively high number that only meet monthly, the low proportion that have moved to the inclusion of communion, and the third of cases that saw their growth plateau. But the mortality rate of 6.3% is less than the average.

A welcome beginning has been made, including the healthy but not strong proportion [71%] taking steps in discipleship.

It seems there is clearly much to give thanks for, much still to do, to strengthen what has been started and to ask what is yet to be begun, now that it is shown to be possible and maybe also sustainable.

Some Comments on Method and Future Work

What was included and excluded



It was agreed with respondents in 100 out of the 163 examples that their case should not be included. The basis for these decisions was our pre-existing ten criteria for assessing all cases.

We are glad to report that the vast majority themselves volunteered that they did not fit the criteria. [This number of 100 does not include the 4 genuine cases that began, but have since died.] We cannot fail to note that this exclusion rate, of 61%, is a higher proportion than the 49% average across the six dioceses examined so far. This suggests there is a concerning and significant lack of clarity about what counts as a fresh expression of Church. This has dangers: it will devalue the currency of fresh expressions of Church language, create unwise expectations in starting and continue confusion between different legitimate ways to work within the mixed economy. A remedial strategy would be to make use of the 10 criteria we have evolved and found to be diagnostic and workable in practice.

Those excluded were omitted for a number of reasons:

[A] Arch	19	Either steps toward, or onwards from, a fxC but not an fxC in itself
[D] Died	4	Died, or closed down, having lived over 2 years.
[I] Infrequent	11	Meeting less than monthly, so unlikely to build a sense of community
[N] Not fxC	57	This grouping contained a variety of other things (see below)
[2] Double	9	Double entry in the data given, because of a name change over time
[NY] Not Yet	3	Examples known to be planned, but not yet started
[X] eXcluded	1	Began outside of the 1992 – 2012 period

The [N] group comprised a wide mixture of categories: 11 re-badged existing services, 8 re-badged existing small groups or social events, 27 outreach projects to bring newcomers back to that local church (many of these were admirable and contextual but were intended to feed back into existing church), 7 new events



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but intended for existing Christians, 1 stopped, having lasted less than 2 years, 2 not Church of England and 1 never started

Nearly all of these have value, not least the 19 classified as an 'Arch' but have the potential over time to become fresh expressions of Church.

The proportion that died is less than other dioceses examined but still might merit further investigation as to causes and possible avoidance of this loss to mission and ministry. If they stopped before January 2012 their attendance figures are not included, but their other dynamics are, for the period of the study is 1992-2012.

We have **included** church plants, for *Mission-shaped Church* listed them as one type of fresh expression of Church. We concur with this reasoning and have taken 1992-2012 as the period of research. 1992 is the chosen start year, which saw the setting in motion of the report *Breaking New Ground* that brought church planting to the attention of the wider Church of England. We therefore include in our analysis [but not recent attendance figures] the four examples that died in the last few years as their data contributes to the overall picture and longitudinal patterns from 1992-2012.

The data took 3 months to collect and a week to analyse and report upon. The time taken in gathering data, which would average 40 minutes per interview, and achieving a 100% response rate, encourages us to assert that the data has an acceptable level of integrity.

Limitation must include the accuracy of perception of the leaders interviewed and only closer qualitative work could test this. The simplicity of the scoring methods also brings in some modesty about figures derived. Yet the similarities with figures in other dioceses are at the

least intriguing, in relation to big picture questions like the percentage of attendees compared to the diocese as a whole, and the proportions of de-churched and non-churched joining.

Contrasts still await analysis during the rest of the year. However, compared to other dioceses, very few other cases were found along the journey; initial work having begun with a list of cases from the diocese that included all those that qualified. It did however contain many alleged cases that needed assessing externally.

Church Army's Research Unit is repeating this exercise with further dioceses, applying the same criteria of inclusion, process in collection and analysis. Only then will most substantive similarities and differences between dioceses appear.

We will also then be free to examine and comment on any correlations that may appear between the number of fresh expressions of Church started and background factors like the differing ratios of surrounding population compared both with the number of Anglican churches and also average weekly attendance.

The hope is that now that planted fresh expressions are being discovered and analysed, the wider Church will be able for the first time to have a more fully informed indication of their contours and of their contribution to overall diocesan growth and decline and the part they play within the mixed economy.

Canon Dr George Lings
16th April 2013
Church Army's Research Unit

Produced by Church Army's Research Unit

We are a research team based at the Wilson Carlile Centre whose role is to discover, develop and communicate our findings in evangelism and mission to Church Army and the wider Church.

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Appendix Four: A survey to all churches in three deaneries of Chelmsford diocese

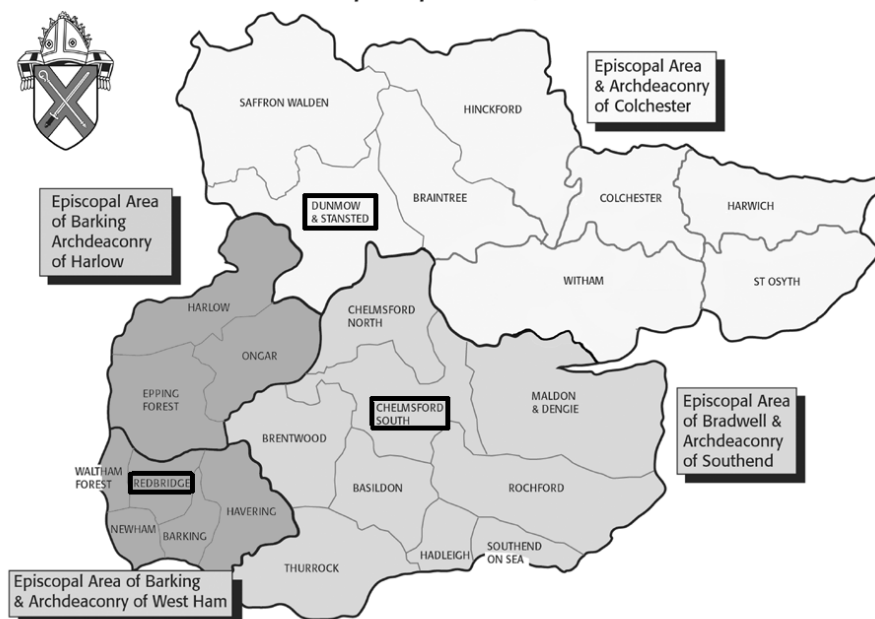
This section considers one criticism that could be raised in our methodology, namely that we have only spoken to those churches/parishes that are thought, or claim, to have fresh expressions of Church. In each of the dioceses we have worked with, this leaves a large proportion which we have not even spoken to. As one of our Church Army colleagues put it, ‘What about the people who **aren’t** doing fxC?’

To address this, our aim was to carry out a pilot study with three deaneries in one of dioceses that we had previously worked with. We designed a simple questionnaire that was sent out to every church in the pilot deaneries. It aimed to discover:

- How much the leader feels they know about fxC.
- Do they think they have any fxC in their parish?
- Have they had any particular training or input on fxC?
- What would they need to start a fxC / why wouldn’t they start a fxC?

We chose to use Chelmsford diocese and liaised with the Mission and Evangelism Advisor to select three deaneries that represented a variety of contexts: Chelmsford South, Dunmow and Stansted and Redbridge, one in each of the diocese’s episcopal areas. The deaneries are very different geographically. Chelmsford South contains part of the city of Chelmsford and a number of villages. Dunmow and Stansted is much more rural and includes Stansted Airport. Redbridge includes several suburbs of London and has a much higher population density than the other two deaneries.

Diocese of Chelmsford - Episcopal Areas, Archdeaonries and Deaneries.



The questionnaire was sent via email to every member of clergy in the three deaneries whose email address was listed in the 2013 Chelmsford Diocesan Directory and also to church offices, if an email address was given. In four cases a church was in interregnum and so the questionnaire was sent via email to the listed churchwardens. In total, the questionnaire was sent out to 84 different people.

The instructions asked that one questionnaire be completed for each church, so in the cases where one clergy person had oversight for a number of churches they were asked to complete multiple forms. In churches with more than one clergy person, they were asked to confer as to who they felt was best placed to respond (this was not the reality of the responses - see below). Any person in some form of leadership (lay or ordained) could have responded.

The rate of response

We received 20 responses, 16 from clergy and four from lay people (all churchwardens, though not all at the churches in interregnum). Two of these responses were from Area Deans but only one answered in their capacity as Area Dean, the other responded as an incumbent.

Two responses came from the same church and a number of the respondents completed one form for their benefice or group of churches, so a rate of return is not straightforward to calculate. The three deaneries contained 76 churches and so this would mean a 26.3% rate of returns, but as mentioned above several respondents completed one form for their benefice. The three deaneries contained 47 benefices (this counts the one team ministry as a benefice) and so the rate of return based on this is 42.5%.

The response rate from the three deaneries varied greatly and so there is not much value in comparing responses between deaneries, especially in the case of Chelmsford South.

- Chelmsford South: three responses from a deanery of 21 churches / 15 benefices and team ministries.
- Dunmow and Stansted: eight responses from a deanery of 30 churches / ten benefices.
- Redbridge: nine responses from a deanery of 25 churches / 22 benefices.

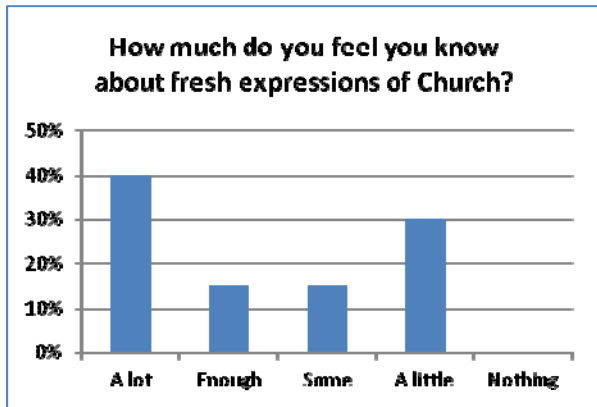
One of the key things to come out of the results is that 'What about the people who aren't doing fxC?' may be the wrong question to ask. We found many people think that they have a fresh expression of Church already happening in their area, though they may be mistaken.

Note:

Of the 47 benefices, we had previously been in contact in the main part of our research with 11 of them about 17 possible fxC, of which only three met our criteria for inclusion. Of these 11 benefices, we received completed questionnaires from four of them. Of the three benefices that had a fxC that was included in our research, only one of these completed a questionnaire.

Q1: How much do you feel you know about fresh expressions of Church?

This first question aimed to get an overview of how well the phenomenon of fresh expressions of Church was known in the deaneries. This simple question does not give any indication as to whether these are positive or negative views, as a person could think they know a lot about fxC and consider they are a bad idea.



	% response
A lot	40%
Enough	15%
Some	15%
A little	30%
Nothing	0%

None of the respondents felt that they knew ‘nothing’ about fxC, suggesting that publicity and debate on fresh expressions of Church means that all are at least aware of them. The largest proportion (40%) felt that they knew ‘a lot’ about fxC and when combined with those who said they knew ‘enough’ about it, this represents over half of those who responded. On the other hand, 30% of respondents said that they felt they only knew ‘a little’ about fxC.

Seven of the nine respondents in the more urban Redbridge felt they knew ‘a lot’ or ‘enough’ about fresh expressions of Church, whereas only two of the eight in more rural Dunmow and Stansted felt the same. This is a marked contrast between these two deaneries.

Q2: Are there any existing fresh expressions of Church in your parish/area?

Yes	60%
No	40%

60% (12 out of 20) of the respondents felt that there were existing fxC in their area. This percentage is much higher than we anticipated. This was because, of the 20 who responded, we had in our previous research been in contact with four of the benefices about possible fxC but only one of these actually met our criteria for inclusion.

While this appears a positive response, our other data suggests a high level of confusion over the term ‘fresh expression of Church’. The list of possible fxC we worked with in the main part of our project was put together by the Mission and Evangelism Advisor for the diocese and so is, we believe, fairly reliable. He would have excluded from the list anything that obviously was not a fxC and so this may be why we contacted fewer benefices than those who responded positively in this exercise.

Of those who said there are existing fxC in their parish, the descriptions given often suggest them being additional church services rather than genuine fxC, although some names do suggest new communities are being formed.

Q3: Do you feel there are any potential fresh expressions of Church in your parish/area?

The aim of this question was to allow those who were less sure of fresh expressions of Church to think of the potential there may be in their parishes.

Yes	70%
No	30%

70% (14 out of 20) of respondents felt that there were potential fxC in their area. Five of these responded that there was potential but as yet they did not know precisely what this was. Three listed potential for fxC to grow out of groups with existing church links, such as a church school or playgroup. Others listed groups they felt were not currently being reached by their churches, e.g. teenagers, over 50s, new housing areas. We suggest this indicates significant openness to future fxC.

Q4: Have you been to any events/talks/workshops about fresh expressions of Church or where they were mentioned?

These events split into several categories:

- Firstly, official Fresh Expressions (FE) events (*vision day, msm, msi*);
- Secondly, events where fxC may not have been the main focus but were at least mentioned (diocese training event, diocese conference);
- and thirdly, having previous fxC experience or some other event.

Event	% response
FE <i>vision day</i>	15%
<i>msm</i>	25%
<i>msi</i>	0%
Diocese training event	45%
Diocese conference	40%
Previous experience	25%
Other	15%
None	10%

35% had been to an official FE event. 60% had been to some sort of diocesan event where fxC were at least mentioned (some had been to both, hence the different percentage). Only 10% of respondents had never been to an event about fxC or where they were mentioned.

In Dunmow and Stansted no one had been to any official FE events. In fact, all but one of those who had been to an official FE event was from Redbridge.

Q5: Please answer whichever question you feel is more appropriate (see Q5a and Q5b):

Note: Despite this instruction, 35% of respondents answered both questions. All responses are included, but this means that simple ‘would start fxC’ and ‘wouldn’t start fxC’ comparisons are not possible.

Q5a: I / the parish would start a fresh expression of Church if I / we had...

	% response
Training	25%
Funding	30%
Resources (people)	55%
Resources (general)	25%
Obvious need	30%
Sense of call	35%
Other	15%
Didn’t respond to question	15%

85% of respondents answered this question. All of the options gained some response, but by far the most common response was from more than half who said they would start a fxC if they had the people resources to begin it. This may suggest that opportunities exceed resources.

Q5b: I / the parish wouldn't start a fresh expression of Church as...

	% response
Don’t see the need	15%
No one would come	0%
Not enough time	5%
The local church(es) are doing well enough	5%
Not enough people to help	25%
Wouldn’t be able to be maintained long term	5%
Other	10%
Didn’t respond to question	60%

40% of respondents answered this question. No one believed that if they were to start a fxC no one would come and only one respondent felt that the local church was doing well enough that they did not need to start anything else. More than half of those who answered this question said that they would not start a fxC as there were insufficient people to help start it.

In both Q5a and Q5b the most common answer was to do with the need for people to be the core of the new church and help run it.

This suggests that there are many parishes that would be willing to or even want to start a fxC but feel hindered by a lack of people power.

Is knowledge of fxC based on attending events?

All of those who had attended a *msm* course felt they knew 'a lot' about fxC, whereas those who had attended FE *vision days* felt they only knew 'enough' or 'some'. Attending diocesan training events seems to improve knowledge of fxC as 78% of those who attended felt they knew 'a lot' or 'enough'. Previous experience of a fxC does not necessarily affect how much a person will feel they know about fxC as those with experience gave a whole range of responses.

Does attending fxC events lead to starting fxC?

Those who had attended *msm* were more likely not to have an existing fxC. This initially seems surprising, although it may be that the *msm* course means that these respondents have a greater clarity of what a fresh expression of Church actually is and so there is less confusion over the use of the term than there may be in other cases.

The *msm* graduates were much more likely to see potential fxC, with 80% of them saying this.

Another way to consider this data is that the *msm* course inspires people to think about how church can form in different contexts. A similar pattern is seen with those who have previous experience of fxC (60% said there are existing fxC in their area and 100% said there are potential fxC) and those who have been to a diocesan training event (67% said there are existing fxC and 78% said there are potential fxC).

Summary

- 55% of respondents felt they knew 'a lot' or 'enough' about fresh expressions of Church, suggesting that it is a well known idea and initiative. However, the fact that 30% said they only knew a little means that it still needs to be made more widely known.
- 60% of respondents feel that there are existing fxC in their area. In one way this is a positive sign, but the descriptions given of them suggest there is confusion over the term and that many of these would not meet our criteria of a fxC.
- 70% felt that there was potential for fxC in their area. This is an encouragement for the future.
- 90% of respondents have been to an event about fxC or where they were mentioned, or they have previous experience of them.
- By far the most common factor that churches feel prevents them from starting a fxC is the lack of people to help be involved with it or to run it.

Appendix Five: Four examples of marginal cases

Time for Tea

Time for Tea occurs in a seaside town parish. It is a weekly midweek initiative that has been running for two years with a focus on the 50+ age group.

Is it missional? There were clear mission aims at the start. It is intended for people who would never 'darken the door on a Sunday' and therefore needed a different way into belonging to St John's. Is it ecclesial? There is a strong sense of developing community (eating together/outings) alongside 'sideways' evangelism and discipleship. There is always a short act of worship. Why is it regarded as marginal? The name doesn't communicate it is ecclesial and half of the members now attend other Sunday morning services. Also, the vicar described himself as the leader. So is it a distinct worshipping congregation?

It was included because it meets weekly, all year round, and to cite the interviewee: 'it means so much to its members'. The vicar and his wife have done *msm* and realise that for half of the current members, this is their primary place of church. The sense of community in the group is very strong. Discipleship is actively occurring and they do celebrate communion together. On closer questioning, there is a strong leadership team in place, a classic sign of a young church starting to mature.

Pram Service

Pram Service takes place in a suburban parish and is a monthly worship initiative for children under the age of five and their parents/carers, that has been running for over ten years.

Is it missional? Yes, it is intended for families of under fives for whom church is new, knowing that Sunday mornings would be too intimidating for both small children and their parents to come to first. Is it ecclesial? Having existed for over a decade, it clearly has maintained momentum, providing an act of worship appropriate to this age/stage of life. It has its own dedicated leader. Why is it regarded as marginal? It calls itself a 'service'. Although the worship dimension is strong, there is little evidence that a sense of having its own distinctive community life has developed. The dedicated leader talked of the *Pram Service* being 'a stepping stone' to families joining the Sunday services.

It was excluded. On the one hand, having a narrow age/stage of life demographic doesn't necessarily exclude an initiative from being included but, in this case, the community dimension would need to be stronger to give evidence that this is a congregation, not just a service. We would also look for ways in which they've 'grown up' together or given birth to something extra for the 5-11 stage of life, or hope to do so in the future. No aspiration of this kind was, or is, present. This is because the leader says the *Pram Service* is working very well as a stepping stone to existing church. She also handles all the baptism requests that come into the parish and runs the Sunday school, which reinforces the 'stepping stone' progression.

Wednesday Praise Service

Wednesday Praise Service is based in an urban parish that has been in vacancy for two years. It is a weekly midweek evening gathering with a more informal, interactive style of worship and teaching than the Sunday worship.

Is it missional? This began more as a way to alleviate the constraints around Sunday services for existing church members and the fringe. However, over the years, it has developed a link with the local primary school and discovered that this gathering is attractive to younger de- and non-churched families. Is it ecclesial? It has its own dedicated leader who believes it does operate as a distinctive worshipping congregation that runs 'in parallel' with the Sunday congregation, in terms of intention, style and membership.

Why did we regard it as marginal? It calls itself a 'service' and the lengthy interregnum has meant identity questions have not been sufficiently addressed. Also, when the leader took our criteria to the membership, some members objected to being called 'non-churchgoers', even though they weren't members of any church prior to joining. Also, about half the members have subsequently connected with Sunday worship, mostly through attendance at occasional parade services.

However, it was included for the following reasons: the fact that this leader felt confident to take our criteria to the group for self-reflection is interesting in itself. Even though the members balked at being called 'non-churchgoers', the perception of the leader is that they did not understand our terminology and were previously de-churched, with a few non-churched families. On closer questioning, the fact that some connect now with Sundays turns out to be about attendance at the intermittent parade services, because many children are in the uniformed organisations. This suggests that this sort of Sunday attendance is more an expression of catholicity (occasionally connecting with the wider church family) than regularly belonging to two congregations.

After school service

After school service happened in a parish serving an expanded village. This weekly gathering was in church on a Thursday for children of the local school. It died after three years of its life.

Was it missional? Yes, it was started because of the need to connect with more families whose children attended the church school but didn't come to church. It was inspired by something similar in a nearby parish that worked very well. Was it ecclesial? It was seen by leaders as a chance for the children to 'encounter' church, to feel at home in the ecclesial space as well as being taught about Christian faith through interactive and kinaesthetic approaches. Two keen lay leaders began it and led it every week.

Why did we sense it was marginal? There seem to be some mixed intentions here regarding it being ecclesial. Despite giving the children their own worship/teaching experience, it never made steps towards becoming a distinctive worshipping congregation. For example, celebrating communion was never considered, even in hindsight. This was due in part to unsupportive clergy – indeed an incoming clergy person shut it down. It was also due in part to the lack of parents attending with their children. Children were brought over by school staff, which contributed to it feeling like an after school club. Thus it was excluded, because despite the good missional intentions of the two lay leaders, intentions for the ecclesial dimension were too underdeveloped.

These four cases illustrate the complexity in the relatively simple search for sufficient *missional and ecclesial* evidence in the identity of each alleged case. We deem these two features to be inherently connected to the term *fresh expression of Church*. ‘Fresh expression’ is for missional reasons, and ‘Church’ is unequivocal ecclesial language. But both must be evidenced.

Appendix Six

Standout comments from leaders

God is completely new to them.

The age limit seems to be increasing.

(youth church)

The mums like making and creating things – that's how they like to learn.

We are completely self-financing. We cost the diocese nothing.

If the church closed down tomorrow, the fxC would probably just move into the village hall.

A minister's post can't possibly be sustainable by the end of it (initial funding period) and therefore it (church plant) is destined to be purely a time restricted experiment, rather than something that is an experiment with some provision made for when/if it succeeds.

(church plant in challenging context)

The church isn't anything to do with bricks, it's about people.

Some people want to walk into a big Victorian building and see someone playing the organ, but other people would never be able to connect with anything like that.

It takes a lot of work and effort to do anything here.

(fxC on very large estate)

It broke down a lot of barriers on the estate.

Staff say it leaves the residents feeling empowered when they normally just mope around.

(fxC for adults with learning difficulties)

Some kids are just coming because of the food – because it's a good meal in the week.

(fxC in very deprived area)

I've seen the kids express their faith more and more as they've come.

It is a very difficult place to do mission, despite valiant efforts at times.

I'm sure we are a fresh expression of Church now, I'm just not sure how we became one.

If we hadn't put the effort in, the church wouldn't be here now.

(after local church closed down)

I'm not sure how sustainable this is if I'm not here.

The state of the church in (city) is diabolical.

(when asked what were reasons for beginning fxC)

It is absolutely wonderful.

(new vicar on visiting the fxC in the parish hall for the first time)

Mum, Sunday is your church but Messy Church is mine.

(overheard at Messy Church)

Members of (sending church) are planning to move in to (retirement home) as they get older so they can be a part of this.

(fxC in retirement home)

The aim of (fxC) is to give mums the opportunity to worship and not have to worry about the noise their children are making or the snacks they are dropping for the church mice!

We actively discourage other Christians from coming to (fxC).

The wider church expects church plants to fail and so there are no plans in place for what to do when they don't.

In some ways Messy Church is more church than our 'traditional' church services!

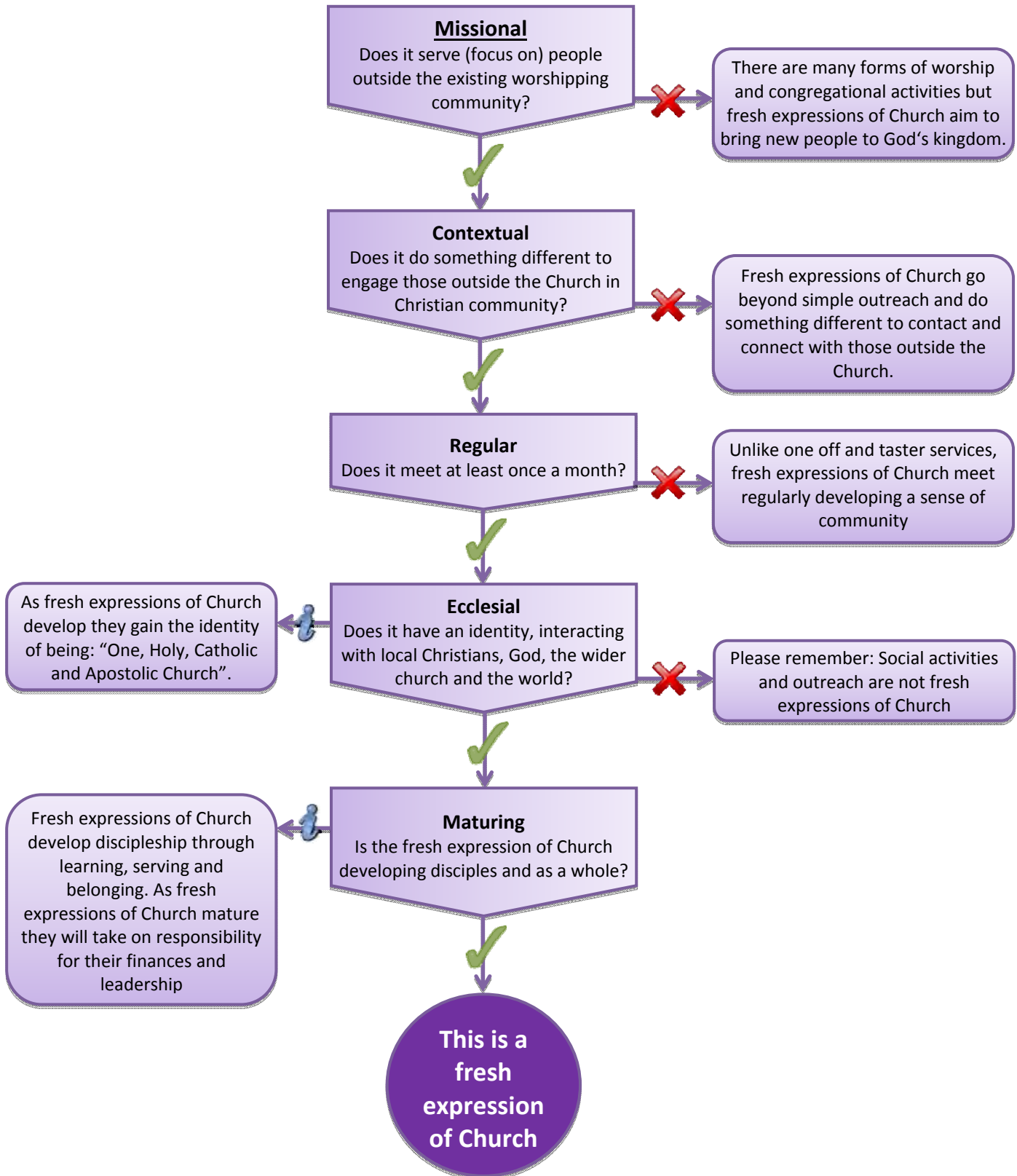
This is more sustainable than anything else going on at St (parish).

This is their church – other churches meet weekly so why do we meet monthly?

(fxC thinking of increasing frequency)

If you told Messy Church leaders they were church planting and equip them for that, wouldn't they be excited?

Appendix Seven: The flow diagram from the Research and Statistics Unit



Appendix Eight: A brief report on the 11th diocese: Gloucester

Some characteristics of Gloucester Diocese

At 557 people/sq mile, it is the second least populated diocese we have looked at, after Norwich with 483 people/sq mile. In terms of AWA it is average in attendance size, yet only three other dioceses of smaller size have more churches. This largely rural diocese, with some towns, serves a population that has increased by 7% from 2006-11, but its AWA has decreased by 7% in the same period. None the less it is still third highest out of 43 in a league table of the percentage of population attending and the highest we have worked with. This paints a snapshot of traditional Anglican strength, now showing signs of waning.

The fxC overall contribution

If the fxC numbers are included in the 2011 AWA of 21200 then the 729 attendance at fxC is but 3.4% of the diocese. The diocese has 388 churches. If the 23 fxC are included in the diocese number of churches (which from the national returns looks unlikely) then fxC are 5.9% of the churches. Both of these are the lowest we have yet seen. It may mean the diocese still thinks fxC are generally not needed .

Ways in which the Gloucester fxC are typical

There are the same proportions as the average across the previous ten dioceses in relation to: the percentage of people thought to be characteristic of the area, those who are mainly or totally drawn from networks, the examples that don't meet on a Sunday, those that meet weekly, and the sizes of teams sent.

We note that in both Norwich and Gloucester the female leaders most outnumber the males at 61% to 39% but do not know why.

Encouragements in the Gloucester set of fxC

They have notably higher than average levels of sacramental practice (Communion 43.5%, Baptism 47.8%, Confirmation 43.5%). This might correlate to Gloucester having the 2nd highest proportion of examples that identify with the Catholic tradition. More of the fxC are taking some steps in discipleship, compared to the average.

Three factors suggest some welcome pioneering. 74% of the fxC felt that they were in a pioneering situation (average 62%), the most frequent motive that led them to start was identifying an unreached people group and their proportion of ordained pioneers is high. It might also link to them having the second highest proportion of lay led examples.

Signs of vulnerability in the Gloucester fxC

They appear to be more marginal numerically to the life of the diocese and of smaller size than elsewhere, though this reflects that 29% of them occur in a rural or semi-rural setting. At them, there are slightly more Christians than average at the fxC and equally less de-churched people. The 17% mortality rate is the highest yet.