

1. Introduction

1.1 The Blackpool Conference of 2007 affirmed and encouraged the priority of developing fresh ways of being Church and the many and various ways in which this priority is being taken forward in the life of the Connexion.

1.2 The Conference directed the Methodist Council to bring annual reports to the Conference from 2008 to 2013 detailing progress made in encouraging the priority of developing fresh ways of being Church and with detailed guidance on how this can be further encouraged including any necessary changes to Standing Orders. This is the second of these reports.

1.3 In October 2007 the Methodist Council approved the constitution of a Fresh Ways Working Group to oversee the development of the 2007 resolutions and to produce the annual reports to Conference. The members of the group are:

The Revd Dr Andrew Wood
(*Chair*),
The Revd Dr Peter Pillinger
(*Convener*),
The Revd Stephen Lindridge
(*Convener September 2009*),
The Revd Ian Bell,
The Revd Sylvester Deigh,
The Revd Jenny Ellis,
Ms Daniela Fetuga-Joensuu,
The Revd Gareth Hill,
Mr Siôn Rhys Evans,
The Revd Dr Peter Phillips,
Deacon Ruth Poch,

The Revd Andrew Roberts,
The Revd Dr Angela Shier-Jones.

2. Good news to celebrate

2.1 Fresh ways of being Church continue to develop across the Connexion, demonstrating a renewed commitment to mission and bringing hope and new life, illustrated in the following three stories.

2.2 *Elvetham Heath Café*

Church Café Church is a two year old venture in an ecumenical church which itself was only planted nine years ago. It meets monthly on Sunday evenings in the church building. Worshippers sit around tables and have free drinks and nibbles all evening. The church's mission statement is: "We don't offer easy answers, we explore questions and we expect to meet God in life-changing ways." The format is multimedia, film clips and conversations, contemporary worship and prayer stations. There are normally about fifty worshippers of whom 10-15% attend no other church services. The challenge is to move from a new expression of worship to a new expression of Church.

2.3 *The Gathering Place (G.P.) St Athan – South Wales*

The small Methodist community in St Athan, took the brave decision to sell the chapel, and invite a deacon to come and begin a brand new work in the community. This involved building a multi-purpose building a mile up the

road, known as 'The Gathering Place'. Four of the eight regular Sunday worshippers from the Chapel are now part of a new lively dynamic and diverse community.

The G.P has been open for 1 year and is next to an estate where there has been little provision for the local community. People gather every day of the week for varied activities including coffee mornings, Rock School, Day Centre, Toddler Groups and a gathering on Sundays @10 called Mosaic.

Mosaic was begun monthly for the un-churched and now meets weekly (since January 2009). There are between 25-40 regulars, ages 1-80; half of whom are under 16. They say that "In an informal, creative, participatory, cafe-style environment we explore relevant issues and look at what Christianity has to say. We are on a journey of discovery and learning together wherever people are on the journey of faith."

We are trying to grow a community based upon relationships which reflects something of the nature of God's kingdom."

2.4 Mind the Gap (MIG) – Gateshead & Jarrow (*fresh expressions DVD 1*) began in 2001. September 2008 saw three evolutions.

- i. Leadership has transferred from being presbyteral to being indigenous lay (part of MTG's

initial vision and values), but still with good support and accountability from the Circuit Leadership Team;

- ii. There has been a movement from being a circuit fresh expression project to being a fresh expression church with a membership whose purpose is to engage with those who are 'not yet Christians'. All members have adopted the values of the 'cell' system, and this has facilitated a genuine expression of the priesthood of all believers.
- iii. The releasing of many of the project's participants back to their inherited churches has sparked missional growth and inspired people with the values of mission in various local contexts.

This new, small community aims to be as accessible as possible in everything it does. Eating together is an integral part of community and discipleship. [website: www.m-t-g.org.uk]

3. The Fresh Expressions Team

- 3.1 In 2004 the Fresh Expressions team was established by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Methodist Council to renew vision, gather news, resource growth and develop training in support of the development of fresh expressions as part of a mixed economy Church. In February 2008 Methodist Council agreed to support a second phase of

the work of Fresh Expressions from 2009 to 2014. The United Reformed Church will also be partners in phase two. The key aims of phase two are;

- ∞ to both consolidate and expand the work of phase one;
- ∞ to deepen collaborative work between the Fresh Expressions team and partner denominations and agencies.

3.2 In May 2009 Bishop Graham Cray became Team Leader succeeding the Revd Dr Steven Croft (who was consecrated Bishop of Sheffield in January 2009). In September 2009 the Revd Stephen Lindridge succeeds the Revd Peter Pillinger as Connexional Fresh Expressions Missioner. In October 2008 a Methodist presbyter, the Revd Andrew Roberts, became Fresh Expressions Director of Training. The Revd Dr Howard Mellor has been appointed as Chair of the *Mission Shaped Ministry* Board.

3.3 The Fresh Expressions team is part way through a programme of visiting Methodist District and Anglican Diocesan Synods to share news of how the fresh expressions movement is developing.

3.4 Ecumenically delivered Fresh Expressions training continues to expand across the United Kingdom.

3.4.1 By Easter 2009, 55 vision days had been held with over 4,500 participants. (www.freshexpressions.org.uk/vision)

3.4.2 Hundreds of church groups have used the short introductory course *mission shaped intro* (www.freshexpressions.org.uk/missionshapedintro)

3.4.3 By May 2009, 27 centres had provided the one year learning experience *mission shaped ministry* (msm) with over 1150 participants. *msm* centres now include Cardiff and Belfast with *msm* Scotland being planned for 2010. *msm* materials are being continually updated in the light of new learning and to ensure that they provide as full a learning experience as possible. (www.freshexpression.org.uk/missionshapedministry)

3.4.4 A new resource *mission shaped congregations* provides worship, preaching and homegroup materials that can be used to introduce fresh expressions vision and values. (www.freshexpressions.org.uk/missionshapedcongregations)

3.4.5 International interest in the work of Fresh Expressions is growing significantly. Training resources are being used in Canada with other countries considering using them. A major International Conference is being planned for 2010.

3.5 Alongside a growing literature about new forms of Church, the Fresh Expressions team offers Share (www.sharetheguide.org). Share has two components.

1. An online learning guide which is a rich source of theology, wisdom and stories concerning fresh expressions.
 2. The Share community which supports learning networks that meet across the country, in both real and cyberspace, for mutual support and learning.
- 3.6 The fresh expressions Summit 2008/9 (with the President of the Conference, the General Secretary, Fresh Expressions Team Leaders and invited guests), highlighted many exciting new initiatives around the connexion from the President's report but also an issue regarding the understanding and use of the term 'fresh expressions'. It is clear that the term is used fluidly and applies to a spectrum of enterprises, from those exploring specific elements of Church, to those developing fresh ways of being Church in its entirety. However, the Summit expressed, no matter what name or language was being adopted, any intentional engagement to fulfil our calling and make more disciples of Jesus Christ was what mattered and should be encouraged.
- 4. Methodist Fresh Ways Working Group**
- 4.1 The Fresh Ways Working Group (FWWG), in partnership with Connexional and Fresh Expressions team members, is listening carefully to leaders of fresh expressions, Superintendents, Chairs, DEEs and others in order to address emerging issues.
 - 4.2 In March 2008 a consultation was held for those developing fresh expressions and those supporting them, to hear in detail some of these emerging issues and explore ways to wrestle with them. FWWG is currently working on the issues raised as a significant piece of work on Good Practice Guidelines for Conference 2010.
- 5. Connexional Pioneering Ministries Scheme**
- 5.1 The Conference of 2008 agreed to a scheme whereby twenty fresh expressions of church to reach young adults with little or no existing connection with Church could be established over a five year period.
 - 5.2 A coordinator for the scheme has been appointed and the Revd Ian Bell began work on a part-time basis in February and will become full-time in September.
 - 5.3 The scheme has become known as Venture FX, reflecting the aim to use new ways and go to new places in the context of holy risk-taking.
 - 5.4 Individuals with appropriate pioneering gifts and experience will be recruited to lead the projects which it is hoped will, over time, become churches in their own right. The vision is for young adults who inhabit a culture where the Christian story is little known or understood to become disciples of Jesus Christ and to express their faith in authentic Christian lifestyle. Some ground-clearing work has been

undertaken to make the scheme known throughout the Connexion and to establish the selection criteria and process for both pioneers and projects. It is anticipated that three or four projects will be established during the connexional year 2009/10 and six or seven in the following year. Appropriate support and training mechanisms are being established so that the pioneers can develop their

ministry effectively and the projects can become viable and sustainable expressions of Church. The scheme seeks to work collaboratively across the Connexion with others who are developing pioneering models of ministry, and with ecumenical partnership where possible. www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=opentoworld.content&cmid=2539

*****RESOLUTION**

16/1. The Conference received the Report.