

AN ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF FRESH EXPRESSIONS OF
CHURCH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE UK ELIM
MOVEMENT

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Introduction

These are challenging times for the Church in the West: unless Christians are in a place of denial, it will be admitted that the Body of Christ is fast losing its previous size and influence. In comparison, the Elim Pentecostal Church in the United Kingdom has been relatively successful at increasing its constituency. However, this paper will seek to demonstrate that the effectiveness of Elim's traditional approach to church planting in particular and mission more generally has diminished in an ever increasing manner, particularly in the years since the Second World War. Given that this is the case, the paper will seek to analyse why this has occurred, particularly in light of the cultural changes which have taken place since the early days of Elim.

Having made this case, the focus will be to critically examine the missional steps being taken by the Anglican and Methodist Churches, more recently joined in partnership by the United Reformed Church, the Congregational Federation and the Ground Level Network together with parachurch groups such as the Church Army, the Church Missionary Society and Anglican Church Planting Initiatives in the church planting movement known as 'Fresh Expressions of Church'.¹ In order to do this, it will be necessary to investigate what is meant in the contemporary context by terms such as 'mission', 'missional church' and 'emerging church'; each of these terms has an important bearing on understanding FE and on any conclusions reached.

Further on in the paper, there is presented an overview of the main lessons that the Elim Pentecostal Churches might learn from the experiences of FE in the past several years. Finally, this paper will seek to propose a tentative church planting

¹ In the body of the paper, the abbreviation 'FE' will be used when referring to the National Initiative: the term 'fresh expressions' will denote something locally organised.

approach for the Elim Movement as it moves further into this century with its increasingly changing and fast moving cultures.

By its very nature, this paper will incorporate material from several theological disciplines, namely church history, missiology and, closely linked to this, practical theology. Most of the material referred to with regard to church history has to do with the Elim denomination and its church planting praxis through the twentieth century: some primary evidence has been gathered but mainly research is taken from secondary sources and, while it is conceded that there is the potential for bias in the some of the sources cited, the conclusions reached are still very strong. Missiological research comes mainly from literature review in the second half of the twentieth century and up until the present time. Since this paper is focused on the contemporary phenomenon of FE, material on its church planting praxis has been collated from recent literature, official websites of the Initiative and an interview with some of the national leaders of FE. Even though the interview is qualitative in nature, given the significance of the respondents the writer believes the material gathered carries weight.

Since the writer is an Elim minister and responsible for one of its national departments, the paper will from time to time make use of the pronoun 'we' when describing current practices or future challenges within the denomination.

1. Elim's Historical Approach to Church Planting/Evangelism

George Jeffreys, Elim's founder, was arguably the most fruitful evangelist in Great Britain and Ireland during the previous century.² He did not intend to start a new denomination. The vision was rather to begin an itinerant church planting/evangelistic team.³ This team had its official commencement in January 1915 in the town of Monaghan, Ireland.⁴ It soon became clear that the resulting churches in Ireland either had to be allowed autonomy and self-government or brought into a cohesive grouping; hence the Elim Pentecostal Alliance was constituted in the autumn of 1918 with a centralised government.⁵ The work would eventually spill over into England and Wales in 1921, mainly because of the difficulties of doing mission in Ireland due to political unrest.⁶ As it providentially turned out, this move led to a period of great fruitfulness in church planting. Cartwright, Elim's official historian, revealed that the number of churches grew from 15 in 1920 to 233 by 1937.⁷

Typically, Jeffreys and his 'Revival Party' would begin a series of meetings, often in a marquee or a hall. Early on, a significant healing would take place as a result of prayer being offered. News would spread through the community and within a short space of time, the meetings would be moved to a much larger auditorium. The meetings would usually continue for several weeks. At the end of this period, the Revival Party would move on and a pioneer pastor would be brought in to follow up

² M.R. Hathaway, 'The Elim Pentecostal Church: Origins, Development and Distinctives' in K. Warrington (ed.), *Pentecostal Perspectives* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 1.

A. Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988), 259,260

³ Hathaway, 'The Elim Pentecostal Church', 13.

⁴ J. Robinson, *Pentecostal Origins: Early Pentecostalism in Ireland in the Context of the British Isles* (Bletchley: Paternoster, 2005), 124,125.

⁵ Hathaway, 'The Elim Pentecostal Church', 13.

⁶ Robinson, *Pentecostal Origins*, 220,221.

⁷ D. Cartwright (unpublished notes) in D. N. Hudson, 'A Schism and its Aftermath. An Historical Analysis of Denominational Disruption in the Elim Pentecostal Church 1939 – 1940' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, King's College, London, 1999), 88.

on those who had made decisions to follow Christ. A Sunday service would be started, and a new church had been born.⁸

The success of this model can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, at a time of economic austerity, there was for those attending a sense of ‘entertainment’ offered. Community singing, songs being performed, the expectancy of miraculous intervention into peoples’ lives all added to the experience. Cartwright, when interviewed by the writer accurately drew attention to this.⁹ Hathaway concurs when he writes

“In the days before television and with limited radio entertainment, a healing crusade meeting could draw a crowd as easily as a theatre performance or a music hall.”¹⁰

Added to these, Jeffreys was an attractive and gifted speaker. Gee, from firsthand experience remarked that Jeffreys “(...) presented his message with a logical appeal and a note of authority that was compelling.”¹¹ Those present would be moved emotionally and spiritually by his anointed oratory.

Secondly, even after the horrors of the First World War, the Christendom metanarrative still held sway over the worldview of perhaps the majority of British people. Jeffreys did not have to fight against the powers of secularisation, pluralism and consumerism in the way that is prevalent today. The need for a sophisticated apologetic approach was largely unnecessary. He preached in a straightforward, basic manner.¹²

⁸ Hathaway, ‘The Elim Pentecostal Church’, 17.

⁹ Appendix One, 66,67.

¹⁰ Hathaway, ‘The Elim Pentecostal Church’, 17.

¹¹ D. Gee, *These Men I Knew* (Nottingham: Assemblies of God, 1980), 49.

¹² Appendix One, 67.

A third factor in Jeffreys success is more difficult to describe and that is God's sovereign choice to take a person and use them to bring evangelistic revival to a particular place at a particular time.

It would seem therefore that at a time of societal unrest, change and poverty, the methods adopted, the message preached, the providential blessing of God and the new churches formed by Jeffreys offered security and a solid basis for the new converts both in the present and for eternity.¹³

After Jeffreys left the movement in 1940, the evangelistic ministry of P.S. Brewster came to the fore. Although the number of new churches planted by Brewster was far less than Jeffreys,¹⁴ Brewster was in some sense the saviour of Elim, continuing the pioneering of new churches in much the same manner as the departed founder.

Direct evidence of this can be found in the transcript of an address given by Brewster to the Assemblies of God Home Missions Conference in 1962

“The main method in this country is by chosen men, entering towns, engaging large halls Campaigning, and gathering the Converts together with an appointed Leader into a hired hall.....Where there is a Pioneer Campaign for one Church, and all the Converts are directed into one building, under one Minister, and those who have been born again grow up together, it does seem to be more profitable.”¹⁵

Brewster was a mentor and model for other younger evangelistic ministries especially Wynne Lewis and Alex Tee. It is important for the purposes of this paper to recognise that the basic *modus operandi* of church planting hardly changed from the days of Jeffreys. Later evidence of this is found from copies of the Elim Evangel,

¹³ D.N. Hudson 'A Schism and Aftermath', 108 – 117.

¹⁴ D. Cartwright, *The Great Evangelists. The Remarkable Lives of George and Stephen Jeffreys* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1986), 131. Cartwright attributes 40 church plants to Brewster.

¹⁵ 'Special Address given by the Rev. P. S. Brewster. Pioneer Evangelism on the Occasion of the Assemblies of God Home Missions Conference 1962 (Coventry)'. Transcript accessed from Regents Theological College Library Archives on 28th April, 2010. (N.B., Use of capitals and punctuation as per the original document).

March 6th and September 4th 1976. The magazine gives clear indication that in order to pioneer a new work, typically a building was procured, an evangelistic crusade was organised with a divine healing element and a 'follow up' pastor was left to run the church. Some of these initiatives did result in new vibrant churches: for example Whitley Bay is showcased in *Elim Evangel*, September 4th 1976 where a crusade led by Alex Tee and party was imminent.¹⁶ The writer is aware through personal friendship with the present minister and through preaching there that the Whitley Bay Elim Church achieves a regular Sunday morning congregation of approximately one hundred and twenty. Sadly, of the other five churches highlighted in the same edition, only one, Shrewsbury, remains in the denomination's current Year Book as an EFGA church.¹⁷ In the *Elim Evangel*, March 6th, 1976, eleven towns were mentioned where buildings had either been bought or negotiations were underway. Crusades had begun in some, were imminent in others and in some, presumably, the crusade would be planned after the building purchase was completed.¹⁸ Again from the 2009-2010 Year Book, four out of the eleven situations now have churches and from the writer's personal knowledge, only two, Redditch and Whitley Bay, could be described as being strong and well established.

As late as the 1990s, the same basic approach to church planting was still adopted. The 'Forward in Faith' initiative was launched at the Elim Conference in 1990 with a vision to plant 400 new churches.¹⁹ The plan was to appoint five evangelists in each region to hold evangelistic missions and begin pioneer churches. Richardson, on the basis of much first hand research and interviews in Elim's North West region discovered that typically, this approach rarely succeeded and in particular, converts

¹⁶ *Elim Evangel*, September 4th 1976, 13.

¹⁷ *Elim Pentecostal Church International Year Book 2009 – 2010*, 118.

¹⁸ *Elim Evangel*, March 6th 1976, 9.

¹⁹ 'Into the New Century. Forward in Faith', *Direction*, June 1990, 8.

from a crusade did not often integrate into the new church planted. His conclusion was

“If a crusade is held prior to planting a new church, the crusade is unlikely to have any long-term benefit.”²⁰

The attempt at two large scale plants in Wolverhampton and Liverpool in the late 1990s utilising crusade methodology seemingly failed to produce much, if any, lasting fruit; indeed the Wolverhampton church numbered less than twenty attendees two years after the crusade and the pioneer pastor had needed to find secular employment.²¹ At the time of writing, there is no Elim church in Wolverhampton.

Anecdotally amongst national Elim leaders, these two crusades which utilized a great amount of people and financial resources are seen to have been a turning point in praxis, although it has not been clear what the alternative for pioneer planting might be. Significantly, Elim’s evangelism and church planting department continued to own and operate a 1000 seat tent and two 300 seat tents until late 2007 when, at the recommendation of the new National Evangelism Director, they were donated to another ministry separate from Elim.

It is the view of the writer that tents and marquees can be effectively used by local churches for ongoing outreach activities, but it was necessary to remove the existing tents from the national department charged with championing church planting in order to facilitate fresh paradigms and approaches to the task in hand. For somewhere approaching eighty five years, tent crusades had formed the major approach to planting within Elim. In the mid-nineties, Robinson observed that this

²⁰ G. T. Richardson ‘Church Planting. Lessons from Elim in the North West’ (abridged version of unpublished Masters dissertation, Regents Theological College, Nantwich, Cheshire, 2000), 22.

²¹ Richardson, ‘Church Planting...’, 28.

was a methodology rarely used by any other group.²² Perhaps the Movement had become stuck with this model and only the slaying of it could release much new thinking and, hopefully, fresh practices.

There is no doubt that at the turn of a new millennium, it was critical to recognise that the lifestyles, worldviews and philosophies of the majority of the UK population had undergone major change during the second half of the twentieth century. An accurate assessment of the new cultural landscape would be necessary in order to work out effective means of doing mission and planting new Christian communities.

²² M. Robinson and D. Spriggs, *Church Planting: The Training Manual* (Oxford: Lynx Communications, 1995), 45.

2. UK Culture in the 21st Century and Its Impact on Mission

2.1 The Demise of Christendom and Rise of Post-Christendom

Christendom can be defined as the all-pervading influence and authority of the Institutional Church over the populace. Its origin can be traced primarily back to the early years of the fourth century when the Emperor Constantine converted to Christ leading eventually to Christianity becoming the official religion of the empire.²³ Gradually the church, which previously had been in many ways at the margins of society began to take centre stage and wield great influence eventually becoming the totally dominant influence on culture.

It could be argued that this was a great coup for Christianity, but Murray argues convincingly that the Christendom model which largely held sway in the West until very recent times led to most people being born into this culture and perhaps adhering to the outward manifestations of the faith but without any inward or saving knowledge of God.²⁴

It would be true to say that the place of Christendom as an overarching metanarrative was gradually undermined by such historical happenings as the Enlightenment and the ensuing challenge of scientific, rational explanations for the way the Universe was constructed as well as fresh anthropological understanding.²⁵ The strong influence of the Christian Story suffered further blows through the horrific experience of two world wars in the twentieth century. Many turned their backs on

²³ *A Lion Handbook. The History of Christianity* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1990), 139,140.

²⁴ S. Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004), 129.

²⁵ W. Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 39.

the Faith, unable to accept the reality of a living, loving God in the light of such terrible atrocities.²⁶

Murray accurately points out that the demise of Christendom has accelerated markedly since the 1960s. He believes that there had been such an undermining of this culture during the previous several centuries that it was set for collapse.²⁷

Certainly other factors in the second half of the twentieth century have served to facilitate this rapid slide: the geographical dispersion of extended families; the increase of choice in leisure activities; the arrival of more members of other world religions. Perhaps more than anything else, the rising ascendancy of consumerism, in itself a metanarrative, has caused people to shy away from anything that does not fit in with what they personally desire.²⁸

It would be incorrect to suggest that Post-Christendom is a definite new culture which has taken the place of Christendom. Rather it describes a phase which western culture is still transitioning through. Some small vestiges of Christendom remain; for example, the UK still has a State Church, Germans still have to decide to opt out of paying some taxes to the Church. It is also worth noting that there are still a significant percentage of people still alive who were brought up in a Christendom cultural paradigm, even if they were not committed church attendees. Murray is therefore correct in suggesting that it could take several more decades before we really know what culture looks like after Christendom.²⁹

Recognising and distinguishing a society which is described as Post-Christendom from one which is Post-Christian is important, although there is some overlap. The

²⁶ Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 182.

²⁷ Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 183.

²⁸ M. Moynagh, *Changing World, Changing Church* (London: Monarch, 2001), 18-21.

²⁹ Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 8.

former speaks more of an accelerating disinclination among the majority population to identify with Institutional Church, its ways and particular practices. It also indicates an ignorance of the Christian ‘Grand Story’, which is where the overlap mentioned above is perhaps most clearly seen. There are those, however, who are ‘anti-Christendom’ but ‘pro-Christian’. It is at least possible that as Christendom dies, the proportion of true followers of Jesus and of authentic biblical *ecclesias* may increase at the margins of the new cultural landscape. In such a context, new missional non-Christendom activities could be powerfully conducted.

2.2 The Demise of Modernism and Rise of Postmodernism

Stemming from the Enlightenment, Modernism is a philosophical system which finds its foundation in an empirical, rational approach. Truth is found primarily in science, facts and the application of reason. Allied to this is a Humanist perspective which optimistically states that humans are basically morally good and that, in line with evolutionary theory, progress is the default position for the human race.

In terms of the relationship of Modernism to Christianity, Reno accurately describes it as the point at which “(...) human power displaces divine power as the source of hope.”³⁰

It would seem that concurrent with the acceleration of Post-Christendom from the 1960s, the public reality of Postmodernism has also become more evident, perhaps for similar reasons. It is beyond the remit of this paper to outline postmodernism in full. It will suffice at this point to mention two particular facets which impact upon Christian mission. Firstly, and perhaps the clearest hallmark of postmodernity as

³⁰ R.R. Reno ‘Postmodern Irony and Petronian Humanism: The New Challenges of Evangelism’ in C.E. Braaten & R.W. Jenson, *The Strange New World of the Gospel: Re-evangelizing in the Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 59.

stated by Lyotard is its “(...) incredulity toward metanarratives”.³¹ The result of this in present day culture is that there is an increasingly large segment of the population who are ignorant of and disinterested in the Christian Story. Secondly, postmoderns tend to be suspicious of anything which they perceive as institutional. This raises a hurdle for historic denominations. Once again, Murray shows clear insight in pointing out that those whom the Church are trying to evangelise will need to be allowed to ‘belong before they believe’ in order to overcome suspicion or prejudice and there will be a necessity to accept a longer journey of spiritual discovery before expecting a positive response to the Gospel.³²

Some observers think that the current cultural landscape in the UK paints a bleak future for the Christian Church. Brown commented early in his book

“.....what emerges is a story not merely of church decline, but of the end of Christianity as a means by which men and women, as individuals, construct their identities and their sense of ‘self’.”³³

Written in 2001, Brown’s book showed little optimism. He could still be proved correct over the next few decades. The production of the ‘Mission Shaped Church’ report in 2004³⁴ both demonstrated new ways of mission and church planting within the Anglican Church as well as acted as a springboard for the subsequent burgeoning of FE. To what degree this major initiative will bring salvation to those at present outside the scope of British Christianity is yet to be fully realised.

³¹ J-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans by G. Bennington & B. Masumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), xxiv.

³² S. Murray, *Church After Christendom* (Bletchley: Paternoster, 2004), 12.

³³ C. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800 – 2000* (London: Routledge, 2001), 2.

³⁴ G. Cray et al, *Mission-Shaped Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004).

3. The Origins of Fresh Expressions

Figures taken from various English Church Census studies show the inexorable decline in church attendance through the final quarter of the twentieth century and on into the present century. The percentage of the English population in Sunday church services in 1979 was 11.7%; in 1989 it was 9.9%; in 1998 it was 7.5%.³⁵ By the time of the 2005 census, the figure had dropped even further to 6.3%.³⁶ It was in this context that in 2002, the Church of England Board of Mission commissioned a working group under the chair of Bishop Graham Cray to both reflect on recent church planting praxis as well as examining and proposing effective missional ways forward.³⁷ Even if the attendance figures did not take into account others who were connecting with church outside of Sunday services, the statistics were dire enough to cause the Established Church in particular to recognise the seriousness of the situation and attempt to address the haemorrhaging of churchgoers.

The Anglican Church has long viewed the parish system at its best as being the way that incarnational ministry and mission could be delivered, potentially to everyone within a given geographical area.³⁸ In the early 1990s, it became apparent that new approaches to mission were needed and that church planting needed to be examined given that the existing system made it difficult to plant across parish boundaries without causing offence to neighbouring clergy.³⁹ The resulting report, 'Breaking

³⁵ P. Brierley, *The Tide is Running Out* (Eltham: Christian Research, 2000), 27.

³⁶ P. Brierley, *Pulling out of the Nosedive* (Eltham: Christian Research, 2006), 12.

³⁷ Cray et al, *Mission-Shaped Church*, xi.

³⁸ Cray et al, *Mission-Shaped Church*, xi.

³⁹ The writer remembers around this time the Rev. David Pytches, vicar of St Andrews, Chorleywood describing the parish boundary as akin to a condom when it came to the task of evangelistic church planting! Also quoted by Mark Russell, Chief Executive of the Church Army in a talk given at the National Anglican Church Planting Conference, 2007. Accessed at www.acpi.org.uk/downloads/NACPC07/Mark%20Russell.pdf on 28th April 2010.

New Ground' was released in 1994.⁴⁰ At the time, the report declared that church planting was "a supplementary strategy that enhances the essential thrust of the parish principle."⁴¹ In retrospect it is clear that even as this report was published it was already out of touch with those unchurched people who viewed life as a web of relational networks formed through, for example, work, leisure pursuits or long-standing friendships rather than perceiving a strong loyalty to a geographical location. Hence 'Mission-Shaped Church' recognised that the 1994 report had acknowledged mission into networks as a subsidiary activity, but by 2004 recognised that

"Not only are networks more dominant for many people, but parishes are not what they used to be."⁴²

Moynagh believes that there is still a strong case to be made for effective missional churches based in particular geographical locations, but it may be that he is too optimistic.⁴³ Part of his proposal is based on the fact that people are staying in one place for longer than we sometimes imagine. His extrapolation is that therefore neighbours will get to know each other and relational mission will ensue. This may be more the case in poorer areas or where there is a dense ethnic population, but it is the writer's experience and, anecdotally that of other missional Christian friends that when one attempts to build community in more affluent areas, one discovers little existing relational connection except where there is some other obvious reason to interact, e.g. school events or sports activities.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *Breaking New Ground: Church Planting in the Church of England* (London: Church House Publishing, 1994).

⁴¹ *Breaking New Ground*, v.

⁴² Cray et al, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 7.

⁴³ M. Moynagh, *emergingchurch.intro* (Oxford: Monarch, 2004), 76,77.

⁴⁴ The writer and his wife moved into a cul-de-sac in Crewe in 2006 and held a 'mince pie and sherry' morning just before Christmas for our new neighbours. Some had lived there for more than twenty years and this was the first time they had met one another.

The phrase ‘fresh expressions’ referring to new churches being intentionally started was first recorded in print in the ‘Mission-Shaped Church’ report.⁴⁵ The launch of FE as an initiative came about in 2005 and was explicitly commissioned by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York as well as the Methodist Council.⁴⁶ Since then, according to the FE website,

“The initiative has resulted in hundreds of new congregations being formed alongside more traditional churches.”⁴⁷

This would be borne out by research in 2005 which suggested that more than half of all Anglican parishes had either begun a FE or were planning to do so.⁴⁸ It needs to be noted, however that the leaders of FE admit that many have jumped aboard ‘the FE bandwagon’ by labelling an existing missional activity as FE when really it is not.⁴⁹

It is difficult to extract any more accurate assessment of the positive effect of FE, particularly in relation to how many previously unchurched or dechurched people are becoming functioning members of the Body of Christ. It does tend to take the postmodern approach of relying more on Story to encourage and explain what is happening rather than collecting lots of hard data. For example, in the summer 2009 edition of the ‘expressions’ newspaper, there were nineteen stories of people who

⁴⁵ Cray et al, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 43.

⁴⁶ ‘Changing Church for a Changing World’. Accessed at <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/about> on 27th April 2010.

⁴⁷ ‘Changing Church for a Changing World’. Accessed at <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/about> on 27th April 2010.

⁴⁸ ‘Question 35 – What Statistics are you Basing Your Activities on?’ Accessed at <http://www.sharetheguide.org/questions/35> on 27th April 2010.

⁴⁹ Appendix Two, 72.

had either started or were running a FE or who had become Christians through the ministry of a FE church.⁵⁰

Overall, there seems to be a strong acceptance and encouragement for this initiative; indeed there is little in the way of thoughtful opposition to what is occurring.

Milbank is one detractor who writes emotionally about FE and declares that

“For all the protestations, they are a clear conspiracy against the parish.”⁵¹

He argues for the total primacy of the inherited parish church, and particularly the importance of its gatherings in the church building

“The real universal Church is found always paradoxically in one place, within one circumscribed boundary and in one sacred consecrated building.”⁵²

It is puzzling from a New Testament viewpoint and from early Church history until the time of Constantine to imagine how Milbank can try and make the case that the ‘sacred space’ of a church building is vitally important for true followers of Christ. The apostle Paul is clear that the people of God are the building in which He dwells (Ephesians 2:19-22). Milbank is also concerned with the homogeneity of new churches.⁵³ Certainly, he has a point about the universal characteristics of the Body of Christ and there is a challenge to face here concerning how the small monocultural Christian community recognizes and relates to the wider Church. Nevertheless, Milbank fails to confess a similar homogeneity in parish churches which are typically white, late middle aged or older and female. This issue will be explored further in the paper under the section on ‘missional church’.

⁵⁰ *Expressions* is the newspaper of Fresh Expressions. Copies are available through <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/expressions>.

⁵¹ J. Milbank, ‘Stale Expressions: The Management-Shaped Church’, *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 2008, 21.1, 124.

⁵² Milbank, ‘Stale Expressions’, 124.

⁵³ Milbank, ‘Stale Expressions’, 124, 127.

4. Analysis of Fresh Expressions

4.1 A Theology of Mission

From the perspective of the Christendom model, the overriding concern of the Church was the conversion of non-Christian peoples, cultures and nations and the establishing of churches which mirrored existing models to a great extent.

Engelsviken points out that the task was viewed far more in terms of the geographical growth and influence of the Church rather than something fundamentally initiated by God.⁵⁴ Smith is clear that the end of the ‘modern missionary movement’ is, of necessity, very near and therefore the global Church must move from a ‘missions’ paradigm to one based on ‘mission’: the former is a historic construct inextricably linked to Western expansion of empire; the latter is an abiding description of what should be the heartbeat of the people of God.⁵⁵

Significantly, concurrent with the accelerated demise of Christendom in the West through the latter half of the twentieth century, theologians and missionary practitioners began to rediscover the all-important reality that the very nature of God is essentially missional. Historical, cultural and religious contexts can play a strong part in causing a neglected or lost doctrine to come to the fore: an obvious example would be the events surrounding the Reformation and the resurrection of the doctrine of ‘Justification by Faith alone’. With the increased haemorrhaging of church members and the marginalising of the Christian metanarrative during the past century, it could be argued that this set of circumstances exercised the thinking of Christian academics and activists towards a clearly delineated missiology.

⁵⁴ T. Engelsviken, ‘*Missio Dei*: The Understanding and Misunderstanding of a Theological Concept in European Churches and Missiology’ *International Review of Mission*, Vol. XCII No 367, 48.

⁵⁵ D. Smith, *Mission After Christendom* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2003), 116, 117.

Barth is purported to have unveiled for the contemporary Church the doctrine of ‘*Missio Dei*’ at the Willingen Conference of 1952, without actually using the term.⁵⁶

Since then, there has been much debate over the exact outworking of *Missio Dei* in the world, often to do with either the theological persuasion of particular authors or the context in which it is being outworked.⁵⁷

Foundationally, *Missio Dei* recognises that God-in-Trinity is by nature missional, meaning that his essential nature is to reach out in love to his creation and ultimately to ‘make all things new’ (Rev 21:5), or from a Pauline perspective, to reveal “(...) the mystery of his will.....to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.” (Eph 1: 9,10). In a moving description, Bosch writes

“Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. It is impossible to penetrate deeper still; there is mission because God loves people.”⁵⁸

To unpack further *Missio Dei*, we must start at creation and recognise that God effectively sends himself to bring the cosmos into being (Genesis 1:1-2:25).

Subsequently, he sends his Son to rescue a fallen humanity. The Father and ascended Son then send the Holy Spirit, importantly to the Church and into the world. It is the Spirit who empowers and equips the Church to be sent into the world.⁵⁹

There are certain points which can be underlined from the above. First of all is the recognition that “(...) mission is not first of all an action of ours. It is an action of

⁵⁶ K. Daugherty, “*Missio Dei*: The Trinity and Christian Missions” *Evangelical Review of Theology* (2007) 31:2, 163.

D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 390

⁵⁷ More can be found on this in Engelsviken, ‘*Missio Dei*...’, 486 – 494, or more comprehensively in Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 393 – 483.

⁵⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 392.

⁵⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

R. Bowen, ...*So I Send You: A Study Guide to Mission* (London: SPCK, 1996), 11-14.

God.”⁶⁰ Our role, then, is defined by discerning what God is doing in his world and joining in. The Spirit leads in the missional enterprise and we are called to obedient participation. This is not to say that it will be an easy task to identify the pneumatological activity of God in the world, but the clues we will be given relate to a ‘going’ imperative and recognising that in our going, we are to both embody Kingdom of God values as well as share these values with others (Matt 28:18-20).

Secondly, it becomes clear that mission is broader in its scope than evangelism. A modernist, reductionist model of mission from the nineteenth century Christendom worldview (and onwards into the twentieth century) may have equated the two, but as much as God wants humans to experience the saving work of Christ for them personally, God’s Kingdom coming on earth will also carry hallmarks of justice, equity and peace finally consummated in “a new heaven and a new earth.” (Rev 21:1). Atkins is clearly correct when he writes

“The kingdom reign of God is the primary missional perspective of the New Testament.”⁶¹

It is perhaps instructive to note the words of the resurrected Jesus to his gathered disciples

“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” (John 20:21).

There is effectively a ‘passing on of the baton’. The disciples are sent into the world as Jesus was sent, to be the Body of Christ in the world, that is, the Church. They are to give indications that they are his emissaries. If they imitate Jesus, they will heal the sick, feed hungry people, set others free from demonic bondage, live honest lives, maintain moral purity, choose to live in community and so on. All of this is

⁶⁰ L. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989), 134.

⁶¹ M. Atkins, ‘What is the Essence of the Church?’ in S. Croft (ed), *Mission-Shaped Questions: Defining Issues for Today’s Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2008), 19.

part of *Missio Dei*. As Bosch points out, this is a relatively fresh view of the ‘raison d’être’ for the Church, having been previously blanketed by the overarching Christendom story. It is an extremely recent change to see mission as more than an added extra to how church functions in its immediate locality.⁶²

A third point of note is to realise that since the essential nature of deity is that he is a missional God, it would be fundamentally incorrect to speak of a ‘theology of mission’, viewing this as a subset of practical theology. Rather, all theology should be seen as missionally based. Again, in the words of Bosch from his authoritative work

“.....if it is not missionary, theology ceases to be theology.....We are in need of a missiological agenda for theology rather than just a theological agenda for mission.....theology has no reason to exist other than critically to accompany the *missio Dei*.”⁶³

This view has fundamental implications, not least for how theology is taught to future Christian leaders in academia. It is the opinion of the writer that few students studying the subject at higher education level would regard mission as any more than an add-on module to their course.⁶⁴ If Bosch is correct in his above statement, the focus of preaching and teaching in many church congregations would also need a shift away from merely doctrinal orthodoxy towards an understanding that believers are to be equipped to be confident missionaries, thereby reflecting the triune nature of the sending God.

⁶² D. Bosch, *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1995), 27-32 .

⁶³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 494.

⁶⁴ The writer is a part-time lecturer at a theological college.

4.2 Missional Church

In order to understand the approach of Fresh Expressions, one needs to grasp what various contemporary activists and writers mean when they refer to ‘missional church’.

Whether McNeal is correct in believing that nothing as revolutionary as this has taken place within the Christian context since Luther, Calvin et al remains to be seen.⁶⁵ He seems to have overlooked the impact and explosive growth of Pentecostalism in the last one hundred years or so.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, within Western nations, missional church is a growing phenomena.

Guder gives a helpful description of the (still) prevailing institutional model of church

“Popular grammar captures it well: you ‘go to church’ much as the way you go to a store. You ‘attend’ a church, the way you attend a school or a theatre. You ‘belong to a church’, much as you would a service club with its programs and activities.”⁶⁷

In contrast, a missional church

“...makes its mission its priority and perpetually asks itself, “*What has God called us to be and do in our current cultural context?*” The issue of cultural context is essential because the missional church shapes itself to fit that context in order to transform it for the sake of the Kingdom of God.”⁶⁸ (writer’s underlining)

⁶⁵ R. McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), xiii.

⁶⁶ D.E. Miller & T. Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (London: University of California Press, 2007), 18-20.

⁶⁷ D. Guder, *The Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 79,80.

⁶⁸ M. Frost & A. Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 7.

This definition is very much a description of a fresh expression of church when it is being formed according to the desire and strategy of the FE national leaders.⁶⁹

It is important to recognise that the missional church spectrum is not monochromatic. There is a need to differentiate between perspectives within the movement. In particular; there are differences in adherence or otherwise to the authority of scripture; there are some who would want to work in partnership with inherited models of church; others would have a more focused approach to reaching out to those outside of the Christian faith and assisting them in becoming fully committed followers of Christ. In the case of FE, since it was originally founded from within the Anglican tradition and is now in partnership with some other historic denominations, it does not see itself in competition with or separate from inherited models of church. One consequence of this is that there is a breadth of approach to scripture and evangelism; for example, the sacramental and contemplative tradition sees itself as having a significant role in FE.⁷⁰ In the writer's meetings with the main national leaders, however, it seems that the majority would fit mainly in the 'charismatic evangelical' wing of the Church.

In an extremely helpful manner, Frost and Hirsch have sought to show the distinctives of traditional Christendom models of church as compared to a missional approach.⁷¹ The authors delineate three areas where the two respective ecclesiologies differ:

- **Attractional versus incarnational.** Traditional models emphasise a 'come to us' approach to the unchurched. Even at its best, this model expects that if church

⁶⁹ Appendix Two, 70.

⁷⁰ S. Cottrell, 'Letting Your Actions do the Talking' in S. Croft & I. Mobsby (eds), *Ancient Faith, Future Mission: Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition* (London: Canterbury Press, 2009), 68.

⁷¹ M. Frost & A. Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Most of the book is taken up with unpacking the three distinctive differences).

services are honed for the target audience, people will come to partake of what is offered. An incarnational approach is focused on a 'go to them' imperative so that the reality of the indwelling Christ can be observed in the lives of the believers. Christian community can then be formed among the people who are coming to faith and being disciplined.

- **Dualistic versus messianic.** The church has been guilty of perpetuating a sacred/secular divide in the way life is approached. Rather, there is a need to see the whole of life as a place of engagement both with God and the world we are placed in. As Greene accurately comments

“The sacred-secular divide, which keeps our day-to-day lives separate from our church lives, has led to flawed theologies of Church and outreach.”⁷²

- **Hierarchical leadership versus apostolic leadership.** It would not be an exaggeration to state that every historic denomination primarily has a top-down, institutional leadership structure rather than something more organic and outwardly focused. Warner is biblically accurate in his assertion that every believer is a priest and therefore able to represent God to people and people to God.⁷³ Any corporate leadership in the missional church has to be concerned with taking and sending believers out into God's world, equipped to make a difference for the Kingdom of God's sake: this is apostolic leadership (Ephesians 4: 11,12).

There are a few pertinent issues which flow out of Frost and Hirsch's analysis and are taken up by other writers. One of these is that to a greater or lesser degree, a missional approach to church will cause a group of believers to spend more time and

⁷² M. Greene, *Imagine. How We Can Reach the UK* (London: LICC, 2003), 13.

⁷³ R. Warner, *21st Century Church: Preparing Your Church for the New Millennium* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1999), 193,194.

energy ‘out’ pursuing the *Missio Dei* and consequently there will be less resources focused inwards on the ‘gathered church’. As McNeal accurately describes it

“The missional church engages the community beyond its walls because it believes that is why the church exists.”⁷⁴

If mission is pushed to its extreme, McNeal acknowledges, without seeming overly concerned, that what will be left is deconstructed church with little sense of being a gathered, worshipping, identifiable community of God’s people.⁷⁵ Kimball, whilst recognising the need to move away from a consumerist approach in church life would, it seems, be more keen to avoid deconstruction.⁷⁶

A second concern from Frost and Hirsch’s writing is the almost inevitable result that the unchurched people reached will tend to be from one particular cultural background where mission is being pursued. The Christian (micro?)community which results would therefore not be representative of the biblical metaphor of church as the family of God. ‘The Homogeneous Unit Principle’ (HUP) was first espoused by McGavran in the early days of the Church Growth Movement.⁷⁷ Bosch believed McGavran’s understanding narrowed the field of mission and was too utilitarian in its approach. The former was concerned about a type of evangelism which would produce

“A talk-alike, think-alike, look-alike congregation.....rather than an alternative community.”⁷⁸

Frost and Hirsch defend HUP as a missional tool whilst recognising that as believers move towards mature discipleship there will be the need to experience the

⁷⁴ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 6.

⁷⁵ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 11,12.

⁷⁶ D. Kimball, *The Emerging Church. Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 95.

⁷⁷ D.A.McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 243.

⁷⁸ D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 415.

heterogeneous Christian community. They offer one example of how this can be outworked from St Thomas, Crookes, in Sheffield. It needs to be stated that one example may not be enough and perhaps points out how difficult it may be to make the transition from HUP to a more fully-orbed experience of Church.⁷⁹

There does seem to be some tension in thinking over the validity of reaching out through HUP and the importance of recognising that, ideally, the church should consist of differing ages, genders, ethnicities growing together.⁸⁰ Having made this point Finney, Frost and Hirsch and Murray all accurately comment that existing traditional church congregations are often homogeneous.⁸¹

From a biblical perspective, one could argue that Paul's approach to evangelism when he tells the Corinthians "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." (1Cor 9:22) is an example of employing the HUP. When he writes to the Galatians however, he is clear that in God's redemptive purposes, all believers are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). Perhaps the conclusion is that in a missionary context, we need to deal with the culture as we find it and seek to allow church to emerge out of the said culture. In the twenty first century Western world where there has been a burgeoning of sub-cultures, this, perhaps inevitably, means multiple expressions of church.

Perhaps the most important issue to grasp in distinguishing missional church from some inherited models is the difference in theological 'flow' between the two. Both would argue that we must start with our understanding of the nature of God, but the

⁷⁹ M. Frost & A. Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 51 – 53.

⁸⁰ J. Finney, *Emerging Evangelism* (London: DLT, 2004), 114,115.
S. Murray, *Church After Christendom*, 83.

⁸¹ J. Finney, *Emerging Evangelism*, 114.
M. Frost & A. Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 52.
S. Murray, *Church After Christendom*, 83.

missional writers stress that the essential nature of God is seen in his desire to redeem all creation. From this, they assert that missiology precedes ecclesiology: in other words it is the missionary God whose purpose is that his Kingdom will come on earth as in heaven; in encountering this God, the church has a clear and unequivocal mandate and call to live out this mission.⁸² Diagrammatically, this flow looks as follows:

THEOLOGY → MISSIOLOGY → ECCLESIOLOGY

Driscoll wrongly wants to put ecclesiology ahead of missiology. He believes that to do otherwise “(...) diminishes the importance of biblical church leadership to define and lead the mission.”⁸³ Not only is Driscoll’s view problematic from a theological perspective, but also pragmatically: since the days of Constantine onwards, with a few notable exceptions, church leadership has tended to neuter the potency of God’s people to engage missionally.⁸⁴ Indeed, following Driscoll could easily lead to ‘church-shaped mission’ rather than ‘mission-shaped church’. Van Gelder helpfully describes the latter

“.....mission is no longer understood primarily in functional terms as something the church does—as is the case for the denominational, organizational church—rather, it is understood in terms of something the church is, something related to its nature. This means that mission is not subsumed under ecclesiology, as in the established church where the church is seen as the primary location of God's activity in the world;

⁸² C. Van Gelder, ‘From Corporate Church to Missional Church: The Challenge Facing Congregations Today.’ *Review and Expositor*, 101, Summer 2004, 446.

Bowen*So I Send You*, 12.

Frost & Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things*, 209.

D. Male, *Church Unplugged: Remodelling Church Without Losing Your Soul* (Milton Keynes: Authentic, 2008), 68-69.

Murray, *Church after Christendom*, 136-137.

⁸³ M. Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev.: Hard Lessons from an Emerging Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 202.

⁸⁴ Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 129.

rather, the missional church shifts the focus to the world as the horizon for understanding the work of God and the identity of the church.”⁸⁵

4.3 Fresh Expressions and Emerging Church⁸⁶

It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a full overview and history of EC, indeed it is difficult to give a short but clear definition of this movement, as Gibbs readily admits.⁸⁷ Perriman gives the following description

“The ‘emerging church’ is the church as it emerges at any point across the ecclesial spectrum principally from Christendom and from modernism.”⁸⁸

Importantly in his article, Perriman insists that EC is not equated with postmodern church, but rather it is church in need of redefinition due to the collapse of both a spiritual and temporal culture in which it previously existed and by which it was shaped.

Gibbs and Bolger present a more clear definition of the movement, outlining nine particular practices which highlight the importance of Christocentric, missional and community lifestyles.⁸⁹

DeVine is correct in pointing out that many of the shapers of EC began a conversation which led to this movement provoked by discontent and frustration with existing approaches to church, mission, discipleship and biblical hermeneutics. The concurrent rise in internet availability made access to other believers with similar issues relatively easy. It is worth noting that DeVine would include Christian

⁸⁵ C. Van Gelder, ‘Rethinking Denominations and Denominationalism in Light of a Missional Ecclesiology,’ *Word & World*, Vol 25, No 1, Winter 2005, 31.

⁸⁶ In the body text, Emerging Church will be abbreviated to ‘EC’.

⁸⁷ E. Gibbs, *Churchmorph: How Megatrends are Reshaping Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 36,37 .

⁸⁸ A. Perriman, “Defining the Emerging Church”, Accessed at <http://www.eauk.org/slipstream/resources/definition-of-the-emerging-church.cfm> on 15th April 2010.

⁸⁹ E. Gibbs & R. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 45.

leaders such as Tim Keller and Mark Driscoll at one end of the emerging spectrum and others such as Brian McLaren and Doug Pagitt at the other end.⁹⁰ Others would hold a similar breadth of view.⁹¹ Certainly, writers such as Driscoll would want to differentiate between himself as an ‘emerging evangelical’ and others whom he would designate ‘emergent liberals’:⁹² there is no ‘one size fits all’.

As can be seen from above, describing and defining emerging church is not easy. Some writers would see FE as part of the spectrum of EC, but there is an important aspect in which the former differs, at least in principle, from many in EC. On the ‘FAQ’ page of the ‘Share the Guide’ website, the question is asked, “What is the difference between fresh expressions and emerging church?” Whilst recognising that “there is no fundamental difference”, FE “...have a focus on those who don’t attend church.”⁹³ Admittedly, the answer is contrasting North American emerging churches with FE, but the situation in the UK emerging scene does not seem to be very different. Murray critiques the British emerging churches, commenting that even the name “(...)lacks missional intentionality”⁹⁴ He goes on to point out that often there is no grid for evaluating success through quantitative growth and even the growth which comes is made up largely of those we might term the ‘open dechurched’⁹⁵ Realistically, he describes some emerging churches

⁹⁰ M. DeVine, ‘The Emerging Church: One Movement – Two Streams’. Accessed at <http://www.theologyprof.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/revised-emerging-church-chapter.pdf> on 30th March 2010.

⁹¹ R. Webber (ed), *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007). Driscoll and Pagitt both contribute to the book.

⁹² Driscoll, *Confessions of a Reformission Rev*, 23.

⁹³ ‘Question 29 – What is the Difference Between Fresh Expressions and the Emerging Church?’ Accessed at www.sharetheguide.org/questions/29 on 6th April 2010.

⁹⁴ S. Murray, *Planting Churches: A Framework for Practitioners* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 8.

⁹⁵ Murray, *Planting Churches*, 31.

“...in which the primary motivation appears to be creating a community that meets the needs and expresses the values of its founder members and their close friends.”⁹⁶

In a similar vein, Dr. Jack Allen Jr. in a response to a paper by Dr. Ed Stetzer suggests that EC are in effect nothing more than ‘Christian Affinity Groups’.⁹⁷

Driscoll, in a typically straightforward way is reported by Fitch as declaring that EC do not see conversions to Christ in any measure. Fitch would want to distinguish between EC and missional churches; the latter he says are much more intentional about reaching unchurched people.⁹⁸

The prevalence of non-missional emerging church is also recognised by Hirsch

“I tend to think of emerging church as a renewal movement rather than a purely missional one. In other words, mission is not the organising principle but rather worship and theology in a postmodern setting. This is good and well, but it is not necessarily a truly missionary activity.”⁹⁹

Hunter, reflecting on his involvement with EC as a church planting mentor, believes that because one of the strengths of the movement is open and honest relationships, evangelism is often viewed as a utilitarian or manipulative activity and therefore is shied away from.¹⁰⁰

The large amount of negative critique concerning the lack of outward focus in these new Christian communities may lead one to consider that the consumer values of the wider culture have succeeded in evangelising the people of God and they have failed to live as missionaries in a post-Christian culture. Having made this point, perhaps it

⁹⁶ Murray, *Planting Churches*, 33.

⁹⁷ E. Stetzer, ‘The Emerging Church, The Emergent Church, & the Faith Once Delivered to the Saints.’ *The Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry*, Vol15, No2. Accessed at www.baptistcenter.com/JBTM_5_2_Baptists_in_Dialogue_Fall_08_pdf on 23rd June 2009.

⁹⁸ D. Fitch, ‘Driscoll: Emerging Churches ‘Don’t have Converts.’ Accessed at www.outofur.com/archives/2008/06/do_missional_ch.html on 12th November 2009.

⁹⁹ Blog post by Alan Hirsch quoted in Gibbs, *Churchmorph*, 37.

¹⁰⁰ D. Neff, ‘The Accidental Anglican.’ Accessed at www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/september/11.66.html on 11th September 2009.

is better therefore in a British context to identify FE at their best as being missional rather than emerging. This would give a clearer imperative to any church planting initiative. Certainly among the national leadership of FE, this would be the stance of many of them. Steve Lindridge, National Missioner for the UK Methodist Church commented

“.....much of the emerging church comes out of a desire for a particular kind of spirituality, rather than an intentional missional approach and I think Fresh Expressions for me is much more about reaching those we don’t touch at all....”¹⁰¹

Pete Atkins¹⁰² in a more conciliatory manner described EC as “patchily missional” and wanted to recognise that some within the FE fold would recognise what they are doing as emerging church.¹⁰³

There may be some debate about where FE fits on the ecclesiological spectrum, but the leaders of the initiative have clearly defined what they mean

“A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church. It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples. It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.”¹⁰⁴

This working definition was adopted and published in May 2006 in order to differentiate this from novel and new attempts at more narrowly defined activities, i.e. evangelism, social action, service. The aim is to pioneer and produce new churches made up primarily of people who were previously unchurched.

¹⁰¹ Appendix Two, 70,71.

¹⁰² Pete Atkins is on the FE National Leadership Team and carries particular responsibility for training through the ‘Mission-Shaped Ministry’ course.

¹⁰³ Appendix Two, 71.

¹⁰⁴ S. Croft, ‘Fresh Expressions in a Mixed Economy Church: a Perspective’ in S. Croft (ed), *Mission-Shaped Questions: Defining Issues for Today’s Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2008), 9.

What seems to have happened between the initial launch of FE and the May 2006 definition being made public is that many parish churches were simply re-branding an existing activity such as a senior citizens luncheon club, a parents and toddlers group, a soup kitchen, a detached youth work as a fresh expression. This could have been a quite innocent misunderstanding of the national proposal; in some cases there is little doubt that motives were mixed. The potential to receive recognition and perhaps funding as an ‘early adopter’ of an initiative launched by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York would be a great temptation to some.¹⁰⁵

It is worth pointing out that generally, the EC movement has developed separately from the historic denominations. In contrast, FE is an initiative clearly born out of the Anglican and Methodist denominations in particular. Within these denominations and others who have joined more recently, there is a recognition that they exist as a ‘mixed economy’. In other words, there is still room for inherited models of church alongside and in partnership with the new missional communities.

The term ‘mixed economy’ was first used by Rowan Williams when he was Archbishop of Wales.¹⁰⁶ It recognises that more traditional congregations can still be effective in reaching out to a proportion of the population, but some will only be affected by new contextualised Christian communities. At the ‘Mission 21’ church planting conference held in Bath in November 2009, Bishop Graham Cray, leader of the FE team suggested that 60% of the population could only be effectively reached through fresh expressions of church.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Appendix Three, 80.

¹⁰⁶ Croft, ‘Fresh Expressions in a...’, 3.

¹⁰⁷ The writer was a delegate at the Mission 21 Conference, 17-19th November 2009, Bath. Bishop Graham repeats the point at <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/e-xpressions/aug09> Accessed on 28th April 2010.

One obvious potential hindrance in being a new church in the mixed economy model as opposed to an independent emerging church is that of identification. Baker is insightful about the risk of a new outward focused embryonic church finding overwhelming difficulties in reaching people because it is known that the new initiative is structurally linked to a local inherited model of church which does not have a good reputation with the unchurched.¹⁰⁸ Since the postmodern mindset is wary of anything with a whiff of institutionalism about it, this could be a difficult hurdle to jump.

4.4 Fresh Expressions – Truly Church?

There will always be debate concerning what is the irreducible minimum number of factors whereby a group of humans can be defined as authentically ‘church’. Rowan Williams gave a helpful starting point when he described church as

“.....what happens when people encounter the Risen Jesus and commit themselves to sustaining and deepening that encounter in their encounter with each other”¹⁰⁹

Jesus said that less than a handful of believers gathered in his name would mean that he also would be present (Matthew 18:20) and perhaps the Archbishop had this in mind when he made this statement. It is recognised, however, that this definition may not go far enough. The ‘Mission-Shaped Church’ report suggests that using the description taken from the Nicene Creed as a base is helpful. Thus the historic view is that believers belong to “one, holy, catholic, apostolic church”¹¹⁰ FE use this to speak of the ‘Up-In-Out-Of’ nature of church: ‘Up’ relates to the church as holy, particularly shown in worship; ‘In’ refers to the oneness of church, shown in fellowship and community; ‘Out’ describes the apostolic dimension of church

¹⁰⁸ K. Baker, ‘Church Planting and Kingdom Building: Are They the Same?’ *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, April 2009, 45 No2, 160,161.

¹⁰⁹ Cray et al, *Mission-Shaped Church*, vii.

¹¹⁰ ‘The Nicene Creed’. Accessed at <http://www.creeds.net/ancient/nicene.htm>, on 30th April 2010.

exemplified in mission; ‘Of’ recognises the catholicity of the church, shown in its historic and geographical universality to which all believers belong.¹¹¹

In recognising the ecumenical dimension of the FE movement, there is a clear desire to avoid prescribing too closely issues of how church is ‘done’, but rather to uphold the essential nature of church. Two things are clear from the discussion: first of all, that new church communities by virtue of their very recent history will still be on a journey towards maturity even if the requisite spiritual DNA is in place, much like a child growing into adulthood but already recognised as human; secondly, as Atkins insightfully points out, the church exists to mirror the very nature of God and therefore must be shaped and driven by a missionary dynamic

“....its (the Church’s) essence necessarily derives from the Christian Godhead, and therefore the nature and life of the Church is created and configured by the life and character of the Christian Godhead.”¹¹²

This assertion serves to underline the missiological approach outlined earlier in the paper. It also acts as a challenge to inherited models of church; to what degree and in what quantity are these models reflecting the missionary God who requires a missionary church?¹¹³

4.5 Planting a Fresh Expression of Church

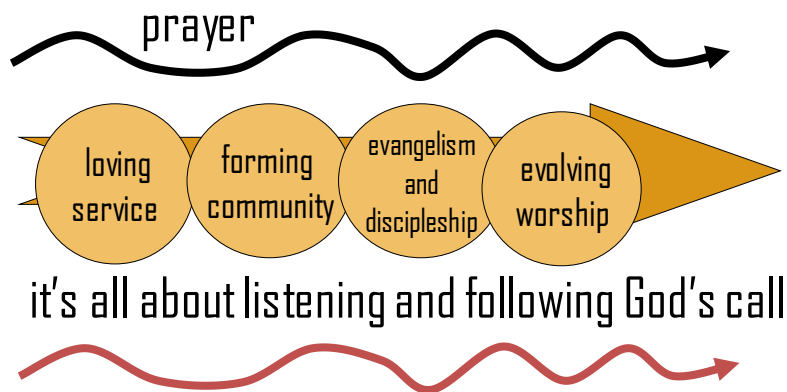
According to Atkins, there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to starting a new missional community; planting can rightly be viewed as an art rather than a science. Nevertheless, he offers the model below as a typical way that one might begin:

¹¹¹ Cray et al, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 99.

¹¹² M. Atkins, ‘What is the Essence of the Church?’ in S. Croft (ed), *Mission-Shaped Questions*, 17.

¹¹³ Atkins, ‘What is the Essence...’, 28.

starting a fresh expression



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It is worth noting that two activities are seen to be consistently present during the whole process; prayer and listening.

No matter what part of the Christian Church to which someone belongs, prayer is a vital component of relationship with God and seeking his direction. In the context of planting, there is a presumption that the team will both individually and corporately seek the will and way of God.

The 'listening' process is described as 'double listening'.¹¹⁵ First of all, it is necessary to listen to the community amongst whom the new church is to be planted, to exegete the target group. Failure to do so may lead to an inability to communicate the Gospel in a manner which makes sense. A scriptural example of this can be seen in the apostle Paul's approach to the Athenians (Acts 17:16-33). In this instance, he finds metaphors for his message in their indigenous spirituality (22, 23) and in their

¹¹⁴ Diagram taken from presentation given by Pete Atkins at the Mission 21 Conference, 17-19th November 2009, Bath.

¹¹⁵ Cray et al, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 104,105.

philosophers and poets (28). Cultural exegesis is also important so that what emerges as church has relevance. It will already be clear that inherited ecclesial models have not proved attractive, so it is important to discover what sort of gathering would be helpful in making disciples and expressing the church.

It is only after this has been done that the second aspect of listening takes place. This entails paying attention to how what is revealed in tradition and scripture influences the shape of church. For evangelicals, the authority of scripture would be more to the fore than church tradition and for charismatic/pentecostal believers there would be some expectancy that God would speak in other ways, e.g., prophetically, as listening took place. Male provides a practical and instructive chapter on how this discipline can be conducted, adding in the need for the planting team to listen to each other, what one might therefore call ‘triple listening’.¹¹⁶

Murray insightfully points to a process of listening even before a decision is made to plant a new Christian community of any kind. He describes a period of community research which acts as both a time for discerning whether God is calling for a church to be planted among this people group at this time and also how feasible this is. Only afterwards is the decision taken to go ahead with the project.¹¹⁷ It seems as if this is a more cautious approach than the FE model where the listening process mainly takes place after the decision to commence has been made. This is not to suggest, however that there is not an *a priori* sense of ‘rightness’ about attempting some new model before the work begins of collecting hard data and intentional spiritual discernment among the target community.

¹¹⁶ D. Male, *Church Unplugged: Remodelling Church Without Losing Your Soul* (Bletchley: Authentic Media, 2008), 33-50.

¹¹⁷ Murray, *Planting Churches*, 94.

The difference between Murray and the FE approach is nuanced but revealing. It could simply be that due to his considerable experience, Murray has discovered that a longer ‘lead-in’ time before deciding to plant will offer more chance of success. Perhaps the difference is due to Murray working almost exclusively in more difficult urban areas where there are more non-churched and ethnic minorities to be reached¹¹⁸ whereas many fresh expressions will be based in suburbia among the de-churched, some of whom will be more open: one would want to be as sure as possible in the former scenario before launching out since there seems to be a greater possibility of failure. Although it is difficult to evaluate, it is possible that some people outside of Christianity would be more attracted to an initiative owned by the State Church rather than something where the roots are not clear. The suspicion that “this could be a cult” is often not far away. Further, if the new plant is sponsored by the local parish church, there is a safety net for the initiating team if things do not work out as planned; in Murray’s situation, this cushion may not exist in the same way.

The four-stage model proposed by Atkins and others¹¹⁹ begins with ‘Loving Service’. Alongside the pragmatic results of this, in that we begin to network in the target community, there is the biblical reality of incarnational mission. As we reach out with acts of serving love, we mirror the approach of Christ who came “not to be served but to serve” (Matt 20:28) and took “the very nature of a servant” (Phil 2:7). Johannes Reimer, professor of missiology at the University of South Africa, contends that service should take place in partnership with the not-yet Christian community rather than the planting team simply being a separate group who do

¹¹⁸ Murray, *Planting Churches*, xv.

¹¹⁹ D. Male, ‘Fishing Nets or Safety Nets? Remodelling Church to Connect with the Unchurched’. *Ministry Today*, 47, Winter 2009, 33.

good.¹²⁰ Perhaps Reimer's approach gives more opportunity for those who are co-workers but not regenerate to observe the reality of believers' faith in action in a relational context. It may well be that there is a place for both approaches in differing situations.

The next step of 'Forming Community' flows from service where relational bridges are built. Again, the advantage of Reimer's model is that one is more likely to build bridges to two different types of people; those who are already activists in the area and those who need to experience the reality of being served.

Out of the new community, it is presumed that evangelism and discipleship will be a natural outcome. It is worth noting that the commission of Jesus was to make disciples (Matt 28: 18-20) not converts. Some missional thinkers and activists think that the issue of disciple making is of more importance than simply attempting to urge people to cross a line so that they are 'saved'.¹²¹ A helpful model in this respect is that of distinguishing between bounded sets and centred sets. In a bounded set it is clear who is inside the boundary marker and who is not; in this case the marker is defined as those who have prayed a prayer of salvation, sometimes termed 'the sinner's prayer'. In a centred set, the issue is more to do with the direction in which one is moving spiritually; in the case of discipleship, the centre is defined as the Lord Jesus Christ.¹²² Richardson, following McClaren, adds in a third model which has to

¹²⁰ Taken from writer's notes listening to Reimer at 'Eurochurch' Conference, Rome, May 5-7th 2009.

¹²¹ W. Brueggemann, 'Evangelism and Discipleship: the God Who Calls, the God Who Sends.' In P.W. Chilcote & L.C. Warner (eds), *The Study of Evangelism. Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 222.

D. Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy. Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (London: Fount, 1998), 331-339.

¹²² P.G. Hiebert, 'The Category "Christian" in the Mission Task'. *International Review of Mission* 72. July 1983, 421-427.

G.T. Smith, *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion and Authentic Transformation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 36-39.

S. Hollinghurst, *Mission Shaped Evangelism. The Gospel in Contemporary Culture* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2010), 182-185.

do with following Christ in the direction he is going rather than simply moving closer to him.¹²³

Rather than accept an either/or approach, it is the writer's opinion that all three models can be useful guides in evangelism and discipleship. Insofar as regeneration is concerned, it was clear to the apostle Paul and to the evangelical Christian position that a person is either "dead in transgressions" or "made alive with Christ" (Eph 2:5); the boundary is clear. It is not however the prerogative of anyone except God to know if or when regeneration has occurred. The fruit of a new life in Christ can be observed however with a centred set, as someone follows Jesus and the marks of Christ-likeness become more manifest in their life (Gal 5:22). It is suggested therefore that even though these first two sets may overlay on each other, in church planting it is evidence of a growing centering on Jesus and his ways in the lives of new disciples which should be our primary concern. Added to this, as Richardson's model suggests, a dynamic following of Christ is preferable to merely a static doctrinal assent.

A biblical apologetic of the above view could be made from looking at the life of Peter and asking at what point did he move from being spiritually dead to a regenerative state? Drane identifies a process in Peter's journey during which his revelation of and commitment to Jesus grows and deepens.¹²⁴ Drane is hesitant to define Peter's initial calling (Mark 1:14-20) as his conversion.¹²⁵ Peace on the other hand robustly states that this is not a conversion experience since the themes of repentance and faith which are strongly present in Mark's gospel are not obvious at

¹²³ R. Richardson, *Reimagining Evangelism. Inviting Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (Milton Keynes: Scripture Union, 2006), 160, 161.

¹²⁴ J. Drane, *Evangelism for a New Age* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), 97-110.

¹²⁵ Drane, *Evangelism for a New Age*, 98.

this point.¹²⁶ It is impossible to know with certainty when Peter was converted, but perhaps this is not the issue we should be focused on in our discipling process; indeed, Willard helpfully coins the term “discipleship evangelism” to describe the spiritual journey which a person embarks upon when taking Christ seriously.¹²⁷ The writer agrees strongly with Murray that a ‘centred set’ church carries the distinct advantage of allowing someone to “belong before they believe”;¹²⁸ this is exemplified in Peter’s journey. Not only is this helpful in a FE context but for more traditional models as well.

In the schema which Atkins proposes, it is as evangelism/discipleship becomes more obvious that an overt, worshipping community will emerge. The initial planting team may have been doing this in a hidden way for some time, but as Male points out, this is not usually the first priority when planting a fresh expression, and even when it begins

“.....evolving worship is created which is not purely an invite to worship with us in the mode we like, but a true organic attempt to create worship that reflects this new Christian community.”¹²⁹

For many involved in planting, this may be one of the most sacrificial aspects of the task. Mature believers may have used the criteria of ‘worship style’ in joining the particular part of the Body of Christ to which they have previously belonged. The culture of the community into which they have planted may not recognise the musical genre which has influenced the tradition of the planting team as valid in worship. If incarnational ministry is the touchstone, then the mature believers must

¹²⁶ R.V. Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 225.

¹²⁷ Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, 333.

¹²⁸ Murray, *Church After Christendom*, 26-31.

¹²⁹ Male, ‘Fishing Nets or Safety Nets?’, 33.

embrace fresh worship styles from the indigenous group; only then will it be a missionary plant.

Typical of the common sense, magnanimous approach which the writer experienced in conversation with various national FE leaders, there is an acknowledgment that the above process often can and does take place in a totally different order. For example, God may sovereignly save someone living next door to a Christian couple and a house church begins without any previous planning or forethought. Murray refers to this sort of plant as “spontaneous/emerging”, although he does not necessarily mean that those involved are part of the emerging church movement.¹³⁰

4.6 What Does a Fresh Expression Look Like?

In the Mission-Shaped Church report, twelve varieties of fresh expressions were identified. These were:

- Alternative worship communities
- Base Ecclesial Communities
- Café church
- Cell church
- Churches arising out of community initiatives (both out of community projects, and the restructuring or refounding of an existing church to serve a community)
- Multiple and midweek congregations
- Network-focused churches (churches connecting with specific networks)
- School-based and school-linked congregations and churches

¹³⁰ Murray, *Planting Churches*, 70-73.

- Seeker church
- Traditional church plants
- Traditional forms of church inspiring new interest (including new monastic communities)
- Youth congregations.¹³¹

Since then, it has been realised that recognising only twelve models of fresh expressions is limiting and what is needed, according to Bishop Graham Cray is

“....the release of missional imagination..... If you can imagine doing something, you know you are allowed to.”¹³²

One of the problems of previous initiatives was that instead of church planting we were often guilty of church cloning, that is developing a smaller version of the existing church from whence we came. This is a clear example of church-shaped mission rather than mission-shaped church. It seems that a large temptation emanating from the list of twelve models cited above was to try and pick one model ‘off the shelf’ and reproduce it in a quite different locality. There is little difference between this and church cloning. Cray’s encouragement is to ‘think outside the box’ and trust that the Holy Spirit who is absolutely creative can inspire unique ideas for each particular place of mission.

Perhaps the most valuable information in the 2004 report was the outline of “five values for missionary churches”.¹³³ In the opinion of this writer, it is far better to present a values-driven initiative than one which is structure-driven. These values are so foundational for the success of new plants that it is worth outlining them here:

¹³¹ Cray et al, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 44.

¹³² ‘A New Permissive Era.’ Accessed at <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=88246> on 4th May 2010.

¹³³ Cray et al, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 81,82.

- A missionary church is focused on God the Trinity.

Many churches focus on a caricature or pale imitation of the God revealed in scripture. It is in recognising and experiencing the God who exists eternally in community and gives himself to create, redeem and consummate his Universe that believers are motivated and inspired to take the message of his Kingdom into the world.

- A missionary church is incarnational .

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John1:14). The contemporary Body of Christ must live in the world in a way that mirrors the first century Christ, making sense to the particular culture in which it exists. It is worth noting that when the Son of God became a human being, he actually became a very specific human being, namely a Jewish male who spoke Aramaic. In doing so, it was possible for him to show the true nature of God in a human context which would not have been possible if, for example, he had been born Roman or Greek, or indeed female, at that time.

- A missionary church is transformational.

The church exists as an eschatological community, an agent and an example, albeit poor and weak, of the Kingdom of God. We are to be “salt and light” (Matt 5:13-16) in this world and thereby act for transformation of the not-yet Christian community in which we are planted.

- A missionary church makes disciples.

The Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) is taken seriously and so the task of calling people and then equipping them to be followers of Christ is central to the activities of the Christian community.

- A missionary church is relational.

Since the Church is derived from the Godhead and called to be imitators of God, the outworking of community shown in hospitable, generous hearts and actions is a non-negotiable. It is part of the missional imperative to be able to invite unregenerate people to join God's new community. The presupposition here is that the church is living this way. Newbigin writes powerfully concerning the need for the people of God to bear corporate witness

“How is it possible that the gospel should be credible.....I am suggesting that the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.”¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 227.

5. Lessons for Elim from Fresh Expressions

5.1 Recognising, Training and Releasing Pioneer Ministries

There is a recognition within the Anglican Church that even though they have agreed to select and train ordinands specifically for pioneer ministry, there is much work to do both in providing the training and also knowing what the training is definitively constructed to produce.¹³⁵ This should not come as a great surprise knowing that ministerial training until recently was aimed at equipping ordinands to become priests in the pastor/teacher mould in order to serve in existing parishes.¹³⁶ Broadly speaking, Elim faces a similar challenge. It is recognised that there is a strong thread of evangelistic DNA within the Elim movement. This is mainly due to the manner in which it was founded and its adherence to a conservative theology which puts a major focus on the need for all people to receive salvation. It also recognises that a major reason why the Holy Spirit is given to believers is to empower them for evangelism.¹³⁷ Nevertheless it is the opinion of the writer that the training of future ministers within the denomination is weighted far more towards equipping them to care for and teach the existing congregations rather than prepare them to be, as it were, lead missionaries in a post-Christian culture. Evidence for this can be gleaned from observing the make-up of the faculty of Regents Theological College, the main training route for those wishing to apply for ‘Minister in Training’ status. Arguably, all of the full-time faculty members are mainly gifted teachers and largely academics

¹³⁵ ‘What is a Pioneer Minister? (by Hannah Smith).’ Accessed at <http://www.sharetheguide.org/blog/archive/2009/03/09/what-is-a-pioneer-minister-by-hannah-smith/?searchterm=pioneer%20ministry> on 12th May 2010.

¹³⁶ ‘A Way Forward for Selecting and Training Pioneers (by Jonny Baker).’ Accessed at <http://www.sharetheguide.org/blog/archive/2009/11/23/pioneer-leadership-selection-and-training-by-jonny-baker/?searchterm=pioneer%20ministry> on 12th May 2010.

¹³⁷ *Elim Pentecostal Church International Year Book 2009 – 2010*, 7.

by vocation.¹³⁸ Regents does produce some passionate, mission-minded activists, but it is argued here that this happens accidentally rather than by design. It is not the aim of the writer to denigrate in any way the excellent work done by lecturers at Regents: in the Church of England, a ‘wake up call’ was needed from the top down through the General Synod’s adoption of the ‘Mission-Shaped Church’ report before there was any significant move in the theological education of future Anglican ministers; it may well be that there is much to be done through the National Leadership Team and the national departments of Elim leading to resolutions at the annual Conference in order to provide the necessary changes in recognising outward-focused ministry. It would then be possible for the college faculty to respond over time both in terms of personnel employed and modules offered.

It is worth noting that in the 2004 report, it was foreseen that those who were equipped as pioneers could easily be pressured to take on inherited models of church, presumably if there was a shortage of parish priests.¹³⁹ The same challenge exists within Elim where there is a need produce enough replacement ministers both in terms of quantity and quality to meet the needs of existing churches. Added to this, there is at present a much smoother route through to ordained ministry if one chooses to become a minister or assistant in an inherited model of Elim church rather than seeking to independently plant a new church. The obvious conclusion is that alongside the provision of relevant pioneer training mentioned above, Elim need to make it as easy as possible for planters to do ministry out in the field. Two issues come to mind: firstly the provision of finance; secondly, a fresh approach to evaluating whether a planter is showing adequate proof of having a ministry which is

¹³⁸ The writer knows this as a part-time member of the Regents faculty and a personal friend of the full-time faculty members.

¹³⁹ Cray et al, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 134.

then recognised through ordination. Both of these issues will be explored later. It is worth noting at this point that there is the potential within Elim to lose a number of younger leaders: they have grown up in an increasingly postmodern culture, yet are being trained to operate in a largely modernist set-up; they are being added to a group of influencing leaders who are prevalently ‘grey’; they are asked to subscribe to a doctrinal stance which is quite narrow even by evangelical standards.¹⁴⁰

It may be that Elim’s church planting approach could benefit from focusing not only on training future ministers for pioneer work, but also by training and releasing lay people for this task. One can see that a visionary minister could release teams from time to time to infiltrate a particular people group and start a new Christian community there. The ‘Mission-Shaped Ministry’ course led by Pete and Kath Atkins already exists to provide the input needed for those who are about to plant or who are already in the process of doing so.¹⁴¹ FE believes that the recognition, training and release of the laity is potentially more significant than what happens with future clergy.¹⁴²

5.2 Embracing a ‘Mixed Economy’

Historically, as has been shown, Elim has produced an attractional model of church. In particular, the Sunday evening ‘Gospel Service’ provided an opportunity for believers to bring friends along to an evangelistic meeting which was lively, perceived as powerful, but usually curbed the use of spiritual gifts.¹⁴³ In more recent times, the effectiveness of this type of service has diminished markedly. Some Elim

¹⁴⁰ E. Creps, ‘Can we be Pentecostal and Emergent?’ Accessed at <http://www.earlcreps.com/article/can-we-be-pentecostal-and-emergent> on 17th May 2010.

¹⁴¹ ‘Mission Shaped Ministry.’ Accessed at <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/missionshapedministry> on 15th May 2010.

¹⁴² Croft (ed), *Mission-Shaped Questions*, 7.

¹⁴³ D.N. Hudson, ‘Worship: Singing a New Song in a Strange Land.’ In Warrington (ed.), *Pentecostal Perspectives*, 188.

churches have not known what to do in order to effectively reach unbelievers and as Hudson points out have simply ended up with two Sunday services which are aimed at the existing congregation.¹⁴⁴

Potential help for such churches has come from Willow Creek Community Church, Chicago and Saddleback Community Church in Laguna Valley, California. The founding pastors of these churches, Bill Hybels and Rick Warren are best known for having pioneered 'seeker sensitive' services aimed at the unchurched. Many church leaders in the UK bought into this style of evangelistically low-key, attractive meetings where the message shared usually had a clear 'life application' emphasis. The approach did not always produce the desired results, perhaps because pastors were looking for a 'quick fix' to their lack of numerical growth and therefore bolted this approach onto existing church life rather than perceiving how to integrate seeker services into the whole missional approach of the church. A lot of pain could have been avoided had leaders understood the complete approach to church which was being espoused¹⁴⁵ and even then, as Peck helpfully points out, taking heed of the principles and values being offered rather than trying to clone an American ecclesial model for mission.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, even churches in the same nation have recognised that it is not possible simply to blindly attempt to reproduce the original.¹⁴⁷

As noted earlier, the 'mixed economy' approach believes that in some situations, the inherited, attractional model can be effective at reaching out to some types of unchurched people. At the time of writing, Elim churches have been helped in this through participating in the annual 'Back to Church Sunday' event held on the final

¹⁴⁴ Hudson, 'Worship: Singing a New Song...', 188.

¹⁴⁵ M. Mittleberg, *Building a Contagious Church*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).
R. Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

¹⁴⁶ A. Peck, 'US and Them', *Christianity Magazine*, October 2009, 23-29.

¹⁴⁷ S. Washburn, 'Purpose-Driven Presbyterians', *Presbyterians Today*, Jan/Feb 2008, 19-22.

Sunday in September.¹⁴⁸ In 2009, approximately seventy five Elim churches participated and on average, twenty nine new people attended church on that day.¹⁴⁹ In the main, these would be lapsed attenders, known as the ‘open de-churched’, but for a minority, this was a brand new experience.

In particular where an Elim church is multi-ethnic in its congregational make-up, there is much potential in the attractional model. There are socio-economic as well as spiritual reasons why this is the case: for example, where an ethnic family lives in an extended household or close to other relatives and the family is relatively poor, the Gospel has the potential to spread more easily; in some ways the situation bears similarities to the culture into which Jeffreys ministered in the 1920s/30s. Spiritually, many ethnic groups, particularly those immigrating from the Global South, are far more open to spiritual reality in general and a Christian worldview in particular than the white British population.¹⁵⁰ It is heartening to see the tremendous evangelistic success at Elim’s Kensington Temple during the ‘revival’ period which began in March 2008. More than 3000 people were recorded as making commitments to Christ in a two year period.¹⁵¹ Besides recognising God’s blessing on the church at this time, one also acknowledges that Kensington Temple has a strong and continuing history of entrepreneurial leadership, a fruitful evangelist working with the church and 119 nationalities represented in its members and amongst those becoming Christians.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ See www.backtochurch.co.uk.

¹⁴⁹ *Direction*, January 2010, 9.

¹⁵⁰ P. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2.

¹⁵¹ ‘Revival Meetings with Gypsy William Lee.’ Accessed at <http://www.kt.org/?p=news&newsid=8> on 17th May 2010.

¹⁵² ‘Kensington Temple and its Vision.’ Accessed at <http://www.kt.org/vision/> on 17th May 2010.

It is important to state that a shift towards missional church is not an attempt to be non-attractional to those we are trying to reach. Indeed, the recognition of the need to plant culturally relevant communities would suggest otherwise. Nevertheless, it is in this area of outreach ministry that Elim is at present, weak. A tentative church planting proposal will be outlined later in this paper, where the question of how we might deal with this weakness will be addressed.

5.3 Permission Giving

Warren wrote these telling words in his bestseller

"A church's health is measured by its sending capacity, not its seating capacity. Churches are in the sending business. One of the questions we must ask in evaluating a church's health is, 'How many people are being mobilized for the Great Commission?'"¹⁵³

The same point could be made for a whole denomination. Elim finds itself in some sense stuck between two cultures at present. There is a strong thread which measures success primarily in terms of the numerical size of a given church. The current General Superintendent clearly set out a more holistic vision for the movement when he wrote his book "Building Bigger People".¹⁵⁴ In essence, the book states that the primary objective of our lives is to live as confident and consistent disciples, seeking to be Christ-like in every way; the aim is to become mature spiritual parents who reproduce.¹⁵⁵ This approach would be very beneficial in terms of planting new missional churches. Certainly from the New Testament, it seems clear that there is a foundational missional dynamic to being a mature disciple of Jesus (e.g. Matt 4:19, 10:5, 28:18-20. Mark 8:38, 16:15. Luke 8:1, 10: 1-16, Acts 1:8).¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 32.

¹⁵⁴ J. Glass, *Building Bigger People. Success is More Than Numbers* (Milton Keynes: Authentic, 2008).

¹⁵⁵ Glass, *Building Bigger People*, 81-88.

¹⁵⁶ G. Krallmann, *Mentoring for Mission. A Handbook on Leadership Principles Exemplified by Jesus Christ* (Hong Kong: Jensco Ltd, 1994), 75-97.

The overarching culture of Elim is however to elevate and give prestige primarily to leaders and ministers of large resource churches rather than those seeking to pioneer new Christian communities. Indicators of this are seen in who sits on the National Leadership Team and the make-up of leaders in the ‘GS Forum’: the first group is the national decision making body and the second group acts to some degree as a ‘sounding board’ for the General Superintendent. One can easily understand why this is the case; after all, these leaders have produced growth when measured by the three ‘Bs’ of buildings, budgets and bodies. Even though research tells us that the greatest percentage growth in new believers happens in the context of church planting¹⁵⁷ and, more to the point, that it takes people who are strong in faith and resilience to be involved in this activity, it seems to be that the spotlight and commendation has not fallen primarily here.

Indication of the General Superintendent’s desire to change the current situation can be seen in his 2010 Conference Report where he unveils the successor to the ‘GS Forum’, a body called ‘The Bridge’ where

“.....participants will not be invited solely on the basis of the size of their church. It will reflect the whole spectrum of our Movement in terms of church size, ethnicity, gender and age.”¹⁵⁸

Added to this, the General Superintendent expresses his desire that every existing Elim church would seek to plant before the one hundred year anniversary of the denomination’s founding in 2015.¹⁵⁹ There is more to be done centrally to facilitate local churches in this endeavor, but perhaps as more permission is perceived to be given from ‘the top’ and this resonates in the hearts of some at grassroots, new

¹⁵⁷ Murray, *Planting Churches*, 43.

E. Stetzer & W. Bird, *Viral Churches: Helping Church Planters Become Movement Makers* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 25,26.

¹⁵⁸ J.J. Glass, ‘General Superintendent’s Report’. 2010 Conference Report, 23.

¹⁵⁹ Glass, ‘General Superintendent’s Report’, 23.

initiatives will spring up in this area. In that respect, Elim's experience will have strong similarities with what happened among the Anglicans whereby the two Archbishops were seen to be at the forefront and indeed initiators of FE.¹⁶⁰

5.4 Contextualized, not Cloned

In colonial times, church planting missionaries would usually reproduce church, as they had previously known it, in the virgin territory they were evangelizing. The writings of Roland Allen are cited by many as key to recognizing the need to accept the prevailing culture largely as it is and to allow church to develop through the community of new disciples, only disallowing that which stands contrary to clear biblical teaching.¹⁶¹ It is the case that new churches reproduced from healthy parent churches ought not to be clones but should genetically carry the family likeness.¹⁶²

The idea of taking contextualization seriously when planting on home soil is quite new, only finding prominence when the demise of Christendom was well advanced.¹⁶³ Even now, there is not full agreement concerning the scope and limits of contextualization in planting. Payne, for example is insightful in adding to Warren's original four areas to be considered in mission. The former writes that we must understand the target group not only in terms of their geography, demography, culture and spirituality but also their history, politics and use of language.¹⁶⁴ Whilst this is helpful, the writer believes that it is not enough simply to have cognizance of the people amongst whom we are planting, but to the degree that it is possible, we must become like them, taking down the maximum number of hurdles possible

¹⁶⁰ 'Changing Church for a Changing World.' Accessed at <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/about> on 15th May 2010 .

¹⁶¹ R. Allen, *Missionary Methods; St Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 111-125.

¹⁶² Moynagh, *Emergingchurch.intro*, 49.

¹⁶³ Cray et al, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 90.

¹⁶⁴ J.D. Payne, *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys and Hows of Global Church Planting* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), 189.

which might prevent them becoming functioning disciples of Jesus. In fact, the planters should only refuse inculturation if the Lordship of Christ is threatened.

Liederbach and Reid add to the above by accurately asserting that the limits of contextualization are met when, due to a failure to acknowledge the overriding authority of scripture in faith and practice, syncretistic beliefs and activities become evident.¹⁶⁵ One can see how this has happened in some sections of the emerging church.¹⁶⁶ McKnight points out that for many in the emerging church, orthopraxy is more important than orthodoxy.¹⁶⁷ Given that within FE there is a strong emerging flavour, caution would need to be exercised by Elim in this area.

The issue facing Elim would generally not be one of syncretism through over-contextualization; the biggest danger here is that we end up merely reproducing church in our own likeness rather than the likeness of the community we are seeking to reach and serve. An interesting question for Elim planters is therefore: to what degree in our gatherings are we willing to lay down areas of Pentecostal liturgy and practice in order to assist new people find a place of belonging?

5.5 Listening and Learning

In the early days of Elim, the pioneers held evangelistic events which were of obvious attraction to outsiders.¹⁶⁸ Of course UK culture was much less diffuse than it is today and therefore the need to work hard at understanding the culture of the host community was not such an issue. In the contemporary scene, Rowan Williams comments that it is necessary to “(...) pay real and costly attention” to the issues and

¹⁶⁵ M. Liederbach & A.L. Reid, *The Convergent Church: Missional Worshippers in an Emerging Culture* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 109.

¹⁶⁶ Webber (ed), *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*, 144-147.

¹⁶⁷ S. McKnight, 'Emerging Church' in *Christianity Magazine*, April 2009.

¹⁶⁸ Cartwright, *The Great Evangelists*, 75-79.

approaches of those we are seeking to reach.¹⁶⁹ There is a clear need to exegete a community before planting. One document outlines twenty steps to be followed in such an undertaking.¹⁷⁰ It would seem from Richardson's research that this approach is of immense importance if the planters are not indigenous to the area.¹⁷¹ Research carried out before beginning a new church will not be wasted and could prevent the initiating of a work which lacks congruence to the area. Whether it is the 'spirit of the age' or a particular Pentecostal predisposition, in the writer's experience, Elim planters will often lack patience and are more likely to want to 'listen to the Spirit' than put in the more demanding work of listening to those amongst whom they intend to minister.

Earlier in this paper, there was an examination of the need for 'triple listening'.¹⁷² A challenge to Elim now may be to actually practice 'quadruple listening'. Warrington, citing Anderson and others, makes the point that when it comes to mission, Pentecostals have often been guilty of not cooperating with or learning from other parts of the Body of Christ.¹⁷³ It is the writer's view that in a similar way that Elim was challenged and provoked by the birth of the Charismatic Movement and later the Restorationists,¹⁷⁴ it may well be that FE will have an effect. It is hoped that the journey through initial suspicion and even hostility which was shown in the 1960s/70s, eventually being replaced by fraternal love, respect and cooperation will not be repeated in relationships with FE.

¹⁶⁹ R. Williams, 'The Strength of the Church is Never Anything Other Than the Strength of the Presence of the Risen Jesus' in *Mixed Economy. The Journal of Fresh Expressions*. Autumn/Winter 2008/09, 12.

¹⁷⁰ '8. Exegesis of a City' in *Towards the Transformation of our Cities/Regions*. Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 37. Accessed at http://www.lausanne.org/documents/2004forum/LOP37_IG8.pdf on 17th May 2010.

¹⁷¹ Richardson, 'Church Planting. Lessons from Elim in the North West', 38.

¹⁷² P.35.

¹⁷³ K. Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology. A Theology of Encounter* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 262.

¹⁷⁴ Hathaway, 'The Elim Pentecostal Church', 26-31.

5.6 Defining (Redefining?) Church

Large sections of the Church suffer from too close an allegiance to the buildings in which they meet. For many believers there is still an underlying belief that the presence of God is more real within a church building than anywhere else. Cole is right to remind us that the Bible states otherwise on several occasions.¹⁷⁵ Even though the word translated ‘church’ in the New Testament always refers to a community of people, local or universal, who believe in Jesus, we so often use the word to refer to a building. For some, the notion that church can exist and flourish without a designated and set apart building is a difficult idea. Within Elim there seems to be an underlying view that if a church is holding its services in hired property, then one day they should seek to buy a suitable building. This may stem from the traditional practice accompanying church planting of finding a redundant church building to house the new converts after a campaign: this approach has never been fully rescinded. It is also clear that an attractional model of church works more easily where there is a building incorporating a ‘worship centre’. We must not view eight people meeting on a Sunday morning for a religious service in a building owned by Elim as more authentically ‘church’ than fourteen people meeting on a Wednesday evening in a home with plans to multiply this into two house churches in the near future; in fact the latter approach is more normative in the New Testament than the former.

The openness and flexibility of FE concerning the shape and structure of church is quite remarkable given its largely Anglican roots. It would seem that as long as the risen Christ is seen to be at the centre of the church’s community, worship and

¹⁷⁵ N. Cole, *Organic Church. Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 35.

mission, a great deal of latitude is being allowed.¹⁷⁶ The vast majority of new FE churches are presently being launched out of existing parishes and therefore can receive Episcopal oversight in a more direct sense: the major challenges concerning issues of ecclesiology, liturgy, sacraments, missional praxis and possibly lay leadership are still to be faced by church plants which are not directly parish-linked and are not yet viewed as mature churches. At present, the use of Bishops' Mission Orders helps to launch a new Christian community with periodic reviews.¹⁷⁷ Lindridge points out that starting a fresh expression of church is much easier in the Methodist context.¹⁷⁸

Elim may find the issue of defining when a fresh expression of church is an official Elim church quite difficult. At present, a new church is officially recognized at the annual Conference by a vote of delegates. All that most of the voters know about the church is told to them in a short paragraph in the Conference programme. There would be a general agreement among Elim's leaders that a local church would meet together for worship and teaching, would be seeking to share the Gospel with others and would practice as appropriate the ordinances of believer's baptism and breaking of bread. There would seem to be an unwritten idea that the gathered congregation would be numbered in the 'tens' before receiving official recognition and if there is no ordained minister, most new churches would carry an aspiration for this to become the case. Although it is yet to be tested, the challenge will be whether the Conference will see fit to receive models of church which carry the doctrine and values of Elim but function very differently in terms of approach, style and structure.

¹⁷⁶ 'Are Fresh Expressions Proper Church?' Accessed at <http://www.sharetheguide.org/section1/4> on 21st May 2010.

¹⁷⁷ 'Bishops' Mission Orders' Accessed at <http://www.sharetheguide.org/section5/bmo/?searchterm=bishops%20mission%20orders> on 21st May 2010.

¹⁷⁸ Appendix Two, 72.

In defining ‘church’ within an Elim context, we cannot be held more in the grip of our traditional views than other older denominations. We may be nervous of an approach as stripped-down as McNeal’s which recognizes church on the basis of two or three believers acting missionally together,¹⁷⁹ but if that is only the beginning of a journey with a vision to see the Kingdom of God come in a people group yet untouched, then it is worth the risk of identifying this as an embryonic or fresh expression of church in a planting context.

¹⁷⁹ McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 25.

6. A Tentative Church Planting Proposal for the Elim Movement

6.1 Facilitate and Celebrate a 'Mixed Economy' of Church

As previously discussed, the great majority of Elim churches utilize an attractional approach in mission due to their history and ethos; essentially, this is no different to the situation in other denominations. Many emerging churches have come about by small groups of disaffected believers leaving the mainline churches and setting up independent Christian communities: as previously mentioned, the potential for younger leaders within Elim to be tempted to do the same could well be present.

A recognition of 'the Mixed Economy' in denominational life is more than simply a pragmatic device to hold things together. Theologically, there is a mirroring of who God is as Trinity whereby different identities are held together by love and a common mission. Biblically, even in the very early days of the New Testament Church there were clear differences in missional approach between Jerusalem and Antioch; the former could be likened to an attractional model whilst the latter could be construed as the first example of a fresh expression.¹⁸⁰ Practically, it is clear that some churches within Elim are experiencing growth through conversion using the inherited model. Whilst it might be argued that this approach will lose its effectiveness in the near future, there is no way of knowing this with any certainty.

Since there are so few models of FE within Elim at present, it will need considerable endorsement and support from national leadership if the Movement is to embrace the missional church paradigm alongside the inherited approach. It remains important, however, that in bringing new approaches to church planting into the Movement, the

¹⁸⁰ 'The Jerusalem and Antioch Churches'. Accessed at <http://www.sharetheguide.org/section1/mixedeconomy/antioch> on 30th May 2010.

traditional ways are not dismissed or seen as poor relations. The leader of FE puts it well when he states

“.....fresh expressions of church and more traditional forms are to honour, support and pray for one another. They are to recognise each other's integrity and distinctive gifts. The younger can learn from the older without having to use the same cultural forms. The older can have faith, for their own mission, renewed through seeing what God is doing among the younger. The older will need to exercise patience while the newer finds its own shape and identity. While the newer recognizes that the older gave it birth. Above all the mixed economy is about mutual generosity.”¹⁸¹

6.2 Elevate the Status of Planting and Planters within the Movement

Elim began as a church planting movement. There is a desire and a will at senior leadership level to return to a more robust approach in this area of ministry evidenced by the appointment of a national church planting coordinator in Spring 2007¹⁸² and the encouragement of the General Superintendent in his 2010 Conference Report to all Elim churches to engage in some form of planting prior to the one hundred year Anniversary in 2015.¹⁸³ It is to be hoped that many existing churches will take this challenge to heart and begin a strategic process to make this a reality in their area. In the writer's opinion, the success of plants from local churches will be most successful where the leadership place this as a central priority: it will require a disproportionate investment of resources to facilitate effective mission in a new area. Pastors will need to sacrifice time, money and possibly some of their 'best people' in order to make this happen. In a denominational culture which pre-eminently values the size of the gathered congregation and the financial income

¹⁸¹ G. Cray, 'Mixed and Mutual'. Accessed at <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/e-xpressions/may10> on 30th May 2010.

¹⁸² The person appointed left the position within approximately nine months. The National Leadership Team has wisely not rushed into appointing a successor since it is critical that the 'right' person emerges.

¹⁸³ Glass, 'General Superintendent's Report', 23.

which goes along to some degree with this, church leaders may need help to both catch the national vision and to take the risk locally.

Use should be made of *Direction* magazine as a major profile-raising tool with a regular monthly feature and the occasional ‘special issue’ highlighting and championing church planting. National leaders should be mandated to include the issue in their preaching and teaching as they travel with opportunity for those listening to make some practical response in terms of prayer, giving or volunteering to be part of a new church plant.

At the time of writing, Elim is at a time of both challenge and opportunity with regard to the recognition of church planters. Two people have been designated as Ministers in Training (MiT) and placed together into a church planting context in Grangetown, Teesside. Given that there is no existing congregation, the existing methods of evaluating an MiT do not work: there is little pastoral visiting or opportunity to preach and teach. Some work is needed so that these ministries can be evaluated and recognised, but not so much on a pastor/teacher template. Clearly, if they are asked to conform to a current paradigm, they either have to connect to an already existing Elim church or fail the evaluation for ordination. This is not good for the morale of planters.

6.3 Facilitate New Planting Through National/ Regional/Local Initiatives

At national level, it is suggested that the main arm of support would come from vision casting to the Movement, the release of key personnel and the provision of some ‘pump priming’ finance for new churches which are not supported out of a sending church.

Vision is already being given to some degree by the General Superintendent, as previously noted. There is some danger in being prescriptive about vision by stating numbers and time frames for beginning new works, as mentioned in the 1990 'Forward in Faith' initiative earlier in the paper. Nevertheless, the vision will need continually re-stating to the constituency otherwise there will be a 'reverting to type' and a settling back into a less outwardly focused approach.

Concerning key personnel, it is proposed that a search is made for a new national church planting coordinator, initially on a part-time basis. Momentum was lost with the demise of the previous incumbent. It would be preferable if this person could be sourced from within Elim since it inevitably takes some time to become conversant with the ways of a Movement, but it is more important that the appointee has the ability to champion creative church planting and lead others in this ministry.

Whilst it is certainly possible that a new church can be started without any external funding, there are occasions where the situation requires the release of time for a planter to be truly effective. A measure of financial support is often required to release the person's time. The suggestion is here made that a means of providing this from national funds is found. At the moment, an existing church which is struggling to remain financially viable, usually due to diminishing attendance, can receive support from the centre: this exhibits the pastoral heart of the Movement. In a similar way, the apostolic/evangelistic heart could be seen by providing initial finance to a new plant for a designated period of time.

Regionally, it is suggested that regional leadership teams make it a priority to identify communities where there is no obvious Pentecostal witness and, in the context of prayer, discussion and strategising, puts together a process for planting

into these areas over a period of time; perhaps an initial plan for the next four years leading up to 2015 would be a place to begin. This could be cascaded down to geographically more discreet areas where, for example, several existing Elim churches are encouraged to work together to plant into an area within ten miles or so of all of them.

6.4 Provide Missional Training and Coaching

Firstly, there should be a re-examination of the primary purpose behind Regents Theological College. If the College exists to serve the Elim Movement, then the nature and the content of what is taught should seek to produce people who are equipped to live and lead missionally. Research should be undertaken to establish whether it is possible to offer an undergraduate degree in missional leadership. Added to this, there may be room to consider transforming the one year vocational course, The Elim School of Ministry, into a School of Mission. This should entail a fifty percent placement in a church planting context.

Existing Elim pastors may need re-skilling for mission, particularly if they have been primarily involved in pastoral work for many years. Even those who are new to ordained ministry may have missed out on suitable training. Perhaps a week's Summer School for a couple of years would assist leaders in being equipped to take their church outwards. Regents would provide an obvious venue for this.

It is not helpful if ministers are prepared but church members are not. A series of workshops should be put together and taken into the regions, or even into individual churches in order to help shape the mindsets of believers to view issues of church, mission and planting differently. Alongside this, the writer has discovered that the establishing of a consultative, mentoring relationship between an experienced

missional leader, a local church and its leadership team leads to powerful transformational change in a shorter time frame. Atkins makes the point that “(...) the most crucial part of training is actually coaching and mentoring.”¹⁸⁴ FE have shown how imperative they believe this to be by partnering with Anglican Church Planting Initiatives in the publishing of a coaching/mentoring book.¹⁸⁵

Alongside the need for input into church planters from experienced mentors, there is a lot to be gained from gathering a group of peers together in a ‘learning network’. These groups work best where they are more than simply a time for fellowship and prayer, important though these areas are. The network exists as a place of mutual accountability, learning and provocation.¹⁸⁶ Within the denomination, these groups could exist within the designated regions.

6.5 Explore Partnership with Fresh Expressions

Whenever an individual or group consider working in a joint project with others, there is the need to balance issues of risk and reward; in other words “What might I/we lose and what might I/we gain from our involvement?” Insofar as Elim is concerned, it is important to examine these two aspects.

There will be some within Elim who would view any collaboration with a section of the Christian Church which contains those who are not fully committed to the authority of Scripture as unacceptable compromise. There might also be issues raised to do with differences over sacraments or models of ecclesial authority. Concerning each of these points, it would seem that precedent was set at least as long ago as ‘Mission England’ in 1984 where most Elim churches were content to participate in

¹⁸⁴ Appendix Two, 73.

¹⁸⁵ B. Hopkins & F. Hedley, *Coaching for Missional Leadership. Growing and Supporting Pioneers in Church Planting and Fresh Expressions* (Sheffield: ACPI Books, 2008).

¹⁸⁶ Hopkins & Hedley, *Coaching for Missional Leadership*, 126-129.

outreach during Dr Billy Graham's visit alongside other denominations. 'Unity in mission' does not mean that any group needs to sacrifice their distinctives in any way. Added to this, as Atkins pointed out when interviewed, FE would want to build "relationally rather than structurally" in the first instance¹⁸⁷ which leaves space for the working out of areas of difficulty or tension before any formal partnership. Any other concerns regarding what the churches planted look like are easily removed if one realises that from the Elim side, a church would be a fresh expression of an Elim church, not Anglican or Methodist. This is not to preclude the possibility that on the rare occasion there may be a local initiative to plant cross-denominationally, but this would be very much the exception and, indeed, to be celebrated were it possible.

The gains for Elim far outweigh any perceived losses. FE is approximately five years into its existence: many of the teething troubles of a new initiative have been worked through and much experimentation has already taken place. Websites already exist both to inform and educate church members and to collate best practice among those involved in planting. Tried and tested training courses already exist, in particular the 'Mission-Shaped Ministry' course. At a higher education level, much thinking and preparation has gone into producing modules of study for those pursuing ordination into pioneer ministries. All of this would mean that Elim would not need to lay completely new foundations. Any partnership would not, as the writer understands, entail Elim contributing large amounts of money into a central fund; it would mean a national leader being seconded to FE for possibly one day a week, but again this could be viewed as a gain for Elim since the person will arguably be receiving as much or more than he/she contributes.

¹⁸⁷ Appendix Two, 76.

Conclusion

The partner denominations involved in FE have generally embraced this church planting project with enthusiasm. The major pragmatic reason was, as seen earlier in this paper, due to a massive fall in membership over the previous decades. The challenge here for Elim is whether we will make the necessary changes to our missional praxis before we reach a similar experience of decline. Hirsch recognizes the difficulty which Pentecostals face

“I would argue that the Pentecostal emphasis on apostolic, as well as evangelistic and prophetic, ministry alone accounts for continued growth through the lifecycle. Though much of the Pentecostal ecclesiology remains basically Constantinian, they have maintained a vigorous apostolic leadership vision that keeps the movement growing and prevents normal organizational degeneration.”¹⁸⁸

He believes that as Pentecostals embrace missional church planting, this will be the ‘missing link’ which will ignite this approach across the developed world.¹⁸⁹ It is the hope of the writer that Hirsch proves to be correct.

There is an inherent danger for Pentecostals in general and, from the viewpoint of this paper, for Elim in particular that if the need for a ‘mixed economy’ approach to church and church planting is not understood, grasped and made equally possible in the years ahead, the Movement may face a period of decline and the closure of some congregations. At present, the national picture for Elim is still one of numerical growth:¹⁹⁰ no statistics exist that would tell to what degree the growth is from unchurched or dechurched people finding faith, but it is probable that without the addition of transfers from other denominations and from existing believers immigrating to this nation, the growth would be much smaller if not non-existent.

¹⁸⁸ A. Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways + Activating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 271.

¹⁸⁹ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 271.

¹⁹⁰ Brierley, *Pulling Out of the Nosedive*, 33.

The Movement also runs the risk of losing some of its brightest and best missional activists if they feel that Elim shows little interest and/or support for them as they attempt to follow the *Missio Dei* and “keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal 5:25). Dunn issues a stark reminder of what can happen when he revisits the eighteenth century

“Methodism is a classic example of a renewal movement within Christianity, a fresh expression of Christianity, which was frozen out by the rigidity of ecclesiastical structures and the unbendingness of tradition.....Disowned by the established Church they found a reality and vitality of church in their home-based ‘societies’(they) brought the gospel to generations overlooked by those who insisted on traditional forms and hierarchy.”¹⁹¹

It is the confident expectation of the writer that Elim will continue to be so Spirit-led in the coming years that, along with our friends in the wider Body of Christ, we will be able to demonstrate the reality of our missional God to those who are “without hope and without God in the world.” (Eph 2:12).

¹⁹¹ J.D.G. Dunn, ‘Is There Evidence for Fresh Expressions of Church in the New Testament?’ in Croft (ed), *Mission-Shaped Questions*, 65.

Appendix One

Interview with Des Cartwright to discuss Elim's history in evangelism and church planting, 20th February 2010.

Attending: Gary Gibbs, Des Cartwright

Des: George Jefferys and his brother Stephen gained their first success in 1913 when Stephen had meetings in Cymer near Swansea and that launched them. After that George had been invited to be the evangelistic speaker at the Sunderland convention in 1913.

Gary: The one Boddy had started?

Des: The one Boddy started, but they hadn't really had evangelistic type meetings, they had teaching meetings, but George was invited as an evangelist and he stayed on in Sunderland. After the campaign he was very good, he made an impact in Germany and all sorts. Boddy commented on him more than anybody else. He was only 24 years of age, far younger than anybody else.

He had a great impact in Sunderland, but some visitors from Ireland heard him and said "will you come over to us?" So he was invited to Ireland for the Christmas time of 1913 into early 1914. They tried to hold meetings in Monaghan but as soon as the Methodists learned they were Pentecostal they cancelled it. So George then begins, after his initial success at Cymer, he gets invited all over the place. He is in headlines in the denominational paper 'The Life of Faith' from Keswick. He was also invited to Penybont which is in the wilds of mid-Wales. It's so remote you have to go through farm gates to get there. And people came mid February to an old Quakers meeting house because George was in great demand. He went back to Ireland in 1914 and 1915 and he started the Elim Evangelistic Band right there in Ireland but then the war broke out and he based most of his work in Ireland. He tried to evangelise the South of Ireland but it became very difficult with the beginning of the troubles. However, they did establish 15 churches in Ireland before 1920 and when the troubles began they came back to Britain to plant churches beginning in Leigh-on-Sea.

Gary: To what degree do you think the economic situation had an effect on people looking for answers?

Des: It meant that every town he went to there was a lot of spare people with nothing to do and some would have thought "there is something going on". In Llanelli in the 30's every church sent up its return to headquarters, the minister at the time had two churches in Llanelli, and had to report the number of members, how many were there and the offering amount. The numbers would be 150-200 in the morning and 400 at night but the offerings were only £2. So a letter came back from headquarters, not calling into question his honesty, because there was a

tendency for some to exaggerate their numbers because they got paid more. So the minister wrote back and said “I ought to explain what the situation is here” and he mentions the number of men in the church that were out of work and there were loads of them. A lot of the converts were young people and were, for example, working in the mill and didn’t have a lot of money and maybe they go to a healing meeting and see a miracle, a cripple who walks or a blind person who sees and it spreads like wild fire and a lot of them got saved.

Gary: In the Elim Evangel 1976 you mentioned by email an article on church planting, the methodology for church planting hadn’t changed that much, in other words, get a building, bring in an evangelist who does a crusade and then a follow up pastor. But it seems to me, you’d have the stats on this, that the success then and now is nothing like it was in the beginning. So that’s one question; second question, why do you think we don’t seem to be seeing the same miraculous intervention of God in evangelism?

Des: My first answer is God knows, but I do have some ideas! First of all the climate of what you could do as far as the audience were concerned: you couldn’t pitch a tent today because it would be burned down before it could start, and Alex Tee found his tents were ripped and burnt. George Jeffreys never had them vandalised so the climate has changed. People now are more sophisticated than to sit in a tent and be harangued; it’s not an acceptable form of evangelism today so you’ve got to target your audience, you’ve got to study the people. George Jeffreys was in God’s timing: he also had miracles that attracted people, they didn’t save them but attracted them, that drew the crowds. But the times have changed; when you read the sermons that were preached you would be amazed they were so successful really, it was so basic and George Jeffreys never preached for a long time but the program was very carefully managed. There was dignity, there was anointing, they developed a technique that proved successful and that is important because if you’re going to sell a product and the gospel is a product you’ve got to study your market: you can’t sell ice-creams to Eskimos, and that’s what we are trying to do sometimes.

Gary: If you were planting a church in an urban situation in 2010 on behalf of Elim any thoughts about what you would take into consideration or what methodology you would use?

Des: I would look at the location of the building: I would not take a place were somebody else had failed, like an old Salvation Army or Baptist church. I would try and go into a new area and try and reach out across some of the barriers. I would have the building open not just at 11 on a Sunday, I would have the place open when people are available. I would use a team of people who are living and working in the location. You have got to support those people church planting from the regional budgets, because the people need to be supported so that they can focus on the church.

Gary: I wonder sometimes if we hamstring our church planting initiatives because if I was a pastor of a reasonable size church and I had a heart for church planting and sent some people off to church plant I would be actually potentially affected my salary, or the ability to bring in other staff, because the folks you send out are your good people. In an ideal world you'll say that shouldn't be a factor, but of course it is.

Des: But of course it's the right thing for you to do, you ought to get some support because anybody who goes into business on a new venture will tell you they have got to have at least 3 years to make the thing grow. The other thing is I think we have got to be more available for other groups to come and join us, in a loose association, in which we link with others who are close to us so we don't become too tightly tied down.

Gary: You mean further out than ECI?

Des: A halfway house, testing the waters.

Gary: Almost like a courtship

Des: Well in one place it worked successfully, a place where I used to be Pastor in Rowley Regis, they joined with the AoG they joined together.

Gary: Let me give you a scenario, yesterday I took a young couple in their 20's from here to Blyth. Blyth is one of the poorest areas in the country and we are considering planting a church there, and they are also considering putting an Eden team in there as well, and these might come together. But when we talk about church planting in that environment what I'm wondering is just how much culture has changed and whether we have to change radically our approach to church planting. What I'm thinking these days is the United Kingdom is more a missionary model than a Christendom model. So I said to this couple, if you come here for the first 3-6 months all I want you to do is network, just get to know people, visit local councillors, get into the schools, meet your neighbours and look for the man of peace. Follow the mission of God because God always goes ahead. And then see what comes out of that flux and see how people come to faith and then form church with those people. In other words, a bottom up model, instead of the top down, start a crusade with a few people and the miraculous, for example, the 1976 Elim Evangel method of rent a building, invite other churches, get a rent-a-crowd, bring in a big preacher, pray for the sick. I'm just not sure that model is going to help us these days.

Des: It would be a waste of time and money to do that you need to work from ground level.

Gary: That's why I'm wondering if this idea of fresh expressions is going to help us. If we send missionaries we tell them if they are going to be fruitful they need to learn the language, understand the culture, and incarnate in the culture and try

and find metaphors for the gospel in that culture and build the church. I'm wondering if we need to train missionaries now for the UK? Who knows where fresh expressions will go but I think church could end up looking quite different to how we have experienced it.

Des: What happened in the first generation, were they all the same, thank God they weren't all like Corinth. There was Ephesus and Philippi and Corinth all different but we get one idea.

Gary: That's a fair point I think, if you go back to the New Testament, there is one theologian in one of the books I'm reading that make the point that you find fresh expressions in the book of Acts. I think in Elim we have got a bit stuck in a traditional model of how we do evangelism and church planting so I'm trying to explore if there is anything fresh expressions can offer for us going forward. The Elim Evangel 1976 seems to suggest the basic model hadn't changed since the day of Jeffreys.

Des: Brewster could only think within that same category. He was very good, he planted a number of churches but he didn't have the same measure of success. That was not his gift. Not all them were successful, but that will be the same today. Even Tesco's go and fail sometimes; we need to judge the market the same as a supermarket would. The other thing I think is the letter to the seven churches came from one central church and that was the key, a central church that kept a monitoring brief on those other churches. We have got to have key churches that have relationship with other churches, it has got to be a resource church that can provide some input and put some of their young people into these situations to train them up.

Appendix Two

Interview with Members of 'Fresh Expressions' National Team, Warwickshire Diocesan Retreat House, Offchurch, 17th February 2010.

Attending: Gary Gibbs, Pete Atkins, Kath Atkins, Steve Lindridge.

Gary: What are your individual roles within Fresh Expressions?

Pete: My role is within the training hub of Fresh Expressions, and particularly I have responsibilities for the practicalities of establishing a course called 'Mission-shaped Ministry' around the UK and beyond, and more so as a mission for Fresh Expressions in whatever sphere I can do it.

Kath: My role in the team is to help administer the leadership ministry courses as we road map around the UK. We currently have 43 courses going with over 1000 associates taking part and 500 or so on at the minute so my role is to back up those folk who are running the course around the country.

Steve: I'm the National Missioner for the Methodist Church, which means lots of things. I've got responsibility for setting up FEASTS which is 'Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Teams' across the country over the next five years. Also advocacy on the Methodist side, a little bit on the Anglican side. Also mapping and also trying to encourage a more missional approach generally in the Methodist Church.

Gary: About the relationship of Fresh Expressions to church planting; in what sense are those two things linked?

Pete: In my mind their identical: I don't think you can differentiate between Fresh Expressions of church and church planting. I think we are using the different expression because church planting, as a phrase, brings with it connotations of all sorts of baggage and some negative feelings in certain parts of the church. There is a nuance which is probably that Fresh Expressions of church is designed to engage with cultures that we have long lost touch with. We actually encourage the shape of church to be whatever is needed in that situation and to be designed or influenced by its context. Whereas church planting in the past felt like people cloning what they were already in and plonking it somewhere else and that is partly what people are trying to differentiate between when they use the different phrases.

Gary: Moving on then, some writers would say that Fresh Expressions is part of the emerging church movement, others would want to clarify that a little bit more carefully, Steve any thoughts on that?

Steve: The whole emerging church thing is a hugely diverse thing; there is a difference between what's going on in America and what's going on here. My wife's doing a course on it at the moment and there were 12 different lecturers and none of them gave it a decent definition, or the same definition of emerging church.

Gary: Where is she doing that?

Steve: Cliff College, Manchester. I think it all depends on your intention doesn't it, who you're trying to reach, how you're trying to reach them. My take, my personal take is that much of the emerging church comes out of a desire of a particular kind of spirituality, rather than an intentional missional approach and I think 'Fresh Expressions' for me is much more about reaching those that we don't touch at all and the intentional missional dynamic is the imperative, whereas the emerging church is about 'we're not happy with what we have had and we want to set up a community'. The tension is for some they do hold good missional intention but their primary perspective is about spirituality and the way they worship. The negative side, in my view, is that they focus too much on the worship and don't get round to the mission.

Gary: Anything to add?

Pete: For me emerging church is part of the spectrum of Fresh Expressions of church, its one part of it and it is patchily missional so some parts of it are genuinely missional, other parts as Steve said are more focused on ecclesiology.

Gary: Talk to me about potential problems between Fresh Expressions of church as they're coming about and the denominational government of church? Do you want to talk about that from the Anglican perspective Pete and then we'll get the Methodist perspective.

Pete: I think a lot of it is still being designed as we go and diocese are finding they now have Fresh Expressions of church in their midst that are asking for proper accountability and structural change so that they fit better. The diocese are asking for money, for proper governance and there is a dialogue going on now between those things, and I don't think it's all sorted. The Bishops' Mission Orders do at least lay down something in terms of how things might work and that has been taken up in places, but really only the first one or two have actually been established so most of them have not. I've got friends who lead Anglican Fresh Expressions of church and many of them have remained under the governance of the initiating parish and that actually for the moment works quite well. However, if you start something that isn't related to an existing parish then what's happening at the moment is there is no systematic approach, it is diocese by diocese, what are we going to do about this at the moment.

Gary: How does it work in the Methodist system Steve?

Steve: Three things; the first thing is you have got good stories and bad stories and it's all about relationship. The second thing is that actually the leadership of the Methodist Church is totally behind the Fresh Expressions initiative and the leadership structure adapted by Chairs of District recently and again they are very much behind the initiative. Where it hits the rub, as it were, is in the middle management and some pioneers who are pushing the boundaries. So in that context you are going to get things that work really well, with good accountability; most Fresh Expressions on the Methodist side are looking for good accountability. They want to be accountable to either a local church or a group of churches which is the circuit and, under the circuit's support and guidance, they fruitfully try to. The tensions are when you have lay people who have grown up in leadership and where there isn't good relationship there are bound to be tensions, especially about what you do when people want to celebrate

the Lord's Supper. Now in certain traditions that's not a problem at all but in Methodist circuits it is, and the question is how you deal with that. Do you ordain people into that place? Do you recognize the leadership in a certain way? It just depends upon middle management, superintendents and the leadership of the circuit and what relationship they have with the pioneer or the leadership team of the Fresh Expressions.

Gary: Moving on from there is this thing about what happens within the Anglicans and Methodists, because it might be different, in terms of recognizing when a fresh expression becomes a bona fide church?

Pete: Many which are currently called Fresh Expressions are not fully mature churches yet and some of them never will be and many have no intention of being. So they are a fresh expression of worship, or a fresh expression of mission, or a fresh expression of social action, or a fresh expression of ecumenical cooperation and because they are those things, they aren't posing the governmental questions. They sit very nicely within current church structures and are not pushing the boundaries in terms of needing any form of extra governance or finding something which works for them.

Gary: I think you're not happy with that, talk to me about that for a moment?

Pete: The initiative that we are part of very much wants to see the development of fresh expression of church; authentic, real, effective church with every dimension in place. When those start arising and get to a level of maturity where they are being effective missionally, where they have relationship with God and each other and with existing church, that's when the governmental questions will become more acute.

Steve: I agree with Pete. What we want to see, and what we see now, is very much lots of things in their infancy and again its back to intention and what are they trying to do. Its been five years since the Fresh Expressions initiative began, but lots of things were happening under the Holy Spirit and what we started in the North East called 'Mind the Gap', that started before it was even called Fresh Expressions. One of the things we wanted to grow was indigenous leadership. What we wanted to see was a reproduction system, and to understand that we are still doing what God wants us to do, or do we need to go in a different direction now, do we try reaching a new community? So there is a little bit of multiplication in that, not just the church that has grown up. 'Mind the Gap' is now recognized not as a project but as a church of the circuit, as in Methodist terms it only takes 12 people to form a new church with permission from the district and circuit, so it's easy in Methodism to set up a new church. Recognizing it and placing governance over it will be different in each context, and how it is lead, that might be different in each context.

Gary: What is church and, particularly from a Fresh Expressions perspective, what has to be in place for it to be called a church within the Fresh Expressions genre?

Kath: What we're seeing now in terms of Fresh Expressions of church as they begin may not look like or might not be a fully mature church from the beginning.

Gary: Is the main institution happy to call it church?

Kath: The institution might do well at looking at their existing churches, and if you look at what the marks of church are, if you consider church

1. a place where people are connecting with God,
2. a place where people are connecting with each other,
3. a place where other people are connecting with other churches in their area and their surroundings
4. a place where people are actually leaving their church and buildings or wherever they meet and actually go seeking folk who are not yet Christians.

If those four marks were asked of many of our existing, traditional churches now I think many of our existing churches would fall short of being mature expressions of church now in terms of roundedness and in terms of covering all of those bases.

Gary: You can't unscramble, scrambled eggs so they already exist: here's these new Fresh Expressions coming into being, what will be the criteria by which the hierarchy accept them as church?

Pete: There is a joint Anglican, Methodist working party at the minute which is looking at this question what is church, what is the ecclesiology of fresh expression? but it's actually sparked the question what is church and it's boiling down to the four classic marks. One of the ways Fresh Expressions is particularly looking at what is a church is by describing four sets of relationships that need to be in place in order that a church is seen to be mature. Those four relationships are; relationship with God, relationship with each other, relationship with the other communities or people of faith around them, and a relationship with the world. In other words it is the missional relationship which we see as key. George Lings has wrapped this up in the Nicene Creed as 'One Holy, Apostolic, Catholic Church'. Others in the Anglican dimension would add that there needs to be word and sacrament for it to be called and known as church, but I probably think that would be the minimum that folks would use as a description.

Gary: You teach your course on mission shaped ministry. How crucial do you think the course is to the success of Fresh Expressions? Are you seeing Fresh Expressions work without the training?

Pete: I do see it work without the training but I believe the most crucial part of training is actually coaching and mentoring. Having people alongside those who are establishing a fresh expression of church, who have experience and been there, got the scars and understand how to give things leeway and time and be flexible. The training courses are of immense value and I wouldn't want to de-value them in anyway but it's really how you apply that teaching into real life situations and see Fresh Expressions established. One of the dangers from a denominational point of view is that you say 'right tick the box we have got mission shaped ministry established in our area therefore we have done the training thing' and that's just not the case. Certainly from our perspective mission shaped ministry needs to be part of integrated strategy across an area to see Fresh Expressions arise, there needs to be vision, leadership, prayer, research, focus on young people, actually planting something, all those things need to have a place.

How you engage with the structures, how you resource it, you need all that. If you just take a course off the shelf and say 'this is what were attempting to do' you've missed it, you've missed actually much of the crucial elements of seeing Fresh Expressions established.

Gary: What are you finding are the most difficult things for people to get about Fresh Expressions of church?

Pete: The first thing is, and the main difficulty people have grasping, that church can be different to what they have experienced often for most of their lives. I think there is a huge leap between what they see as church and what can be church and still is legitimate and authentic church, so I think it's a mindset paradigm thing. I think the second thing a genuine heart change rather than a head change to be actively missional and following the mission of God and therefore being prepared to do things which cost you like it cost God to reach for us in the first place in order that the folks he loves would be reached at all. And that's a big, big deal and if you can change people's values, and change their internal impetuses that drive and motivate them, if they can share the love of God for the lost, then that's half the battle.

Kath: It's as basic as people's self-centredness and the human feel of wanting what's best for ourselves, rather than for other folk, the folk who don't know Jesus. So you look for patterns of worship or ways of doing church that suit you better than actually daring to leave your comfort zone and actually going and find some way of worshipping or being together with folk and sharing the good news with people who are completely different and need to do things differently, that boils down very basically to self-centredness, consumerism.

Steve: I think a massive number of folk, particularly in local leadership level, just don't get that things have to change. I think they are still hanging onto the fact that things like Fresh Expressions will bring a breath of fresh air to the rest of the church and they're not going to have to do anything about it and everything's going to grow back and people are going to come flooding through the doors. Although we're trying very hard to say even if you do messy church, this thing through the week for lots of families, and literally see the place crowded, you may never ever see them on a Sunday because they're doing other things. Talking about changing their values, that takes years, it takes years to change people's values and if we don't realise that then we need to look at what's going on now in most of the inherited church. So I think that's the biggest wakeup call that a lot of people think they can just carry on as they are and do what they have always done on a Sunday and still see people go out the door, that's what I think is the biggest problem.

Gary: What will success look like for Fresh Expressions of church in four or five years?

Pete: For me success is to do with transformation, transformation of individuals and of areas of culture by the gospel. I think if this movement is to really have the impact that we hope it will have what we need to see happen is huge numbers of Fresh Expressions of church begin, which engage in a missional fashion in the culture as it now is not the way it once was.

Kath: I think success would be just millions of people as new disciples of Jesus living it out.

Steve: Success for me will be that the 600 Methodist circuits, I don't know how many Anglican equivalents there are, but of the 600 Methodist circuits I would like to see in 95% of those circuits a very significant number, let's say 10% because it's not near that now, 10% who are really on fire, built in confidence, know that they can be missional, and should be missional and have been trying to do it for the last couple of years. I know that doesn't sound that massive but actually if you had just that 10% because it often between 10-20% that are doing most of the work anyway, if you could get that 10% totally missional, totally freed to do it, then actually in the next 10 years then we will see something substantially different.

Gary: What model of church is being assumed in the Fresh Expressions movement?

Pete: There is no one model of church and that's one of the key features of the Fresh Expressions movement, we are saying quite clearly is that with the multicultural society that we are now in we need to follow the Spirit, be shaped by the culture, be determined by however God leads, into creating all kinds of variety of church with no particular model except that its biblically authentic, in order to reach the lost that are in all those different categories. The 'Mission-Shaped Church' report identified 12 different categories of fresh expression of church and that was only five years ago and what we are seeing is an incredible range of creativity happening in the movement so there is a range of models not just one.

Gary: On top of that Pete, there is a question of Episcopalian government and how that affects the models of church that would be produced?

Pete: Certainly in the Anglican church the Episcopal model of government is still in place and therefore the kind of model that would be encouraged or permitted would probably depend on the openness of mind of that particular Bishop, and so that's expressed in terms of the way Bishops' Mission Orders are acquired. I think different Bishops will apply it differently depending on how they see church, but by and large there hasn't been a restriction on model. I think where the restriction has come has been in middle management as happens in the Methodist Church as well and angst about where resources are going and angst about is it proper church and that kind of stuff.

Gary: Steve, what forms of church are important in where Fresh Expressions is going?

Steve: I think many genuine Fresh Expressions that are trying to become mature are very mindful that they can't express themselves as church without having a deep sense of community, and if you grow in size and get to a certain number, it's very difficult to know 70 people while it is possible to know 12; but there is also something to be gained from gathering together as larger groups and experiencing the transcendent dimensions of God. In a small group the imminent can really come through but when you get together with a larger group there is something of the transcendent nature of God comes through as well, so I think there is a

mindfulness in models of church that just being small is good because you get that intimacy but you may miss out on the transcendence, and as they grow and develop that's what they are trying to balance and that's why meeting with other churches at big special events, city wide things, regional things are great. Getting together and doing FEAST stuff is great for that. Equally a really large church may look at itself and say 'we've lost our intimacy; we've got to have that deeper level of commitment and we've got to have the small groups that will unpack each other's lives and create that accountability in which we really can grow as disciples and have that accountability to push each other in that.' It's typical Methodism really, getting back to the roots of both the large society and the classes. I think in Methodism as well we've got such a diversity as well. We often are called a broad church which I think is not necessarily a good thing but it's a true thing. You have such a range of styles of leadership; some people that are actually quite high in their churchmanship and some that are lower than the carpet. I think there you have got all kinds of expressions of church in the making and developing and I think fundamentally one of the key things is if we are saying we are trying to be the Christians God has called us to be that has got to have a Trinitarian edge to it, in terms of community, love and honesty.

Gary: The final thing is, just thinking about this tentative church planting manifesto with Elim, what would it take for Elim to buy into the whole Fresh Expressions movement?

Pete: Provisionally obviously it would be conversations with the existing movement, but my take on it is that there is always a welcome for others who feel that this would be something they could contribute to and benefit from and it's something we have always said is far wider than two initial denominations that began it. We do see it as a movement therefore as it picks up speed, picks up depth, the more of the church of the UK and beyond want to be part of it and contribute to it the better in my view. I think relationships are always really helpful and it would be great to build relationally rather than structurally with people who are particularly focused on this as a benefit to Elim and they would be the right people to be talking to Fresh Expressions initially. I think what it takes is recognition that we do want our existing churches to do better in mission but actually we need a whole raft of different kinds of church to reach the folks we are no longer engaged with. Once that recognition is in place then I think it's a very small step to say, actually this is a movement I want to be part of.

Appendix Three – Pete Atkins Original Seminar Notes

Mission21 Bath. Fresh Expressions stream. 17 – 19.11.2009

Introduction:

Discover – what is going on?

Discuss - how does that relate to me and my situation?

Discern – where is God in this?

“The most important feature of each stream should be the participation of the delegates”

This conference as a whole is looking at big picture stuff, discerning where God is taking us with Church Planting in the UK. Fresh expressions of church are one part of that picture.

We see this seminar stream as focussing on where you are at within the overall scene. We intend it to be informative and to be useful for the strategists and permission givers among you and we also intend it to be a valuable 2 days for those of you who are practitioners – helping to review where you have got to and hopefully being of help in navigating your way ahead.

Aim: To enable folk on a spiritual journey of discovery and moving on in their calling with respect to Church Planting. Maybe particularly being of help in getting through road blocks, learning from each others struggles, successes and failures.

The questions we have been asked to address:

1. What does a fresh expression look like?
2. How does one begin such an initiative?
3. What does this imply for working with existing structures?
4. What should be encouraged and what should be avoided?
5. What does leadership look like and where can new leaders come from?
6. What is the longer term future for fresh expressions – will they just revert to a default mode of church?
7. What other issues need to be faced?

So – surrounded by prayer

- Plenty of time for reflection, discussion and asking questions.
- Minimal but hopefully relevant and inspiring input around key issues

- Availability onsite and offsite of resource – prayer, people, materials

Session 1: Vision and values

Introduction – as above

Introduce team: P and K, Bob Franklyn, Bob and Mary, Graham.

Gain sense of where people are coming from: Fe novices or aficionados

: Denominational background

: Strategists, practitioners, explorers

Introduce themselves to one or two around them

Prayer: for God to take us on this journey, for wisdom, discernment, guidance, strength, and breakthrough.

What is a fresh expression of church?

Definition and explanation:

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

- *it will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples*
- *it will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context*

A story: Monks Rd

Monks Road Congregation

Monks Road congregation is probably best described as a wonderfully happy accident!

After moving in to the area, a couple who belonged to the wider Threshold church started to make friends with people in the community and use their house to hang out together. As more people came to hang out it soon outgrew their house and new groups formed meeting in other local homes.

Still travelling each Sunday to Nettleham joining with others to worship it became increasingly difficult to get everyone there! We also realised that it was easier to

make even more friends with people in the community if we met all together in the community.

As well as being a relatively young congregation, our average age is younger than most churches. We have an eclectic mix of individuals from all sorts of backgrounds; Students, young professionals, recovering addicts, young mums (& dads!) all make the congregation a privilege to be part of. Many of us refer to it as a family and we think that making people feel welcome and accepted is very important regardless of what church experience or beliefs they've got.

This is reflected in all that we do, so whether it meeting in people's homes, or worshipping altogether on a Sunday at the YMCA, the emphasis is on belonging and being able to take part and find a place to fit.

We have a big heart for the local community and look for ways to actively make a difference. Whether that's supporting the local access centre, working with and helping other churches or planning community fun days and Christmas events, the emphasis is on getting to know new people and helping in whatever way we can.

We meet in small groups at local homes midweek to get to know each other more, discover more about God and laugh lots! We also meet as a larger group at the local YMCA on St Rumbold Street above the gym on Sundays @ 10:30am

Three questions in small groups:

- Own experience of fresh expression(s)
- Types of fresh expressions aware of – plenary feedback - list
- Relationship between fresh expressions and church planting.

Points:

1. ++Rowan's experience – recent history
2. "CP is a no no in the Anglican church". The term means different things to different people – and its frightening or distasteful to some for a variety of reasons/experiences
3. CP verb, fe noun? As in Church planting leads to fresh expressions of church? Or expressing freshly leads to church plants!
4. List in msc – "Traditional church plants" covers a multitude of approaches – from HTB to new church to Jamie and Lea in Burundi.
5. Point is – we are talking about planting fresh expressions of CHURCH
6. Recent dismissal or confusion because of early stages and not waiting for full development, or attaching the name to funding bids or popularity ratings or what is being seen is giving a new name to the toddler group or whatever. Fresh

expressions of worship, mission, social action or ecumenical working won't necessarily lead to mature life of church. NB It doesn't necessarily say anything about models – relative dependence/independence from existing churches.

Why fresh expressions of church?

Lincolnshire survey 2005 – the blunt approach

Changing culture

Cultural context of C21

Small groups – key features – with feedback

Vox pops

A mixed economy will always be needed

Core values of fresh expressions:

1. mission-shaped community
2. creative experimentation
3. culturally relevant
4. transformation
5. discipleship
6. sacrifice
7. unity in diversity

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Appendix One

Interview with Des Cartwright to discuss Elim's history in evangelism and church planting, 20th February 2010.

Attending: Gary Gibbs, Des Cartwright

Des: George Jefferys and his brother Stephen gained their first success in 1913 when Stephen had meetings in Cymer near Swansea and that launched them. After that George had been invited to be the evangelistic speaker at the Sunderland convention in 1913.

Gary: The one Boddy had started?

Des: The one Boddy started, but they hadn't really had evangelistic type meetings, they had teaching meetings, but George was invited as an evangelist and he stayed on in Sunderland. After the campaign he was very good, he made an impact in Germany and all sorts. Boddy commented on him more than anybody else. He was only 24 years of age, far younger than anybody else.

He had a great impact in Sunderland, but some visitors from Ireland heard him and said "will you come over to us?" So he was invited to Ireland for the Christmas time of 1913 into early 1914. They tried to hold meetings in Monaghan but as soon as the Methodists learned they were Pentecostal they cancelled it. So George then begins, after his initial success at Cymer, he gets invited all over the place. He is in headlines in the denominational paper 'The Life of Faith' from Keswick. He was also invited to Penybont which is in the wilds of mid-Wales. It's so remote you have to go through farm gates to get there. And people came mid February to an old Quakers meeting house because George was in great demand. He went back to Ireland in 1914 and 1915 and he started the Elim Evangelistic Band right there in Ireland but then the war broke out and he based most of his work in Ireland. He tried to evangelise the South of Ireland but it became very difficult with the beginning of the troubles. However, they did establish 15 churches in Ireland before 1920 and when the troubles began they came back to Britain to plant churches beginning in Leigh-on-Sea.

Gary: To what degree do you think the economic situation had an effect on people looking for answers?

Des: It meant that every town he went to there was a lot of spare people with nothing to do and some would have thought "there is something going on". In Llanelli in the 30's every church sent up its return to headquarters, the minister at the time had two churches in Llanelli, and had to report the number of members, how many were there and the offering amount. The numbers would be 150-200 in the morning and 400 at night but the offerings were only £2. So a letter came back from headquarters, not calling into question his honesty, because there was a tendency for some to

exaggerate their numbers because they got paid more. So the minister wrote back and said “I ought to explain what the situation is here” and he mentions the number of men in the church that were out of work and there were loads of them. A lot of the converts were young people and were, for example, working in the mill and didn’t have a lot of money and maybe they go to a healing meeting and see a miracle, a cripple who walks or a blind person who sees and it spreads like wild fire and a lot of them got saved.

Gary: In the Elim Evangel 1976 you mentioned by email an article on church planting, the methodology for church planting hadn’t changed that much, in other words, get a building, bring in an evangelist who does a crusade and then a follow up pastor. But it seems to me, you’d have the stats on this, that the success then and now is nothing like it was in the beginning. So that’s one question; second question, why do you think we don’t seem to be seeing the same miraculous intervention of God in evangelism?

Des: My first answer is God knows, but I do have some ideas! First of all the climate of what you could do as far as the audience were concerned: you couldn’t pitch a tent today because it would be burned down before it could start, and Alex Tee found his tents were ripped and burnt. George Jeffreys never had them vandalised so the climate has changed. People now are more sophisticated than to sit in a tent and be harangued; it’s not an acceptable form of evangelism today so you’ve got to target your audience, you’ve got to study the people. George Jeffreys was in God’s timing: he also had miracles that attracted people, they didn’t save them but attracted them, that drew the crowds. But the times have changed; when you read the sermons that were preached you would be amazed they were so successful really, it was so basic and George Jeffreys never preached for a long time but the program was very carefully managed. There was dignity, there was anointing, they developed a technique that proved successful and that is important because if you’re going to sell a product and the gospel is a product you’ve got to study your market: you can’t sell ice-creams to Eskimos, and that’s what we are trying to do sometimes.

Gary: If you were planting a church in an urban situation in 2010 on behalf of Elim any thoughts about what you would take into consideration or what methodology you would use?

Des: I would look at the location of the building: I would not take a place where somebody else had failed, like an old Salvation Army or Baptist church. I would try and go into a new area and try and reach out across some of the barriers. I would have the building open not just at 11 on a Sunday, I would have the place open when people are available. I would use a team of people who are living and working in the location. You have got to support those people church planting from the regional budgets, because the people need to be supported so that they can focus on the church.

Gary: I wonder sometimes if we hamstringing our church planting initiatives because if I was a pastor of a reasonable size church and I had a heart for church planting and sent some people off to church plant I would be actually potentially affected my salary, or the ability to bring in other staff, because the folks you send out are your good people. In an ideal world you'll say that shouldn't be a factor, but of course it is.

Des: But of course it's the right thing for you to do, you ought to get some support because anybody who goes into business on a new venture will tell you they have got to have at least 3 years to make the thing grow. The other thing is I think we have got to be more available for other groups to come and join us, in a loose association, in which we link with others who are close to us so we don't become too tightly tied down.

Gary: You mean further out than ECI?

Des: A halfway house, testing the waters.

Gary: Almost like a courtship

Des: Well in one place it worked successfully, a place where I used to be Pastor in Rowley Regis, they joined with the AoG they joined together.

Gary: Let me give you a scenario, yesterday I took a young couple in their 20's from here to Blyth. Blyth is one of the poorest areas in the country and we are considering planting a church there, and they are also considering putting an Eden team in there as well, and these might come together. But when we talk about church planting in that environment what I'm wondering is just how much culture has changed and whether we have to change radically our approach to church planting. What I'm thinking these days is the United Kingdom is more a missionary model than a Christendom model. So I said to this couple, if you come here for the first 3-6 months all I want you to do is network, just get to know people, visit local councillors, get into the schools, meet your neighbours and look for the man of peace. Follow the mission of God because God always goes ahead. And then see what comes out of that flux and see how people come to faith and then form church with those people. In other words, a bottom up model, instead of the top down, start a crusade with a few people and the miraculous, for example, the 1976 Elim Evangel method of rent a building, invite other churches, get a rent-a-crowd, bring in a big preacher, pray for the sick. I'm just not sure that model is going to help us these days.

Des: It would be a waste of time and money to do that you need to work from ground level.

Gary: That's why I'm wondering if this idea of fresh expressions is going to help us. If we send missionaries we tell them if they are going to be fruitful they need to learn the language, understand the culture, and incarnate in the culture and try and find

metaphors for the gospel in that culture and build the church. I'm wondering if we need to train missionaries now for the UK? Who knows where fresh expressions will go but I think church could end up looking quite different to how we have experienced it.

Des: What happened in the first generation, were they all the same, thank God they weren't all like Corinth. There was Ephesus and Philippi and Corinth all different but we get one idea.

Gary: That's a fair point I think, if you go back to the New Testament, there is one theologian in one of the books I'm reading that make the point that you find fresh expressions in the book of Acts. I think in Elim we have got a bit stuck in a traditional model of how we do evangelism and church planting so I'm trying to explore if there is anything fresh expressions can offer for us going forward. The Elim Evangel 1976 seems to suggest the basic model hadn't changed since the day of Jeffreys.

Des: Brewster could only think within that same category. He was very good, he planted a number of churches but he didn't have the same measure of success. That was not his gift. Not all them were successful, but that will be the same today. Even Tesco's go and fail sometimes; we need to judge the market the same as a supermarket would. The other thing I think is the letter to the seven churches came from one central church and that was the key, a central church that kept a monitoring brief on those other churches. We have got to have key churches that have relationship with other churches, it has got to be a resource church that can provide some input and put some of their young people into these situations to train them up.

Appendix Two

Interview with Members of 'Fresh Expressions' National Team, Warwickshire Diocesan Retreat House, Offchurch, 17th February 2010.

Attending: Gary Gibbs, Pete Atkins, Kath Atkins, Steve Lindridge.

Gary: What are your individual roles within Fresh Expressions?

Pete: My role is within the training hub of Fresh Expressions, and particularly I have responsibilities for the practicalities of establishing a course called 'Mission-shaped Ministry' around the UK and beyond, and more so as a mission for Fresh Expressions in whatever sphere I can do it.

Kath: My role in the team is to help administer the leadership ministry courses as we road map around the UK. We currently have 43 courses going with over 1000 associates taking part and 500 or so on at the minute so my role is to back up those folk who are running the course around the country.

Steve: I'm the National Missioner for the Methodist Church, which means lots of things. I've got responsibility for setting up FEASTS which is 'Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Teams' across the country over the next five years. Also advocacy on the Methodist side, a little bit on the Anglican side. Also mapping and also trying to encourage a more missional approach generally in the Methodist Church.

Gary: About the relationship of Fresh Expressions to church planting; in what sense are those two things linked?

Pete: In my mind their identical: I don't think you can differentiate between Fresh Expressions of church and church planting. I think we are using the different expression because church planting, as a phrase, brings with it connotations of all sorts of baggage and some negative feelings in certain parts of the church. There is a nuance which is probably that Fresh Expressions of church is designed to engage with cultures that we have long lost touch with. We actually encourage the shape of church to be whatever is needed in that situation and to be designed or influenced by its context. Whereas church planting in the past felt like people cloning what they were already in and plonking it somewhere else and that is partly what people are trying to differentiate between when they use the different phrases.

Gary: Moving on then, some writers would say that Fresh Expressions is part of the emerging church movement, others would want to clarify that a little bit more carefully, Steve any thoughts on that?

Steve: The whole emerging church thing is a hugely diverse thing; there is a difference between what's going on in America and what's going on here. My wife's doing a course on it at the moment and there were 12 different lecturers and none of them gave it a decent definition, or the same definition of emerging church.

Gary: Where is she doing that?

Steve: Cliff College, Manchester. I think it all depends on your intention doesn't it, who you're trying to reach, how you're trying to reach them. My take, my personal

take is that much of the emerging church comes out of a desire of a particular kind of spirituality, rather than an intentional missional approach and I think 'Fresh Expressions' for me is much more about reaching those that we don't touch at all and the intentional missional dynamic is the imperative, whereas the emerging church is about 'we're not happy with what we have had and we want to set up a community'. The tension is for some they do hold good missional intention but their primary perspective is about spirituality and the way they worship. The negative side, in my view, is that they focus too much on the worship and don't get round to the mission.

Gary: Anything to add?

Pete: For me emerging church is part of the spectrum of Fresh Expressions of church, its one part of it and it is patchily missional so some parts of it are genuinely missional, other parts as Steve said are more focused on ecclesiology.

Gary: Talk to me about potential problems between Fresh Expressions of church as they're coming about and the denominational government of church? Do you want to talk about that from the Anglican perspective Pete and then we'll get the Methodist perspective.

Pete: I think a lot of it is still being designed as we go and diocese are finding they now have Fresh Expressions of church in their midst that are asking for proper accountability and structural change so that they fit better. The diocese are asking for money, for proper governance and there is a dialogue going on now between those things, and I don't think it's all sorted. The Bishops' Mission Orders do at least lay down something in terms of how things might work and that has been taken up in places, but really only the first one or two have actually been established so most of them have not. I've got friends who lead Anglican Fresh Expressions of church and many of them have remained under the governance of the initiating parish and that actually for the moment works quite well. However, if you start something that isn't related to an existing parish then what's happening at the moment is there is no systematic approach, it is diocese by diocese, what are we going to do about this at the moment.

Gary: How does it work in the Methodist system Steve?

Steve: Three things; the first thing is you have got good stories and bad stories and it's all about relationship. The second thing is that actually the leadership of the Methodist Church is totally behind the Fresh Expressions initiative and the leadership structure adapted by Chairs of District recently and again they are very much behind the initiative. Where it hits the rub, as it were, is in the middle management and some pioneers who are pushing the boundaries. So in that context you are going to get things that work really well, with good accountability; most Fresh Expressions on the Methodist side are looking for good accountability. They want to be accountable to either a local church or a group of churches which is the circuit and, under the circuit's support and guidance, they fruitfully try to. The tensions are when you have lay people who have grown up in leadership and where there isn't good relationship there are bound to be tensions, especially about what you do when people want to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Now in certain traditions that's not a problem at all but in Methodist circuits it is, and the question is how you deal with that. Do you ordain people into that place? Do you recognize the

leadership in a certain way? It just depends upon middle management, superintendents and the leadership of the circuit and what relationship they have with the pioneer or the leadership team of the Fresh Expressions.

Gary: Moving on from there is this thing about what happens within the Anglicans and Methodists, because it might be different, in terms of recognizing when a fresh expression becomes a bona fide church?

Pete: Many which are currently called Fresh Expressions are not fully mature churches yet and some of them never will be and many have no intention of being. So they are a fresh expression of worship, or a fresh expression of mission, or a fresh expression of social action, or a fresh expression of ecumenical cooperation and because they are those things, they aren't posing the governmental questions. They sit very nicely within current church structures and are not pushing the boundaries in terms of needing any form of extra governance or finding something which works for them.

Gary: I think you're not happy with that, talk to me about that for a moment?

Pete: The initiative that we are part of very much wants to see the development of fresh expression of church; authentic, real, effective church with every dimension in place. When those start arising and get to a level of maturity where they are being effective missionally, where they have relationship with God and each other and with existing church, that's when the governmental questions will become more acute.

Steve: I agree with Pete. What we want to see, and what we see now, is very much lots of things in their infancy and again its back to intention and what are they trying to do. Its been five years since the Fresh Expressions initiative began, but lots of things were happening under the Holy Spirit and what we started in the North East called 'Mind the Gap', that started before it was even called Fresh Expressions. One of the things we wanted to grow was indigenous leadership. What we wanted to see was a reproduction system, and to understand that we are still doing what God wants us to do, or do we need to go in a different direction now, do we try reaching a new community? So there is a little bit of multiplication in that, not just the church that has grown up. 'Mind the Gap' is now recognized not as a project but as a church of the circuit, as in Methodist terms it only takes 12 people to form a new church with permission from the district and circuit, so it's easy in Methodism to set up a new church. Recognizing it and placing governance over it will be different in each context, and how it is lead, that might be different in each context.

Gary: What is church and, particularly from a Fresh Expressions perspective, what has to be in place for it to be called a church within the Fresh Expressions genre?

Kath: What we're seeing now in terms of Fresh Expressions of church as they begin may not look like or might not be a fully mature church from the beginning.

Gary: Is the main institution happy to call it church?

Kath: The institution might do well at looking at their existing churches, and if you look at what the marks of church are, if you consider church

5. a place where people are connecting with God,

6. a place where people are connecting with each other,
7. a place where other people are connecting with other churches in their area and their surroundings
8. a place where people are actually leaving their church and buildings or wherever they meet and actually go seeking folk who are not yet Christians.

If those four marks were asked of many of our existing, traditional churches now I think many of our existing churches would fall short of being mature expressions of church now in terms of roundedness and in terms of covering all of those bases.

Gary: You can't unscramble, scrambled eggs so they already exist: here's these new Fresh Expressions coming into being, what will be the criteria by which the hierarchy accept them as church?

Pete: There is a joint Anglican, Methodist working party at the minute which is looking at this question what is church, what is the ecclesiology of fresh expression? but it's actually sparked the question what is church and it's boiling down to the four classic marks. One of the ways Fresh Expressions is particularly looking at what is a church is by describing four sets of relationships that need to be in place in order that a church is seen to be mature. Those four relationships are; relationship with God, relationship with each other, relationship with the other communities or people of faith around them, and a relationship with the world. In other words it is the missional relationship which we see as key. George Lings has wrapped this up in the Nicene Creed as 'One Holy, Apostolic, Catholic Church'. Others in the Anglican dimension would add that there needs to be word and sacrament for it to be called and known as church, but I probably think that would be the minimum that folks would use as a description.

Gary: You teach your course on mission shaped ministry. How crucial do you think the course is to the success of Fresh Expressions? Are you seeing Fresh Expressions work without the training?

Pete: I do see it work without the training but I believe the most crucial part of training is actually coaching and mentoring. Having people alongside those who are establishing a fresh expression of church, who have experience and been there, got the scars and understand how to give things leeway and time and be flexible. The training courses are of immense value and I wouldn't want to de-value them in anyway but it's really how you apply that teaching into real life situations and see Fresh Expressions established. One of the dangers from a denominational point of view is that you say 'right tick the box we have got mission shaped ministry established in our area therefore we have done the training thing' and that's just not the case. Certainly from our perspective mission shaped ministry needs to be part of integrated strategy across an area to see Fresh Expressions arise, there needs to be vision, leadership, prayer, research, focus on young people, actually planting something, all those things need to have a place. How you engage with the structures, how you resource it, you need all that. If you just take a course off the shelf and say 'this is what were attempting to do' you've missed it, you've missed actually much of the crucial elements of seeing Fresh Expressions established.

Gary: What are you finding are the most difficult things for people to get about Fresh Expressions of church?

Pete: The first thing is, and the main difficulty people have grasping, that church can be different to what they have experienced often for most of their lives. I think there is a huge leap between what they see as church and what can be church and still is legitimate and authentic church, so I think it's a mindset paradigm thing. I think the second thing a genuine heart change rather than a head change to be actively missional and following the mission of God and therefore being prepared to do things which cost you like it cost God to reach for us in the first place in order that the folks he loves would be reached at all. And that's a big, big deal and if you can change people's values, and change their internal impetuses that drive and motivate them, if they can share the love of God for the lost, then that's half the battle.

Kath: It's as basic as people's self-centredness and the human feel of wanting what's best for ourselves, rather than for other folk, the folk who don't know Jesus. So you look for patterns of worship or ways of doing church that suit you better than actually daring to leave your comfort zone and actually going and find some way of worshipping or being together with folk and sharing the good news with people who are completely different and need to do things differently, that boils down very basically to self-centredness, consumerism.

Steve: I think a massive number of folk, particularly in local leadership level, just don't get that things have to change. I think they are still hanging onto the fact that things like Fresh Expressions will bring a breath of fresh air to the rest of the church and they're not going to have to do anything about it and everything's going to grow back and people are going to come flooding through the doors. Although we're trying very hard to say even if you do messy church, this thing through the week for lots of families, and literally see the place crowded, you may never ever see them on a Sunday because they're doing other things. Talking about changing their values, that takes years, it takes years to change people's values and if we don't realise that then we need to look at what's going on now in most of the inherited church. So I think that's the biggest wakeup call that a lot of people think they can just carry on as they are and do what they have always done on a Sunday and still see people go out the door, that's what I think is the biggest problem.

Gary: What will success look like for Fresh Expressions of church in four or five years?

Pete: For me success is to do with transformation, transformation of individuals and of areas of culture by the gospel. I think if this movement is to really have the impact that we hope it will have what we need to see happen is huge numbers of Fresh Expressions of church begin, which engage in a missional fashion in the culture as it now is not the way it once was.

Kath: I think success would be just millions of people as new disciples of Jesus living it out.

Steve: Success for me will be that the 600 Methodist circuits, I don't know how many Anglican equivalents there are, but of the 600 Methodist circuits I would like to see in 95% of those circuits a very significant number, let's say 10% because it's not near that now, 10% who are really on fire, built in confidence, know that they can be missional, and should be missional and have been trying to do it for the last couple of years. I know that doesn't sound that massive but actually if you had just that 10% because it often between 10-20% that are doing most of the work anyway,

if you could get that 10% totally missional, totally freed to do it, then actually in the next 10 years then we will see something substantially different.

Gary: What model of church is being assumed in the Fresh Expressions movement?

Pete: There is no one model of church and that's one of the key features of the Fresh Expressions movement, we are saying quite clearly is that with the multicultural society that we are now in we need to follow the Spirit, be shaped by the culture, be determined by however God leads, into creating all kinds of variety of church with no particular model except that its biblically authentic, in order to reach the lost that are in all those different categories. The 'Mission-Shaped Church report identified 12 different categories of fresh expression of church and that was only five years ago and what we are seeing is an incredible range of creativity happening in the movement so there is a range of models not just one.

Gary: On top of that Pete, there is a question of Episcopalian government and how that affects the models of church that would be produced?

Pete: Certainly in the Anglican church the Episcopal model of government is still in place and therefore the kind of model that would be encouraged or permitted would probably depend on the openness of mind of that particular Bishop, and so that's expressed in terms of the way Bishops' Mission Orders are acquired. I think different Bishops will apply it differently depending on how they see church, but by and large there hasn't been a restriction on model. I think where the restriction has come has been in middle management as happens in the Methodist Church as well and angst about where resources are going and angst about is it proper church and that kind of stuff.

Gary: Steve, what forms of church are important in where Fresh Expressions is going?

Steve: I think many genuine Fresh Expressions that are trying to become mature are very mindful that they can't express themselves as church without having a deep sense of community, and if you grow in size and get to a certain number, it's very difficult to know 70 people while it is possible to know 12; but there is also something to be gained from gathering together as larger groups and experiencing the transcendent dimensions of God. In a small group the imminent can really come through but when you get together with a larger group there is something of the transcendent nature of God comes through as well, so I think there is a mindfulness in models of church that just being small is good because you get that intimacy but you may miss out on the transcendence, and as they grow and develop that's what they are trying to balance and that's why meeting with other churches at big special events, city wide things, regional things are great. Getting together and doing FEAST stuff is great for that. Equally a really large church may look at itself and say 'we've lost our intimacy; we've got to have that deeper level of commitment and we've got to have the small groups that will unpack each other's lives and create that accountability in which we really can grow as disciples and have that accountability to push each other in that.' It's typical Methodism really, getting back to the roots of both the large society and the classes. I think in Methodism as well we've got such a diversity as well. We often are called a broad church which I think is not necessarily a good thing but it's a true thing. You have such a range of styles of leadership; some people that are actually quite high in their churchmanship and some that are lower

than the carpet. I think there you have got all kinds of expressions of church in the making and developing and I think fundamentally one of the key things is if we are saying we are trying to be the Christians God has called us to be that has got to have a Trinitarian edge to it, in terms of community, love and honesty.

Gary: The final thing is, just thinking about this tentative church planting manifesto with Elim, what would it take for Elim to buy into the whole Fresh Expressions movement?

Pete: Provisionally obviously it would be conversations with the existing movement, but my take on it is that there is always a welcome for others who feel that this would be something they could contribute to and benefit from and it's something we have always said is far wider than two initial denominations that began it. We do see it as a movement therefore as it picks up speed, picks up depth, the more of the church of the UK and beyond want to be part of it and contribute to it the better in my view. I think relationships are always really helpful and it would be great to build relationally rather than structurally with people who are particularly focused on this as a benefit to Elim and they would be the right people to be talking to Fresh Expressions initially. I think what it takes is recognition that we do want our existing churches to do better in mission but actually we need a whole raft of different kinds of church to reach the folks we are no longer engaged with. Once that recognition is in place then I think it's a very small step to say, actually this is a movement I want to be part of.

Appendix Three – Pete Atkins Original Seminar Notes

mission21 Bath. Fresh Expressions stream. 17 – 19.11.2009

Introduction:

Discover – what is going on?

Discuss - how does that relate to me and my situation?

Discern – where is God in this?

“The most important feature of each stream should be the participation of the delegates”

This conference as a whole is looking at big picture stuff, discerning where God is taking us with Church Planting in the UK. Fresh expressions of church are one part of that picture.

We see this seminar stream as focussing on where you are at within the overall scene. We intend it to be informative and to be useful for the strategists and permission givers among you and we also intend it to be a valuable 2 days for those of you who are practitioners – helping to review where you have got to and hopefully being of help in navigating your way ahead.

Aim: To enable folk on a spiritual journey of discovery and moving on in their calling with respect to Church Planting. Maybe particularly being of help in getting through road blocks, learning from each others struggles, successes and failures.

The questions we have been asked to address:

1. What does a fresh expression look like?
2. How does one begin such an initiative?
3. What does this imply for working with existing structures?

4. What should be encouraged and what should be avoided?
5. What does leadership look like and where can new leaders come from?
6. What is the longer term future for fresh expressions – will they just revert to a default mode of church?
7. What other issues need to be faced?

So – surrounded by prayer

- Plenty of time for reflection, discussion and asking questions.
- Minimal but hopefully relevant and inspiring input around key issues
- Availability onsite and offsite of resource – prayer, people, materials

Session 1: Vision and values

Introduction – as above

Introduce team: P and K, Bob Franklyn, Bob and Mary, Graham.

Gain sense of where people are coming from: Fe novices or aficionados

: Denominational background

: Strategists, practitioners, explorers

Introduce themselves to one or two around them

Prayer: for God to take us on this journey, for wisdom, discernment, guidance, strength, and breakthrough.

What is a fresh expression of church?

Definition and explanation:

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

- *it will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples*
- *it will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context*

A story: Monks Rd

Monks Road Congregation

Monks Road congregation is probably best described as a wonderfully happy accident!

After moving in to the area, a couple who belonged to the wider Threshold church started to make friends with people in the community and use their house to hang out together. As more people came to hang out it soon outgrew their house and new groups formed meeting in other local homes.

Still travelling each Sunday to Nettleham joining with others to worship it became increasingly difficult to get everyone there! We also realised that it was easier to make even more friends with people in the community if we met all together in the community.

As well as being a relatively young congregation, our average age is younger than most churches. We have an eclectic mix of individuals from all sorts of backgrounds; Students, young professionals, recovering addicts, young mums (& dads!) all make the congregation a privilege to be part of. Many of us refer to it as a family and we think that making people feel welcome and accepted is very important regardless of what church experience or beliefs they've got.

This is reflected in all that we do, so whether it meeting in people's homes, or worshiping altogether on a Sunday at the YMCA, the emphasis is on belonging and being able to take part and find a place to fit.

We have a big heart for the local community and look for ways to actively make a difference. Whether that's supporting the local access centre, working with and helping other churches or planning community fun days and Christmas events, the emphasis is on getting to know new people and helping in whatever way we can.

We meet in small groups at local homes midweek to get to know each other more, discover more about God and laugh lots! We also meet as a larger group at the local YMCA on St Rumbold Street above the gym on Sundays @ 10:30am

Three questions in small groups:

- Own experience of fresh expression(s)
- Types of fresh expressions aware of – plenary feedback - list
- Relationship between fresh expressions and church planting.

Points:

1. ++Rowan's experience – recent history
2. "CP is a no no in the Anglican church". The term means different things to different people – and its frightening or distasteful to some for a variety of reasons/experiences
3. CP verb, fe noun? As in Church planting leads to fresh expressions of church? Or expressing freshly leads to church plants!
4. List in msc – "Traditional church plants" covers a multitude of approaches – from HTB to new church to Jamie and Lea in Burundi.
5. Point is – we are talking about planting fresh expressions of CHURCH
6. Recent dismissal or confusion because of early stages and not waiting for full development, or attaching the name to funding bids or popularity ratings or what is being seen is giving a new name to the toddler group or whatever. Fresh expressions of worship, mission, social action or ecumenical working won't necessarily lead to mature fe of church. NB It doesn't necessarily say anything about models – relative dependence/independence from existing churches.

Why fresh expressions of church?

Lincolnshire survey 2005 – the blunt approach

Changing culture

Cultural context of C21

Small groups – key features – with feedback

Vox pops

A mixed economy will always be needed

Core values of fresh expressions:

8. mission-shaped community
9. creative experimentation
10. culturally relevant
11. transformation
12. discipleship
13. sacrifice
14. unity in diversity