

£1.5m sought for Fresh Expressions to make new disciples

Canon Tim Lomax prefaced the Fresh Expressions presentation to March's Diocesan Synod with news of the diocese's aim to make 8000 new disciples of Christ by 2028. This would be realised through enabling the development of 300 Fresh Expressions of church and 1200 lay leaders. There are two parts to the plan: 150 of our existing Fresh Expressions would be developed alongside 150 new ones, for which £1.5 million is being sought from the Church Commissioners' Renewal and Reform Strategic Fund, put in place to support church growth. The diocese has already cleared stage one of the bid process and expects to hear the result of stage two in July.



Canon Phil Potter, Archbishops' Missioner and Fresh Expressions Team Leader, addresses Synod

New Fresh Expressions will be developed in all contexts: urban, rural, estates and in all traditions. They will reach out to those unconnected with church, harness potential in existing Fresh Expressions and grow a younger church. Almost all indicators of attendance have dropped by about 10% in the last five years and, outside Fresh Expressions, only 0.4% of children and young people are attending church. Our current Fresh Expressions are strongest with children, families, teenagers and young adults (e.g. Church of the Good Shepherd, Leighton Buzzard; Soul Survivor, Watford and Hub Church, Hitchin). The focus of work will be to build on this experience, developing Fresh Expressions and missional congregations that nurture the faith of the younger generation.

This plan works alongside two other ways of stimulating growth. The first of these is to increase the support for churches in fulfilling their Mission Action Plan objectives to make new disciples. The second is to aim to create two or three large resource-churches in town centres.

This three-fold strategy places a great deal of emphasis on the potential of Fresh Expressions and part of preparing for this future was for Synod to hear from Canon Phil Potter, Archbishops' Missioner and Fresh Expressions Team Leader. Canon Tim Lomax said: "Phil Potter gave us great encouragement that the journey on which we are embarking is the right one. There is considerable potential for growth in existing and future Fresh Expressions. I am convinced that this is the right way to draw in people who are hungry for faith, but who have no contact with the church. This is our chance to connect with them."



Fresh Expressions...

- ✓ are a serious tool, not a fad
- ✓ help change church culture
- ✓ are a form of church for our changing social culture
- ✓ are mission-shaped, not church-shaped
- ✓ make new disciples
- ✓ are fully church
- ✓ in 12 years, 2000 FXs, have reached 30,000 unchurched people
- ✓ are found in all traditions, all venues, at least 20 types
- ✓ are led predominantly by unauthorised lay people
- ✓ are twice as effective at attracting under-16s
- ✓ predominantly stay in the parish where they were started
- ✓ make up 15% of church communities
- ✓ have 4x as many started now compared to 2004
- ✓ for every 1 person sent out to join a FX, 2.5 are added
- ✓ are attended by the equivalent of 2 new dioceses
- ✓ investment, integration and innovation are key to their success in mission and growth