

NEWS FROM FRESH EXPRESSIONS

Copy for Diocesan newspapers and Church magazines:

Please try to include this in a diocesan newspaper, the website or a news feed to parishes.

It is sent with greetings from the Fresh Expressions team.

Bishop Graham Cray, until recently Bishop of Maidstone, is looking forward to the autumn when his work as Archbishops' Missioner and Leader of the Fresh Expressions team will begin in earnest. He offers some thoughts at this important juncture for Fresh Expressions:

ONLY THE BEGINNING

By Bishop Graham Cray

It is my privilege to succeed Bishop Steven Croft as the leader of the Fresh Expressions Team.

We exist to enable dioceses and districts to plant fresh expressions of church. We offer training, resources, support and connection with other practitioners. We are available to help, but the work of mission can only be done locally.

When I was introduced at the Methodist Conference the President prayed for the Fresh Expressions Team, but then promptly reminded conference that the work of planting fresh expressions is the work of the whole church.

As the Church of England we understand ourselves as the church of the nation. Our parish system was established to ensure that the good news of Jesus could be embodied in every community; heard and experienced in each place and each generation.

This cannot be achieved by simply repeating what we have always (or at least as long as we can remember) said and done. Every bishop, priest and deacon has publicly committed themselves to 'the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures' and to proclaiming it 'afresh' in this generation. Today this involves establishing fresh communities of faith as well as sharing the good news in culturally appropriate ways through our existing ones. Communities are more complex and diverse and one shape of church can no longer fit all.

This is partly achieved by good ecumenical relationships. We can support the efforts of other denominations to reach people we cannot. But the large numbers of people who 'used' to go to church come from all denominations. The same challenge faces us all, which is why the Fresh Expressions team has been ecumenical from the beginning.

If we include children and young people, it is now the majority of the population who have had no regular involvement with the Christian church.

It is becoming clear that many of these people for whom Christ died are unlikely to be drawn to our existing churches, however spiritually alive, hospitable and attractive they are. Many can be – so our existing churches have plenty to do – but many will not. As well as making our existing church properly attractive and Christlike, we need to follow the example of Christ's incarnation, by entering the networks and neighbourhoods, of those who have little or no contact with the church, serving them, planting new congregations among them and seeking the transformation which only the kingdom of God can bring among them.

As a national team we exist to help you in this task.

+Graham Cray

Please note that images of Bishop Graham are available on request.

For further information

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