Welcome
This is a workshop about Rural Fresh Expressions but I also refer to Rural Pioneering...
What’s going on?

All around the country:

- God’s spirit is on the move
- Christians are trying new things
- New types of churches are being formed

Guide: What is a fresh expression of church? freshexpressions.org.uk/guide/about/whatis
Three characteristics:

- a strong mission focus;
- a willingness to re-imagine church so that people can encounter Christ in their culture;
- a commitment to the mixed economy of existing and new forms of church.

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Mixed economy is essential because it gives the balance between stability [and] an openness to the Spirit of God doing new things.

Justin Welby

All this is happening alongside and not instead of the existing church. Rowan Williams has called this a 'mixed economy'.

Justin Welby has affirmed the concept of mixed economy advocated by his predecessor as Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams saying 'Mixed economy is essential because it gives the balance between stability - a location in place and nature - with the catalyst of an openness to the Spirit of God doing new things. And we need both. Without stability you end up just following fashion, and without the catalyst of the Spirit you end up just becoming utterly embedded and unable to move in what you've always done'.

Guide: Fresh expressions and a 'mixed economy' church freshexpressions.org.uk/guide/about/mixedeconomy
Some stories

Play the following DVD sequence:

- starter stories
  (edited from expressions: the dvd - 1 and expressions: the dvd - 2)

  [W01.02, 2.36]

This is a montage of short soundbites and clips from the first two Fresh Expressions DVDs.
Some stories

Play the following DVD sequence:

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This is a montage of short soundbites and clips from the first two Fresh Expressions DVDs.
your reaction?

• What strikes you in what you have just seen?
• Are there common aspects?
• Is anything similar happening where you are?

Feedback

Spend about 5 minutes now in twos and threes sharing your immediate reaction to what you have seen:
  • What strikes you in what you have just seen?
  • Is anything similar happening where you are?

Spend a few minutes getting feedback from one or two groups
Rural Pioneering!

➢ Supporting traditional church while developing new ways of being church
➢ Small often older congregation – enough keeping traditional going
➢ Structures not working – teams / minster model / amalgamation - villages relate to villages differently to towns?

What is rural
Describe your context in your group.
try this

the word became flesh and moved into the neighbourhood...
(John 1)

Incarnational Exercise

Invite everyone around the tables to remove their accessories, rings, watches and mobile phones etc and place them in the middle of the table. Ask them to swap them for another person’s and try something else on.

Ask the following questions of people with a roving mike:

- What does it feel like to give up your items?
- Would it be easy to replace your items with someone else’s?
- Did the item you put down have special value to you?
- Does another person’s watch or ring fit you?
- Does it feel strange or comfortable or unfamiliar to wear or hold another person’s accessories?
- Would you prefer someone else’s or your own?
- What other items are you wearing that express something about you to others and what do they say?
- How easy would it be for you to give up all of your clothes, accessories and jewellery to express yourself in another way?

Link this exercise with the fact that in the incarnation Jesus gave up all he had.
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.

Definition

This is a provisional definition, offered as a contribution to an ongoing debate about how fresh expressions should be understood. Some would want to define fresh expressions as communities that at first comprise mainly non-churchgoers, with a core of Christians. Others want to include expressions made up largely of churchgoers, who are exploring a different way of being church so that they can serve more effectively friends, neighbourhoods and the wider society.

Giving ‘fresh expressions’ precise meaning is a challenge. There is a danger the term will be defined so loosely that anything fits; that churches will describe things they have done for years as fresh expressions. On the other hand, defining fresh expressions too tightly risks excluding innovative forms of church that have a real mission thrust. The definition above aims to strike a balance between the two.

Guide: What is a fresh expression of church? freshexpressions.org.uk/guide/about/whatis
What is not a fresh expression?

You will need to read the caption out loud:

Reverend Collins’ new 8am ‘hip hop communion service’ didn’t quite connect with the congregation at St Mary’s.

Cartoon originally published in Youthwork Magazine.
Coffee culture!
SPACE for everyone
Forest School / Church partnerships
First steps

• Listen to your community
• Community audit
• Identify a need
• Encourage participation
Character Exercise (part 1)

As a group think of the people in your community who do not come to church. What do they do? How old are they? where do they meet? Do you know what they need in life? What do they like?

If you have come as a group and can quickly identify a character from your community that you would love to see as part of your fresh expression, describe this person.
Character Exercise (part 2)

- How might you share love and service with these people? (recognising that they will have much to offer you).
- What will it look like?
- What might you learn?
- Where is God at work so that you might join in?

Invite the table groups to share their thoughts.

Invite feedback from some of the groups.
"Pioneering ministry cannot be done to a community by someone who knows what they need, it can only be done with a community by someone who shares their need."

Angela Shier Jones
A process of discernment

Just before we look at the formative sequence that is being observed in fresh expressions, it is important to note the three continuums that are vital in the formation of a fresh expression:

- Prayer and support. The prayers of the wider Christian community are essential.
- Listening to God. Fresh expressions must continually be listening to God, discerning His call and following that call, through prayer, the Scriptures, other Christians and God's world.
- Connection. It is vital that fresh expressions remain connected to, committed to and accountable to the wider Body of Christ. And it is vital that the wider Body of Christ supports, resources and prays for the fresh expression.

The story of Somewhere Else illustrates these very well (as does Barbara Glasson’s book Mixed Up Blessings, Epworth).

Share: How might you discern God’s call? sharetheguide.org/section1/6/discern
A formative journey

So what does the formative journey of fresh expressions look like? Typically we are seeing this sequence:

• Loving service - Unlike many traditional church plants, a fresh expression is unlikely to start with worship. If you launch a worship service, you know who is going to come - Christians! So if the aim is to serve people who do not come to church, you may not get very far. Indeed, instead of starting with a worship service, fresh expressions are more likely to begin with loving service. So a key foundational question is: In the culture, context, community that we are called to serve, what are the needs that we can respond to with a practical expression of God’s love?

• Community - Building community within the context of loving service is vital. People you are called to serve may not come back if they do not feel accepted and valued. But if friendships form, the coffee may be dreadful, the sense may not be perfect, there may be no wind to fly your kite, but people will still turn up. They will come because they like each other. Your act of service will become an opportunity to meet with others. Creating community may be the biggest service you offer.

• Discipleship - This is the journey through which people explore and are nurtured in the Christian faith, including learning how to worship together.

• Church - As the formative journey unfolds with needs being met, community forming and discipleship developing, the fresh expression moves towards becoming fully church for those involved.

Underpinned by prayer, ongoing listening and relationship with the wider church.
It’s all about relationships and service.