

# Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Teams

a guide to the establishment of Fresh Expressions Area Strategy teams

A brief introduction to Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Teams (FEASTs), what they are and how to set them up.



*'Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Teams are a key means of catalysing the establishment and long term development of fresh expressions of church.'*

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## 1. Introduction

Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Teams (FEASTs) are a key means of catalysing the establishment and long term development of fresh expressions of Church across a particular geographical area for which the team takes responsibility. We believe that they are key to many vital areas of development including initiating and sustaining fresh expressions of church, supporting pioneers, establishing training, engaging existing structures and promoting prayer. The national Fresh Expressions team is now giving considerable focus to the establishment of FEASTs across the UK to help embed fresh expressions of church into the ongoing life of Dioceses, Districts and Synods. FEASTs have a pivotal role in changing the church landscape to one of genuine mixed economy into the long term. We have so far seen several of FEASTs arise around the UK: each focuses on a geographical area corresponding to a city or county or to the area within Diocesan or District boundaries and we are encouraged by the impact they are having. The lessons learned from these early FEASTs are the substance of this document.

Whilst our hope is that this guide will be of help to those considering a strategic approach to their area we have no desire to be prescriptive and, as with starting a fresh expression, a prayerful contextual approach that responds to the leading of God in any particular situation is vital.

## 2. Background

Historically there is some debris in relation to geographically based Church Planting type strategies in the UK scene - There has been much comment made about the merits and failings of a DAWN (Discipling A Whole Nation) type approach to Church planting in the West, not least because of the questionably successful Challenge 2000 initiative in the UK in the 80's and 90's. One of the many lessons learned from that was that strategic approaches to smaller geographical areas might be more successful than a national approach. This booklet is designed to support and encourage any team taking an area approach.

### 3. Strategic process: initial stages

Observation of the emerging strategies we have looked at so far reveals some identifiable aspects and elements of process of FEAST development in each location. Whilst each has a different starting point and developmental pathway there are nevertheless some common components worth describing. The process seems to generally start with an individual or possibly a few people developing vision for the establishment of fresh expressions across an area they feel responsible for, whether or not that is reflected or asked for in their current employed role. The responsibility for taking this forward seems to initially rest with one individual in most cases. The motivation expressed is a desire to see people come to faith and become disciples of Jesus.

The start point of a strategy can vary from the vision of an individual to the request of an employing body to an area-wide evangelistic strategy. The establishment of the *msm* course has proved to be the catalyst for FEAST development in some areas. Whatever the start point, there will be some initial issues which need addressing.

#### A. Gathering the team

It is best to gather a team (rather than constitute a committee) to work relationally across the denominations and streams with those of similar heart and vision. This then may well begin with conversations between two or three people and gradually develop into a larger team. This will typically be an ecumenical group that includes permission givers (usually a senior leader or two), champions (those committed to seeing the entire area impacted by the development of fresh expressions of church) and pioneers and practitioners who are already developing specific fresh expressions.

There may of course be more than one of these attributes in any one individual. Examples of conveners across the UK include District or Diocesan Evangelism/Mission Enablers, Diocesan or Area Bishops or other staff such as Fresh Expressions enablers. As the strategy develops administrative support may become essential.

Ideally those on FEASTs should be:

- Passionate about fresh expressions of church;
- Senior enough to be listened to;
- Good networkers/coalition builders and well connected;
- Articulate;
- In tune with the cultures of the dioceses/districts and streams;
- Determined, patient, resilient and persistent;
- Supportive of practitioners and pioneers;
- Ecumenically-minded and Kingdom orientated.

#### B. Articulating the vision

Developing clear vision with a contextual way of expressing it (e.g.: Lake/River in Merseyside) is important in order to have clarity of purpose and to communicate with others who may want to support, enable or commit to the strategy. This vision may be expressed in Kingdom terms - focusing on the multiplication of Christian disciples through the establishment of fresh expressions of church. There will need to be a considerable focus on developing a mixed economy of church and enabling release from inherited-mode-only thinking.

In articulating the vision, stating a clear end point and a long timescale and keeping these visible is important. Looking ahead 25 years or so gives the helpful perspective of this being a realistic endeavour - it speaks of patience and permanence and enables the engagement of others.



#### C. Deciding on the geography

It is important to define the area that this strategy will concentrate on which will depend on local circumstances, passion, inspiration and a knowledge of the area. A FEAST might cover a city or county or a particular geographical patch defined by common history or accent. So you could have a Dudley FEAST, a Cumbria/Lancashire FEAST or a North East FEAST. Current examples include Manchester, Liverpool, Lincolnshire, the North East and Devon. It seems to be important that it makes sense at 'gut' level or intuitive level to the "locals" so as to enable a commitment to the vision and an emotional as well as intellectual engagement. It helps if the area described has some relationship to the institutional structures but it may or may not correspond to ecclesiastical (Diocesan/District/RTP), governmental (county/local/unitary), or obvious geographical boundary (roads/rivers). At present we feel that we should not prescribe either the size of area or of population served, but there may well need to be discussion of boundaries at regional level as FEASTs emerge.

#### D. Agreeing the principles

This process is akin to identifying, working through and agreeing values at the outset of a fresh expression project. Principles espoused by those involved so far include:

- Openness and flexibility: The importance of recognising the uniqueness of the local situation - in terms of approach, the nature of barriers and open doors, the support that exists in senior staff etc;

- Valuing unity, diversity and the creativity of the Spirit;
- Planting from life - identifying resource churches, pioneers and catalysts;
- Working with the willing and focusing on the open doors - travel as led through the opportunities. (This may say something about the call/skills/position of the leader(s) of the strategy);
- Lay and clergy involvement: Developing lay leadership is critical. Lay leaders will need identifying, encouraging, releasing and supporting;
- Mixed economy thinking and approach - clearly valuing and affirming both fresh expressions and inherited mode and encouraging all to be mission shaped;
- Relationships (not necessarily structures) are key - at many levels. They are a crucial resource;
- An ecumenical approach;
- Dependency on God: Prayer is essential;
- A clear focus on making disciples and Kingdom establishment;
- Structural integration of new models and thinking without compromise;
- Reproducing from small: Seek synergy/leverage - there are disproportionate gains from small resources in God.
- Intentional seeking of reproducible models and multiplication: Intentionally seeking multiplication, especially multiplication of key roles. eg. coaches;
- Recognise and encourage journey of key people from permission to blessing to... to paradigm shift.

### E. Encouraging prayer for the strategy

The vision is often birthed and shaped in a context of prayer with key themes for prayer in the initial stages being:

- Gaining understanding of the unique context they are in and the approaches therefore required - akin to "listening for mission" as a fresh expression develops;
- Identifying and taking God given opportunities to forward the vision especially developing or building on key relationships and alliances;
- Inspiration in and opportunity for expressing the vision;
- Team formation: especially identifying and "recruiting" the right people;
- The provision of resources;
- The identification of leaders in mission;
- The multiplication of leaders, training, new communities etc.;
- For God to empower, encourage and protect all concerned.

Prayer can be sought from many different sources: from an especially recruited team to engagement of existing networks or religious communities. Many Dioceses and Districts and other denominational bodies have prayer diaries or web pages or other that can be a useful sources of encouragement for specific prayer.

## 4. Strategic process: moving on

The team, once gathered, will need to discern priorities in terms of the further development of the Strategy and set objectives against a time scale. There will then be leadership needed to pursue this vision, take necessary initiative and develop and enable the other elements of the strategy. The elements or components of a strategy described below are each continuous or cyclical once begun, are interweaved with each other and don't necessarily occur in neat order.

### A. Continued sharing of the vision across the area

The vision will, at the right time, need communicating across the area by a variety of means: Key conversations, presentations at existing or special gatherings, vision days, regional days, road shows, special events, short courses, via the Christian media in the area and others. It is wise to have a fairly continuous presentation of vision aimed at different constituencies within the church in the area - e.g.: special briefings for senior staff, stories in the District/Diocesan newspaper, a constant item on Synod agenda, inclusion in area mission planning advice, focus in the employment of a fresh expressions enabler, inclusion in websites and prayer diaries etc.

#### Handy tip

Keep the vision visible - don't think that because it has been expressed once all will now be committed to it and keep it in mind!

### B. Research and mapping

Research is an essential component of a strategy and doing this together enables formation of vision and catalyses effective collaborative working. Mapping the locations of



Churches with some indication of their strength in relation to the underlying population can provide a useful visual aid to planning.

#### Handy tip

Before embarking on any form of research ask if the information gained is likely to make any difference to your approach. (Much time can be spent on research the results of which may be fascinating but little used as they have no practical outcome)

Some areas of research that may be useful:

- Creating a directory of the current Churches of all denominations and streams including contact details;
- Creating a directory of all recent Church plants/fresh expressions of Church and their leaders;
- Researching the strength of the Churches for three reasons:
  - To create a baseline in order to see what changes occur over the lifetime of the strategy;
  - To understand the percentage of the total population that is meaningfully engaged in church - which in itself can be motivational towards change;
  - To discern where the areas of relative strength or of gaps in Christian presence are in order to strategically plan pioneer activity.

### C. Training provision

This may involve courses, coaching or mission accompaniment and other elements. It will probably be a major component of any strategy however delivered.

There are currently several courses available in the UK which are designed to equip individuals and teams to pioneer fresh expressions of Church. The mission shaped ministry (msm) course has been adapted and developed by Fresh Expressions from a

course that arose in Lincolnshire as part of an area strategy. It is a part time course taken over a year and is suitable for clergy or lay people. It is being made available through ecumenical partnerships in many (and growing) areas of the UK.

Other courses which may well be suitable include Re:Source, Crucible and the Together in Mission MA in missional leadership.

#### Handy tip

It is important to maintain the focus on establishing new work through the equipping of individuals and teams, not on the establishment of training courses or schemes for their own sake.

We also believe that provision of coaching and the establishment of learning networks will be increasingly important to equip and support pioneers in their work. Many areas are starting to develop coaching capacity as part of the support of those participating in msm. The Fresh Expressions team are also committed to develop and establish learning networks and currently this work is being undertaken by Beth Keith based in the Sheffield Centre of the Church Army.

### D. Intentional multiplication

We should seek to multiply key roles, pioneer leaders, training, resources, new communities and possibly particular models (after contextual research). This will mean the identification, training, release, connecting and support of pioneers and teams. This may also mean seeking leverage from a small initial resource. It is wise to target resources on people and projects that have the most likelihood of multiplying those resources. So examples of key roles that may lead to multiplication of resource are: coaches and "network pioneers" (Merseyside terminology -



leaders who have the capacity to reproduce several projects).

#### Just a thought

in the research done by Christian Schwarz on Church Growth the variable (of the 170) from their 4.2 million answers which had the most significant relationship to church growth was "Our church consciously promotes the multiplication of small groups through cell division"

### E. Developing and expanding the prayer base

It is good at intervals to review the prayer activity behind the strategy for the formation of fresh expressions of Church and consider whether a new approach is needed, a new constituency engaged or a new means of communicating the need for prayer is possible.

### F. Engaging with existing structures to bring change

This will mean working for change in hearts and minds then policy and practice. The progression of thinking could be described as "moving from permission to blessing to paradigm shift". This will mean engagement with permission givers, training structures, policy makers, existing pioneers, and others. The Fresh Expressions national team have found that a constellation of approaches is effective in this respect: Prayer, vision casting, key conversations, serious theological debate, telling the stories/giving examples, informal e-newsletters, resourcing key individuals, engaging

those in specific "gate keeper" roles such as Circuit Superintendents, Diocesan Directors of Ordinands or training staff all have their part to play. It may involve drawing attention to examples of the fruit of national policy development (e.g.: Bishops Mission Orders) to see change and engagement. Communication and reporting is vital to maintaining support and formal reporting to denominational bodies such as Bishops councils and District Policy Committees all help to move engagement forwards.

#### Handy Tip

proceed with grace through the doors God opens, keep the vision of the mixed economy in mind and heart and be patient.

### G. Youth and young People

It is worth considering whether in your area this vital aspect of work will be covered by the strategic approach you are taking or whether there would be benefit from a focused track or permanent agenda item to ensure that it is properly addressed. At the least a conversation between those charged with the development of youth work in the denominations, the leaders of Christian youth agencies in your area and the strategy team to gain a comprehensive perspective on the current situation and possible future approaches would probably be most beneficial.

## 5. Resourcing the strategy

### A. Identifying new leaders

In any one area we need to determine how we will look to identify, equip and deploy new leaders of fresh expression of church. On a national basis we recognise that thousands of new leaders, both lay and ordained, will be needed to effect the transformation that we are looking for. We are certain that the main weight of work will be lay led as the resource of clergy is too small and costly to provide the number of pioneers necessary.

There are probably a number of key factors in identifying future leaders:

- Creating a climate that encourages pioneers into mission;
- Prayer for God to raise up pioneers;
- Keeping the vision and possibility of this kind of ministry visible;
- Looking to centres where growth and multiplication are evident i.e. 'Resource churches' to provide new leaders\*;
- Working with Diocesan Directors of Ordinands, Network leaders, District staff etc.

\* NB It is important to identify and work with these churches (of any denomination) as they may be able to help resource many elements of the strategy - from new leaders to training, coaching, prayer etc. This follows the principle of planting from life.

### B. Supporting practitioners

Good support maximises the resources already available and can focus on the need for Pioneers to call and train others - leading to multiplication. Important elements of Pioneer support will include:

- Coaching;
- Gatherings/learning networks;
- Good practice on finance;
- Conference attendance - Breakout \*, mission 21, etc.;
- The appropriate deployment of Bishops Mission Orders;
- Connecting to resources;
- Communication and networking;

\* Breakout is a Cambridge-based conference primarily to equip and support fresh expressions practitioners

### C. Finance and administration

So far the financial support for FEAST initiatives has come from the participating denominations on an event-by-event basis. Administrative support has tended to be found from within the group, often from that of the convener. Participant's fees for *msm* have in some areas been generously funded by denominations. In one area administrative support is now part of the role of the local Churches Together facilitator. It may be that further financial support for FEASTs could be drawn from District Advance Diocesan mission funds.

### D. The National team

Stephen Lindridge, the full time Methodist Fresh Expressions missionary has the national team role of supporting the establishment and development of FEASTs around the UK and is available for consultation, help and advice. Stephen has until recently chaired the FEAST in the North East and was responsible for creating the acronym.



## 6. Some stories so far

These are brief descriptions of the approaches taken in four different areas with contact details for further exploration/discussion:

### A. Merseyside

#### Contact

Phil Potter  
Director of Pioneer Ministry, Liverpool Diocese

#### The Structure

There is a core team (Mission opportunities group), established by the diocesan Bishop, which is developing and implementing strategy. This includes the Director of Pioneer ministry, church growth team leader, and members of the Bishop's Core group including the two Archdeacons and the Diocesan secretary (key person in this).

There are several other teams that gather regularly around a common missional focus, and cluster together once a term:

- Pioneer ministers;
- Emerging leaders (pioneer curates);
- Workplace network;
- DPA Urban network;
- City network;
- Emerging generation network;
- Lake and River churches (parish network);
- Area Deans (with a L&R mindset).

#### The Key Values

- Small size;
- Indigenous lay leadership;
- Reproducible models;
- Connection to inherited ("blended" economy);
- Seasonal mission movements

#### The Strategy

- To create and reproduce mixed economy local churches;
- To plant and multiply a variety of fresh expressions;
- To build a pioneer network, blending the two together.

#### The Process

To **model**, then **multiply**, then **mesh** together.

#### The Key Features

- **Three kinds of pioneer:** Traditional Parish Planting Pioneer, Deanery Pioneers, and Network Pioneers i.e. leaders who have the capacity to reproduce several projects;
- **12 ordained pioneers**, all planting, but also grafted into inherited churches in associate roles, all promoting a 'blended' economy;
- **Identifying churches with potential** and working with them including big churches. A resource church can be any size and will have the potential for reproduction. "Working with life from life";
- **Looking intentionally to renew** historic churches through development of 50/50 mixed economy model;
- **Lake** (settled communities) and **River** (flow anywhere and everywhere) themes. Adopted by diocese and some deaneries - even in the logo;
- **Spider's web theme.** A soft and flexible structure that doesn't replace but can be laid over an existing structure. Single threads are fragile and vulnerable, but together they form a structure that is strong, attractive, organic and functional;
- **Ecumenical strategy** has been slow (though being worked on) and so the major focus has initially been on diocesan strategy. There are 2 well established ecumenical mission initiatives on Merseyside (Together



for the Harvest' and 'SHINE'), but interest and engagement in 'fresh expression' thinking is a work in progress;

- **Coaching people** is the key, not putting on courses. 3 strands for training;
  - **School of Leadership**, established now since 2003, with 60 incumbents having gone through an intensive 12 month process;
  - **msi.** One person exclusively employed to role this out continuously in deaneries and parishes
  - **msm.** Looking to radically remodel and personalise for teams who are already and intentionally engaged in pioneer projects.
- **Recognition of 4 stages** that people move through in embracing the vision:
  - **Permission** - agreement - 'let it happen' - entrust - apprehension;
  - **Blessing** - encouragement - 'like it' - endorse - approval;
  - **Passion** - engagement - 'love it' - enthuse - affiliation;
  - **Paradigm Shift** - investment - 'live it' - enshrine - affinity.

## B. North East

### Contact

Stephen Lindridge  
Methodist missionary, Fresh Expressions

### Background

The starting point flowed out of NE1 (Merseyfest equivalent) with 200 churches involved. There were 100 afternoon projects across the North East coordinated by Steve Lindridge. Post-NE1, Sir Peter Vardy initiated a leadership forum which developed the relationships across the region. Subsequently the opportunity for 'Just 10' was possible, with 300 churches involved and working together.

As part of continuing momentum the intention was to establish *msm*, initially stuck in RTP but now moved on by gathering Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, URC and independent regional leaders and focusing on promoting missional thinking and emerging church. The mix includes some permission givers.

### The Strategy

- *msm* 2008 as pilot to train coaches for subsequent courses and projects. First full course Sept 2009;
- A regional day for fresh expressions network with 2 years ahead planned;
- Denominational groupings meet in their areas then all network together in the autumn;
- A conversation imminent with senior Roman Catholics

The plan is to strengthen links between networks over the next few years and facilitate more effective mission through training. FEAST may bring together the initiatives above and agencies working on discipleship.

There needs to be clear vision and purpose articulated and people will get on board. The most difficult issue is releasing people from structures and inherited mode.

## C. Kent

### Contact

Kerry Thorpe  
Mission enabler, Canterbury Diocese

### Background

No big cities at all and subject to both the London effect (Focus on the city and away from the county) and (from an Anglican perspective) the Archbishop effect (not often in the Diocese). There is no ecumenical structure which holds leaders together, so networking is ad hoc. Fresh Expressions now has a reasonably high profile in the Diocese, although take up is patchy.

### The Strategy

- Database of fresh expressions around the Canterbury Diocese, currently 41 projects (very broadly defined!) or fourteen on a much stricter definition;
- Biennial gathering of practitioners, usually about 35 people;
- Coaching/mission accompaniment are being established. An accompanier is offered to every new project and a wider team is being developed. Coaching is seen as a key element/doorway and a thread that runs through into the future;
- *msm* is now established on a wide ecumenical basis for Kent involving both Canterbury and Rochester dioceses. The partnership is Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Salvation Army and URC. Year one trained 52, year two starts in September 09;
- There have been four *vision days* across the area. Partly through these a relational network is developing. Relationships are seen as key;
- In Rochester Diocese the year one training for their order of Evangelists will be *msm*;

## D. Lincolnshire

### Contact

Pete Atkins  
Fresh Expressions

### Aims

The overall vision is to see the further establishment of the Kingdom of God in the Humber to the Wash region such that the region is transformed by the love and Power of God.

To see the Kingdom further established could be expressed as:

- People entering the Kingdom and joining Kingdom community;
- Communities of the Kingdom set within the communities of our area living out Kingdom values and demonstrating life of the Kingdom;
- The values of the Kingdom becoming the foundations of society thus seeing the culture change.

Our stated objective (expressed for around 30 years by Stuart Bell - leader of Ground Level Network) is to see a cell in every village, a congregation in every town and a celebration in the city from the Humber to the Wash

A strategic Church planting approach (cells and/or congregations) will, by grace of God, help towards the accomplishment of this objective.

### Principles

- Mission focus;
- Whole-church Strategy with Kingdom focus;
- Synergy between planting/renewal;
- Variety of models maximizes effectiveness and access;
- Benefits of regional approach;
- Responsible planting;
- Planting from life;
- Planting for the future;
- Planting not the entire "answer"

## Six integrated tracks

### 1. Leadership and vision

slow work at first. Churches Together in All Lincolnshire (CTAL) Presidents warmly received the strategy in 2003 but no substantive engagement emerged until the publication of Mission Shaped Church (msc) report. However the vision has been subsequently presented via "NOTEPAD", review days, conversations with permission givers etc. Then msc arrived and change began in main denominations - an Anglican then ecumenical team formed Chaired by the Diocesan Bishop, John Saxbee. This team has taken forward: Vision days in the Cathedral, an msi pilot and evening "road shows". There has also been one deanery half time Fresh Expressions appointment and in 2009 an Anglican Diocesan Fresh Expressions Enabler was appointed for 1 day per week. There was a Diocesan synod presentation in November 2008. Denominational leaders met to discuss and synergise their mission plans for the county December 2009.

### 2. Prayer

Initial team, "shields" for each site and an invitation to link with denominational prayer systems - for example the Diocesan prayer diary. We are now developing a web based prayer network hosted on the Churches Together in All Lincolnshire website.

### 3. Research

Baseline of Churches and ministries directory. 2005 - Church strength survey. Again for use as a baseline. The picture painted by research can (in classical DAWN thinking) lead to concerted action by providing a stimulus for change.

### 4. Equipping

Jan 2002 - First (pilot) Church planting school with Ground Level teams: Bob and Mary Hopkins contributed core

planting material. In 2005 we made considerable changes in the recruitment process - changing the name to mission shaped Leadership and explicitly aiming at those wanting to transition to more effective missional Church as well as those starting new initiatives. The course continued to evolve over the subsequent years in terms of content, teachers, culture, name and then with adoption and adaptation by Fresh Expressions in 2007. We have now had around 300 folk from the region through the course and are aiming for 500 initially.

### 5. Planting

Some is happening anyway, some encouraged/enabled or initiated by course attendance. So far examples are: Student congregation, village based churches/congregations and small village focussed teams, "Re:fresh" at RAF Cranwell, Bus ministry, a new community on the Carlton Estate (New housing), community congregations, Brigg replant, Café church Boston and Gainsborough, "Side Door" in Grimsby, the Kings Café in Stamford.

### 6. Youth and young people

Appointment of network youth development worker 2004 with matched funding for workers. CTAL "Youthworks" conference 2005.

### Resourcing

Many initiatives have been supported through the Anglican Mission Initiatives fund. Anglican participants' *msm* fees have been covered from the MIF, and two participants per circuit have been able to draw on the Methodist District Advance Fund for full course fees. Ground Level has invested in support for Church Plant leaders - through network mission giving and through Local Churches. In March 2009 CTAL appointed a Facilitator whose role includes administrative backup, events management, communication and resourcing for the Lincolnshire FEAST.

## The Future

Continued FEAST development:

- Denominational mission enablers meeting regularly to plan and deliver as of 2009;
- Prayer Network development: especially focus on identifying leaders;
- Delivering road shows across the county on an ongoing basis;
- Research: Survey of effect of *msm* so far and 5 year repeat of 2005 survey due 2010;
- Establish a Coaching network;
- Gather practitioners for support - first due November 2009;
- Rural focus - piloting *msm* Rural 2009/10;
- Youth movement development.



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