

Fresh Expressions in the UK – Church Planting Lessons to Be Learned for the Rest of Europe

Fresh Expressions began as a highly experimental attempt within the Church of England to answer the question, “what kind of churches should we be planting?” Since then it has been adopted by other denominations in the UK and is currently being explored by State churches in other European nations. This session will ask, what are the main principles that undergird Fresh Expressions, what evidence is there for its effectiveness, why is it proving to be successful as an approach to church planting and what elements are transferrable to other situations in Europe?

Martin Robinson is Principal and Chief Executive of Springdale College: Together in Mission. Martin was born in India of missionary parents and then brought up in Scotland where his father was a church planter. When Martin was in his early twenties he trained for the ministry, and his first church was in the inner city of Birmingham. This multi-ethnic congregation was engaged in church planting, and Martin together with his wife Lynda led one of the new church plants. After thirteen years in local ministry, Martin went to work for the Bible Society in the UK in a variety of roles. In a period he was the Director of Mission and Theology. Martin has written many books on the broad theme of mission, including *Faith of the Believer* and *Invading Secular Space*. In 2002 Martin became national director of Together in Mission.

1. Background story to Fresh Expressions

- a) Origins of the story
- b) Why “Fresh Expressions” and not just church planting?
- c) The need for a “mixed economy”
- d) Structural change alongside local experiment

2. Main elements in the strategy

- a) The provision of training
- b) Creating friends within the structures
- c) Developing a sense of “movement”
- d) Publications
- e) Research

3. Key findings

- a) The number and breadth of actual local experiments
- b) Evidence of growth
- c) Evidence of conversion growth
- d) Broader findings relating to leadership
- e) Deeper impact of a given Diocese

4. Transferrable lessons

- a) The need for strategy
- b) The importance of resource
- c) The significance of good leadership
- d) The value of research
- e) The vital need for recruitment and training
- f) The strategic need to invest in structural change

Useful resources:

Mission-Shaped Church by Rowan Williams, Fr Damian Feeney SSC, George Lings and Chris Neal, 2004

Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of a Church in a Changing Context by Graham Cray, 2009

Mission Shaped Evangelism: The Gospel in Contemporary Culture by Steve Hollinghurst, 2010

Mission-shaped Questions: Defining Issues for Today's Church (Explorations) by Bishop Lindsay Urwin, Canon Martin Warner SSC and Steven J.L. Croft, 2008

Planting Mission Shaped Churches Today by Dr. Martin Robinson, 2006