

Building a missional church: Week 4 – Changing Church

“How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”

(Psalm 137:4)

Talk about your first experiences of church - and what excites or frustrates you about your current experience.

What are the essential elements of something that is 'church'?

Listen to Graham Cray speaking about [“What is church”](#). (6 mins)

What are the essentials that are needed for a Christian group or fellowship to be recognized as a proper church and not just an event? What parts of our current practice could be changed or compromised to allow the gospel to flourish?

What are Fresh Expressions

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. There is no single model, but the emphasis is on starting something which is appropriate to its context, rather than cloning something that works elsewhere.

Over 3,000 now exist in almost every denomination and tradition in the UK. A fresh expression of church will:

- serve those outside church;
- listen to people and enter their context;
- make discipleship a priority: journeying with people to Jesus;
- form church.

The description above was taken from the website <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/> where you can find out more.

See [here](#) (8 mins) for insights by a number of missionaries in the Church of England involved with Fresh Expressions of church.

If you have a little more time you might want to listen to testimonies [here](#) (6 mins) of how Fresh Expressions have made a difference and changed lives.

The aim is not to provide a way into existing church, but to form new churches in their own right. In the past our evangelism has often been seen as building stepping stones for others to come to us; **how can we turn that around and look for stepping stones to take us out into the mission field that surrounds us?**

If you want to look at some more detailed statistics than those we saw in Week 1, then the figures [here](#) shows why it’s vital we just don’t keep repeating church as it’s been for the last 150 years.

Church for the unchurched

“I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”

(1 Cor 9:22)

“The church is the only society that exists for the sake of those who are not its members”

(William Temple)

Do Christians today expect others to become like them? **What changes might we have to make if we were to fully follow William Temple’s words and be a church established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church?**

Reflecting – and acting

“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.”

(Isaiah 1:17)

“For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”

(Luke 22:27)

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

(John 13:35)

Choose one of these passages relating to our mission:

- Called to service: Matthew 25:31-41
- Called to bring about justice: Luke 1:46-55
- Called to make disciples: Matthew 28:16-20

Read the text aloud, wait a short while in quiet and then read it again

Which of our current activities (include both what church members do at work or through volunteering and what we do as a congregation) respond to the challenge of the passage.

Compare this with what we found out about our local community last week. **Who do we not contact?**

Do we have the capacity or calling to reach them – perhaps through supporting individuals or jointly as a congregation? If ‘Yes’, how could we start?

We’ll look a second of these passages next week

Closing reflection

As a closing thought reflect on the ways Jesus is “what the world is waiting for” as you listen to [this song](#). (6 mins)