

54. Fresh Ways Working Group

1 *Introduction*

- 1.1 The Blackpool Conference of 2007 affirmed and encouraged the priority of developing fresh ways of being church and the many and various ways in which this priority is being taken forward in the life of the Connexion.
- 1.2 The Conference directed the Methodist Council to bring annual reports to the Conference from 2008 to 2013 detailing progress made in encouraging the priority of developing fresh ways of being church and with detailed guidance on how this can be further encouraged including any necessary changes to Standing Orders. This is the first of these reports.
- 1.3 In October 2007 the Methodist Council approved the constitution of a Fresh Ways Working Group to oversee the development of the 2007 resolutions and to produce the annual reports to Conference. The members of the group are:

Andrew Wood (Chair), Peter Pillinger (Convener), Sylvester Deigh, Daniella Fetuga-Joensuu, Gareth Hill, Margaret Jones, Peter Phillips, Ruth Poch, Andrew Roberts, Angela Shier-Jones.

2 *What are Fresh Expressions?*

- 2.1 A working definition (below) has been developed by the Fresh Expressions initiative and is becoming normative. It highlights the intent for fresh expressions to develop into mature or full expressions of church. In this processing of maturing every aspect of church life will need to be considered and developed.

'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.'*

- 2.2 Fresh Expressions was initiated as a response to a report to the General Synod of our Covenant partner church, the Church of England, called *mission-shaped church*.¹ The Methodist Church participated in the writing of this report through our Secretary for Church Planting and Evangelism Policy. This report contains foundational material for the understanding of fresh expressions including theology and missiology.

¹ *mission-shaped church* can be accessed at:
http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/papers/mission_shaped_church.pdf

54. Fresh Ways Working Group

- 2.3 The *mission-shaped church* report notes the diversity of fresh expressions. It includes the following in its list of types of fresh expression:
- Alternative worship communities, base ecclesial communities, café church, cell church, churches arising out of community initiatives, multiple and midweek congregations, network focussed congregations, school based and school linked congregations and churches, seeker church, traditional church plants, traditional forms of church inspiring new interest, youth congregations.
- The Fresh Expressions initiative has helpfully added a further category of ‘children’s fresh expressions’.
- 2.4 We believe *mission-shaped church* should be more widely read and studied by the Methodist people alongside Methodist documents about the nature of the church and, specifically: *Called to Love and Praise* (1999), *Our Calling* (2000) and *Priorities of the Methodist Church* (2004).
- 2.5 The Conference statement, ‘*Called to Love and Praise*’ states:
- ‘In the New Testament, the understanding of the Church’s life and mission which derived from Jesus is developed in a rich variety of ways. This diversity is itself an important testimony to the multi-faceted nature of the Church; it does not, however, obscure the fundamental underlying unity (2.3).*
- 2.6 The contemporary development of diverse fresh expressions of church continues a long tradition which is itself a reflection of the diverse nature of God’s mission and God’s creation and the diversity in unity of the Trinity.
- 2.7 The working group has ongoing work regarding the relationship between the terms ‘fresh expressions of church’ and ‘fresh ways of being church’.
- 2.8 The working group has set up a blog web site www.freshways.org.uk to encourage conversations about its work and the development of fresh ways of being church. Among these conversations is one on *Called to Love and Praise* in the light of the development of fresh expressions. More general conversations regarding fresh expressions of church can be found on the Share website www.sharetheguide.co.uk.

In the Bloxwich and Willenhall Circuit one church decided to close its Sunday evening service attended by around twelve people. A new service meeting on a Thursday in the early evening was started. Around 40 people including families with children now attend. Very little financial cost was involved.

The Wesley Playhouse in Howden Clough is also engaging with many young people. The fresh expression which includes a Fair Trade café and a substantial indoor play area involved an investment of around £100K much of which came from non-church sources.

<http://www.thisisit.me.uk/>

54. *Fresh Ways Working Group*

3 *Good news to celebrate*

- 3.1 Fresh ways of being church continue to develop across the Connexion, demonstrating a renewed commitment to mission and bringing hope and new life. A range of fresh expressions is emerging traversing spectrums of demography, geography and theology. Initiatives range from the creative re-imagining of activities to major missional initiatives supported by significant grants.
- 3.2 146 Methodist schemes have been registered with the Fresh Expressions website directory (www.freshexpressions.org.uk) as of March 6th 2008. Conversations with Districts and Circuits indicate that significantly more fresh expressions are being developed or considered².

re:generation in the Romford circuit is thriving youth church led by Deacons Jamie and Ruth Poch. re:generation takes discipleship very seriously and has a range of approaches to help young people grow in faith.

<http://www.regenerationchurch.co.uk/index.html>

- 3.3 Some fresh expressions are proving to be particularly effective at engaging with the 'missing generations' of children, young people and young adults. Others are reaching older people as well.
- 3.4 Within fresh expressions the need to form and nurture Christian disciples is being taken seriously. The value of the small group in making disciples is being demonstrated in many fresh expressions. The Methodist report *Time to Talk of God* notes the importance of such small groups. Such small groups are a key part of Methodist historical formation.
- 3.5 Fresh expressions are being seen, celebrated and resourced in other denominations and streams as well. The strategic development and support of fresh expressions is often ecumenical and in many places gives visible expression to the Anglican/Methodist Covenant.

The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District has partnered with the Lichfield Diocese to create a pioneer post in Wolverhampton. Richard Moy has been employed to create a fresh expression of church amongst the young adults of the city centre.

- 3.6 The ecumenical environment of Scotland and Wales is different from that in England. Fresh Expressions is an initiative of the Church of England. We note with joy the recent appointment by the Church of Scotland of the Revd David Currie to a post with responsibility for development of the equivalent of fresh expressions in that church. We note that Fresh Expressions has also initiated conversations about fresh expressions with Synod Cymru and the Wales Synod and that the mission shaped ministry course is to run in Cardiff.

2 Visits by members of the Fresh Expressions team to the Bolton and Rochdale, East Anglia, South East and Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury Districts suggest the actual number of fresh expressions is three to five times the number registered.

54. *Fresh Ways Working Group*

- 3.7 Alongside the stories of flourishing fresh expressions there are also stories of new initiatives that have ceased or have not achieved what was intended. Such short-term fresh expressions may illustrate poor practice and are opportunities for learning. They may have achieved, in a short time, what God intended for them.

4 *Structural and Institutional challenges and opportunity*

From its beginnings, Methodism has been pragmatic in its approach to questions of church structure and order. Its own order and discipline emerged largely as the result of a series of *ad hoc* experiments. They were created in the 'missionary' situation of the eighteenth century, and the legacy of this has been a tendency to subordinate church order to, and to deploy church resources in response to, the missionary needs of the Church. This is, or should be, a particular strength of a 'connexional' Church, in which there is a common recognition that all are parts of a larger whole.

Called to Love and Praise

- 4.1 The development of fresh ways of being church raises questions for *all* expressions of church. What does it mean to be church? Are all expressions of church within the connexion alive with all of the marks of the church?

- 4.2 Methodism understands the Circuit to be a key unit for mission. This provides considerable scope and opportunity for the strategic development of fresh expressions. Following conversations with the Fresh Ways Working Group the Faith and Order committee are currently developing a paper on 'What is a Circuit?'

There is considerable flexibility already possible under current Standing Orders – the Spirit can and does move through existing Standing Orders. Lack of flexibility can be in how Standing Orders are interpreted. The opportunities afforded by present structures and Standing Orders however do not mean that courageous structural and institutional changes may not be needed. The need for such changes will often be identified at grass roots level.

"The mixed economy... will best be undertaken by historic denominations through strategic and intentional management, rather than incidentally or accidentally and, whenever possible, regionally and nationally as well as locally. Fresh expressions are not produced simply by top-down decisions, but they are significantly encouraged and enabled when denominational authorities work with rather than against the will of the Holy Spirit"

Martyn Atkins³

3 Martyn Atkins, *Resourcing Renewal*, Inspire 2007 p64.

54. *Fresh Ways Working Group*

4.3 Particular issues are emerging within Methodist fresh expressions as they develop. The following are extracted from consultations with fresh expressions practitioners:

- There is a sense of missional urgency in fresh expressions that needs to be channelled effectively without process cooling passion. This is paralleled by a perceived slowness in structural change and policy reform.
- There is an ongoing need for those in fresh expressions to be listened to well.
- The ratio of resources committed to established churches and fresh expressions is strongly weighted towards established churches.
- The development of 'light touch' ecumenical instruments, envisaged in *mission-shaped Church*, is a perceived need of many fresh expressions practitioners.
- There are pressures to conform to a standard view of what church should look like. Many a fresh expression leader has been asked, 'This is wonderful but when we will see people on Sunday?'
- The sacramental life of those involved in fresh ways of being Church, including, for example, the question of who can and should preside at Holy Communion, is a particular issue for many.⁴
- The relationship between membership and representation on the decision-making bodies of a Local Church and Circuit, including the place of a fresh expression on the circuit plan. One fresh expressions practitioner recently said '*Stop giving people freedom then telling them how to use it.*'

"If Church Councils hold the decision making powers over fresh expressions, by their very nature the fresh expressions are not likely to have people who qualify to be members of the Church Council. It does not seem right that a 'traditional' Church Council should have executive authority over a fresh expression. On the other hand a fresh expression needs to be accountable if it is genuinely part of the Body of Christ, but there is a difference between accountability and control. The twin dangers I see are that, on the one hand, Church Councils could decide to close down what they perceive as 'experiments' because they are not 'bringing people into church' and on the other, fresh expressions could hive off independently and become virtually separate denominations."

Graham Carter, President of the Conference 2006/7

⁴ This is explored in an anglo-catholic context in the diocese of Chichester in chapter 3 of the recent publication '*Mission Shaped Questions*' 2008, Church House Publishing, London. This book also contains chapters by Methodists Martyn Atkins, James Dunn and David Wilkinson.

54. Fresh Ways Working Group

5 Matters being addressed by the Fresh Ways Working Group

- 5.1 The Conference of 2007 directed the Methodist Council to develop particular guidance for:
- the stationing and deployment of lay and ordained people to begin and sustain fresh expressions of church (working with the Stationing Committee)
 - the identification and training of suitably gifted lay people, deacons and presbyters, to begin fresh expressions of church
 - the appropriate and wise development and recognition of fresh expressions of church within Circuits and Districts.
- 5.1.1 The Working Group is attending to each of the above in collaboration with four other key matters:
- consideration of the theological foundations of fresh expressions
 - the furthering of robust research into the missional effectiveness of fresh expressions
 - the future development of the Fresh Expressions initiative (see 7.3 below)
 - whether a review of the ecumenical instruments is needed in the context of fresh expressions to enable them to be more ‘light-touch’.
- 5.1.2 We are currently developing the guidance mentioned in 5.1 above and expect to be able to develop these matters of guidance interactively through www.freshways.org.uk and with other parts of the Methodist Church by other means including paper based. We expect to be able to present such guidance to the Council for approval during 2008/09. It has not proved possible to do the appropriate consultation across the connexion and bring such guidelines to this Conference.

5.2 Theological Foundations

- 5.2.1 The Methodist Church was born in mission and its structures were established in order to promote mission. The Connexion, with its core identity as a gathering of societies, is structured therefore not for maintenance but for mission. Moreover, as the denomination has experienced considerable decline, its awareness of its missional identity has increased. This is not surprising. Methodism’s heritage within the evangelical revival and its involvement in social renewal movements ever since, means that our Standing Orders require the denomination to reflect constantly on its need to express that mission within its contemporary context. So, over the last decade, the Methodist Conference has agreed major statements about the identity of the Methodist Church, a full expression of its ecclesiology and the principle of connexionality, in *Called to Love and Praise* (1999) and its priorities and purposes in *Our Calling* (2000) and *Priorities of the Methodist Church* (2004). Another important document in exploring the missional heart of Methodism is *Mapping a Way Forward* (2007), although this document has not been formally discussed at the Conference. What the Conference has explicitly expressed is its commitment to the Fresh Expressions initiative in terms of practical encouragement and in the secondment of personnel and resources

54. *Fresh Ways Working Group*

and in its reception of the resource *Changing Church for a Changing World* (2007). Throughout these documents, the Methodist Church has shown its commitment to move forwards in the continual process of renewal that derives its impulse from the fact that the God whom we worship is ever-new.

- 5.2.2 On these terms, the Methodist Church should have few problems accepting fresh expressions as the fruit of worship and discipleship and as the work of God in our midst. The Faith and Order Committee are developing a paper focusing on *The Missional Nature of the Circuit*, which explores how this is expressed in the history and polity of the Church, and how this missional nature can be extrapolated to both the local church and to the District and wider Connexion. *What is a Presbyter?* (2002), *What is a Deacon?* (2004), *What is a Circuit Superintendent?* (2005), and *Releasing Ministers for Ministry* (2002) all express the need for a missional approach to ordained ministry.
- 5.2.3 As such, fresh expressions need not be a problem which we need to solve, but rather a natural expression of what we believe church to be, a natural expression of Methodism's constant need to respond to what the Spirit is doing in the world. There have, of course, been other attempts made through the years to encourage the development of other fresh expressions, through measures made to enable house congregations in the late 1980s, and the Standing Orders relating to the formation of new classes, and the Connexional Team's commitment to Church Planting. Methodism's foundation within the tradition of religious societies means that we are well equipped to embrace and develop the opportunities offered by fresh expressions of Church.
- 5.2.4 However, there can be no doubt that fresh expressions *are* unsettling, not because they are outside of Methodist structures or understanding as shown above, but because they unsettle the picture of what we tend to think established Methodism is and because they seem to lack the boundaries that enable us to contain and control them through our established authority structures and buildings. So, fresh expressions tend to be church in the original sense of gathering or society, rather than as a definable chapel or geographical community within a neat circuit boundary. Fresh expressions also tend to have a different locus of power and authority. It is thus a whole set of issues which lead Methodists to be wary of fresh expressions – they just don't seem to fit established methods and rules. Although, as we have seen, it may well be our interpretation and understanding of what established Methodism is, rather than our theology and polity.
- 5.2.5 Another issue relates to the sense that fresh expressions focus too much on the needs of those who attend rather than to other aspects of ecclesiology. A delicate balance is needed between church meeting the needs of those who attend and church providing an experience which transcends the needs of the individual worshipper. Church is not an individualistic experience and nor should it be confused with a consumer experience. Fresh expressions are a wonderful opportunity to move beyond the mundane and to enter into an experience of ecclesial community which stretches back thousands of years and which offers a new dimension of human existence.

54. *Fresh Ways Working Group*

Such a vision is imperiled when any form of church, fresh or inherited, simply becomes a club of like-minded consumers.

- 5.2.6 One other issue relates to the entrepreneurial leadership which is at times associated with fresh expressions. Of course, not all fresh expressions are led by lone pioneers. Fresh ways of being Church are being pioneered under many different forms of leadership, lay and ordained, male or female, salaried or volunteer, team or individual. Methodists are properly wary of the (ab)use of power and so have developed appropriate processes of oversight which need to be addressed throughout fresh ways of being church, irrespective of their leadership, whether it is lay or ordained. Of course, such oversight can also be used to stifle new growth and so the Church will be faced with allowing the development of pioneering work whilst also making sure that leadership is accountable and appropriate. One way to develop this awareness is through training, such as Fresh Expressions' 'Mission-Shaped Ministry' course, or through the new initiatives in pioneer/fresh ways ministry training being developed across the Regional Training Partnerships. Such initiatives, of course, need to be available to the whole people of God, lay and ordained.
- 5.2.7 In other words, our exploration of the theological foundations needs to take seriously the ministry of the whole people of God – and to take seriously the potential of lay-led congregations and lay-pioneered fresh expressions. This fits Methodist history and polity but may need more careful integration into contemporary structures. The Methodist Church has explored the role of the ordained in some depth over recent years. However, we may need to explore more deeply our theology of charism and power, authority and accountability specifically in terms of the apostolic. In other words, do we need to raise the question of whether the apostolic nature of ministry has been given sufficient scope for expression in the Methodist Church, or whether it is subsumed within pastoral, educational or evangelistic aspects of ministry? On the other hand, it may well be argued that this has already been achieved through reports such as *The Nature of Oversight*. It is clear, however, that there are diverse models of ministry within the New Testament and we may need to look again at paradigms such as Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 4 to understand a theology of apostolicity more closely. As the Church develops its experience of fresh ways of being church, as well as its theological reflection of these, it is clear that the one will affect the other – experience will affect our theology just as our theology will, hopefully, inform our experience. An understanding of both, experience and theology, will be needed as we develop appropriate forms of church and ministry for a new and continually developing context.

5.3 *Stationing and deployment.*

- 5.3.1 Across the connexion there is an increase in the number of circuit fresh expressions posts - lay, diaconal and presbyteral. There is a need for proper recognition and resourcing of such posts. We have been informed of situations where such posts have been put under pressure by circuit staffing changes. Where such posts exist, particularly where they are funded by connexional or district grants, there is a need to define and ring-fence the boundaries of the post.

54. *Fresh Ways Working Group*

We would encourage thinking that sees such posts as normal rather than exceptional, an integrated part of circuit life rather than an optional extra.

- 5.3.2 The Fresh Ways Working Group welcomes the work of the Stationing Review Group. We believe that encouraging the church to be flexible enough for the development of fresh expressions of church will need some matters to be further developed over the next five years. This is particularly true in looking seriously at the stationing needs presented by fresh expressions of church.

5.4 *Identifying and training of suitably gifted people*

‘The identification and training of suitably gifted lay people, deacons and presbyters to begin fresh expressions of church’ is being addressed from several different angles.

- 5.4.1 It is important to remember that leadership in pioneer settings does not necessarily lie with the ordained: Methodism has a distinctive emphasis on lay leadership. The identification of suitably gifted lay people takes place at local level and their training is resourced directly by the Circuits and Districts.
- 5.4.2 The identification of people for ordained ministry is a connexional responsibility *shared with Districts and Circuits*. The Ministerial Candidates Selection Committee (MCSC) is working within the existing selection criteria to take account of those areas that particularly indicate suitability for pioneer ministries.

The working group noted the increased prominence given to evangelism and church planting skills in the equivalent criteria of our covenant partner church as well as the development of a specific Ordained Pioneer Ministry stream which adds to the normal criteria ‘proven skills in development of fresh expressions of church’.

The Training Strategy and Resources Executive (TSRE) proposes to do further work on the selection criteria. It would be helpful if selection committees at both district and connexional level contain people who understand fresh expressions.

- 5.4.3 The establishment of the Methodist Training Forums means that it will be possible to co-ordinate training for lay and ordained (across more than one District if appropriate) and to make wider use of the expertise and resources of institutions which until now have focused solely on training for ordained ministry.
- 5.4.4 Several of these institutions are already offering or developing courses with a fresh expressions element. In addition the Fresh Expressions ‘mission shaped ministry’ course is becoming available in an increasing number of centres (20 by January 2009) and in some has university accreditation. Equally significant is the extent to which a fresh expressions ‘flavour’ is permeating all ministerial training. This is reinforced by the conviction that Methodism itself has always been a mission movement. Training must also take into account the breadth of ‘fresh ways of being church’ and the need to prepare students for lifelong service in a variety of church settings.

54. *Fresh Ways Working Group*

- 5.4.5 The Training Forums offer opportunities for developing the kind of 'situated' initial training (where a person combines the practice of ministry with formal training) that is particularly appropriate in some emerging church settings.
- 5.4.6 Learning about developing fresh ways of being church does not belong solely to initial training, and is often not best placed there. A calling to fresh expressions work may be the response to situations encountered as ministry develops. There is a growing need for high-quality training, coaching and mentoring for deacons and presbyters who find themselves called in this way. Once again the new training structures offer the opportunity to co-ordinate such training, coaching and mentoring according to the needs discerned within Circuits and Districts. This will enable good use to be made of local expertise, as well as offering a means of co-ordination with the connexional Pioneer Ministries project. Distance and on-line learning, already available from a range of sources, can have a significant role here.
- 5.4.7 An increasing number of training institutions, Methodist and other, are offering MA courses in fresh expressions/emerging church.
- 5.4.8 Methodism has always affirmed the values of lay ministries. Through fresh expressions there is the potential for a new generation of lay leaders to emerge.

Tubestation reaches surfers and skateboarders through its unique beachside location in Polzeath, North Cornwall, and radically altered interior with skateboard ramp replacing the pulpit. The winter congregation of five is now around 35, mostly under 40. Six baptisms in the sea have taken place since the summer. www.tubestation.org

5.5 *Development and recognition within Circuits and Districts.*

- 5.5.1 The majority of Districts are seriously engaged with the priority 'encouraging fresh ways of being church'.

In some areas ecumenical FEASTeams are being formed. FEAST=Fresh Expressions Area Strategy Team. *In Lincolnshire the FEAST is convened by the Bishop of Lincoln and includes Anglican, Methodist, URC and GroundLevel Network participants. It has the support of the participant denominations and is guided by an Area Strategy - 'A cell in every village, a congregation in every town and a celebration in every city'. The resources of all participant denominations and streams are being made available to assist the development of fresh expressions of church in the area including the Lincoln offering of Mission Shaped Ministry.*

In Greater Manchester, the Manchester and Stockport and Bolton and Rochdale Districts have joined with the Diocese of Manchester to send representatives, including the Chairs and Diocesan Bishop, and a number of pioneer ministers to a gathering that meets four times a year to look at:-

54. *Fresh Ways Working Group*

- the strategy for fresh expressions in the region;
- training;
- the use of and sharing of resources.

- 5.5.2 An increasing number of Circuits are designating some or all of the time of a staff member to the development of fresh ways of being church. While we know that this is true the number of such posts is changing rapidly and we do not know how many there are at the time of writing.
- 5.5.3 While we know of such posts we also know of some such posts which have been reduced due to pressures of staff changes and others which are under pressure.

6 *Research*

- 6.1 The Fresh Ways working group recognises the need for robust research in to the missional effectiveness of fresh expressions. There is a particular need to establish how effective fresh expressions are in making more followers of Jesus Christ (the ‘Our Calling’ interpretation of evangelism).
- 6.1.1 Research is being done by the evangelism and church planting office, Fresh Expressions, and various academic bodies. We have identified a need for a dedicated research project to determine the missional effectiveness of fresh expressions in Methodism. Where are members of fresh expressions of church coming from? How many are from other churches? How many from the ‘non-churched’? What motivates pioneers to start fresh expressions?

7 *The Fresh Expressions initiative*

- 7.1 The Methodist Church has continued to benefit from its covenant partnership with the Church of England in the work of Fresh Expressions.
- 7.2 The Fresh Expressions initiative acts as an agency supported by the Methodist Church which has been given a remit to help the Methodist Church develop its priority ‘encouraging fresh ways of being church’. The Fresh Expressions Initiative core team includes a seconded Connexional Team member.
- 7.2.2 Fresh Expressions has served Methodism in the following ways:
- as an accompanist to the Methodist Church, honestly reflecting back to the church on progress made by the church in developing fresh ways of being church
 - as an ecumenical instrument, ensuring working harmony in the development of fresh ways of being church with our covenant partner church and others
 - as a provider of training through the three levels of Fresh Expressions training – Vision Days, mission shaped intro and mission shaped ministry – and through specific training by invitation of theological training institutions, Districts and Circuits
 - as a conduit for the sharing of good news.

54. Fresh Ways Working Group

- 7.2.3 Fresh Expressions is called to work with/alongside
- the Secretary for Church Planting and Evangelism Policy in the support of Methodists called by God to develop fresh ways of being church
 - Formation in Ministry in the development of suitable contextual training for people called to work in developing fresh ways of being church
 - Districts and Circuits in the wise development of fresh expressions of church
 - the Stationing Committee in guiding the development of stationing policy for such expressions
 - all other parts of the church where their work is involved in the development of fresh ways of being church.

7.3 Fresh Expressions Phase 2

- 7.3.1 Fresh Expressions was established in 2004 as an Archbishops' initiative supported by the Methodist Council and with a brief to encourage mission through fresh expressions of church within a mixed economy church.
- 7.3.2 The strategic goal of Fresh Expressions is to see fresh expressions of church established and flourishing in every part of the Church of England and the Methodist Church as part of a mixed economy of church life.
- 7.3.3 The long term aim of the Fresh Expressions initiative is that the vision, wisdom and skill to begin fresh expressions of church becomes a normal part of the ongoing life of local churches, dioceses, Districts and the denominations. Fresh Expressions estimates that a further five years of leadership by a central initiative and core team is sufficient to bring us to the point where this goal is achieved.
- 7.4 In October 2007 Fresh Expressions launched *Share*, an online guide to fresh expressions of church. *Share* is a resource for people leading and supporting fresh expressions of church.

The practical wisdom the church needs to develop fresh ways of being church is being learned in hundreds of different settings. Via www.sharetheguide.org this wisdom is being gathered and made available to anyone who needs to know.

The Terminus Café in the Sheffield District and Fellowship@Grannies in the Nottingham and Derby District are two of the Methodist stories explored on <i>Share</i> .
--

- 7.5 The *Mission Shaped Ministry* course (MSM) is a one year course designed to equip those leading or seeking to develop fresh expressions of church or help their existing church to become more mission shaped.
- 7.5.1 MSM is being offered in 12 centres with over 450 participants and a high level of Methodist involvement. By January 2009 MSM will be offered in 20 locations. Fresh expressions aims to support enough partnerships offering MSM to make it available within one hour travelling throughout England and is exploring methods of provision for Wales and Scotland.

54. *Fresh Ways Working Group*

'The MSM course was stimulating, challenging and thought provoking; a powerful training resource for ministry in all its shapes and forms'.

Revd Michael Redshaw participant on the Lincoln course

- 7.6 *Vision Days* continue to introduce people to the vision, values and experience of fresh expressions. Over 3500 Christians⁵, including many Methodists, have been inspired by these events and have gone on to undertake further training or to start a fresh expression.

'I've been waiting for day like this for ages. The subjects that were discussed have been what I've wanted to do but I didn't know how to go forward. It has given me lots to think and pray about. I'm very excited.'

Eileen Bamford, Methodist, at the Stoke-on-Trent Vision Day

- 7.7 January 2008 *Mission Shaped Intro* (MSI) was launched. MSI is a six week introductory course designed especially for local church groups. It looks at fresh expressions of church through a mix of teaching, activity, reflection and story. The course is available as a free download from www.freshexpressions.org.uk/missionshapedintro.

- 7.8 Substantive theological issues relating to fresh expressions were examined in the *Hard Questions* tour. The series of lectures included contributions from Methodist theologians Martyn Atkins, James Dunn and David Wilkinson. The lectures have been published in *Mission Shaped Questions* (London, Church House Publishing, 2008).

- 7.9 The Fresh Expressions initiative has reported to Methodist Council, most recently in February 2008. Full details of the report to the council can be accessed at <http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=opentogod.content&cmid=1943>

The Council was supportive of the second phase of Fresh Expressions and appreciative of the work already done.

- 7.9.1 In March 2008, the Methodist Church, through its Strategy and Resources Committee, approved Methodist support for phase 2 of Fresh Expressions.

8 **Hope and challenge.**

Fresh expressions continue to be a major source of hope in challenging times. Their development continues to raise major theological, missiological and ecclesiological questions for *all* expressions of church. They raise particular questions for Methodism in the 21st century. Can the church hear what the Spirit is saying? What is God calling the people called Methodists to be and do in these days to fulfil their calling?

Whatever the future holds, it is vital that a vision for the Church – and for each local church – should be inspired and maintained by Scripture and

5 Between September 2006 and June 2008.

54. *Fresh Ways Working Group*

tradition, by contemporary experience and need, and, not least, by the Holy Spirit firing imagination, mind and heart.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 54/1. The Conference receives the Report.
- 54/2. The Conference directs the Methodist Council to receive and approve the guidelines to be produced by the Fresh Expressions Working Group as described in paragraph 5.1.
- 54/3. The Conference commends the report '*mission-shaped church*'⁶ to the Methodist people for study and discussion alongside the Methodist statement '*Called to Love and Praise*' and the documents: '*Our Calling*' and '*Priorities of the Methodist Church*'.
- 54/4. The Conference encourages every Circuit to consider in the light of this report, the Faith and Order paper *The Missional Nature of the Circuit* (Agenda p 98) and Standing Order 500 how best to provide resources for the initiation and development of fresh expressions of church, including how staff time might be allocated and ring-fenced for that purpose.

6 Mission Shaped Church can be accessed at:
http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/papers/mission_shaped_church.pdf