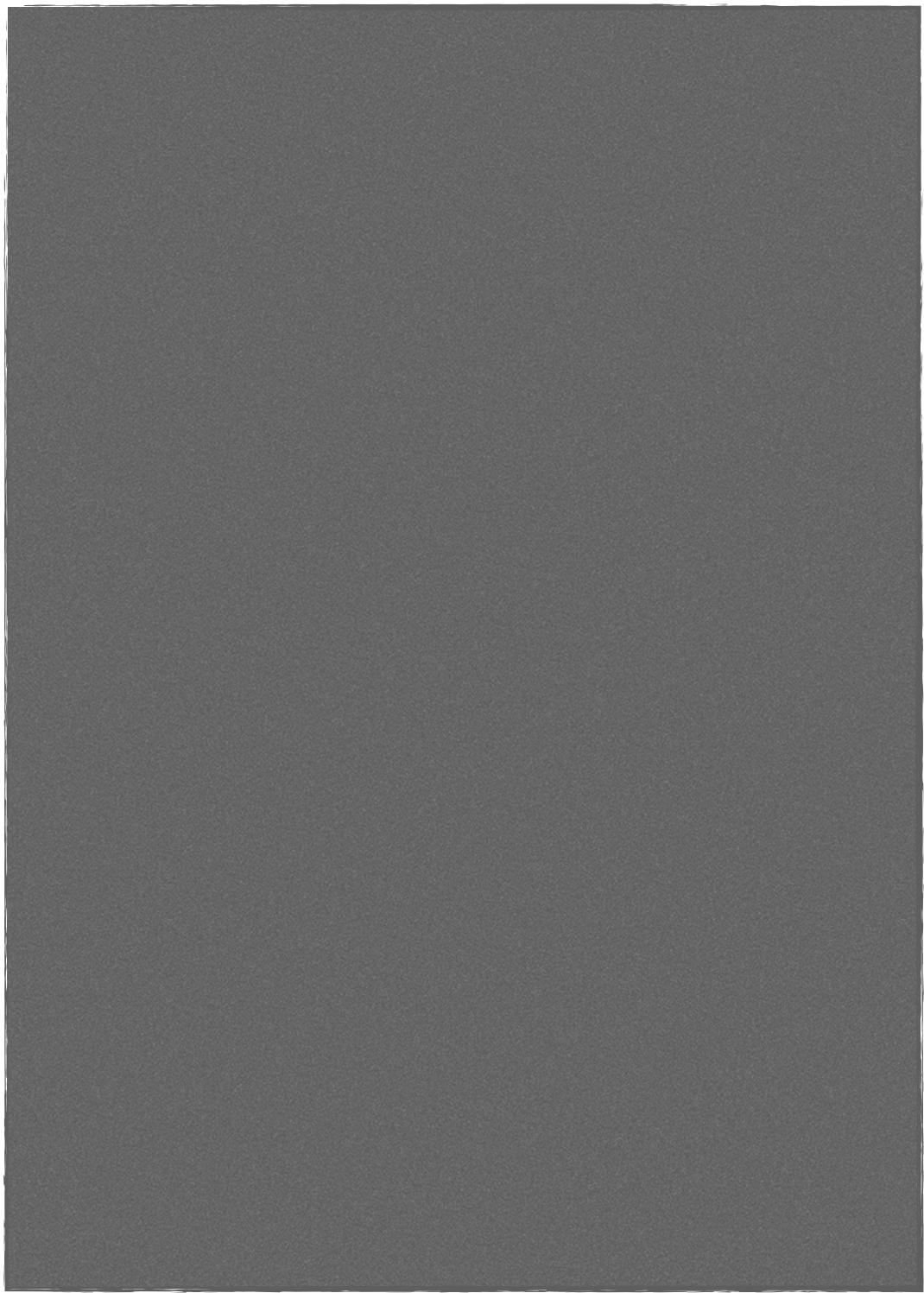


Fresh Expressions and Pioneering in Cumbria







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Foreword by Bishop Emma Ineson



I am very much looking forward to joining you in Cumbria as the Bishop of Penrith, alongside Bishop James, next spring. One of the things that has appealed to me about the Diocese of Cumbria is your wholehearted commitment to mission and to sharing the love of Christ with everyone in the county.

The expansive inter-denominational vision of God for All: “to see every person in Cumbria of all ages and backgrounds having an opportunity to discover more of God and God’s purpose for their lives, so that they will discover more of Jesus and the Good News and become followers of Jesus within a Christian community” has captured my attention and heart, and is one of the reasons I am so excited about coming to join you. But it is a big vision and quite a challenge. That is why we need different approaches to reach different people.

Conversations about mission can sometimes sound scary and be steeped in jargon, but this helpful guide seeks to de-mystify and explain what is meant by Fresh Expressions, to show how they fit into the overall mission of the church, and how important they are in reaching everyone with the good news of Jesus. The challenge is to go where people are, in their everyday lives as Jesus did, to meet them face to face, drawing them into the community of followers of Jesus.



Introduction by Richard Passmore

Fresh Expressions Enabler Cumbria

These are exciting times for Fresh Expressions in Cumbria, last year we recorded 99 Fresh Expressions (FX) across the county, and saw some key themes begin to emerge, from FXs in education and outdoors, to working in economically deprived communities to alternative spirituality. We're also seeing a variety of FX that are embedding themselves deeper into local culture which have a more **pioneering edge**. Change is happening and now begins the hard part: working out how this will look in practical terms. Although there is a lot of potential, logically it's not always easy to deliver. With existing structures and ecumenical working, the way forward is complex to navigate. Each year we have several hundred groups identifying as a Fresh Expression but who don't meet the FX criteria, which we outline later in this booklet. However this growth and creativity around mission **opens up new possibilities** and the opportunity to hear from different voices across the county. What is encouraging is to see so many embracing new ways of doing church, many led by lay workers. One of the challenges we face is how to recognise, train and support lay leaders and we are exploring developing a new partnership with Church Mission Society to help us in this.

We hope this booklet goes some way to explain the main elements of what a Fresh Expression is, pulling together information from the national Fresh Expressions website and drawing on central mission concepts. I have tried to outline how these new forms of church are a vital resource in effectively engaging the whole county. We will look at the developmental stages, as well as the four key marks that make up a Fresh Expression of Church. The diagram at the centre of the booklet brings these principles together and explores how they interconnect.

Church as we know it is great for the people it is currently engaging, but we have to recognise that as culture has shifted, the potential reach of the established church is limited. It is a myth to think Christians can reach their friends, who then reach their friends and so on, because in reality we tend to hang out with people like us. Fresh Expressions take us beyond these limits and challenges us to build community in new ways and places, to discover fresh opportunities to connect with God and one another.



What is a Fresh Expression of Church?

Fresh Expressions of church are pretty much what they say on the tin
- they are about being and growing church in a fresh way

A Fresh Expression of church is a new gathering or network that engages mainly with people who have never been to church.

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



Here in Cumbria we already have a host of different Fresh Expressions of Church. Some of which you may have heard of like Biker Church in Torver, Messy Church or Mountain Pilgrims, but there are also many other examples of Fresh Expressions throughout Cumbria, faithfully connecting people together to explore faith.

You will encounter some jargon words in this booklet, but rather than dumbing these down we offer simple definitions for clarification.

There are four marks of what makes a **Fresh Expression** of church, which are:

Missional

They serve those outside church

Contextual

They listen to people and enter their context

Formation

They make discipleship a priority: journeying with people to Jesus

Ecclesial

They are and form new sorts of church communities

The Four Marks of Fresh Expressions in a Cumbrian Context

Missional

Fresh Expressions of church are for those who don't or wouldn't choose to go to church. It offers a way of doing church that is accessible, different and meaningful in its context. Creating somewhere people feel comfortable exploring their spirituality; like drawing on the wonder of walking in the hills instead of sitting in a building.

We live in an ever changing world; people have diverse interests and connect with others who share these. Even in a village people are more likely to network with those who have the same interests e.g. yoga, or other similarities, such as having young children. These can be drawn on to develop a Fresh Expression, such as Maranatha Yoga Cumbria which blends yoga postures with Christian spirituality. Being contextual is about looking at how church can grow in contemporary culture, whilst also being shaped by bible teachings.

Contextual

Formational

Fresh Expressions are developed **with** the community, not for them. This means that **everyone** who takes part in a Fresh Expression can help shape it. 4th Sunday Adventures, a Mountain Pilgrims group, started a discipleship cell with young people. One of their first activities was to go on a walk where they weren't told the destination. The leader related that being a Christian is about how, as we journey together, we are not only formed more like Jesus, we also discover who Jesus is.

To be ecclesial as a Fresh Expression means to grow a new form of church, it's not as a means to get people into 'traditional' church - a Fresh Expression *IS* church. Fresh Expressions grow and develop in an organic way rather than following a recipe. That's because the ingredients will be different based on things like: location, the people it's reaching, what God is already doing. Worship will develop differently too. Instead of sung worship and a sermon, Cafe Church in Brough start with bacon sandwiches and then go on to do things like have a discussion about their favourite love songs, watch a video clip, have chocolate eating prayers and participate in a ritual like mending a broken pot. This different approach is just one example of how worship can develop in a Fresh Expression.

Ecclesial



Get **involved** with existing stuff, value existing networks, be real, be led by the needs of the community, NOT by the needs of the volunteers.

Kenosis (putting aside your own will and agenda, and opening up to hear the community and God).

Before you start you need to **listen** to the community, your volunteers, those who will potentially join in with your Fresh Expression; for example the elderly, mums, gamers.

How do you **listen**? Via schools, community groups, informally by chatting to people, intentionally by holding a meeting, through doing a Community Profile or Colourful Conversation*, linking it into maps and physical locations.

What are you listening for? What's already happening; joining in with that, looking for gaps, listening to the Holy Spirit.

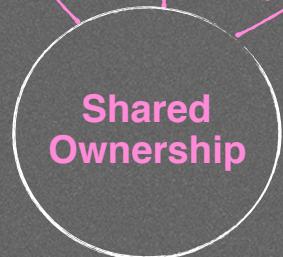
Growing Fresh Expressions is about doing what's in front of you well. Don't be put off by the diagram, we are simply trying to show how different elements connect e.g. you can only love and serve your community if you're meeting the right needs/ being contextual.

This is a flat system with **ownership** rather than **leadership**. Resist the urge to lead, it is contextual and participative...
Listen again



Missional

Ecclesial



Building Community

Share intentions, **value** everyone & everyone's contribution, **develop** a shared identity, foster a **third space-ness**, **do** life together in different contexts, don't be too quick to label what's emerging. If it's genuinely fresh it's likely to be different, so be willing to let go of some of your pre-conceptions about God and church so that new values and approaches can be developed together as a community.

Contextual

Involve everyone. This stage is not of higher value than other stages, it's happening all the time, it's **relevant** to the context rather than being an off the shelf package. Whilst there are some good resources out there, it is vital you put your own spin on these to contextualise them to the group. Often **discipleship** happens in smaller groups alongside the Fresh Expression that has emerged.

Formation

Accept what is growing, recognise that church may be taking shape in a more networked way, for example people may attend different elements of a Fresh Expression, but not all gather together at a single place and time like traditional church. Each element by itself is not church - **but together** it is. Allow things to stretch and morph into the context, **connect** to the wider church.

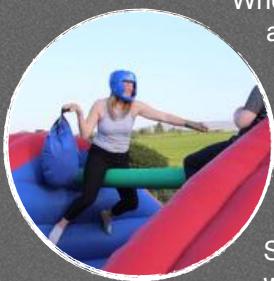
Church Taking Shape

How do Fresh Expressions fit with Church as we know it?

As Cumbria moves towards Mission Communities, we would like to see each Mission Community develop at least one new Fresh Expression in its locality.

Church as most people know it is often called *inherited* or *attractional* church, and these churches hope to attract local people to services and events. This is why God for All has **In-Reach** with Mike Talbot as Evangelism Enabler, helping established churches make the most of their community connections, where they can build on occasions like baptisms and weddings. Fresh Expressions belong to *incarnational* forms of church, which means they are *not* about creating stepping stones into traditional church, even though links with existing churches are very important. Nor are they about social action alone, although this hopefully will be a priority.

"Fresh Expressions are about encouraging Christian communities with all the marks of church to spring up amongst people who don't go to church"



When working with Mission Communities we explore different approaches to developing Fresh Expressions. Firstly they may develop **geographically**, perhaps there is a village or area of a Mission Community that doesn't have an existing form of church, and working through the Fresh Expressions process (see pages 6 & 7) you could develop something with the community.

Secondly some Mission Communities may have connections with a particular **interest group** around something like walking, food or young people; for example Network Youth Church. These connections can be used to grow community and help start a Fresh Expression of church.

Across the county we are also developing some **third space** Fresh Expressions that are bit more experimental, playful, and often cover several Mission Community areas. These are deliberately pushing the boundaries of thinking and practice, and as they become established are resourcing other local groups. For example Mountain Pilgrims write up each session so that other Mission Communities with groups interested in outdoor Fresh Expressions can look at adapting these resources to create their own Mountain Pilgrims group.

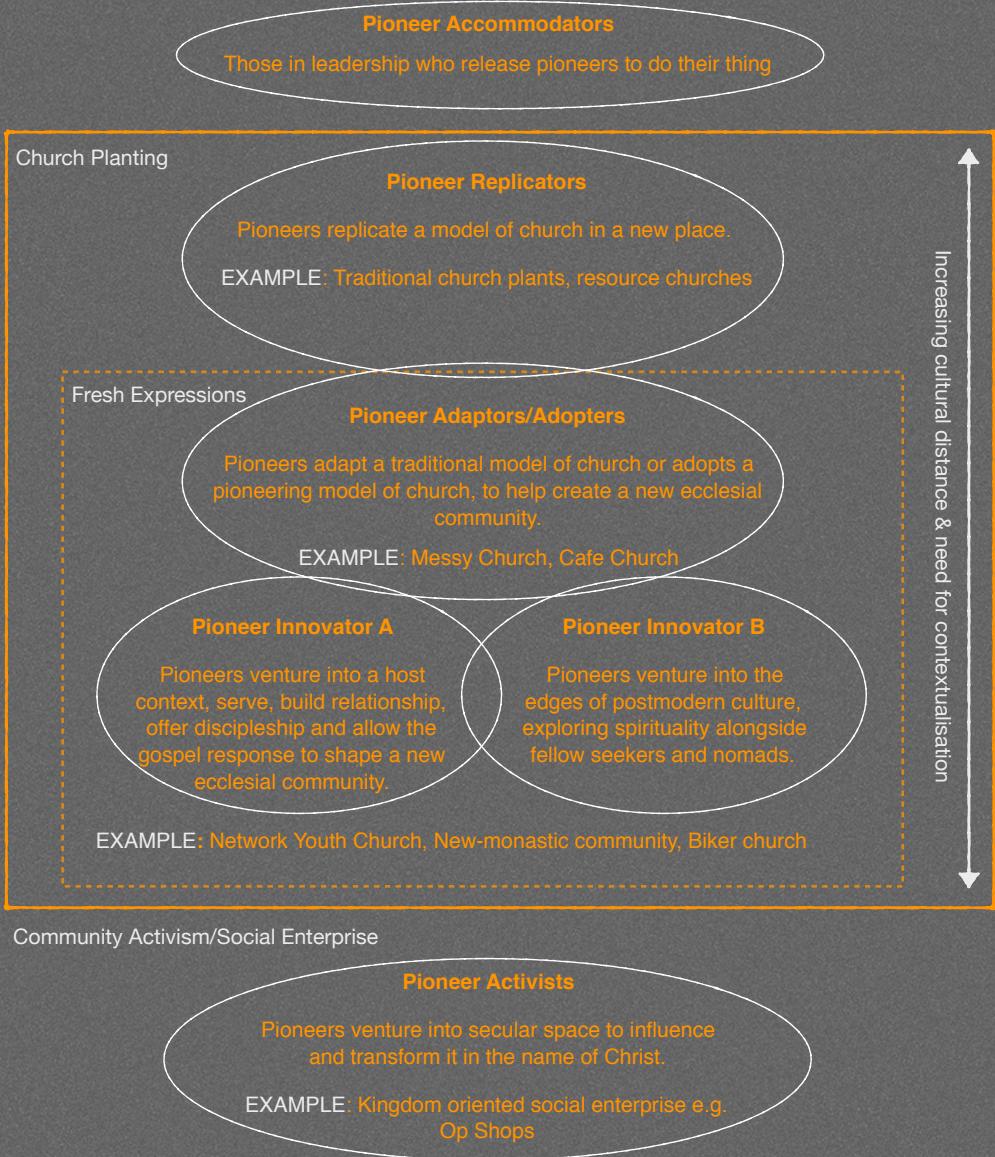


NETWORK
YOUTH CHURCH



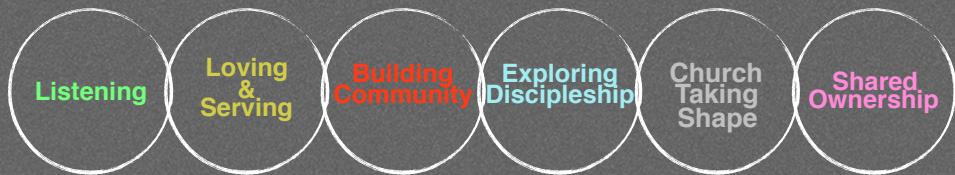
Making space for pioneering

The diagram below was developed by Tina Hodgett and Paul Bradbury based on Richard's typology of pioneering, we've now adapted it for a Cumbrian context.



If you would like to know more visit: churchmissionsociety.org/resources/pioneering-mission-spectrum-tina-hodgett-paul-bradbury-anvil-vol-34-issue-1

The Fresh Expressions Process



Whilst there are lots of different types and style of Fresh Expressions, what has been observed is that many go through similar stages.

A lot of Fresh Expressions of church:

- begin with a period of **listening** to God and to the people the missional team feels called to serve;
- develop by building **loving relationships** and through acts of **service**;
- create a sense of **community** in which evangelism can play a key part;
- provide opportunities for individuals to **explore** becoming followers of Christ; encourage **church to take shape** around those you are journeying with.

What this looks like in Cumbria depends on the local setting. **Listening** isn't just about audible listening but also observation, and researching the needs of a community (see Colourful Conversations and Community Profiles on the God For All Website). For example Biker Church knew their locality was popular with bikers, and observed that the school house in Torver would be a great location to get something started. Mountain Pilgrims was an obvious starting point having listened to climbers and walkers talk about their mountain experiences and sense of wonder they felt in the outdoors. Often we think we know our community better than we really do. One local village assumed they knew everyone in the locality, when in actual fact there was a large caravan park down the road that had nearly twice as many semi-permanent residents as the total population of the village.

Jesus left a simple command for us to **love** one another. After we listen we need to act on the outcomes to **serve** the community. Haven in Carlisle saw that people were hungry so started community meals, a key part of this was not about doing stuff TO people or even FOR people but WITH people.

This then shifts the focus away from people being consumers towards community and participation, which is important both in terms of discipleship (we learn as we do) and relevance, because things are shaped together. In Haven, even though people don't have a lot of money, they contribute in other ways.

Community forms as people spend time together, it takes a lot of work, time and availability - if you force community you will lose it. Fresh Expressions with young children and families often grow because of the natural community that forms around parents. At the M:Hub in Milnthorpe it was suggested that rather than the church starting a toddler group they simply ask local parents if they wanted one, and then spread the word via social media. This participative working together meant there was a great turn out at the first M:Hub, showing strong support and a sense of ownership from the community.



The disciples learnt as they walked with Jesus. **Disciples** are formed as we journey with people, and this comes much more naturally if we have invested in the principles behind the previous stages: Listening, working WITH people and the community. In the Messy church at Kirkby Thore, the parents got together over a meal to explore the stories they wanted to cover. People drew on their own experiences and the leaders helped them unpack the meanings as they planned together the terms events.

If you want to grow a Fresh Expression and see **church take shape** it is really important that you hold that intention of being and growing church through the whole process. Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury said “church starts where Jesus is with others.” So this stage isn’t about arriving in a place called church, but recognising that the journey to this point has already been an expression of church, and building on that.

On the official Fresh Expressions website the final stage is “doing it again”. However, in Cumbria, Fresh Expressions are part of the shift we are making across the whole church towards being more relevant, missional and sustainable. The **Shared Ownership** stage is part of this move. In Mini Mountain Pilgrims,

sessions are often led by children as young as 8 years old, and these have turned out to be some of the most profound moments of reflection. We want to encourage more lay ministry and leadership, to see the church emerging in new ways whilst remaining relevant and real for their communities. With an ageing population in church the more active we can be in raising leaders and leading co-operatively the better future we will have.



Resources and Links

Across the county we are building up a good range of resources and people who can walk with you as you start the Fresh Expressions journey. There are a range of **Host Centres** being developed where local Fresh Expressions are written up. They are keen to welcome people to visit if you are interested in starting something similar. As well as Richard Passmore, the Fresh Expressions Enabler, we also have the REACH team working across the county. So for all things Fresh Expressions and Children and Families contact Sarah Hulme. For Youth; Emma Richardson and the Network Youth Church are great resources.

Core to Fresh Expressions is our annual **Cumbria FX day**, great for anyone involved or interested in Fresh Expressions. As we grow more pioneering work we now also have Cmpfire* which meets a few times a year and specifically supports those in pioneering roles.



Over the past few years we have successfully piloted an **informal coaching framework** around the 6 stages of Fresh Expressions, the aim of which is to help people plan their way through the process and identify the opportunities and barriers. It is about finding out and joining in with what God is doing locally, and not imposing ideas from the outside. To cope with the growth, we are exploring developing groups of Fresh Expressions around some of the themes we are seeing emerge:

Addressing deprivation, education and outdoors, social enterprise, buildings and rural, youth, hospitality and older people, new monasticism and alternative spirituality, and children.

In time we hope to train and equip more coaches. For more information about coaching contact Richard Passmore or Emma Richardson (contact details on the back of this booklet).

There is also a wide range of local training available, such as colourful conversations, through the REACH team and Cumbria Christian Learning which are mainly one off sessions we deliver locally, according to your local context.

We are still able to offer the Mission Shaped Ministry course, this is now mainly delivered as a flexible course in local areas. We also hope that as the partnership with CMS grows so will our training opportunities.

As well as local resources there are several national bodies supporting Fresh Expressions which are easily accessed online, some of whom have been listed on the back cover of this booklet.

...and the last word goes to Cat Kingham who's involved as a volunteer at Bridekirk Youth Cafe, Cumbria.

God beyond the gates...

From youth cafes to soup kitchens, from baby groups to fell climbs, Fresh Expressions can take all forms and so display the richness of God's character, and as each Fresh Expressions meets and grows, it becomes 'church'; a group of people exploring God and life together.

We are simply doing what Jesus did, taking every opportunity to create a new expression of his Father's love. Jesus pushed himself into the crowds to embrace the lonely, the lame, the young, the unloved, the disliked, the unwanted and even the dangerous. When I think of how these new expressions of church begin, I am reminded of the story of the prodigal son. His Father didn't spot him and wait for his arrival, No, he ran out of the gates, arms open wide and met him where he was; hungry and lost.

This is the essence of Fresh Expressions. We run out to people, because if we are honest, waiting for them to run into our church buildings and our church services may leave us waiting indefinitely. No, we don't wait; we open our gates and we run out to meet people where they are, helping them, often feeding them and always embracing them as they continue on their journey with God.

God does not belong bound within a building. We must push wide the gates and be the hands and the feet that will release his love upon the nation.



Websites

God for All www.godforall.org.uk

Host Centres www.godforall.org.uk/host-centres/

Cumbria Fresh Expressions Facebook Group [goo.gl/CQ7djP](https://www.facebook.com/groups/100000000000000/)

Messy Cumbria www.godforall.org.uk/messy-cumbria/ (also see Facebook)

Network Youth Church (NYC) www.networkyouthchurch.org.uk

Mountain Pilgrims www.mountainpilgrims.org.uk

Maranatha Yoga www.maranathayoga.org.uk

Fresh Expressions UK www.freshexpressions.org.uk

Church Mission Society <http://www.churchmissionsociety.org/pioneer>

Methodist Venture FX www.methodistventurefx.com goo.gl/juiAxV

Church of England Pioneer Ministry <https://www.cofepioneer.org>

Email Contacts

Fresh Expressions Enabler

richard.passmore@carlislediocese.org.uk

Youth, Children and Families Evangelism Enablers

sarah.hulme@carlislediocese.org.uk

emma.richardson@carlislediocese.org.uk

Evangelism Enabler

mike.talbot@carlislediocese.org.uk

Big Reach Innovator

eleanor.ledesma@carlislediocese.org.uk

