

# Imaginative Mission in and around Cumbria



**NORTHERN  
MISSION  
CENTRE**



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# Some words from our ecumenical partners

The history of all of God's people has been told and extended by pioneers and there has been a constant refreshing of all we call Church. What is now cherished was once new, what is now commonly held was once the edge and in what is now the edge we find fertile ground of growth. May our pioneers continue to explore and stretch our understanding and may we grow, together.

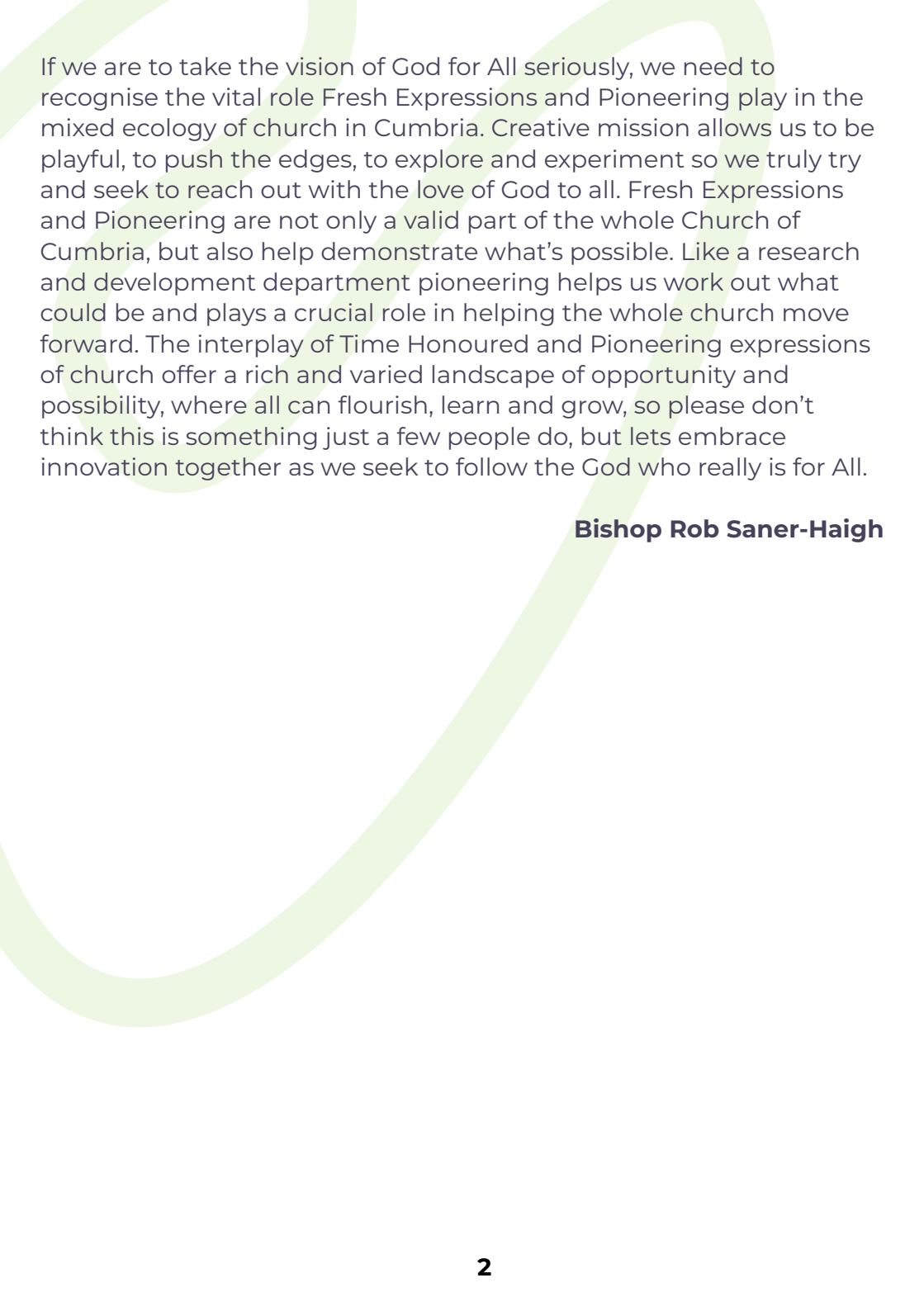
**Rev David Newlove**  
**District Mission Officer of the Methodist Church**

Watching the planting of Fresh Expressions of church in Cumbria took my breath away. This was for three reasons. The first was the level of innovation I saw – wonderfully creative new communities of disciples were growing which included lots of people who didn't know church could be for them. The second was the sheer pace and number of them – so many seemed to pop up in a short space of time. And the third is that the planting of Fresh Expressions is folded into a vision for God for All – i.e. it's central to the mission, vision and strategy of the Church in Cumbria and not just a side project of a few enthusiasts. I'm excited therefore to see what comes next – how it will evolve and grow. We (CMS) love joining in as partners so we can share the adventure!

**Jonny Baker**  
**Britain Hub Mission Director**  
**Church Mission Society**

In The Salvation Army we fully embrace the vitality of communicating the good news in new and creative ways that Fresh Expressions and Pioneering offer. As a movement, we were born in an age of holiness revivalism and the inspiration of Charles Finney, who taught us to search for 'new means and methods' to share the gospel in a contemporary world. That challenge continues today in every community.

**Major David Taylor**  
**Salvation Army Divisional Leader North West Division**



If we are to take the vision of God for All seriously, we need to recognise the vital role Fresh Expressions and Pioneering play in the mixed ecology of church in Cumbria. Creative mission allows us to be playful, to push the edges, to explore and experiment so we truly try and seek to reach out with the love of God to all. Fresh Expressions and Pioneering are not only a valid part of the whole Church of Cumbria, but also help demonstrate what's possible. Like a research and development department pioneering helps us work out what could be and plays a crucial role in helping the whole church move forward. The interplay of Time Honoured and Pioneering expressions of church offer a rich and varied landscape of opportunity and possibility, where all can flourish, learn and grow, so please don't think this is something just a few people do, but lets embrace innovation together as we seek to follow the God who really is for All.

**Bishop Rob Saner-Haigh**

# An introduction by Richard Passmore

## Northern Mission Centre Director

The Northern Mission Centre is a collaboration between God for All and Church Mission Society to support creative and innovative mission. We are pioneering at heart, supporting both Time Honoured and Fresh Expressions (FX) of church across all denominations to reach deeper into the communities they serve.

One of the joys of working in Cumbria over recent years has been seeing great relationships between Time Honoured churches, Fresh Expressions and pioneering. Whether that is a Time Honoured church hosting a Messy Church, a pioneer helping an established church connect with new people, or a party that embraces everyone, we have come together to serve people in numerous creative ways and honour the connections we already have.

The lessons we have learnt along the way are many. We know that Time Honoured and Fresh Expressions need each other, often more than they realise. We know that telling stories about others working in their communities can inspire people to adapt something for their own context. We know that the more we network and nourish people involved in pioneer mission, the more happens. We know people are generous with their time, gifts and talents, but are stretched. We know that the more creative we are in how we do training and support, the more creative people are in their local situation, and we know that all of this has helped to foster a kind of missional ecosystem that is supportive, relational, giving and creative. This is now increasingly reflected in the God for All vision and the imagery used of a garden, a mixed ecology of church, community and chaplaincy.



We hope through this booklet you will see how we at the Northern Mission Centre can be a toolshed of ideas, practices, and dare I say it, fertiliser(!) as you seek to nurture the garden in your own patch.

Through our collaboration with Church Mission Society we are seen as “an exemplar” of missional training at different levels, from our Conversations Day, focusing on theology of mission, or the Certificate in Pioneer Mission helping you innovate in your local situation, to the IME2 support for new ministers and curates, or new for 2023 our Creative Mission Thinking and Practice modules which are part of The Discipleship Project. Likewise we have been able to establish strong local countywide and regional networks of support for mission and innovation such as local pioneer hubs in key areas across Cumbria, and Cmpfire our gathering for all those involved in mission and innovation.



# Stories of Fresh Expressions and Pioneering in Cumbria

**A story about a Fresh Expression.** The Living Room at St John's Crossfield Community Centre, Cleator Moor...a place where you can feel at home. We started in response to growing concerns about those in the community struggling with isolation and the weakening of social ties, struggling to tend to their emotional, social, physical and mental wellbeing and complex bereavement. **The group itself shapes what we do** and we encourage reciprocity in relationships, emphasising that each person is there to 'be with' those who come along. What we do varies but there are a few fixed points. There is always a time of prayer and reflection which is optional but we have found that most of those who come along attend. **There is always plenty of cake, tea and coffee.** Some weeks people from within the group or from the local community

share a passion (examples being gardening, bee keeping, cooking one pot wonders, local history)...some weeks we engage in activities which have included painting, origami, craft, singing, relaxation practices, exercise, board games, jigsaws... either led by members of the group or again from those in the local community. We have also put on advice sessions around health, welfare benefits etc.

## THE LIVING ROOM

A SPACE OF WELCOME AND INCLUSION  
A SPACE TO CONNECT AND BE YOURSELF



**A story about something a bit different.** Time for Contemplation provides the opportunity to rest your body, quieten your mind and nourish your spirit. **We explore ancient spiritual disciplines** and how they can help us live a life based on spirit in the world today. Each session is guided, with periods of silence, and lasts for an hour. We gather monthly with two options - either in-person in Windermere during the day or on ZOOM in the evening (no geographical boundaries!). All are welcome.



**A Revitalising Story.** St Annes Messy Church started in 2016 when we saw a need for something to engage children, so after speaking to local families (both Christian and non) we decided to start a Messy Church. It was clear after it started that **this was becoming a form of church**, one that people wanted to attend, accessible to those who wouldn't attend conventional Sunday worship. We set up a group on social media and it was in this online space we could listen, see, and seek out what people wanted, it also **created a sense of community**. This resulted in us re-starting a Mossy Church (in the outdoors), which then led to starting another group, Pub church. A place where anybody is welcome, including those in the pub! Although a little unconventional it is a good way to reach and interact with people who are unlikely to go to church. We put out beer mats with thought provoking questions on, or start discussions around faith. All these groups continue to grow and people now attend from much further afield than just the local village. Out of these groups a **growing congregation has formed** that meet together for Sunday worship (done a little bit differently).

**An Enterprising Story.** Several groups have developed out of **Carlisle Restore** including warehouse work, a Community Shed Project, Allotment Group, Community Dinners. **We are building community** with people who struggle with mental health, addiction, loneliness, and isolation or are just out of prison.

Rough Edges is a new Christian community developing out of these groups. Also, a new community is starting to help us share money to meet needs in Cumbria called The Scruffy Vicar Fund.



# Introducing the Trellis

## The Trellis

The Trellis is a way of visually capturing all of what Church can be. Fresh Expressions and pioneering expressions of church have matured and are now an established part of the wider Church in the UK. Time Honoured church and Fresh Expressions have distinct needs, but also need one another. In the mixed ecology, all are valid, but more than that, by being in relationship with one another in a mixed ecology, Church can flourish and bring about positive change. The Trellis seeks to shed light on what a mixed ecology of Church might look like, and how the different aspects interconnect and relate to one another.

**The Trellis image (on pages 9 & 10)** is deliberately organic, and the vine interweaves across the different elements, traditions and approaches to show our interconnectedness.

The Trellis uses open language recognising that everyone has a part to play, one Church with many expressions and different gifts that need one another. Although the language of 'pioneering' is not used on the Trellis it is recognised that pioneering remains critical to creating space, and the continued imagination to reach the breadth and diversity of the communities we serve.

# What makes up the Trellis

## **The vine and leaves**

Shows different expressions of Church in the mixed ecology, an organic structure has been created to show that all expressions of church are valid.

## **To the left of the Trellis**

These terms seek to describe the type of attitudes and aptitudes that a church and leaders may need as it seeks to engage a society becoming increasingly distanced from church as it has been known. This is based on the Pioneer Spectrum created by Tina Hodgett and Paul Bradbury, you can read more about that here: <https://pioneer.churchmissionsociety.org> search for 'Pioneer Spectrum'.

## **Settlers**

A church that is not looking to reach out to their community proactively, perhaps an older congregation being faithfully served weekly eucharist.

## **Connectors**

A church setting that would primarily use existing services and traditional connections e.g. christenings and weddings as a way to attract and connect with new people.

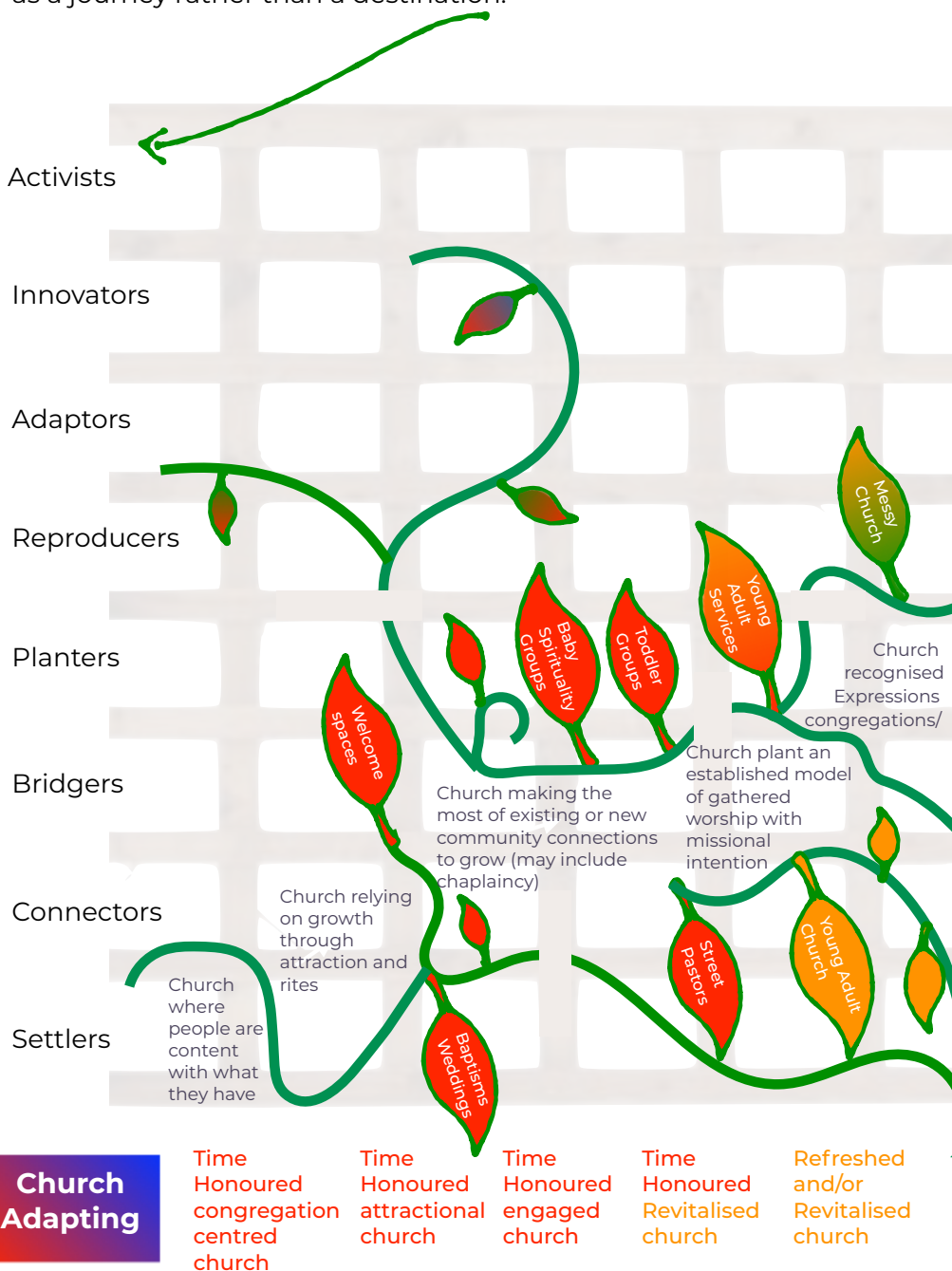
## **Bridgers**

A church deliberately trying to capitalise on its role in the community to bridge into new groups e.g. running a toddler group and inviting these participating to Sunday services.

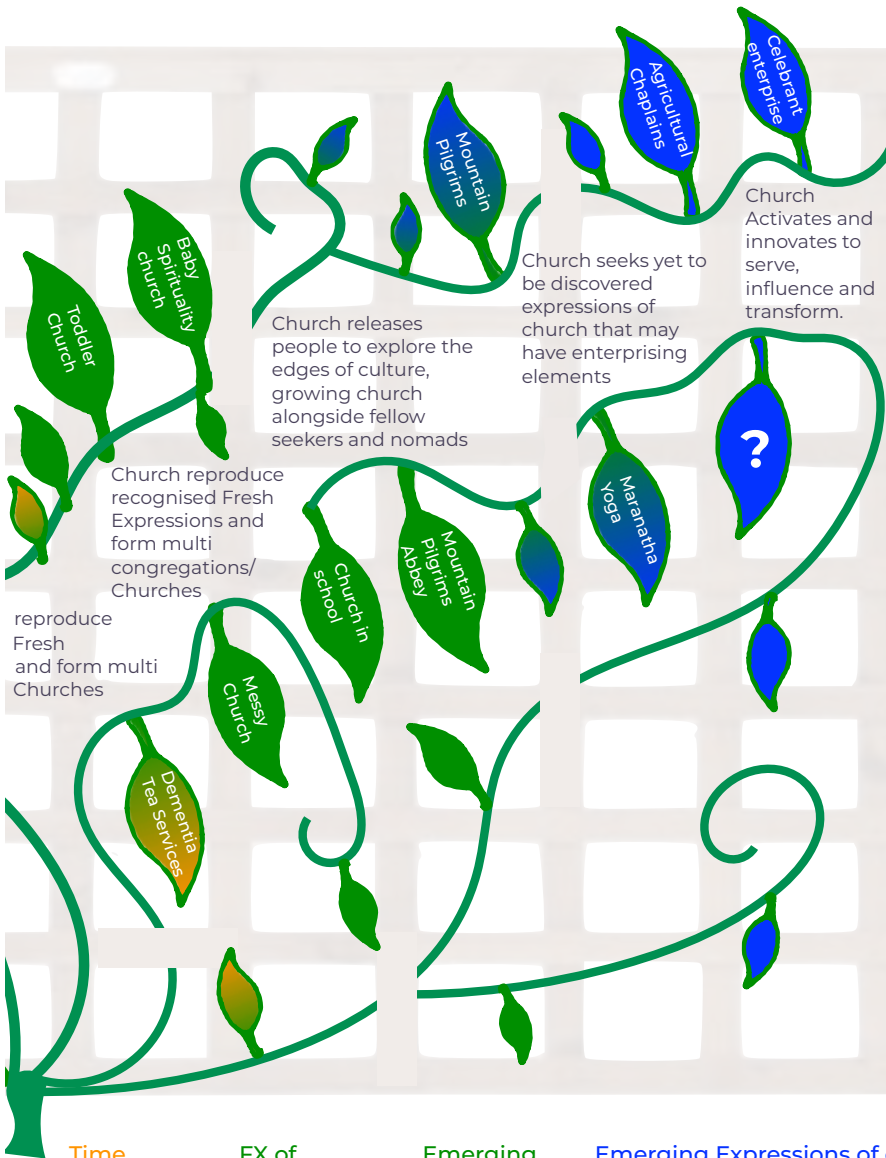
**Trellis explanation continued on page 11.**



A more adaptable approach to church and a greater sense of church as a journey rather than a destination.



# The mixed ecology of church



Time  
Honoured  
Fresh  
Expressions  
(FX) of Church

FX of  
Church

Emerging  
FX of  
church

Emerging Expressions of church,  
faith and activism

# Trellis Explanation Continued

## ***Planters***

A space where a new or revitalised congregation is established with the intention to reach new people centred around gathered worship services.

## ***Reproducers***

A space where tried and tested methods of church or Fresh Expressions e.g. Messy Church are reproduced in a local area to grow a new Christian community.

## ***Adaptors***

Spaces where established ideas are tweaked and contextualised to a context or situation e.g. Fire Church where a community gather around a fire but use many of the Forest Church principles.

## ***Innovators***

Spaces where new things are tried and tested and developed with new people in new ways to form Christian community.

## ***Activists***

Individuals or groups working in innovative ways to connect with a range of new people in new ways, either with or without the specific intention of forming Christian community. These may include social enterprises or activities seeking to address particular needs.

## **Accommodators (not on the Trellis but important to note)**

Accommodators are generous space makers, leaders who see that Time Honoured and Fresh Expressions need each other. Even if they are working primarily with a Settled Church Congregation, they look to help others flourish and let them go to new places that they themselves or their established congregation may never go.





It is entirely possible to inhabit more than one space, e.g. a Time Honoured church community may run a service dedicated to people who simply want to attend a weekly communion, and others in the church community could run a Messy Church and an Enterprise engaging new people beyond their usual reach.

### **Along the bottom of the Trellis**

Shows the different types of churches in the mixed ecology. Time Honoured churches are those that are often easily recognisable as 'church' by those in the community e.g. your local parish church or chapel. Fresh Expressions of church are new Christian communities that emerge as you listen to the local context and seek to gather people. Many Fresh Expressions have now been around for a long time, and this is reflected below. However, any description is limited, but the intention is that all spaces are valued for what they offer.

#### ***Time Honoured Congregation centred church***

A church community that are simply seeking to gather for worship without any specific intention of meeting new people.

#### ***Time Honoured Attractional church***

A church centred around gathered worship open to others.

#### ***Time Honoured Engaged church***

A Time Honoured church active in their community.

#### ***Time Honoured Revitalised church***

A church where a new congregation has been planted into a traditional church setting e.g. a parish church.

#### ***Refreshed and/or revitalised church***

As above but may or may not meet in a recognised church building.



### ***Time Honoured Fresh Expressions of church***

A Fresh Expression of church that is well established over a number of years and may or may not meet in a recognised church building.

### ***Fresh Expressions of church***

New expressions of church that emerge in response to local needs and interests.

### ***Emerging Fresh Expressions of church***

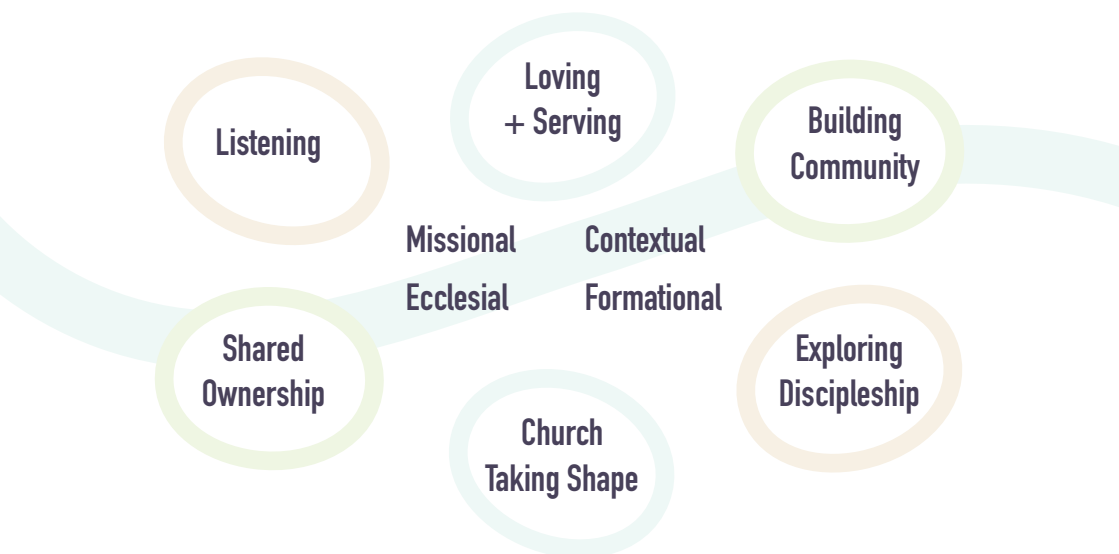
New expressions of church that are being experimented with or may not yet be mature enough to meet all the criteria of a Fresh Expression (to be contextual, formational, ecclesial, and missional).

### ***Emerging Expressions of church, faith, and activism***

Spaces where journeying beyond the boundaries is encouraged. Where innovation, challenge and improvisation around Christian traditions and spirituality create new opportunities that push what we know church, faith, and mission to be.



# 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. 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**. This could be something reproduced from another area e.g. a food bank or debt advice centre. Or it may be something more bespoke to the needs of your area. A key value within Fresh Expressions is that it's not about doing stuff to people, or even for people, but ideally 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.

**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 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 Thwaites community plays a key aspect and the original Messy Church expanded into several groups including a pub group, Alpha Course and Mossy Church. There is a real sense of community and ongoing discipleship with some attendees going on to positions of leadership within the local church.

If you want to plant 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. 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. Our certificate in Pioneer Mission is a great way to bring on local leaders and we need to model a more shared approach to running Fresh Expressions. One example we use on the Course to help with this is to unpack Jesus’ approach where he was tempted in the wilderness, resisting the temptation to Possess, Perform or Provide.



# Interview with a Student on the Certificate in Pioneer Mission Course

Helen attended the Certificate in Pioneering Mission 2020 - 2021. She is now a Community and Youth Leader involved in pioneering in Cumbria. A lot of her work is with church schools and youth, such as after schools and lunch clubs. As well as working with the children and young people, she also appreciates being able to help support teachers as she herself was previously a teacher. She enjoys the freedom to be creative in her role and sees the importance of developing good relationships with both the children and young people she supports, as well as the teachers.

**We asked Helen what drew her to do the Certificate in Pioneer Mission.**

"I'd spoken a lot with Richard (the Northern Mission Centre Director) over the years and thought the course sounded interesting. I was particularly caught by the phrase 'pioneer' as that sounded like someone who wanted to do things differently, it was missional and not about being tied down to a traditional way of doing things. I also knew of Church Mission Society who partner on the course. I thought it would offer me the opportunity to be a bit braver and meet others who had a similar calling to do things differently."

**What did you find the most helpful about the course, what things stood out to you or have stayed with you?**

"That I'm not mad! Meeting amazing leaders and teachers, learning real, refreshing and exciting stuff and hearing what others are doing. Finding my tribe; different people from all walks of life who are maybe feeling like they don't fit in, that there's more than just traditional ways of doing church. To be brave, be who I am and not worry about not fitting in. For me the course reinforced the importance of knowing who you are. I also made some good friends who I'm still in touch with."

## Why do you think people should do the course?

“Anyone and everyone should do this course, it opens your eyes to all the different ways of doing church. It’s for anyone who’s thinking ‘is this the only way of doing church?’ or who wants to discover more. It’s a safe, respectful space and opens up possibilities you may not have thought of before. It’s for anyone who’s interested in lifelong learning, it’s even for those who are ordained.”



# Resources and Links

You can find out more about any of the below at [www.northernpioneer.co.uk](http://www.northernpioneer.co.uk) or [www.godforall.org.uk](http://www.godforall.org.uk) or by emailing [nmc@carlisle-diocese.org.uk](mailto:nmc@carlisle-diocese.org.uk)

## Training

Fresh Expressions Day

Certificate in Pioneer Mission

Discipleship Programme

We come to you

## People

Pioneer Enablers

Pioneer Advocates

Network Youth Church

## Networks

Pioneer+

Cmpfire

Local pioneer gatherings

Mountain Pilgrims gatherings

Messy/Children's and families

# Websites

**God for All** [www.godforall.org.uk](http://www.godforall.org.uk)

**Northern Mission Centre** [www.northernpioneer.co.uk](http://www.northernpioneer.co.uk)

**Northern Mission Centre Facebook Group:** <https://bit.ly/NMCFB1>

**Network Youth Church (NYC)** [www.networkyouthchurch.org.uk](http://www.networkyouthchurch.org.uk)

**Mountain Pilgrims** [www.mountainpilgrims.org.uk](http://www.mountainpilgrims.org.uk)

**Maranatha Yoga** [www.maranathayoga.org.uk](http://www.maranathayoga.org.uk)

**Fresh Expressions UK** [www.freshexpressions.org.uk](http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk)

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

**Pioneering in the Church of England** <https://bit.ly/cofepioneer>

**Pioneering in the Methodist Church:** <https://bit.ly/mchpioneer>

**Pioneering in the URC** <https://bit.ly/URCpioneer>

**Pioneering in the Salvation Army** <https://bit.ly/SApioneer>

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