

Fresh Expressions Praxis in the UK

+Graham Cray



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

A CHRISTIAN PRESENCE IN EVERY COMMUNITY



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

EVERY COMMUNITY

**OUR BUILDING MAY BE CLOSED
BUT OUR CHURCH IS ALIVE**

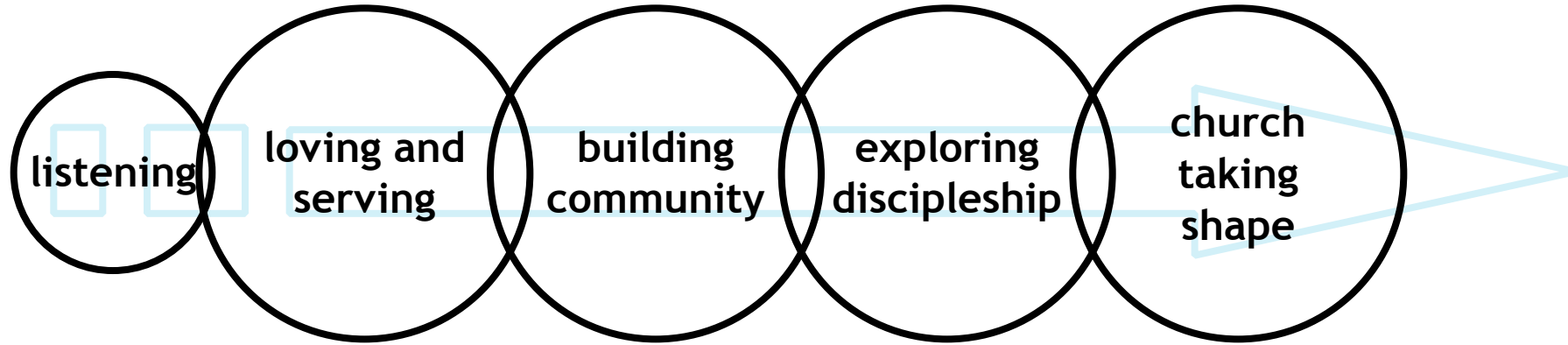
Fresh expressions of church

- A form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who do not attend any church
- Missional
- Contextual
- Formational
- Ecclesial

A 'mixed economy' 'the new normal'

- 'In the Church of England today, bishops undertake to pursue and support the full range of contributions to mission and church growth ... creating and normalising a pattern of diversity, of parish and other traditional forms alongside newer forms.
- This pattern of diversity is the 'new normal'. It requires leadership from bishops in leading our dioceses into understanding and embracing this diversity.' The House of Bishops

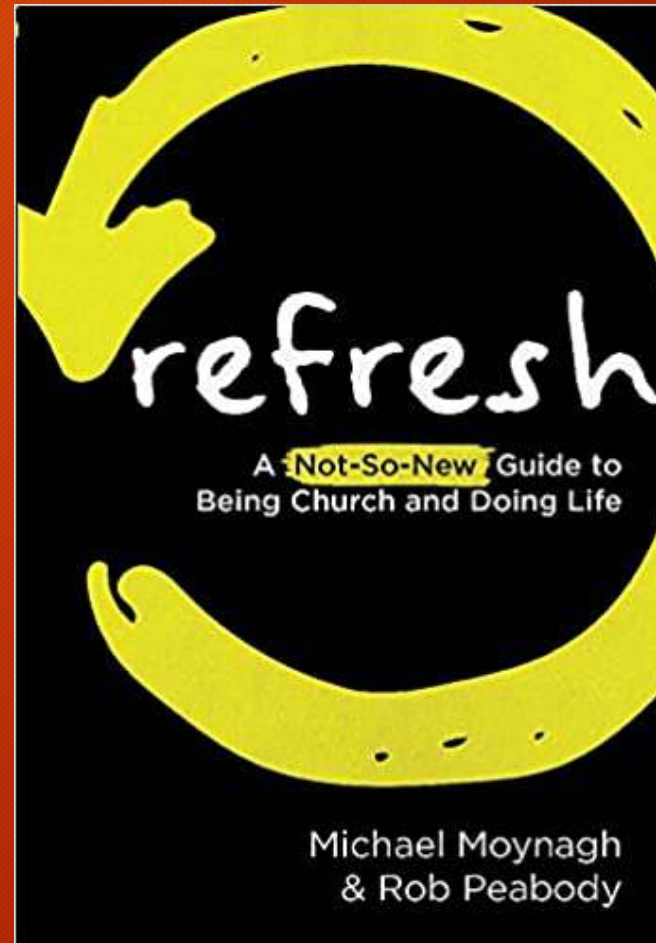
A process of discernment



underpinned by prayer, ongoing listening and relationship with the wider church

CAFE

- **C**are for and serve people outside the church
- **A**dapt to the context. Listen to the people you serve and enter their worlds
- **F**orm disciples. Journey with people to help them discover Jesus and grow to be more like Jesus
- **E**xpress church where life happens. These are not bridges to an existing church, but forms of church for others in the midst of their lives



Menu

- Discernment is the capacity most needed
- Disciple making is the central task
- Fresh expressions take shape through an incarnational ministry

Discernment

Discernment

- The location, character, style and missional focus of a fresh expression emerge, and are then directed, through a process of discernment; through *a focused and deliberate attentiveness to the Holy Spirit.*

Why?

- Because mission is not primarily our activity, which we ask God to empower and bless, but God's activity in which we participate.
- 'It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church. Creating a church as it goes on its way.' Jurgen Moltmann

It is Jesus' ministry continuing by the Holy Spirit

- 'The mission of the Church is the gift of participating, through the Holy Spirit, in the Son's mission from the Father to the world.'
James Torrance
- Jn. 20: ²¹Jesus said to them, as the Father has sent (continues to send) me, so I send you.'²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.....'

Seeing what God is doing and joining in

- 'Planting is about a church's ability to effectively discern the Spirit of God and follow courageously into where that Spirit is leading.' Nicholas Warnes
- It's all about distinguishing God ideas, from your good ideas



Grange Park Church Northampton

Triple Listening

- Listen to God
- Listen to the church / team
- Listen in and to the context and community

Cultivating Discernment

- ‘Church planters need to engage the practices that tune our lives to God.’
- ‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.’ (Acts 2:42)

Disciple Making

- Planting new congregations serves disciple making, not the other way round!

'The Great Commission'

Matthew 28:16-20

- 'Make Disciples' is the central command
- The way to do it, by
 - Going
 - Baptising
 - Teaching

Church is .. ‘people on the move with Jesus, going wherever Jesus leads them.’



The Heart of Discipleship

- The heart of discipleship is obedience to Jesus
- The motivation for discipleship is a vision of Jesus and his Kingdom
- Part of God's work is to make us like Jesus



Be Intentional

Make the fresh expression itself about discipleship from beginning to end.

Aim to provide an experience of Christian community for those with little contact.

Allow for the long journey people go on as they come from initial attention to openness to respond to the gospel. Paul Moore

Start as you mean to go on!

- Build sacrifice and service into the culture of the fresh expression from the beginning
- Don't create an environment so comfortable that it gives no hint of the cost of discipleship, or the call to serve

Staging posts - Sorted

- Contact work
- Club night
- Praise service
- Peer-led discipleship groups



How is disciple-making being practiced?

- One to one
- Appropriate courses
- Small groups
- Serving team

Incarnational Mission

Shaping the Church

- Fresh expressions take through an incarnational ministry the Holy Spirit forms the body of Christ.
- What should Jesus look like in this community?

Incarnational Mission

- ‘When we expound both the what and the how of mission incarnationally, we need to be careful always to emphasise that the incarnation is the unique event that founds and forms the church’s witness.
- The event defines how it is to be embodied and thus communicated.’

Darrel Guder

‘Christ’s Mission in Christ’s Way’

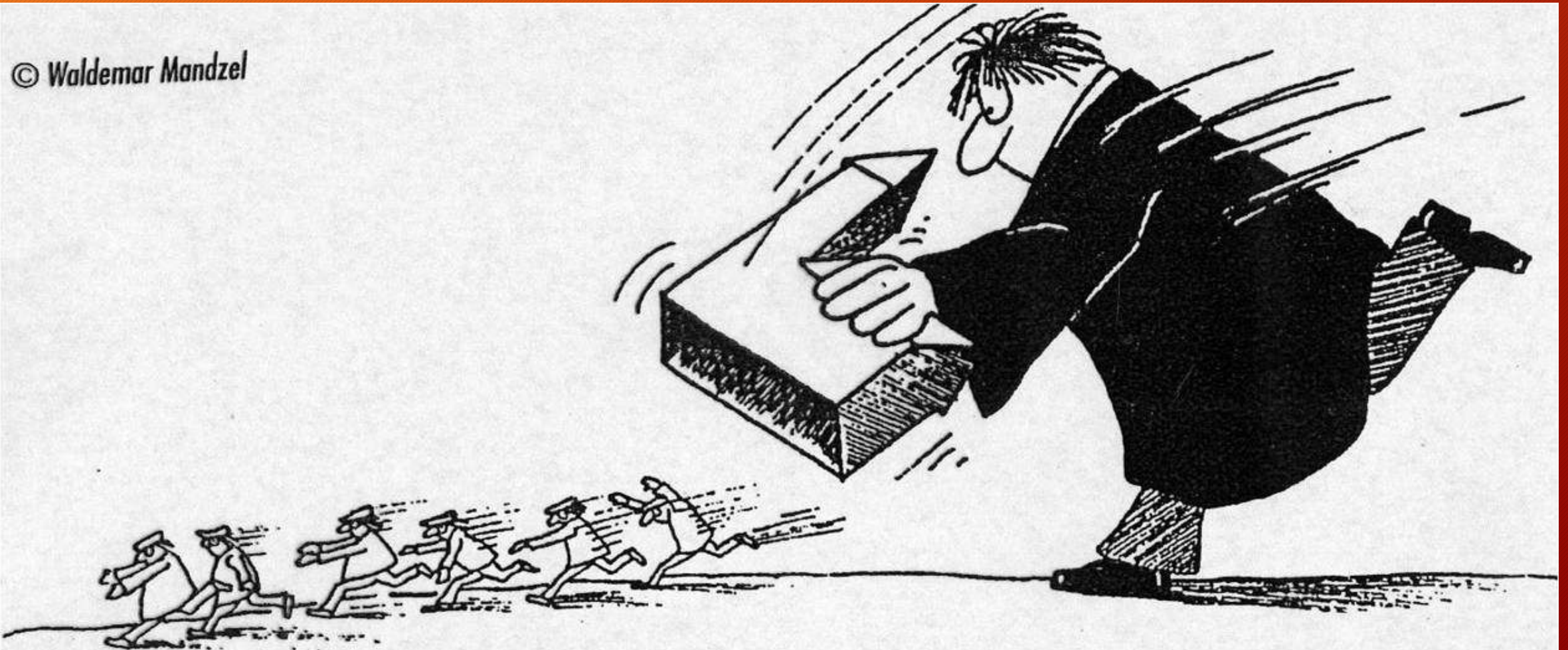
- ‘Jesus was sent to walk in and with people of a particular culture and time. Jesus did not provide esoteric teachings from a distant mountain or from deep in the desert; he walked with people, spoke their language, touched their sores and gave them hope now and for the future. He held their children and was held, as a child, by his own mother.’ Scott Sunquist

Incarnational mission

- ‘To practice incarnational witness means learning the cultures into which we are sent: learning what they think and how they think, what it feels like to be part of their world, and how to communicate on their terms.’ Darrell Guder
- Founders of a new ecclesial communitywill put themselves in other people’s place, they will walk with Jesus in the shoes of those they encounter.’ Michael Moynagh

One size does not fit all
CONTEXT IS VITAL!

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Café Church in Maidstone



‘Nothing is going to change. ... We will set the tone, they can join in if they want to ...that was my plan. Then God went and ruined it. ...

So what does worship look like here? Sundays have taken on a very different flavour. There have been challenges. How to you incarnate the gospel in a different culture?

Fresh Expressions Praxis

- Ephesians 1:22 ‘The church is Christ’s body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.’
- The key questions for discernment.
What should discipleship, and the body of Christ, look like here?