

# Anglican Fresh Expressions and Pioneering Network Conference 2023



## Our stories



Anglican Fresh Expressions  
& Pioneering Network Conference

BLACKFRIARS

CARLISLE

TAUNTON

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# An Introduction

It has been a joy to collaborate on this booklet that accompanies the National Anglican Fresh Expressions and Pioneering Network Conference. When a conference has the title “from the stories we found ourselves in, to the stories we need to tell” it seemed obvious that we needed to find a way to tell some stories. This booklet is just a snapshot of some of the wonderful stories of what God is doing across the country in the lives of real people in real places through Fresh Expressions and Pioneering ministry.

These stories represent some of the often discussed “mixed ecology of church” and hopefully show something of the breadth of that mixed ecology. In years gone by, they might have been seen as something on the edge of church or even as not real church, but thankfully we have seen the thinking catch up with what God has been doing in the community for the past 30 plus years. So much so that Fresh Expressions of church are recognised within the second priority of the new national strategy for the Church of England that states we are **“To be a church where mixed ecology<sup>[1]</sup> is the norm”** where every person in England has access to an enriching and compelling community of faith by adding new churches and new forms of Church to our parishes, cathedrals, schools and chaplaincies.<sup>[2]</sup>

The fact that Fresh Expressions have been around so long, means we have been able to include some stories from established FXs and some more recently planted new ones. It also means we have stories worth telling, and a growing body of evidence of the effectiveness of the FX and Pioneering approach. Indeed research by George Lings of the Church Army, demonstrates that “nothing else, as a whole in the Church of England has this level of missional impact and the adding of further ecclesial communities, thereby fuelling ecclesial re-imagination” <sup>[3]</sup>.

We want to thank all our colleagues that make up the Diocesan Pioneering and Fresh Expressions Officers Network for all their help in contributing stories and pulling the wider conference together. We hope you will be inspired by the stories we offer, and encouraged to see the Spirit at work in so many communities. But more that this we hope you will become part of that story in your local area as you discover the stories you now need to tell.

**Richard Passmore (Carlisle), Richard Priestley (Bath and Wells), Will Cookson (Southwark).**

<sup>[1]</sup> the mixed ecology describes the flourishing of church and ministry in our parishes, and in other communities of faith through things like church planting, fresh expressions of church, and chaplaincy and online

<sup>[2]</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/emerging-church-england/vision-and-strategy>

<sup>[3]</sup> Lings 2016 Day of Small Things pg.10.



# The Fresh Expressions process



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

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.

You can read more about the full six part framework of the Fresh Expressions journey at [freshexpressions.org.uk](http://freshexpressions.org.uk)

# Bubble Church

Bubble Church was a mid-pandemic experiment to see if we could connect with local young families in a period when they were starved of personal contact and activities to occupy little ones. So we came up with Bubble Church, and the strap line: *A puppet-packed, Jesus-centred, socially-distanced, coffee-and-croissant-fuelled, 30 minute kids and families adventure every Sunday morning.* Families would arrive, have a coffee and croissant, sit on socially distanced “bubbles” (blue circular carpets), and join in with 30 minutes of song, puppets, Bible story, prayer, and simple, fun liturgy.

People came and told their friends to come because they were getting what they wanted for free: fun, good news, entertainment for their children, food, structure, kindness, quality time with their families and a great welcome (as one parent reflected, “no one else is so happy to see us!”).

Now at the beginning of 2023 there is a congregation of about 150 regulars. The vast majority fall into two rough categories: 'unchurched' families who like the fun, feeling of community, and message of hope, and 'nominally' Christian families who didn't go to church before but where mum or dad had some history with the church and with faith.

In 2022 we were happy to hear we'd be receiving Innovation Funding from the Church of England to use the Bubble Church formula in other church contexts. Currently, there are three other churches in London running Bubble Church, in each case they're seeing new families arrive in their churches, just like we did. It's an exciting moment for Bubble Church; we're praying it will help thousands of grown ups and little ones across the country get to know Jesus Christ for themselves in the coming months and years. Please contact [keli.bolton@ascensionbalham.org](mailto:keli.bolton@ascensionbalham.org) for more information.



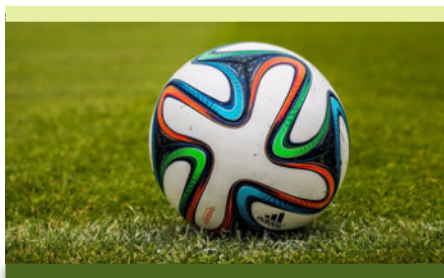
# Truro's friendliest kick about

Following lockdown two pioneers in Truro Cornwall, Joff Phipps and Robin Mitchell were thinking about how to engage with the missing generations whilst also delivering support to those in need. As two passionate football fans and players, the idea came to create an alternative football scene in Truro, one that would welcome any level of player, would guarantee you wouldn't be shouted at if you made a mistake, and offer support and friendship. In essence we wanted to bring together the alternative Kingdom of God and football.

So in February 2022 a pitch was booked and they started to invite friends and advertise what was named "Truro's friendliest kick about." They started with 4-6 players, not even enough for a game, then the next few weeks the WhatsApp group grew and grew, to the point where we had 40 men jumping at the chance to join a game. Joff and Robin comment 'As time grew we added in social events, weekly drinks in a local bar, word spread and it's been described as the most exciting missional opportunity happening right now in Cornwall.

Since the start we have learned just how hungry people are for relationships, and how refreshing people find the ethos and lifestyle of the alternative kingdom of God, the way of Jesus. The feedback we receive more than any is that it is so nice not to be called a swear word every 2 minutes on the pitch'.

This project is developing and we are now moving into other settings to offer a new culture, or should I say ancient culture. Our next adventure has begun as we move into the music scene of Truro, to use our passions to create a way to connect and introduce people to the way of Jesus.



# Arterie

"Arterie" is a developing Christian community in and through the arts. The metaphor for my vocation in the arts is a playful riff on the important vessels that carry blood around the body, and the image that captures it is inspired by the architectural scissor arch in nearby Wells Cathedral. The upper 'V' shape is an inclusive reservoir where all are welcomed and gathered, and gently encouraged down towards the central axis. This marks the point of potential encounter with the divine, and from where individuals in community are being transformed in heart, mind, and spirit, and flow outward into the world through the downward "V". The pulse of "Arterie" is in Shepton Mallet in the Diocese of Bath & Wells, where vessels, veins, and capillaries encapsulate creativity and spread out in rhythm to the dynamic beats of the Holy Spirit.

"Arterie" has multiple strands, to date: "Drawing On", "Vespers", and "Tea-Time Praise". "Drawing On" is a weekly sketching group in the town park that meets year-round whatever the weather! Inspiration abounds in the natural beauty and human and animal activity of the park, or through a poem, story, or conversation. Social isolation is mitigated, great coffee and cake consumed, stories and life shared, and, at just the right time there's an invitation to move towards the axis shape of encounter. (If you're interested in starting "Drawing On" in your own town, a pack is available through the contact details below).

"Vespers" is a contemporary evensong. After the fun of a scratch rehearsal, creative worship - entirely sung - takes place with pause for a visual reflection or making activity.

"Tea-Time Praise" is an itinerant worshipping community with on-the-go sacred objects; a large hand painted and printed altar/picnic/table cloth, a miniature traveling triptych with changing art made by children and parents.

Rev'd Gill Sakakini  
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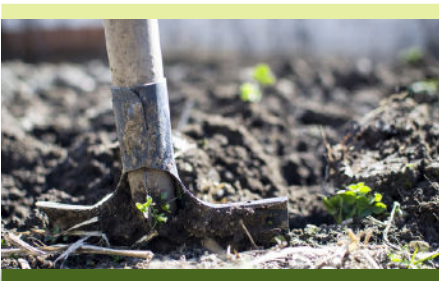
# Pioneering in a Community

As a Pioneer in Birchfield for the first 6 months, I walked around and talked to people and listened to them. Because it was in the middle of the pandemic lockdowns listening also worked as an act of love: people wanted to talk to someone. It helped me build relationships with people in the community, understand the challenges people were facing, understand what people in the community considered to be local issues, and helped people get to know me as a pioneer minister.

From these conversations and relationships, the idea of creating a garden in the local park emerged. It made the park more family-friendly and discouraged drug dealing by removing the overgrown areas which worked as hideouts for drug dealers. People were very grateful for that. A few people came and helped me clear the ground and pull out stumps. Two of them began sharing deeply about serious health issues they were going through. Others donated plants for the garden. We had many conversations. Being around and cleaning up the park enabled the community to trust me. The local primary school invited me to join their governing team because of my connection with the community. That invitation has opened a way to be involved in after-school clubs and share gospel stories with children.

During the summer of 2022, I held a holiday club, in the park in the community garden. Holiday club cemented my relationship with the community more and opened the way to start church in the park in September.

In this relational space, I talked to someone about what talking to God means and why it's significant. I also talked to another person about how rethinking life and how changing our minds about certain issues really helps him. I replaced the word 'repentance' with the phrase 'changing our minds'. It was not easy to start these conversations: I was worried about how people will receive me and if relationships were going to



break down. But I was surprised how people were open to hearing about having a conversation with God. Also, although the person I talked to about changing his mind said he was not ready for it yet, he asked a few questions and was engaged and listening. I do think without developing relationships it wouldn't have been possible to talk about these things.

One of the key lessons I've learnt is that people of the Birchfield community won't be able to relate to the church as we know it in our weekly congregational gathering, because of the language we use and because of the huge gap in social and cultural aspects of the church members and the lives of the people in the Birchfield community. But people respond to being outdoors and exploring nature as a medium for communicating the gospel. They show interest in Celtic mystic Christian spirituality through outdoor contemplative worship practices.

# Cathedral Plus

Carlisle Cathedral's All Age worship 'Cathedral Plus' came about by listening and recognising the need on a Sunday morning for engaging (a) children who sing in the choir with more age-appropriate experiences than the sermon and (b) younger families and unchurched families. We had a desire to create a space/experience that all would find welcoming – especially a single parent with a child with special educational needs and those for whom 'inherited church' is alien or unattractive.

We did this by creating a 'parallel worshipping community' where attenders seek to help and support each other and respond to community needs. We begin the meeting by sharing food (breakfast) together and encouraging conversation in a café-style. Playing games (especially with parachute) where people's names are spoken and learned.

We explore discipleship through 'living liturgy' and teaching, (normally cartoon/video) focussed on Christian skills rather than knowledge asking questions as much as giving answers. Encouraging discussion and practical application working up towards a moment of silence Jesuit Style 'to say to God what you want to say (in your head or heart)'. Provision of multi-targeted activity sheet with colouring, puzzles, basic bible passage exploration, quotations to take home.

We reimagine church and worship through the use of visual illustrations/ photographs, a wide range of music geared to the ages attending – both secular and churchy – regular use of Makaton (basic sign language) and 'praise aerobics'. Participation over passivity, welcoming energy as well as stillness. Though securely 'led', continual encouragement to members to help 'shape' the gathering. Led by a growing lay team. Content to be small and effective rather than large and impersonal.



# Eco Church

## St Mary's Eco Church, Diocese of Southwark Frequently spotted in Archbishop's Park, central London Manna in the wilderness

St Mary's Eco Church was created in November 2021 by Lambeth Palace, North Lambeth Parish, and the Diocese of Southwark to respond to the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis. We're a church without a building and the wilderness increasingly seems to be the place we're actively called to be: a place to be adaptable, resourceful, resilient, thankful for the smallest thing; a place for noticing and listening, the biblical place of beginnings, beyond human control - perhaps exactly where an eco church should be seeded.

In the wilderness - mostly gathering outside - we've learned to listen, to love and serve, to build community with the little groups we've seeded and watched take root and flourish, and we've held pop ups in all sorts of amazing, unexpected places including Battersea Power Station: take a look at [www.stmarysecochurch.org](http://www.stmarysecochurch.org). But what about 'discipleship', 'reimagining Church and worship'? The wilderness can be exciting and exhilarating. It's also a challenging place to be. What works elsewhere often makes no sense here or doesn't take root. We've had plenty of ideas for starting a time to reflect on our relationship with God and to create spaces for worship but something has always happened to disrupt our starting date, including the death of Her Majesty, the Queen, when our 'wilderness' unexpectedly became the base for the army. As a Hebraist, I'm acutely aware that the *midbar* (wilderness) is traditionally the place *min* ('away from') *dbar* ('word'): the place beyond words, where human attempts to make

meaning and to communicate falter and no longer make sense, the place of silence beyond our control.

*A moment in the wilderness: We're in Southwark Cathedral for one of our pop ups as part of their Gaia*



exhibition. It's October 2022, and we're inviting people to get creative in the face of climate change. Not just children but also adults, because in the face of climate change it's not fair to leave the responsibility to children. Over the weeks, we've gathered natural debris from the streets of London – seed heads, acorns, tree seeds, pine cones - things we would normally tread on or sweep away as rubbish. And we're challenging people to reimagine this debris as art resources, to create little sculptures of sea creatures using salt dough as a base. So many have been struck by just how 'blue' Gaia is, and we're responding to this by giving those who live in those oceans visibility and voice.

We were initially invited for a single afternoon, but the challenge has caught people's imagination and we've now been there for three days, challenged to flex and adapt as always. The little sea creatures are proliferating and making their presence felt: by now there are over one thousand of them weaving through Southwark Cathedral on the blue fabric spread for them.

But now the pop-up is ending. We have just a few autumnal resources left. I'm standing at the one remaining table, holding the last serving of salt dough in my hands. The visitors know we're about to close, and they gather round that table, hands cupped, waiting to receive. And I break off a piece of salt dough for each guest and place it in their open hands for them to make from that salt and flour and water what I now see are little sacraments of hope: created from what earth has given and human hands have made. And our thwarted, perhaps impatient attempts to reimagine Church and worship suddenly feel so unnecessary as I'm reminded that God is always already there before us. We only need to create the space, accept the silence, and our inability to control, and open our eyes to see. Manna in the wilderness.

# Friday LIVE

At the Church of the Saviour on Sunny Bank Road in Blackburn, an interactive all age family service on Friday nights has been running now for the last few years. Services are all age, they normally begin with a fun intro and then a song followed by a reading, an interactive talk then prayers, song and awards, which allows children or grown-ups to be congratulated for any awards they have received during the week. After the formal part of the service there is a craft, a game and a chance for a brew.

James Lapping, the Urban Outreach Pastor at the church explains how the service originally started following the demise of the Campaigner/ Crusaders youth events and it was felt something was needed to cater to young children.

“We are an estate church, on the Infirmary / Higher Croft estate in South Blackburn. Our estate has lots of young families on it. Our target congregation are young families on the estate. Lots of these who historically would never have been to church before. We try to use interactive liturgy that is easier for children to understand...and use safe, comfortable language that makes everyone feel part of the service.

It is a loved service and we have had good numbers over the years, we do tend to lose kids (and families) once they move into year six and upwards. Hopefully, we will be able to find a way of engaging this age group. We have 10-25 each Friday coming along, most of whom are on the fringes of church life.

Friday LIVE is the best outreach event we do, and definitely brings folk into the church family. It has had a big reach into the community and is a big part of the viability of Church of the Saviour.”



# Kentigern School of Contemplation

The Kentigern School of Contemplation was set up by Stephen Wright of Sacred Space in Cumbria and runs over two residential weekends with one to one meet ups in between. The school has been running for 4 years with those attending the course creating a convocation for all those who've completed the course to meet together on a regular basis.

The Kentigern School allows participants to study the history, practice and relevance of contemplation for today, but the primary focus is on the experience of contemplation. It is deeply rooted in the teachings of Jesus, whilst being open to the wisdom in other traditions.

Contemplation cannot be taught, but it can be experienced. It is the possibility of deep, prayerful communion with the Divine. The contemplative way is one of inner reflection, communion and transformation out of which we participate more fully in everyday life. The Kentigern School offers ways of exploring the *Real* and finding our unique path of connection.

The programme provides an opportunity for participants to explore: What contemplation is and what it means to be a follower of the Contemplative Way. The story of the Contemplative Way down the ages. How meditation, prayer, contemplation and mysticism intersect. The different ways of understanding the Beloved in the Christian tradition and beyond. Preparation for contemplation. Contemplative Prayer. How contemplation is lived in our daily lives. Deep Listening. Silence and Solitude. Ego and Soul. Key themes of spiritual maturity and practice: love, discernment, authenticity, humility, transformation, wisdom, trust, joy, service and peace. Movement and stillness. The sources of support we need. Our path of service or calling and how to follow it in ways that are healthy for ourselves and others. Opportunities for mutual support among a group of companions, fellow seekers along the Way. Participation or otherwise in a faith community



# JEDS Pantry

'What an 18 months we've had since opening JEDS' Pantry. Even those who were sceptical at first now come along regularly to support us.'

'God is good, all the time' has been our message throughout. God's provision is many-fold, we always get the food we need! But spiritual as well. We've listened to the needs of our local community, stepping beyond 'church' to meet new people from all walks of life, and those who are going through difficult times.

The generosity of volunteers, giving up time, energy and care to love people, has been phenomenal.

A simple cuppa for shoppers quickly became "tea and toast", and with the need for Warm Spaces over the winter, there's now a pay-as-you-feel café, helped by our local pub landlady cooking and baking for us every week.

There is a permanent prayer point for quiet reflection, or for praying with others.

Community grows, volunteers help out, faith conversations happen, and prayers are offered.

"Tom", a 31-year-old, struggled at home with just his two dogs to talk to, before he found JEDS Pantry. Now he comes for food and a warm space and helps occasionally as a volunteer, simple things that have proved "life-changing" for him.

One regular, a single Iranian mother who arrived in the UK six years ago, says, "I'm always excited to come. I even got a hug when I first walked in. Here I feel safe, included and part of the community. I enjoy coming here, I am always smiling."





# Farsi Christian Community

When two young Iranian men recently housed in a nearby hotel arrived at our Sunday morning worship in September 2021, it was a complete God-incidence that the member of our congregation welcoming arrivals that morning was herself married to an Iranian.

But as we sought together to serve these young men, numbers steadily started to grow and, thanks to the slow-moving asylum process, to grow and grow until, after a year, we had welcomed more than 100 Farsi speaking men, women and children through the doors. God's miraculous provision for the work has kept pace as He brought skilled individuals alongside and raised up extraordinary ministry gifts from among our own congregation.

We have been on a steep learning curve in terms of discipleship, and we have also been delighting in discovering the amazing story that God is writing in Iran and among displaced Farsi-speakers across churches in the UK. Our model is based in a desire to create a cultural hub where Farsi-speakers can find a church home for as long or as short as they are in the area. We welcome and look for the Jesus story that each individual carries and we are seeking to build a vision of church together that celebrates our diversity of culture across the congregation on Sundays, whilst also seeking to support in-depth discipleship midweek in Farsi, and provide opportunities for a wider congregation of Farsi speakers drawn from nearby churches to gather bi-monthly for Holy Communion.



Christ Church Gipsy Hill in Southwark Diocese.

# Saturday@4

St Wilfrid's parish church in Standish near Wigan, has adopted Saturday as the day for a new outreach to its community in 2022. The new 'Saturday @ 4 Service' takes place on the first Saturday of each month at 4pm in the afternoon. Like many communities in Lancashire, a lot of new homes have been built in the last few years, with more to come.

According to the Rev Canon Andrew Holiday, Vicar of St Wilfrid's, the target congregation are members of the church's uniformed organisations, the Brigade and Guides: "Following the COVID pandemic we had wanted to move away from the 'traditional' pattern of a Parade Sunday. The service also reaches out to those members of our community who find Sundays difficult. We are reaching out to couples / families seeking Baptism or Confirmation and also, perhaps more particularly, to new families moving in Standish."

We create a 'liturgy' act of worship for each Service, for example in November the theme was Remembrance, September Harvest, in August a space for prayer. Resources have included the depth and richness of the Iona Community material, Celtic patterns of worship and prayer, and the resources that the Diocese help us with and Church of England materials that are widely available."

Feedback has been very positive, Canon Holliday says that some people have come to Church for the first time, and felt welcomed: "Starting with refreshments served in Church, has helped to create a more relaxed atmosphere. We have also started a Young Voices Choir, a piece of work involving our primary School St Wilfrid's Academy. This service is core to our mission values and firmly in line with our Parish Vision and strategic plan we have written for the Parish in planning for the future - we need to reach out and get ourselves involved with the young people and families of our parish."



# Wellspring

For many years St Paul's school and church in Wigan have worked together closely, but we wanted to reach out to the parents, carers and families as well as the pupils.

In 2017 a small team started meeting regularly to pray and discuss, and the result was Wellspring.

Our passion is to make disciples and build faith, providing a space for grown-ups to relax and reflect, while children do crafts and games, as well as sharing a cooked meal. We aim to help people find faith, through Alpha courses, bible study groups and other activities.

We have children and parents not just from St Paul's but from other schools around the area and this happens through word of mouth and by hearing about us on social media.

We also have an amazing group of volunteers whom God has brought along at just the right time and who ensure things continue to run smoothly!

Why do people like belonging to Wellspring?

'I meet people I wouldn't usually meet.'

'I've never been religious but after coming to Wellspring I always feel more open minded.'

'I feel wanted.'

'I love the gardening.'

'Good food, good chat!'



# Mountain Pilgrims

There are a number of expressions of Mountain Pilgrims across Cumbria. Mountain Pilgrims are a church which gathers in the outdoors – as John Muir suggested: We'd rather be in the mountains thinking of God... Using all our senses, stillness, and discussion we pray, worship and, through one another, Creation, and the written Bible, we explore what it means to be followers of the way of Jesus. Creation ministers to us by providing space, experiences of awe and wonder and many metaphors for reflection.

Below is one such reflection used with one of the Mountain Pilgrims Groups on the theme of 'paths'.

Using the metaphor of path and journey to explore the themes of past, present and future. As you make your way to your destination, reflect back on the past: What things have resourced you?

On reaching your destination pause in the present and read the poem 'For the Traveler' by John O Donohue from his book 'Benedictus: A book of Blessings'.

As you make your return journey think about the things you need to resource you in the future.

The Romans built straight roads that would get them from A to B in the quickest time, in a place like the Lake District there are many winding roads to accommodate the mountains, fells and lakes. Life is not always straight and true, sometimes there are twists and turns or obstacles to overcome, or we might even lose sight of where we are going. Although the path we walk is our own, it is good to know that there are others walking beside us, and as pilgrims together we can support one another on life's journey.

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



# Haywood Village Church

11 years ago Fiona Mayne was an atheist and there was no church on Haywood Village, where she now lives. It was a village in name only, a new housing estate under construction.

Fiona came to faith and in time felt a call to serve God in her local community which was the new estate. A local Anglican curate wanted to start an Alpha course on the estate and asked Fiona to help. She told him “I know everyone, I’ve lived here 10 years.”

Fiona goes on: over the next two years I led Alpha and organised some community events. I was learning more about mission, evangelism and pioneer ministry from the local sending church.

I began to ask people who lived there what they wanted for the estate and the answer was always the same; somewhere to meet up. I sensed a calling to gather community, God-centred community. So I started Take Five, a pop up café with a small group of people from local churches. It ran one afternoon a week in the school community room. It grew to around 100 people with crafts, dressing up, table tennis and lego.

Although I have never been apologetic about faith there is no Christian content at the café and everyone is welcome. From café conversations and friendships an Alpha group happened and continued after the course. Some began to ask “where’s the church in Haywood village?” I said there wasn’t one but if there was what would they want it to be? People said they would like it to be like the café but with Christian content. So we started Tea & Toast church in the hall once a month in a

café format. Hospitality was central. I was leading a team and it was suggested that I could lead a church on the estate.

As a church plant we started with where people are rather than taking a



model of church and planting the same thing in a new site. We simply share our lives and our faith. Everyone is welcome to join anything we do wherever they are on their journey. I feel like a bridge, because, having become a Christian later in life, I can see things from both sides, the people who aren't Christians and the church.

I think anybody can plant a church because you don't need to have anything. I had nothing but the heart to have a go. For me it was about having a go and a lot of it was about hospitality.

With 7 currently on the leadership team, Haywood Village Church is now a conventional district, the first step to being a parish church with its own church council and treasurer.

The latest chapter in the story concerns the vision for a multipurpose building with café, community space and office space for hire. The managing director of the development company said the land would cost £500,000-600,000. Having seen the plans and vision, he promised the land for a nominal £1. However we are still needing to pin this down formally and agree a timescale for handover of the land. God will provide. Fund-raising is underway to raise the money to build. Along the way, Fiona was called to ordination and is now a Pioneer Curate leading Haywood Village Church.

# Forest church

Forest Church started in September 2021, after I'd been meeting with a small group of local people every week for several months through lockdown outdoors, surrounded by nature, at the community allotment on the Bournville estate in Weston-super-Mare. During this time, people kept saying how much they enjoyed being in nature, how peaceful it was, and how good it was for their wellbeing. It felt natural to start some kind of outdoor fresh expression with them – and not to just simply 'do church outdoors' but to start with nature, which is tangible - we can see, hear, smell, feel and touch it, and through this, to enable people to connect with God, who is much more intangible, but who can in many ways be experienced on a deeper, spiritual or soul level, in and through the natural world, God's creation.

We felt it was important to start as a weekly gathering, to build community and asked local people what day and time worked best for them. Most people said Sunday afternoons as they didn't really do anything then and often the kids were bored with nothing to do! We advertised locally via word of mouth and on the local "I love the Bournville" facebook group and were amazed at the response – 25 local people came to the first one (all unchurched)! It grew each week until just before October half term, when we did pumpkin-carving exploring the theme of light in the darkness – 68 local people came, which was a bit crazy but lots of fun!

Numbers have fluctuated since then, but we have kept going because those who do come regularly have told us how much they enjoy and value Forest Church. We now meet Fortnightly so that we can keep going throughout the year, we have also moved it to Saturday. Forest Church is organic and flexible, in order to adapt to the changing culture and needs of the local community.

## **For more information:**

[www.facebook.com/forestchurchbournville](https://www.facebook.com/forestchurchbournville) or email [nicky.pybus@gmail.com](mailto:nicky.pybus@gmail.com).



# 5pm

St John's, Hatfield is located next to the main campuses of the University of Hertfordshire with its 25000 students and staff.

5PM was planted three years ago at St John's Hatfield as a new worshipping community for students and young adults.

Despite the interruption of the global pandemic, 5PM now regularly gets between 30-40 students who worship, engage with scripture, and build community together. It is particularly focussed on how to share the gospel and disciple the Gen Z demographic within the context of community.

Through both the community and the Alpha course we have seen several become Christians including some with backgrounds in other faiths. We have also seen a number of young Adults who dropped out of church for various reasons return and become active again.

Because students will only be around for 2-3 years, 5PM recognises that it very much has a "pay it forward" ministry with a lot of focus on equipping and encouraging the gifts of the students and to provide a place for them to exercise and grow in them. As a result, we have seen the first crop of young adults who are staying around St John's once they finish their studies, and some who have sensed a possible call to full time Christian ministry and are now plugged into the discernment journey.

Find out more at [www.stjohnshatfield.org/500pm](http://www.stjohnshatfield.org/500pm)





# Resources and Links

## **Fresh Expressions in the Church of England**

[www.churchofengland.org/about/fresh-expressions-church-england](http://www.churchofengland.org/about/fresh-expressions-church-england)

## **Fresh Expressions UK**

[www.freshexpressions.org.uk](http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk)

## **Godsend**

[godsend.cloud](http://godsend.cloud)

## **FX and Pioneering in Bath and Wells Diocese**

[bit.ly/BWpio](http://bit.ly/BWpio)

## **FX and Pioneering in Southwark Diocese**

[bit.ly/SOpion](http://bit.ly/SOpion)

## **The Northern Mission Centre**

[www.northernpioneer.co.uk](http://www.northernpioneer.co.uk)



Anglican Fresh Expressions  
& Pioneering Network Conference

BLACKFRIARS

CARLISLE

TAUNTON