



GOD AT WORK

LEARNING ABOUT FRESH EXPRESSIONS OF CHURCH AND OTHER PIONEERING MISSIONAL ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE DIOCESE OF LEICESTER

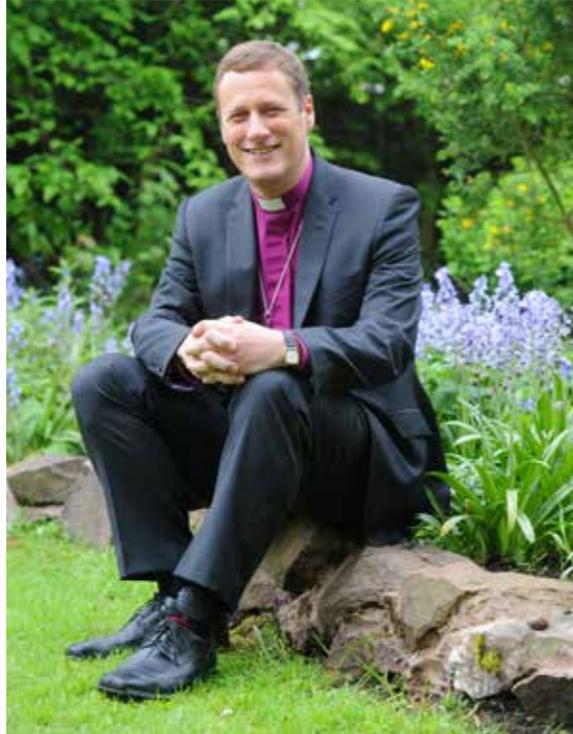


Diocese of
Leicester
Shaped by God

WELCOME

I believe that the fresh expressions movement is one of the most significant developments the Church has experienced over the past few decades. This report contains multiple areas of learning about fresh expressions of Church and other pioneering missional activity within the Diocese of Leicester. It contains a distillation of more than eight years of research the Diocese of Leicester has undertaken in partnership with Church Army's Research Unit, as well as significant areas of wider diocesan learning about pioneering. The results of this research have not only helped us better understand those pioneering missional activities which fit the Church Army criteria for fully formed fresh expressions of Church, but also to gain insight into where God is at work in other pioneering contexts in the diocese.

The fresh expressions movement has been so significant for a whole host of reasons - freeing lay people to be leaders in mission, encouraging risk-taking for the gospel, taking contextual evangelism seriously and reaching out to those outside the orbit of "normal church." The conclusions drawn by the Church Army's Research Unit on the basis of their work with the Pioneer Development Team in Leicester further highlight the vital role that



fresh expressions and pioneering now occupy in the mixed ecology landscape, which is going to be vital for the church's mission in the 21st Century.

I commend this report, and pray that it will be a helpful contribution as we continue to wrestle with what it means to be a Christian presence in every community at this point in history.

+ *Martyn Snow*

The Rt. Revd Martyn Snow
Bishop of Leicester

THANK YOU

This report would not have been possible without the time and cooperation of countless leaders of fresh expressions, pioneer development workers and diocesan staff. Church Army's Research Unit and the Diocese of Leicester would like to extend their heartfelt thanks to all those who gave up their time and invested their energy to make this report a reality. Our prayer for each of you is that you might be encouraged and challenged by the fruits of your own labour.

To that end please let us encourage you, whatever your relationship to the project may be, to reflect on the following questions and hold them in your mind as you engage with the rest of this document:

Is God calling you to start something new?

Could you be a pioneer?

What new thing is God doing in your context?

Who could you release into a pioneering ministry?

Where are the fresh opportunities where you are?

What next, Where next?

FIND OUT MORE

churcharmy.org/research

leicester.anglican.org/about-us/pioneering



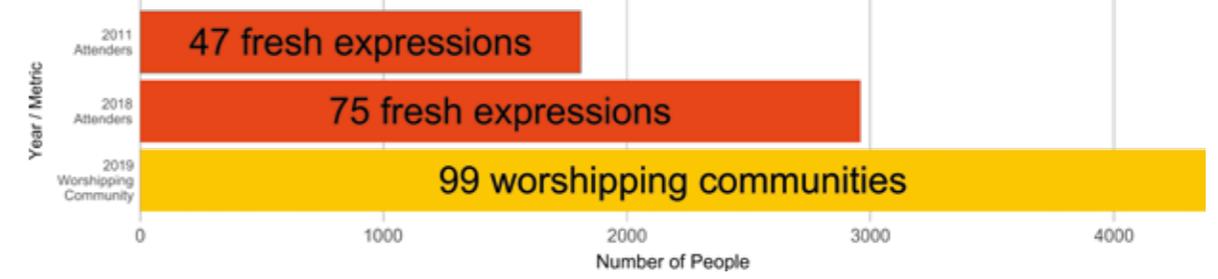
FxC GROW THE CHURCH



FxC GROW THE CHURCH

There has, since 2011, been a 60% increase in the number of fresh expressions of Church in the Diocese of Leicester. There has also been a 63% increase in the number of fxC attenders and a 77% increase in the number of fxC who are celebrating baptisms.

One of the key things that we have noticed is the extent to which fresh expressions of Church (fxC) and other pioneering missional activities are able to respond to their context in a missional way. The diocese began investing in fxC in 2011, and now, in 2019 there are **4,378** people in the 99 worshipping communities surveyed.



We're intentionally a slow-burning, relational community. It is therefore extremely encouraging to see the growth of new friendship groups coming out of the monthly events.

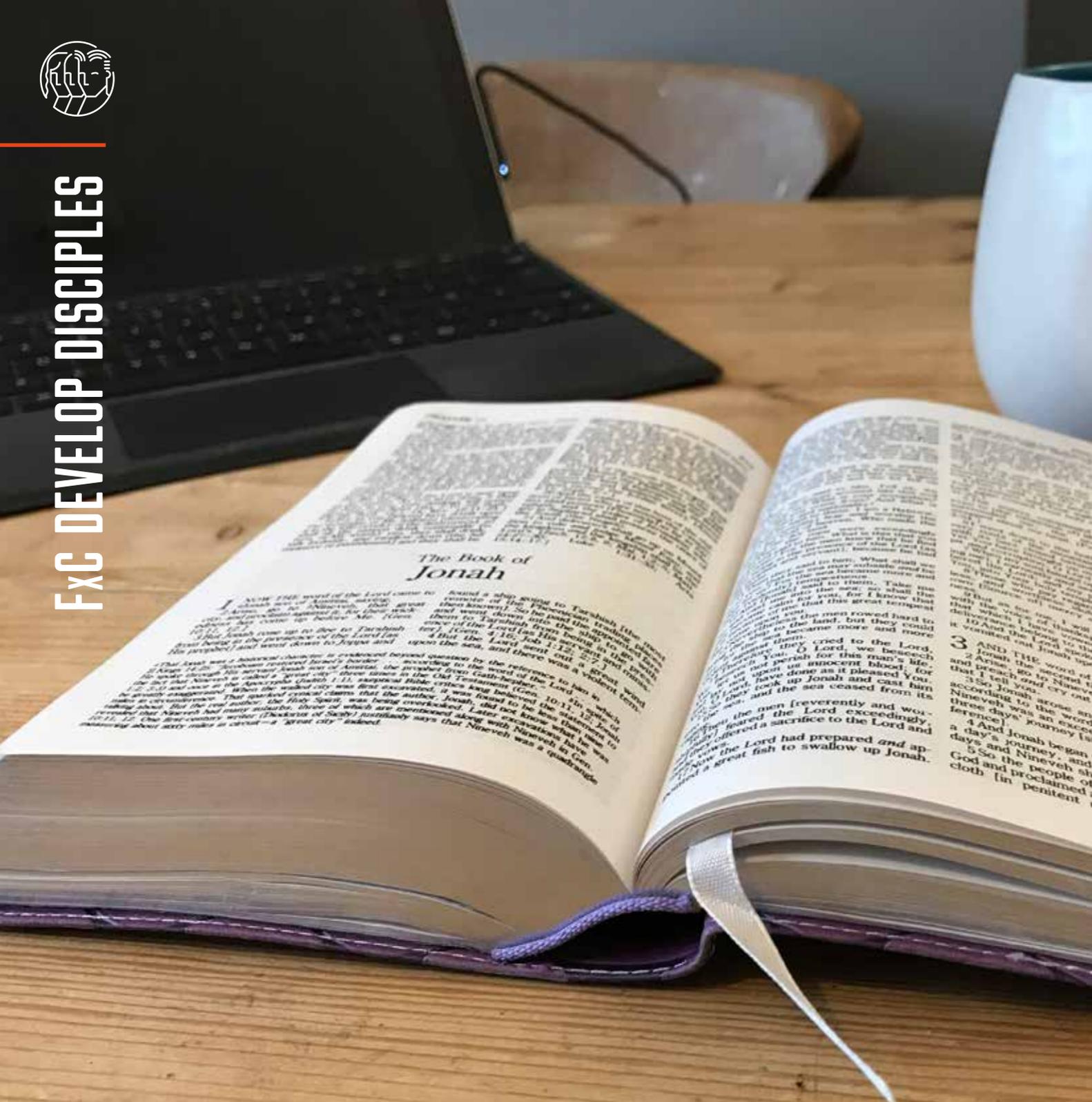
a pioneer in the Diocese of Leicester

We've seen children pray for their friends and pray for healing for people. We encourage people to step out in faith in our fxC which spurs them on to step out in bigger places!!

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FXC DEVELOP DISCIPLES

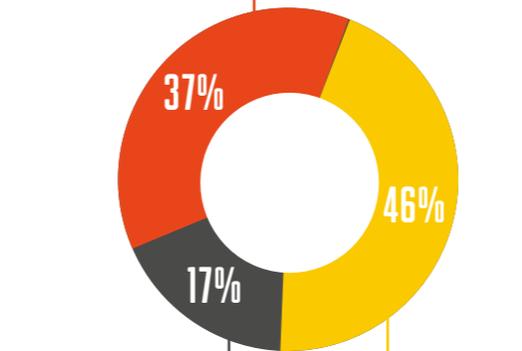


FXC DEVELOP DISCIPLES

At least 156 people are reported to have ‘come to faith in Christ’ through fxC in the 12 months preceding our latest research.

Over half of the worshippers at fxC would not otherwise attend a church. 17% are de-churched (those whose last regular experience of traditional church was more than a year ago) and 37% are non-churched (those with no regular experience of traditional church whatsoever).

NON-CHURCHED



DE-CHURCHED

CHURCHED

The engagement with the Bible that occurs within fresh expressions of Church provides one indicator of deepening discipleship. 53% of all diocesan fxC attenders are functionally new to church but are choosing to regularly engage with Scripture: that’s 1,825 people.

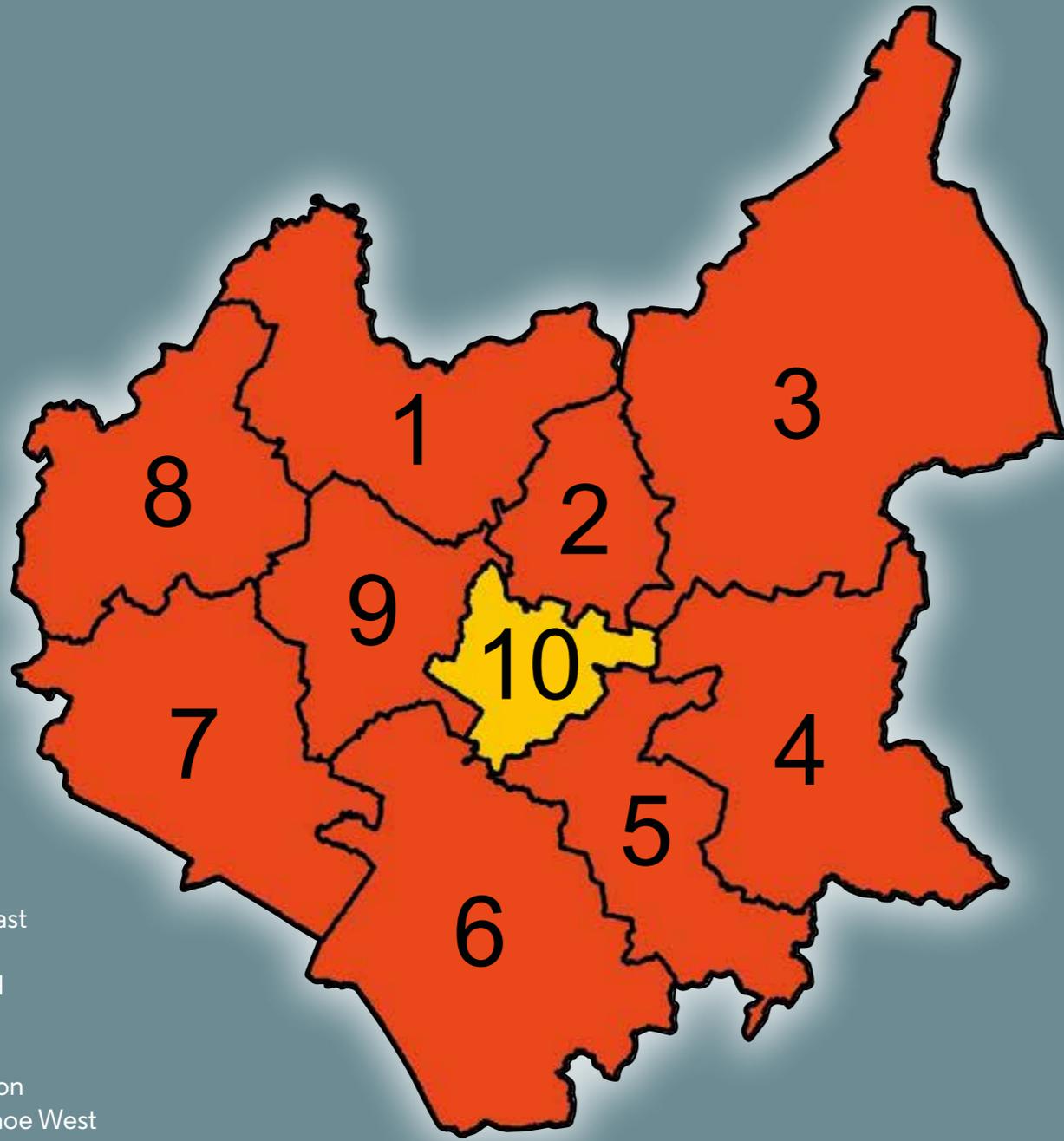
A crucial area for us has been to make sure that our worshipping communities (of any type) are deepening the faith of those that attend. This aligns with our Diocesan vision and what we believe to be the calling of all Christians – to know God more closely over time and become more like him. We are now able to prove statistically that this is happening in our fresh expressions of Church (fxC). All of our fresh expressions of Church engage with Scripture in at least two different ways, and 99% of these communities report that at least a few of the lives within their fxC have been observably changed in the last two years.

Helping to create a space within my fxC where people can meet with God is exciting. People take their “inward” faith and develop outwards to change the lives of those around them.

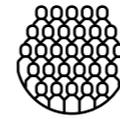
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FXC ARE FOR EVERYBODY



- 1 Akeley East
- 2 Goscote
- 3 Framland
- 4 Launde
- 5 Gartree
- 6 Guthlaxton
- 7 Sparkenhoe West
- 8 NW Leicestershire
- 9 Sparkenhoe East
- 10 City of Leicester



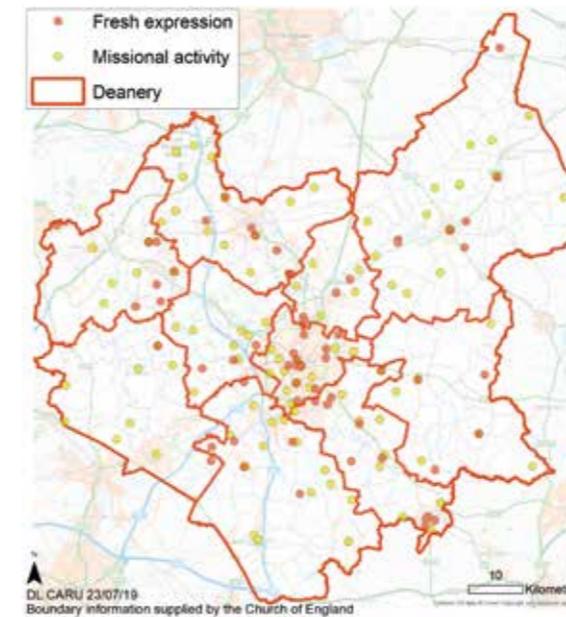
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The Diocese of Leicester’s fxC are located all over the diocese, from Bottesford (Framland) in the north east, to Market Harborough (Gartree) in the south, and from Loughborough (Akeley East) in the north, to Hinckley (Sparkenhoe West) in the west.

Though the City of Leicester (CoL) Deanery differs markedly from other parts of the diocese in various respects, fresh expressions of Church can be found in every deanery.

There are also fresh expressions of Church within the Diocese of Leicester’s most deprived areas and its least deprived ones. This, combined with the insights we have gained from various national research projects, suggests that fresh expressions of Church can be established and thrive in lots of different types of mission context.

We are a rural diocese with urban heartlands, and this is reflected in the fact that over 70% of our fxC exist outside the City Deanery. It’s been really encouraging to see the extent to which fresh expressions of Church (fxC) have the potential to be an exciting and creative answer to some of the challenges of rural ministry.



Having a fxC based in a village enables us to foster the natural relationships people have within the community. We’ve seen people engage with the community in a more deliberate way by joining in with local groups, and now have a monthly outreach meeting in the pub.

a pioneer in the Diocese of Leicester

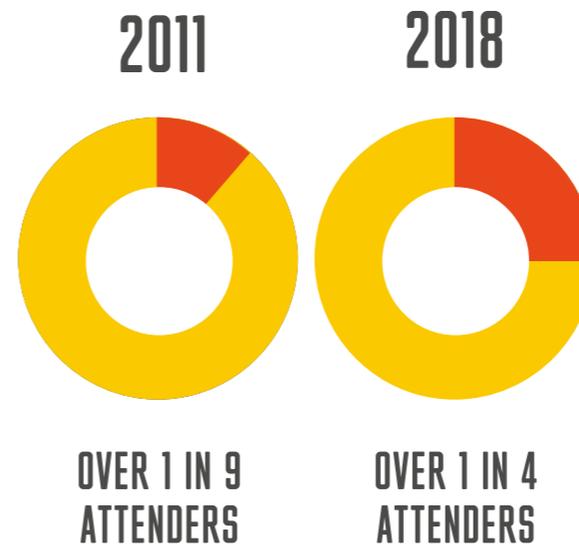


FXC STRENGTHEN THE EXISTING CHURCH



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Over 1 in 4 (26%) of people attending worship in the diocese now do so at a fresh expression of Church. FxC account for 19% of the overall diocesan 'worshipping community'.



We are seeing, constantly, that there is strength in having so many different models of church – what we call a “Mixed Ecology”. The different expressions of church within a parish complement each other, and this variety is possible because as Guerin Tueno notes, “the church is not defined by its outward appearance, forms and traditions but by its character and relationships”.

In talking about mixed ecology we’ve often used the analogy of a box of Liquorice All Sorts. They all have liquorice in them, they’re all in the same box, but different people prefer different sizes, shapes or textures of liquorice. So it is within our diocesan mixed ecology of churches.

Almost half the fxC (48%) have had baptisms, and a further quarter (24%) intend to do so in the future. In 47% of fxC, attenders are thought to be ‘mostly’ or ‘very’ aware of their belonging to the wider Church. And in 67% of fxC, attenders outside the wider team are engaged in sharing their faith. There were no fxC which did not intend to engage in faith sharing.

Through leading a discipleship group with my husband, I have been able to share faith with people on a deeper level and have been encouraged to try out new ways of discipleship.

a pioneer in the Diocese of Leicester



FXC SET GOD'S PEOPLE FREE



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Compared to inherited models of church, fxC have a tendency towards alternative forms of lay leadership. Our research found 359 core leaders across all fxC, with an average of 4 core leaders per fxC.

66% of all core leaders were women.

85% of all core leaders were unpaid.

74% were unlicensed 'lay-lay' leaders.

A significant part of our diocesan vision has been setting all of God's people free in the ministry that God is calling them to – for example the 51 licensed lay pioneers that are currently in post. However, one of the unexpected joys has been to give 33% of our licensed lay pioneers away to other ministries. This has ranged from paid pioneer roles elsewhere in the country to ordination training.

Leading a fxc in a non-ordained, voluntary role I think is how most of us are supposed to live. To be given the opportunity to grow in my ministry without having to be ordained or get a paid role means that I can live out my calling within a 'normal life'.

a pioneer in the Diocese of Leicester



FXC CAN BE SUSTAINABLE



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The majority of fxC operate a relatively 'low cost' financial model that makes them easier to sustain. 85% of all core leaders were unpaid.

28% of fxC report that they are now 'completely self-financing', with 69% of fxC having made progress towards being self-financing.

60% of fxC report that attenders are giving money to the fxC.

When Church Army's Research Unit last reported in 2017 we noted that just over 30% of fxC begun in the diocese of Leicester had come to an end. One of the benefits of conducting this research over an extended period is that we can now report that since 2015 fxC in the diocese appear to have become more resilient.

Much is made of the fragile, vulnerable or unsustainable nature of fresh expressions of Church, which can be a deterrent to financial investment. However, fxC offer unparalleled value for money, and provide a sustainable approach to mission. This is because of their significantly lower set up and ongoing costs. In fact, research shows that fresh expressions of Church are just as generous with their money as they are in giving away their people to new communities.

- Over one in four people attending worship in the diocese now do so in a fxC
- 85% of their core leaders are unpaid
- Inherited churches that have planted fxC are more generous in giving, per person/ per week giving (£12.11 pp/pw), than the diocesan average (£9.70 pp/pw)

What we do

Church Army's vision is for everyone everywhere to encounter God's love, and be empowered to transform their communities through faith shared in words and action.

Our Research Unit exists to help the Church in the British Isles and Ireland to more fully realise how God is active in mission, and to grow in understanding as to why churches' participation may falter or flourish. We seek to address these questions through the provision of excellent and innovative research and consultancy.

What we've done

For this report, we developed a survey which was completed by 97 pioneering leaders within the diocese. We analysed the responses to these and brought them into dialogue with previous surveys and external data sources in order to better tell the story of how God has been and still is at work amongst Leicester's fresh expressions.

This research is one fruit of Church Army's seven-year relationship with the Diocese of Leicester, partnering with them in learning about how God is active across their pioneering missional activities.

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