



# Fresh expressions of Church in the Diocese of Leicester

## Executive summary

This report provides an overview of the research by Church Army's Research Unit into fresh expressions of Church (fxC) in the Leicester diocese. Its focus is work carried out in the Spring of 2019 when the team conducted a survey of the diocese's known fresh expressions. The results of this survey have been analysed and brought into dialogue with the results of previous research conducted since 2011.

The report highlights:

- Increasing numbers of fresh expressions of Church, which are spread across all the deaneries of this varied diocese
- Increasing numbers of worshippers at fxC, many of whom would not otherwise attend an existing church
- Increasing numbers of people observed to have 'come to faith in Christ' through fxC
- Evidence of deepening discipleship within fxC
- Signs that fxC are making progress with stewardship and sustainability

It also provides compelling evidence that:

- fxC grow the Church
- fxC develop disciples
- fxC offer value

The story is one of encouragement. It is also one that is just beginning. These are young churches with all the attendant vulnerabilities of youth.

Church Army's Research Unit  
October 2019

# 1 The story so far

Since 2011, Church Army's Research Unit (CARU) has been working with the Diocese of Leicester to track the development of fresh expressions of Church (fxC). This report focuses on the most recent tranche of this research, completed in Spring 2019.

It involved surveying the leaders of fxC known to the diocese. The survey was completed either face to face, over the phone, or online. Participants were invited directly; general invitations were also shared through social media and the diocesan mailing.

99 responses were received and 75 fresh expressions of Church were identified using criteria consistent with previous research.

This research is generally comparable to its predecessors, but previous work has informed a few notable changes to data collection methods. For example:

- In previous tranches CARU collected detailed data pertaining to each fxC's primary leader, whereas here summary data were collected for every member of the fxC's core leadership team.
- In the first phase of collection, respondents selected their socio-geographical context from a list, while more recently fxC postcodes have been used in conjunction with official Census and deprivation data to present a data-driven overview of geographical contexts.

The rest of this report provides an overview of the current landscape of fresh expressions of Church across the diocese, before concluding with some final reflections on their deeper impact and prospects for the future. Given that the Diocese of Leicester is, in many ways, 'a rural diocese with urban heartlands', we give particular weight, in various sections of this report, to the manifold differences between the City of Leicester Deanery and the rest of the diocese.

## 2 Describing the current landscape

In this section we report back what participants in our research have told us about fresh expressions of Church. We look at how many there are, where they are, and what type, then at who goes to fxC, and who leads them. Finally, we look at what happens within fxC - how lives are changed and how fxC engage with sacraments, Scripture and stewardship.

### 2.1 Fresh expressions of Church

#### How many are there?

When CARU began this research in 2011, we identified 47 fresh expressions of Church with a total attendance of 1,811 people. Just over 1 in 9 (11%) people who attended worship in the diocese in 2011 did so at a fresh expression of Church. In 2018, we identified 75 fxC with a total attendance of 2,959 people. Now, just under 1 in 4 (23.5%) people attending worship in the diocese did so at a fresh expression of Church.

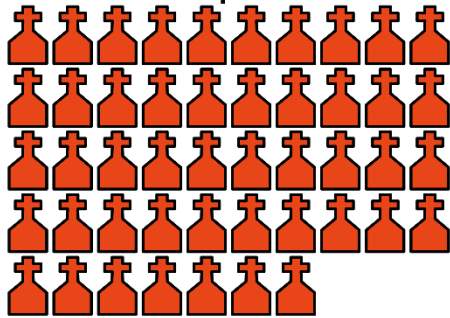
The infographic on the next page provides a visual representation of these findings. It shows that over the past seven years:

- The number of known fxC has grown by 60%.
- The number of fxC attenders has grown by 63%.
- The number of attenders relative to diocesan attendance has grown by 106%.

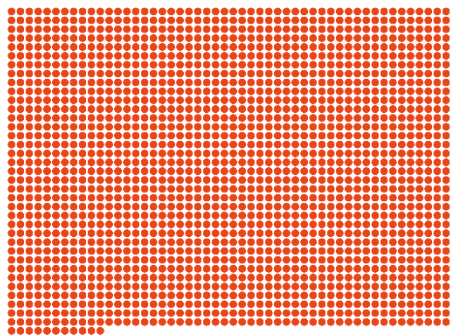
Interestingly, the number of attenders per fresh expression has increased by only 2%. The growth in diocesan fxC attendance can be explained almost entirely by the increase in the number of fresh expressions of Church.

# 2011

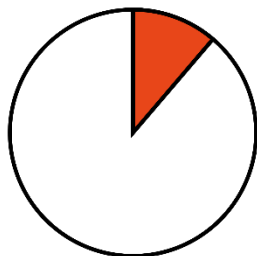
47 fresh expressions



1,811 attenders

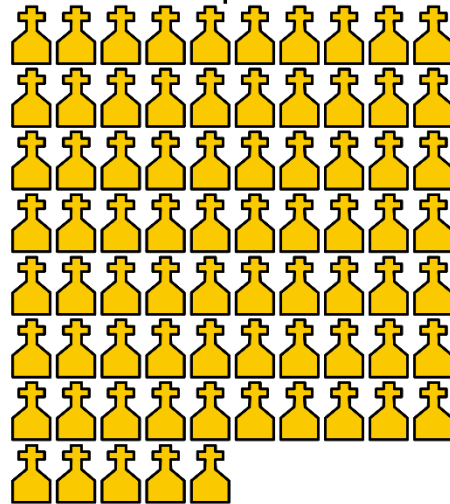


1 in 9  
diocesan  
attenders

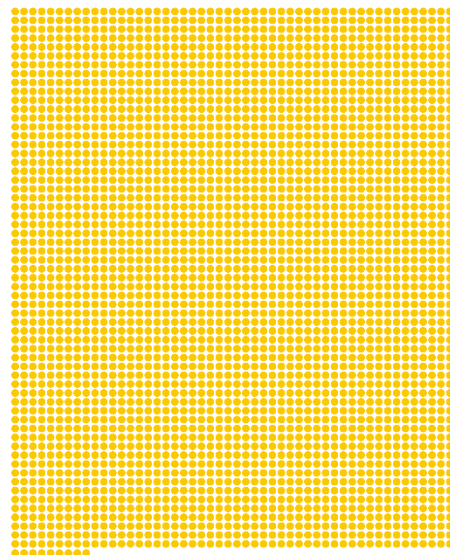


# 2018

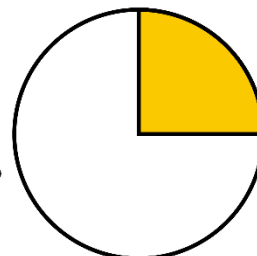
75 fresh expressions



2,959 attenders



1 in 4  
diocesan  
attenders





## Where are they?

Fresh expressions of Church, as well as other missional activities, can be found throughout the Diocese of Leicester. Figure 1 indicates the name of each deanery,<sup>1</sup> and Figure 2 shows the location of all the fxC and missional activities who responded to our surveys. These show that 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 Woodville (North West Leicestershire), to Hallaton (Launde) in the east.

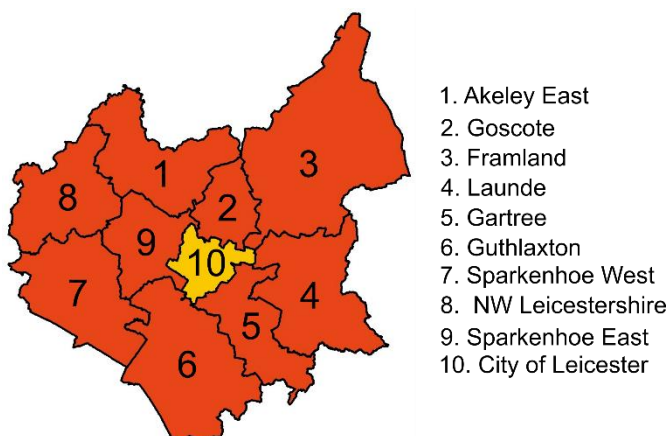


Figure 1: Deaneries in the Diocese of Leicester

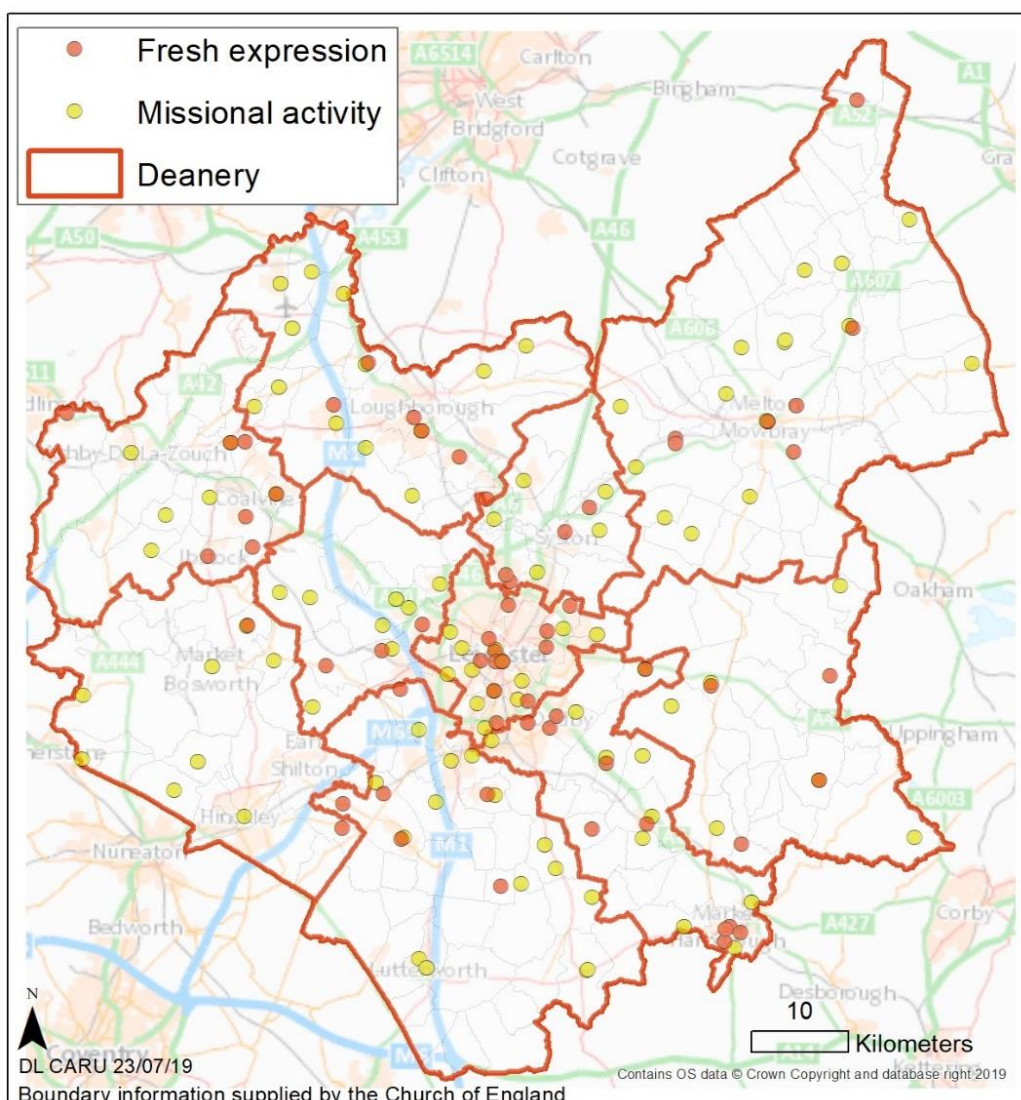


Figure 2: Fresh expressions of Church and missional activities in the Diocese of Leicester

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report, the Cathedral deanery has been included in the City of Leicester, and extra-parochial areas have been incorporated in their nearest deanery.

Whilst there are fxCs in every deanery, there is a large variation in the number of fresh expressions per thousand people across the diocese, as shown in Figure 3 below. Launde is the deanery with the most fresh expressions per person (0.53 per thousand). It has over three times the number of fxC per person in any other deanery, and 25 times the number of fxC found in Sparkenhoe West (0.02 per thousand). In general, the eastern deaneries of Framland, Launde and Gartree have more fresh expressions of Church per person than other deaneries.

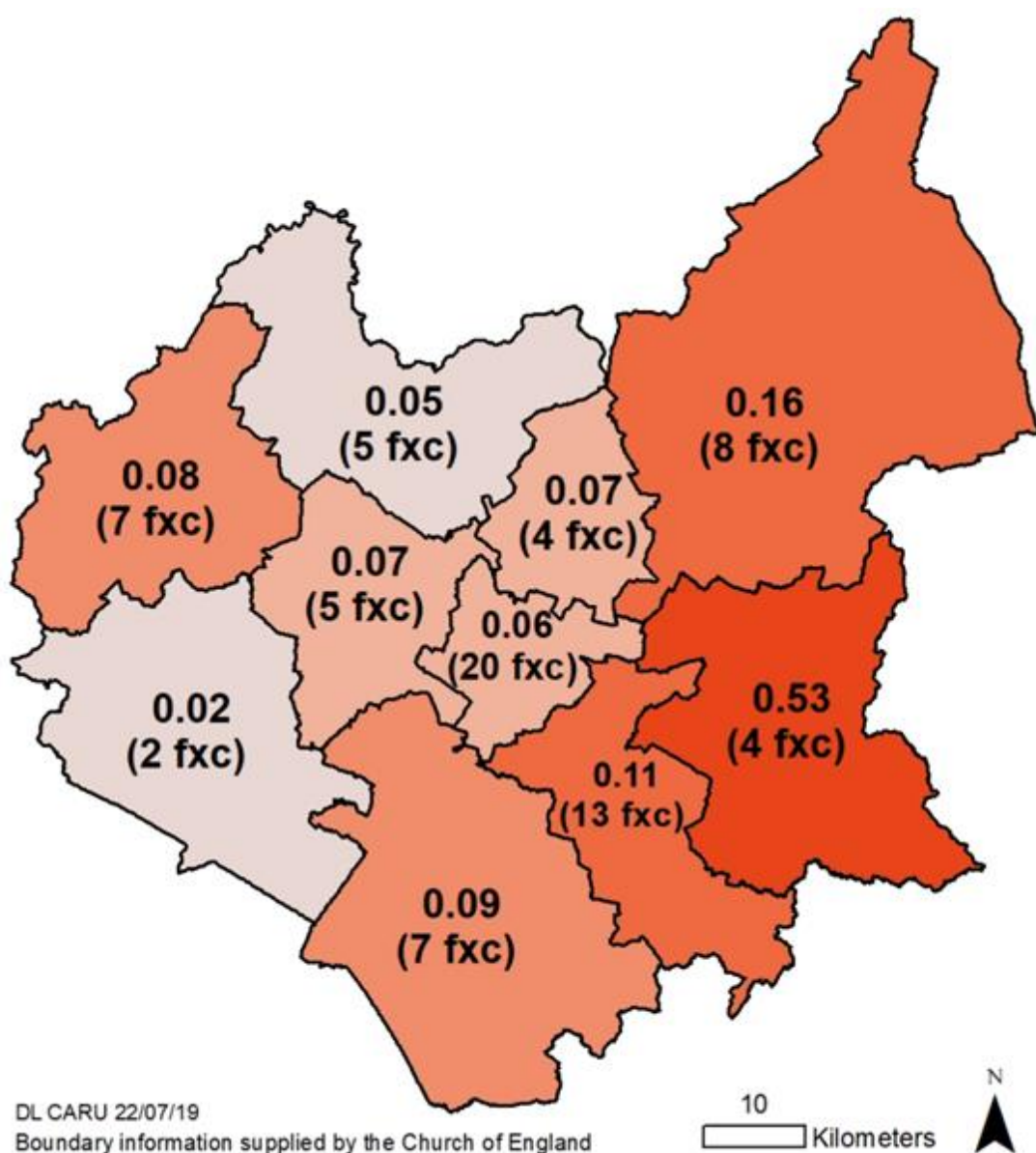


Figure 3: Number of fxC per thousand people, and number of fresh expressions of Church in each deanery.

Table 1, below, provides a statistical overview of each of the deaneries of Leicester diocese.<sup>2</sup> This shows that City of Leicester (CoL) Deanery, which has the highest number of fxC, differs markedly from other parts of the diocese in various respects. These include:

- Population - The population of the CoL is much higher than that of other deaneries.
- % Christian - According to Census data, the CoL has a much lower percentage of Christians than other deaneries.
- % Black and Minority Ethnic (BaME) residents - The CoL has a much higher percentage of BaME residents.

We will return to this distinction between the predominantly urban City of Leicester and other, more rural, deaneries in later sections of this report.

*Table 1: Deanery statistics for the Diocese of Leicester*

Deanery Name	Population (1000s)	Number of parishes	Number of fxC	fxC per 1000 people	% Christian	% BaME
City of Leicester	331.1	29	20	0.06	33%	49%
Gartree	118.2	21	13	0.11	56%	16%
Akeley East	100.5	23	5	0.05	54%	13%
Sparkenhoe West	85.4	20	2	0.02	65%	3%
North West Leicestershire	84.5	22	7	0.08	65%	2%
Guthlaxton	78.3	36	7	0.09	63%	3%
Sparkenhoe East	70.5	14	5	0.07	58%	11%
Goscote	58.5	12	4	0.07	56%	14%
Framland	50.3	43	8	0.16	68%	2%
Launde	7.6	23	4	0.53	72%	2%

Table 2, below, categorises the diocese's fxC using data from the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). In summary, this shows that fresh expressions of Church can be found in the Diocese of Leicester's most deprived areas (quintile 1), as well as in its least deprived ones (quintile 5).

*Table 2: Fresh expressions of Church in IMD quintiles*

#fxC per IMD quintile	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
City of Leicester	16	3	0	1	0
Other deaneries	1	2	14	12	26

<sup>2</sup> Population, % Christian and % BaME figures from 2011 Census, supplied by the Research and Statistics Unit of the Church of England, and adjusted by CARU for the new deanery structure.

## What type of fxC?

In this research, we asked people to describe their fresh expression in one of the ways shown in Table 3.<sup>3</sup> We can see that Messy Churches are the most common type of fxC, with 29% of all groups selecting this option. 1 in 8 fxC describe themselves primarily as All Age, while those serving Special Interest Groups comprise 8% of all fxCs. Network Churches make up 7% of fxCs and Other types 9%. Other choices selected by respondents made up 5% or less of the total.

There is a significant difference between the types of fxC found in the City of Leicester compared with the other deaneries. The final column of Table 3 shows the percentage of each type found outside the City of Leicester, for example, 50% of Special Interest Group fxC (3) are within the City, while the other 50% are in other deaneries. Messy Churches and All Age fxC are more common outside the city (91%, 88%), while Network churches (80% in CoL) and Special Interest Group fxC are found more often than expected in the CoL.<sup>4</sup>

Table 3: Types of fxC in urban and rural areas

Type of fxC	City of Leicester (CoL)	% of all CoL fxC	Outside City of Leicester	% of all non-CoL fxC	Total	% of Total	% of type outside CoL
Messy Church	2	10%	20	36%	22	29%	91%
All Age	1	5%	8	15%	9	12%	88%
Other	1	5%	6	11%	7	9%	86%
Special Interest Group	3	15%	3	5%	6	8%	50%
Network church	4	20%	1	2%	5	7%	20%
Café church	1	5%	3	5%	4	5%	75%
Child-focused	1	5%	3	5%	4	5%	75%
Cluster	2	10%	1	2%	3	4%	33%
Alt worship	0		3	5%	3	4%	100%
Under 5s	0		2	4%	2	3%	100%
Community Development Plant	1	5%	1	2%	2	3%	50%
Midweek church	1	5%	1	2%	2	3%	50%
Older people	1	5%	1	2%	2	3%	50%
Youth Church	1	5%	1	2%	2	3%	50%
New Monastic	0		1	2%	1	1%	100%
Traditional Church Plant	1	5%	0		1	1%	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>73%</b>

<sup>3</sup> In previous tranches of research in Leicester Diocese, fxCs were able to choose from up to three options, meaning that these results are not directly comparable with previous reports.

<sup>4</sup> Some rows are amalgamated to allow for test,  $X^2=14.03$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p=0.03$ .



### When did they start?

Table 4 shows the start dates of all fxC observed for the full duration of CARU's research, regardless of their current status, divided into six-year sections. The start rate for fxC in the last six years (65) is similar to the 2006-2012 rate (63) at just under one per month.

Table 4: Start dates of fresh expressions of Church, all tranches of research

fxC	1992-1998	1999-2005	2006-2012	2013-2018	Total
No. of fxC started	2	7	63	65	137
% all observed fxC	1.5%	5.1%	46.0%	47.4%	

Of the 75 fxC observed in 2018, 19 (25%) had started since collection for the previous tranche ended in 2016, and 39 (52%) were less than six years old. The 'live' fxC accounted for in this phase comprise 55% of all unique fxC recorded since data collection began. The oldest fxC captured here began in 2005. Figure 4 shows the cumulative count of these fxC over the last 13 years. The rate of initialisation of the current fxC visibly increases in 2010, and thereafter remains consistently above five fxC begun each year.

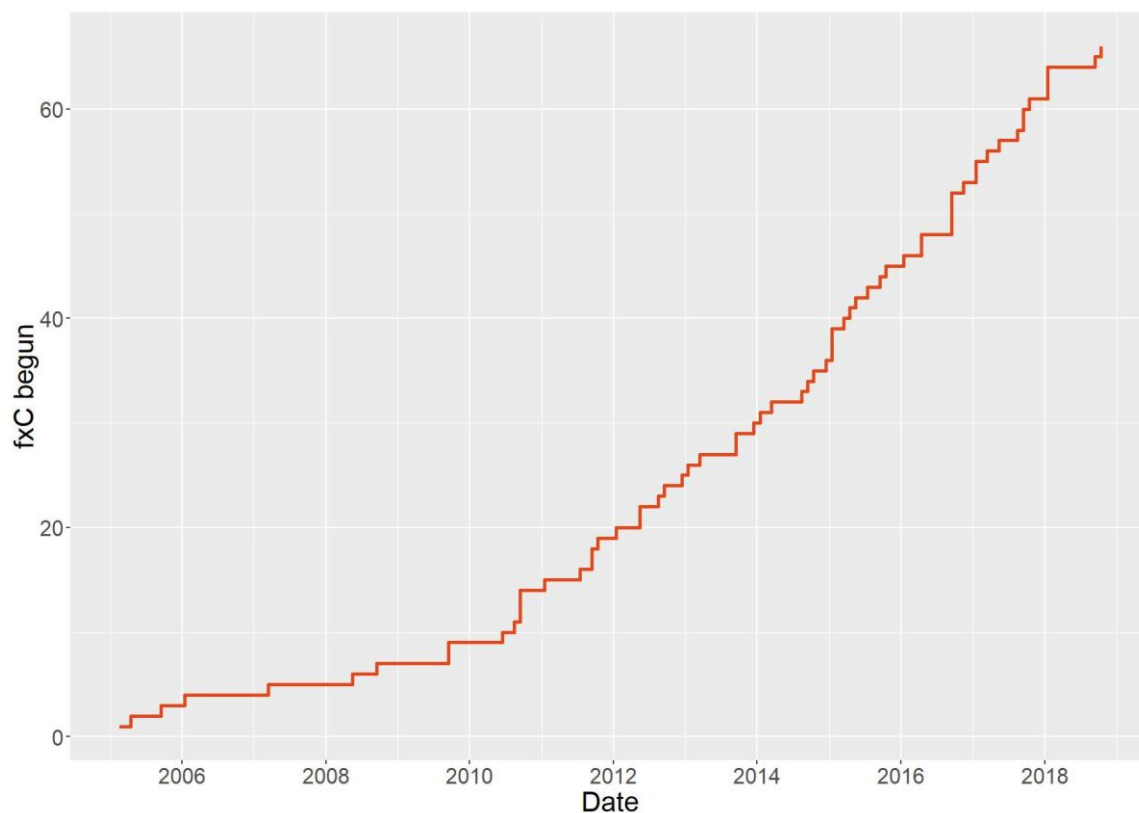


Figure 4: Cumulative plot of start dates of present fresh expressions of Church

## 2.2 Who attends fxC?

### How many people go?

The total worshipping community (WC) of fresh expressions of Church within the Diocese of Leicester is 3,426 people. This is the number of people who attend regularly, or who would do if not prevented by infirmity or temporary absence.<sup>5</sup> This figure constitutes 19% of the overall worshipping community of the diocese. Thus, just under 1 in 5 people who are part of a worshipping community in the diocese are part of a fresh expression.

Figure 5 shows the number of people in the worshipping communities of the fresh expressions of Church. The average (median) group size is 40,<sup>6</sup> and six fxCs have WC of 100 people or more, including IMPRINT with 190. There is no statistical difference between fxC in the City of Leicester and outside.

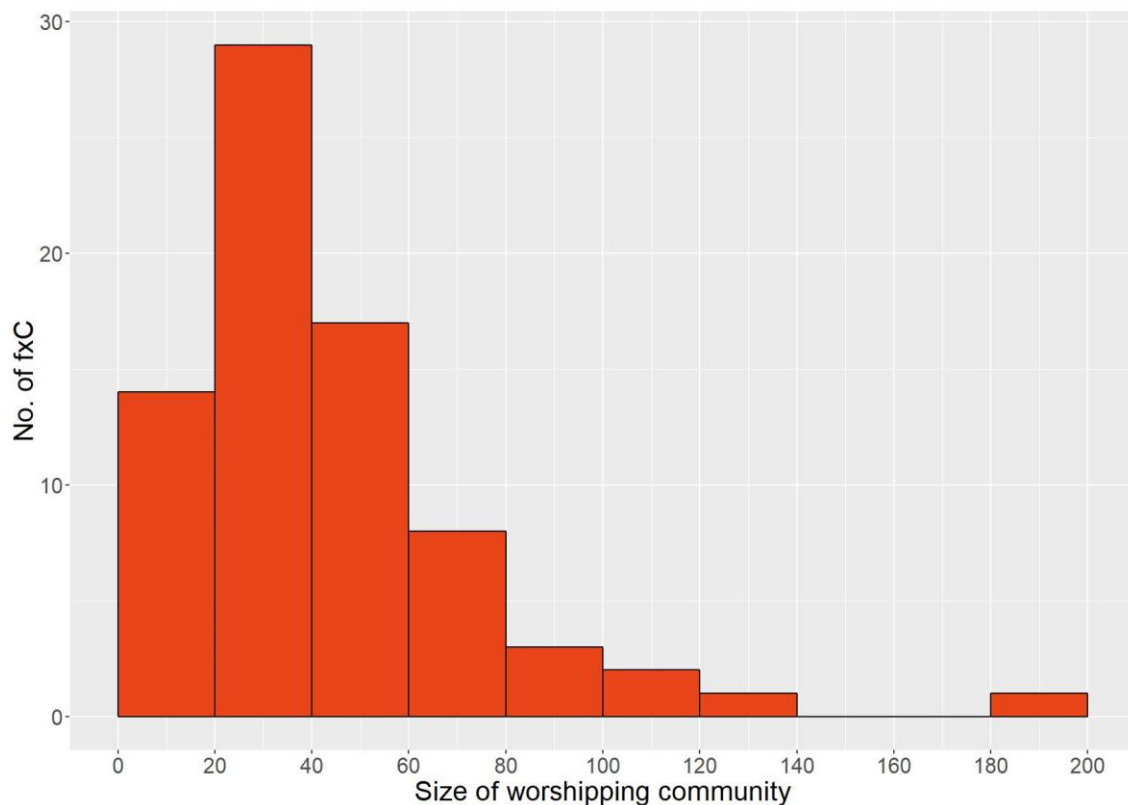


Figure 5: Worshipping community sizes at fxC

<sup>5</sup> For a full definition, see: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/WorshippingCommunity.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> This compares with 42 people making up the median worshipping community reported in the Church of England's Statistics for Mission 2018: [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/2018StatisticsForMission\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/2018StatisticsForMission_0.pdf)

### Have they been to church before?

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). These figures are illustrated in Figure 6 below.

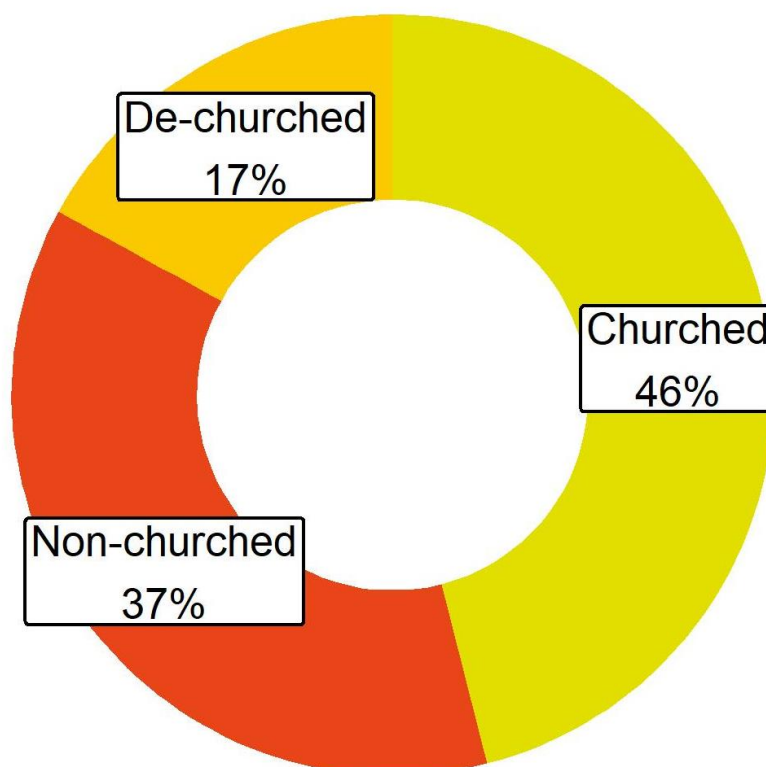


Figure 6: Attenders' prior experience of church

With relation to church background, we have found there to be statistically significant differences<sup>7</sup> between fxC worshippers in the City of Leicester and those in other deaneries, summarised in Table 5 below. Within the City of Leicester, those in the worshipping community of fxC are more likely to be churched than in other deaneries. In other parts of the diocese (beyond the City of Leicester), there are more people with little previous experience of church.

Table 5: Church background of fxC worshipping community, by deanery

	Churched	De-churched	Non-churched
Diocese of Leicester	46%	17%	37%
City of Leicester	57%	21%	22%
Other deaneries	42%	16%	42%

<sup>7</sup>  $\chi^2=9.2$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.01$ .

## How old are they?

Just over a third (35%) of the fxC worshipping community are under eighteen. Table 6 shows the different age groups of the worshipping community of fxC.

Table 6: Age groups of those who attend fresh expressions of Church

Age group	Under fives	Children	Youth	Young adults	Middle aged	Older	Elderly
Age band	0-4	5-11	12-17	18-35	36-55	56-70	71+
No. worshippers	331	637	241	569	659	511	415
% worshipping community	10%	19%	7%	19%	18%	15%	12%
% Leicestershire population <sup>8</sup>	6%	8%	7%	25%	26%	16%	11%

We see that more children under 12 attend a fxC than might be expected, given the number of young people in the diocese. 14% of the Leicestershire population are under 12, yet double this figure (29%) of the worshippers at fxCs are under 12. Later age bands show relatively fewer worshippers than the general population, particularly for those between 18 and 55 (37% of those at fxC, 51% of the diocese). At the Older age group the difference closes; here and amongst the Elderly there is only 1 percentage point difference.

For each of these age groups, Figure 7 illustrates the number of worshippers at fxC per thousand people of the same age within Leicestershire.

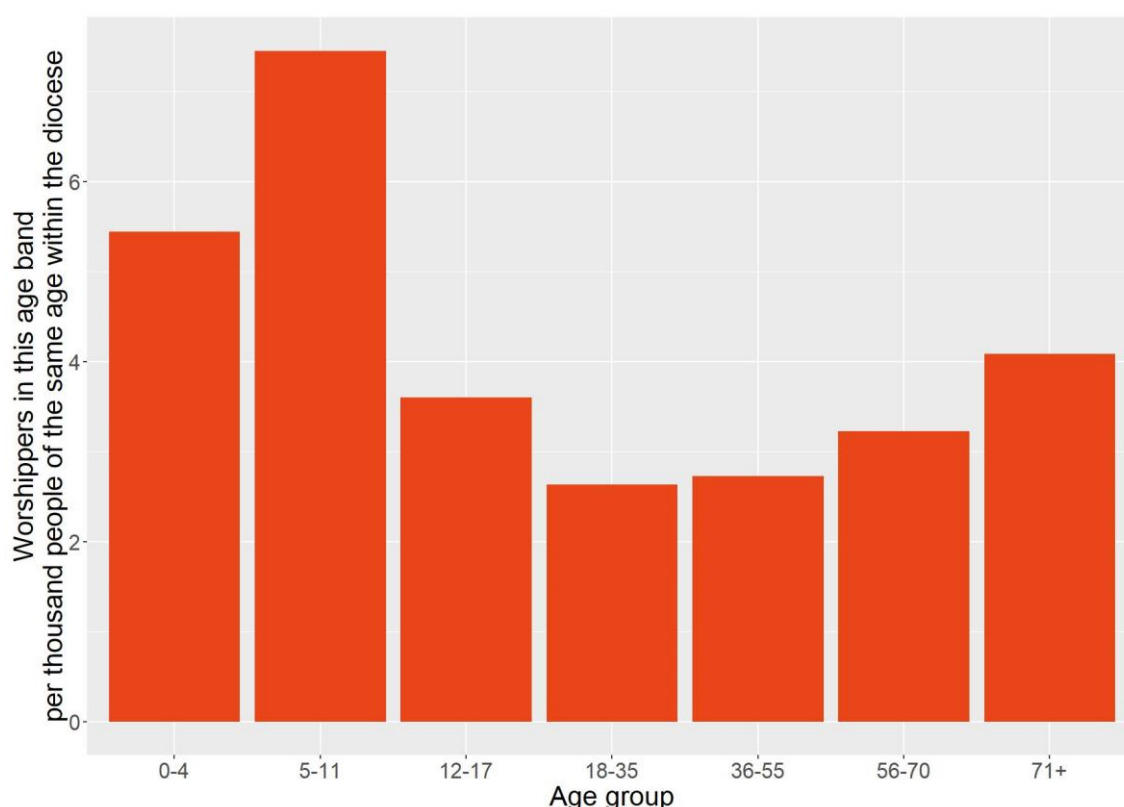


Figure 7: Attenders at fxC as a proportion of those in the diocese

<sup>8</sup> Leicestershire population here denotes the general population within the area of the Diocese of Leicester.

## What ethnicity are they?

There are approximately 345 Black and Minority Ethnic (BaME) worshippers in fresh expressions of Church in the Diocese of Leicester we surveyed. These comprise 10% of the total worshipping community at diocesan fxC.

Table 7 below indicates the % of BaME worshippers and residents in different areas. Within the City of Leicester, almost half (49%) of the residents are BaME, while in other deaneries, the figure is less than 1 in 10 (9%). The percentage of BaME people in fxC is much lower than that of the general population in both cases - within the City it is 30% BaME. Beyond the City of Leicester, the figure is only 4%. However, 39% of all BaME worshippers belong to a single fxC within the City of Leicester Deanery, IMPRINT. Without this group, the total worshipping community would fall to 7% BaME, and within the City of Leicester to 18%.

Table 7: BaME representation in fxCs

	% BaME worshippers	% residents
Diocese of Leicester	10%	22%
(excl IMPRINT)	7%	
City of Leicester	30%	49%
(excl IMPRINT)	18%	
Other deaneries	4%	9%

## 2.3 Who leads fxC?

While our previous research asked questions about only the main leader of a fxC, this more recent tranche gathered data about the fxC's core leadership team (ie. the group of people who share primary responsibility for the fxC's ministry and direction). We found 359 core leaders across all fxC, with an average of 4 core leaders per fxC.

Table 8 gives the details of the responses - key headlines include:

- Two-thirds (66%) of all core leaders were women.
- 85% of all core leaders were unpaid.
- 74% were unlicensed 'lay-lay' leaders.

Table 8: Characteristics of core leaders in fxC<sup>9</sup>

		All		Women		Men	
Pay source	Voluntary	305	85%	208	88%	96	79%
	Stipend	35	10%	14	6%	21	17%
	Local church	13	4%	9	4%	4	3%
	Other	6	2%	5	2%	1	1%
Ordination status	Lay-lay	265	74%	180	76%	84	69%
	Licensed lay	49	14%	38	16%	11	9%
	Ordained	45	13%	18	8%	27	22%
Time given	Spare-time	287	80%	194	82%	92	75%
	Part-time	51	14%	34	14%	17	14%
	Full-time	21	6%	8	3%	13	11%

<sup>9</sup> Not all figures total exactly 100% due to rounding and non-response data



## Leader status

Table 9 and Figure 8 show how all core leaders place within a matrix of pay type and ordination status.

Table 9: Pay and ordination status of leaders in fxC

	Voluntary	Diocesan or Stipendiary pay	Paid by local church	Paid by other source	Total
<b>Ordained</b>	8	34	1	2	45
<b>Licensed lay person</b>	44	-	5	1	51
<b>'Lay-lay' person</b>	253	1	7	3	264
<b>Total</b>	305	35	13	6	359

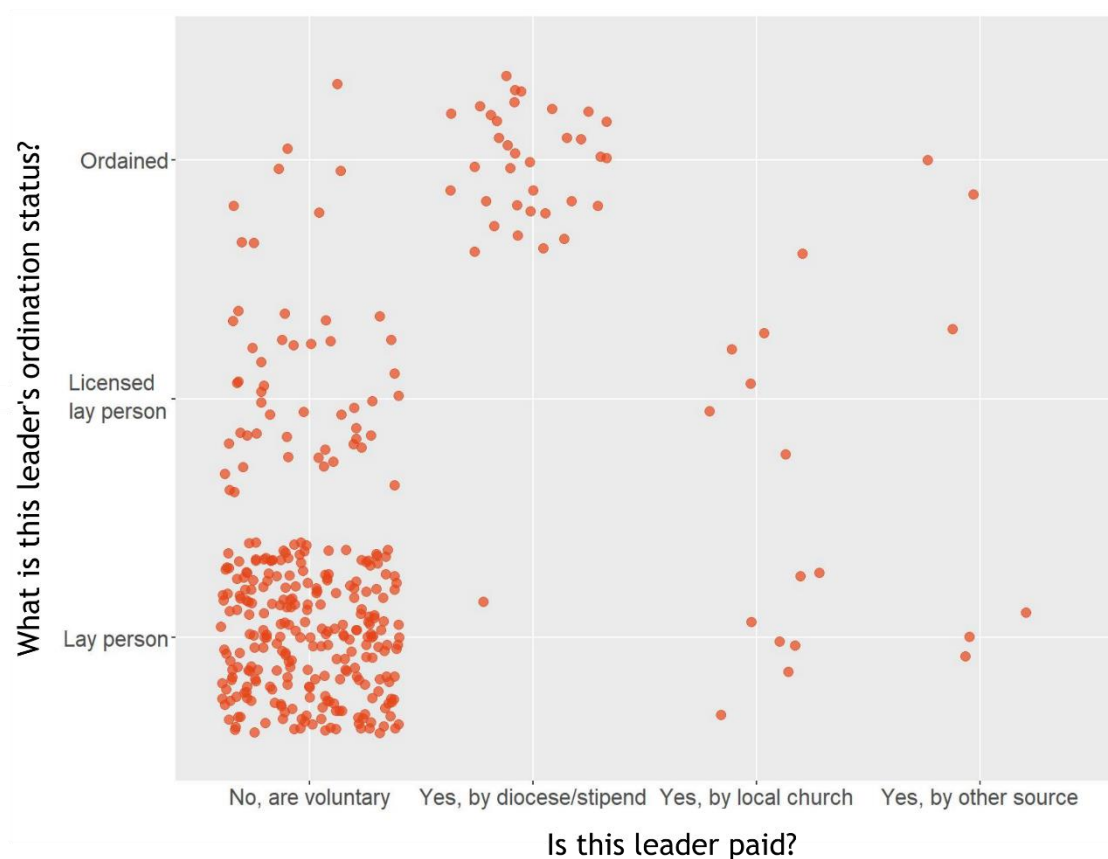


Figure 8: Ordination status and payment of leaders of fxCs

Over 70% of all fxC core leaders are unpaid lay-lay people. Only 15% of fxC leaders within the City of Leicester deanery are licensed, whereas in other deaneries 31% of fxC leaders are licensed.

## Age of leaders

Table 10 shows the different ages of all fxC core leaders. 74% of all leaders are between the ages of 36 and 70. Of those younger than 36, none were licensed or ordained.

Table 10: Ages of all fxC leaders

Age group	12-17	18-24	25-35	36-55	56-70	71+
No. leaders	6	26	18	135	127	45
% all leaders	2%	7%	5%	38%	36%	13%

Figure 9 shows how all core leaders place within a matrix of age and time commitment to the ministry of their fxC. Spare-time leaders are found in all age groups, but those who work full-time are few and do not include the youngest or oldest.



Figure 9: Age by time commitment of leaders

### Leader ethnicity

96% of all core leaders were white. No BaME leaders were reported to us outside the City of Leicester deanery, and of the 15 BaME leaders reported, 10 led in a single fxC, IMPRINT.

Figure 10 shows how the BaME percentage of fxC leadership compares with the BaME percentage of the parish population where the fxC meets.

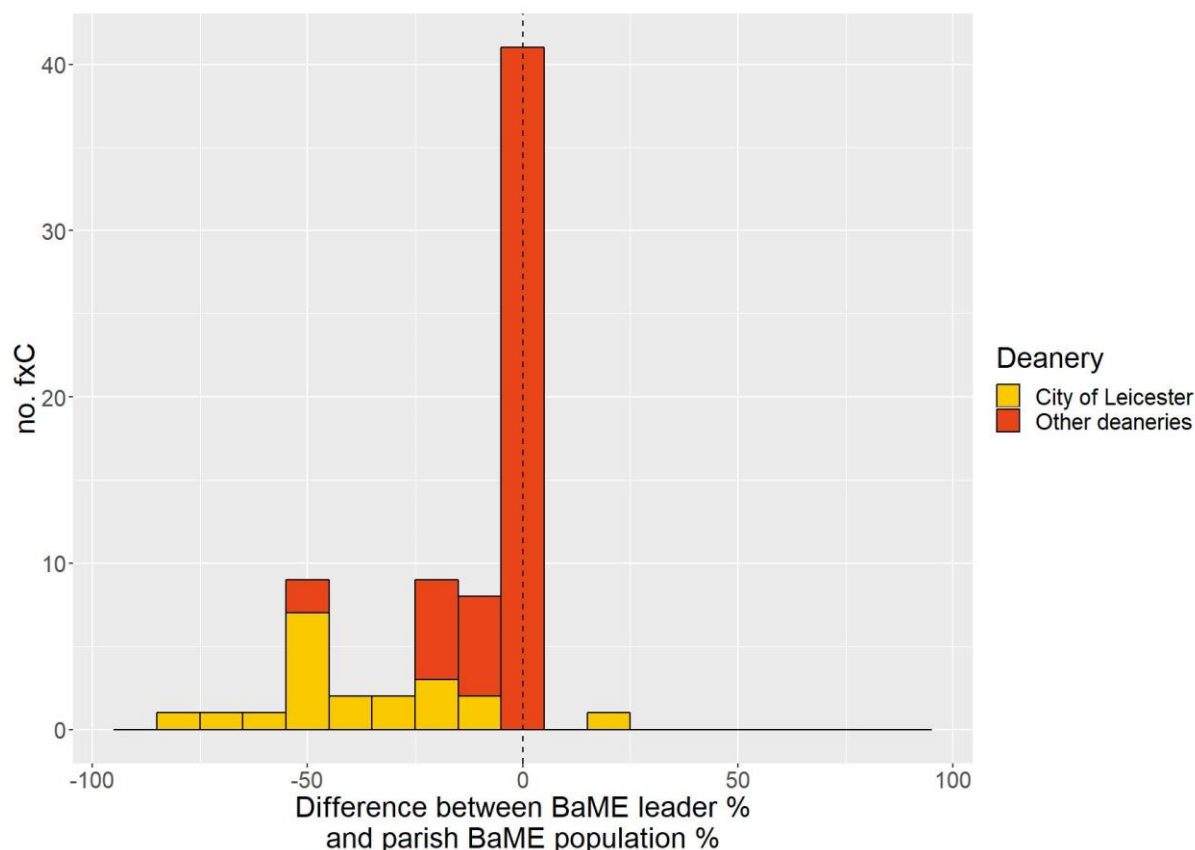


Figure 10: Difference between leaders' ethnicity and parish BaME population

Only one fxC, located in the City of Leicester deanery, has a core leadership team with a higher BaME percentage than the surrounding population. We found that there are no BaME leaders outside the City of Leicester deanery.

None of the 15 BaME fxC leaders in the diocese who completed our survey identified themselves as licensed or ordained. BaME leaders are significantly less likely to be ordained than their white counterparts. Only one BaME leader is paid, but there is insufficient data to claim a statistically significant difference in the likelihood of being paid between BaME leaders and their white counterparts.

## 2.4 What happens?

### Lives are changed

Lives are changed in fresh expressions of church. 99% of fxC report that at least a few lives have been changed as a result of the fxC. 35% of fxC report that some lives have been changed, and 39% of fxC report that the lives of ‘many’ or ‘most’ worshippers have been changed because of the fxC. Table 11 and Figure 11 show the response rates for the answers to the question of how many lives have been changed.

Table 11: Lives changed in fxCs

	None	A few	Some	Many	Most
% fxC	1%	24%	35%	27%	12%
CoL	5%	21%	16%	37%	21%
Other	0%	26%	42%	24%	9%

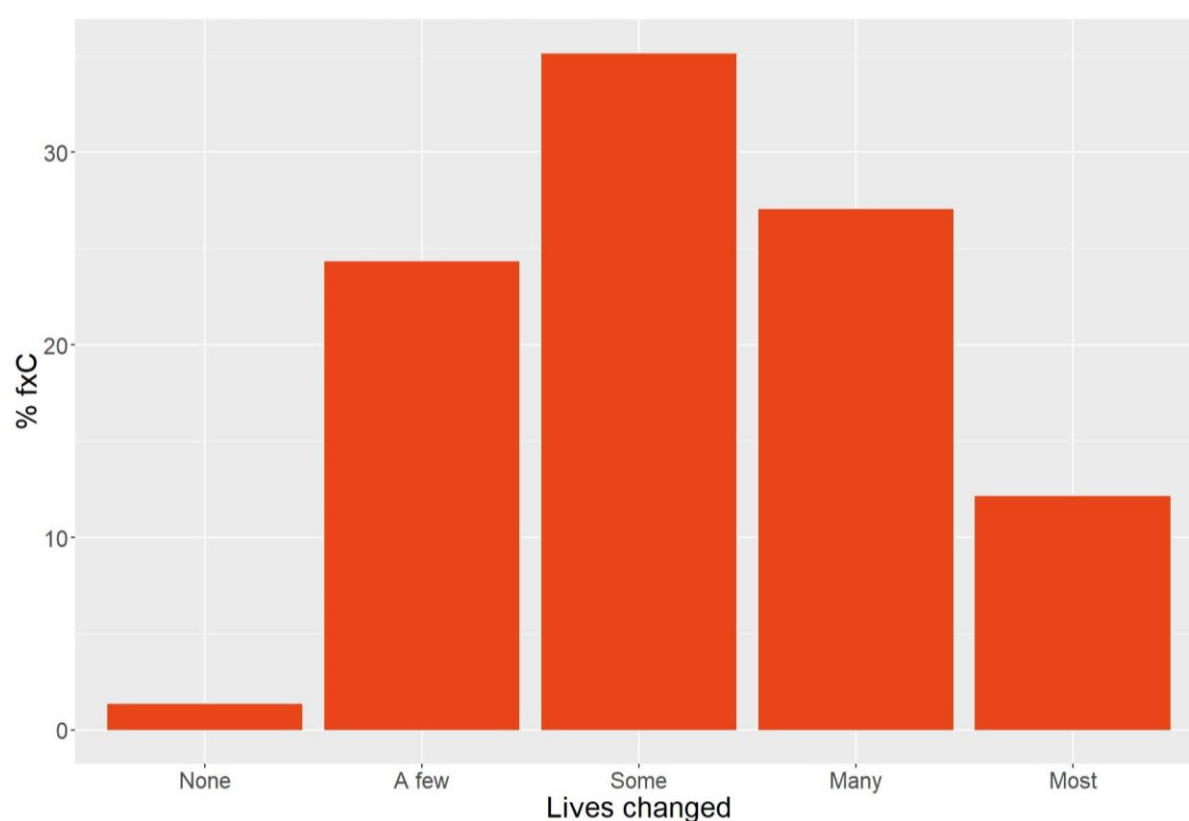


Figure 11: Lives changed in fxCs

Across all fxC, leaders report that 295 people have ‘come to faith in Christ’ through fxC. Interestingly, 156 (53%) of these are reported to have come to faith within the year preceding collection. Whilst it may be that this is due to a sudden spike in professions of faith in fxC, a possible alternative explanation is that respondents were more able to recall more recent professions of faith, or that changes in diocesan communication have helped fxC leaders become better at noticing faith professions.

## FxC are engaging in the sacraments

Table 12 shows how the percentages of fxC engaging in baptism, communion and confirmation have changed over the course of Church Army's partnership with Leicester Diocese.

Baptism is the most common sacrament for fxC, perhaps due to the large number of Messy Churches. Almost half the fxC (48%) have had baptisms, and a further quarter (24%) intend to do so in the future. This represents a 77% increase since the initial research.

Almost a third (32%) of fxC are celebrating communion, and a further 35% intend to do so. This is a decrease since 2011, when 40% of fxC celebrated. Changes in the type of fxC and the age groups present may have influenced this figure, but it may also indicate an area for development.

Confirmations have been held in 1 in 5 (19%) fxC, and a further 2 in 5 (40%) intend to hold them in the future. This was not asked about in the first phase of research, but the recent figures provide signs of developing discipleship in fxC.

*Table 12: Engagement with sacraments in fxCs*

Year	2011		2018	
	Doing	Intend to do	Doing	Intend to do
% fxC baptising	27%	42%	48%	24%
% fxC celebrating communion	40%	33%	32%	35%
%fxC confirmations	-	-	19%	40%



## People are engaging with Scripture

All the fxC who responded to our survey are engaging with Scripture in at least two different ways. Figure 12 and Table 13 show the frequency with which different fxC are doing so.



Figure 12: Engagement with the Bible in fxCs

Table 13: Engagement with the Bible in fxCs

Type of Engagement	% fxC who engage with the Bible in this way				
	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost always
Sermon or talk	12%	4%	18%	16%	50%
Creative activity	5%	5%	19%	22%	48%
Read passages in public	7%	7%	22%	25%	40%
Storytelling	19%	16%	19%	20%	26%
Group study	36%	10%	12%	29%	12%
Encourage devotional reading	18%	21%	28%	26%	7%
Encourage use of daily Bible-reading resources	24%	19%	35%	12%	10%
Memory verses	43%	31%	21%	6%	0%

The above chart and table should be read with an awareness that many of the people who engage with the Bible at fresh expressions of Church have little previous experience of church. 53% of all diocesan fxC worshippers are functionally new to church but are choosing to engage with Scripture in various ways. Of the 1,862 non-churched and de-churched worshippers at diocesan fxC, 98% attend fresh expressions where at least one kind of engagement with Scripture happens frequently. 75% attend fresh expressions where at least one type of engagement with Scripture ‘almost always’ occurs.

## 2.5 Stewardship

We also asked fxC whether leaders encourage worshippers to give financially. In response to this question, there was an almost equal split (52%:48%) between leaders agreeing or disagreeing with the statement.

Leaders encourage worshippers to give financially	Agree 52%	Strongly agree 12%
		Agree 40%
	Disagree 48%	Disagree 24%
		Strongly disagree 24%

Interestingly, leaders within the City of Leicester deanery were significantly more likely to ‘Strongly agree’ with this statement. 78% of all leaders who did so were in this deanery.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, it is worth noting that 16 of the City of Leicester’s 20 fxC are in relatively deprived areas (quintile 1 of the Index of Multiple Deprivation), so the data would appear to suggest that people with least to give are being encouraged to give more. We would encourage the diocese to reflect further on this.

Leaders were also asked if they agreed that worshippers understood financial giving to be part of discipleship. Again, there was an almost equal split between those who agreed and disagreed (48%:52%), but with less ‘strong’ disagreement than the previous question.

Worshippers understand financial giving to be an aspect of discipleship	Agree 48%	Strongly agree 11%
		Agree 37%
	Disagree 52%	Disagree 39%
		Strongly disagree 13%

Here, we found no statistically significant difference here between the City and other deaneries.

<sup>10</sup>  $\chi^2=14.9$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.002$ .

## Ways in which people give

Stewardship can be exercised in many ways, for example the giving of time and talent as well as money. Table 14 shows the ways in which people give to fresh expressions of Church. More than half of all fxC (56%) receive cash or cheques, while just under a quarter (24%) receive bank transfers, an option which may imply a deeper connection. For some, money was given to other parts of the Church, perhaps where attenders also went to a traditional parish church.

Conversations about stewardship were only reported in 11% of cases. Though this may be an indication that fxC have further to go in this regard, it is important to stress that we have no comparable data for traditional churches. Other ways of giving - those of time, energy and resources - are reported in the majority of fxCs (65% time/energy; 48% resources). On the subject of resources, our recent national research on Messy Church has shown that many leaders subsidise the costs of crafts or foods out of their own pockets.<sup>11</sup> Given the large number of Messy Churches and voluntary lay leaders in the diocese of Leicester, we expect that this is a common occurrence here.

Table 14: Forms of giving in fxC

Form of giving	% all fxC	City of Leicester	Other
Cash/cheque	56%	50%	58%
Bank transfers	24%	40%	18%
Giving to the wider Anglican Communion	16%	5%	20%
Conversations about stewardship	11%	15%	9%
Time/energy	65%	70%	64%
Resources	48%	55%	45%

When we consider the City of Leicester in contrast with the other deaneries, we find that stewardship is more developed in the City.<sup>12</sup> More fxC report giving through bank transfers rather than cash or cheque, and fewer see giving to the wider Anglican Communion. The levels of giving through non-financial means are higher with the City, as are stewardship conversations. The higher percentage of 'churched' people attending fxC in the City of Leicester may be pushing the stewardship figures higher as this is seen as a 'standard' part of discipleship.

<sup>11</sup> See p. 8 of our *Playfully Serious* report on Messy Church: [churcharmy.org/playfullyserious](http://churcharmy.org/playfullyserious)

<sup>12</sup> This is a statistically significant difference -  $\chi^2=19.8$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=0.001$ .

### Ways in which fxC receive support

Fresh expressions of Church receive support in different ways, from their sending church, diocesan advice or elsewhere. Table 15 shows the ways in which fxC receive support. Just under a third (31%) of all fxC receive support from their sending church, rising to 50% within the City of Leicester. The Generous Giving Team (GGT) have worked with proportionately more fxC within the City.

Over half (53%) of all fxC received no support with stewardship, but this is unevenly split between the City of Leicester (35%) and other deaneries (60%). The difference between the City and the rest of the diocese is statistically significant.<sup>13</sup>

*Table 15: Support for fxC*

	<b>All fxC</b>	<b>CoL</b>	<b>Outside CoL</b>
Sending church	31%	50%	24%
Elsewhere	15%	10%	16%
GGT	7%	10%	5%
None	53%	35%	60%

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<sup>13</sup>  $\chi^2=18.8$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.0003$ .

### 3 Assessing progress and prospects

In this section, we reflect on the implications of the preceding material. We consider the impact of the Diocese of Leicester's investment in fresh expressions of Church and offer some insights and reflections around prospects for the future.

#### Do fresh expressions of Church grow the Church?

As indicated already, 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.

In this sense, fresh expressions are clearly helping grow the Church in the Diocese of Leicester, though it also needs to be acknowledged that the gain in the number of still live fxC since 2011 is relatively modest when compared to the diocese's original aspiration of creating 320 fxC by the year 2030. This aspiration was about parity with the number of parishes in the diocese. If parity of attendance was the aspiration, the story would be unequivocally positive for fxC. However, this progress is perhaps more a reflection of, and flattered by, the decline in parish attendance in the diocese over this period.

Our most recent tranche of research identified 75 fxC across the diocese, with a total average attendance<sup>14</sup> of 2,959 people and a worshipping community of 3,426. Just under 1 in 4 (23.5%) of people attending worship in the diocese now do so at a fresh expression of Church and fxC account for 19% of the overall diocesan 'worshipping community'. Crucially, over half of the worshippers at fxC are people who would not otherwise attend an existing church, with at least 156 people observed to have 'come to faith in Christ' through fxC in the 12 months preceding our collection.

Reflecting on recent growth, it is important to note that the increase in the diocesan fxC attendance can be explained almost entirely by the increase in the number of fresh expressions of Church. In this sense, the diocese's experience of fxC is a story of **growth by multiplication**. This, we suggest, is a key policy issue for the diocese to reflect on moving forward.

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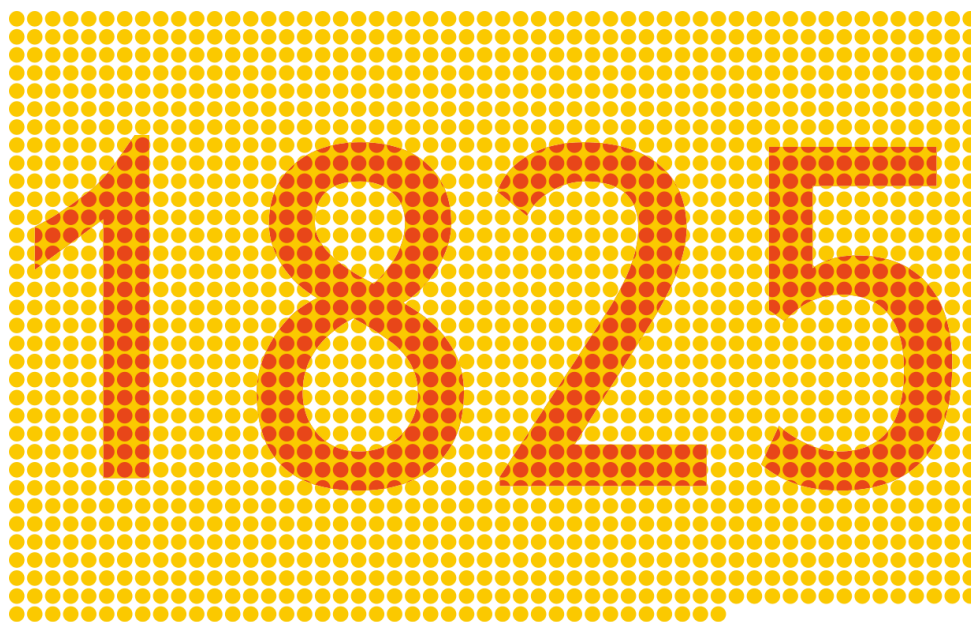
<sup>14</sup> In the first publication of this report, this figure was reported as 'average weekly attendance'. The inclusion of the word 'weekly' was a proofing error; in our survey, we asked respondents about 'attenders' and 'worshipping community'. 'Attenders' describes the number in attendance at a typical gathering, whereas 'worshipping community' denotes the size of the group who attend as regularly as circumstances allow and do not profess to belong to another 'home congregation'. For further clarity on the questions that were asked of respondents, please see the [survey instrument](#) that was used in collection. For further discussion about measures of attendance and their comparability with inherited church statistics, please see our [technical note](#).



## Do fresh expressions of Church deepen discipleship?

It is clear from this research that fresh expressions of Church in the Diocese of Leicester are helping people to follow Jesus.

The engagement with the Bible that occurs within fresh expressions of Church is one indicator of this. As we have noted already, 53% of all diocesan fxC attenders are functionally new to church but are choosing to regularly engage with Scripture: that's 1,825 people!



Of the 1,862 non-churched and de-churched fresh expressions attenders in the diocese, 98% attend fresh expressions where at least one kind of engagement with Scripture happens frequently.

Other key headlines include:

- Almost half the fxC (48%) have had baptisms, and a further quarter (24%) intend to do so in the future.
- 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.
- In 47% of fxC, attenders are thought to be 'mostly' or 'very' aware of their belonging to the wider Church.

Do the fresh expressions of Church deepen discipleship? The evidence suggests: yes!

## Value for money?

Quantifying the 'return on investment' from supporting fxC would be a perilous undertaking and one beyond the scope of this research. But our research findings point to the following reasons to suggest that supporting and resourcing fresh expressions of Church is money well spent:

- Just under 1 in 4 (23.5%) of people attending worship in the diocese now do so at a fresh expression of Church.
- Over half of fxC attenders would not otherwise attend a church.
- Just over a third of attenders are under 18.

- 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.

The diocese may wish to reflect on the relative cost of its investment in parish ministry and that in fxC. How does this relate to relative sizes of worshipping community and missional impact?

### A tale of two dioceses

We have found fresh expressions of Church within every deanery of the diocese, from the ‘urban heartlands’ of the City of Leicester to other more rural deaneries like Framland, Gartree, Launde and North West Leicestershire. This, combined with the insights we have gained from various national research projects,<sup>15</sup> suggests that fresh expressions of Church can be established and thrive in lots of different types of mission context.

Nevertheless, we have found there to be some important differences between the fxC landscape in the City of Leicester and the other deaneries of the diocese. These include:

- Population density
- Levels of deprivation
- BaME populations
- Frequency of fxC and % of Christians
- Types of fxC

This strongly suggests that diocesan support should be clearly differentiated. It was striking to see that the Generous Giving Team had the greatest amount of contact with the fxC in the poorest parts of the diocese.

### How durable are fresh expressions of Church?

In 2017, we reported that 31.1% of fxC begun in the diocese of Leicester had come to an end or (as the report put it) ‘died’<sup>16</sup>. But since then, there appears to have been a slowing down of the ‘death rate’. Within this most recent tranche of research, only two more fxC endings were reported. Encouragingly, this has brought the overall ‘death rate’ (as represented by the yellow sections of Figure 13 below) down to 26.6%, though (for reasons outlined below) further reflection on the reasons for ending causes us to question whether the vocabulary of ‘death’ is always appropriate.<sup>17</sup>

Figure 13 shows the start dates of all fxC currently known to CARU, grouped according to their current status. Of the three known fxC that began before 2005, none are still running currently. Although there are a few fxC whose current status is unknown, none of the fxC which started after 2014 are confirmed as having stopped running.

<sup>15</sup> See [churcharmy.org/researchpublications](http://churcharmy.org/researchpublications)

<sup>16</sup> The 2017 update on fresh expressions of Church within Leicester diocese, Church Army’s Research Unit, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> For further reflections on this issue, see p. 16 of our *Playfully Serious* report on Messy Church and p. 17 of our *Sustaining Young Churches* report. Both available from: [churcharmy.org/research](http://churcharmy.org/research)

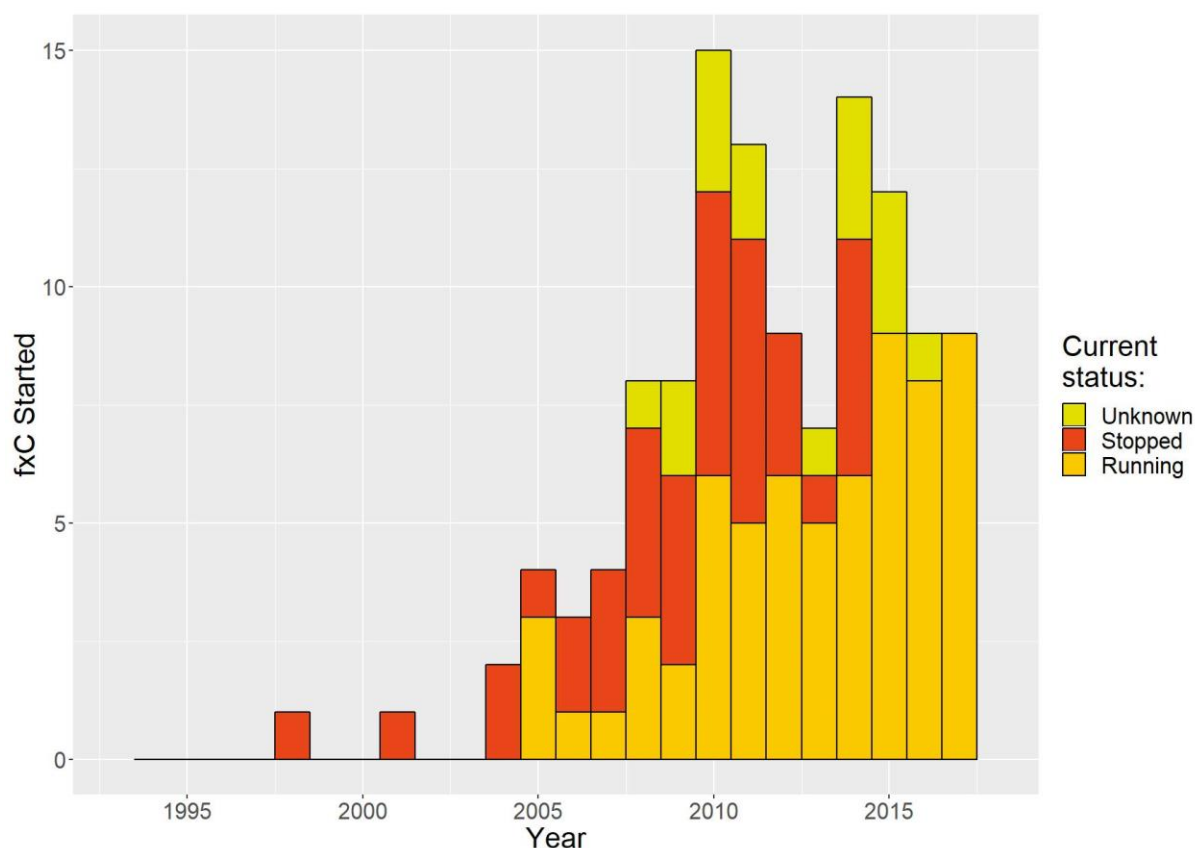


Figure 13: Current Status of fxC by year started

Across all four phases of research, 40 fxC are known to have stopped. Further analysis of the reasons given for ending (where available) suggest that the most common contributing factors are:

- The leader/s stopped leading the fxC (11 cases reported)
- A change in charism - the fxC stopped being a fxC and was redesignated a pioneer mission activity (10 cases reported)

Our 2017 report for the diocese reflects on these and other related issues in more depth. We suggest that they warrant continuing attention by the diocesan team, not least as the slowing 'death rate' may be indicative of the fruitfulness of the team's investment in fxC leadership. Further consideration should also be given to the sustainability of growth in fxC numbers. Whilst there is much to be encouraged by in the emergence of a wide range of Pioneering Missional Activities, the question of how these lead to new disciples, and whether or not these are in fxC, is of critical importance for the future health of the Church.

## Conclusion

This review of fresh expressions of Church within the Diocese of Leicester has identified many encouraging developments and signs of growth. These include:

- Increasing numbers of fresh expressions of Church, which are spread across all the deaneries of this varied diocese
- Increasing numbers of fxC attenders, many of whom would not otherwise attend an existing church
- Increasing numbers of people observed to have ‘come to faith in Christ’ through fxC
- Evidence of deepening discipleship within fxC
- Signs that fxC are making progress with stewardship and sustainability

This report has also acknowledged that, in some respects, the growth achieved to date is still relatively modest. The diocese is still a long way off from the original aspiration of creating 320 fxC by the year 2030 and there are some key challenges that warrant attention moving forward.

Finally, this research would not have been possible without the goodwill and commitment of the diocesan staff and fxC leaders who helped us with this research. We record our gratitude and best wishes to them all.