

APPENDIX I

PORVOO COMMISSION ON FRESH EXPRESSIONS OF CHURCH

Participants: from the Anglican churches in England, Wales and Ireland and the Lutheran Churches in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Estonia, Iceland and Finland met from 16-19 October at the International Study Centre, Canterbury Cathedral.

Purpose: to share experiences of Fresh Expressions of Church, to create a network and to share resources.

Context: to varying degrees all the churches face similar challenges – declining membership, sense of cultural irrelevance, alternative spiritualities etc. One participant described the church as like a sandcastle crumbling before a tide of unrelenting change.

The Fresh Expressions movement was set in the context of seven other movements: the ecumenical, lay leadership, small group, liturgical, charismatic, church growth, and church planting movements.

Archbishop Rowan William's prophetic words about the challenge of existing as a mixed economy church provide the basis for the discussion. The focus on fresh expressions is nothing new. Throughout its history the church has had various expressions, none of them complete and perfect.

Practical examples: There was opportunity to see in operation a number of churches in the Canterbury area: e.g. the Harvest New Anglican Cell Church, Broadstairs, a nightclub ministry in Maidstone, Y Youth Congregation. Lutheran delegates gave as examples the Open Cathedral in Oslo and the Norwegian "Big Hall" alternative youth congregation.

Issues:

1. **Permission:** Mission inevitably overflows parish boundaries. The Church of England is currently passing legislation to make it possible for new forms of church to be planted across boundaries. Lutheran delegates found it hard to envisage something similar in their own contexts but noted that legal measures have generally followed on practice. Permission ought to be linked with leadership which creates space for others.
2. **Membership:** Lutheran churches tend to have a 'tighter' view of membership than others because of their system of state-funding. membership means money. Intrinsic to the essence of Fresh Expressions is a much more open view.
3. **Ecclesiology:** What constitutes church? Is it enough to say that if something is "potentially" church we ought to be open to nurturing it? Are Fresh Expressions able to assist in the challenge of providing the ministry of word and sacrament in a rapidly mobile society?

It was entirely appropriate that this consultation should be held in the grounds of Canterbury Cathedral, the mother church of the Anglican Communion, with its rich heritage. It is a

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reminder that traditional and newer forms of churches need each other. The task is not to be an either/or church but to become a both/and church. All the delegates were agreed that it's worth persevering with the issues surrounding Fresh Expressions of Church because they have the potential to reach people that traditional forms of church will not reach and that it's important to journey together because we have much to share and much to learn.

Paul Hoey 23.10.06