

# ENQUIRE WITHIN

**Question:** *Please, Neil, would you explain the Archbishop's "Fresh Expressions Initiative" and tell us whether it is relevant to our work at Holy Cross?*

**Answer** Let us read a quote from Archbishop Rowan: "I've talked quite a bit about the church of the future as a mixed economy, meaning by this that there's no one kind of church life that captures everything, that does every kind of job. We need both a traditional parish doing its work really well and some quite new kinds of venture, some new kinds of initiative, that's what I mean by a mixed economy and I think that's where the health of the church of the future is going to lie."

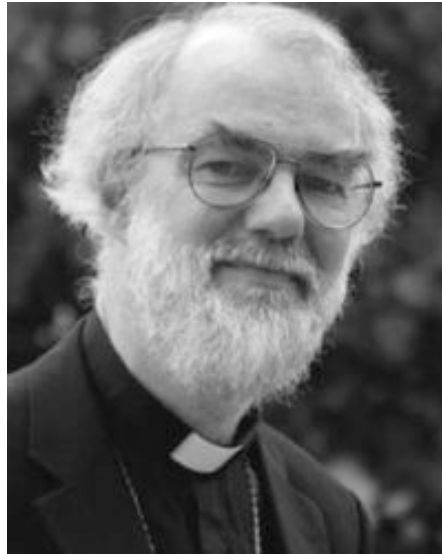
Add to this a quote from Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, who was once thought as the next Archbishop: "A church in every community in the land is an empty boast if it boils down to there being a church in a given geographical area, without any reference to accessibility or culture."

The Anglican pattern of ministry, built around parish and neighbourhood, can lead to a way of thinking that assumes that all people whether attending or not attending are basically our people. All people are God's people, but it is an illusion to assume that somehow the population of England is simply waiting for the right invitation before they will come back and join us.

In other words, as someone wrote a long time ago using a football analogy, the Church in England in all its activities used to assume that it was playing at home, in front of a basically supportive and friendly crowd. Now, it is clearly playing away, in front of a crowd that doesn't want it to succeed, even though it might admire its traditions, culture and individuals.

How true is that, do you think? I find that I can't make up my mind. I agree that we can't just sit back and wait until people come to their senses as it were and return in droves to the church. That is not going to happen. But more difficult, it is now clear that many people identify much that has gone wrong in the past with the essential nature of the church. In other words religion and especially Christianity, are bad for your health!

So, Fresh Expressions is in fact a way of nourishing and garnering any expression of Christian life wherever it occurs without trying to subject it to the traditional structures of the parish system. It certainly makes sense to me.



We at Holy Cross are a very traditional parish Church. We have a good and strong congregation, but when you think about how many potential Anglicans there in Greenford, you see that we are only just touching the surface. We should therefore be encouraging Fresh Expressions if we find them, and encouraging people to find ways of expressing the faith in ways which make sense in the age of mobile phones, mobility, job insecurity, and new waves of people from all over the world arriving on our streets every day.

Of course, as Rowan Williams said, there will always be a place for churches like Holy Cross, because there will always be families wanting good schools, good church life, baptism, weddings and funerals. But you have to admit that we are not really well-equipped to serve the faith needs of young single adults, teenagers and those transient people who pass by over the space of two or three years in search of their lives.

The Church could benefit from fresh expressions of Christianity in more ways than one!

Neil Richardson