

CHRISM Paper 10

MSE and Fresh Expressions

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Richard Dobell, MSE, musician, and inspiration to CHRISM. We miss him.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore how the newly emerging 'Fresh Expressions Movement' (FE) relates to a longer established world-engaging form of ministry called 'Ministry in Secular Employment' (MSE). It is based closely on a dissertation written during my final year in training for ordained ministry of the Northern Ordination Course and addresses how FE and MSE might, and indeed should, complement each other, recognising the importance of their respective functions within the church.

The subject arose after three members of the CHRISM (CHRistians in Secular Ministry) committee met with Archbishop Rowan Williams (CHRISM patron) to discuss MSE. He asked the committee to consider how MSE and Fresh Expressions could relate to one another. They then that the dissertation would provide an opportunity for the subject matter to be discussed and researched in detail.

This paper begins by looking at the current, post-modern, context in which we live. It then moves on to discuss the history and developments of both MSE and FE movements, considering whether they have a relation to another or are able to recognise and complement each other's role within the church.

Having discussed the history of MSE and FE movements the dissertation will move on to consider traditional models of church as a basis for understanding the inheritance of both movements within the possibilities of new models of being church. MSEs do not work in a vacuum. Each MSE is a licensed representative of his/her sending church and each one has a unique and individualised ministry. No two MSEs are alike. Although, the main focus of an MSEs ministry is within their workplace they do exercise a ministry within a parish, although limited. This is an essential part of the MSEs ministry and they will have a great deal to contribute to the work of the local parish.

The exact pattern of each individual MSE ministry is unique and evolves over time. It is important and valuable for the church to feel they are part of this ministry, to learn about and support the MSE in their workplace ministry. It is important for the church to which the MSE belongs to recognise that they are affirming the MSEs ministry in the world, hence sending. Ownership is an integral role of the supporting and sending church.

In addition, to understand fully the background to MSE and FE it is necessary to look at the ecclesiology that has produced it. Ecclesiological models sketch theoretical frameworks for Church but by themselves leave us still with many questions unanswered. Furthermore, when we want to catch a foretaste of what that might look like in practice we need to examine other expressions of church. At a time when traditional church institutions are eroding, it is a challenge to the Christians at the grassroots to respond to that change. Hence, over the last decade we have seen the emergence in the UK of 'new ways of being church.'

2. Current context

There is no doubt that in the last 50 years the Churches have changed and will continue to change if they are to meet the needs of today's society. The Churches have recognised that it needs to engage with a consumer society of which Christians are part. Christians need to embrace consumerism in a big way. We need to move from the periphery of society and engage with the mainstream. If Church is to be relevant in today's society, then it has to try to connect with this consumer generation (Machure, 2001). As Church we need to act as a voice for Christianity within the prevailing culture.

The 'Real Christmas' campaign is a good example, encouraging people to find the real meaning of Christmas rather than just focussing on its secular aspects. According to Briggs (2000), connecting the unchanging gospel with the changing world around us has always been a challenge. Grappling with how God speaks today in, through and to our own lives, lies at the heart of theological thinking. In response to the challenge of a changing society, the shape and structure of mission are changing and as a church we need wisdom and humility to discern faithful ways ahead.

It is frequently asserted today that we live in a Post-modern social and cultural milieu. Post-modernism is the term used to designate a variety of intellectual and cultural developments in late twentieth century Western society. It is an ethos that is characterised by a rejection of modernist values and mistrust of the supposedly universal rational principles developed in the enlightenment era. Post-modernism generally embraces pluralism and places a value in the diversity of worldviews and religions that characterises contemporary society.

Ireland (2003, pg171) suggests Post-modernism is not so much interested in the 'Is it True?' questions of apologetics as in the 'Will it work for me?' - questions of spiritual experience. It is vital in today's church that we understand the extent of change in our culture and society and the implications this has for mission. Especially as, according to Ireland (2003, pg183), our culture is hungry for spiritual experience.

Christians have a living faith, which holds the answers to the spirituality many in today's society, are seeking. In addition, there are also many committed Christians who are seeking and looking for new and different forms of Christian spirituality and adapting these for their own spiritual needs, for example Celtic spirituality or Taizé. Hence Christian spirituality is shaping itself to the postmodern world. Furthermore, there needs to be a visible demonstration that the truth proclaimed can also be lived out. Christians are involved in a wide range of important activities within our society. Therefore they have the opportunity to reach out to those people in need.

Mission needs to be approached from a holistic point of view. Firstly, meeting the needs of the people in our communities, and then secondly, meeting and allowing them to engage with their own spiritual

needs. This view is supported by Booker (2003, p. 98), 'there needs to be movement towards greater wholeness and flourishing of God's work, which will inspire and encourage the undervalued.'

There is a need to grasp the imaginations of people in today's society in order for them to engage with the nature of God. The church over the last few years has been wrestling with the changing nature of society and has begun to develop new ways of being church, particularly through the Fresh Expressions movement. However, those in workplace ministries have been undertaking new ways of being church for a number of years. The role of the Minister in Secular employment has been to bridge the gap between the world and the church.

3. Literature review

3.1 Literature Search

The aim of this review is to examine the literature encompassing the role of the minister in secular employment and alongside the Fresh Expressions movement. The initial search strategy was of a broad enquiry to provide a range of information. However, I was aware that due to the subject matter the amount of literature available would be limited and possibly difficult to search. My initial search was via internet search engines such as 'Google' and 'Yahoo', using search terms such as 'ministry in secular employment' and 'Fresh Expressions'. This search drew a large result; unfortunately, most of the search was not relevant to the requirements of this paper, though this itself is not insignificant.

However, the search produced links with a number of practising ministers within secular employment with whom I was then able to make contact. Subsequently, one of these contacts has been able to provide some useful literature on various aspects of being a minister in secular employment. The second search database was using the Leeds University Library site accessing the various links available. The search terms used were, 'MSE', 'Worker priests', 'Tentmaking', 'Emerging Church', 'Fresh Expressions'. Again, unfortunately, the majority of material from the search was irrelevant.

In addition to a computerised literature search, a large amount of 'grey literature' was also reviewed such as reports, booklets, discussion papers and unpublished studies. A manual search of related journals and textbooks within the library and organisations was undertaken to include articles not yet on the database. Furthermore, although I have not undertaken any further research using interviews or questionnaires, I will relate to and discuss a questionnaire recently undertaken by CHRISM.

3.2 Literature Review of Ministry in Secular Employment

CHRISM (CHRistians in Secular Ministry) is an association for all Christians who see their secular employment as a primary field of Christian ministry. According to CHRISM, (2003a) 'Ministry in Secular employment (MSE) is a Christian ministry exercised by accredited ministers, ordained and lay, within and through any secular work. The MSE represents God and the church within the workplace establishing a connection with those they come into contact with on a daily basis. The MSE provides a ministry that is accessible to anyone. This form of ministry complements the ministry of all Christians at work, the work of the stipendiary minister or visiting chaplains in industry, hospitals, colleges and other spheres. (CHRISM, 2003b)

The MSE has a unique role within the ministry of the church and each has an exclusive and varied role within the world of secular employment, from 'the Tax Collector to the Teacher.' MSEs are pioneering ministers and have been for number of years. The role of a 'Specialist Nurse as a MSE' within the

environment of neonatal intensive care is unique and one which I have been exploring and developing for the last few years. It is a role which will take its next step in development after I am ordained this summer.

The MSE within the Church of England in particular, is a rare concept and one that can be difficult to understand and establish. However, there is evidence in Biblical times of the concept of the role of workplace ministries and it is now a concept that is being revived to enable the church to be relevant today within the workplace. According to James Francis (1990), St Paul exercised at least at one time, a self-supporting ministry, in other words he was a 'worker-apostle.' Evidence of this type of ministry can be found in the first letter to the Corinthians. For St Paul (1 Corinthians 4:12, 1 Corinthians 9:19), his ministry in Christ within his employment leads him to side with the weak, the weak in the congregation and crucially with the weak in the world. Paul recognised a need to work alongside the people within his society. Therefore, bridging the gap between the world and the church. It could be said that Paul had a ministry which holds the church and world together.

Furthermore, Francis states that although the particular issues that Paul dealt with are no longer directly relevant, his insights and his way of holding church and society together invite us to continue to explore and reflect upon this type of ministry for the society and church of the 21st century. A former Bishop of Manchester acknowledges that most of Jesus' followers were, by our standards ministers in secular employment (Mayfield, 2001). Some would go as far to say that Jesus himself wanted to meet/teach people where they lived, worked, and socialised, rather than go to the temple. Jesus wanted to be part of their lives, not separate. According to Archbishop Michael Ramsey (1972), ministers in secular employment belong most truly to the apostolic foundation. He wrote:

“We may learn from them of the inward meaning of priest hood” (Ramsey, 1972, P. 4).

Michael Ranken was ordained in the 1970's as a MSE, this was probably around the time that the concept of the worker-place ministry started to be revived. However, the concept is still misunderstood within the church today, despite the historical heritage of this form of ministry.

Bourke (1998), states that taking on the role of the MSE is to undertake a voyage of discovery. By being a priest he/she is firmly rooted with the ecclesiastical institution and the theological tradition; and by being the worker he/she is forced to face issues. It is about bridging the enormous gulf that exists between the church and the secular world, of discovering what faith means to the modern person without making them 'religious' or 'churchy.' This raises the question 'What does God mean for people today?'

Outside the church the priest is still regarded as a person with some kind of authority; not authority claiming obedience but authority to speak on behalf of Christianity in a way that the lay-person is not.

Ordination enables the church to be what it is meant to be on behalf of the people. Ordination represents the church as a living reminder of God in the world. Bourke (1998) implies that if the ordained minister is to be confined to the congregational sphere of ministry, then the concerns of the secular world will not be taken seriously by the church, unless ordained officeholders are active in the secular affairs and force the church to pay attention.

In contrast it can be argued that no priest in the Church of England works purely within a congregational model since they do focus on the real world when they work within the parish.

More than ever the ministry through the occasional offices is an essential part of the parish priest daily ministry, reaching out to those who turn to the church in times of joy and sorrow. The parish works alongside human networks and research shows that a considerable number of people still greatly value the church (Gamble, 2006, p. 94).

Nevertheless, the world needs to see the church as a visible institution. The present crisis of Christianity is that some people in society who have no contact with the church do not know what the church is, or what its role is, or what are the exact boundaries of faith and non-belief. The task of the MSE is to bring the church to the people, to live at the frontier, to discover what faith is and what it means in the secular world, without denying the traditional church (Francis, 1990, Bourke, 1998, CHRISM, 2003, Ranken, 1988). A minister in secular employment has a unique opportunity to make these connections and Mayfield (2001) believes that the presence of an ordained minister within the workplace could make all the difference by bridging the gap between the church and society.

According to Ranken, (1998), MSE will be a ministry partly to the private concerns and the souls of the people among whom we work, but it will also be a ministry in and to the structures of work, to its processes and to the work itself. The priest is a representative figure. In experiencing the sensations of feeling trapped, compromised, or wounded by the workplace, we are sharing in the same process, giving up the security of the church building as parish priest. What makes this priestly is that the role of the MSE is a focal one representing the concern of God and God's people for the whole world, interceding, helping others perceive the strengths, opportunities and threats. For some the role is of a pastoral nature, helping others to handle the bereavement of loved one for example (Mayfield, 2001). Furthermore, as a priest, and as a person in secular employment, we can make the same mistakes, or errors of judgement, or take decisions the consequences of which weigh heavily upon us for a long time, as would any member of the workplace where we are based. To acknowledge vulnerability, and weakness and being alongside others that hurt, will be of great benefit to others (Mayfield, 2001, Francis, 1990, Ranken, 1998, CHRISM 2003).

The aim of the MSE is to deepen the vocation of the whole church to serve Christ in the world, and to be a representative sign of the presence in the world of the mystery of God. (Austin, 1996)

In addition, Avis suggests ministries such as MSE carry the representatives of Christian Ministry beyond the confines of church or parish and into the wider communities and are 'an integral part of the mission and ministry of the Christian Church.' (Avis, 1999, pp. 10-14)

3.3 Review of Literature of Fresh Expressions

Fresh Expressions of church are new and different ways of being church in a changing culture. Fresh Expressions of church begin where people are and make church and community there.

The definition of Fresh Expression is 'A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church. Through the principles of listening, service, an incarnational focus and making disciples' (Croft, 2006).

With our society changing all the time, overall Church attendance has declined over many years, but in many places you will also find growing congregations. Generally, the church has moved from the central role of our society to the edge. At the same time, the “centre” of our society is itself moving around. As churches, we need to learn to live at the edge again — to rebuild community there.

For hundreds of years, people in Britain have related to one another primarily because of where they live: in the same town or village. People from the same place would go to school together, grow up together and often work together. For all that time, the church also related to people because of where they lived. The whole of England is divided into parishes. Each one has a church and most have a vicar. However, over the last fifty years, society itself has changed more than ever before. People move around more. They work in different places. Most of us live in cities not villages. People get to know one another now through networks of friendship, through work colleagues, through sharing the same interests (Fresh Expressions Website, 2007).

The Fresh Expressions initiative which is part of Archbishop Rowan Williams vision to create a ‘mixed economy church’ of traditional congregations alongside new expressions of church life. It already numbers 300 new congregations with 20,000 members. Fresh Expressions’ aim is to create around 10,000 new worshipping communities across the UK within the next decade, by resourcing innovative mission through new expressions of church life.

In 2002, the Church of England set up a group to think about mission as a result this group published their report in 2004 *Mission Shaped Church*. The report described a growing movement of 12 kinds of fresh expression; Alternative worship communities, Base Ecumenical Communities, Café church, Cell Church, Churches arising out of community initiatives, Multiple and midweek congregations, Network focussed churches, School based and school linked congregations and churches, Seeker church, Traditional church plants, Traditional forms of church inspiring new interest and Youth congregations.

The *Mission Shaped Church* report considered church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context. The report de-scribes in detail the changes in society. It describes twelve different kinds of fresh expressions of church. It challenges the whole church to turn outwards in mission because of God’s call to be mission-shaped.

The report encourages the churches to shift resources towards encouraging fresh expressions of church alongside the parish system and makes a number of recommendations to enable this to happen. It was unanimously welcomed and commended by the General Synod in February 2004 (the General Synod is the Church of England’s parliament). Subsequently 14,000 copies have been sold, giving added impetus to the Fresh Expressions movement. It is now being widely studied across the churches and overseas.

Fresh Expressions aims to be rooted and grounded in prayer and to focus on four key areas; renewing vision, gathering news, supporting growth and developing training.

4. Models of Church

Ordained ministry is in essence a projection of an ecclesiology into the community of that particular place and time. Theologian Avery Dulles, in his book *Models of Church* (1987), lists five paradigms of the Church’s being: institution, body of Christ or community, sacrament, herald and servant. This list is not necessarily exhaustive, but does provide a useful framework for understanding the nature and function of the church.

The Institutional Model

Dulles suggests that this model was a robust and functional for the Catholic Church during the Counter-Reformation. It gave definite guidelines by which church members could identify one another, and by definition exclude others. This model of church puts an emphasis on a visible institution.

However, Koszarync (1997) suggests:

‘The church is much more than a social structure. He suggests other essential characteristics must be represented: the life of grace, a Christian communion of faith, hope and charity, the abiding presence of grace, a Christian communion of faith, hope and charity, the abiding presence of Christ and the gifts and assistance of the Spirit.’

The absence of any sense of the divine nature of God is the basic weakness in a model that aims to express a reality that both a mystery of faith and a biblical reality.

The Body of Christ Model

This model highlights the relationship between the divine and the visible, between the supernatural community of grace in Christ and the visible society of imperfect human beings. Church is more than an invisible communion of grace, but also a visible community, the fullness and completion of Christ. Christ in the church being in some sense brought to a complete achievement.

It is important that both FE and MSE ministry is rooted in this model if we are going to sustain real relationships. A sense of the Body of Christ on earth, to be in Christ is to be ‘made anew’, to be recreated (1 Corinthians 10 to 12).

The Sacramental Model

The Church is in Christ as a sacrament or sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind. A sacrament is both sign and instrument, describing in some sense the inexpressible and overwhelming spiritual reality. As sacrament of salvation, the church’s community life expresses something of the essence of salvation. If we accept that in some way a sacrament is an instrument that affects what it signifies then the church as a sacrament of Christ brings about the continuation of His ministry and as sacrament of salvation builds a community in the world (Koszarync, 1997).

The Herald Model

This model is the church as ‘gathered and formed word of God’ (Dulles, p.76). Here the mission of the church is to proclaim that which it has heard, believed and been commissioned to proclaim. Dulles suggests that this is a development of the community or body of Christ model where community amongst believers is replaced by emphasis on faith and proclamation while retaining the understanding of a gathered community. This model recognises the importance of the proclamation of God’s word within the church, a view consistent with the whole prophetic example set out in scripture. However, this model places so much emphasis on the word that it may not be able to meet people where they are.

The Servant Model

This model sees the church as fulfilling a servant role within the world. It differs predominantly from earlier models in that it accepts the validity of worldly knowledge, advances and understandings. It does not see the church as primarily concerned with transforming the world from worldly structures into

Christian structures, so much as seeing its role as bringing a voice of hope, peace and justice to a hurting world. The church, in this model, is concerned with healing the hurting world at the point of its need. Part of the church's role is to speak out for those who have no voice within the world, for those who hurt, those who are oppressed, those who are hungry and those who cannot help themselves. This action is not restricted to being for the benefit of church members; rather for all humankind. These actions are based on the Servant-hood of Christ, 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10: 45).

This model introduces the idea of listening to and learning from the world. It makes the world a theological focus. This particular model is one that an MSE can closely associate with within their particular ministry. However, being directed exclusively by the model of the church as a servant would mean neglecting the other important elements which make up the church. Although Servant-hood is central, it may be helpful to relate to the other models and use them together to express the nature of the church.

5. Discussion of MSE and Fresh Expressions

'Any theology of the church must ultimately be rooted in the being and acts of God: the church is first and foremost the people of God, brought into being by God, bound to God, for the glory of God' (Cited in Mission Shaped Church, 2004, p.84). At the centre of our understanding of God is the concept of the Trinity, and this also provides a rich base for seeing the church as a mission minded community.

A statement on the Fresh Expressions website by Rowan Williams: 'If 'church' is what happens when people encounter the Risen Jesus and commit themselves to sustaining and deepening that encounter in their encounter with each other, there is plenty of theological room for diversity of rhythm and style, so long as we have ways of identifying the same living Christ at the heart of expression of Christian life in common.'

If church is what happens when people encounter the Risen Jesus as Archbishop Rowan suggests, then church should no longer be just about buildings, or growth in numbers. The church should therefore be about ensuring the nurture and growth of the faith of those who belong to the church. In addition, the church is also about encountering the living God within our daily life? Since Jesus Christ lives with us in the everyday, those ordinary situations within our daily lives are the material of extraordinary possibilities.

'A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.' This echoes the words of William Temple 'The church is the only society that exists for the benefit of its non-members.' However, when Temple made this statement it was not his intention to use it as a form of evangelism, rather stating that the church should be speaking out for the needs of society, helping to change things and showing God's kingdom through this. The concerns of the church extend way beyond the church. The church does not exist just, or even primarily, for the sake of its members. Temple's statement suggests that as a church we should be looking beyond the walls of the church perhaps reaching out to those on the outside or even accepting those who turn to the church when in need. John Wesley (1739) insisted that the world was his parish. So the concerns of the church extend way beyond its boundaries.

Archbishop William Temple observed that the Christian church was unique among institutions in that it existed for those beyond the boundaries. He touched on the truth, his reflection on the nature and purpose of God. Temple's profound comment can be a starting point for those who wish to seek God beyond the boundaries of the church and rediscover the essence of Christianity.

As Christians we are called into the world as disciples of Christ, reaching out towards those in need, to those on the margins of society, to those on the outside of the church building. Scripture asserts this e.g. in the Gospel of Matthew. God's 'Great Commission and commandment' was left to whole church. 'Love God with all your heart and love your neighbour as yourself.' Matthew 22: 37-40. 'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you' Matthew 28:19-20.

It is no longer enough for the church simply to relate to people because of where they live (although we may still need the parish system). The church needs to serve the whole of society. That means relating to networks as well as to areas. If the church is to reach those who are outside the church building then the church has to continue to market its product for the consumer market into today's society, in order for the church to be accessible to everyone.

MSE is probably one of the original/oldest fresh expressions of being church. A ministry which is not confined within the church walls but is active wherever the people are active, whether Christian or non-Christian. MSE is a frontier ministry and needs to be recognised in that context. MSEs are Christians who recognise they are living out their Christian lives and values in the world of work. An MSE values work and workplaces as providing opportunities for human relationships, where people may find a sense of identity, dignity and belonging (CHRISM, 2004).

The late Richard Dobell (fellow MSE) spoke of his work as an MSE in this way: 'First, I see myself as a Church of England cash point on site. If anyone wants to access this cash point, I am there to be accessed, as best I can be amidst everything else that is happening. I try to help by listening, by empathising, and most importantly by understanding. Secondly, I can draw parallels between Christ's earthly ministry and life at school, and I can largely rejoice. I see so much good in so many young people. I also see my community, the poor helped, the sick cared for and the sinner loved.' (Taken from funeral address, Rev A. Shearn, 28/04/07).

The way Richard described himself as a 'Church of England cash point' is one way to describe an MSE. Living and working alongside people and easily accessible when the need arises. By choosing to share the daily experience of our work colleagues, we celebrate the presence of God, and see and tell the Christian story.

MSEs, then, are both representative of and counter-cultural to Parish congregations. We are lights for Christ shining "abroad," out in the world. We are a "frontier" ministry, distinctive from, but complementary to, the Parish or other Church structure. We encounter God and people where they meet in the busy-ness of worldly life. We experience that busy-ness, its joys, its pains, its frustrations from the inside, resulting in a rich diversity of encounters with God's world and humankind. An MSE therefore, seeks to work out their ministry and theology as they go about their daily lives (CHRISM, 2004).

Workplace ministry is at the heart of community mission, meeting people where they are, Christian mission across all denominations and boundaries, serving the basic needs of those around us. Providing the opportunity to share the gospel of Christ in the midst of everyday life. This is a ministry that is involved in living in two worlds, and a ministry that bridges the gap between the church and the workplace. An MSEs action and encounter could be and should be an opportunity to serve God. The MSE has a teaching, preaching and encouraging role in the workplace and the church. In the church so that congregations can recognise their advantage for God's mission to the world of work. Prophet, priest or king in work, humankind's mission in and through work. Above all, modelling their working lives on Christ as servant, so they may approach work and relationships in work as servants with a missionary role (CHRISM, 2004).

As the church in the West continues to shrink, Spirituality is increasingly popular but its link with church has been severed. The MSE has an increasingly important role to play in bridging the gap between church and society. MSEs are frontier ministers, a ministry which changes constantly but a ministry which struggles to be recognised as essential within the traditional church.

The traditional church appears not to recognise the presence and activity of existing Christian ministry already in pioneering settings. The 'Fresh Expressions' movement seems to overlook the work of Industrial Missioners, MSEs, lay and ordained, both groups have a wide-ranging and influential ministries in workplaces, communities and in the world every day. The church has a body of experienced licensed ministers practising in pioneering contexts already and those embarking on new and exciting opportunities (Fox, 2007, p.10). Fox suggests that the church is looking to do something 'fresh' without understanding what ministry is already going on. As a Neonatal Specialist Nurse and MSE, I am entering into a pioneering ministry, yet it has not been an easy task to establish this new and exciting ministry.

Fresh expressions of church have indeed got exciting opportunities for the church to grow in strength and numbers. CHRISM as an established organisation for supporting MSE ministry recognises and supports the work of Fresh Expressions. However, we also recognise that as frontier ministers what use is being made of us by the established church bodies.

In a recent survey of MSEs experiences during their ministry undertaken in 2006, by the editor of the CHRISM journal. Fox (2007) came to some interesting conclusions which he drew from this survey particularly in relation to Fresh Expressions and pioneer ministry but also highlighted the need for support of MSE ministry. 'The church as an institution (of each denomination) seems rarely to provide any organised support for MSEs, but when it has been there it has been valued.' (Fox, April 2007, p. 8) MSE is still not on the churches' radar. Unfortunately, this still remains a frustration for many within existing MSE ministries and those embarking in new forms of MSE ministry.

Despite the work carried out and consequently the publication of Mission Shaped Church as result of the Church's concern to provide a theological framework to enable a 'mixed economy' of church. This report was the consequence of the Church of England increasing awareness that the parish system of church as 'one-size-fits-all' was insufficient to miss this need. Yet despite research and recognition of various forms of emerging church which have been trying to narrow the gap between the church and culture within this report it failed to recognise the work of CHRISM and of those involved in worker priest ministry (MSEs). Apart from one small paragraph on page 58.

Mission Shaped Church report is a call for the renewal of local church life and a demand for more imaginative structures through which Christian faith can today be expressed (Hull, 2006, pp. ix).

MSEs have been striving to do this for years and therefore this is nothing new. MSEs have a significant contribution to make to both the Faith and Work movement and to Fresh Expressions. We also have an important role to play within the life of the institutional church. MSEs need to be utilised and recognised positively by the institutional church but not as an extra pair of hands.

MSE ministry is very much about being rather than doing. As a result it means we do not always or may never see the results of the seeds we have sown. MSE ministry is about encounter rather than numbers. It about making a difference in a person's life we have come into contact with during our working life or our everyday living.

Morisy (2004) suggests a strategy for mission which: 'enables people to act as Christians, feeds people's imaginations so that the significance of the gospel can be sensed and can be a force for positive change in society.' This strategy can have a powerful effect on those living and working in society, as well as the church. There's a need to grasp the imaginations of the people in today's society in order for them to engage with the nature of God.

The themes that emerge in Morisy's books are transferable to any situation where Christians are involved in working in the Kingdom of God. Morisy's repertoire of stories are mostly about church situations, however what she has to say can act as a catalyst for our own thinking and reflections in our own situation. Morisy talks a great deal about thin and story rich lives. The themes in the book can help us think about our own situations in the workplace and from which we can tell our own stories. In a time when people want to live lives which contain a greater richness and meaning, the challenge for the church is to connect with such people, so that they may find the 'fullness of life', which is Christ's promise (Ebor, 2003). MSEs each have their own stories to tell as they engage with people they come into contact with in their daily life.

As a neonatal nurse I have a story rich ministry and regularly have 'incubator encounters' with parents, families and staff. I had one such 'incubator encounter' with one parent. She knew that I was training for the ministry as she listened to conversations between staff. 'One evening we engaged in conversation over the top of her son's incubator, he was premature and had required surgery. As we were talking, she was asking questions and was very interested about my ordination training. During this conversation she talked about how she had begun to pray again because of her son's situation. She described herself as a lapsed Catholic and she talked about her husband's lack of belief in God which consequently had been an influence in her life, but she had found herself praying again turning back to her faith in a time of need. Towards the end of the conversation, she asked me to ask my fellow Ordinands and church to pray for her son. Which I did and consequently my church and fellow students were able to engage with my ministry at work. As people prayed for this baby they were interested in his progress. So as I engaged with his mum over the incubator top subsequently I was able to share with her the interest of those people praying for her son and was then able to relay his progress back to them with permission of his mum.

As one can see “incubator encounters” can also serve as a metaphor for all kinds of “seed sowing” conversations, the outcome of which we may never know. But being there as an MSE enables this creativity to happen.

6. Comparisons of MSE and Fresh Expressions

This section aims to draw comparisons between MSE and FE focussing on some of the points which have been raised in the previous chapter.

Exploring faith in new ways. This is a key element in both MSE and Fresh Expressions ministries. MSEs are frontier ministers, each one unique, particularly within their sphere of work and within their individual ministries. Each MSE has an exclusive and varied role within the world of secular of employment. Therefore, each MSE evolves as they develop and explore new forms of ministry and this is a cycle which continues to evolve during their ministry. Particularly as they move on in to fresh and new dimensions of ministry as their work develops. In addition, the Fresh expressions movement is about finding new ways of being church, allowing people to explore faith in new ways and aims to provide something for everyone. Both MSE and FE work alongside the traditional church settings and therefore enable the established church to connect with those who are not necessarily members of the church.

Fresh Expressions and MSE both work with the idea of an incarnational and Spirit led ministry within society. Both MSE and FE enable the gospel to cross cultural boundaries through incarnational ministry by living among people and sharing their lives (Croft, 2006, pp. 83). FE has some realisation that the church is not/should not be running in parallel with society but interacting with it and immersed in it. On the other hand, MSEs have a total commitment to this, each MSE remains in the world, whatever its culture and outlook, immersed or embedded. To be incarnational is to seek to shape ministry in relation to the culture in which we are located or to which we are called.

The sense of Servanthood is central to the work for both FE and MSEs. In addition, the concept of serving is at the heart of priestly ministry, the roots of which are firmly inherited in the teachings of Jesus and His call to service. The concept of Servanthood can also be rooted in Dulles (1987) ‘Models of Church’ this is integral for both MSE and FE. Servanthood is an essential element of the ministry of a Deacon, which is the foundation for all Christian ministries. The ministry of a Deacon derives from the reading of the New Testament and is concerned with a quiet hidden service and the undertaking of practical tasks. According to the Church of England liturgy, deacons are heralds of Christ’s kingdom and agents of God’s purpose of love (Croft, 2006, pp. 83).

Fresh Expressions are more evangelistic and concerned about making disciples. MSE ministry on the other hand is more about encouraging faith through responding to question. MSEs will be less proactive in evangelism, more proactive in engaging with building community in workplace, fostering good relations, showing pastoral care and addressing justice issues. MSE ministry is about being vulnerable, being human and wearing our hearts on our sleeves. MSE ministry is being alongside people on their journeys, helping them in ways appropriate to their discoveries of spirituality and yet, being part of the team. Whereas, FE, although it is concerned for those they come in to contact with, nevertheless as is evident from the FE workshops I have attended remains to some extent concerned with statistics and therefore follows success indicators. On the other hand, MSEs are very much about being rather than doing, they are about encounter rather than numbers.

MSEs as well as having a ministry within the work-based community, receive support in their ministry by their sending church. As such they have a role in helping the church to affirm faith in daily life. Although the MSE is part of a work-based community, some MSEs will be reluctant to use their workplace and time for holding Christian meetings as this may not be appropriate. Hence, this is a different missionary style to FE. But there should be no divide the church is wherever we meet people.

Envisioning is an important element for both FE and MSE, being able to imagine is essential if their ministry is to continue to evolve. Einstein said 'What you cannot imagine you will never see.' A comment on this from a student during a seminar made this point 'And yet we can see things but have trouble in imagining how to, and finding the will to address them.' For an MSE it is not just about thinking outside the box, because we don't fit into a box in the first instance. Crucially, for both FE and MSE there is a need for community and belonging and one that affirms cultural identities.

Listening is another important element for both FE and MSE. To listen to those around us, to listen to their pains, hurts, joys and their sorrows and to listen to their needs. For the MSE this tends to happen through engagement, for FE it's perhaps more structured through the church, in loving service, forming community, evangelism and discipleship and in Worship.

MSE is an authentic expression of Christian leadership at the heart of all the corners of the world. Yet it/we are so diverse it is not possible to define us precisely. Yet, there is a parallel between MSE and Fresh Expression. If Fresh Expressions is to remain fresh then each example needs to be unique, somewhat different from any other expression, and that is also what MSEs are, each unique.

There is also the issue of ecclesiology. The challenge to FE is to ensure that 'What is fully church?' is and remains authentic. That is to say that any fresh expression of church remains united to the whole and does not depart into sectarianism. The challenge for MSE is to ensure that there is accountability for their ministry. But that means, since accountability derives from "giving an account", that the church finds space and takes time to listen to the accounts of their ministry that MSEs are only too willing to give.

7. Conclusion

There are two key strategies which relate to both FE and MSE ministries:

- (a) sharing people's lives and bringing the gospel to where people are, and
- (b) finding people of goodwill in the community or as colleagues.

This dissertation has enabled the contemplation of issues which have arisen whilst undertaking research. In return this has then facilitated some discussion of Fresh Expressions and MSE ministries and how they might be able to relate to another. A subject matter which Archbishop Rowan proposed to some members of the CHRISM committee and asked them to consider.

Initially when undertaking research for this dissertation I had a negative view of Fresh Expressions and I would surmise that I am not alone in this view, including fellow MSEs and some Parish Priests. I feel that there has been rather too much emphasis on promoting the FE movement by Church authorities, which in turn, could have led some to perceive FE in a negative way and raise the following questions. Is the scope of the FE movement just about new ways of being church? Or new ways of converting outsiders to conventional church? Whereas MSE ministry is not about either of these things. MSEs

remain in the world, whatever its culture and outlook, immersed and embedded. The phrase 'Fresh Expressions' could be seen as being wrapped up in what the church thinks it means to be church or to be Christian communities. As the church comes across something unconventional it calls it 'fresh expression.' Although, as evidence illustrates in St Paul's pastoral letters, MSE ministry has been around before the church became institutionalised, with order and structure and bishops etc.... Essentially, MSE continues to be a frontier and pioneering ministry yet evidence from the survey carried out by CHRISM shows it still struggles to be recognised in the wider church.

Although, I essentially recognise the importance of the Fresh Expressions movement in today's church, as an MSE who is about to be ordained Deacon and has struggled to be recognised. Continually having to justify my ministry for the last few years, because as one ordained minister said to me 'MSEs do not fit into the box.' I feel it necessary to make clear that it is essential for the church authorities to recognise and support the ministry of MSEs. Working alongside CHRISM to promote this frontier ministry, in line with the promotion that Fresh Expressions receive.

Essentially, this dissertation has given the opportunity to consider MSE and FE individually and this has then enabled comparisons to be made of each one. If the church is to become a 'mixed economy' as Archbishop Rowan refers to the future of the church then there is a need for both MSE and FE. Diverse ways of working to build the Kingdom on earth rather than focusing on and working to build the Kingdom for Heaven.

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