

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY
ABSTRACT

CAMBRIDGE THEOLOGICAL FEDERATION

MASTER OF ARTS

**EMERGING AND FRESH EXPRESSIONS OF CHURCH:
HOW ARE THEY AUTHENTICALLY CHURCH AND
ANGLICAN?**

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In 2004 The General Synod of the Church of England accepted the need to develop twelve new forms of 'Fresh Expressions of Church'. At the same time reform of church law sought to widen what could be legitimately church. Six criteria were proposed to ensure that 'Fresh Expressions' were authorised and authentic Anglican expressions of Church.

This study explores how four 'Fresh Expressions of Church', understand how they are being 'church' and 'Anglican'. Narrative data drawn from transcribed 'action research' enabled theological exploration of the study question.

Results indicate a developing typology of 'Fresh Expressions' that forms two distinct sub-groupings, 'emerging church' and 'inherited church'. Each reflects differing approaches to contextual theology. 'Emerging' forms aimed to relate to specifically 'postmodern' elements of culture utilising a 'synthetic' approach to contextual theology, whilst 'inherited' forms related to more 'modernist' aspects of culture utilising a 'translation' approach to contextual theology. Concerning ecclesiology, 'emerging' forms appeared to hold a distinctly Trinitarian, mystical and sacramental understanding of 'church'. 'Emerging' forms resonated with the writings of Hooker concerning Anglicanism drawing on Trinitarian theology and focused on 'unity in diversity' and organic local expression. The groups valued the Anglican formula of 'scripture, reason and tradition', the importance of a 'theology of presence' and the need to participate within diocesan governance structures. However, the study projects demonstrated a poorly developed understanding of the place of leadership and the ordained ministry. The study groups met four out of the six proposed criteria. Two were not met because current church law prevents their full participation in diocesan structures and secondly, as being 'distinctively Anglican' is difficult to definitively answer. However results provide evidence that all four study groups were authentic expressions of church and Anglican in so far as it is possible to be clear about what 'being Anglican' means.