

Name: Laurence Gamlen

Year Group: 31/04

Module Number: C2-3

Title of Placement:

Drawing upon my experience of accompanying the Moot Community in Westminster, and my reading and researching of other emerging church communities, this is a paper that examines how a community evolves, and how ministry and mission within fresh expressions of church.

Supervisor: Rev'd Michael Moynagh

Number of words: 4045 words

Date of submission: August 2006

Name: Laurence Gamlen
Placement: The Moot Community, Westminster, London
Supervisor: The Rev'd Mike Moynagh
Date: May – July 2006

Abstract

A paper that examines:

- The nature of emerging church within the United Kingdom
- How the Inherited model of church responds to a post-modern context
- The theory of Social Capital within a church context
- A developing theology of Mission, with specific reference to David Bosch
- The methodology of emerging church
- How a sense community may develop and evolve within a fresh expression of church within the context of post-modernity
- How ministry and mission differs within the emerging church context, with reference to two specific examples of church communities:
 - 1) The Moot Community, Westminster, London
 - 2) The 'Somewhere Else' Community, Liverpool

Foreword

After consultation with STETS staff I intended to spend time with two or three emerging church initiatives, and to address some questions raised by such fresh expressions of church, specifically concerning how ministry and mission occurs within the post-modern world.

I spent time with the Moot Community based in Westminster, London. I wanted to compare Moot's approach with another emerging church, but this proved difficult within the time allowed. My placement supervisor was able to point me towards another Fresh Expression that began in a completely different place.

This report is therefore based upon the stories of Moot and Somewhere Else, and is the account of my grappling with a number of intriguing questions, including:

- What is a Fresh Expression of church?
- Is one model of emerging church more effective in ministry and mission?
- What theological principles inform my experience and thinking here?
- What theological understanding do I bring to this?
- How might my experience shape my future ministry, and my understanding of ordination?

I was helped in my task by reading Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Orbis, 1991) and Morisy, *Journeying Out* (Morehouse 2004), as I encountered the themes of Holistic Mission, and Social Capital.

I am indebted to my Placement Supervisor, Mike Moynagh. Time spent with Mike was always stimulating and thought-provoking, and invariably threw up more questions than answers!

Introduction

I struggle with the church in the United Kingdom. For someone in full-time ministry and preparing for ordination this could be considered a problem. I realise that I am not alone in this; nationally the church is losing ground in this country and church attendance statistics make gloomy reading.

My placement reading offered differing perspectives on church life in this country. Morisy is rather optimistic (2004:p1ff) recognising church longevity within the UK as being a quite extraordinary thing, and citing the fact that throughout history the church has had to weather the storms of two millennia, including the traumas of repeated reformations, and escaping the cultural control of the powerful. She makes an excellent point concerning how the church coped with the horrors of the Great War, and helpfully adds that it is often through such times of adversity and vulnerability that the church not only survives, but also adapts and responds. Albeit not always as rapidly as its environment demands, and the structures allow. Morisy notes that this parallels a biological process of evolution when living organisms encounter

'critical moments' (p2) by entering a distinct 'adaptive zone' when a leap in development occurs. She says:

'All species and organisms have to actively and continually engage with their external environment in order to ensure longevity and productivity.....for the Church today the challenge is to find a way of focusing our attention outside the institution and to resist the temptation to become preoccupied with the insistent, internal demands for more money, new roofs, more clergy, more children in Sunday School and more young families in the pews.....Journeying out requires the capacity to rise above the anxiety associated with encountering and embracing a potentially overwhelming, outside world' (pp2-3).

Morisy urges the church to embrace the adaptive zone, despite the feelings of vulnerability and the risks involved. In a similar vein Robert Warren helpfully observed that *'we must stop starting with the Church'* (2004:22).

Mike Moynagh recognises the same picture of the church losing ground, but offers a rather less optimistic assessment of the situation. He observes a growing drift between inherited church and society (2002:92), noting that the number of adults with a Christian background is shrinking, and that public indifference to Christianity has the church by the throat. He writes,

Doing "Inherited church better" might give the church a temporary reprieve, but it would not be a lasting solution. This generation would still pass on a church that was totally ill-equipped to flourish in the next' (p92).

My experience of inherited models of church tends to reflect Moynagh's point of view, although this is tempered by some examples that I suspect will be able to pass something positive to successive generations. The distance between the world inhabited by the church and that inhabited by my non-Christian contacts is very large indeed, and I do not feel comfortable inviting them to church.

Although a small number of local churches have for many years sought to narrow this gap, the emerging church movement was given a fresh impetus by the publication of '*Mission-shaped Church*' Report in 2004. Within 12 months it had sold over 16,000 copies, and the Archbishop had resourced and commissioned a team of Fresh Expression Missioners. Can I be bold enough to suggest that the church is again, in part at least, taking note of, adapting and responding to its environment?

My placement gave me the opportunity to examine two distinctively differing emerging church, one that began from within an inherited model of church, and the other which began outside of the church. It is necessary however to attempt to define what actually constitutes an emerging church.

Fresh Expressions, Emerging Church...

The term has become something of an evolving catchall phrase acknowledging that this is a way of expressing the need for new forms of church that relate to the emerging culture. Such forms often have an inherent ability to adapt more quickly to any given situation, an important attribute in

times of rapid change. Drane (2006:4) points to these new forms as being melting pots of many different ideas and themes (p7) that are both 'work in progress' and 'very diverse.' He also notes another image of emerging church which consists of Christians who have become angry and disillusioned with their previous experience of church, and have established their own faith communities. Gibbs and Bolger (2006) offer this rather bland definition of emerging church:

'communities that practice the way of Jesus within post-modern cultures.'

They recognise that their definition encompasses nine practices:

- *Identifying with the life of Jesus*
- *Transforming the secular realm*
- *Living highly communal lives*
- *Welcoming the stranger*
- *Serving with generosity*
- *Participating as producers*
- *Creating as created beings*
- *Leading as a body*
- *Taking part in spiritual activities* (p45)

A slightly fuller definition is offered by the Fresh Expressions team emphasises a distinctly missionary edge:

'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.' (www.freshexpressions.org.uk/section.asp?id+25)

My two examples fulfil both these definitions, and to greater or lesser degrees, the above practices also. I would add however that a number of churches that operate from within the inherited model practice do as well and also experience growth; although this is the exception to the rule common in church circles that the church actually *does* exist for the benefit of those who do attend it.

There does appear to be a specific model of Fresh Expressions developing,

Prayer and listening to the people being served are central to this fresh expressions journey, at every stage.

Loving service: Unlike many more traditional church plants, a fresh expression is unlikely to start with worship, but with loving service for example a community café for people at home.

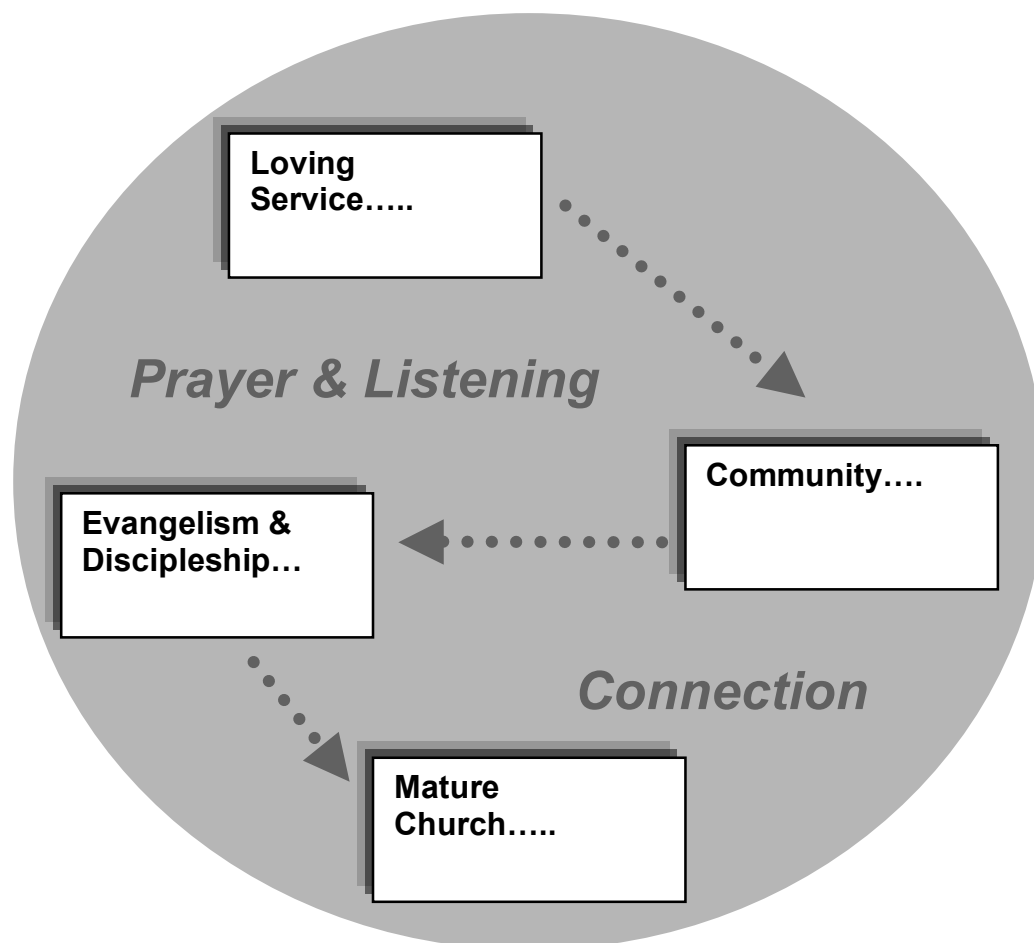
Community: Building an experience of community follows. People come because they like each other.

Evangelism and discipleship: The process through which people come into Christian faith and begin to be nurtured in that faith, including learning how to worship together. There are at least three ways to move from community to evangelism and discipleship.

Mature church: As people explore the Christian faith and worship together, they are not encouraged to join 'the main church', as has traditionally happened. They are invited to explore what it means to be church

themselves, as they meet and relate to each other. Mature church begins to develop when there is growth in reaching up towards God in worship, reaching inwards by building community, outwards towards others.

I would suggest that this process is modelled on Jesus. He served people, he formed his followers into a community, he made them disciples and his disciples planted churches throughout the known world.



This model and order appears to be the path trod by Barbara Glasson and the Some Else Community in Liverpool, and the characteristics can be partially seen in Moot, although I would suggest in a different order.

And Mission?

As it responds to changes in environment, so the church continues to develop its understanding of mission. There have been significant advances here over the last few years. One foremost thinker was David Bosch, who recognised that an inherited view of mission was about the salvation story being presented to individuals. This view undervalued the actions and teachings of Christ demonstrated in his daily life. To follow Bosch's thinking encourages the Christian minister to recognise that Jesus both inaugurated salvation and also provided us with a model to emulate, a package that he termed, '*holistic mission*.' He writes,

'the church can only be a credible sacrament of salvation for the world when it displays to humanity a glimmer of God's imminent reign, a kingdom of reconciliation, peace and new life'(p378).

Morisy contends that the implication for the church is therefore to journey out, embrace strangers, work for social peace and justice and partake of God's gracious gift of salvation. What I particularly warm to in her analysis is that Bosch is talking about the formation of community, by emphasising the corporate nature of Christ's work. Morisy suggests that this is about becoming and being '*kingdom people*' rather than '*church people*.' Inherent within this model of ministry is a concern for the marginalised and the poor, something that both my examples of emerging church take seriously.

Social Capital

An initial conversation with Steve Croft, the Archbishop's Missioner and Team Leader, introduced me to the theory of Social Capital, and to the work of

Robert Putnam. Social Capital is a way of conceptualising the intangible resources of community, shared values and trust upon which we draw on in daily life. It can be summed up in two words: *relationships matter*. Morisy has taken this theory and perceptively related it to the church's mission.

By coincidence, a recent *'Third Way'* magazine article explored the theory of Social Capital, defining it as

'the sum of time, energy, expertise, experience, commitment intuition and imagination built up through networks of neighbourhood, friends and family through reciprocity' (Vol29:8p4).

Morisy notes the significance of social capital for the church, picking up the theme of risk by asserting that it is essentially about trust and both the ability and willingness to cross boundaries between strangers. The result is that value is gained within our social lives, and a sense of being at home within our neighbourhoods.

'Bonding' Social Capital

Social capital can act as glue as strong allegiances and commitment between people occurs, as frequently found within a church context. An example would be, *'you need transport to visit your sick mother? Here, take my car'* There is the danger that such allegiances can become exclusive of others, and this is a charge that can be levelled at the church with some justification.

‘Bridging’ Social Capital

Moving beyond the bonding aspect, ‘bridging’ social capital leads to a broadening of identity and attitude as the dynamic becomes outward towards the stranger, and relationships formed. This movement is counter-cultural as today there is often ambivalence towards the large and organised, and even suspicion of an organisation, and in some quarters, fear of organised religious groups. The trend is towards a self-sufficient individuality, of working things out for oneself on ones own.

It is worth noting that in 1995 the Church of England’s National Officer for Evangelism published *‘Building Missionary Congregations’* sub-titled *‘towards a post-modern way of being church.’* In it, Robert Warren notes,

‘Whenever the church has made significant impact in mission, it has clothed the gospel in a way which resonates with the concerns, needs and aspirations of the surrounding community’ (p21).

The church that has eyes to see and ears to hear what is happening locally, and the courage to respond is the church that acknowledges both the risks and the feelings of vulnerability engendered. Morisy reflects that the Church of England has a privileged position through the age-old notion of ‘parish’ which extends its commitment to those outside of the congregation, and gives the wonderful example of harnessing both church and the local community to oppose the re-election of a BNP councillor within a multi-racial area, demonstrating the capacity to join together, pray and lobby together, and the substantial risks involved in ‘taking on’ an extreme political party.

'Brave' Social Capital

Morisy introduces a third category, that of the Brave. She tells the story of ecumenical church networks providing night shelters and of the attendant threats, ranging from violence to head lice and fleas. Reference is made of individuals who respond to God's call to leave the comfortable environment of suburbia to pitch their lot in on 'hard-to-rent' estates. Morisy's analysis here is, I think, incarnation at its purest. She remarks:

'When these structures of participation are without power and based on values such as hospitality, concern and kindness, then the expression of brave social capital can unleash the cascade of grace from which an unknowable range of people and situations benefit. This cascade of grace is uncontrollable, unpredictable and virtuous. It speaks of God's Kingdom and gives us a glimpse of what it is to be God's children, and each other's brother and sister' (p61).

In the light of Social Capital, Third Way magazine encourages the reader to redefine wealth, something I consider to be a helpful step bearing in mind the precarious financial situation experienced by many local churches. I would very much want to encourage the local church to do a 'wealth audit' without referring to the bank balance.

I suggest that the theory of Social Capital is a strong motivator in the development of emerging church initiatives.

Moot

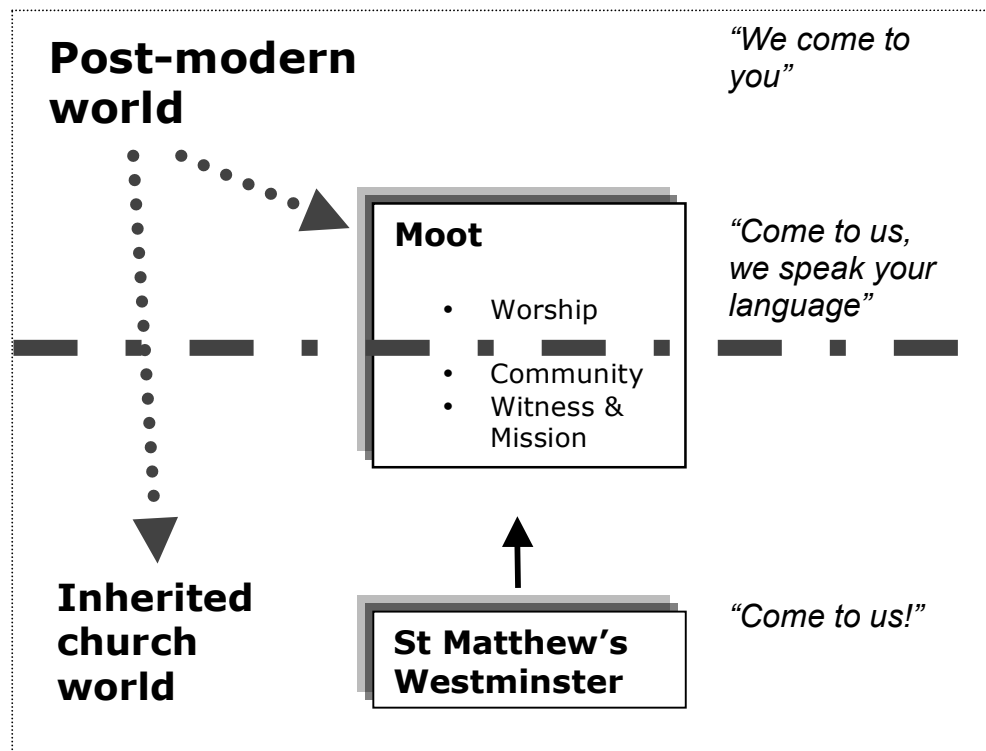
Moot describes itself as a community of Christian spiritual travellers who are seeking to find a means of living a life that is honest to God and honest to now. Moot seeks to make connections and find inspirations in the meeting of faith, life and culture. The roots of the community can be found in the alternative worship arena, offering opportunities for worship from January 2003. Since that time, Moot has developed and grown into a group with three core activities, i.e. worship, building community, and reaching out to others, activities that can be found in many other churches throughout the country. The vital difference is that Moot takes it's post-modern context seriously, working hard to inhabit the post-modern world, and perhaps just as importantly, to see it's practice and continuing formation informed by that world, something that many inherited models of church steer clear from for risk of contamination. Examples of this engagement include the relationship that Moot has with a local hostel for homeless men within Westminster, and being a presence at a recent 'Body, Mind and Spirit' exhibition, here Moot members offered foot massages to spiritual seekers, giving natural opportunities for many and varied conversations. Another key movement is the way that Moot offers an experience of traditional and at times monastic church practice to a post-modern world. Examples include the use of sacred ritual within worship, such as using a labyrinth.

Having been a part of Moot for a number of months, I have tasted their life of worship and community building. I have been warmly welcomed and accepted as a member of Moot who is just 'passing through.' It is a short journey that I

have enjoyed making, and one that I hope will continue in some shape or form after my placement has ended.

Moot inhabits territory that the church often perceives as a foreign environment, standing at the place where the world of church abuts the world of post-modern humanity. It conveys two messages that travel in opposite directions. Firstly there is a message to the inherited church, inviting them to follow and it is good to see Moot developing a ministry of encouragement to those who want to venture into this uncertain world. Secondly, there is the message to the post-modern world, offering a Christian presence in ways that are accessible and in a language that is intelligible, that conveys assurance of Christ's relevance in 21st Century London. I am struck by the extensive use made by email, texting and blogs to keep people informed and up to date. What I found particularly interesting is the way that Moot uses and fuses ancient liturgical church practice together with contemporary models of worship. This approach seems to especially resonate with today's spiritual seekers, who find a sense of the 'otherness' and a quite profound connectedness with God.

Diagrammatically, Moot may be pictured thus:



Here I have attempted to depict Moot's place within the post-modern context. I would place Moot at a 'mid-point' within the church world, and within the post-modern environment. It is a world that many Christians who struggle with the inherited way of being church find attractive. Although I have not tested this empirically, my hunch is that many Moot members have a Christian past, and have left an inherited model of church in exchange for the way of Moot. Ian Mobsby notes that there is an authenticity about Moot that it attractive to others, and I recognise this.

I am however left wondering just how much Moot reflects the model of development of a fresh expression of church. Its genesis was from within the inherited model of church that initiated an alternative experience of worship rather than beginning with offering loving service to a non-churched constituent.

What Moot's development suggests is that there is real scope for variety as the church in the UK moves towards a '*mixed economy*' of inherited, emerging, and all places in between.

Picking up on Moynagh's observations concerning the 'it-must-fit-me' society, I have coined the phrase, "*Come to us, we speak your language*" which differs from the inherited church's stance which may be summed up by '*Come to us.*' Moynagh suggests that in most areas of life the consumer is assaulted by choice, except within the inherited church in which 'consumers' are expected to accept what is offered.

I was able to interview Moot's leader, Ian Mobsby and a transcript of this can be found in Appendix 1.

Somewhere Else

The 'Somewhere Else' church community began life in a very different manner. Barbara Glasson, a Methodist minister, was charged to go to Liverpool, to find if there was still a place for the Methodist church within the city after the Central Hall had been closed some years before. Barbara noted that although church life was in decline, Liverpool itself was a living place with both a heartbeat and a pulse, '*it breathes, rests, washes and dances, struggles and is wounded*' (p5). Barbara tells the story of 'The Bread Church' as it has come to be known in her book, '*Mixed up Blessing.*' She charts the developing of a community that grew out of what she describes as the '*rhythm to the day*' (p5) of city life as various tides of people approached Liverpool city

centre during the day, beginning with the pre-dawn street cleaners and ending with the young party animals making their uncertain way home in the early hours.

Barbara walked, talked, listened and learned to wait. As she continued to reflect upon her experience of being a minister she discovered that she had less to bring, and more to learn. What followed next was the 'clearly crazy' idea to make bread in the kitchen of a friend, alongside other people, an episode that she later described as '*riotous*' as stories began to flow that deepened over a shared lunch. As time moved on so participants around the table would make three loaves of bread each, one for immediate consumption for lunch, one for taking home and one to be given away. Bread would be given away to friends or neighbours,

'I'm going to give mine to the lady next door, I haven't seen her for ages' (p16).

As she had detected the rhythm of the city, so Glasson began to recognise a rhythm within the bread making. She tells of

'a pace of engagement and withdrawal that was initiated by bread.

Bread making became my pint of connection to a different set of people. This group was never the same group twice. As the bread was made and distributed, so others were intrigued by what was going on.

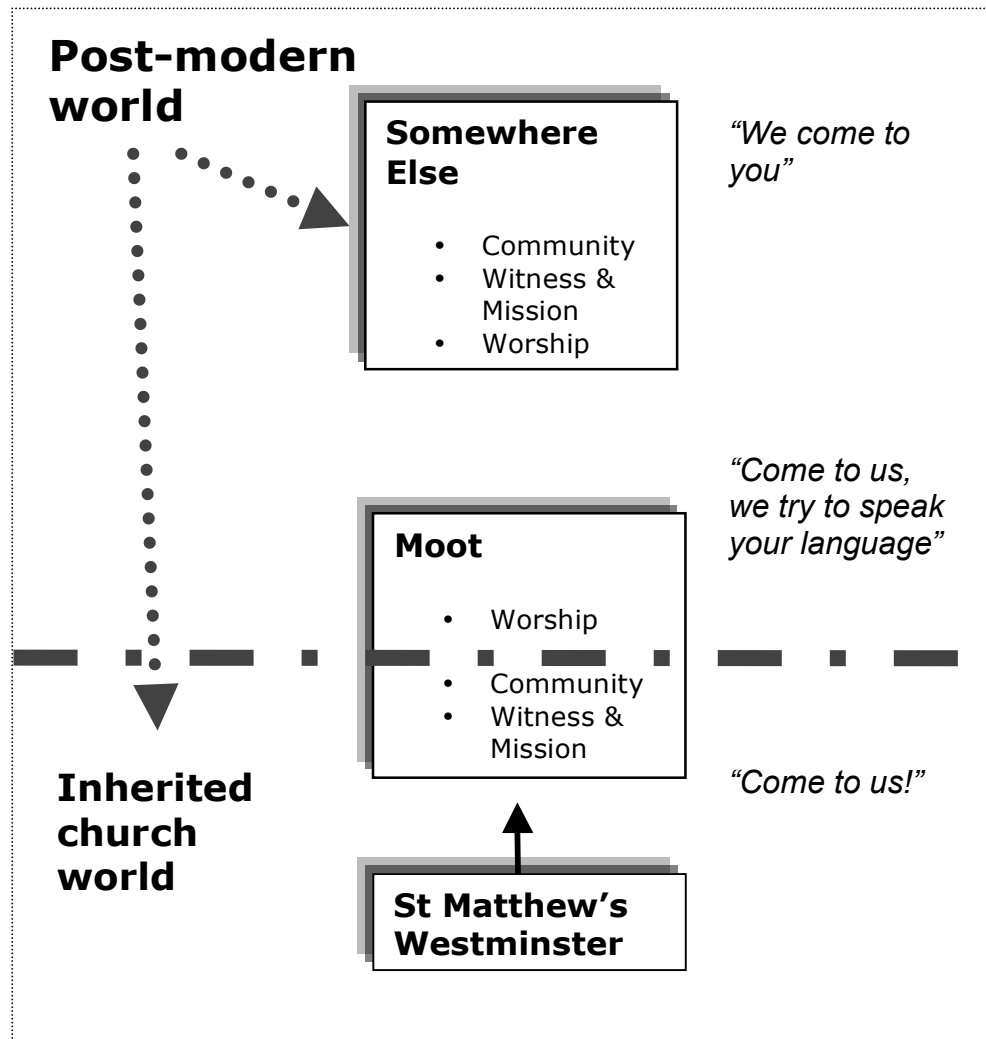
'Why did you make this for me?' 'Did you say anyone can come?'

(p17).

Later on Glasson reflected that she had looked to bread as a way of connecting with people, a focus around which a community could gather, a process that, as with bread making itself, cannot be rushed. I was intrigued by the way that this community formed as people found their way into Somewhere Else by any number of different routes. Individuals emerged from all walks of life, including Big Issue vendors, gay and lesbian Christians, and individuals with mental health issues. Glasson remarks, '*Whoever arrives is whoever God sends*' (p38). My intrigue centres around the fact that Somewhere Else clearly proved an open and easy community to become a part of, something that many inherited churches are not. Another contrast noted is the fact that bread making together is a process where participants stand side by side, as opposed to the face-to-face encounters that church attending may engender. I am not sure that this symbol of solidarity can be overstated.

I was pleased to meet Barbara Glasson and interview her. Again her thoughts concerning ordination, and her view upon the inherited church are helpful. A transcript of this forms Appendix two.

Somewhere Else's place within my earlier diagram looks like this:



The charge could be levelled against the Somewhere Else community that they exist to be a therapy group. I am reminded that this community began because of Glasson's time of prayer and listening. This church emerged because God called it into being through the process of making bread and being present. Barbara is sure that The Bible informs the very heart of the community, and the Eucharist is regularly celebrated. There are of course many references to bread within scripture and to its significance to human existence, perhaps no where more striking than in the giving of the Eucharist, a way in which the living out of a shared experience transforms relationships with one another and with God.

It is worth noting that Barbara's understanding of the gospel makes more sense to her, and that celebrations of the Eucharist have become both deeper and richer.

I am deeply moved by what has been described as the '*Gentle, personable and subversive activity that is bread making*' (p50). The subversion occurs because bread is made and given away, something that a capitalist economy fails to understand. Barbara Glasson observes that

'This little community stands as a radical counter-sign, set as it is in the heart of the retail and business community of one of Britain's largest cities' (p51).

This enterprise strikes me as a good example of Social Capital being worked out in practice. It resonates with Mary's song of praise (Luke 1:46-55) telling of God's economy being at odds with that of the world.

Conclusions

I remain very excited by the prospect for mission that the Fresh Expressions movement offers. Both Moot and Somewhere Else offer alternative and refreshing ways of being church. Both have been fashioned out of time spent listening to God, and to the world. Both endeavours are identified by vulnerability and risk-taking, and neither is numerically large. Both offer inclusivity. The leaders of each have a passion to make Christ known in ways that are authentic and significant in the lives and experience of others, as evidenced in the transcripts attached to this assignment.

Warren R The Healthy Churches' Handbook

Church House London 2004

Appendix One

Transcript of a conversation with Ian Mobsy, leader of the Moot

Community, Westminster, London.

Recorded at the Greenbelt Festival, Cheltenham Race Course on 27th August 2006

LG Ian, how has your involvement in Moot informed your understanding of three things: community, church and God, so nothing too big there!

IM For community there is something about living out this way of unconditional love, there is something about, because God goes deeper, depth of relationship is important, about relationships that make up the community are fundamental, so if there is not depth of relationship, trust, mutuality then our ability to worship, mission and community is not possible, so the heart of what we are doing has to have a viable and vibrant community or there is no life in it. OK What does Moot do about being church, umm well I take that in terms of the functional stuff, I see church in terms of wanting to worship, do mission and live in community, umm there's something aboutgosh that's such a large question!

LG Yes it is, isn't it!?

IM OK important principles, this is just headline stuff....turn-taking, that being part of Moot... that they are there and if I start getting arsey for being an ordained priest, they will level me, no doubts! If I suddenly get high falluting, ego ideas, I'll be flattened, if I start getting bolshy that will be challenged and

there is that whole kind of realness in Moot, where they will not put up with any crap! (laughs) and I love it! Because it keeps me grounded, it keeps me real, and it becomes very real and very attractive to the real world, its not a removed, special needs group for people who can't relate to the real world, its actually something inherently vibrant and real, so as church therefore we worship and in everything it does there becomes a sense of partnership, about people working together, and it comes back to that idea, you know that 'if two or three are present I am there also' in Moot I think that is done with real humility. What I love about Moot is that there is no pretension (laughing,) there is such groundedness and often rudeness and all sorts of playfulness that I find very very exciting and something of God, so therefore it becomes really attractive to the world, it has something to say, it has visibility, its authentic, it says all sorts of things.

LG OK and it does away with that whole secular....sacred divide bit which the church has been very good at keeping going for the last six hundred years or so...In my reading of emerging church stuff, a lot of it seems to be around vulnerability, risk and smallness and never quite sure what the future might hold. Ian as such as you are able to say, what do you think the future of Moot is?

IM Well I think it has.....gosh that's such a good question...its better to talk about my hopes, that really is the easiest way to talk about it.....I think is has a particular calling to do something that is being done by other emerging churches. I think a number of us have been really challenged by café church

model of doing church which is very much where you have something that is very engaging with the real world, its not removed, its not buildings away from reality, its something about Moot becoming present to people as God is present with us, so its something about Moot not hiding that it does things on Tuesday nights or Sundays, its got to move to this place where it has an ability every week, where it has some kind of presence wherever it feels called to, and I think that there is something at the moment that is very powerful about café church, and that relates to my passion that I see in the gospels where Jesus spends his entire time munching his way through the gospels...right? Significant moments of food and drink, and I see great things like the Church of the Apostles in Seattle, and of things of the Café Church in Sydney, and lots of us in Moot have got a real heart for café church mission. The danger if Moot doesn't go that way is that we will get stale, because it is doing community and worship very well at the moment and it has started to do some mission, but its not enough, so I think God is wanting it to be a café church, now whether the powers that be will go that far is the stuff that has to be negotiated, but I think I discern, and a number of us in Moot discern this of God that this is the way they want it to go

LG Sure, that's really interestingI hesitate to ask the question, but my assignment needs to touch on this...

IM No, no go for it...

LG ...which is stuff about gauging success really, umm and I know its all about quantifiable measures which I sometimes struggle with, but what would be....two questions really, what would be a successful Moot, be it a community meeting, be it an act of worship, be it whatever, and what would be success for Moot taken over a longer period?

IM So those two levels? A successful event, and a longer time frame?

LG Yeah, that would be helpful...

IM On those two levels, well one we would like to do something with secular galleries like The Tate, The Institute of Contemporary Art...me doing a joint event in the real world is a success in its own right, the fact that those things have never happened before and Moot has done one and is working with The Institute of Contemporary Art, so by doing an event in partnership with secular organisations is a success in its own right,

LG Sure, sure...

IM So that's one, in terms of significance I find that so difficult to answer.....I don't ...you see... yeah...if I could just critique the question?

LG Yeah please do...

IM The critique of the question is that the way we try to evaluate is to suddenly talk in business language, and start talking about objective measures, and I don't think that its very difficult to do that with the Kingdom of God, so I would say...right....I would say, the things that Moot has done with the Mind, Body & Spirit Festival, that it prayed for over 300 people and all those people had some kind of religious experience of God, then I would say that is a significant event, we managed to pray and serve three hundred people...its not conversions per pounds spent, it doesn't work like that, so that's a success. My other measures are if Moot doesn't keep growing in terms of being a vibrant community and others joining it, then if Moot events do not lead to people becoming part of the community by some degree, then I think it would have failed.

LG OK Thanks Ian

IM The other success story is to do with pastoral care, which I think we are totally right on... I know of at least three marriages that would be divorces now, I know of at least two people who would be dead because they would have jumped off cliffs, I know of significant people within Moot who have found the way we do prayer groups with a real depth and honesty every month, has kept them kept going, there's a vibrancy to it... so there's something about humanity there that makes a community a success in its own right, but then if you think about mission, then there is something about the fact that there has to be a sense of a Moot that grows, but not by having seven people a month, or two people a month, I just don't buy that, and I

guess a big thing for me is that if it continues to be that slight irritant to the institution and that it remains that prophetic voice and doesn't get stale and get tired and then I would prefer to go and watch television on a Friday night than going to see the old lady around the corner, or I can't be bothered to meet up because there is too much hassle, then its failed.

LG That's really helpful and a good lead into my next question which is actually is a message to the inherited church ummm..what sort of stuff would you want to say to the inherited church again informed by your experience of involvement with Moot?

IM Headlines....firstly, there is nothing to fear by taking risks in fact the big one for me is that the church has never stood still in 2000 years, the church has constantly reformed so this idea that the church has been this continuous thing for 2000 years is an absolute myth, normally built up in the 19th Century umm so actually the church is fluid as God is fluid and God is complex and the church is complex, and society is complex. For me it's about remembering where the faith starts, and it starts in relationship with Christ in community and, it does not start in an institution....yes I love the tradition, yes I love the inherited tradition but it has to be constantly critiqued by what is going on in contemporary culture, and so I am passionate about...my biggest passion is that Christianity is not rated at all by many people that know the church in the United Kingdom, especially in England. My frustration is that the church has huge resources for people to deepen themselves, to find themselves, to become more human and I think that we as the church and the inherited

church sometimes really undersell that, and it's about how do we get, how do we really enable people, rather than trying to make and maintain an institution?

LG OK, right..the last aspect is about leadership, because it always seems to come back to this issue; two things, specifically, well firstly more generally your role as a leader of Moot, and then the supplementary issue to that is about the ordination bit, and what that might bring to the role, whether it actually enhances it, and I recall that you said some things in your seminar about that but if you could say a little bit about leadership first off... your role as leader of Moot

IM (Long pause.....) Well... as I said earlier and I really believe it, it's one of service, about being a servant, its not about power, its about function, its not about hierarchy umm... I have I do believe in episcopate, so I do believe very strongly in oversight, accountability and I do have a very good relationship with the Bishop, and I really do submit to that authority, but the Bishop is a human being too, he has a huge responsibility, an impossible job actually, so there's a sense of that I serve the Bishop, who serves the local church, and the diocese becomes the local church and Moot is part of that local church definitely, so I love all that in terms of Anglicanism. What I want to say about leadership is probably maybe is my own stuff...shepherds... our calling is to shepherd people. Shepherds were what type of people? It's a tough life.. you are often on the edge of society, you have a difficult role, you are quite isolated form people, there's a certain amount of self autonomy that

you have to keep going, there is that sense of having that really difficult line and about the art of being able to shepherd people, it's a skill you know, you have to learn it, and some of it is kind of out of your character, and some of it is a painful journey, it's a costly journey, it can drive you completely up the wall, it certainly has me, and it can be a very difficult thing, and for me the big thing is following the passion of Christ, this is a Moltmann idea and I love it, in the sense that if you are following the passion of Christ, then it will lead you to celebrate the fullness of God, and the passion of Christ in terms of, you know, going to the organic beer tent and having profound conversations up to three o'clock in the morning, all that sort of thing (laughs), so there is something about following that side of the passion of Christ, the other is following Christ to his crucifixion, which is the other side of passion, which is about pain, it is the journey of cost, of isolation, and dislocation, and all those other nasty words I don't like very much, but it's a two way journey and actually, so my call to be a priest has been possibly the most exciting, and the most painful thing that I have ever had to do, and it mediates between the two, between agony and ecstasy and actually priesthood is not about having the nice house, and the privileged vicar existence, where you have got certainty and everything like that, the calling for the future of the church is that radical calling to take risks and to have the ultimate uncertainty, and it is about therefore trying to be a shepherd and getting back to what that means, which is not easy.

LG Thanks very much..

IM Was that alright?

LG Yeah, brilliant, thanks Ian

Appendix Two

Transcript of a conversation with Barbara Glasson, leader of the 'Somewhere Else' Community, Liverpool.

Conducted at the Greenbelt Festival, Cheltenham, Racecourse, on 28th
August 2006

LG Barbara, could you say something about how your experience of being involved with the Bread Church has informed your understanding of community? What that might mean?

BG OK, I think because the Bread Church has emerged from a context of city, umm I haven't been given a fixed community to begin with, and I think that that is a really significant difference for us, that we haven't been able to name who we are, and we still can't name who we are, we are always a different group of people, so I think that starts from a different place from most church-based things because I think most church-based things say whose out there, and I have had to say 'I'm out here, what does church mean out here?' and then we have worked as we have become a group of people around the bread, I suppose we have worked at community in the sense that we are still part of the city. So I talk about two models of church really, one that is the sort of sheepfold thing, and you get people in and you close the gate to keep them safe, and we look at ourselves much more as a 'watering hole' a well where people come to resource themselves and be out there. So it's not a separatist sort of thing, we are still community, are still Liverpool, we are still city, but then we have a sort of way in which we are an intentional community, we intend to be with each other in a particular way, which is stated and named

and negotiated and so on. And hopefully , hopefully that is something that people take out with them as life skills, but actually I am not bothered about what they do when they are not gathered with us – we try to be adults, and as adults you know, as responsible people making choices for our own life..does that answer the question?

LG Yeah, yeah that's really helpful, I was very struck this morning when you responded to someone's question about what you do with observers, and they come in not to observe....

BG That's right, that's right...

LG ...but to be a part of the community for that particular time

BG That's right, once you are there, you are a part of being there, you are what it is

LG So the inclusive nature of this...is lovely

BG Yes it is

LG OK what about your experience of the church? I know this is a massive question, ummm but I mean, well you tell me, but where you ordained to do inherited models of church?

BG When I was ordained I never thought or imagined that I would ever be anything else other than an ordinary circuit minister, and actually I was quite snooty about people (laughs) you know, not doing that! I think that is the bread and butter stuff, in some ways I still believe that. I am a bit of a reluctant prophet, and I would be content to go back to circuit, except to say that I believe I feel called to be with people who don't think they have got anything, I feel that that is a supreme gift. Like I said this morning, the only people I can not deal with are 'experts.' So I feel that I am ordained to be alongside the struggling because in my own life-journey that's where I have been at times. And it took me a long time to think that actually God could use me. In fact I was standing in the pulpit one Sunday morning and thinking, 'Oh my goodness, it's me!' And that's all of me, and the struggling part is not something to be denied, but has formed me, so I suppose in a way looking back, I could say this was a part of how it was to be, although I haven't entered this ministry thinking that, I've entered into this ministry because I do believe in obedience, and ordination is about being obedient under orders. I believe that firmly and if I am under the authority of the church to be in this place that they have sent me, - I've spent a long time in the church and now I've been slung out – but that's part of the obedience, that's what it means to be under orders.

LG Yes, thank you Barbara... What's your experience of the Bread church done to your understanding of God?

BG (Laughs) I think he has a wicked sense of humour! I believe...I believe in a bigger and smaller God. I don't think we have even got the first glimpse of the immensity of God's love, I think we just use that sort of language too lightly, and that comes to us in the most unlikely and sparkling ways that usually makes me respond, often to people who wouldn't know themselves as Christians or of a faith or anything else. I am a Methodist and actually one of the fundamental things to me is an understanding of grace, we are a communion and a communion of grace and all that stuff. And I have come to value that also. I think God's grace is immense and we are called to love and that's big enough, and we are not called to do the judging bit (laughs) and God is intimately involved with his creation, but is also able to see it in a way that we don't see it, so both intimately involved and above and beyond and because I am struggling with language I also want to say that we knobble God with language quite a lot. I want to explore more the depths of silence, the wonders of poetry, the sort of creative world of colour and I think that because I have had to work out in a way that has been about listening and attention, I am seeing the creative wonder in people, I think...it has made me see what God does with us and for us is actually pretty astonishing! (more laughter).

LG And the whole Somewhere Else thing taps into people's creativity, and the idea that 'Can I do that?!'

BG It does, and also personally I have become in some sense 'High Church' because I believe that the ordinary stuff we have around us like bread is sacramental, and it is deeply and profoundly holy, because and as well as

being made by ordinary people. Its ordinary and we need it, it's not remarkable on one level but also it is sacramental...

LG It taps into that grace thing you were saying earlier?

BG That's right, that life operates at so many different levels at the same time.

LG Where do you see the future?

BG (Laughing) You mean 'what's my plan?' Actually I don't really have one. I've never had one. Which is why I genuinely think that it is emerging church. I mean, if you had said to me five years ago that I would have had a group of Christians around me, I would have just laughed like a drain because, it was not intentional to have a church as such, and this has been a gift to us. I don't know where the people come from, but they come! I sometimes look at the group around the table and think, 'I don't know where you guys come from, but I'm really pleased you are here' and that is total gift. Every day that is a total gift. And I can't say, you can't say in five year's time, ten year's time we will be this or that, or this won't change because it changes daily, weekly, as the people change, and I think if you go in straight lines with plans, with mission agendas and vision plans and all that stuff, I think you close down that sort of surprising minute, and often what is happening with us is not what we think we are doing – we think we are having a creative arts workshop and actually what is happening is, you know, is somebody has

decided to give up alcohol, or somebody has decided to form a relationship, do you know what I mean? (I nod) So I think...

LG It's gracious subversion really?

BG Yes it is actually, and I think it is also has a lot to do with personality types, because I am quite 'open ended' so the worse thing for me is to choose a meal on a menu, because I choose something and then think 'ooo I wonder if I should have had that....could have been interesting, that' For other people they now what they are going to have, so it's the possibilities against the those who now what is coming next...and I also believe in saying yes, before asking how, and that can get me into a lot of trouble, that.... And also the future is not for me to see or to know, you know, five years or so and I will be off and out somewhere else and the church should be too, it needs to be free from me, and I need to be free from it, that's growth.

LG OK, it's the 'success' question then, which is one as I said earlier...I don't know, I don't know what success is...what do you think success is for Somewhere Else?

BG A whole group of people sitting around a table, with their bread in front of them, killing themselves laughing (laughs herself), it's just those moments of absolute delight, we've always said that we would go for quality and not quantity, and we do have to count numbers for statistics, but I think we should stop, I really don't care about numbers, as long as what we are producing is

the best that we can produce. And the rest? Well you know... we might not be there in 10 years time, and that's not failure.

LG Yep, I understand that.... Do you have a message for the inherited church and those who hold to a model of inherited church?

BG I want...I really want to say that they are still valued and loved. You know it's not, it's not lost.... The inherited church is not lost but we will never really know the kingdom until we have nothing left to lose (laughs). And that's a gift too. So don't be afraid of the building closing or you know... don't lose heart, I suppose. Don't lose heart because I honestly believe that what umm... what has happened at Somewhere Else is the successor to the inherited church. Its not something new and off another planet, and somehow sparkly and validates everything that's gone before, it's part of the Christian tradition, it's very much a part of my tradition, it's about small group, it's about God's grace, it's about empowering ordinary people, I mean that's what Wesley came to talk about, and umm and to bless what happens next, don't resent it, don't be jealous of it, but bless it and your turn will come. If you are faithful to God he will be faithful to you.

LG OK thank you Barbara. Could you say something about your ordained role as the leader of Somewhere Else? How important is it to be ordained?

BG It is very important for me personally to be ordained. I believe that is what I am called to. It is about being under orders as I said before. But more

than that I believe I am the one person whose duty it is, whose responsibility it is, who is paid to 'remember the story'

LG OK yeah

BG So to remember the scriptures and to remember the tradition, and to look out for it, and to recognise it and to point people to it, not in any way to say actually, 'Oh this is what you are talking about, my good man' You just sort of wink at it and smile at it and say, 'Oh yeah that's what Jesus was on about' because there are all sorts of whacky things that go on, peculiar things and off the planet people, and we have to know when things are not of God, or of Christianity and the faith. That's not to say that other people are not there to remember it, but I am set aside to do it, that is my calling to remember. I am not running a community project, I am not there to do my membership returns, that stuff is just extra, but I am there to remember the story of God in the middle of it, and to recognise it when it breaks in.

LG I suppose my supplementary to that is, say you are kneading bread together around this table, and someone shares something that, you know, some sort of hardship that they are going through, a relationship crisis with a partner, or something like that, how is your remembrance of the story? Is there an expectation that you will come in with something, or....I know it's really difficult and hypothetical here....

BG No...no but it's about leadership and styles of leadership more than anything else, isn't it? I mean people may expect me to say something, when they say, 'I've got this issue, what do I do?' That request comes in lots of guises, doesn't it? 'You're the minister you know what to do with this one!' Basically the answer is within the community. I believe that, and the bread teaches us something that you, you don't act in haste, you wait and the bread works on that process.

LG There's a secret working going on isn't there? When you have finished working it, there is something still going on...

BG Yes and I think one of the many things that I have noticed is not to panic, I don't have an answer for everything, 'I don't know, what are you asking me for?!' (laughs). But rather to say, 'Yeah that's an issue, isn't it? What do you feel about that?' And to find discernment in the conversation, which I suppose in some ways is a kind of counselling technique, but it's also about style of leadership, and it's all about knowing that God works within the interaction, within the process...God's at work in there, and to trust that. There have been moments when I am completely out of my depth...someone disclosed some ritual abuse, well, I don't know! Somebody living in a wheelie bin, that's not in my experience! Somebody.....an Iranian asylum seeker, a Muslim, 'Hey! Help!' I don't know!!! 'OK you've come across in the back of a lorry, I've never done that!' But there is something about everybody's experience is valid, and your experience is your experience, and I think I want to validate that, and from that there is no experience from which God is

absent, if that's not too many negatives! And therefore, let's find out where God was present in this situation, where God is present in this situation, and let's wonder at it and show me, tell me.....

LG And others would come in on such conversations?

BG Possibly, and sometimes things are said that are very confidential, especially if there is abuse is involved, and then you need to be trusted with that story, and set boundaries that are appropriate, and all that stuff and other times it's a general conversation and lots of other people have wisdom on these things, and often the homeless guys, you know, will work with each other and that's fun to see.

LG Barbara, thank you, that's it!

BG That's it? Flippin 'eck!