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**Finding faith in fresh expressions of church:
Implications for evangelism from a Methodist context**

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2022

Abstract

Within the context of general denominational decline, this thesis sets out to explore how and why people are connecting and finding faith in Jesus Christ in a selected small number of Methodist fresh expressions of church. The aim of this thesis is to find people within these churches who display significant measurable change using a form of Hoge's Intrinsic Religious Scale. Once this is achieved, a number of key factors are considered, noting common and disparate themes across the four areas. Firstly, what is the nature of any Christian background prior to their involvement with the fresh expression of church? Secondly, what are the triggers for their engagement with the fresh expression? Thirdly, what significant triggers amount to their respective responses towards faith in Christ? Finally, what are the establishing factors that help them remain and grow in faith within that church community?

This research is explored through a methodology of practical theology and tests a working hypothesis that the four conduits of Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God through the Centred Set are being practiced within these new forms of church. This active dynamic is strongly confirmed by the research, showing the formation of an effective foundation where anyone is welcome and a non-judgmental value is an operant dynamic within the communities studied. Thus, new ecclesial communities are presenting a space for apt and relevant methods of evangelism to be inhabited by the divine action of God the Holy Spirit.

The people studied are as eclectic as the communities from which they come, adding integrity to the model used and the theological principle of true diversity within the Body of Christ. Based on these findings, a future pedagogy of evangelism that does not invest in all four conduits through the Centred Set of Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God as a cooperant whole risks disregarding a cache of valuable insights into the reasons why some are finding faith in fresh expressions of church.

Acknowledgements

This work could not have been realised without the generosity of spirit from all those who participated from each of the *fresh expressions of church*. I wish to express my sincere thanks; it was a privilege to hear your stories of faith in Jesus and how your journeys began and developed.

To my two supervisors, David Wilkinson and David Goodhew, who have kept me on track with their patient and persistent encouragement, honing my thinking and deliberation, I offer a deep debt of gratitude. Finally, to those around me on this journey who have helped in a myriad of ways, offering their time, kindness, and support, thanks may not be enough. So, I will endeavour to make it up to you with wine and chocolate.

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Abbreviations

<i>fxC</i>	Anglican fresh expressions	27, 29, 289
<i>MSC</i>	Mission Shaped Church Report	18, 19, 22, 28
<i>msm</i>	Mission Shaped Ministry Course	239, 240
<i>NrP</i>	Nonreductive Physicalism	35, 36, 39
<i>NPNP</i>	New People in New Places	78

Introduction

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake – for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me...’ And they immediately left their nets and followed him.¹

What makes someone a Christian? In the first page of *Christ of the Everyday*, Jeff Astley helpfully examines this key question which most of this work will seek to explore.² Ashley quotes St. Mark’s gospel to call into question the disciples’ first responses. There is no check, qualifications, or investigations into who can or cannot follow Jesus; St. Mark records no mention of any doctrines of belief that must be adhered to, neither is their moral behaviour interrogated.³ Their only requirement is the action to follow Him. Though the hermeneutics may offer a great deal more behind this encounter,⁴ it is clear, as Riddell observes, ‘Jesus didn’t ask them for a statement of belief or even commitment to a programme of action. Nor does he appear to take much interest in their moral life.’⁵ Jesus initiates an open but specific invitation, with no hint of where the journey will lead and the only “cost” required is that they leave their old life behind.

The context for this research is situated within new forms of church known as fresh expressions of church.⁶ From 2005 to 2021, this initiative

¹ Mark 1. 16-18 (NRSV)

² Astley, 2007 p.ix

³ Gill, 1990 pp.21, 24, 39,

⁴ Cranfield, 1963 pp.61-71, Myers, 2019 pp.132-33, 136, Rawlinson, 1960 pp. 14-15, Wright, 2004 pp.7-9

⁵ Riddell, 1998 p.146

⁶ The term ‘fresh expressions of church’ is explained in detail in Chapter 1 of this thesis, on p.23-4. The background and origin of this term is explained in the Mission Shaped Church report, Chapter 4. Church of England. Mission and Public Affairs Council., 2004 pp.43-82, Cray, 2009 accessed, 3 December 2013;

between the Archbishops and the Methodist Church (now partnered by multiple other denominations and organisations⁷), saw significant numbers of people come to faith in Jesus Christ.⁸ Though data was principally anecdotal until 2012, evidence gathered from 2011-13 by the Methodist Church Statistics for Mission and the respective work commissioned by the Church of England for twelve Dioceses over 2012-14, offer empirical data demonstrating two very significant observations. Firstly, there are quantifiable large numbers of fresh expressions of church in both denominations and secondly, a high proportion of those attending these new forms of ecclesial communities have no previous church background of any kind.⁹

Consequently, the principle question to ask is, why, with a general decline in attendance in the Anglican and Methodist denominations in Britain, is this happening?¹⁰ What are the reasons behind this new growth? This thesis puts forth the argument that these new forms of church are offering diverse conduits for gospel engagement through which apt and relevant forms of evangelism and discipleship are practised.

Early data indicated that two interesting trends were arising. Firstly, those with no previous background with a church were engaging with these fresh expressions of church and coming to faith in Jesus. Secondly, those

⁷ Cray, 2013 accessed, 3 December 2013; Aldous, 2019 p.iii

⁸ Ivison, 2012 accessed, 3 December 2013, freshexpressions.org.uk, accessed, 3 December 2013

⁹ Lings, 2014 p.23; Atkins, 2013 para.13

¹⁰ Atkins, 2013 para.13; Mission, 2013 pp.7, 32; Church of England, 2014 para.3; Voas and Watt, 2014; Dunwoody, 2019

who could be described as “de-churched” were also engaging with these new forms of ecclesial communities.¹¹

In his report for the Church of England Commissioners, George Lings records, ‘In rough proportions 25% are Christians, 35% are de-churched and 40% non-churched.’¹² Lings notes that the terms used are not without their challenges as:

the borders between churching, de-churched and non-churched are neither entirely clear nor fully agreed. For example, we would exclude from being classified as churching or de-churched those who have only attended an occasional office (baptism, wedding or funeral), much less a concert or civic function in a church building, at all of which the local Christian community were not present.¹³

These figures were revised in Lings’ second report to ‘40% Christian, 27% de-churched, and 33% non-churched,’¹⁴ from another eleven Dioceses, researching a further 541 fresh expressions of church.¹⁵

I note here my own intrinsic knowledge on the subject of “how people find faith in Jesus,” which spans over thirty years and is identified for the transparency of this work. At the beginning of this research, I served as the Connexional Missioner for the Methodist Church of Great Britain, seconded to the National Ecumenical Team Fresh Expressions (2009-2015). Before this, I worked as the Evangelism Enabler for the Newcastle upon Tyne District of the Methodist Church (2004-2009), after serving ten years

¹¹ The term “de-churched” refers to those people who once regularly attended church but have now left the church. Church of England. Mission and Public Affairs Council., 2004, pp.38-41

¹² Lings, 2014 p.6

¹³ Ibid.,pp.24-5

¹⁴ Lings, 2016 p.10

¹⁵ Ibid.,p.11

in Gateshead as a Methodist presbyter (1994-2004). In this first presbyteral appointment, a church was closed, a fresh expression of church (Mind the Gap) was planted, and oversight of a one-million-pound new church build was undertaken. During all these roles, experience of people coming to faith in Jesus Christ was encountered and observed. None more so than during the years of Mind the Gap, where there were over fifty-five individuals who made some form of assertion of faith.¹⁶

Despite observing these faith changes in different contexts, no analytical research was undertaken. However, during my years as Evangelism Enabler and Connexional Missioner, workshops and training sessions across Newcastle District, then England, Scotland, and in Europe, revealed more anecdotal information supporting the premise of the hypothesis of this thesis that a combination of the conduits of Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God, expressed through the dynamic of journey around the principle of the Centred Set, held validity.

This research was prompted by my own observations coupled with the information emerging from Lings' analysis¹⁷. Attempting to close the gap in knowledge between what is happening within these new forms of church requires deep investigation. Adding detail beyond the anecdotal information and exploring an individual's background prior to their connection with a fresh expression of church is a central aspect which adds to this field of research. Further analysis is needed on how an individual makes this connection and what is involved? What acts as a trigger in their

¹⁶ Lindridge, 2007 p.11

¹⁷ Lings, 2014, Lings, 2016

decision-making process to become a follower of Jesus. Finally, what are the establishing factors that determine why an individual becomes a part of that fresh expression of church?

Within the era defined above, the Methodist context, and within the time frame of this research (2011-2020), the remainder of this introduction gives a brief summary of each chapter offering shape and structure to this thesis. Chapter 1 of this thesis presents a thorough investigation of the available literature upon recent missiological and theological works around the theme of coming to faith in Christ. It defines the terms used and considers succinctly the Biblical material. This Biblical material forges the background to: the theological engines of how we currently interpret the word conversion, and consider the component parts or “conduits” to the process of change in a person’s life when coming to faith in Christ. The current practice around evangelism and methods of discipleship since the 1940’s are also considered up to the present time in the context of Practical Theology as a method.

Chapter 2 locates and justifies the methodology of Practical Theology and presents greater detail of the thesis’ ration and hypothesis. Set within the methodology of the cycle of Practical Theology there are three active research steps to uncover the key data required:¹⁸

1. To identify and select an appropriate pool of recognised fresh expressions of church.
2. Identify a pool of individuals of the right demographic to interview (Stage One).

¹⁸ Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011 pp.344-61

3. Gather information about the respective experiences of those demonstrating significant spiritual change through the fresh expression of church, identified by Stage One's questionnaire, through Semi-Structured, Responsive Qualitative Interviews, (Stage Two).

The methods used for Stage One (a questionnaire) and Stage Two (a semi-structured, responsive interview) are critiqued and justified. Chapter 2 also includes within the methodology an ethnographic study of the context of one of the Methodist fresh expressions of church. It justifies the method used and applies the tried and tested evaluative tool of Douglas' Group and Grid.¹⁹ This offers a thick and rich description bringing contextual information to the key data discovered in Stage Two. A brief description of the other fresh expressions researched is also included.

At each step, Durham University Ethics Board requirements were followed and adhered to. The ethical issues faced within this work are recognised.

Chapter 3 presents the Stage One Data Results (Step 2) and interprets the data. This was an interim process to discover a pool of people for Stage Two. The response rates are evaluated and a form of coding implemented to justify the results with transparency and integrity.

The outcome is a surprising volume of potential candidates for the Stage Two interviews proposed. However, the vulnerabilities this piece of research encountered are examined here and the learning noted.

¹⁹ Douglas, 1970, Douglas, 2007

A significant gap occurred between Stage One and Stage Two. Consequently, the optimum pool initially identified became an acceptable number for Stage Two to progress and enough for this thesis to find validity within the qualitative data in this research.

Chapter 4 presents the principal research evidence, foundational to this thesis. The annotated data of twelve participants, from two locations, through semi-structured, responsive qualitative interviews, are presented. The key insights observed from the original transcripts are coded in corroboration with the four conduits of behaviour, belonging, belief, and experience of God. The combining significance of the participants lived narratives is summarised.

Chapter 5 details Stage Two Data Analysis. Returning to the original questions, the chapter seeks to isolate the specific, significant data and offer analysis upon four codes: Background Factors, Triggers for Engaging, Triggers of Response, and Establishing Factors. Table 5.1 holds a summary of the key data and it is incorporated within this chapter. It was first listed as an Appendix in order not to inhibit the narrative flow but as it contains essential data it seemed best referenced in this chapter.

The a priori codes²⁰ formed a helpful lens, bringing insight and meaning to the data. These a priori codes are found within the literature in Chapter 1²¹ and described as the conduits of behaviour, belonging, belief and experience of God. They perform as identifiable themes or conduits by which faith in Christ can be engaged from different perspectives.

²⁰ Harding, 2013 p.131

²¹ Chapter 1, pp.39-51

The summary findings of Chapter 5 are affirming in two respects. Firstly, they endorse much of the previous literature and bring more substance to its validity through the participants' narratives. Secondly, they expose both new and nuanced data for further theological and missiological reflection, which may influence some of the dynamics of the future pedagogy of evangelism within the wider church.

Chapter 6 attempts the beginnings of what may require much further work, in a Theological and Missiological reflection upon the theme being non-judgmental as an operant dynamic of both the Holy Spirit in the process of evangelism, and as a value within the practising community of the fresh expression of church.

A theological engine of non-judgmentalism is considered and applied to missional practice through the lens of the Centred Set,²² while interrogating this concept through Biblical and contemporary theological opinion.²³

The Conclusion seeks to address the three overarching questions, first presented in the origins of this research, flowed from the data gathered and are provoked by the evidence observed. Firstly, why did the identified participants find faith in Jesus? Secondly, what was happening within these new contexts of church that significantly helped the participants to find and continue with faith? Thirdly, what can be learnt for the future pedagogy of evangelism within the wider church?

²² Hiebert, 1983

²³ Volf, 1996

This thesis presents one further step in the cycles of practical theology, and thus attempts to diminish the gap in knowledge of “How and why people find faith in Jesus Christ in Methodist fresh expressions of church.” This research offers some real examples of nuanced data and comes back to the wider community with important observations that reinforce the basis for some practices and question others.

Chapter 1

Context, Constructs, and Conduits - Literature Review

The title for this piece of research started in its most basic form with the question: “How and why are people coming to faith Jesus Christ in fresh expressions of church?”

For the purposes of this literature survey, both Biblical and recent historical (post 1940's) work will be examined and critiqued, focusing particularly on the recent work of church growth. This analysis will seek to unpack both the right form of metrics and the methodology for this work to provide a worthy means by which to explore this research. The construct tools, as offered by Graham, Walton, and Ward²⁴ of ‘critical reflection upon praxis’ and noted by Nickoloff,²⁵ allow the appropriate focus on the theological and missiological voices without them being drowned out by the practical or evidential. The construct tools also do not allow an abstract speculation upon timeless truths but the consideration of the dynamics of communities of faith in their contexts.²⁶ Therefore key to this thesis’ subject is developing an understanding of John Wesley’s view of how salvation is realised in the individual. Lindstrom’s systematic work seeks to restore the correct perspective and depicts the structure and place of sanctification as the dominant component in Wesley’s view of salvation and will form part of the analysis of this work.²⁷

²⁴ Graham, Walton, and Ward, 2005

²⁵ Gutierrez and Nickoloff, 1996 pp.30-31

²⁶ Graham, Walton, and Ward, 2005 pp.170-71

²⁷ Lindstrom and Wesley, 1950 pp. 15, 125

1.1 Words of context – Defining terms

Words and their clarity of definition are imperative to the development and argument of this work. Therefore, the following have been selected as key components of the argument without which it will be difficult to substantiate the line of reasoning.

1.1.1. Decline

This in essence provides the context and metric by which it is possible to observe something different. Moynagh and Harrold, Goodhew, Roberts and Volland, Davison and Milbank in their respective works, reference the significance of the *Mission-shaped Church (MSC)* report, not least through drawing attention to the high number of sales (e.g., with over 30,000 copies sold).²⁸ Although Davison and Milbank's work in *For the Parish* is very critical of the literature, it does not offer any evidence for the following statement:

Mission-shaped Church is a flawed document. Yet at present it determines the shape of ecclesiology in the Church of England.²⁹

It does, however, evidence something of an iconoclastic reaction towards fresh expressions of church, perceiving them as something that has had a significant impact upon the nature of the parish within the Church of England in a relatively short number of years. It is worth noting that *For the Parish* comes six years after the *MSC* report was produced, therefore this is not a knee-jerk reaction but a considered theological response to something

²⁸ Moynagh and Harrold, 2012 p.51; Goodhew, Roberts, and Volland, 2012 p.70; Davison and Milbank, 2010 p.vii

²⁹ Davison and Milbank, 2010 p.1

perceived as having a transformational effect upon the Church of England's ecclesiology. Albeit in Davison's view, a negative transformation and to be corrected.

This invites the question why did the *MSC* report create such an effect. The report identifies the changing context over the last thirty years in social trends, networks, and consumer culture which is largely post-Christendom.³⁰ This analysis of the changing British context is observed by a range of authors from different disciplines. The following significant inferences were drawn from four respective sociologists Bruce, Davie, Gill and Lyons:³¹

- There is not a clear demarcation between the sacred and the secular.³²
- The institutional church has a significant problem in not attracting new people and therefore has declined. The reasons for this decline are numerous, but poor strategy,³³ ignorance,³⁴ and arrogance³⁵ are significant factors.
- Spirituality is still a relevant issue for today's individual, but it may be a hybrid of numerous faiths or beliefs.³⁶
- The individual has the power to make a difference should they choose to.³⁷
- It is ignorance not antagonism to non-institutional Christianity that pervades.³⁸
- There is still some sense of desire to form a common identity with others, hence the need for community.³⁹

³⁰ Church of England. Mission and Public Affairs Council., 2004 pp.1-12

³¹ Bruce, 1995, 2002, Davie, 1994, 2002, Davie, 2015, Gill, 1993, 1994, Lyon, 2001

³² Bruce, 1995 pp.125-7, Dillon and Wink, 2007 pp.119-36

³³ Gill, 1993 pp.296-7

³⁴ Note the unrecognised and widespread unacknowledged decline until relatively recently, i.e. 1990's; Jackson, 2005 pp.6-16; Goodhew, 2012 pp.1, 10-17

³⁵ There is no need to change, the problem is not with 'us'(institutional Church), people will come to join us if they stop being bad. A common view held amongst many longstanding church members; Potter, 2009 pp.15-16

³⁶ Davie, 1994 p.43, Croft, 2005 pp.11-15

³⁷ Lyon, 2001 p.95

³⁸ Davie, 1994, Gill, 1993, Lyon, 2001

³⁹ Davie, 1994; Lyon, 2001 p.105; Ward, 2002; Billings, 2013 pp.7-10

The question of secularisation was a common factor between the sociologists, as was their respective research and analysis of lifestyle change in relation to the British institutional church. Much of their analysis concurs with John Drane's summations⁴⁰ that substantive change has occurred since the 1950's, but their conclusions on the pace of change and decline in church attendance varied between gradual to cataclysmic.⁴¹

A few supplementary comments to the above can be added. The sociologist Steve Bruce makes the argument of increased secularisation in the West, predicated on the evidence that conventional religious beliefs are declining in popularity.⁴² This is largely based on the work of Peter Brierley, in particular the statistics and conclusions presented in *The Tide is Running Out* (2000).⁴³ Two reflections emerge from this. Firstly, the statistics of declining institutional church attendance are persuasive but they do not tell the whole story of Christianity in Britain; and secondly the declining figures in attendance do not necessarily correspond to secularisation.⁴⁴

Robin Gill's work tracks the decline in Sunday Schools and the resulting loss of the Christian meta-narrative. It also discusses the impact of Victorian church planting in the wrong places, resulting in the unsustainability of large premises being used by small numbers.⁴⁵ Gill speculates that 'empty churches' are off-putting to the enquirer, sending out a negative signal about the future of the church and religion.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Drane, 2008 pp.7-8

⁴¹ Goodhew, 2012 p.1; Brown, 2001 pp.170-92

⁴² Bruce, 2002 p.60, 72

⁴³ Brierley, 2000

⁴⁴ Brierley and Miles, 2003 p.9.9

⁴⁵ Gill, 1993 pp.296-7

⁴⁶ Gill, 1994 pp.54-56

With respect to the empty church theory, Lyon's recognition of "religious neo-tribes" that have lost their connection to a place or building but still operate as "community" is very significant.⁴⁷ Though he seeks to qualify it as the emergence of humanistic ecumenism and the search for common religious culture, it could equally be defined as the individual's desire to "belong." This form of belonging is expressed through mutual recognition and acceptance in which there is support, care, love, and perhaps some measure of desired accountability. More than a decade earlier, a study in Britain asked Anglicans: *What exactly is it that you feel you belong to?* The most popular response from attendees was a sense of community.⁴⁸

Grace Davie views the societal trends in Britain as a mixed economy, not a one-way street. She states:

The sacred does not disappear but in many ways is becoming more rather than less prevalent in contemporary society... The decrease in institutional religion has not destroyed religious belief... Nominal Christianity provides a rich seedbed for alternative versions of the sacred.⁴⁹

Davie also notes the rise in activity of the committed, particularly those known as evangelicals. This is a global phenomenon, not just a British manifestation, and it follows the church's involvement in secular affairs. This same phenomenon was also noted by Lyon.⁵⁰ Evangelicalism traditionally affirms personal conversion. Davie makes this revealing but positive statement in reference to the conversion of the individual:

⁴⁷ Lyon, 2001 p.105

⁴⁸ Davies, 1991 p.118

⁴⁹ Davie, 1994 p.43

⁵⁰ Lyon, 2001 p.104

Any change in society will come about as the cumulative decisions on the part of individuals rather than by changes in social structures.⁵¹

Connected to this, Davie observes that the largest proportion of voluntary organisational membership relates to those from a religious background.⁵²

So using the Durkheimian frame of reference, Davie asks:

If the religion isn't doing what it's meant to – what replaces it?⁵³

This is both a cohesive societal question and a spiritual one.

Though these other sources evidencing societal change are not exhaustive, they do substantiate the changing culture in society towards the church and the diminishing influence of the institutional church and its central place in the British culture for the majority of people. *Churchgoing in the UK*, a report funded by the Tear Fund in 2007, presented data that supported this conclusion.⁵⁴ Similarly, the Joint Anglican-Methodist Working Party on the Ecclesiology of Emerging Expressions of Church (JAMWPEEEEC) also reached the same conclusion.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the JAMWPEEEEC report warned of the “time bomb” effect first raised by *MSC*. This effect relates to declining children’s Church attendance and ageing congregations, resulting in the average age of the Church attenders being calculated to be fourteen years higher than that of the general population.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Davie, 1994 p.70

⁵² *Ibid.*,p.71

⁵³ *Ibid.*,p.84

⁵⁴ Ashworth and Farthing, 2007

⁵⁵ JAMWPEEEEC, 2012 p.25

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.26

1.1.2. Fresh Expressions and fresh expressions of church

When written with capital letters, the term “Fresh Expressions” refers to the ecumenical initiative supported by its constituent partners (originally the Church of England and the Methodist Church) as an agency for Christian mission to those never previously engaged with any form of church.⁵⁷ When presented in the lower case, the term “fresh expressions” refers to a mission project sponsored by one of the denominations participating in the Fresh Expressions initiative.⁵⁸ Officially, the definition of the lower case form of this term 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.⁵⁹

With two qualifying statements offering further detail as to how it might begin and be recognised:

It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples.
It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.⁶⁰

The report makes explicit that this activity is not a new way to reach people and then add them to an existing congregation, but that a fresh expression is intentionally ‘a form of church for our changing culture’ shaped by the host environment as well as by the gospel.⁶¹ This defining emphasis is supported in much of the critiquing literature, and a key differential to identify.⁶²

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.198

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.199

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.38

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.38

⁶¹ Ibid., pp.38-39

⁶² Nelstrop and Percy, 2008 p.8, Goodhew, Roberts, and Volland, 2012 p.99, Moynagh and Harrold, 2012 pp.237-238, Davison and Milbank, 2010 pp.93-94

Two further sets of criteria or parameters have been created externally to the initiative and presented in short below and in full in Appendices I. and II. The joint ‘Faith and Order’ Anglican/Methodist working party in their interim report created eight criteria from which both denominations would affirm the presence of a Christian community that sufficiently could be recognised as a church.⁶³

1. A community of people who are called by God to be committed disciples of Jesus Christ and to live out their discipleship in the world;
2. A community that regularly assembles for Christian worship and is then sent out into the world to engage in mission and service;
3. A community in which the Gospel is proclaimed in ways that are appropriate to the lives of its members;
4. A community in which the Scriptures are regularly preached and taught;
5. A community in which baptism is conferred in appropriate circumstances as a rite of initiation into the Church;
6. A community that celebrates the Lord’s Supper;
7. A community where pastoral responsibility and presidency at the Lord’s Supper is exercised by the appropriate authorised ministry;
8. A community that is united to others through: mutual commitment; spiritual communion; structures of governance, oversight and communion; and an authorised ministry in common.

The Church Commissioners church growth research commissioned a sub-strand of this work into fresh expressions of church by the Sheffield Centre. For this research, ten parameters were devised to ensure a robust and thorough evaluation was possible.⁶⁴

Ten parameters

1. Was something Christian and communal brought to ‘birth’ that was new and further, rather than an existing group modified?
2. Has the starting group tried to **engage with non-churchgoers?**
There was intention to create a fresh expression of Church, not begin an outreach project from an existing church. The aim was for the

⁶³ JAMWPEEEEC, 2012 p.114

⁶⁴ Lings, 2014 p.10

- Christians to change, to fit a culture and context, not make the local/ indigenous people change, to fit into an existing church context.
3. Does the resultant community meet **at least once a month**? In cases of monthly meetings further questions about how to deepen community, build commitment and increase discipleship follow.
 4. Does it have a **name** that helps to give it an identity? An active search, not yet yielding a name, is allowed.
 5. Is there **intention to be Church**? This could be from the start, or by discovery on the way. This admits the embryonic fxD (fx of developing community) and cases of fxE (fx of evangelism) and even some fxW (fx of worship). The key is that they are *not* seen as a bridge back to 'real church'.
 6. Is it Anglican, or **an Anglican partner** in an Ecumenical project? 'Anglican' here means the bishop welcomes it as part of the diocesan family, not whether it only uses centrally authorised worship texts, or has a legal territory such as a parish.
 7. There is some form of **leadership** recognised within, and also without.
 8. At least the majority of members (who are part of the public gathering) see it as **their major expression** of being church.
 9. There is **aspiration for the four creedal 'marks' of church, or ecclesial relationships**: 'up/holy, in/one, out/apostolic, of/catholic'. We question validity in an absence of 'mission/out'. (Our Church Army team see the two dominical sacraments as a given consequence of the life of a missional community which follows Jesus, but not the sole or even best measure of being church.)
 10. There is **intent to become 'three self'** (self-financing, self-governing and self-reproducing). These factors need contextualisation, but are some marks of advancing maturity. They are not to be interpreted as indicators of congregationalist independency, or breakaway tendencies.

Although Lings creates his criteria first, the results of Strand 3b were not published until two years after the JAMWPEEEEC report, affording Lings the opportunity to comment and compare the parameters chosen. Lings notes that in hindsight some questions about the inclusion of Scripture would have been very useful. However, Lings is hesitantly critical of the eight elements, seeing them as more definitive and a tougher standard than the ten in Strand 3b. He states:

It is astonishing there is no reference whatever to the person or work

of the Holy Spirit. This is both a theological and characteristic omission... We ourselves did not set such a criterion because, although theologically vital, quantitative methods would be most unlikely to be able to disclose it.⁶⁵

Furthermore, though Lings sees the first four criteria set by the Faith and Order group to be admirable, he argues that it does not necessarily equate to lived out practice or qualify the quality. Lings makes an incisive comment in asking:

If these are such good and self-evident criteria, and they are what the Church of England and the Methodists have been living by, how do the authors explain the previous century of steady decline? What has been missing?⁶⁶

Though this may appear a critical observation, in the light of Lings own robust parameters and process of eliminating almost half the projects identified, it does echo the earlier question about decline and raise a relevant challenge worthy of reference.⁶⁷

The summary of the report on Strand 3b's research is persuasive. The detailed study, involving all fresh expressions of church in ten dioceses, was carried out between January 2012 and October 2013, when researchers spoke to the leaders of 518 fresh expressions in the dioceses of Liverpool, Canterbury, Leicester, Derby, Chelmsford, Norwich, Ripon and Leeds, Blackburn, Bristol, and Portsmouth. These dioceses were chosen to reflect variety in context, geographical spread, and different stances towards fresh expressions.

The findings show the growth has been noticeably marked in those past three years. Some forty-four percent of the fresh expressions in the

⁶⁵ Ibid.,p.13

⁶⁶ Ibid.,p.13

⁶⁷ Ibid.,p.6

research were launched between 2010 and 2012.⁶⁸ Across the ten dioceses surveyed, this adds the equivalent of a whole new diocese in terms of numbers and in seven out of the ten dioceses, their numbers added equates to reversing the Average Weekly Attendance (AWA) decline in those dioceses over 2006-2011.⁶⁹

The evidence suggests that for every one person involved in the setting up of a fresh expression of church, there are now two and a half more people.⁷⁰ A typical fresh expression begins with three to twelve people and grows to two-hundred and fifty percent of that initial team size, with only twenty-five percent of Christians attending, the rest are made up of thirty-five percent de-churched and forty percent non-churched.⁷¹ Lings makes the claim, ‘There is nothing else in the Church of England that can do anything like this.’⁷²

There are two final observations to take note of from the research. Firstly, the variety of the types of fresh expressions are numbering at over twenty and are to be found in every tradition of the Church of England.⁷³ Secondly, over ninety-one percent of Anglican fresh expressions (*fxC*) across the ten dioceses are described as ‘runners’⁷⁴ rather than grafted, seeds, or transplants.⁷⁵ These church planting terms are originally used and

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp.6, 29

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.6, 31-32

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp.6, 35

⁷¹ Ibid., pp.23-24, 26

⁷² Ibid., p.35

⁷³ Ibid., pp.6, 76-79

⁷⁴ ‘Runners’ refers to the type of church planting coming from the parent plant, like a strawberry. It is still connected, drawing resource but looking for new ground in which to become established.

⁷⁵ Lings, 2014 pp.27, 111

described in *MSC*.⁷⁶ This strongly indicates a rooted connection with and intentional missional activity from the parent sending church. More to the point this evidence indicates it is not the maverick, haphazard initiatives of the radical, which has occasionally been portrayed anecdotally.⁷⁷

The significance of this most recent research creates robust data rather than the previously speculative, anecdotal, and slightly ambiguous evidence provided by the respective denominations' annual self-selecting statistics for mission. It defines in reality what is happening, where it is happening, with and through whom it is happening. This is not just one model in one context but a diverse and rich compilation, nearly all of which are bearing some measurable level of growth under analysis.⁷⁸

John Walker's analysis in *Testing Fresh Expressions* affirms the fresh expression movement, but he is not uncritical of the claims made by the Strand 3b document.⁷⁹ However, Stephan Paas' review of his work, while exhorting its rigour and methodology, does highlight the very small sample of just five fresh expressions, all from within the Dioceses of Canterbury. Thus, noting Walker's work should be complimented with other studies in this field.⁸⁰ Lings acknowledges the flawed figures from the first report and affirms the more accurate figures produced in second report, *The Day of Small Things*.⁸¹ The politics within the Church of England towards

⁷⁶ Church of England. Mission and Public Affairs Council., 2004 pp.113-115

⁷⁷ Davison and Milbank, 2010 p.16

⁷⁸ Lings, 2014 p.87

⁷⁹ Walker, 2014

⁸⁰ Paas and Vos, 2016

⁸¹ Lings, 2016

fxC come through in Lings' concluding remarks of his introduction where he states:

The title of the report invites the Church of England not to despise what is growing within its family, but has not yet been given due sympathetic attention. The invitation is to notice a phenomenon whose time has come and which has quadrupled in the last ten years. Now may be the day of small things: a diverse set of small, sometimes frail, mainly young churches that lay a claim to being among our best hopes for the future. They are not the whole answer, but they are one sign of reform as well as renewal within the Church of England...Among the clearest signs is the sheer presence of 1109 young Church of England churches...⁸²

1.2. Biblical Material

It would be easy to overwhelm this work with the sheer volume of Biblical material and critiques. Therefore, this analysis will focus on the overarching concepts presented within the scriptures of the New Testament as is relevant to the central thesis of finding faith and evangelism. Leslie Newbigin, in writing a paper on the British and European perspective on conversion, suggests that any systematic thought about conversion must begin with the 'call to' conversion, recognising this, according to the Gospel of Mark, was the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus.⁸³

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news."⁸⁴

This is immediately followed in the next verse by the call 'Follow me.'

Carey calls this the twofold nature of conversion.⁸⁵ Firstly, the New

⁸² Ibid., p.9

⁸³ Hill, 1986 pp.57-8

⁸⁴ Mark 1. 14-15

⁸⁵ Hill, 1986 p.11

Testament Greek word *μετανοέω*, is the verb to ‘think again’.⁸⁶ It is the first functional action of the brain, followed by the second verb *πιστεύω* to ‘believe’ or ‘put trust in,’ both verbs are expressed in a present tense, active voice and as an imperative.⁸⁷ Notably, the word and theme *μετανοέω* became a central component of the synoptic Gospels and early preaching in the New Testament, but it is interesting to note the change of tense from the words of Jesus above to Peter’s call in Acts 2.38 where the inflection is the aorist⁸⁸ imperative *μετανοήσατε*. The invitational tense moves from a generically open “repent when you are ready” from Mark’s words of Jesus, to Luke’s use of words for Peter’s repent, ‘do it now and complete the task.’ The call to follow is replaced with the call to be baptised and reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

While a full analysis of all the uses and endings in the New Testament of *μετανοία* is beyond the scope of this research, it would provide a more accurate contextual evaluation between St. Mark and St. Luke’s respective portrayals of Jesus’ and Peter’s respective calls to repent. Thus, answering questions of author style, ecclesiological influence, and intended readership, would aid a better understanding by which to determine if there has been a definitive ecclesiological development. That is, Jesus’ call to repent is an open invitation one can respond to when ready, but Peter’s call to repent has become a much more intentional invitation, seeking a completion of action in baptism.

⁸⁶Blue Letter Bible, Strongs G3340, and G4100, accessed, 6th March 2014, Moulton, 1978 pp. 266, 326

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Aorist - A tense of the verb in classical Greek and in certain other inflected languages, indicating past action without reference to whether the action involved was momentary or continuous. Dictionary, 1991

Carey notes the following three aspects of the nature of such change:

a) moral character, b) a message of joy because of a new relationship with God and c) *μετανοια* is not just confined to the beginning of a follower of Christ's life but is an ongoing and life-long dynamic.⁸⁹ In addition and connected with *μετανοια*, the word *ἐπιστρέφω* is used thirty six times in the New Testament, half of which are in a context of turning to God from one order of existence to another.⁹⁰ This transformation, as represented by Luke, is the core subject for Kavin Rowe's interpretation of Acts: seeing the visit to Thessalonica by Paul and Silas encapsulating the theological tension inherent in Christian mission. This is portrayed by Luke in the words of opposition,⁹¹ "These people who have been *turning the world upside down*, have come here also,"⁹² and encapsulated the three actions of Christian mission, i) naming Jesus as Lord, ii) taking that active mission to the ends of the earth, and iii) then caused concern as they gathered or assembled identifiably as "Christians."⁹³ This collision between the expansion of the gospel and the essential assumptions of pagan life, Rowe illuminates from four accounts in Acts: Lystra (Acts 14.8-19), Philippi (16.16-24), Athens (17.16-34) and Ephesus (19.18-40).⁹⁴ Rowe helpfully defines the use of *pagan* as referring to those in the ancient world who were neither Jewish nor Christian and places no value judgment of morality upon the term.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Hill, 1986 p.12

⁹⁰ Acts of the Apostles 3.19, 10.35, 14.15, 26.18, 28.27 (St. Paul quotes Isaiah 6.9-10)

⁹¹ Rowe, 2009 p.6

⁹² Acts of the Apostles 17.6b

⁹³ Rowe, 2009 pp.6, 92, 99, 103, 116, 126

⁹⁴ Rowe, 2009 p.18

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp.14-15

The gospel of John has a further motif in *γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν*, being born anew or from above, which expresses the inference that without which, one cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.⁹⁶ This regeneration theme of the individual also is found in Titus 3.5 *παλιγγενεσία* and I Peter 1.23 *ἀναγεννάω*. Ben Witherington contrasts the use of new birth (divine action, top down – principally Johannine) with new creation (more mundane human point of view, bottom up – principally Pauline), seeing both result in a change of human character, a counter cultural expectation in the Greco-Roman world of the first century.⁹⁷ It is interesting, though the comment is over thirty years old, that Carey notes the lack of critical engagement in academic theological writing with this central Biblical concept in any of the forms or metaphors used, in the New Testament.⁹⁸

Joel Green's taxonomy of conversion in the New Testament implies it is too simplistic to align *μετανοέω* with the Jews and *ἐπιστρέφω* with the Gentiles as many references point to God-fearing Gentiles who already know the God of Israel.⁹⁹ However, Green introduces a fourth concept interpreting the redemptive purpose of God within the cosmic battle of competing kingdoms, that is relevant for Gentiles and Jews alike, deliverance from darkness.¹⁰⁰ Paul before King Agrippa states his commission from Christ:

to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Hill, 1986 p.13, John 3.5

⁹⁷ Collins and Tyson, 2001 pp.119-42

⁹⁸ Hill, 1986 p.14

⁹⁹ Collins and Tyson, 2001 pp.104-5; Witherington, 1998 pp.341-6

¹⁰⁰ Collins and Tyson, 2001 p.105

¹⁰¹ Acts of the Apostles 26.17-18

This theme is found in much of Pauline theology, 1 Thessalonians 5.4-7, Colossians 1.12-13, Ephesians 5.8 and once in 1 Peter 2.9. It is not just *ἐπιστρέφω*, the concept of turning to God from idolatry or to a better or new lifestyle, but of being rescued (*ρύομαι*) from something bad or evil.¹⁰² It is worth mentioning here that the word *σώζω* is used in different accounts in Acts and Romans to signify this same inference of rescue.¹⁰³

One final dynamic of these connected words is the extensive use of *πιστεύω* in the two hundred and sixty-four times it is used in the New Testament, fifty-two of them occur in all but five chapters of John's Gospel. The aorist, active subjunctive of John 1.7, *πιστεύσωσιν*, 'that they all *might believe* through him,' sets the intentional tone for most of the other uses to implore belief in Christ. Acts 16.30-31 offers the reader a definitive link between *σώζω* and *πιστεύω*, presenting the New Testament's closest relationship between a request to be 'saved' and the answer 'believe on the Lord Jesus.'

Acts 14.23 offers one more perspective on *πιστεύω*. In Luke's use of *πεπιστεύκεισαν* it is described as a pluperfect, active, indicative word, creating the impression of journey action, both past, present and future... 'entrusting them to the Lord in whom *they had come to believe*.'¹⁰⁴ They have believed, presently believe, and are expected to continue in that belief.

Having considered the main New Testament words that describe the changes in coming to faith in Jesus, it is now important to consider the main

¹⁰² Collins and Tyson, 2001 p.272

¹⁰³ Acts of the Apostles 2.21-47, 4.12, 11.14, 15.11, 16.30-31; Romans 5.9-10, 10.9-13,

¹⁰⁴ Blue Letter Bible, accessed 8th March 2014, Moulton, 1978 p.316

theological drivers or engines behind the subject of coming to faith. Subsequently but intrinsically linked, the following section will consider what evidence might exist to understand the conduits involved. Paul Markham's work using both modern neuroscience and Wesleyan theology, brings the questions of what it means to be human alongside questions of Christian conversion in contemporary culture and has proved to be a helpful conversation partner in exploring these two aspects of theological engines and conduit components of conversion.¹⁰⁵

1.3. Theological Engines

1.3.1. Body and Soul?

In an economy of words, Paul Markham explores the historical journey of the theological question, "What are human beings made up of?"¹⁰⁶ Asking afresh Saint Augustine's question of God, 'What then am I,' body and soul; body, soul and spirit; or just body?¹⁰⁷ Markham argues that answering this question determines our basic philosophies of human life, and also our core theological perspectives, including how we relate to God, ourselves, other people, and the world we live in. He brings the question into focus via recent developments from within the field of neuroscience.

Quoting Antonio R. Damasio, he comments:

many of the faculties once attributed to the mind or soul can now be explained as complex functions of the human brain.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Markham, 2007

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.73-90

¹⁰⁷ Markham, 2007 p.73; Chadwick, 1998 Book X, Chapter VIII.

¹⁰⁸ Markham, 2007 p.92; Damasio, 1999 pp.112-17

Offering the examples of religious or spiritual experience, the experience and expression of love, and finally moral attitude and behaviour, once the exclusive province of the soul are now being investigated through the brain sciences. The subplot is the age-old question of, what are human beings? Markham reframes the question to ask, ‘what are humans made of?’ In order to explore his thesis, he argues that it matters a great deal how one answers that question, as the dualist or reductive materialist views will profoundly impact one’s view of Christian spirituality. Both views are insufficient, and he offers the visible theory of human nature, which he calls Nonreductive Physicalism (*NrP*) as a reasonable alternative.¹⁰⁹ Markham argues, ‘this theory avoids the problems inherent in ontological substance dualism while preserving the casual efficacy of “higher order” capacities necessary for proper theological anthropology.’¹¹⁰

Dunn makes the supporting Biblical argument distinguishing between a ‘partitive’ and an ‘aspective’ understanding of the human person. The Biblical text is concerned with the latter and when it appears to refer to an ontologically distinctive part, the body, soul, or spirit, it is intended to designate the whole person conceived from a certain angle.¹¹¹

Markham’s argument for *NrP* holds the holistic view:

Human nature should be viewed as intrinsically and inextricably embodied... to be human is a physical being operating on such a level of complexity as to allow for the emergence of human capacities such as morality and spirituality... These things will emerge without the addition of any immaterial entity such as a soul or spirit.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Markham, 2007 pp.126-7

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.127

¹¹¹ Dunn, 1998 pp.51ff

¹¹² Markham, 2007 p.103

In other words, what goes on inside a person is not disconnected or separated but embodied in their life.

This is further supported by Markham's claim that this is not in conflict with a Christian theological perspective. As physical creatures we function fully without the nonmaterial entity of a soul or spirit and the nonreductive side rejects the claim that we are nothing more than bodies, using the concepts of 'supervenience,' 'emergence,' and 'top-down causation' to make his case.¹¹³

Markham tackles the further potential vulnerability of *NrP*, the loss of human uniqueness, by drawing on Wesley's theology of *imago Dei*, defining the relational nature of human beings.¹¹⁴ Coupled with Brown's work from neurobiology, this is explored from a cognitive perspective, quoting six capacities (listed below), which are not seen as exhaustive but must be present in order to demonstrate a proper functioning sense of relatedness.¹¹⁵

Brown's Cognitive Contributions:¹¹⁶

1. *language*: the capacity to communicate a potentially infinite number of propositions; to relate regarding complex, abstract ideas, as well as about past and the future.
2. *a theory of mind*: an ability to consider the most likely thoughts and feelings of another person.
3. *episodic memory*: a conscious historical memory of events, persons, times, and places (i.e., more than memory for actions and their consequences).
4. *conscious top-down agency*: conscious mental control of behaviour; the ability to modulate ongoing behaviour in relationship to the conscious process of decision-making.

¹¹³ Ibid., pp.106-21

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.122

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.123

¹¹⁶ Brown, Murphy, and Malony, 1998 pp.103-4

5. *future orientation*: ability to run mental scenarios of the future implications of behaviours and events.
6. *emotional modulation* by complex social and contextual cognition that serves to guide ongoing behaviour and decision-making.

Markham claims these cognitive, multi-dimensional, and multi-directional experiences of relationship with God and creation are a distinctive attribute that sets humanity apart from the other species on earth. It is hard to argue that this is not the case.

1.3.2. Sanctification

The delineated language of sanctification serves as a critical theological tool for Markham to frame a process or event question of conversion. He makes the argument for an observable socio-moral behavioural transformation in which God's activity should be understood as co-operant respecting the constraints of neurobiological systems.¹¹⁷

It is important to note John Wesley's doctrine of sanctification expressed through Christian Perfection¹¹⁸ was heavily opposed, to the point where Wesley, weary of the strife, asks, 'Shall we go on in asserting it ... or shall we quietly let it drop?'¹¹⁹ Wesley did persist and recommended it to the end, satisfied in the knowledge that though he never claimed the experience for himself, hundreds of others had. Richard Heitzenrater's assessment states, 'The possibility of perfection in love through grace was the

¹¹⁷ Markham, 2007 p.124

¹¹⁸ For an understanding of Wesley's thoughts on Christian Perfection see, 'A Plain Account of Christian Perfection' Wesley, 1850

¹¹⁹ Wesley and Maddox, 2012 p.126

distinctive and defining message in Wesley's revival.'¹²⁰ For this work, the doctrine of Christian Perfection is not the focus but the theological concept of what sanctification is.

It is easy to see why Markham likes Wesley's notion of sanctification as it pertains to a holistic approach, pushing the individual on 'to the most vigorous industry... living out in life and character, in body and spirit, the will of God, whom he claims to obey.'¹²¹

This is not some inert state disconnected from real life but a living power to see transformation in all realms of living for God. An able theology of sanctification is dependent upon a beginning in faith but equally, for Wesley, a beginning in faith such as 'justification', 'conversion' or 'assurance', is irrelevant or false without sanctification following it.¹²²

Salvation is both depicted as referring to the individual and to creation.¹²³ The process for a person's salvation is a combination of prevenient grace, justification, both present and final, and sanctification,¹²⁴ both instantaneous and gradual.¹²⁵ Faith comes through God's prevenient grace and present justification. Sanctification follows, turning the Christian's life into a process of change to restore the individual into the image of God before final justification.¹²⁶

Markham seeks to employ Wesley's notion of sanctification as equivalent to the concept he offers for religious conversion. Blended with

¹²⁰ Heitzenrater, 1995 p.242

¹²¹ Cannon and Wesley, 1946 pp.221-2; Wesley, 1831 Vol. X, pp. 68, 71

¹²² Wesley, 1831 Vol. X, p.273

¹²³ Lindstrom and Wesley, 1950 p.106

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.122

¹²⁵ Wesley, 1831 Vol VIII, pp.328-9

¹²⁶ Lindstrom and Wesley, 1950 pp.123-24, 177-178

the *NrP* research, Markham seeks to explain human nature¹²⁷ and to offer a definition of Christian conversion constituted by four component features:

1. Christian Conversion is a process involving normal human biological capacities.
2. It is characterised by a change in socio-moral attitude and behaviour, and
3. is best understood as the acquisition of virtues intrinsic to Christian faith. Such acquisitions are facilitated through social interaction and participation in practices inherent to the Christian community.
4. Furthermore, the conversion process should be viewed as the co-operant result of Divine grace and human participation.¹²⁸

1.4. Conduits of Conversion Considered

The term “conduit” has been added as a purposeful tool to describe, and hold present, the concepts of means and medium alongside connection, process, and journey, which follow on from the discussion on sanctification. Conduit can be defined in a multitude of ways, but for the purposes of this research, “conduit” will be defined as a person, organisation, or thing that acts as a channel for the transmission of something.¹²⁹ That “something” in this thesis is the ‘encounter¹³⁰ with Jesus Christ’ and how it is engaged with.

It is important to note at this point what the conduits are leading to and why the phrase ‘encounter with Jesus Christ’ has been selected over other considerations. Firstly, terms like ‘conversion’, ‘the Gospel,’ and ‘discipleship,’ all hold some significant dynamic to this process but they all present their own challenges of explanation and definition which are unique to each person. Secondly, any other phrase to what the conduits were

¹²⁷ Markham, 2007 pp.130-1

¹²⁸ Ibid., pp.131-92

¹²⁹ Hornby and Lea, 2020 accessed 28 December 2021.

¹³⁰ Encounter is not time defined. It might be instantaneous or over a longer period of time.

leading to would potentially limit the understanding from the research or even exclude one of the four conduits of Belief, Belonging, Behaviour, or Experience of God. Such a step would change the focus and create a whole different set of questions that is not the objective of this thesis. For example, what aspect of the Gospel did the person connect with, or what was the nature of their conversion and what does this mean?¹³¹ What were the variables in their discipleship and how did that compare to the others? While these are all valuable questions, they do not address each person's journey, a threshold encounter with Christ. It is from this threshold encounter that observable change takes place, whether instantly or over time. It is this definable change in relationship to Christ that this study seeks to understand.

The ancient word conduit derives from the Latin *conducere*, meaning 'bring together.' The key question this thesis seeks to explore is, "How does that happen?" How are people in Methodist fresh expressions of church being brought together with this encounter with Christ? What are the relevant conduits in these contexts?

Using Markham's framework of the four features of his working definition of conversion, complimented with significant taxonomy of other sources the possible conduits of Behaviour, Belonging, Belief and Experience of God will be considered in the exploration of his theory. Each of these words are complex spectrums of meaning. Markham's contemporary work, alongside other sources, presents a helpful conversation

¹³¹ Some explanation of conversion is noted below from extensive sources.

partner demonstrating the theological method of praxis in understanding change and the tools with which to consider them.

1.4.1. Normal Human Biological Capacities

Markham characterises conversion as a change in both attitude and behaviour and argues such change permeates every aspect of the convert's life and therefore can and should be considered biological in nature.¹³² The research into *neural plasticity* is evidenced by Markham.¹³³ This process of formation, breakdown, and reformation of neural synapses to affect subsequent changes in the brain to influence behaviour is not the cause of conversion, nor is it conversion but a biologically observable human function. It is best understood as a process of learning that with familiar recurrence offers greater skill. Markham asks, 'what type of experiences must a person have for the brain to undergo this plastic change' and explores the evidence from Schwartz and Begley to suggest that self-induced neuroplastic change can occur.¹³⁴

To evidence a much wider compendium of research around experience and change, consider the theological taxonomy of Alan Kreider's study of the change of conversion where he states:

All scholars have viewed conversion in the ancient world as an aspect of change; etymologically, *epistrepho*, *metanoia* *conversio* all connote change. But scholars' interests have concentrated on differing dimensions of change.¹³⁵

¹³² Markham, 2007 p.137

¹³³ Ramo'n y Cajal, 1999 p.35; Markham, 2007 pp.138-41

¹³⁴ Schwartz and Begley, 2002 pp.195-238; Markham, 2007 pp.139-40

¹³⁵ Kreider, 1999 p.xiv

Nock focuses on change of ‘belief.’¹³⁶ Meeks sees ‘belonging’ and the change in the corporate dimensions of conversion as especially important.¹³⁷ MacMullen’s studies focus on the experiential dimension – especially the encounter of potential converts with supernatural power.¹³⁸ Finn places emphasis on the ritual dimensions of conversion, in keeping with the Roman Catholic initiatory programmes.¹³⁹ Harmless takes an in-depth look at Augustine’s approach to conversion as a communal, lifelong journey, required of all.¹⁴⁰ If Markham’s theory is accepted, there is a logical argument that each of the different conduits considered above will also engage the human biological functions in the brain.

Markham’s question above relating to experience along with these scholars’ respective fields of research, identifies to the reader that perhaps more than one element is significant in the conversion journey. Although Krieder, Markham and Wesley all speak of holistic change, the inference implies that where that process begins in the brain may have come from quite different origins of experience. Those experiences, explored by Nock, Meeks, MacMullen, Finn, and Harmless, though not exhaustive, may provide a reasonable field of study through which to explore how the beginnings of connection leading to conversion are made. Although ‘Experience of God’ is recognised as not exhaustive or exclusive to this first component of normal human biological functions by Markham, there is the

¹³⁶ Nock, 1933

¹³⁷ Meeks, 1993

¹³⁸ MacMullen, 1983 Vol.37, No.2 June, pp.174-92,

¹³⁹ Finn, 1997

¹⁴⁰ Harmless, 1995

common thread of the conduit of ‘Experience of God,’ which potentially is a formative part of a person’s encounter in coming to faith in Christ.

1.4.2. Changes in Socio-Moral Attitude and Behaviour

Studying the embodied nature of the biological process of conversion is assisted by the four cognitive science concepts of: *procedural knowledge, affect memories, somatic markers, and automaticity*. Though Markham, like Wesley before him, does not resist the notion of instantaneous conversion,¹⁴¹ this discourse is better understood as a gradual process rather than as a response to a crisis event.¹⁴²

Procedural knowledge is implicit, non-declarative knowledge, relating to our learning processes, and evidenced by the works of Cohen (*Preserved Learning*); Langer, and Imber (*When practice makes imperfect*); Mishkin (*Memories and habits*); Berry and Broadbent (*On the relationship*); and Strawn and Brown (*Wesleyan Holiness*).¹⁴³ These learning processes often elude verbal expression and are not easily accessible using language. Thus, not constituting knowledge but rather a “practice makes perfect” action or the forming of habits or shaping character. The argument for procedural knowledge is based on the principle that new experiences must be present for such formation to occur and often outside an individual’s consciousness.¹⁴⁴ This indicates the role of ‘cause’ in the modulations of

¹⁴¹ Collins and Tyson, 2001 pp.46-7

¹⁴² Markham, 2007 p.143

¹⁴³ Squire and Butters, 1984 p.96; Langer and Imber, 1979 pp.2014-24; Lynch, McGaugh, and Weinberger, 1984; Berry and Broadbent, 1984 pp.209-31; Strawn and Brown, 2004 p. 123

¹⁴⁴ Markham, 2007 p.144

ongoing behaviour and with respect to conversion, the learning of new habits.¹⁴⁵ Maddox notes succinctly Wesley's holistic perspective of such human faculties endowed by God of; understanding, will, and liberty. To these three Wesley considered having a conscience central to what it is to be human, and termed it "our inmost soul."¹⁴⁶ Wesley maintained conscience is a human faculty that continually assesses our values, thoughts, words and actions but where does the conscience obtain the standard by which it judges?¹⁴⁷

Affect memories are the intricate weaving together of emotion with past life experiences with the ability to influence socio-moral behaviour.¹⁴⁸ Though Kant¹⁴⁹ characterised emotions as non-moral influences, current research in cognitive science demonstrates the difficulty of separating emotion from behaviour.¹⁵⁰ Markham's argument is to consider the change and transformation of a person's emotive reactions from their encoded affective memories. Cognitive processes are active but emotion, however finely distinct, is not inseparable from the affect upon socio-moral behaviour.

Changes in an individual's *somatic markers* are a further demonstration of conversion's effectual change upon a person. Previous life experiences produce a bound knowledge of the world involving non-conscious responses or gut-feelings that give rise to a causality of action.

¹⁴⁵ Markham, 2007 p.145

¹⁴⁶ Stuart, 1974

¹⁴⁷ Maddox, 1994 pp.69-70

¹⁴⁸ Markham, 2007 pp.145-7

¹⁴⁹ Kant, Hill, and Zweig, 2002

¹⁵⁰ Pizarro, 2000 pp.355-75; Greene and Haidt, 2002 pp.517-23; Greene et al., 2001 pp. 2105-8

Though Markham uses the evidence of research from those with dysfunctional frontal lobes, it is nevertheless persuasive.¹⁵¹

Automaticity applies to all three previous concepts of *procedural knowledge*, *affect memories*, and *somatic makers*. This research does not rule out the conscious processes in behaviour, but it does point to new ways of understanding human motivation. Its basic premise holds that much of human behaviour occurs outside a person's conscious control.

Understanding the change of a person's motivation to affect such processes is Markham's argument that conversion occurs not just through cognitive understanding alone. Thus, the conduit Experience of God from the first of Markham's components of conversion is now complimented with the conduits of Belief and Behaviour. Belief is the observable conduit in the transfer of performative knowledge and the cognitive change that takes place. However, the close relationship to the conduit of Behaviour is also observable in the behavioural changes evidenced in neuroscience through *affect memories*, *somatic markers*, and *automaticity*.

1.4.3. Acquisition of Virtues

Virtues intrinsic to the Christian faith are not just personal habits (*ethos*) frequently practiced that eventually build character (*êthos*), but fundamentally come from a community of practice that has a historical lineage over twenty centuries, as illustrated by Meeks (historical origins) or presented by Wright (contemporary practice) as a *virtuous circle*.¹⁵² With

¹⁵¹ Markham, 2007 pp.147-9

¹⁵² Meeks, 1986 p.15; Meeks, 1993 p.219; Wright, 2010 pp.221-44

the concept of social interaction and participation in the practice of Christian community first established, one may then consider Markham's premise of the *narrative self*, creating the ability for co-authorship to produce *narrative history*.¹⁵³ This concept is not a notion of an isolated moral automaton but finds embodiment in social constructs.¹⁵⁴

These virtues are acquired and not genetically determined. A process that Kallenberg calls "becoming a Christian" is the process of 'naturalisation' into the narrative tradition that has and is being shaped by the story of Jesus.¹⁵⁵ Rambo uses the "matrix of transformation" to describe the four components of roles, rituals, relationships, and rhetoric, to interact through the process of conversion, as a platform for the acquisition of virtues.¹⁵⁶

Fundamental to both Kallenburg and Rambo's expressions of conversion is learning the language of that narrative tradition. George Lindbeck's seminal work in *Nature of Doctrine* defines religion as:

Comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives heavily ritualised, which structure human experience and understanding of self and world... A religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought.¹⁵⁷

The emphasis is upon inner religious experience being derived from external features rather than vice versa. While there is merit in this, as language does play a vital role in both the expression of historical and

¹⁵³ Markham, 2007 p.155

¹⁵⁴ Gregersen, Drees, and Gorman, 2000 pp.189-211

¹⁵⁵ Kallenberg, 2002 pp.38-42

¹⁵⁶ Rambo, 1993 pp.106-8

¹⁵⁷ Lindbeck, 1984 pp.32-3

personal Christian narratives, the progression of Lindbeck's work is vulnerable to the interpretation that conversion is merely intellectual assent.

Henry Knight's essay *The Transformation of the Human Heart: The Place of Conversion in Wesley's Theology* makes plain the error of confusing conversion with the human decision to believe.¹⁵⁸ Wesley understood conversion as first and foremost an act of God that is transformative in its effects.¹⁵⁹ Matthews argues that during Wesley's life he understood faith and a person's response to it, in three concepts: firstly, as assent truth, secondly, as trust in God's love, thirdly, and predominately, as an actual spiritual experience of God's love.¹⁶⁰ Yet Wesley does not make his own experience normative for others.¹⁶¹

Markham's discourse on the emotion 'empathy,' as an unlearned, innate human capacity, distinct from the reaction that feelings produce, holds complex but intriguing questions.¹⁶² The Christian community's re-interpretation of empathetic reactions as the virtue of 'compassion,' seems only to have credence when there is a visible effect upon socio-moral behaviour.¹⁶³ The fact that all "normal functioning" humans may display the emotion empathy does not necessarily infer that they will or do react to any given object or event, and secondly, that this response is not the exclusive domain of a Christian community. Furthermore, it is intriguing that Shelton and Markham only consider half of Matthew 25. Even in the Christian

¹⁵⁸ Collins and Tyson, 2001 p.45

¹⁵⁹ Wesley, 1829 Vol.I, p.286

¹⁶⁰ Maddox, 1994 p.127; Matthews, 1986 pp.244ff

¹⁶¹ Collins and Tyson, 2001 p.46

¹⁶² Markham, 2007 pp.167-76

¹⁶³ Shelton, 1990 p.115

community, the observation expressed by Christ, in Matthew's Gospel 25:37ff, is that not all who profess to be part of the Christian community have displayed compassion in their social contexts.

Zizioulas' work on *Being as Communion* offers a sensible theology of the gathered Christian community. In his comprehensive ecclesiology, the functional processes of the transformation of socio-moral behaviour takes more tangible shape.¹⁶⁴ Zizioulas argues extensively for a view of the Church, which is not simply an institution but as a form of existence. Volf's study of Zizioulas' work claims it as a most significant work of its time, stating:

Zizioulas's *communio*-ecclesiology as based on an ontology of person acquired from a consideration of the nature of the triune God.¹⁶⁵

The theological implications for these concepts will be considered in greater depth in Chapter 6. However, in her most recent work, Watkins¹⁶⁶ takes further the intimation made by Zizioulas through her Action Research and, quoting Healy, remarks that:

In general, ecclesiology in our period has become highly systematic and theoretical, focused more upon discerning the right things to think about church rather than orientated to the living, rather messy, confused and confusing body that the church actually is.¹⁶⁷

However, this blueprint for ecclesiology, formed from a social doctrine of the Trinity, is challenged by Ward presenting the respective work of Holmes and Kilby.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Zizioulas, 1985

¹⁶⁵ Volf, 1998 p.75

¹⁶⁶ Watkins, 2020

¹⁶⁷ Watkins, 2020 pp.3-4; Healy, 2000 p.3

¹⁶⁸ Ward, 2017b pp.18-22

Ethnographic narrative enquiry such as the theory of ‘group and grid’ by Mary Douglas is a helpfully objective tool with which to navigate potential conflicts of interest and interpretations of socio-moral behaviour.¹⁶⁹ Douglas’ method is particularly useful for participant observation of a community of people with an eclectic constituency, as evidenced by Caulkins.¹⁷⁰

Douglas interprets ritual as a restricted code, understood by those who practice it thereby creating a group. Bernstein defines it as a structured group where members know each other very well. They, in turn, develop their own special form of restricted code that shortens the process of communication by condensing units into pre-arranged coded forms.¹⁷¹ The code enables a given pattern of values to be enforced and allows members to internalise the structure of the group and its norms via the process of interaction.

In summary, these theories provide evidence to support the premise that intentional virtue is a present dynamic in the Christian community thus creating the opportunity for it to be acquired through social interaction. As demonstrated by Markham’s work and the analyses of the other scholars discussed above, there is clear interaction between the conduits of Experience of God and Behaviour within the practices of the communities of faith. While these are not exclusive to this component of conversion, the substantive conduit resonant throughout this argument is that of Belonging. It is Belonging that is the essential dynamic by which Markham’s argument

¹⁶⁹ Douglas, 1970 pp.54-68

¹⁷⁰ Caulkins, 1999

¹⁷¹ Douglas, 1970 p.54

is substantiated and occurs from within the community by a person being a part of it, not external to it. Hiebert's theory expanding the dynamics of Belonging are considered in greater depth in Chapter 5.¹⁷²

1.4.4. Co-operant Grace

Markham recognises that his argument is vulnerable to the critique that it operates as merely a sociological dimension. However, the fourth component of Co-operant Grace is intentionally so much more than Austin Farrer's 'casual joint' in *Faith and Speculation*.¹⁷³ Co-operant Grace forms three component parts: the activity of God, the individual – the object of the activity, and the process as to how change takes place.

God's action in the world, though listed fourth, is theologically first and the fundamental essence of Markham's definition of conversion. Maddox terms this 'responsible grace,' summarising Wesley's theological taxonomy around Co-operant Grace. He writes: 'Wesley has underlined the provenience of *grace* to our *response*'.¹⁷⁴ Wesley was keen to focus on the nature of God and God's actions rather than humanity's, making clear God's indispensable gift of gracious forgiveness and empowerment was fundamental to a person's awakening,¹⁷⁵ while capturing the qualification that this was enabling rather than overriding human responsibility.¹⁷⁶

David Bosch argues the importance of distinguishing between *missio Dei* and *missiones ecclesiae*.¹⁷⁷ The former is the attribute of the Divine

¹⁷² Hiebert, 1983; Hiebert, 1994

¹⁷³ Markham, 2007 pp.172-3; Farrer, 1967 p.66

¹⁷⁴ Maddox, 1994 p.118

¹⁷⁵ Maddox, 1994 pp.160-161

¹⁷⁶ Maddox, 1994 p.19

¹⁷⁷ Bosch, 1991 p.10

Trinity, in self-revelation to reach out to humanity, embrace it in relationship through Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The latter refers to specific ventures of participation by the church in times and places in *missio Dei*.

Bosch quotes Moltman's fleshing out of this concept stating:

It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.¹⁷⁸

Moltman takes this further in the original work, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, arguing that it is the Spirit which administers the church and not the other way round.¹⁷⁹ These Trinitarian¹⁸⁰ theological concepts place the origin of activity with God and not humanity, but that is not to deny that this is a two-way process.¹⁸¹

Markham considers divine action at the quantum level and the seven contemporary models of divine action, offered by Wilkinson's¹⁸² critique of: Bultmann, Wiles, Barbour, Pinnock, Jantzen, Polkinghorne and Farrer.¹⁸³ Murphy's attempts to provide a theologically adequate view built on the theory of God's activity stemming from the quantum level with parameters from science being preserved.¹⁸⁴ Murphy argues:

This account allows the representation of God's sustenance, governance, and cooperation in such a way that we can make sense of revelation, petitionary prayer, human responsibility, and of extraordinary acts such as resurrection, without at the same time blowing the problem of evil up to unmanageable proportions.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁸ Bosch, 1991 p.390

¹⁷⁹ Moltmann, 1977 p.64

¹⁸⁰ Newbigin, 1995 pp.19-29

¹⁸¹ Wright, 2006 pp.46-7

¹⁸² Marsh, 2004; Wilkinson pp.143-7

¹⁸³ Markham, 2007 pp.174-6

¹⁸⁴ Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke, 1997 pp.325-58; Markham, 2007 pp.178-81

¹⁸⁵ Russell, Murphy, and Peacocke, 1997 p.333

The work presented by Wells in *Face to Face*, although anecdotal, emphasises the recognition of an experience with God as a profound and life changing occurrence and to be taken seriously.¹⁸⁶ Equally, Voysey observes the very different ways people encounter God. Voysey illustrates his point of diverse means, from modern missionaries discovering a call to Vietnam, to the revered saints of Cuthbert and Aidan. The pragmatic and the spiritually dramatic are considered equally valid.¹⁸⁷

By the very nature and action of Co-operant Grace it is feasible to postulate that each of the conduits mentioned fall under the influence and dynamic of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God might each, and all, play some respective part in bringing a person to a place, point, or realisation that they have changed with respect to faith in Christ. How realised the work of the Holy Spirit is at that moment, might be varied and subjective. Nonetheless, its validity is observable in the lifestyle changes an individual makes.

1.5. Current Practice since the 1940's

The following section seeks to examine the practice of evangelism in the context of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, observing any pedagogical developments. Stanley Hauerwas said in *After Christendom*:

Questions of truth or falsity of Christian convictions cannot even be addressed until Christians recover the church as a political community necessary for salvation. What Christians believe about the universe, the nature of human existence, or

¹⁸⁶ Wells, 2019

¹⁸⁷ Voysey, 2019

even God does not, cannot and should not save. Our beliefs, or better our convictions, only make sense as they are embodied in a political community we call church... For Christians, without the church there is no possibility of salvation and even less of morality and politics.¹⁸⁸

Context is everything and it is no different when it comes to understanding Hauerwas' statement above. Most statements that say demonstrative things such as 'without the church there is no possibility of salvation'¹⁸⁹ belie themselves if not interpreted and understood in their historical context. For Hauerwas this popular refrain was actually a countercultural phrase, penned in the context of rising individualism, shaped by consumerism, and situated within a technological and media environment that facilitated personal TV evangelism in isolation from community.

Although this section largely considers the British context, it is mindful of other influences that began elsewhere but have crossed oceans. What are the significant projects, practices, or writings of the last four decades that offer substance to the progression of this thesis, in its understanding of how people journey to faith? As a backdrop, it is relevant to note the contextual effects of post-World War II, which are summarised as: 1950's post war economic boom, the 1960's era of civil rights and social liberation, the 1970's strikes and discontent, the 1980's surge for personal capital and gain, the 1990's rise of the internet and globalisation, and since the mid-2000's, the vast rise in social media.

In *After McDonaldization*, John Drane draws on an extensive supply of variables to underpin the argument of lifestyle change for the Western individual. The rise in individualism, consumerism, affluence, and other

¹⁸⁸ Hauerwas, 1991 p.26

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. p.26

choices of religion, coupled with the philosophy of a bankrupt Western world-view of modernity, have created the sort of openness to explore other holistic views of life.¹⁹⁰ Even the substructure of society of knowing one's place, handed down through the Enlightenment, but found conceptually from ancient times through Greek Philosophy and Roman pragmatism, is long since gone.¹⁹¹ Post-modernism is a socio-cultural force rather than a systematic, philosophical system.¹⁹²

In evaluating the following recent historical activities of the church to respond evangelistically, recurring questions surface. Was this a reactive or a proactive measure of the church? What were the facets and failings and was it a "word" and/or "deed" in season and only relevant for that time?

John Mark Terry's summation of Billy Graham's mass evangelism strategy across the 1950's and 1980's offers four insights worth noting.¹⁹³ Firstly, the call to make a 'personal decision for Christ' appealed to a culture in which individualism was steadily emerging. Secondly, pragmatism is a powerful force. Many local ministers differed theologically from Graham, but because these large events produced results, they supported them. Thirdly, this sort of revivalism prompted a religion of the heart, particularly appealing to the American pietistic tradition but also relevant in Britain. Fourthly, particularly in the 1950's but not irrelevant in the 1980's, this was an appealing, good show, and it was free. With the rise of television this sort of meeting declined.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Drane, 2008 p.7

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p.8

¹⁹² Percy, 2005 p.6

¹⁹³ Terry, 1994 pp.165-71

¹⁹⁴ Quebedeaux, 1979 pp.82-3

Mass evangelism in this gathered event form did, at the time, present the Gospel to significantly large numbers of people and created high visibility. Research carried out for *The Sociological Quarterly* in 1975 by Wimberley, however, demonstrated that most people (91%) attending were already attending a church.¹⁹⁵ Therefore, the claim that this form of Gospel presentation was reaching vast swathes of those no longer engaged with the institutional church is unfounded. Nevertheless, as a method to galvanise the beliefs of those twenty years of age and under and currently attending a church, it can be judged to be an effective form of evangelism with seventy-three percent responding to the call for commitment to Christ.¹⁹⁶

This evidence suggests that the decisions made are not the result of a spontaneous event, but the triggering or catalytic moment of a slower more gradual process. However, it should be noted that without that moment of invitation, how would such a trigger otherwise occur? It is even more significant when coupled with the fact that local ministers of differing theological opinions used the “crusade” because it appeared to be a successful way to draw in individuals. Local initiatives, however, never achieved the same numbers and were not as successful.

The missiologist James Engel worked for Billy Graham and sought to describe the process by which people come to a place when or where they may accept a challenge to follow Christ. When Engel introduced his Scale¹⁹⁷ to Christian thinking, it brought a significant change in the way Christians approached evangelism, both in pedagogical learning and

¹⁹⁵ Wimberley et al., 1975 pp.162-70,

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., pp.165-6

¹⁹⁷ Appendix III p.290, Engel and Norton, 1975 p.45

practice.¹⁹⁸ Much greater detail was paid to each step of the scale in the hope to improve the methods of evangelism being encourage or practiced inside church and outside in the public square.¹⁹⁹

John Finney's *Finding Faith Today*, despite being published in 1992. is the most recent in-depth, large-scale empirical examination of how people in Britain were responding to the Gospel.²⁰⁰ This canvassed over a thousand churches of diverse traditions producing five hundred and eleven participants who were over sixteen years of age and who had made a recent public profession of faith in the previous twelve months (between March 1990 and March 1991).²⁰¹ This fixed metric of public profession of faith in that year was determined as the most appropriate standardisation for the selection of participants. Bearing in mind the first two main criteria for the research as listed below, confirmation or reception into church membership and even baptism, though public professions of faith, are not always the consequence of conversion.²⁰²

- a) to examine the spiritual journeys by which people are finding faith in God through Christ at present.
- b) to draw conclusions from this research on the comparative merits of different evangelistic methods.²⁰³

The report's own exploration into 'What is a Christian?' demonstrates this metric's vulnerability in addressing the core research questions of a small number of respondents. Rites of initiation into a church community are significant and understandably conversion has subtly become entwined with

¹⁹⁸ Hunter, 1992 p.84

¹⁹⁹ Ward, 2017b pp.110-24

²⁰⁰ Finney, 1992

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp.ix, 1-5, 6

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p.21

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.112

church membership, necessitating its control by various institutional hierarchies. However, Riddell notes,

Membership and boundaries are legitimate institutional concerns. All corporate legal identities have means of identifying their members. But the Kingdom of God is not an institution.²⁰⁴

Acknowledging this, the report's main inferences to criteria (a) were that the dynamics of personal relationship had greater influence than activities, events, or dogma.²⁰⁵ The process was gradual for most people (69%) with only a third saying it was a dateable event.²⁰⁶ Religious observances marked the increase in commitment while the participants' self-analysis and observation of what others close to them had said noted substantial behavioural changes for the better.²⁰⁷ The report notes that almost half of the participants had 'out of the way experiences' that they would describe as religious. Though these religious experiences may be highly subjective, possible to fabrication, and may even invite disbelief, Finney recognises that in the vast majority of cases their whole narratives hold authenticity, bearing no evidence of fabrication.²⁰⁸

Overall, the impact of this report substantiated the methods of *lifestyle evangelism* or *friendship evangelism*. This method had been advocated in the 1980's by Joseph Aldrich who had long since proposed that eighty per cent of all new followers of Christ become a Christian because of a friend or relative.²⁰⁹ It is worth noting that this research, in particular,

²⁰⁴ Riddell, 1998 p.149

²⁰⁵ Finney, 1992 pp.36-47

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.24

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.73-92

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.93-9

²⁰⁹ Terry, 1994 p.194

highlights the conduits of Belonging and Behaviour through the close relationships encountered.

The more recent research into those finding faith in the United Kingdom (UK) includes the *Talking Jesus* research done in 2015,²¹⁰ the *Tearfund* research from 2007 about churchgoing in the UK,²¹¹ and the information coming from the *Faith Survey* website done by the Brierley Consultancy covering a range of methods and data sets.²¹² The *Talking Jesus* data is utilised in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis.

A further piece of evidence is drawn from the work of Agnes Liu.²¹³ Liu's research begins with the premise that Christianity in Hong Kong is a middle-class movement, with the working classes being essentially unreachable. Dr. Liu did extensive research of working-class Chinese people in Hong Kong, including working as a seamstress in a factory to learn their culture, dialect, vocabulary, values, needs, heroes, and heroines. This unearthed a context of monotony, futility, alienation, and work-induced sickness experienced by this people group. Liu started lay-led 'factory fellowships' that met on the premises and as the factory workers became Christians this provided narrative information, gathered, and assessed by Liu and her team, to form the construct for her triangular model of *Attitudes, Experiences* and *Theological Knowledge* of how Chinese secular, working class people become Christians. Note the conduits at work of Behavioural

²¹⁰ Barna Group on behalf of the Church of England, 2018

²¹¹ Ashworth and Farthing, 2007

²¹² Brierley, 2020

²¹³ Hunter, 1992 pp.83-5

Attitudes, Experience, and Belief in the form of transfer of Theological Knowledge.

According to Hunter, ‘this model diverted from the conventional evangelical wisdom summarised in the Engel Scale.’²¹⁴ Liu’s data brought the reluctant conclusion that the essence of conversion for this group was not the transfer of theological beliefs but relational engagement.²¹⁵

Their process began with attitude changes that opened the journey for Christian faith to be found. Initially, it was the Christian people they met and began to like²¹⁶ that led to engagement in the fellowship services, which in turn provided opportunities to begin ‘liking Jesus.’ Personal religious ‘experiences’ enter somewhere in the midst of the process of change in attitude, which in turn opened the receptiveness to Scripture and theological knowledge that had previously been disregarded.

Hunter documents the growth of the church in Hong Kong through this contextual model of evangelism forming church in the workplace.²¹⁷ These new communities of faith serve to illustrate the relevance of contextual missional practice that engages with a cultural context in a unique and previously untried way.

Furthermore, key to this thesis is a clear example of the four conduits interacting, demonstrating helpfully the interplay of Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God. Liu’s work demonstrates ‘Belonging’ as a significant depth of relationship to get to know someone

²¹⁴ Ibid., p.84

²¹⁵ Note the conduit of Belonging.

²¹⁶ This is a key piece of learning to observe as part of the conduit of Belonging.

²¹⁷ Hunter, 1992 p.85

and to be liked by them, which then opened the way for Behaviour to change.²¹⁸ Experiences formed part of this narrative, which eventually provided a platform on which Belief could be encountered. It would be errant to reduce this to some form of order to be repeated, but Liu's research is a pedagogy of evangelism to learn from.

In *Brand New Church*,²¹⁹ Graeme Fancourt, quoting Mary Gray-Reeves and Michael Perham,²²⁰ advocates the traditional linear path of a journey in discipleship that begins with Belonging, looks for Behaving, and then acknowledges Believing. This was once delineated clearly in traditional church from baptism, confirmation, sacrament, until funeral. However, because of cultural shift, it is now no longer prevalent. Fancourt argues that emerging churches are seeing a more muddled progression of this formula rather than the linear one as described above. However, this is also realised in present forms of traditional churches.²²¹ This evidences that such views of sequential progressions in faith exist, and that there is now a recognised blurring of theological and missiological thought about such orders of linearity, raising the question, 'What is the relevance of a sequential order in contextual, contemporary times?'

Fancourt states, 'Anglican priests and Methodist Ministers did not respond to God's call to manage a church in its final years of decline,'²²² yet this is what is exactly what has happened. Fancourt fails to pay due attention

²¹⁸ Ibid. p.85

²¹⁹ Fancourt, 2013 p.37

²²⁰ Gray-Reeves and Perham, 2011 pp.69-70, 72,75,78

²²¹ Ibid., pp.136-7

²²² Fancourt, 2013 p.127

to the increasing irrelevance of more established patterns of worship, and style of church practice, to contemporary culture.

From his argument of the church in dialogue, Fancourt should be a big fan of fresh expressions but his expressed ecclesiology seems to rest more in ecclesial buildings and the traditional higher sacramental forms of worship.²²³ Although such worship has seen a small rise in attendance, which is mainly transfer growth noted in *Anecdote to Evidence*, he fails to perceive this is still a form of church in conflict with contemporary culture. If it were not, would not such services and places be full and overflowing?²²⁴

Although there is merit in his theory, in practice Fancourt has drifted into the same romantic view of the traditional radical orthodoxy of Davison and Milbank, which is in essence the theological framework of the church in conflict with consumerist post-modern culture. The classic tension of “in the world but not of it” alongside a love for it ‘for God so loved the world...’ has to be worked out in frailty and vulnerability being part of it and not separate from it. Fresh expressions of church are not a new layer of bureaucracy but the church in dialogue with many cultures of the day, learning how to negotiate the gospel proclamation in a relevant way in a postmodern western world.

Hollinghurst charts the rise within the last decade of new spiritualities, especially in popular Western culture but notes that this is at the expense of institutional Christianity as it is not a disinterest in Jesus.²²⁵

²²³ Ibid., pp.128-9

²²⁴ The Church of England, 2014

²²⁵ Hollinghurst, 2010 pp.41-63

This is supported from the empirical research by David Hay on the nature of religious or spiritual experience and used by Yvonne Richmond in her further research in *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age*.²²⁶ Though Richmond's empirical sample size is relatively small and should be weighed accordingly, the accumulative evidence is persuasive in investigating the theology of "Experience of God." Drane builds on this argument.

Theology, Drane claims, needs rehabilitation 'if the Christian voice is to be heard as anything other than an outmoded hangover from the past that knows the answers to all the questions that nobody is actually asking.'²²⁷ Drane builds his argument from the etymology of theology and sees its use holding 'relational enterprise' that begins and ends with Jesus.²²⁸ For Drane, this 'relational enterprise' holds the currency to unpack the term 'practical theology' coined by Schleiermacher.²²⁹ Drane argues that the rehabilitation of theology must include a person's 'life experience' and the 'passions' that drive them, proclaiming that theology can no longer begin from just the cognitive realm, which has been the inherited paradigm of what he calls 'my reading' and 'my tradition.'²³⁰

Drane makes the claim that inherited paradigms of theology are not only incapable of addressing the decline of church attendance in the West, but they have actually contributed to it by alienating large sections of the

²²⁶ Hay, 2006 p.11; Croft, 2005 pp.11-13

²²⁷ Morgan, 2008 accessed, 5 November 2012

²²⁸ Drane, 2008 pp.120-1

²²⁹ Ibid., pp.118-27

²³⁰ Ibid., pp.129-31

population from the life of the church.²³¹ These are important questions and they are not new as they mirror what Howard Snyder wrote in 1975:

How can one get to Christ if not through the church? How can the church present Jesus without itself getting in the way?²³²

Snyder's observation recognises that the institutional church too often represents something radically different from the Jesus Christ of the Bible.

The works of Newbigin, Hauerwas and Willimon, and Arbuckle (from a Catholic perspective) all consider a practical theology that engages contemporary culture and challenges the existing forms of ecclesiology and their respective missional practices.²³³ More recently, the scholarly work of Moynagh, or the contemporary writings of Chalke, McLaren or Bell, all carry this discussion forward seeking practical theological inference for today's Christian in their discipleship and mission.²³⁴ Furthermore, if you accept Bevans and Schroder's types of Theology, one can trace practical, holistic theology all the way back to Antioch, with a stream or trajectory that encompasses Irenaeus, Francis of Assisi, Luther, Wesley, Barth, Teilhard de Chardin, and finally Gutierrez, as referred to by Drane.²³⁵

Hay's biological work exploring the physiological basis for transcendent experience,²³⁶ studying the recent developments and advancement in neurophysiology of the brain and investigating if spiritual awareness is inherited.²³⁷ Quoting Newberg et al. and Kirk et al.'s respective

²³¹ Ibid., p.127

²³² Snyder, 1975 p.15

²³³ Newbigin, 1954; Newbigin, 1989; Hauerwas and Willimon, 1989; Arbuckle, 1996

²³⁴ Moynagh and Harrold, 2012; Chalke and Watkis, 2006; McLaren, 2002; Bell, 2006

²³⁵ Bevans and Schroeder, 2004 p.37

²³⁶ Hay, 2006

²³⁷ Hay, 2007 pp.77-86,

research, Hay's principle objective is to apply biological scientific investigation to human spirituality in which experience is central.²³⁸ Hay writes:

Critics of religion say we are born little atheists and in the process of being socialised we acquire a set of religious beliefs. I say the evidence points almost in exactly the opposite direction.²³⁹

Abby Day's research through social anthropology into 'Believing in Belonging' reframes religious belief in a seven-part heuristic (content, sources, practice, salience, function, place, and time) arising from inductive empirical research conducted initially in the UK and then expanded for cross-cultural comparisons.²⁴⁰ This work ostensibly lays the foundation for exploring the question "Is anyone in the British context 'not' de-churched, to some degree?" Day sees 'nominalism' as far from an empty category but loaded with cultural meaning towards Christianity in the European and American contexts.²⁴¹ Although tracking a different subject of work, the respective research by Jameson and Richter and Francis also offer relevant insights for constructing this thesis' research, particularly with regard to understanding Christian faith held and practiced beyond the church.²⁴²

Steve Aisthorpe's very recent research investigating Christian practice by those who call themselves Christian but do not currently attend church in the Scottish Highlands used the recognised work of Hoge as a

²³⁸ Newberg, D'Aquili, and Rause, 2001; Newberg and Waldman, 2007; Kirk, Eaves, and Martin, 1999 pp.81-7

²³⁹ Hay, 2007 p.41

²⁴⁰ Day, 2011

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.192

²⁴² Jamieson, 2002; Richter and Francis, 1998

standard for an Intrinsic Religiosity Scale.²⁴³ Koenig reviewed numerous tools for measuring religiosity but said of the Hoge Intrinsic Religiosity Scale:

This is by far the most accurate measure of what I think is at the heart of religious devotion – relationship with and commitment to God, the object of ultimate concern.²⁴⁴

In the light of the above it makes relevant the purpose of exploring ecclesiology and such questions as, ‘What is the church and how do you join it?’²⁴⁵ These two integrated missional questions are discussed in Chapter 6, principally considering Hiebert’s work on the church as a Centred Set.²⁴⁶ However, the contributing works of Volf, *After Our Likeness*,²⁴⁷ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*,²⁴⁸ Morris, *Flexible Church*,²⁴⁹ Watkins, *Disclosing Church*²⁵⁰ and Byassee, *Trinity and Discerning the Body*,²⁵¹ all bring a lens of interrogation to these two questions. Similarly, Taylor’s work on what and how someone is influenced in *A Secular Age*²⁵² also provides an interesting perspective about the ‘porous’ and ‘buffered or bounded’ self. It also holds an interesting perspective as to what and how someone is influenced, in his work *A Secular Age*.²⁵³

²⁴³ Hoge, 1972; Aisthorpe, 2014 p.6

²⁴⁴ Koenig, 2011 p.229

²⁴⁵ Ferguson, 2003; Jackson, 2005; Stone, 2012

²⁴⁶ Hiebert, 1983; Hiebert, 1994

²⁴⁷ Volf, 1998

²⁴⁸ Moltmann, 1993

²⁴⁹ Morris, 2019

²⁵⁰ Watkins, 2020

²⁵¹ Byassee, 2015; Byassee and Marty, 2013

²⁵² Taylor, 2007

²⁵³ Ibid.

A significant part of this question will explore what and when is the recognition made that someone a Christian or follower of Jesus. This is both an individual and corporate question that negotiates between ecclesiology and personal expression of faith. Entwined within this and related to Abby Day's work noted above is the historic context of ecclesiology in England discussed in Nigel Rooms' research about faith in an English context.²⁵⁴

This thesis will consider the faith backgrounds of those people who engage with fresh expressions of church and what underpins their previous understandings about Jesus and/or Christianity. It should be noted that one disparity that stands out is the church growth in London. From Brierley's research, a reversal of decline in some mainline denominations seems to be bucking the national trends across the rest of Great Britain.²⁵⁵

This chapter has sought to expose the most relevant literature in observing change, its conduits, and contexts, with respect to coming to faith in Jesus Christ. The respective scholarly material examining: New Testament Biblical material, current theological and missiological studies on and of conversion, illustrated by the insights from recent Christian practice and culture in the West, all form a volume of established, deductive material and information, on which this thesis builds.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Rooms, 2011

²⁵⁵ Brierley, 2013

²⁵⁶ Harding, 2013 pp.12-13

Chapter 2

Methodology

Ostensibly this chapter and the preceding chapter could be reversed, but in placing the methodology chapter after the groundwork of material that already exists on Biblical material, Christian Practice, current missiological, and theological studies on conversion of coming to faith in Jesus Christ, it illustrates aptly Rowan Williams' point that the theologian always starts 'in the middle of things.'²⁵⁷ Ward's inference in quoting Williams states that,

Being in the middle means there is no defined starting point or clear methodology for theology. We are simply where we are.

Graham describes this ongoing process of reflection, research discovery, and analysis, and once again enactment, as

a distinctive methodology, which describes and systematises the movement from practice to theory to practice²⁵⁸

It is this movement from practice, to theory, to practice that has sparked the origins of this thesis and centres such research within the discipline of Practical Theology. Observing how and why people have come to faith, over my thirty years in ministry, and reflecting on the practice and place of evangelism within the Christian community, has been both my work as a presbyter and passion as a disciple of Christ. As a presbyter, this encompasses local ministry in Gateshead, UK, regional work as Evangelism Enabler, and national work as the Fresh Expressions Missioner. As a disciple of Christ, this encompasses over twenty years of experience on

²⁵⁷ Williams, 2000 p.xii, Ward, 2017a p.10,

²⁵⁸ Graham, Walton, and Ward, 2005 p.188

mission teams as a participant, mainly through the organisations of Share Jesus and Cliff College.

In 2011, while serving as the Methodist and Archbishops' ²⁵⁹ Connexional Missioner for Fresh Expressions, I was given the opportunity to extend this curiosity under the lens of the academy. This research seeks to animate one more cycle of the methodology of Practical Theology through a qualitative piece of research with the specific focus on a small number of people within the context of Methodist fresh expressions of church.

Therefore, this chapter considers the methodology and methods ²⁶⁰ utilised, forged from discipline of Practical Theology. This chapter also seeks to investigate four questions: What is happening (Experience)? Why is it happening (Analysis)? What does this mean (Reflection)? How shall we respond (Action)? ²⁶¹ Much of the literature in the previous chapter was predicated upon these very questions. People have been coming to faith in Jesus Christ for millennia and as Graham advocates,

Each new reality or problem is calling people of faith to reinterpret the Word of God anew, but that theology in the form of received tradition (doctrine, Bible, Church traditions) needs to be reinterpreted in the light of contemporary faith... thus the hermeneutical circle actually embodies the method of theological reflection at the heart of theology as praxis. ²⁶²

It is precisely the praxis of these new communities called fresh expressions of church which becomes of interest, set in the wider context of

²⁵⁹ This was a joint appointment with Bishop Graham Cray (Team Leader) officially recognised and documented by both Archbishops, ++Rowan and ++John, with an induction service at Lambeth Palace. Both our respective positions were to be recognised in the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain.

²⁶⁰ Methodology formally relates to the study of methods and more broadly relates to the overall approach of a particular field. Methods are the specific techniques used in data collection; Swinton and Mowat, 2016 pp.80-81

²⁶¹ Swinton and Mowat, 2016 pp.83-106; Osmer, 2008 pp.4-5; Graham, Walton, and Ward, 2005 p.188

²⁶² Graham, Walton, and Ward, 2005 p.188

the mainline denominational churches not experiencing such numbers of people find faith in Christ, even though they are in similar contexts.

2.1. Practical Theology

Miller-McLemore identifies four distinct but interconnected uses of the term practical theology, which are not mutually exclusive:

- a) an academic discipline among scholars,
- b) an activity of faith undertaken by believers,
- c) a method for thinking,
- d) a subject area in a curriculum.²⁶³

Ward argues that for all the different shapes and forms of practical theology it is not an end in itself but it is always operating in relation to the ongoing life of the Christian community.²⁶⁴

Browning states, ‘Practical theology is about asking questions in order to come to a concrete practical and theological conclusion.’²⁶⁵ Graham et al. advocate that ‘Theology has always been contextual and is best understood as possessing a practical function: to nurture, to inform identity, to communicate.’²⁶⁶ Though ‘concrete’ has an unhelpful metric to it, it does avoid its antonym of something vague and unformed. However, as Swinton and Mowat and Ward and Watkins all observe, practical theology is not without complexity²⁶⁷ or its critics.²⁶⁸

²⁶³ Miller-McLemore, 2011 p.5

²⁶⁴ Ward, 2017a p.11

²⁶⁵ Browning, 1991 pp.56-7

²⁶⁶ Graham, Walton, and Ward, 2005 p.10

²⁶⁷ Swinton and Mowat, 2016 pp.16-37; Ward, 2017a pp.65-66; Watkins, 2020 pp.ix, 5

²⁶⁸ Note Cahalan and Nieman argue practical theology in not one stage but theological throughout. Cahalan and Nieman, 2008 pp.62-85; Ward, 2017a pp101-2. Watkins sites practical theology is fundamentally action research, which is critiqued by Graham. Watkins, 2020 pp.27, 36. Also note Root’s criticism of Practical Theology’s failure, particularly in America, to talk of divine action. Root, 2014; Ward, 2017a pp.44-46

Swinton and Mowat advocate that practical theology takes human experience as its starting point, as distinct from other theological disciplines.²⁶⁹ This is not to suggest that taking such experience seriously is to then imply that these encounters are the same as the source of Divine revelation.²⁷⁰ However, this does not deny that human experience is an important locus for the work of the Holy Spirit²⁷¹ as advocated by Root.²⁷²

Many fresh expressions of church have detailed such encounters and have begun to buck the trend of decline and show growth in the number of those being nurtured in the Christian way. This work seeks to examine why that is. The dynamics of community are significant and may be a contributing factor requiring examination, if only to offer a rich description of the context for the rest of this research. However, as explored in Chapters 3 and 4, this research places the focus of investigation on the individual participants and seeks to understand what sparked their engagement with the Christian faith. Although a qualification of these new communities of Christian faith (fresh expressions of church) has now been documented by Lings, no work akin to *Finding Faith Today* by Finney has been trialed in this context.²⁷³ Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by forging a pilot scheme investigating personal narrative around coming to faith in fresh expressions of church.

Judith Bell does not express this discipline in the same language as Graham but from her perspective, refers to a tool called ‘Narrative

²⁶⁹ Swinton and Mowat, 2016 pp.18-19

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p.18

²⁷¹ 1 Corinthians 6:19

²⁷² Root, 2014 pp.90-93; Ward, 2017a p.45

²⁷³ Lings, 2014

Inquiry.²⁷⁴ Bell draws on Janette Gray's justification of Narrative Inquiry and explains it is most appropriate where the researcher is interested in portraying intensely personal accounts of human experience.²⁷⁵ As evidenced in Chapter 1, the wealth of literature clearly demonstrates that coming to faith in Christ is not just a cognitive rationale but a sociological, behavioural, and relational experience.²⁷⁶ Therefore the induction and nurture of a person into the life of faith in Christ is a complex and deep engagement of the human psyche and worthy of a form of narrative inquiry. Although the language of narrative inquiry is different, it is Bell's justification from social science research that such methods are acceptable in revealing the data required.²⁷⁷

Graham argues the strength of this method is that it allows someone alien to the cultural background of the narrative to gain insight into the motives, actions, and values of those within the story. The strength or weakness of this method depends on the perspective, interpretation, and authenticity of the author as they tell the story, presenting its beginning, middle, and end.

Graham lists seven methods through which theological reflection can be accomplished, recognising that no one method is a perfect model.²⁷⁸ Nevertheless, one model has emerged as more useful than the others for this research in its relevance, that of 'Theology-in-Action': Praxis. Graham describes this method as '*performative knowledge*,' that is, a way of

²⁷⁴ Bell, 1999 p.16

²⁷⁵ Gray, 1998; Swinton and Mowat, 2016 pp.83-84

²⁷⁶ Note particularly the dialogue with Markham and the conduits of conversion, pp.35-48

²⁷⁷ Bell, 1999 p.16

²⁷⁸ Graham, Walton, and Ward, 2005 pp.13-14

knowing that is inseparable from doing and has as its starting point, not abstract speculation on timeless truths, but consideration of the obligations of communities of faith in relation to their local context.²⁷⁹

Graham provides historical examples of liberation theology, noting the Quakers and Søren Kierkegaard who both demonstrated such praxis, denoting the centrality of value-committed action. In essence, the work of fresh expressions of church are the value-committed actions of '*missio Dei*' in aiding people to find faith in Christ.

My research seeks to examine the context of a small number of Methodist fresh expressions of church bucking the trend of decline and to discover the impetus and/or motivating reasons for faith in Jesus Christ behind such people connecting with these new forms of church. This is the 'nagging issue' Ward refers to and which inspires my critical question, 'Why is this happening?'²⁸⁰

This review of methods of Practical Theology highlights the points I seek to explore and which will shape the latter part of the chapter, as well as dictate the form and the structure of this thesis. The four principle questions of practical theology noted above will form a modified model of the pastoral cycle.²⁸¹ It is a modified model in that no stage of this thesis is disconnected from theology or Christian practice. In addition, it should be noted that this model is not beginning with a problem but a positive observation. Ward's point on 'beginning where you are' takes seriously the theological and missiological material evidenced in Chapter 1. As Swinton and Mowat

²⁷⁹ Graham, Walton, and Ward, 2005 pp.170-199

²⁸⁰ Ward, 2017a

²⁸¹ Ward, 2017a pp.98-9; Osmer, 2008; Graham, Walton, and Ward, 2005 pp.188-9

observe, Practical Theology uses as its starting point the participants' experiences. Discovering this data through some form of narrative enquiry will require careful pastoral planning. Once this stage of the research is accomplished the data that arises from participants' narratives of coming to faith will seek to discover the 'performative knowledge,' as expressed by Graham. This performative knowledge, in Chapters 4 and 5 requires analysis and then further theological reflection which is presented in Chapter 6. Lastly, the concluding chapter of the thesis considers further learning and forms action towards a pedagogy of evangelism and how this might be achieved, thus completing the cyclic hermeneutic of Practical Theology.

The rest of this chapter now details the rationale and hypothesis, relating to how this focus of research was decided upon and considers the methods chosen to best understand the data. Much research has been undertaken in an effort to understand the phenomena known as fresh expressions of church, as recorded in the literature review examined in Chapter 1, but so far there has been no research into the stories of those joining these new forms of church.²⁸²

The period of research took place from 2014 to 2017, but it also takes a wider view, relating the participants' own lives and narratives from 2005 to 2017.

²⁸² 'What is a *fresh expression*', <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/about/whatis> accessed, 10 April, 2017

2.2. Rationale and Hypothesis

As Billings observed, regular attendance of an ecclesial community does not necessarily equate to the participant's belief in Christ.²⁸³ Therefore, this research has to move past regular attendance as a metric and has to discover more significant aspects of change in the individual.

Research into fresh expressions of church has grown since the Archbishops and the Methodist Church Initiative took hold across denominations both within and beyond Britain. However, at the time this research was commencing, there had not been any investigation into why and how people respond to the Gospel and come to faith in these new environments.

As detailed in the introduction, my lived experiences as both a practitioner (Mind the Gap) and as a leader in this area (Methodist Connexional Missioner and District Evangelism Enabler) increasingly turned the speculative hunch of a practitioner working in a new scenario (Mind the Gap), to the substantive question that has now grown into the basis of this research. The theory proposed is that there are a variety of conduits through which people first connect with Jesus Christ. My experiences gained with fresh expressions of church, Mind the Gap, and as Newcastle's District Evangelism Enabler, suggested it was not belief alone that inspired Christian faith in a person. There also seemed to be other factors at work such as some capacity and dynamic of belonging with other Christians, the attributes or values espoused in behaviour (whether corporate

²⁸³ Billings, 2013 p.60-62

or individual), and finally the conduit of personal experience, whether physical or spiritual that all led to faith in Christ.

The four conduits of Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God shape part of the informal research into the narrative enquiry of people's journeys to faith in Jesus and takes place over several years prior to the beginning of this thesis. This informal research was part of a training exercise in workshops and seminars,²⁸⁴ designed to help build an understanding of apt contextual evangelism. It soon became clear, however, that the information gathered from the training workshops was pointing towards a mounting need to further investigate people's journeys to faith. It is this early, informal exploration that underpins this thesis and that this research seeks to undertake under the scrutiny of the academy as a piece of doctoral research in Theology and Ministry.²⁸⁵

The principle questions this thesis seeks to ask is: How, in a general trend of decline of attendance in the Anglican and Methodist denominations in Britain,²⁸⁶ are people coming to faith in these new expressions of church? What are the reasons behind this new growth? The working hypothesis is that these new forms of church are offering diverse conduits for gospel

²⁸⁴ During my time as Evangelism Enabler, these workshops sought to help people understand their own journey to faith and how they connected with faith in Jesus. The anecdotal results over many sessions demonstrated the majority connected through 'Belonging,' a quarter of participants chose Experience, the same proportion Belief and roughly one in ten chose Behaviour. Some people found it difficult to identify just one conduit, choosing multiple conduits working in tandem.

²⁸⁵ While Connexion Missioner, this workshop became part of the Mission Shaped Ministry Course, Unit B10 Personal Evangelism and produced hundreds of observed but unrecorded pieces of anecdotal evidence endorsing peoples' self-recognition of these four conduits playing an identified dynamic in their journey to faith in Jesus Christ. Appendix IX pp.328-330, The Diocese of York,

²⁸⁶ Atkins, 2013 para.13; Mission, 2013 pp.7, 32; Church of England, 2014 para.3

engagement, through which apt and relevant forms of evangelism and discipleship are being practised.

This exercise will seek to unpack both the right form of metrics and methods for this work to provide a worthy foundation on which to explore this piece of work. Graham, Walton and Ward's *Theological Reflection: Methods*, (SCM, 2005) offers constructive tools, allowing the appropriate focus on the theological and missiological voices not being drowned out by the practical or evidential.²⁸⁷

In refining the subject area, I am particularly concerned with finding those people who have had very little or no recognisable contact with established forms of church. This filtering process will also seek to qualify what religious or spiritual²⁸⁸ influence might also be relevant prior to attending the fresh expression of church by using the recognised work of Hoge.²⁸⁹

Harding describes uncovering previously unknown data as 'inductive research' and its merits applied to this research confirm this method as the most suitable option for this type of research.²⁹⁰ At the point of beginning this research, very little was known as to why fresh expressions of church seemed to be bucking the trend of decline in the two mainline churches. Therefore, research that sought to uncover data that

²⁸⁷ Graham, Walton, and Ward, 2005

²⁸⁸ Morris, 2019 pp.198-9. The terms 'religious' and 'spiritual' used to be synonymous, however they now represent different but inseparable aspects of believers' relationships with God.

²⁸⁹ Hoge, 1972; Aisthorpe, 2014 p.6

²⁹⁰ Harding, 2013 pp.13-15

considers the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ further confirms the suitability of an inductive approach to the field of study.

Though this gathering of data may look like Glaser and Strauss’ grounded theory method,²⁹¹ the intrinsic knowledge detailed below illustrates Harding’s point of a ‘middle range’ theory being relevant which sits ‘somewhere between grand theory and a working hypothesis.’²⁹²

It is important to recognise that the focus of this work should not be a case study contrasting different forms of church or denominations or different forms of fresh expressions of church. That work has already been examined by Lings and others at the Sheffield Centre.²⁹³

Furthermore, this was not principally intended to be a hard deductive method testing a clearly developed grounded theory of how people come to faith. Although some ethnography is present in this work, it is there to build a rich description of the context of one of the fresh expressions of church. It is there to add a descriptive background to the main data, but it is not the foundation of the research.

Therefore, the task is to construct some form a narrative enquiry that explores the working hypothesis and exposes the raw data. This qualitative enquiry holds in tension a) my previous experience, b) the literature examining the role of the conduits of Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God, and c) seeks to uncover new data from new Christians in fresh expressions of church without prejudicing their experience.

The theological and ministerial justification of the research is, to

²⁹¹ Glaser B. G and Strauss A. L, 1967 p.vii

²⁹² Harding, 2013 p.13; Harding, 2006 pp.131-132

²⁹³ Lings, 2016

echo the words of Ephesians 4.12, ‘to equip the saints...for building up the body of Christ.’²⁹⁴ In the present context of the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain, the area of ministry known as fresh expressions of church is still conceptually new and producing results that are having significant impact.²⁹⁵

Therefore, research into fresh expressions of church is justifiable given the broader context of the very gloomy reality of statistical decline in both churches.²⁹⁶ Furthermore, such investigations are a fundamental part of the Methodist Church’s bloodstream since the 2014 Methodist Conference endorsed the reclaiming of evangelism as a crucial part of God’s mission, emphasising it as ‘the main thing’!²⁹⁷ This took on a more developed shape at the 2018 Conference via the discussion paper ‘Reaffirming Our Calling: the future call of the Methodist Church.’²⁹⁸ This conference paper detailed a range of work to be established, not least the appointment of a new Evangelism and Growth Team. The 2020 Conference endorsed a strategy of multi-million-pound investment across the Methodist Church to reach new people in new places (NPNP) and create more churches at the margins of society.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ Ephesians 4.12, NRSV

²⁹⁵ Lings, 2014 p.32

²⁹⁶ Piggot, 2014, Atkins, 2014 p.266; Lings, 2014 pp.31-32

²⁹⁷ Atkins, 2014 pp.266-68

²⁹⁸ Methodist Church of Great Britain, accessed, 2nd October 2020.

²⁹⁹ Although the language of NPNP is a new term the same values that birthed fresh expressions of church still exist.

2.3. How to discover the data required

At present, fresh expressions of church are relatively new areas to be considered for research. Therefore, in the absence of more informative data, taking action that would uncover the unknown seemed the most coherent approach.³⁰⁰ It was decided that there would be three paths to isolating the data required. Firstly, selecting an appropriate sample of recognised fresh expressions of church; secondly, identifying a pool of people of the right demographic for interview; thirdly, gathering the information about their respective experiences of coming to faith through the fresh expression of church. For the sake of avoiding confusion with the participants of the research, the second and third steps were called ‘Stage One and Stage Two,’ respectively, and the first step not given a numeral.

When this work began, I held the position of Connexional Missioner for Fresh Expressions. This was an appointment by the Methodist Church of Great Britain and seconded to ecumenical Fresh Expressions team. The role of Connexional Missioner provided access to all fresh expressions of church regardless of which denomination initially formed them. During the research period 2014-2017, my professional role changed in August 2015 to become a Methodist Chair of District. The relationships I had built up with the respective fresh expressions of church that I was investigating were very good prior to this change, nevertheless this was a significant change to be recognised.

During my time as Connexional Missioner, I was able to access a wide network of professional expertise in researching ecclesial themes.

³⁰⁰ Harding, 2013 p.4

Therefore, in preparation for my own investigations, conversations with other researchers helped inform and shape the construction of the questionnaire for Stage One and the interviews for Stage Two. The individuals named below all offered significant insight: David Wilkinson, David Goodhew, George Lings, Bob Jackson, Steve Aisthorpe, Ruth Pickles (Leslie Francis), Philip Richter, John Drane and Stephen Skuce, Alan Piggot, Hamish Leese and Toby Scott.³⁰¹

2.3.1. Step 1: Selecting an appropriate sample of recognised *fresh expressions*

The proposal began by exploring the wide field of the already qualified data from the research by the Sheffield Centre for the ‘Strand 3b’ report.³⁰² This provided a large database of recognised fresh expressions of church from across ten dioceses which passed the robust criteria set by the Church Commissioners. To this list and criteria, a smaller number of Methodist fresh expressions of church were measured and added to the cohort of potential places.

Early in this process of determining potential places for investigation, it became clear that fresh expressions of church from the Church of England were not feasible due to ongoing research by the Sheffield Centre. The success of the initial work done by George Lings and his team showed early signs of very positive results in church growth. This evidence spurred greater inquisitiveness and thus more and deeper research

³⁰¹ Appendix VIII p.327

³⁰² Lings, 2014

ensued, which prohibited more than one piece of research happening at or around the same time on the same subjects of investigation.

Though the data for Strand 3b had initially presented an excellent selection bank from which to choose the significant variables such as diverse demography, type, size, and maturity, it became apparent that the study needed to focus on a Methodist context as the standard metric for comparison. This recognises the high diversity present in the Church of England research, which may offer too many variables to be useful for a work of this size.³⁰³

From the list of possibles, four were chosen from anecdotal evidence in seeing significant numbers of people come to faith in Christ. This anecdotal evidence comes from both the recorded stories on the Fresh Expressions DVDs and stories relayed to the Connexional Missioner firsthand from the Methodist fresh expressions of church listed. One is on the urban fringes of a large multicultural city (and will be called EGG), one on the edge of a council estate of a medium size town (and will be called ROD), one serving an eclectic community gathered over a larger geographical area (and will be called NOW) and one from a smaller coastal village (and will be called BAT). The small coastal village fresh expression openly agreed to be involved but took no further action to begin the research, so did not become part of the data gathered.

Contact was made with each leadership team to invite their permission to participate. An explanation of the two-stage process with a

³⁰³ Lings, 2014 p.6

brief synopsis of the purpose of the research and potential learning outcomes hoped for accompanied this request.³⁰⁴

2.3.2. Step 2: Identifying a pool of people to interview in Step 3

In January 2015, the four fresh expressions communities received the Durham University Ethics Board approved questionnaire link via the survey engine, Dot Mailer. Three places also asked for the paper form to hand out. Copies were posted with stamped addressed envelopes. Each was given a timeframe for completion and submission. In each of the three cases, a focused period of time was encouraged, with the survey's attention being raised and supported by each respective leadership. Cohen's list for improving response rates proved invaluable, though no reward was offered prior to the survey.³⁰⁵ However, a thank you donation to the fresh expressions of church was sent in gratitude to the time invested and was unexpected but gratefully received.

EGG and NOW utilised the online survey by which fifty (40/10) responses were received. The remaining thirty-two surveys were in paper form, fourteen from NOW and eighteen from ROD. All were completed and returned by April 2016. Eighty-two responses, from three places, offered a reasonable response rate, representing between twenty and eighty percent of the respective communities. The balance of female to male was 65/34%. A more detailed description of respondents is presented in Chapter 3 on the Stage One Data results.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ A copy is held on file.

³⁰⁵ Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011 p.263-4

³⁰⁶ Table 3.1, Chapter 3. p.125

The principle construct for this questionnaire in Stage One was to create a valid set of criteria by which to identify the target group for researching Stage Two by interviews.³⁰⁷ Initially, the two fundamental criteria to validate through Stage One were: i) to identify those who had started to attend the fresh expression of church with no or hardly any previous church background and then ii) to find some way of measuring the ‘change’ to their intrinsic religious/spiritual values that the fresh expression of church had made to their lives, with regard to faith in Christ. A copy of the Stage One survey is presented in Appendix IV, for which the rationale of the questions and this method is justified later in this chapter.³⁰⁸

Denscombe’s good practice for questionnaires and checklists was employed and included a pilot version in the context of a progress paper seminar with fellow doctoral peers of Durham University’s Theology and Ministry course.³⁰⁹ The group of eight helpfully appraised the ethos, style, and content. Minor alterations were made.

2.3.3. Step 3: Gathering the information about the respective experiences of those demonstrating significant spiritual change through the fresh expression of church, identified by Stage One’s questionnaire.

This was a qualitative piece of research that provided the main source of data on which the thesis is founded. The analysis of the Stage One data presented a range of results consistent with the anticipated outcomes for which it was derived. The purpose of the Stage One questionnaire was to

³⁰⁷ Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011 p.179

³⁰⁸ Appendix IV pp.291-96

³⁰⁹ Denscombe, 2010 p.155-71

identify with validity a potential number of people who have recognised substantial change in their life through coming to faith in Christ, in the context of a fresh expressions of church.

Stage Two's qualitative interviews using semi-structured,³¹⁰ responsive, questions sought to expose, in-depth, the narrative enquiry of how, in this context, faith in Christ was found. Inquiring what the key components and normative conduits were that most aided their faith development, were the more specific tasks for which this Stage was designed. The justification for this method is detailed below in Chapter 2.7. The presentation of the data for Stage Two and its subsequent analysis forms Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.

2.4. Ethical issues

On each occasion in discussion with DThM staff and peers, this concept of coming to faith has been an emotive subject that has energetically charged our conversations. Exploring people's life stories is an area of evident vulnerability, requiring sensitivity.³¹¹ Therefore, taking due and diligent account of university regulations in this matter is of the utmost importance. Informed consent from all participants is essential.

A further ethical concern was to produce transparent empirical data that held integrity. In order to achieve this significant time was invested, paying careful attention to the creation of the questionnaire and ensuring that it presented a matrix of questions that would build upon the recent and

³¹⁰ Denscombe, 2010 p.175; Davies, 2008 p.106

³¹¹ Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011 p.377

recognised respective research of Lings³¹² and Aisthorpe.³¹³ The use of NVivo is not a foolproof way of avoiding errors but it does offer a very useable interface from which to analyse the qualitative data. However, as the research progressed it was decided that this method would not be undertaken, and forms of coding came to be the performative method for the data analysis. The full transcripts and recordings for each interview are available and present a credible representation of the data recorded to test the thesis.

2.5. Adding a thick description of EGG's Context – what does an ethnographic study reveal?

As a preliminary aspect of the pastoral planning in the cycle of Practical Theology, it was important to inform the shaping of Stage One's questionnaire and Stage Two's interviews with some in-depth contextual information from one of the fresh expressions of church, and not just with the theoretical material from Chapter 1.

Therefore, at an early stage in my relationship with EGG, a piece of ethnographic work of participant observation was done as part of this doctoral work. The main objective was to observe and understand "Belonging" in this faith community, exploring the different reasons why such a diverse ethnography should choose to want to belong to one another. Informal observation took place over three years and created a growing knowledge of this community that led to this piece of work delving further

³¹² Lings, 2014

³¹³ Aisthorpe, 2014

into the question of why this complex cultural group exists and thrives. Using predominantly Mary Douglas' tool of group and grid exposes the constructs within EGG.³¹⁴ This was helpful preparation, informing some of the shaping of Stage One's and Stage Two's methods to collect the right data. However, this exercise ultimately added significant supporting background evidence that allowed richer and deeper missiological and theological questions to be asked in Chapter 6 about the way the community lived its theology in action.

Furthermore, this short ethnographic picture of EGG is presented to aid the reflection within process of the pastoral cycle of practical theology, thus building the context for findings from the Stage Two Data Coding Analysis in Chapter 5.

2.5.1. Building the Narrative Picture of EGG

Over the time spent with EGG multiple informal conversations took place. John Van Maanen advocates that any ethnography must present accounts and explanations by members of the culture of the events in their lives.³¹⁵ What follows is the researcher's summary description of the different people encountered. Although they only represent a sample of the group, they are not unrepresentative of the group. Admittedly, this would be considered a weakness for work of a more analytical nature. However, in this exercise exploring belonging, the relative number spoken with were unlikely to change the general responses expressed about the group in comparison with observed impressions of the researcher. All conversations

³¹⁴ Douglas, 1970

³¹⁵ Van Maanen, 1988 p.49

were undertaken at random and opportune moments, thus allowing a genuine response to form.

It is 8am Sunday morning walking through the church hall doors and there are already a dozen or so people of different ages and backgrounds milling around, some tidying up after the night-shelter, others preparing food and setting up for the morning service. Fifteen homeless people stayed overnight, eight have remained, one woman, the rest were men aged thirty to sixty.

Sam comes across to say hello. He is white British, early twenties, and part of the leadership team. Sam's thin face looks tired, but he assures me he is fit and well and still fitting in his free running alongside his studies in pioneer ministry at Cambridge. His five years in EGG have equipped him well for the contextual three-year course. Sam has just returned from a Scripture Union mission in Uganda doing schools work for two weeks across nine locations. He describes how vibrant their response was to the visit with great enthusiasm.

Michael joins in the conversation and is introduced to me. He has been a part of EGG for just over eight years. He is white British and also in his early twenties. He joined EGG after the closure of the church he had previously been attending. Michael described the community as a surprising family who do unexpected things. It was clear though that this was a good thing as Michael stated it was great to be with people of his own age in a vibrant and life-filled commune.

Wendy, early fifties, arrives and comes to introduce herself. It becomes apparent that Wendy has responsibility that morning to organise

several aspects of the proceedings. Wendy, due to marital abuse issues, is currently staying with Ruth and Jamie, my hosts, and the founders of EGG. Wendy declares she is still involved because this is a place that creates in her a thirst for God, having discovered a vibrancy of faith here five years ago.

The small cluster breaks conversation and Wendy introduces Andrea to me. She is approximately ten years Wendy's junior but her appearance gives the impression she is ten years Wendy's senior. Andrea is brimming with excitement as that evening she returns to see the baptism of her friend Grace. This will be the first time Andrea has ever spoken publicly, offering a short speech as she sponsors Grace. Five years earlier, those at EGG could barely get two words out of Andrea as she struggled to overcome personality disorder and mental health issues. The woman before me is lucid, articulate, and composed.

The gathered number around thirty, with young families and several third generation add to the majority of teens, twenties, and a few thirties. Both before and after the simple act of worship, interspersed with breakfast, it is notable that all who are present interact with one another.³¹⁶ There are no visible cliques. The conversation groups are fluid and open. The homeless folk are only conspicuous by their bags. None of them appear dirty or raggedly dressed.

Tao is a tall and slender African, in his thirties and one of the homeless who had stopped in for the service. He has been attending for eighteen months, since the night-shelter and morning service began. When

³¹⁶ Breakfast equaled; filter coffee, bacon rolls, Danish pastries and fresh orange juice

he first came his mental condition was very poor, such that he could not engage orally and communicated by writing comments down. This was principally attributed to the trauma he suffered surviving the intentional jump from a multi-storey building in a failed suicide attempt. Though his speech now is hard to follow, he did hold a conversation for over five minutes and conveyed in that time how much he felt part of a family by attending EGG.

Charlotte and Tom, both late-teens and white British, are tidying up after the service. I had met them before on a previous visit at EGG's Mission Planning Team meeting. They describe how they respectively came to be involved in EGG. Charlotte, seventeen, was invited by Katie three years ago to an ice-skating trip followed by a Christmas party several days after that. Though a self-described atheist, Charlotte was fascinated by, in her words, 'this mad intergenerational group' and kept coming back with her friend Katie with more and more questions about life, God, and faith. She described the experience of coming to faith later that evening before being baptised. Katie runs the programme of involvement for EGG's work in multiple residential care homes for the elderly. Regular monthly visits to the homes and acts of worship there are staffed by volunteers from EGG.

Tom is twenty and was previously part of a high Anglo-Catholic church in which he struggled to feel a part or noticed. Though EGG is an entirely different expression of spirituality to the church he grew up in, Tom wants to exercise ministry and found in EGG, spiritual enrichment and a welcoming environment over the last eleven months of attending. Tom works in a local supermarket and has invited several of his friends to

experience a variety of events offered by EGG. Some have come and stayed.

Alicia and Adi are two of the longest participants of EGG. Both are black British, responsible jobholders, and in leadership at EGG. Alicia is mid-twenties and of Caribbean descent, though her accent is a polished East London one. She was invited nine years ago by one of the founding group members, Reggie. Alicia lives in Barking and has the furthest to travel. Alicia is a highly organised person, but one who is critically aware of her generally negative outlook. The glass is always half-empty. Despite these things, Alicia comes across as incredibly committed to this group.

Adi is in her early thirties, of Nigerian descent, and runs her own business. Adi, recently married to Reggie, spoke in a well-refined English dialect as she delivered the fifteen-minute message in the morning service. Adi's journey into EGG had more of a divine intervention to it rather than an invite. After living a very rebellious teenage existence, she felt God called a full stop on the mess of her life, causing her to re-think what she was doing. EGG church was literally just down the street and so she came to discover what life could be about. Adi found the small community at EGG who would listen and help her.

Two final characters must be added to the picture and while both were encountered in the morning service it was not until the evening gathering that we were provided the opportunity to talk. Phil is homeless and has been, by choice, for a long time. He is in his sixties, of white British origins, and by accent, a local to the Essex area. Phil knew all the night-shelters and homeless drop-ins locally and how good they were. He is a

streetwise cynic and nobody's fool. EGG is the second-best place on his list, only nudged out by one longstanding place of excellence run by the Salvation Army several miles away. By his own admission he was initially very skeptical of EGG and what motives lay behind the opening of the night-shelter and breakfast service. Eighteen months on, Phil loves what EGG does. He helps set up the breakfast, puts out the chairs for the morning service, attends a number of other activities run by EGG, and is an intentional member of this hundred plus community, knowing most of them by name.

Last, but by no means least, is Jack. Dressed in skinny black jeans his legs look like they may snap at any moment under the disproportionate weight above them. Jack is white-British, in his fifties with a scruffy beard, poor complexion, and unwashed hair that hints of other things. His speech is so fast and slurred it is difficult to make out much of what he is saying. Jack's home is local to the church and has been visited by several of the EGG staff. He lives alone with several cats and appears to have no sense of smell as well as being somewhere on a scale of requiring special needs support. That said, it was observed that he seemed to be very well integrated to the group, helping out in the morning in the kitchen and involved in different group conversations in the evening. He was not avoided nor ignored but a welcome and wanted participant. This concludes the cultural tapestry observed.

2.5.2. Grid and Group

Douglas interprets ritual as a restricted code, understood by those who practice it thus creating a group. Bernstein defines it as a structured group where members know each other very well, thus they develop their own special form of restricted code that shortens the process of communication by condensing units into pre-arranged coded forms.³¹⁷ The code enables a given pattern of values to be enforced and allows members to internalise the structure of the group and its norms in the very process of interaction.

These concepts form the basis on which Douglas built the “Grid and Group” model explaining that ‘classification, like symbolising, is the creation of culture, or equally one could say that culture is the creation of classifying processes.’³¹⁸

Douglas maintains the only materials required to set up this form of analysis are the two dimensions of Group and Grid.

Group is a general boundary around a community shown on the horizontal axis; and Grid is regulation, on the vertical axis. Individuals are expected to move, or be forced to move, across the diagram, according to choice, or according to circumstances.³¹⁹

Observe Douglas’ visible depiction in Table 2.1 below. The further right on the horizon the greater the influence of the group on the individual and the higher up the vertical axis the greater the structural constraints upon the group. To assist the understanding, Douglas uses Weber’s three types of




³¹⁷ Douglas, 1970 p.54

³¹⁸ Douglas, 2007, accessed 13 July, 2013

³¹⁹ Douglas, 2007 p.2

rationality and caricatures them as: ‘the smug pioneer with his pickaxe, the stern bureaucrat with his briefcase, the holy man with his halo.’³²⁰

Table 2.1. Three archetype characters in their Grid-Group locations.³²¹

	Isolate	Positional 
Grid	Individualist 	Enclave 
	Group	

These caricatures in Table 2.1 perhaps date the work, but Douglas’ emphasis still stands. The top right is a highly ordered society governed by strict behavioural and social structural rules in which people know their place, rank, or function. Though this is a stark summary of Douglas’ concept, it is a fairly loveless model in which hierarchy and order leave little allowance for respectful loyalty from the junior to senior ranks and vice versa.

The bottom left, which epitomises the individualistic lifestyle of the pioneer, is quite the contrast. Here is one who does as they like and belongs to no one. The inferred influences are personal gain in power, wealth, or notoriety. Oliver James puts a Western contextual twenty-first century twist on these values in his work *Affluenza*.³²² Social structure and the society

³²⁰ Douglas, 2007 p.3

³²¹ Douglas, 2007 p.4

³²² James, 2007

around them appear to have no sway on their behaviour, belonging, or belief.

The upper left quadrant has no designated caricature but Douglas describes this as ‘a cultural isolate,’ heavily influenced by the grid but separate from those around them.³²³ Choice, position or circumstances are all factors that may determine the individual’s position in this space. The desert monk, monarch, or prisoner all could be viewed to reside here, divorced from society by different forms of high grid values.

Lastly, the lower right quadrant represents a group bonded together with no ranking or grading rules, suggesting ‘the enclave community tends to be egalitarian because it repudiates the inequalities of the rejected outside world.’³²⁴ However, there is a logic that would question both the sense of any bonded language and the creation of any values for this to truly be where it is in the table. Perhaps it is here that the vulnerabilities of this model are most exposed. To reside here is to be strongly influence by the group, which means there is still the deliberate choice to abide in a community of low or no rules, by the acceptance of the person next to you. Is this a practiced sociology of toleration or something else?

2.5.3. EGG’s Ethnography of Grid

What are EGG’s visible and invisible influences that may create some awareness or structure of position on the grid? EGG has a leadership team. Two of the leaders were employed and ordained by the Methodist

³²³ Douglas, 2007 p.6

³²⁴ Douglas, 2007 p.5

Church as Deacons,³²⁵ the other five are lay indigenous leaders grown from within the community over the ten years since beginning in 2005.

Having observed their practice over several years, this is a very flat organic structure that engages the knowledge and will of the whole community on all the substantial issues and decisions required. Openness and direct honesty are encouraged to the point that often the dissenting view is deliberately asked for in order to truly test the right way forward. There is welcome support from the leadership to dissent in the decision-making process and with no consequences. However, once a decision of unity is made, there is a clear and present sense of support for the choice made and a common disapproval for any subsequently negativity expressed. Authority resides within the community.

This portrays an interesting view for the grid. The open and common opinion of the whole suggests a very low grid value but the lack of community tolerance for any opposition past the decision-making process indicates a much greater degree of structure. It is almost as though any potential pronouncement could have been made at the beginning of the process but by the end of the process structure is self-created.

Participant observation has regularly seen the presentation of the ancient texts from the Bible. The teaching and preaching within this group is always based from the scriptural texts of the Old or New Testaments. This is a church, albeit a new form of church, of orthodox Christianity. Therefore, here is another layer of influence, which has a significant measure of grid to

³²⁵ This was accurate at the time this piece of the research was undertaken but it is not the case now.

it. Every occasion observed has had life application issues embedded into the religious values being taught, raising relevant questions for the culture and context of the group. The ambiguous thing to note is the subjective measure of influence the Bible teaching has upon each individual within the group. It does seem to be quite different on each occasion.

One further significant observation for the grid analysis is the strong emphasis on participation. Anyone relatively new to the group after some months of attending is invited to fill out a 'gift form.' This seeks to offer a structured way of discovering what abilities each individual might possess and offer to the wider group as a whole. This is quite a stark contrast to many other churches observed within the Methodist or Anglican tradition. In both these denominations it is quite common for two things to be very different. The first is one of limitation. In some communities, to be offered a role is only achieved after decades of attendance and or significant testing.³²⁶ Secondly, and in stark contrast, there is a very low commitment to volunteer and to fill the roles available. In general, the level of participation is nominal at best.³²⁷

EGG seem to have created a natural culture of participation. No one is deemed unworthy or incapable: note the stories of Jack, Phil, Tao or Charlotte above. Everyone has something to offer and will be involved in the life, mission, and ministry of this church. Having observed the leadership teams' discussions, some level of discernment is made to the

³²⁶ This is a contextual comment in the time bracket of 2005 to 2015 when this work was undertaken but also noted by Francis and Richter, 2007 pp.128-9, 176; Lewis, Francis, and Geary, 2021 pp.1-9

³²⁷ Billings, 2013 p.35

capabilities of the individual with appropriate levels of responsibility increased or re-evaluated if problems have regularly occurred. In these conversations it is very apparent the leadership know a great deal about the person. These are not un-informed conversations but quite moving and aware, portraying strong bonds of communication and commitment to one another.

Though there are many other values worthy of inclusion, the three substantive values of open leadership style, orthodox non-judgmental Christian teaching,³²⁸ and encouraged participation, form the essential components shaping a grid value that might sit somewhere just below the horizontal line and because of the nature of the group, EGG will most likely be found within the ‘enclave’ quadrant in Table 2.1.

2.5.4. EGG’s Ethnography of Group

How far right past the vertical line does EGG sit? In her original work, Douglas asked if it was possible to accept the social pressure of a group and still develop a private philosophy?³²⁹ This is perhaps one of the most useful questions to ask in determining how strong the group’s influence is. The old adage, we do what we value and we value what we do, is a useful lens to help comprehend EGG’s influence.

The first influence of substance is the integrated diversity of the community. Douglas argues in her later work under the title of ‘Cultural

³²⁸ Note the contrast in the Conclusion found in Morris, 2019 pp.195-205; One reasonable illustration of this concept is presented in Bretherton, 2019 and an analysis of it by Zerra, 2020.

³²⁹ Douglas, 1970 p.62

Theory' that every cultural collective thrives because of conflict between the types.³³⁰ What is evident from the ethnographic study is that the individuals present could quite easily find themselves placed in very different quadrants. Phil and Tao are by background pioneers. Their chosen homeless lifestyles have led to very individualistic pathways. Adi, Tom, and Alicia, however, live in the professional working world of the positional bureaucrat. Each have their set roles, designated places, and authorities to work under and by. Andrea, Sam, and Jack are or were in their respective lives, isolationist. Sam is at college studying or often out alone free running. Jack lives an almost solitary life in his flat, separated from much of everyday life around him, and Andrea's narrative of mental health issues certainly began in isolation, even if that narrative has changed substantially now. Though this is only a brief synopsis, their respective lives offer evidence to support this theory of strong character diversity.

If these people were all of very similar backgrounds, then perhaps it would be quite easy to reconcile the nature of their enclave group. However, they are not. Therefore, it is reasonable to propose that the influence of this group is very strong. One may even say powerful when considering the degree of change in the bureaucrat, isolationist, or pioneer. Phil and Charlotte, for very different reasons, were both antagonistic to the group when they first encountered EGG. Phil was very cynical of their motives. Charlotte's evaluation was they were mad in their behaviour, compared to the cultural norms she was used to. That is, one is cautious about strangers, you don't welcome them with open arms in well-mannered society; a polite

³³⁰ Douglas, 2007 p.8

shake of the hand will suffice. Whilst this behaviour is not common it is by no means unique. Billings notes Easterhouse in Glasgow as another church community rich in fellowship, sharing, and social equality. Like EGG, Easterhouse demonstrates the surprising reality that very few groups meeting regularly in any place would bring such a cross-section of people together for the benefit of the wider good.³³¹ ROD's demographic would mirror this dynamic too, though they are a much smaller community.

The second aspect to consider in placing the group is closely related to this last illustration made by Charlotte, that of the group's openness or welcome. The fluid open space of the morning service created a very flexible environment to move around and not be constrained by formal rows of fixed pews. Large sofas with chairs around the hall, coupled with many people milling about gave an ambience of informality. To the first time visitor, this may seem very unstructured, almost chaotic, potentially creating uncertainty of what to do or where to go. However, the well-trained welcome team clearly know their role and circumvent this. Their gentle skill was observed, of not loitering with intent but blending into the background until someone new or relatively new entered and was welcomed with a normal conversation.

Knowledge of the EGG community is high by most of its members. Several times the researcher asked who people were across the room, as a test. Every time those asked knew their names and something about them. In contrast when the researcher first began ministry in 1994, this exercise was practiced at two of the Methodist churches of which he had Pastoral Charge,

³³¹ Billings, 2013 p.49

hosting around forty people; few people knew one another past the person they sat next to. This was a fairly common reality across the wider Methodist Church at the time.

Welcome is not superficial in EGG. Rather, it is a strong dynamic of their practice and values within the group. Durkheim argues that social facts must be considered as ‘things.’³³² EGG’s welcome is a thing. Though it may be a very subjective thing, done by a different team of people on each occasion, it is still something that is noticeably embedded as a group value. This has two outcomes. The first is the impact on the individual who comes through the door, the outsider. The newcomer is quickly set at ease, not judged but accepted and made to feel a part, no matter what. The second outcome is the dynamic of influence it creates on the insider already part of the group. Again, it is the power to facilitate character change, creating within the insider a group norm and culture that naturally welcomes anyone, irrespective of creed, colour, class or background.

This may seem like a dichotomy for discerning the group location in the model, holding great openness and ease of access to the group for the outsider close to the vertical line whilst seeing the strong effect upon the insider to become themselves conformed to this value of the group. However, the very nature of a non-judgmental reception is perhaps a very acceptable coercive value to assimilate, adopt, and then practice.

One final consideration is the interaction of the group itself. Hammersley and Atkinson warn of the danger of the complete observer failing to understand the perspectives of the participants and to seriously

³³² Durkheim, 1938 p.14

misunderstand the behaviour observed, contrasted with the common danger of “going native.”³³³ With these two vulnerabilities recognised, the researcher endeavoured to hold the fine balance between being a participant observer and objective circumspection of EGG’s group behaviour, as Davies suggests.³³⁴

From conversations engaged in and observed practice, the concept of family was explicit in both behaviour and language. This is further evidenced from their narratives in the Stage Two Data (for both EGG and ROD) and in the ethnographic piece above. There was no obvious deference to parents, matriarch, or patriarch, but this construct created the parameters for interaction across social boundaries and backgrounds to exist and flourish. As a participant who was both an insider (known to some) and an outsider (a new person to others), it was possible to observe the group’s practice from both perspectives. There was little noticeable difference between the engagement from insider or outsider perspective.

One may raise the point that once welcomed by the “chief” the tribe will welcome you with open arms, which is logically acceptable for conversations involving the researcher as a participant. However, the researcher’s observed evidence of the group’s interactions, both in the focused visit and previous gatherings, would conclude the group’s practice indeed has a uniformity about it.

From the cumulative evidence it is apparent there are dysfunctional moments, principally about those within the group who are regularly failing

³³³ Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 p.110

³³⁴ Davies, 2008 p.98

to fulfil their participatory role. Like any family with adolescents, learning to become something more than a dependent is a process: two steps forward, one step back. This is a tangible part of the group's connectivity and accountability.

In summary, the sense of belonging within EGG is transparent. Using the social science method of ethnography was a powerful tool to expose any errant community value or façade. In light of this evidence and analysis, it would substantiate the premise that a non-judgmental culture within the community of EGG is not only evident but actively espoused by those who participate in it. Is this a true dynamic of the nature of belonging?

2.6. The Stage One Questionnaire - content, construction and purpose

This section examines in greater detail the questionnaire used and what questions were asked and for what purpose. This was an interim phase in the research but contributes to the hermeneutical cycle of beginning with experience and exploring the question of what is happening.

The first four questions formed the unique quantifiable identity required for any work of this nature.³³⁵ Agreement to participate, name of the fresh expression of church, gender, age bracket, and finally, post-code offered the bare minimum for identification and differentiation, with straight-forward questions to answer.³³⁶ This was to aid holding a balance towards the length of the survey, which in paper form did not exceed four

³³⁵ Denscombe, 2010 p.165

³³⁶ Stage One Questionnaire is presented in Appendix IV pp.291-96

sides of A4 and ten questions. The online version appeared as a scroll-down version with fill-in, tick and selection boxes.

Questions Five and Six, detailed below, were the first set of key data seeking to qualify the participant's previous church connections before engagement with the fresh expression of church.³³⁷

Question 5. Before you started going to the fresh expression of church named in Question 1, please choose below which of the following most accurately describes your background of any other previous church attendance.

- Never been to church or hardly ever
- Went occasionally to church (less than 5 times a year)
- Went regularly to church (monthly or more often)
- Used to go to church but stopped
- How long ago did you stop attending church?

Question 6. How many different churches have you attended (regularly)?

Choosing the right language and phrases held a particular challenge as certain terms may be easily misunderstood or even cause offence, e.g., 'unchurched,' 'member'. Even the term 'regular attendee' required qualification.

Question Five's aim was to discover those of very little or no previous church attendance in their background. This question also sought to identify those who were very occasional participants at church, i.e., less than five times a year and those who 'used to go to church but stopped.' This had a follow up box to discover how long ago they stopped attending church in an attempt to quantify and discover those who had evidently been drawn back to church engagement through the fresh expression of church.

³³⁷ Harding, 2013 p.13

This follow-up box did not prove as successful as had been hoped for. Less than half the respondents who selected 'Used to go to church but stopped' went on to add a time value in 'how long did you stop attending church?' This diminished the effectiveness of the question for follow up. Thus, understanding how quickly they had returned to church or discovering why this fresh expression of church had been successful in drawing them back, did not work so well.

This raises interesting questions about why there was a lack of response to this follow up box. Was this question misunderstood? Could it have been presented in a different way, perhaps with option boxes of different time references? Another possibility is this answer was skipped over for reasons of forgetfulness. Were they unable to remember? If that were the case, does that say something about their sense of perception or recollection? Is it possible that the short amount of time it took to fill out the questionnaire meant that if someone could not remember the answer straight away, they would simply skip this over this and move on to the next question? A further speculation might be that there was some element of shame or embarrassment, possibly even a sense they might feel judged if they had not come to church over a number of years and out of a sense of discomfort decided not answered this question? One learning point for any future work looking at this question could soften the language with something like, "Do you have any sense of how long this gap was between attending church?" Also, the selection of time option-boxes might jog a memory and serve as an aide-memoire.

Question Six was included to scope the previous question and act as a fail-safe in parallel to Question Five. One cannot declare to be a non-attende and tick the 5+ number of churches box. That either would be an error in filling the questionnaire in or a significant misunderstanding of the questions. It was anticipated that those who had not previously attended church would also display a zero or one to two results for this question. The use of closed questions with specific options was preferred over an open response that could have offered enormous variations too numerous to evaluate effectively.³³⁸

The next challenge in constructing this questionnaire was to discover a validated measure of change with regard to faith. Though Finney's work used baptism and confirmation as the two standards, it was evident that this did not always connote spiritual development leading to genuine belief in Christ or Christian behaviour as noted in the literature review.³³⁹ After an extensive search, Dean Hoge's Intrinsic Religious Scale seemed to offer the most potential in terms of relevance.³⁴⁰ It measured a range of values around commitment, practice, experience, and belief. Furthermore, it has been recently used in a contemporary context by Steve Aisthorpe's work in Scotland.³⁴¹ The value of this work is already noted by Koenig.³⁴²

Hoge's set of ten questions/statements employing the Likert Scale³⁴³ used for Question Seven and repeated in Question Ten (Table 2.2) had only

³³⁸ Denscombe, 2010 p.166

³³⁹ Chapter 1 p.56f, Finney, 1992 p.21

³⁴⁰ Hoge, 1972

³⁴¹ Aisthorpe, 2014

³⁴² Koenig, 2011 p.229

³⁴³ Denscombe, 2010 p.168

minor changes of language for this questionnaire's context. The original word 'religion/religious' was replaced with 'faith/spirituality'. The work by Hollinghurst, Croft/Richmond and Hay all critique and advocate the contextualised word of spirituality over the word religion/religious in a personal narrative.³⁴⁴ So to avoid a contemporary misunderstanding or avoidance, 'spirituality' was selected above the original 1972 word of 'religion.'³⁴⁵

Hoge's ten questions focus on an individual's perspective of themselves and indirectly corroborate the key themes of belief, behaviour, and spiritual experience. While the theme of belonging is not overtly present in these questions, it becomes intrinsically evidenced by the participants' future practice in joining the fresh expression of church.

³⁴⁴ Croft, 2005; Hay, 2007; Hollinghurst, 2010

³⁴⁵ The later work done by Morris, 2019 pp.10, 40, 87, 94, also notes the 'Spiritual but not religious' mantra but this is a developing contextual conversation, debated in Ward, 2017b pp.20-21, 128 as the subjectivisation of religion, towards personal expressive individualism.

Table 2.2

Qu. 7 In your life before attending the fresh expression (named in qu.1) how would you have answered the following ten questions?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My faith/spirituality involved all of my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You should seek God's guidance when making every important decision.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my life I experienced the presence of the Divine.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My faith/spirituality sometimes restricted my actions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nothing is as important to me as serving God as best I know how.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try hard to carry my spirituality/faith over into all my other dealings in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My spiritual beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It doesn't matter so much what I believe as long as I lead a moral life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Although I am a spiritual person, I refuse to let spiritual considerations influence my everyday affairs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Although I believe in my faith, I feel there are many more important things in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The purpose of Questions Seven and Ten was to assign a numerical value to the answers. A score of 1 to 5 was attributed from left to right of the

Likert Scale for the first seven statements and then reversed for statements eight to ten. With a minimum score of 10 and a maximum of 50 the contrasting scores of Questions Seven and Ten were compared. Looking at the differential would help identify those displaying the higher measures of change and held in the context of the answer to Question Eight.

Question Eight asked how long the participant had been attending the fresh expression to give context to the linked Questions of Seven and Ten. This was a closed list of options covering a spectrum of a less than a month to more than ten years. The time frame for fresh expressions of church at the point this research was undertaken would not go much further than ten to fifteen years since their respective points of origin.

Questions Nine (a) and Nine (b) were to operate on the same principle but offer a contrasting method of question which focused more clearly on Jesus. This is derived from work identified by Moynagh and Harrold³⁴⁶ on postmodern paths to faith and initially used in North America by Everts and Schaupp and their research on postmodern evangelism and college students.³⁴⁷ The one addition to this set of options that was not present in the original work was 'not interested.' Though an antagonistic option was considered as well, there were too many variations, which ultimately amounted to the same thing: someone was not interested.

This separate metric offered an additional support to the Intrinsic Religious Scale and with a different approach would offer a greater

³⁴⁶ Moynagh and Harrold, 2012 p.340

³⁴⁷ Everts and Schaupp, 2009

robustness in validating the results. The scoring for Question Nine ranged from zero to six.

The final aspect of the questionnaire invited the participant to declare if they were willing to participate (if invited) in Stage Two and to offer their first name and contact details. This on reflection has proved the weakest dynamic of Stage One. It would appear from conversations with the respective fresh expressions' leadership teams that some people missed this part. Others just thought they would be traceable through the early information and some pressed submit before realising they had not finished the online version. However, due to the good knowledge of the respective leaders from EGG and ROD, all who were potentials for Stage Two were able to be asked and their permission was given. In between Stage One and Stage Two the leadership changed at NOW and tracing the potential candidates proved too difficult.³⁴⁸ A delay in getting clearance from the university ethics committee for the Stage Two forms led to a three-month window of opportunity being lost before the researcher's role changed. The change of role from Connexional Missioner for Fresh Expressions to becoming a Methodist Chair of District led to the research being suspended for two years, agreed by the university.

This proved a damaging factor to the number of potential candidates for Stage Two. As will be noted in the results for Stage One and the introduction for Stage Two, the life changes over a nearly two-year period

³⁴⁸ Methodist Ministers are under the discipline of the church to move at the end of the appointment.

meant that multiple candidates were no longer able to participate in Stage Two.

Some final comments on the process for Stage One. There was some uncertainty during the early development of the questionnaire whether to extend it with a full set of questions about ‘coming to faith’ on top of the initial questions seeking to discover their background. In the end, this did not happen for three main reasons. Firstly, it was deemed important to have a focused piece of data focusing on who really attends fresh expressions of church that might stand alone. Secondly, the case for adding the second set of questions would most likely reduce potential return rates and increase intrusion with research fatigue.³⁴⁹ Thirdly, the significant loss of not doing this was recognising that these questions might provide the bonus range of information about those who may not be interviewed in Stage Two (i.e., those who are more strongly defined as “de-churched”). This extra data about the de-churched coming to faith could act as a contrast to those with no church background, but this may confuse the original purpose. In the end ‘less’ was deemed better than ‘more.’

With hindsight, and the loss of immediate follow up not being known at the time Stage One was undertaken, some additional questions about how and why the participants connected with the respective fresh expressions of church would have been a very useful piece of data. The potential to undertake a further bespoke piece of research remains an additional option for another researcher, but due to time constraints and the

³⁴⁹ Harding, 2013 p.19; Denscombe, 2010 p.19; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011 pp. 396-7

capacity limitations for this researcher, it was not possible for this piece of work.

Finally, as stated above, it was noted that the Stage One questionnaire's design and expected outcomes may lead to a number of, as yet unqualified variables. For example, this could include a person recording no church background before attending the fresh expression of church but also not recording significant change in Questions Seven and Ten or Nine (a) and Nine (b) (or the reverse). Though this is the most straightforward variable, there are other permutations which need to be accounted for if the working hypothesis of this research is to be tested. Therefore, to apply a form of coding to the relevant questions Five, Six, Seven and Ten, Nine (a) and Nine (b) may form a usable metric to help the researcher discern more complex decisions of who to include or excluded from Stage Two's selection pool.³⁵⁰

The use of coding in this case is as Cohen describes: to assist interpretation, cull the volume of information, and make meaning of data.³⁵¹ This research rests somewhere between the substantive literature on the different ways people have found faith in the past, such as changes in their belief, behaviour, or belonging as a result of their experiences of God, which are evidenced in Chapter 1.³⁵² How does that compare or contrast with the data found within the fresh expressions and how they have found faith? In order to observe such a change, a numerical value system was assigned to the questions with the purpose of the summative scores for each

³⁵⁰ Denscombe, 2010 pp.245-6; Harding, 2013 pp.128-9

³⁵¹ Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011 pp.428

³⁵² Chapter 1, pp.29-66

respondent being the final aid in assisting the selection process for the Stage Two qualitative interviews.³⁵³

2.7. Stage Two - Qualitative semi-structured, responsive interviews

Denscombe makes the case that interviewing participants, and particularly in-depth interviews, are the most reasonable model of data collection when the research covers privileged information, perhaps of a sensitive nature, in which opinions, feelings, emotions, and experiences are likely to be gathered in significant detail.³⁵⁴ As a distinctive research technique, Cohen states that the interview may serve three purposes.³⁵⁵ Firstly, as the principal means of gathering the research data. Tuckman³⁵⁶ describes this as,

access to what is ‘inside a person’s head’ making it possible to measure what a person knows.³⁵⁷

Secondly, as a means to test hypotheses or suggest new ones as a device to explain or identify variables and relationships. Thirdly, as a tool to follow up unexpected results from another method or validate another method or go deeper into the motivations of respondents and the surrounding reasons entwined with their responses.³⁵⁸ Though Tuckman’s quote seems an obvious statement about an interview, the value of being able to bring qualitative analysis to variable results through a recognised metric in order to distill some form of research hypothesis is a serious one. All three of

³⁵³ Harding, 2013 p.129

³⁵⁴ Denscombe, 2010 pp.173-4

³⁵⁵ Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011 p.411

³⁵⁶ Tuckman, 1972

³⁵⁷ Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011 p.411

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p.411

these purposes have purchase for this research and thus present the interview as a credible method for Stage Two's data gathering.

As noted by Woods,³⁵⁹ the interview process as a method requires the qualities of trust, curiosity and naturalness.³⁶⁰ Cohen presents Tuckman's summary table of the merits of an interview versus a questionnaire, which further validates the choice for this research stage.³⁶¹ Without doubt, the method of interviewing is a significant investment of time and cost, but the aim of accurately recovering this kind of data is significantly increased by the researcher being present and adapting to the interviewee's responses.³⁶²

Though Lee writes from a medical background, the principles behind the argument made for evidence-based practice using the widely recognised definition from Sackett is a helpful one.

The conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about care of individual patients [or service users], based on skills which allow the [practitioner] to evaluate both personal experience and external evidence in a systemic and objective manner.³⁶³

The seven steps adapted from Reynolds³⁶⁴ and Sackett has been the intended basis under which this inductive research would take shape.

Having made this acknowledgement, this work in no way undervalues what this qualitative study of responsive interviews exposes.

Lee evidences the work of Taylor and White and Glasby and Beresford, who

³⁵⁹ Woods, 1986

³⁶⁰ Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011 p.410

³⁶¹ Ibid., p.412

³⁶² Rubin and Rubin, 2012 p.70

³⁶³ Lee, 2009: p. 58 p.58; Sackett, 1997 p.71,

³⁶⁴ Reynolds, 2000; Lee, 2009 p.59

both adopt a more inclusive stance on what constitutes evidence.³⁶⁵ The heart of the evidence from each of the individuals interviewed is unique, previously unknown, and there to be discovered. Rubin and Rubin³⁶⁶ and Denscombe make the case that it is essential to respond with flexibility to a person's answers in order to mine the greater riches of insight held within their narratives.³⁶⁷

The focus and depth of Stage Two was to ask the initial main question of how each interviewee first connected with the fresh expression of church, to then ask probing questions about their understanding of the changes within them over time, seen before and after attending the fresh expression of church (noted by the scores from Stage One in questions, Seven, Ten and Nine a and b), and finally to ask a follow-up question to see if they could identify what helped them the most.

The Stage Two Research Survey was composed of seven questions (with one additional question about background if this had not been previously addressed in the interview) and can be found with a Supplement Sheet in Appendix VII. However, as most of those interviewed were unknown to the researcher before the interview, various degrees of time had to be invested for a rapport to be built before approaching the main questions. As Rubin notes, a responsive interview is much more than a conversation with a stranger and the interviews reflect listening to the participants' narratives and asking new questions based upon their replies.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁵ Lee, 2009 p.61, Taylor and White, 2002 pp.36-54; Glasby and Beresford, 2006

³⁶⁶ Rubin and Rubin, 2012 p.5

³⁶⁷ Denscombe, 2010 p.175

³⁶⁸ Rubin and Rubin, 2012 pp.5-7

The nature of the subject material is a deeply personal and emotive matter, therefore great care was taken by the researcher to make the interviewee feel they were in control of the conversation and the surroundings, thus observing the guidance recorded by Harding.³⁶⁹ The interview venue was entirely the interviewee's choice and on three occasions the interviewee asked for a family member or close friend to accompany them.

The nature of this research had both inductive and deductive aspects to it. Quoting Moses and Knutsen, Harding notes that inductive research begins with the particular and moves to general, discovering the unknown by data collection and analysis and then later building more general truths by considering their relationship to existing knowledge.³⁷⁰

The particular in this research was the anecdotal narrative of significant numbers of new people coming to faith in Jesus Christ in the contexts of Methodist fresh expressions of church. The unknown, inductive dimension to this research was the why and how this was happening. The more detailed information sought from the narratives entailed the key aspects or the facilitating points that helped the participants to engage with this new form of church, and was presented in Question B.

Question C formed the link between Survey One and the interviewee's journey from before attending the fresh expression to the point of completing the Stage One survey. This is perhaps the pivotal point of Stage Two, where the information gathered moves from being an inductive process to progress into a deductive one.

³⁶⁹ Harding, 2013 pp. 34-36; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011 p.410; Denscombe, 2010 p.182

³⁷⁰ Harding, 2013 p.13; Moses and Knutsen, 2007 p.22

The known aspect of this research, is the proverbial “other side of the coin.” In other words, we know that people are coming to faith in these new forms of church but we still do not yet know the ‘how.’ Harding describes this method as testing a theory by creating specific hypotheses and using the research to determine whether they are correct.³⁷¹ However, Harding acknowledges that in practice, these hypotheses or research questions are often nuanced within the breadth of the existing literature.³⁷² Thus the work presented in Chapter 1 draws upon the most well-known and established concepts from the literature on observing change in a person, while they are coming to faith in Christ.

This research is not intended to be exhaustive, however it attempts to provide space for the new knowledge revealed through the interview process while still remaining faithful to the strands present in current literature and practice. Question E in the Stage Two survey offered four generic conduits³⁷³ that were present in both the Hoge Intrinsic Religious Scale questions in Survey One, (questions Seven and Ten) and in the extensive research across a broad canopy of disciplines.³⁷⁴

Question E is the central question for this piece of research and explores the four conduits of: Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God, suggesting that there are multiple ways in which people connect with Jesus Christ. Though these may be connected, they do hold distinctive

³⁷¹ Harding, 2013 p.12; De Vaus, 2002 pp.13-15

³⁷² Harding, 2013 p.12

³⁷³ Appendix VII pp.319-26

³⁷⁴ See Literature Review Chapter 1.4, 1.5, pp.39-66

facets and, in theory, could suggest new pedagogical concepts and practice to the wider Church in its study of evangelism.

Survey One in questions Seven and Ten, considers the influences of change for the individual in their:

- thoughts, i.e., what they believe or understand (cognitive)
- behaviour (changes in actions)
- experience (things that they felt that brought a change)
- though it is not explicit, it is evident the relationship to the people in the fresh expression has brought some degree of change, in their sense of belonging or commitment to the group.³⁷⁵

These four conduits were then each expressed in a paragraph to add a little more detail for the interviewee to consider if this was a relevant notion or not for them. There was one further question which invited the interviewee to offer their own response if none of the four paragraphs below notionally fitted their narrative. Thus, keeping an open possibility for the unknown to come to the surface.

The four paragraphs were presented in a random order to ensure no hierarchy or prejudice could be justified or inferred:

Belief - Some people through the centuries have come to believe in the truth about Jesus before they actually know it through a relationship with Him. Whether reading the Bible or hearing a message (testimony, sermon, or article) they have engaged with who Jesus is as God's Son and started to believe in Him.

Behaviour - Some people connect not through the cognitive words but through observing the actions of Christians. Their service in the world draws a curiosity that leads to inquiry. Love of God found in outward action often draws more attention to the Gospel than words. Whether acts of kindness, justice, service, or stewardship of the earth, doing things that are often

³⁷⁵ Appendix IV, p.291

counter cultural (i.e., not being selfish but caring for others) creates the opportunity to see Christ at work in the world today.

Belonging - For many people they find Jesus through a friend or a circle of friends to which they belong first and as relationships strengthen so the individual is drawn closer to Jesus and begins to seek Him for themselves. Though this might sound very similar to the above observation of behaviour, it is much more relationally based and one might say it is through the faith of the group or individual that acts as a sort of surrogate to give new life in Christ to them. For many people who come to faith in Jesus this way, it is important to recognise that their belief, behaviour and/or experience of Christian faith may often not form part of their value system initially, but they do like belonging to a group of people or church who care about them.

Experience of God - Many people unconnected with the church are spiritually seeking and have all kinds of experiences in which God meets them, whether in their physical or emotional needs, naturally or supernaturally. Through these experiences of the Holy Spirit (ordinary and extra ordinary encounters with Jesus), people can respond to God's love with no real beliefs in place, without belonging to a group of believers, or without any behavioural influence in their values or practice. However, it is through the experience that something of the reality of God meets their life in a tangible way and enriches or blesses them. From these moments as the reality of God breaks into their lives, the opportunity to respond is made, seeking some measure of a relationship with God.

As noted on pages ten and eleven of this thesis, the theory of multiple conduits influencing a person's journey to faith in Christ comes from the work initially undertaken as part of the dissertation for a Master of Arts Degree through Manchester University in 2007, which focused on those coming to faith while attending Mind the Gap.³⁷⁶ It has then been explored through fifty to sixty seminars over five years, in which informal polls were taken asking the participants which of the four conduits (or any

³⁷⁶ Lindridge, 2007

combination of them) best described their experience in journeying to faith. This learning continued to gain traction and in 2012 was incorporated as part of the *Mission Shaped Ministry* course, Unit B10 on ‘Personal Evangelism.’³⁷⁷ Testing this hypothesis using the four conduits has been an ongoing aspect of reflexive theology, which has drawn intrigue and inquisitiveness from a range of academic and practical levels. Therefore, the opportunity to test this hypothesis under the rigour of an academic lens to this level and to discover what further insights can be found was a prudent exercise for this research.

This brings together a significant amount of known information to this element of the research, and alongside the literature identified in Chapter 1 establishes codes (as referred to by Gibson and Brown³⁷⁸) as a priori codes, as they bring to the research the interests of the researcher present within the literature.³⁷⁹ These a priori codes of *Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God*, when applied to the data, can affect three different outcomes upon the research. According to Harding, the first point is that the code can be found to be relevant without adjustment to the data gathered. Secondly, the a priori code can be adjusted or nuanced once the data is known to better fit the issues being examined. Thirdly, it may be that the a priori code cannot be applied at all to the data.³⁸⁰

Harding argues that a list of a priori codes should be seen as flexible and permissible to be reviewed, nuanced, or added to. If they are too broad

³⁷⁷*Mission-Shaped-Ministry course*, Unit B10, ‘Personal Evangelism’, (Leamington Spa: Fresh Expressions, 2012) pp.4-6

³⁷⁸ Gibson and Brown, 2009 pp.132-33

³⁷⁹ Harding, 2013 pp.129,

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.130-31

and need to be broken down in the light of the data³⁸¹ or if a new theme arises not previously mentioned in the literature add it to the a priori codes.³⁸² Harding emphasises that this is necessary to ensure that a clear link exists between the research findings and the existing literature.³⁸³

Question E was intentionally placed later in the design of the survey in order to allow the narrative of the interviewee to come out first. As noted earlier by Tuckman's quote, information from participants could be revealed without any other leading questions or impressions guiding or influencing what they had to say. The design of Stage Two's Semi Structured Interview also sought to pay attention to the timeframe and event matrix by which the interviewee recognised they had journeyed to a place to become a follower of Jesus Christ and formed the substance of Question D.

Questions F and G were positioned to be evaluative measures, considering the interviewee's perceptions of their own discipleship. Having asked what has helped them in their respective journeys of faith, it would add validity to hear: Firstly, what gets in the way or makes it difficult for them in following Jesus and secondly, what would be their reply to an action question with regard to their own response or behaviour to act as an evangelist or witness toward the fresh expression of church they are involved in?

Finally, though no less important, Question A, opened up the potential to catch a rich and deep ethnographic picture of the interviewee.³⁸⁴

³⁸¹ Ibid., p.131; Barbour, 2008 pp.204-205

³⁸² Harding, 2013 p.131; Gibson and Brown, 2009 p.133

³⁸³ Harding, 2013 p.131

³⁸⁴ Davies, 2008 p.106-7

The anthropologist Rayfield,³⁸⁵ as quoted by Mishler, refers to ‘the assumption that there exists universally in the human mind the concept of a certain structure we call story’³⁸⁶ and that it is probably the primary way human beings make sense of their experience to cast it into a narrative form.³⁸⁷

2.8. A Brief note on the origins of EGG, ROD and NOW

Having offered such an in-depth examination of EGG earlier in this Chapter at section 2.5, it is important to record that such a similar piece of work does not exist for both ROD and NOW. The time spent at these two fresh expressions of church was significant but not as extensive as the time invested at EGG as the Connexional Missioner for Fresh Expressions. As a result, what follows is a short description of each context but is by no means as rich or as detailed as EGG.

ROD began in a similar way to EGG, reaching out to the missing demographic of teenagers and those in their early twenties. Both EGG and ROD sought to be relevant to these generations in the forms of worship they practiced and in their relational investments through the week, in the forms of clubs and activities. These two respective communities grew over a short number of years and then took over what had been the traditional worship services of the Methodist Churches they met in, when the existing congregations became unsustainable.

³⁸⁵ Rayfield, 1972

³⁸⁶ Mishler, 1986 p.67

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p.68; Gee, 1985 p.11

ROD has been predominantly led by the same individuals forming a small leadership team of lay volunteers. Of these lay volunteers, one is a Methodist Local Preacher and has served as a Lay Worker for the Methodist Church in several different Circuits, with differing responsibilities for mission, youth work and evangelism. The leadership team's passion, vocation, and commitment to their community is without doubt sincere and authentic. ROD's location is directly between two large housing estates. One is predominately social and local authority housing, in an economically challenging area. The other is predominately private housing, owner occupied, from a more economically affluent background. The contrast is stark.

NOW, however began as a church singing group, aiming to learn the newer worship songs that traditional congregations in the area were unfamiliar with. This initially attracted a much older demographic before growing over several years to become an alternative worship service and then journeyed to become a recognised church of the Methodist Circuit with its own membership. This growth was reflected in multiple, different site activities, including: food bank services, small discipleship groups meeting in homes, and a large variety of social action and justice actives that served the surrounding communities' needs as well as the regular Sunday evening worship services from which NOW began.

NOW is located within an established Methodist Church in the middle of a large town in the North West of England. This church traditionally had a mission focus but had a dwindling regular congregation. The leadership of NOW began with the indigenous leadership of the

musically gifted presbyter at this church and a small number of their lay leaders, equally musically gifted, some of whom were already Local Preachers and leaders in other roles in the Methodist Circuit.

2.9. Completing the Cycle of Practical Theology

Chapter 3 delivered a pool of people to interview, the results of which are presented in Chapter 4. This data seeks to answer the question: “What is happening?” through the experience of a number of individuals who have come to faith in Christ in these fresh expressions of church.

The data analysed in Chapter 5 explores the question “Why is this happening?” and Chapter 6 offers the theological reflection upon the question: “What does this mean?” This reflection focuses on a new insight discovered in the data flowing from Chapter 4 and observations in Chapter 5. The final stage, completing the hermeneutical cycle of practical theology is presented in the Conclusion and seeks to go some way in answering the question: “How shall we respond?” The ongoing praxis of theology in action is a continuing cycle which evolves from where we are.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁸ Ward, 2017a p.24

Chapter 3

Stage One Data Results

WHO IS THAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR?

The singular purpose of the Stage One research was to discover potential candidates for the more in-depth qualitative research that would take place in Stage Two. This chapter presents the results from Stage One and in doing so justifies the purpose of the questions posed in the survey, as discussed in the Methodology Chapter 2.6. The data presented offers some contextual information for each fresh expression of church participating in Stage One. The weight and significance of the findings from this Stage One research are evidenced in detail in this chapter.

3.1. The Data gathered from Stage One's Questionnaire from three Methodist fresh expressions of church

The full set of the anonymised data is presented in Appendix V with only the identifying contact details removed. This contains the complete list of answers to all the questions and the respective scores assigned for all respondents from Stage One.³⁸⁹

The summary statistical information from Stage One's survey is presented below in Table 3.1, recording generic totals for age and gender, as well as the broken-down totals for each place, with the respective percentages of the survey in brackets.

³⁸⁹ The key to the DThM reference in Appendix V column 2, is as follows; E-DM-01, The first letter relates to the first letter of the name of the fresh expression, e.g., E = EGG. The middle letters note how the questionnaire was completed P for paper, DM for Dot Mailer (online). The last two digits are numbers linked to the respondent at that place as a unique reference.

Table 3.1

Summary Statistics of Respondents from Stage One

	Totals	Female	Male	No Gender	EGG F/M/ NG	NOW F/M	ROD F/M
Totals	82	53 (65%)	28 (34%)	1 (1%)	40 (49%)	24 (29%)	18 (22%)
Millennial	2 (2%)	1	1		0/0	0/0	1/1
Gen Y	39 (47.5%)	22	17		15/11	3/0	4/6
Gen X	16 (19.5%)	12	4		3/2	7/2	2/0
Baby BMR	17 (21%)	13	4		3/3	10/1	0/0
Pre-War	8 (10%)	5	2	1	2/0/1	1/0	2/2

It is interesting to observe the largest proportion of those responding to the survey are from Gen Y (48%), with those born in the Baby Boomer (21%) and Gen X (20%) generations forging the rest of the majority of replies.³⁹⁰ The split between female (65%) and male (34%) portrays an interesting fact in contrast to many mainline declining churches who portray a demographic of predominately Pre-War, female participants.³⁹¹ Furthermore, Table 3.1 shows a more equal balance of gender across the replies of Gen Y in both EGG and ROD but in NOW there is a higher demographic of female Baby Boomers in contrast to EGG and ROD. Either very few men attend NOW, or they were unwilling to fill in the questionnaire. From the visits the researcher made to NOW's acts of worship, it was quite noticeable that this was predominantly attended by

³⁹⁰ The Stage One Questionnaire age choices were defined as: Pre War - 1945 or before, Baby Boomer - 1946 to 1964, Gen X - 1965 to 1981, Gen Y - 1982 to 1998, Millennial - 1999 or after.

³⁹¹ Morris, 2019 p.3

women, with very small numbers of men in attendance. This supports the evidence in the survey of the representation of responses at NOW from mainly women and very few men. Also, the observational data gained when visiting with EGG and ROD would support the respective balance of information presented in Table 3.1.

A detailed analysis follows from the results of the Stage One survey in each place. This survey was looking for change in a person that they noticed and evidenced themselves in answering the questions. It also sought to understand their background in churchgoing and what previous experience this was in frequency of attending, and or number of churches engaged with. It is important to note that Stage One was not intended as a piece of quantitative research but principally as a filtering mechanism, offering a means to discover a suitable number of people for the qualitative piece of research this work sought to find and interview. Therefore, the following insights focus on what can be gleaned from the survey about the degree of change in a person before and after attending the fresh expression of church with respect to their faith, and whether any are the indicators which may have contributed to this. A full and rigorous quantitative analysis is not the purpose or intention of this thesis, from the Stage One Survey.

The metrics in focus are the two score differentials between question Seven and Ten, which was a potential maximum of 40 and the differential between question Nine (a) and Nine (b), which was potential maximum of 6. The first piece of evaluation was to notice in each fresh expression where the largest scores were and what, if any, other insights might be gleaned from their previous church experience or time differential since joining.

3.2.1. EGG's respondents

Of the forty respondents at EGG, just under half scored in the mid to high range. A mid to high-range score is defined as between 16-32 for the first differential of Questions Seven and Ten and between 3-6 for the second differential of Questions Nine (a) and Nine (b). No one scored above 32, but two respondents did score the maximum of 6 with the second differential.³⁹² The majority of those showing significant change were predominantly from Gen Y and seem to have been involved with EGG for a substantial number of years. This ranged from 3-5 years to over 10 years. This might point towards something about the nature of learning and discipleship within this community.

The second thing observed with this set of respondents from Question 5, was that the majority come from either (i) an occasional interaction with church, (ii) have never been to church or (iii) used to go to church but stopped attending, before then joining the fresh expression.³⁹³ That said, it is interesting that a significant proportion, around 30% of the high scorers were regular attenders of church before attending the fresh expression.³⁹⁴ This might further support the point above about learning and developing as disciples.

The third but more tentative observation is that the majority of the high-scorers at EGG all had minimal experience of other churches.³⁹⁵

³⁹² EGG codes in Appendix V, highest to lowest scores c.f. E-DM-04, 02, 01, 25, 28, 19, 20, 29, 17, 21, 10, 08, 14, 09, 07, 35.

³⁹³ EGG codes in Appendix V, E-DM-04, 02, 01, 25, 29, 17, 21, 10, 14, 09,

³⁹⁴ Ibid., c.f. E-DM-28, 19, 20, 08, 07, 35.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., c.f. E-DM-02, 01, 25, 19, 29, 21, 08, 09, 07, 35.

Surprisingly only three people recorded their background to church as, ‘Never been to church or hardly ever.’³⁹⁶ Nine respondents recorded that they ‘Used to go to church but stopped,’ and demonstrated a higher score in their change differential questions.³⁹⁷ Only four people noted they ‘Went occasionally to church,’ one of whom’s score (E-DM-31) showed a negative figure in the Hoge questions (Seven and Ten) but a differential score of 4 in the relationship change to Jesus.³⁹⁸ This suggests that something was most likely misunderstood in the questionnaire. Nevertheless, this illustrates that the inclusion of two methods of change questions in the questionnaire was a justified approach.

Looking at the length of time the respondents had been involved at EGG, it was unsurprising that no one completed the questionnaire who was new to EGG. One person had joined in the last four to six months. Four people had joined in the last year, twenty-five per cent had been attending for one to two years, with nearly fifty percent being part of EGG for between five and ten years. Only four of this number had been part of EGG for more than ten years. These numbers are a reasonable indication that those who attend EGG are committed. Only time will offer something of a fair comparison to other mainline denominational churches.

3.2.2. NOW’s respondents

It is important to note that none of the respondents from NOW were able to be followed up. In some ways therefore this data was not used for

³⁹⁶ Ibid., c.f. E-DM-01, 21, 22

³⁹⁷ Ibid., c.f. E-DM-04, 06, 10, 23, 29, 38,

³⁹⁸ Ibid., c.f. E-DM-02, 09, 14, 31

the intended outcome. However, it is data that is of interest as it gives some comparison with the other fresh expressions. Seven of the twenty-four respondents scored in the mid to high range for the differential between questions Seven and Ten,³⁹⁹ the highest score being 34. The generational spread of these respondents included: three from Gen X, two Baby Boomers, one Gen Y and one Pre-War. Four recorded only 'Occasionally went to church' and two recorded that they had 'Never been to church or hardly ever.' The top-scoring respondent did not complete this box. Two of the seven had been part of NOW for '3-5 years,' four chose the '1-2 years' and one chose '7-12 months.'

For questions Nine (a) and Nine (b), seven people showed a differential score between 4-6 (no one scored 3) but interestingly these were not the same people. The references N-P-07 and N-P-09 were not part of this group, scoring 2 and 0 respectively, who had scored much higher in the first differential (18 and 34). However, N-P-02 and N-P-01, were included, both scoring 4.⁴⁰⁰ So again as at EGG, the different questions brought responses that note significant change.

It is interesting to note that the vast majority of the respondents at NOW record that they 'Went regularly to church' and scored low between the two sets of differential questions. However, those who had 'Never been to church or hardly ever' (3 recorded)⁴⁰¹ or those who 'Went occasionally to church' (4 recorded)⁴⁰² all scored higher, between two sets of differential

³⁹⁹ NOW codes in Appendix V, highest to lowest scores c.f. N-P-09, 06, 04, 03, N-DM-39, N-P-05, 07.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., c.f. N-P-05, 06, 04, 03, N-DM-39, N-P-02, 01.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., c.f. N-P-02, 03, 05.

⁴⁰² Ibid., c.f. N-P-04, 06, 07, N-DM-39

questions, demonstrating something of the impact NOW had on those with little or no church background.

Looking at the length of time NOW respondents had been participating, there is almost a full representation of time intervals represented. This information demonstrates new people were attending on an annual basis⁴⁰³ and there were long established attenders.⁴⁰⁴

Considering the overall information and scores, one tentative inference might conclude that NOW was established by very committed Christians, hence the low scores from those long-established members. However, NOW was also drawing new people in from more un-churched backgrounds and beginning to see significant change in their recorded values of behaviour, belief, and experience, relative to how they respond to Christ and in the way that influences their lives. However, no one from a de-churched background took part in the Stage One survey from NOW.

3.2.3. ROD's respondents

Eighteen ROD respondents completed the Stage One survey, six scored in the mid to high range for the differential between questions Seven and Ten, ranging between 30 and 19.⁴⁰⁵ Three were Gen Y, two were Millennials and one was from the Gen X era. Four recorded that they 'Used to go to church but stopped.' Their follow up detail recorded that this gap

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 1-3 months N-P-08, 7-12 months N-P-02, 05, N-DM-41, 45, 1-2 years N-P-01, 04, 06, 07, N-DM-39, 42.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., c.f. 5-10 years N-P-10, 11, N-DM-43, 3-5 years N-P-03, 09, 12, N-DM-40,44, 46, 47, 38, 49, 50.

⁴⁰⁵ ROD codes in Appendix V, highest to lowest scores c.f. R-P-03, 09, 04, 05, 06, 01.

was around eighteen months for three of the responses.⁴⁰⁶ The other respondents left this space blank. Surprisingly the other two higher scorers noted that they ‘Went to church regularly,’ indicating that participation at ROD had brought significant change despite their previous church experience and regular attendance.⁴⁰⁷

As observed in EGG and NOW the responses to questions Nine (a) and Nine (b) presented similar results. Six people from ROD scored between 4-5 (3/3), no one scored 6 or 3 and one new person was included in this differential set (R-P-02). Their response in relation to the questions about Jesus was a very marked difference (score of 5), whereas R-P-09 now recorded a low score (1), in contrast to their high score (24) from questions Seven and Ten. Only by further investigation will such intriguing results gain greater clarity and hence the purpose of Stage Two’s qualitative interviews to uncover the detail behind such responses.

Looking at the overall demographic of ROD respondents there is an even split between female and male, the majority are Gen Y or younger,⁴⁰⁸ with a fairly equal spread of time in which each has been participating at ROD.⁴⁰⁹ From this information, ROD is a long-standing small community, the majority of which have known each other for more than five years and form something of a stable community. It seems that this multigenerational

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., c.f. R-P-04, 05, 06.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., c.f. R-P-01, 03.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., c.f. Millennial R-P-06, 09, Gen Y R-P-01, 02, 03, 05, 07, 08, 10, 11, 14, 17, Gen X R-P-04, 13, Pre-War R-P-12, 15, 16, 18

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., c.f. more than 10 years R-P-01, 07, 11, 13, 16, 18, 5-10 years R-P-03, 10, 14, 17, 3-5 years R-P-04, 05, 06, 15 and 1-2 years R-P-09

context (with the absence of Baby Boomers) is one that others have found possible to join in relatively recent years.

3.3. Responses Rates

In assessing the volume of responses, this was contrasted in proportion to the recognised regular numbers attending the respective fresh expression of church. If all four fresh expressions of church had participated the target range would have been between one hundred and one hundred and fifty responses from a potential gross of around two hundred and sixty people. This would represent a response rate potential of forty to sixty percent from the combined communities. Baruch and Holtom argue that this would be a good rate of response.⁴¹⁰

As BAT did not form part of the Stage One survey this reduced the collective community to around two hundred people and equated to a potential equivalent response spectrum of between eighty and one hundred and twenty respondents. As noted earlier, the options to discover a new venue or to persist with BAT were not possible within the constraints of capacity and time for the researcher. Regrettable though this is, the volume of data gathered was considered sufficient for analysis to bring validity to the research for Stage Two to be considered.

Prior to the Stage One survey, a conversation took place with each respective fresh expression leadership team. This was to determine when, where, how the survey should be done, what might help facilitate it, and was

⁴¹⁰ Baruch and Holtom, 2008

there a preferred format by which to receive the questionnaire. The advice offered by each respective leadership team was followed by the researcher.

The response rate for EGG represented around fifty per cent of their regular worshipping community. Though their numbers fluctuate month to month, with a significant number of new people visiting (one aspect of their community life), the leadership acknowledged the forty responses were about half their regular committed attendees. It is notable that EGG had the largest demographic of respondents from Gen Y and the highest response rate from those who chose the online version of the questionnaire. This could be down to several factors of culture, peer dynamics, or access to smart phones, but nevertheless it helped the response rate.

Also, it significantly helped that one person from EGG's leadership, who was not the team leader, took on the responsibility of organising, facilitating, and returning the survey at this venue. All correspondence with the researcher was clear and the online data easy to collate. As the date and time frame were recorded by the Dot Mailer survey software it is easy to see that the responses were made over twelve different days and various times. There were two days on which significantly more responses were made around the same time, demonstrating a specific time being given by the church to do this in a group gathering.

NOW also showed something similar for their online responses being completed around the same day and time. The paper responses were gathered over two separate Sundays, one week apart. NOW's team leader acted as the facilitator and coordinator. The response received by the research from NOW represents around twenty-five percent of their regular

worship community. There was a problem recognised with some of the paper returns. These were posted to the researcher but undelivered and returned to the sender. At the second attempt these returns were successfully delivered.

ROD's demographic predominantly came from a Council Estate onto which the church backs. The advice of the leadership team was to work purely on a paper version and for the researcher to be present to explain any questions from those willing to participate. Over eighty percent of the community were attending a Christian festival at which the researcher was present, and the survey took place at a specific time and location at which this community gathered for lunch. All but one of the ROD community present, participated in the questionnaire, giving a response rate for this fresh expression of church's regular community at over eighty percent.

The time investment and relationship with the respective leadership teams of the fresh expressions of church evidenced a fruitful response in Stage One's remote involvement of the researcher, with the exception of ROD. The questionnaire's overall return produced a pleasing response rate for a survey investigating previously undiscovered data of this nature.⁴¹¹ This piece of research could be classified either as internal (because the research was known to the leadership of the church and had offered support to them previously) or external (because most of the respondents did not know the researcher and would be unaware of any previous involvement with them). Nevertheless, the response rate generated falls more within the

⁴¹¹ Note the blog from Survey Gizmo accessed 8th May 2019 <https://www.surveygizmo.com/resources/blog/survey-response-rates/>

dynamics of an internal survey. If this is a fair assumption, it is useful to recognise this inference in the approach taken in developing the process of interviews for Stage Two.

In summary, the following are the lessons learnt from the response rates and experience of this Stage One survey. Firstly, that good relationship with the leadership is key in learning when and how to undertake such work. The strength of this relationship makes a significant difference in the frequency of contact required, and the likely outcome of what might be agreed in principle actually being carried out in practice.

Secondly, being present at the time the surveys were completed, or having a dedicated member of the local leadership team to help at the time, proved to be very beneficial and increased the response rate potential, especially since someone was able to check that everything had been completed. Thirdly, both paper⁴¹² and online⁴¹³ surveys have their strengths and weaknesses, but offering both increases the potential response rate. Fourthly, a dedicated time to fill in the survey as an activity of the group helps with the general understanding and value of the survey and thus increases the potential response rate.

3.4. Coding

Four sets of questions held the data required to inform the selection process for Stage Two; Questions Five and Six held the church background information and the summative scores of Question Ten minus Seven and

⁴¹² Paper copies can get lost in the post but are more likely to be fully completed.

⁴¹³ Online surveys can suffer from the wrong button being pressed too early and incomplete forms being submitted but once submitted the data is instantly made accessible.

Nine (b) minus Nine (a), held the information with regard to what change had been recognised. Table 3.2 illustrates the coding applied.

Table 3.2 Coding Values used in Stage One

Qu. 5 Church Background	Never	Used to	Occasional	Regular
<i>Code A values</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>
Qu. 6 No.of Churches	0	1-2	3-5	5
<i>Code B values</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>
Qu. 9b - 9a total	6-5	4-3	2-1	0
<i>Code C values</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>
Qu. 10 - 7 total	40-31	30-21	20-11	10-0
<i>Code D values</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>

Therefore, the maximum score for any respondent would be sixteen, the minimum being four. The proposed selection criteria for establishing a selection pool to approach for interview would have to score at least eight or above. This score would one way or another denote some significant change through the fresh expression of church, whilst allowing for a wide number of variables, so that people from a spectrum of responses may contribute to Stage Two without diminishing the learning potential from this research.

This method of coding allowed these judgments to be made and ensured the selection for Stage Two Interviews was not arbitrary but paid close attention to the categories through which change was observed. A number of respondents made the selection unexpectedly, with surprising

criteria, such as being a regular church attendee, and yet their inclusion could be justified by the qualifying score denoting some form of significant change.

This method of coding produced a potential pool of thirty-seven candidates from the eighty-two surveys returned in Stage One. The full details of those qualifying are presented in Table 1.4 in Appendix VI.⁴¹⁴ The significant data is as follows. Only six of the respondents had never been to church before. Twelve respondents had stopped going to church before re-engaging through the fresh expression of church and eight respondents had attended occasionally, prior to joining the fresh expression of church. The remaining ten respondents all attended regularly but noted significant change to qualify for further study.

It is interesting to note those who demonstrated a high degree of change in their lives between Questions Seven and Ten, and Nine (a) and Nine (b) are from a range of church backgrounds and not exclusively from an 'unchurched' or a 'de-churched' background.⁴¹⁵ This is further justification that the form of coding has proved worthwhile and elicited an expanding dynamic for Stage Two to consider. The immediate inference exposed by the coding is that context of fresh expressions of church are not only bringing significant change to the lives of those who have no church background but also those who have identified that they come from a regular church background.

⁴¹⁴ Table 1.4 Coding Values - Gross Scores achieving the Criteria (Descending), Appendix VI, pp.315-16

⁴¹⁵ This will pose an interesting study for Stage Two and for the learning that may be gleaned for evangelism amongst those who perhaps have grown up with a church environment or are quite familiar with traditional forms of church, but the new forms have evoked some significant spiritual change within them.

One further observation from those achieving the criteria set by this coding, is that each of the fresh expressions of church is reasonably well represented across the church background classifications.⁴¹⁶ Thus inferring that this is not all new people, neither are these initiatives only reaching existing people with some form of church connection. Furthermore, the age range for all three places has some metric of diversity and those attending are not from one type of demographic alone.⁴¹⁷

Lastly, the list of those achieving the criteria demonstrates a good selection of potential candidates from each of the three fresh expressions of church, despite their different contexts, origins, and nuances of practice in: rhythm, mission, and styles of worship.⁴¹⁸ This might imply that these new forms of church are doing something different. Is it their intention to try and reach out in more apt contextual ways or are there other reasons why each place has shown some measures of success in seeing change in peoples' values towards faith in Jesus Christ?

For completeness and any potential learning, it was important for this chapter to include those not achieving the criteria and notice any patterns from the data, presented in Table 1.5, Appendix VI.⁴¹⁹

Looking at the coding scores, with the exception of four people, it was somewhat reassuring that almost all those not qualifying for Stage Two, were all from regular church backgrounds.⁴²⁰ This is not to say those from

⁴¹⁶ Table 1.4, pp.315-16

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., pp.315-16

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., pp.315-16

⁴¹⁹ Table 1.5 Coding Values - Gross Scores not achieving the Criteria (Descending) Appendix VI pp.316-18

⁴²⁰ Table 1.5, pp.316-18, exceptions: E-DM-06, E-DM-15, N-DM-49 and N-P-09

regular church backgrounds do not undergo change, but it does amplify the evidence through the coding that those experiencing these fresh expressions of church from unchurched or de-churched backgrounds are evidencing significant change.

There was one person who scored highly under code D but entered no response for Question Nine (a) to be scored under Code C.⁴²¹ Had they competed this question, it is feasible this score would have been eligible to add to the selected pool.

Another significant observation from those not achieving the criteria for selection is that the vast majority (thirty out of forty-five) record a 0 score, showing no change in their answers to Questions Nine (a) and Nine (b).⁴²² This Question particularly invited their choice with respect to their view or relationship to Jesus, making it a marked differential to the Hoge questions of the Intrinsic Religious Scale, which are more generalised questions and do not specify the name of the deity believed in. This could either be understood as the ambiguity of interpretation by the reader in Question Nine, such as: what is the difference between ‘Jesus is worth taking seriously’ and ‘Jesus could be for me’ and hence they have failed to answer the question well or it is that these respondents are experienced Christians, so no change is recorded for Question Nine. It could be that they have found something in the fresh expression of church that has made them want to be part of this community. It could be argued that the Hoge Questions draw out a greater spectrum of opinion, hence the scores show

⁴²¹ Reference E-DM-20, Table 1.5 p.316

⁴²² Table 1.5, pp.316-18

more change between Questions Ten and Seven, than Nine (a) and Nine (b), which may be present in any community of faith and not just fresh expressions of church.

Nevertheless, the method of coding for the defined combination of questions has fruitfully separated a significant sample for Stage Two to progress.

Chapter 4

Stage Two Data Results

WHAT EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN DISCOVERED?

Practical theology takes human experience seriously and this chapter contains much of the real value of this thesis in the participants' lived narratives.⁴²³ The individual data from twelve Semi-Structured Responsive Qualitative Interviews is properly coded and summarised with recognition of the themes which arise. This chapter details the follow up to Stage One's data and provides a narrative to the initial selection pool of the interviews achieved. In representing the key data, significant pieces of the participants' stories are presented to give context and understanding to their narratives.

The methodology, as detailed in Section 2.7 of the thesis, is grounded in a modified model of practical theology, drawing on the pastoral cycle's stage of 'experience' and asking the question 'What is happening?'⁴²⁴ It also builds on the wealth of literature surveyed in Chapter 1. This allows close attention to be paid to the four conduits of Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God. This becomes a framework to examine the data presented in this chapter.⁴²⁵

These four conduits will act as the affective method of code by which it is possible to observe what this data reveals.⁴²⁶ This code will be

⁴²³ Swinton and Mowat, 2016 p.18

⁴²⁴ Graham, Walton, and Ward, 2005 pp.188-9; Ward, 2017a p.98

⁴²⁵ Chapter 1.4, Chapter 2.7

⁴²⁶ Affective coding methods investigate subjective qualities of human experience. Saldan'a, 2009 p.124

represented alongside the participants' data using a superscript abbreviation for each word, presented as;

Behaviour = *Bh*, Belonging = *Bl*, Experience = *Ep*, Belief = *Bf*.⁴²⁷

The intention is to recognise a number of key points, while not distracting from the flow of the narrative.

4.1. Introductory Statements

Twelve semi-structured, responsive interviews were achieved from two of the three fresh expressions of church.⁴²⁸ Considering the length of time between Stage One and Stage Two's Interviews, achieving interviews with one third of the original pool of thirty-seven was acceptable, considering the transient nature of current society among a younger demographic. The length of time between Stage One and Stage Two did severely hamper the successful follow-up of potential candidates for interview.

Table 4.1. below details their availability status for interview, the date the interview was completed, and the summary details and scores from questions Five, Six, Nine b minus Nine a and Ten minus Seven, thus qualifying them for Stage Two.

⁴²⁷ In some places these words are directly specified as part of their narratives in the text.

⁴²⁸ Harding, 2013 p.31; Rubin and Rubin, 2012: pp. 5-10

Table 4.1. Stage Two Interview Status

Fresh-Expressions-Research-Survey-Stage-2 Candidates for Interview

DThM Ref	STAGE 2 INTERVIEW Response?	Interview Status Date/Time Completed	Qu.5 Before you started going to the fresh expression of church named in question 1, please choose below which of the following most accurately describes your background of any other previous church attendance.	Qu.6 How many different churches have you attended (regularly)	Qu. 9b-9a	Qu. 10-7	Stage 1 Codes Sum
E-DM-01	NOT POSSIBLE		Never been to church or hard	1-2	6	29	14
E-DM-02	Y	C 27-11-2016	Went occasionally to church,	1-2	6	32	13
E-DM-04	NOT POSSIBLE		Used to go to church but sto	3-5	5	32	13
E-DM-07	NAS2		Went regularly to church, (mc	1-2	2	16	8
E-DM-08	NAS2		Went regularly to church, (mc	1-2	3	19	9
E-DM-09	NAS2		Went occasionally to church,	1-2	4	17	10
E-DM-10	NAS2		Used to go to church but sto	3-5	4	19	10
E-DM-14	NOT POSSIBLE		Went occasionally to church,	3-5	2	18	8
E-DM-17	MOVED		how long ago did you stop a church? - 2 years	3-5	1	21	10
E-DM-19	NAS2		Went regularly to church, (mc	1-2	2	26	9
E-DM-21	NOT POSSIBLE		Never been to church or hard	1-2	5	19	13
E-DM-22	Y	C 27-11-2016	Never been to church or hard	1-2	3	7	11
E-DM-23	NAS2		Used to go to church but sto	1-2	4	11	11
E-DM-25	Y	C 27-11-2016	how long ago did you stop a church? - I'd stopped going	1-2	5	27	13
E-DM-28	UNI		Went regularly to church, (mc	3-5	3	27	9
E-DM-29	Y	C 27-11-2016	Used to go to church but sto	1-2	3	23	12
E-DM-31	N		Went occasionally to church,	1-2	4	-10	9
E-DM-36	Y	C 27-11-2016	Went regularly to church, (mc	3-5	5	14	9
E-DM-38	Y	C 27-11-2016	Used to go to church but sto	1-2	0	7	8
N-DM-39	NAS2		Went occasionally to church,	1-2	5	26	11
N-P-02	NAS2		Never been to church or hard	0	4	13	13
N-P-03	NAS2		Never been to church or hard	1-2	5	30	14
N-P-04	NAS2		Went occasionally to church,	1-2	5	30	12
N-P-05	NAS2		Never been to church or hard	0	6	19	14
N-P-06	NOT POSSIBLE		Went occasionally to church,	3-5	5	31	12
N-P-07	NOT POSSIBLE		Went occasionally to church,	3-5	2	18	8
R-P-01	Y	C 21-4-2017	Went regularly to church, (mc	0	5	19	11
R-P-02	NOT POSSIBLE		Went regularly to church, (mc	3-5	5	7	8
R-P-03	TBC	TBC	Used to go to church but sto	1-2	5	30	13
R-P-04	Y	C 19-4-2017	Used to go to church but sto	3-5	4	21	11
R-P-05	Y	C 19-4-2017	Used to go to church but sto	3-5	4	20	10
R-P-06	Y	C 19-4-2017	Used to go to church but sto	3-5	4	19	10
R-P-07	Y	C 20-4-2017	Used to go to church but sto	1-2	2	14	10
R-P-08	N		Used to go to church but sto	3-5	2	8	8
R-P-09	Y	C 20-4-2017	Went regularly to church, (mc	1-2	1	24	9
R-P-10	?		Went regularly to church, (mc	1-2	2	12	8
R-P-11	?		Went regularly to church, (mc	1-2	1	13	8

Looking at the reasons why potential interviewees were unavailable, it seems the most common reason was Stage One respondents had not filled in their details to be contacted for Stage Two and therefore had declared themselves Not Available for Stage Two (NAS2). In discussing this with the leadership of the respective fresh expressions, the most common reason was the last page was either missed or Stage One participants pressed the 'enter/return' button on their devices rather than the next arrow and therefore submitted their form too early. If this was to be repeated, a simple page numbering system should be used such as page 'x of y' to inform the participant of how much is left of the survey. Instruction was given not to press 'return' but inevitably mistakes were made by some participants.

The other major reason from the time gap was that almost a fifth (seven) of the potential interviewees had either moved from the fresh expressions of church or were facing life challenges and it was not possible to set up an interview.

The remaining potentials represented approximately one third of the Stage One selected candidates from EGG (six of nineteen) and just over half of the selected candidates from ROD (six of eleven). None of the qualifying candidates from NOW proved possible to find, despite the leadership from NOW making some extensive investigation.

4.2. Summary Data Gathered from Stage Two, Semi-Structured Responsive Interviews

The following data from ten interviews with twelve people, (six from ROD, six from EGG) represents the essential parts of their narratives.

The quotes used capture the key points from their transcripts and are supported with introductory or explanatory information to highlight my observations from the recorded interviews transcribed and coded as described above. Also, within this data is a small amount of ethnographic detail to present their unique personalities. It was a privilege to hear how their stories of faith in Jesus changed and developed.

These were unique accounts, full of complexity and therefore initially best represented as individual presentations, rather than as a consolidated collective of themes, grouping their accounts. To do the later would diminish the rich portrayal of their characters and stories. However, the collective themes rising from their data are summarised at the close of this chapter and evidenced appropriately.

4.2.1 ROD Narratives, reference R-P-01. Paul

Paul is in his late twenties and apart from a period away at university has predominantly lived in a large port town in Lincolnshire. In Survey One he scored five in the difference between questions Nine b and Nine a, and he scored nineteen between Questions Ten and Seven, both showing significant change. His coded score from Stage One was eleven.

Paul is a tall, friendly character, dressed in skinny jeans, with black converse and lumber-jack shirt. He is a quite open and affable person in his approach but clearly from his data he has suffered periods of challenge to his mental health and well-being. He loves music gigs and tattoos. Paul has known significant periods of unemployment but is currently employed in a caring role and sees this as a vocational appointment.

Paul's data shows an interesting set of influences that make up his narrative from the interview. He started at one Methodist Church, in his words:

My mum put me in a Methodist Church called Haven since I was a kid...I didn't enjoy being at Sunday School and having to go into church and listen to someone talk for an hour; I didn't enjoy that.⁴²⁹

The Youth Club at this church was the activity which kept Paul attending. When the Youth Club closed at Haven Methodist Church, he started attending a different church with Youth Activities run by the same person in the Circuit.⁴³⁰ This was ROD. The Methodist Church at which ROD was based closed but ROD was viable and was given the suite of premises to carry on as a fresh expression of church. Though the people were fun, and he enjoyed the activities and trips, Paul notes at this point in his life:

I was never really interested in the God stuff, it was just somewhere safe to go really and hang out with people^{Bl}.⁴³¹

In 2005, while attending ROD, Paul went for the first time to the Christian Event called Easter People. A weeklong Christian festival post-Easter, based at the seaside town of Scarborough. The youth venue was based in Westborough Methodist Church.

Paul imagined it might be boring despite what others had said, but decided to attend the event. Looking back, Paul identified this as a key

⁴²⁹ Paul's Transcript p.2

⁴³⁰ A Circuit is the Methodist term for a group of churches. It has both ecclesia and missional status.

⁴³¹ Paul's Transcript pp.2-3

moment in his life in coming to faith in Jesus and using his present theological knowledge, some twelve years on from that experience, he describes what happened in one of the youth sessions.

All of a sudden I thought, I feel like crying and I thought wow why do I feel like crying and at the time I tried stopping myself from crying. Feeling so stupid for crying and I don't know why when there is no one else crying because I could feel the Holy Spirit inside me^{Ep}... and then when I looked around others were crying and being filled with the Holy Spirit as well and I knew at that point that there was something else going on that everyone else was experiencing the same thing that the Holy Spirit had descended into that room at that time...I never felt the Holy Spirit move before and like it says in Corinthians we live by faith and not by sight. You can't see it you can only experience it. And I felt that divine experience within me and I knew at that point that that was the Holy Spirit moving and that's when I thought I'd give my life to God.⁴³²

An invitation was offered at the event and Paul responded^{Bf}. Paul references that this was his first encounter but there have been many more experiences of a similar nature and when asked to describe the experiences he said,

It's like the best feeling ever...I feel at peace...connected to God, like He was stood next to me and I feel that everything that I have been going through has just disappeared and nothing around me is existing and I feel peace in my heart^{Ep}.⁴³³

Probing other possible influences pre and post this experience, Paul relayed that he was not reading the Bible at that age as he could not get to grips with it. He did appreciate Christian music and went to a number of gigs full of gospel content with contemporary music.⁴³⁴

⁴³² Ibid., p. 3

⁴³³ Ibid., p. 5

⁴³⁴ Ibid., p. 6

The significant change came for Paul when he went to University in Hull and his faith 'slipped' to being non-existent from 2008 to 2012 while away from ROD. He said, "I was really as far away from God as I could be at that time."⁴³⁵

Paul gave an emotional explanation which left a sensitive pause in the interview. He had desperately wanted to make his family proud by going to university and getting a good job and remaining in Hull. However, debt and an obsession with a broken relationship brought out a violent and aggressive behaviour tied to alcohol. Paul found himself in a very dark place and wanting to end his life. Responding to the enquiry about what helped Paul, he said,

I had these thoughts of not wanting to be around anymore, ...it just came to me one night...I was so low. What can I do about it? I'll text the people back home and they have got a prayer line where you can text anytime to this prayer line and they can respond to you... I thought I had never prayed for ages at this point and I thought well why don't I just pray to God?⁴³⁶

The ROD prayer line messaged Paul back that night^{Bh} and that began a link to return to Grimsby and leave the past destructive life in Hull behind. To learn how things went from there, a question of how things changed for Paul going back to ROD was asked. Paul said,

In all honesty I wasn't sure if I would go back to ROD when I came back from Uni... I felt so ashamed about my past life I'd been living at Uni... I had it in my mind that I would go back but when it came to every Sunday I thought, 'oh no I can't do it because I will get judged on this past life that I was living'... but I did pluck the courage to return one evening and it wasn't like that as

⁴³⁵ Ibid., p. 6

⁴³⁶ Ibid., pp.6-7

everyone was really happy to see me back. It was great to see a lot of folk.⁴³⁷

Though Paul had felt very nervous being there, the community not only made him feel welcome^{Bh} but within the year had asked him to actively participate, join the worship band, sing, and play guitar^{Bl}. This has led to Paul becoming a worship leader for ROD. Furthermore, his development in faith at a subsequent Christian Festival in Scarborough called ECG in 2017, led to his re-affirmation of Baptism^{Bf}. In his own words, Paul would put belief in God as the strongest reason for his coming to faith:

People say, ‘I won’t believe God until it becomes evident to me that He is there’ but I don’t think it will ever become evident because that’s not how faith works. I do believe in the Holy Spirit and it comes upon you. So, belief was the strongest reason for me coming to my faith.⁴³⁸

Paul denotes his experiences of the Holy Spirit as presenting authenticity for belief in God. He describes it ‘becoming evident’ in a way that might suggest this was “a revelation of human knowledge” instead of faith being “a gift from God” but this is not the case. He does describe the experience of the Holy Spirit ‘coming upon him’ as revelatory to cognitive ‘Belief.’ This may appear to be a contradictory statement, but it is most likely he is not deconstructing the terms in relation to how they were presented to him, and therefore honing in on the end result of belief rather than the means to which it came, which is the experiential event.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., pp.7-8

⁴³⁸ Ibid., p.9

One further observation arises from his narrative that I wish to make more explicit and that is of his perception of 'being judged,' but specifically not being judged by ROD as it proved. ROD's behaviour towards him proved instrumental in Paul returning to the community and subsequently redeveloping his faith. This concept was more significant than I feel he realised and worthy of significant note.

4.2.2. ROD Narratives, reference R-P-04. Lynda, R-P-05. Stuart, R-P-06. Martyn

This was a joint interview with a mother and her two sons. Lynda is a single parent and full-time carer for Stuart and Martyn with their respective conditions of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Martyn was at school studying for his General Certificate of Secondary Education exams (GCSEs) and Stuart was finishing Level Three of a Motor Vehicle Course at college and hoping to gain an apprenticeship or a job in this field. In Survey One, Lynda, Stuart, and Martyn all scored four in the difference between questions Nine b and Nine a and scored twenty-one (Lynda), twenty (Stuart), and nineteen (Martyn) between Questions Ten and Seven, all showing significant change. Lynda's coded score from Stage One was eleven and the boys scored ten.

While this is predominately Lynda's data, though Martyn and Stuart both contributed, it was difficult to draw out any depth of detail from the questions. However, they were under no obligation to agree or support their mother's narrative but freely did and without any influence or encouragement from Lynda. This added emphasis to all Lynda conveyed.

Lynda grew up under the influence of an atheist father who would not tolerate God being mentioned in the house, alongside a Catholic Auntie who seemed very different to her other Aunties, more loving and forgiving, and made Lynda curious about faith^{Bh}. None of the others in her family of brothers or her mother expressed Christian belief.

Lynda first connected with a church when Stuart was born and attended their parent and toddler group^{Bl} along with her family members and was drawn on to an Alpha Course run by the New Life Centre Church. Lynda said the prayer of commitment on the Alpha Away Day^{Bf}, though she did not understand it like she does now, it was instrumental in her realisation that ‘somebody was there.’ Lynda intimates the struggles early life presented her and attributes this understanding of somebody being there to the reason she is alive today.^{Ep}

As the boys grew they also attended this church. At this point in time, someone at the church, who called themselves a Christian, behaved in a way that Lynda felt ran contrary to what was acceptable or what God was like: loving, compassionate, and forgiving. Lynda became very cross about this and decided to leave the church. Though there were lots of good things at this church, this experience was bad enough for Lynda to stop attending.⁴³⁹

The three of them record in Survey One that they stopped going to a church for a period of eighteen months. Through a special needs group for children and families, Lynda met Elaine’s sister. Elaine is one of the founding leaders at ROD. So Lynda having made friends with Elaine’s sister

⁴³⁹ Lynda, Stuart and Martyn’s Transcript pp.9-10

and by her invitation, subsequently decided to give ROD a try. The boys started off in the youth groups^{Bl} and Lynda asked what happened at ROD for adults and started attending. She said:

It was a slow process, wasn't it...I had to build the trust up again with the church.⁴⁴⁰

It was evident Lynda was concerned about how the boys would behave and how they would be received by ROD. In response to the question 'What sort of things helped you remain at ROD?' Lynda described the positive behaviour of the community at ROD toward them as a family^{Bh+Bl}. Despite the boys ADHD, the ROD community embraced them like they were their own family and they felt truly accepted as they were^{Bh+Bl}. Support was prevalent with no expectation to be something you were not.⁴⁴¹

The boys both affirm that ROD's welcome had been very important^{Bh}. In trying to understand the scores from Survey One and what helped Lynda, Stuart, and Martyn grow in faith, what had made the difference for them, Lynda describes an incident while on an Emmaus retreat, when God spoke to her^{Ep} and the unfolding life-changing experience:

I was in a really bad place and I didn't quite realise how much I had been controlled in my life...and God actually spoke to me; it was crazy but He did. I went to Elaine and I said I think I am going mad... He has told me this thing and I had to choose. He told me these three things about three friends I had in my life. One was going to really betray me, it was going to knock me off my feet. One was going to be a friendship from this, and the other one is going to walk away.⁴⁴²

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., p.2

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., p.3

⁴⁴² Ibid., pp.4-5

Lynda explained that each of these things came true. The betrayal came as one of her friends was having an affair with her husband, another of her close friends could not believe what was happening and walked away from their friendship, and the third friend has become really close. This third friend, Mary, though least connected to God, had been praying for Lynda even though she did not really believe and is now on a journey of faith herself^{Ep+Bh}.

Lynda went on to explain the rest of the emotive encounter at Emmaus that changed her perspective about herself and God's love for her, while confessing that she did not believe she was sharing to this depth and would have not done so several years before, revealing the change that had occurred in her life since.

I hid behind my children and I hid behind my husband a lot. I had never been away from them and it was really hard. It was about love and that's what changed me because I thought what is this place, this isn't love. It wasn't the love I understood as a child and it was all about God's love and it was so overwhelming. I thought wow! I just felt safe^{Ep}. I just can't describe it.⁴⁴³

This safety opened Lynda up to participate at a greater depth than she had done before, but this in turn led to a panic attack because she had faced so much in her life that was difficult. Lynda describes what happened after this metaphorical exercise of placing in a basket the troubling things you want to give to God and her swift exit from the room and running away to hide in the toilet. She said:

I couldn't breathe and I thought I was going to die... I was praying in the toilet to bring myself round and I said, 'Please Lord let there be just one person outside,' because

⁴⁴³ Ibid. pp.5-6

I only knew two people. I just need someone to be there. Just one person and I don't care who it is who can help me get out of here and calm down. My instinct was I didn't know what to give him, I had that much crap in my life I got in a panic thinking, which bit do I give him first. I thought I have too much to give him I can't give him it all. And that's what made me panic, so I prayed and I calmed myself down and then outside was Elaine with her arms open^{Ep+Bh}. So she said, 'Come on' and I said 'I want to go home.' She said, 'Come on we are just going to give Him one thing, just take one thing.' Then from that day I opened up about lots and lots of things in my childhood to Elaine because God showed me lots of things and I am learning to not let people control me the way they did. I am actually learning to be on my own and I am realising I don't need a man to make me happy. God has worked in so many ways and through coming to ROD.⁴⁴⁴

Lynda portrays this threshold time as being the releasing of her faith to flourish and discovering confidence in herself and her deeper dependence upon God. She summarised this description by saying:

God loves you the way you are. I have never liked myself, I have always hated myself from the things that have happened but God's actually making me realised that. If I hate myself then it kind of upsets me but I have come to that point of getting to know myself and who I am.⁴⁴⁵

This sense of belonging was also recognised by Stuart and Martyn, noting the listening people did at ROD to both of them when Lynda and their dad split up.⁴⁴⁶ Although both lads believed in God and Jesus before attending ROD, Stuart and Martyn echoed their development at ROD by saying of belief that they knew, 'a little but not as much as we do now.'⁴⁴⁷

Martyn explained,

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., pp.6-7

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., p.10

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., p.12

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., p.8

It's like if you had a question you could go up to one of the staff like Charlie, Hannah or one of them and you could ask it and they would answer it, or not. They might say I can't answer it at the moment and they will go away look it up and then tell you the answer next time they see you... Praying lots has helped as well... Sometimes I do it on my own, like in bed but sometimes ask someone to pray with me... I just know that He is there because when my Mum and Dad split up He just like...helped me through it^{Ep+Bf}?⁴⁴⁸

Stuart and Martyn both said they were very likely to encourage others to come to ROD. Lynda described something more about Mary's journey, the friend whom she had become very close to. Though Mary thought Lynda was a 'bit wacky' at first, Mary started attending ROD and over time Mary has recognised the change in her own behaviour. From being quite an angry person, Mary is seeing God at work in her life and the calming difference that has brought to Mary's behaviour towards other people now.

Lynda's friend Mary, refers to Jesus as "the man upstairs," but knows she has been talking to him for months and has seen answers to her prayers for Lynda, despite not quite believing and seeing it as a test to see if God was there. Lynda recounts Mary saying,

there are so many amazing things happened that it's just got to be God because there is no other way it could be anything else.⁴⁴⁹

Revealed in these narratives are a blend of the conduits in which behaviour both facilitates challenge and opportunity for the participants' faith to be shaped and developed. It is interesting to note the bad experience at the first church did not cause Lynda to lose her faith in God, but rather the

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., pp.8, 12-13

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., pp.13-14

behaviour of those who called themselves Christian had caused this family to leave that community.

It is then the opposite behaviour that opens up a new encounter in which at one given moment looks like Lynda's world has come crashing down but the pathway leads to a greater healing. From this experience Lynda is led to a deeper friendship with a friend. That relationship opens up her friend's faith developing, in what it seems the Holy Spirit was already doing in the prayers of this person, who did not yet believe.

Again, there is the explicit evidence of a community that receives this family as they are with the implicit notion of not being judged in the way they were at their first church.

4.2.3. ROD Narratives, reference R-P-07. Colin

Colin is a white-collar shift-worker, twenty-six years in the job, for a Chemical company in Lincolnshire. A white, British man in his forties, married to Elaine (the same Elaine mentioned in Lynda's story) with grown up children and has always lived in the same area.

In Survey One, Colin scored two in the difference between questions Nine b and Nine a and he scored fourteen between Questions Ten and Seven. His coded score from Stage One was ten.

Colin's first connections with church were through his parents attending an Anglican parish church, before moving to a Methodist church^{Bl}. He did not know why they moved churches. Colin attended the Boys Brigade and then the church Youth Club where he met Elaine and, though

he had stopped going to church, through her encouragement started to attend the Bible Studies^{Bl}.

Colin was not part of ROD as it began but became involved several years in, after being asked to help out by Elaine^{Bl}. Colin relayed the change in the young people from the estate as they engaged with ROD and how they stopped swearing and through peer pressure helped each other remember they were in a church^{Bh}.⁴⁵⁰

He also noted,

when the youth came through the door they were wanting to ask all these questions and I wasn't able to do that. So, it was the core people who took it on and any question that came up they answered.⁴⁵¹

In response to the question of when and how faith started making sense for you, Colin described going to a small Bible studies group that met in someone's home. He also helped out with transport to Christian events^{Bl} and one evening responded to the call to faith. He said:

Something overpowered me and I just had to stand up and say yes I want to give my life to God, which Elaine was floored at that point because she had never seen me actually stand up in a service and yeah, there was a sort of glow around me^{Ep}.⁴⁵²

Probing more of what Colin meant he said,

It was like a gust of wind, sort of like lifting me up saying yes you are going to do this. I was sat there thinking no I'm not going to I don't want to, I'm scared and all of a sudden it was a case of, no I'm not. Why should I be scared of doing something as marvellous as this. So I stood up and it was wonderful... It's difficult, to try and explain what the feeling is, it's just overwhelming and you need to do it even though you don't want to do it yourself.

⁴⁵⁰ Colin's Transcript p.2

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., p.2-3

⁴⁵² Ibid., p.3

Your body just lifts up and you are there and oh I am stood up.⁴⁵³

Colin had been in other situations like this before but had never felt the urge to respond^{Ep}. In describing what changed after this event, Colin detailed the following:

Prior to that I was money orientated, I had to have money and spending money, just for myself, but since then it's a whole reversal where we have money and if someone needs it we give it away... I came to peace with God, I had done bad things in the past, like everyone does and I couldn't forgive myself. So I had read the Bible and it said that God does forgive you and how can He forgive you if you can't forgive yourself.⁴⁵⁴

It became clear that Colin had shared this problem in the Bible Study Group and someone had offered to pray for him.^{Bh} Colin felt his burden was lifted^{Ep} and this moment above was the next opportunity he had to respond to the Gospel and ask God to come into his life^{Bf}. He describes the feeling:

It's just like being on the ocean, it can be really rough seas then it's just calm and that's how I felt. Inside I was just churning, I couldn't forgive myself and then the overwhelming peace where God does forgive^{Ep} and it was me that was holding back...⁴⁵⁵

Colin also explained that previously the desire to attend church had been with reluctance but after this experience he wanted to go to church to learn and to get to know God better.

Colin is proactive in his faith both at work and in ROD. People now come to him with their problems and prayer needs. Though it is not easy in his work environment his gentle witness is respected and admired.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., p.3-4

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., p.4-6

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., p.7

It was clear that Colin knew his barrier around forgiveness and also recognised when this changed for him. The work of the Holy Spirit here in both the action in the Bible Study and Colin's response in the Christian event culminated in establishing his faith and life changes in behaviour.

4.2.4. ROD Narratives, reference R-P-09. Stephanie

Stephanie is in her mid-teens, in the process of taking her GCSEs, and is hoping to go to college to study medicine and become a paramedic. Stephanie is bright and engaged, unfazed by the interview, and accompanied by Elaine.

In Survey One, Stephanie scored one in the difference between questions Nine b and Nine a and she scored twenty-four between Questions Ten and Seven, both showing significant change. Her coded score from Stage One was nine.

Originally born in a large market town in South Yorkshire, Stephanie moved in her early life to her mother's hometown, a large coastal seaport. Stephanie was first invited along to ROD by her Godmother who attended regularly^{Bl}. Remarking on ROD Stephanie said,

I thought it was a small church family and they were really welcoming^{Bh} and they just accept you for who you are.⁴⁵⁶

To the question, "Did you expect that?" Stephanie replied,

No. I didn't really go to church before, I went every now and then to this Catholic Church with my Nana when I lived near her. But I just used to sit there and colour because I was only little. I was expecting it to be all strict,

⁴⁵⁶ Stephanie's Transcript p.2

like it is in the Catholic Church, but it was nothing like
it^{Bh}.⁴⁵⁷

Stephanie described feeling like part of the church family, being loved and cared for and it was always fun and active^{Bh+Bl}. When asked what helped or facilitated her thoughts about faith, Stephanie said,

I was going to clubs for a bit and the same people who were at the clubs were at the church. I just wanted to know what it was like ... because everyone said it was really good. So I thought I would go and try it out... At the actual church services it was like nothing I had been to before^{Bh}. Before it starts everybody is speaking and it's really nice and you get to know new people before, and it's like a connection between who is doing the speaking and the actual people there. It is more relatable because you know the people most times^{Bl}.⁴⁵⁸

To this response about the Sunday Services, the follow-up question was asked, 'Was there anything about Jesus that you never really noticed before?' Stephanie replied:

Well it was the part saying...cause... At the time, my friend had died, and I felt quite lonely and the fact that they were saying there's heaven... and that God loves you and that made me quite close to my faith because I thought one day I will see him again^{Bf}. And that even when I am really upset I will always have someone there...I felt going to ROD helped me get through it because I felt I wasn't alone any more^{Bl}. Someone is always there for me even when no one else is. I think that really helped with the situation. My friend, he was bullied and he committed suicide and I was really upset about it... I was only a child at the time myself as we were both in year five.⁴⁵⁹ I was confused and I think what other people were saying to me really helped me get through it.⁴⁶⁰

Stephanie went on to identify the sense of belonging as the main conduit for her faith beginning and sustaining her six years attending ROD.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., p.2

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., p.3

⁴⁵⁹ Year 5 primary education in England equates to being nine or ten years of age.

⁴⁶⁰ Stephanie's Transcript pp.3-4

Furthermore, when asked about encouraging others to find faith and connect with ROD, Stephanie said the following:

I encourage a lot of people to come to ROD. I have asked a lot of my friends and they have liked it... I normally invite them to the clubs and I have invited one person before to the church but most of the time it's to the club so that they can get used to the environment first... Throwing them into the church environment isn't always easy. So if they go to the clubs first it might be easier for them.⁴⁶¹

Though Stephanie is relatively young, she recognised and identified the struggle of sharing faith in the context of her Catholic school but still showed the desire and wisdom to look for the appropriate steps for her friends to engage with ROD in an apt way.⁴⁶²

Stephanie's early statement about being accepted as she was again adds another thread to the strengthening picture of a culture within this community of not judging those who come through their doors.

4.2.5. EGG Narratives, reference E-DM-02. Imogen

Imogen is in her mid-twenties, born and raised until her early teens in the Delta State of Nigeria before moving to England and settling in Romford when she was sixteen. Imogen has a mixed race, multicultural background. Her father is Lebanese and a Muslim; her mother is Nigerian with a Pentecostal church background. Imogen opted not to go to university and has had range of employment but now works in London for a PR company and is married.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., pp.6-7

⁴⁶² Ibid., p.7

In Survey One Imogen scored six in the difference between questions Nine b and Nine a and she scored thirty-two between Questions Ten and Seven, both showing significant change. Her coded score from Stage One was thirteen.

Having not met Imogen before the interview, I had arranged to meet and walk with her to her choice of venue. This twenty-minute walk afforded time to build rapport and inform the conversation for interview.

Imogen is a bright, capable individual with an effervescent personality and was very easy to talk to. Since connecting with EGG some ten years earlier, Imogen is one of EGG's worship leaders and not only trains younger protégés to do the same but has led seminars at Christian festivals, which equip these skills.

Imogen's first encounter with EGG was one Sunday morning's act of worship. The following substantially abridged section from the transcript details selected quotes of this encounter, interspersed with summarised points, portraying the unfolding levels of information around her experience that come from subsequent deepening questions.

Imogen and her mother had moved adjacent to the church (EGG) and for seven weeks her mother had tried, unsuccessfully, to encourage Imogen to come with her but Imogen was not interested, declaring:

I was kind of done with church. I was 16 or 17, church was fun when I had nothing better to do but it was just something that passed the time, I never considered personal faith or anything.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶³ Imogen's Transcript p.5

However, one particular Sunday her mother felt a deep compulsion to make Imogen an offer she could not refuse, that if she went with her to church that day, she would never ask her to come to church ever again. Imogen said her mother later reflected upon this action as a very high-risk strategy and was deeply worried she may have scuppered Imogen's chances of ever finding faith if this backfired.⁴⁶⁴

Imogen's current context and scepticism about faith ran deeper than disinterest, noting that she had seen both her father's nominal practice of Islam and some 'fake' Nigerian Pentecostal activities that seemed false to her.⁴⁶⁵ So taking a friend along for moral support, who had been staying over, Imogen said:

So I dragged her along, 'ok don't let them brainwash me'. She is a theist, so she believes there is a God out there but doesn't affect me. We kind of went in with this attitude of we are going to have a laugh and never go back.⁴⁶⁶

However, Imogen's first impressions were not what she expected. They were given a friendly greeting^{Bh} by two teenagers in a very modern church environment, which caught Imogen off guard. She said,

It was just a lot of friendliness too quickly, I wasn't quite... it was too much. Ok, this is strange, this is very strange. It wasn't quite what I expected. I had been to Pentecostal churches and had been to so many different kinds, I hadn't seen anything that looked current and modern. So I sat in the back and tried to hide away.⁴⁶⁷

That week someone shared a testimony that was very similar to Imogen's life story. However, Imogen noted that person sharing had a very

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., p.19

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., pp.6,10-11

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., p.5

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., pp.5-6

different understanding of it to her. So as the girl spoke Imogen was trying to understand what was being said. It was at that point Imogen said she felt the presence of God^{Ep} for the first time and rushed to the front to ask for prayer, even though her friend was trying to stop her.⁴⁶⁸

Imogen recognised her mother's genuine faith had probably laid a foundation of faith for her already^{Bf} although Imogen had never consciously thought of it. She expressed, in retrospect, the difference she had noted about faith and how this changed her thinking at that moment:

You can't grow up in a household where someone believes in God and you don't think about God. It's really interesting because I was thinking about this recently when someone asked when did I become a Christian because in the culture I grew up in if you believed in God you called yourself a Christian. It's kind of the difference for me between when did you acknowledge that Jesus became Lord of your life rather than when did you find out that you had that initial understanding of God and Jesus and the price that was paid and all of that because I kind of always knew about that but that moment it made sense and it became true for me personally^{Bf}.⁴⁶⁹

I asked further probing questions about what sounded like a very experiential moment^{Ep}. Imogen explained that while it was very hard to put into words, she would try to express her tangible memory from when the girl was speaking. Imogen clarifies:

The first thing I remember feeling was anger; I was really angry that she was so content and was so happy^{Bh}. Clearly she had something that I didn't and I couldn't understand why. Then she was talking about God being her Father in this moment and I was like yeah but isn't He everyone's Father? Then I felt a sense of longing and then as I remember thinking that I want what she has and I guess it was not like a flush of warmth. It was like warmth but not as physical warmth but you know when you think of a

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., p.6

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.7, 9

fireplace and get like a feeling of warmth. It's that sort of feeling...⁴⁷⁰

Imogen went deeper in her description explaining that she felt like she was hugging herself and a sense of timelessness in the moment, as if nothing else mattered and she felt grounded all of a sudden^{Ep}. This greater perspective of reality brought a clear choice to her mind. Imogen said:

I felt like I was being pulled forward but I knew I could sit down. I knew if I didn't get up then I would never do it again.⁴⁷¹

Imogen went on to explain she felt both safe and intrepid, yet brave. She recalls this moment as never being more sure of than anything in her life. It was scary because she was not sure exactly what was happening, but she was certain it was her choice, a unique, uninitiated encounter that was authentic to her and it needed to be responded to.⁴⁷²

Imogen again noted that she had always had a cynical approach to faith, seeking proof or explanation and very much rooted in a cerebral question rather than on faith-based experience. Hence her comment; 'I don't usually tell people in this much detail. I usually just say, "I felt it".'⁴⁷³

However, in this instance no one was trying to prove anything to her. The girl sharing testimony in the service was just speaking about what she had experienced in her life and then something happened to Imogen that seemed completely removed. Imogen noted that it did not seem to be happening to anyone else and it felt so specific to her that it could not have been contrived.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., p.8

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., p.8

⁴⁷² Ibid., pp.9,10, 15

⁴⁷³ Ibid., p.9

In recording her response at the time, Imogen used the additional Supplement Sheet in Appendix VII, marking ‘Went by Chance,’ ‘The community were wonderful,’ ‘Had a spiritual experience,’ ‘Invited Jesus Christ into my life,’ ‘This was a safe place,’ ‘Found peace/hope here.’ This led the questioning to enquiring about her action going forward. The question was put: ‘If you hadn’t come forward, but you’d still had the experience, do you think you would have gone on in the same way that you have been?’ Imogen replied that she did not think she would have, saying:

I had that experience to let me know that it was real, God wasn’t so far off, but that he knew me... If I had stopped there it would have been great. I would have thought of: ‘Great God knows me. Cool!’ but because of the type of person I am, I would have easily dismissed it or thought that was a nice thing for then... But after going forward for prayer and then receiving more and feeling more of that peace that I initially felt this could be ongoing. Then I had conversations with people afterwards and I took the time to then look at the people around me^{Bl+Bh}. Which if I had just had the experience I would still have been out the door straight away but I stayed because I had that initial encounter with someone else. So when that conversation happened I realised this isn’t unique just to me, people do experience this. I got to talk to Ruth, being the pastor of the church, finding out about the Holy Spirit, she was trying to explain to me what that was that happened. Okay, this is not just like a one-off event. This is what Christians are trying to do to have an ongoing encounter with God. So I thought okay, I’ll come back. I want to learn more. I want to understand more how this can happen. How I can have more of this, because I liked that peaceful feeling^{Ep}. I liked not feeling scared. I liked feeling safe. So that’s what made me think, right, I should come back and find out more. If I didn’t have that time to chat with people, I don’t think that would have happened the same way. I really don’t.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., pp.12-13

Imogen recognised in further conversation that she had since witnessed others experience similar spiritual encounters with God but then convinced themselves that other elements were at work. For example, “I was just emotional that day,” “the music was really good, that’s why I cried,” or “you knew that I was struggling, and preached on that subject.” However, for Imogen going forward and talking it through cemented something within her that remained irrevocable.

This was also an emotional experience on several levels. Imogen thought coming forward was the bravest thing she had ever done. She said,

being 16 at the time you care what people think and I had a lot of eyeliner on that day and by the end there was snot and mascara everywhere and I didn’t care.⁴⁷⁵

Conversely, this was the opposite of what Imogen had expected to encounter when she walked through the door at EGG. She said,

I showed up in a really tiny skirt and some fishnet tights and there was no “*look*,” because I was trying to provoke a reaction. ‘Ok these people are definitely going to judge me^{Bh}. They are going to push me away.’ I didn’t have that, so even though I had that initial experience and everything, when I kept coming back I hadn’t changed anything in the way I was. I didn’t feel there was an expectation for me to change^{Bh}. I never felt at any point that ‘Imogen you need to stop doing this or stop doing that.’ They accepted me just as I was^{Bh} and as I learned more about what God expected of me^{Bf}, and what living a holy life meant that things started to change.⁴⁷⁶

Although Imogen marked out that experience and belief were both instantaneous through this encounter, it was the dynamic of belonging, in the way she was welcomed, that played a very significant role in her faith

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., p.15

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., p.16

journey, too. Imogen noted that it was much later when she was offered an opportunity to start leading people that the responsibility of showing others ‘this is the way to live’ became more of a personal challenge. However, Imogen notes that it was at this point that she was even more aware of ‘how I behaved, but it wasn’t because someone told me to, directly.’⁴⁷⁷

Imogen felt this openness when she first joined EGG, especially in her conversations with Ruth, one of the leaders of EGG. Imogen describes her perception of Ruth’s intentions:

Ruth just wanted me to see the Gospel and get what the Gospel was and understand that my faith was my own and no one else’s and the responsibility to learn about my faith was my own and no one else’s. And if you read the Bible and if you pray and you are seeking God out he will meet you and from there everything else will follow. So I think having that as a foundation was very important.⁴⁷⁸ We are quite a discipleship heavy church. Yes, that definitely came last for me, behaviour.⁴⁷⁹

This recognition of the receiving community’s acceptance of Imogen as she was at the time holds greater credence as Imogen recounted:

I imagine I was very hard for them because I have moments sometimes when I am walking and I start thinking about my journey and I am just like, I would have been a nightmare. I was loud, I was opinionated, I was angry. Like, how did they cope? Even when I started leading worship, I remember James would be teaching me things and I had walked out on practices. Even though there was an amount of challenge, there was so much grace... I keep thinking about that I am not sure I could be such a patient leader like they were.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., p.16

⁴⁷⁸ Imogen said mid-sentence speaking about Ruth, “I am so grateful for her actually.”

⁴⁷⁹ Imogen’s Transcript pp.16-17

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., p.17

To the question of how Imogen thought the leadership knew what to do with her, as when to nudge her or when to nurture her, she replied:

I think it literally had to be a God thing, especially with Ruth. There were times when I felt like she knew things about me that she shouldn't be able to know because it's not like I told anyone. So that's why I felt that the Holy Spirit's prompting comes into play.⁴⁸¹

Imogen references this work of Holy Spirit in her own decisions and discernment in ministry, describing that she feels at times 'you just have to go with your spiritual gut,' akin to what her mother did for her that first Sunday morning. She said,

It's subtle really, really subtle and I think there are literally times when I suddenly feel like saying maybe a particular word in conversation not necessarily when we are speaking about anything spiritual or deep and you like slip something in there but if nothing is happening you just ignore it and pretend that didn't just happen. Then when it happens, you're like... that really was God but that's not really what I expected to hear.⁴⁸²

In the closing questions, Imogen described her relationship with others in EGG and their helpful perspectives shaping her faith. This authentic faith in Christ has made Imogen an active witness to encourage others to meet Jesus and, if possible, attend EGG.⁴⁸³

The theme of the Holy Spirit's role in Imogen's story plays an interesting part, as does her reference to the expectation of 'being judged,' which did not happen.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., p.18

⁴⁸² Ibid., p.20

⁴⁸³ Ibid., p.22

4.2.6 EGG Narratives, reference E-DM-22. Trudy, accompanied by her husband, Marcus

Trudy is a woman in her early thirties, with a soft East London accent. Trudy described herself as hardly ever going to church before getting involved with EGG.

In Survey One, Trudy scored three in the difference between questions Nine b and Nine a and she scored seven between Questions Ten and Seven. Her coded score from Stage One was eleven.

Trudy and Marcus met at a rehab centre in London. Marcus was learning to use a wheelchair and Trudy was learning to walk again having lost the use of her legs through Multiple Sclerosis (MS). Before her illness eleven years earlier, Trudy worked in the construction industry as a Personal Assistant having left school at sixteen. Looking back, Trudy described herself as a bolshy teenager growing up in Buckhurst, Chigwell, not a tearaway but someone who knew how to handle herself in the context of her workplace.

Trudy felt she had always believed in God but did not know that much about Him^{Bf}. Trudy describes her first experience of God as a young teenager crying because she had been dumped by her boyfriend. Unable to stop crying she prayed, “God please make me stop” and He did and then I went to sleep and I slept soundly^{Ep}.⁴⁸⁴ Despite knowing God existed at that time Trudy said, ‘I don’t need to know more...’

⁴⁸⁴ Trudy’s Transcript p.4

As Trudy and Marcus got to know one another, Marcus invited Trudy to EGG. In response to how she initially found her experience at EGG, Trudy replied,

I found it a refreshing way of approaching it. Not as in.. erm church, I think I did once because I went to St Johns in Buckhurst Hill and that was, you had the sermon, you know very standard. Whereas here it was it was refreshingly, wow, was that church? Really? It stuck with me... it brings you on to want to learn more, really^{Bh+Bl}. And the people that come here too they are all so passionate and that's a nice thing to have in your life. They were trigger moments, meeting people but they are not going God! God! God! In your face. No, they are normal people and that was refreshing.⁴⁸⁵

From the interview it was clear from Trudy's narrative that she saw something different in Marcus, in his behaviour and temperament^{Bh}.⁴⁸⁶ More of the nature of support came out later in the interview when Trudy said,

I had lots of questions and he helped me through a bad time after I got home from hospital because it was my first major relapse. 'Major' in inverted commas because they are all bad... from being happy going out with my friends etc. to then feeling immensely alone. My friends' lives were all evolving but mine not. Mine was staying the same. I got very depressed for a moment and I used to ring Marcus up in tears. What are we going to do 'X' 'Y' and 'Z' and Marcus always calmed me down, talking to me, taking time out. I couldn't have that from my Mum. I love her and we have a great relationship but she is grieving too because she can see her daughter experiencing illness.⁴⁸⁷

To the question about currently obstacles to faith, it is clear she has a thinking, questioning faith, as Marcus notes,

I think sometimes you can see things going on in the world that you begin to question...⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., pp.1-2,3

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., p.9

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., pp.9-10

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., p.6

To which Trudy replies,

But I have never not once blamed God for that. That's man being a bit silly. Being, "Oh I'm the best and I want to blow that up!" etc. but that's not God as far as I am concerned. It's like my MS when I was told that. I spent a month just laying on my sofa and not able to walk alone and then I went back to work up London but I never once thought why did you do this to me?⁴⁸⁹

Responding to Question G.i. about helping others to engage with faith, Trudy said,

I still feel that I need to learn more before I can stand in front of people and preach and try to teach them something. And I am not sure about it.⁴⁹⁰

But in response to the second part about encouraging folk to come to EGG, Trudy said she was 'very likely' to do that saying,

Everybody has either a sad experience in their life, or whatever or a happy one they want to share so you know the whole spectrum, so everybody falls in a slot as such and EGG is definitely a place that I have seen people cry here but then there are people singing for joy.⁴⁹¹

At the end of the interview Marcus was asked what he thought about EGG and why he had invited Trudy along, he added,

I have been a part of EGG since we launched which is back in 2004 and a couple of my friends I invited from school and they do still come here on a regular basis and it is just I think here is like what Trudy said earlier about such a welcoming atmosphere, you know open to receiving people from varying, different places and backgrounds, you know, experiences in life, all that kind of stuff and I guess with some churches the people there are all very samey, samey, whereas here we have such a wide variety of people and everyone is so loving and welcoming as Trudy said earlier. So I guess I knew by bringing Trudy here there would not be an issue of people looking at her thinking she was quite different, because I knew that wouldn't happen. I guess in this church anyone is welcome here, regardless of what

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., p.6

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., p.7

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., p.8

you have been through in life, maybe even what your belief might be. You might come here not really having a belief at all and we are open to people like that and I guess some places might not be as so welcoming in that sense you know^{Bh+Bl.492}

This short response from Marcus showed his sensitivity to what might be perceived as being seen to be different. He observed that those within the EGG community came from a variety of backgrounds yet were corporately open, loving and welcoming of new people regardless of their beliefs or circumstances.

It is quite clear for Marcus in a wheelchair and Trudy with MS that this is a community that has received them both well and demonstrated an unprejudiced welcome that needs further investigation.

4.2.7. EGG Narratives, reference E-DM-25. Kathryn

Kathryn is a mother of two very young children and pregnant with her third. She is married to Simon and in her late-twenties. She is an articulate and organised woman, very alert to her surroundings, and displaying a mindfulness of many things at once, despite thinking she has a bad memory. After secondary education, Kathryn trained as a legal secretary and had a number of part-time jobs before gaining full-time employment in London for a Law firm until the birth of their first child.

In Survey One, Kathryn scored five in the difference between questions Nine b and Nine a and she scored twenty-seven between

⁴⁹² Ibid., pp.10-11

Questions Ten and Seven, both showing significant change. This totalled thirteen for her coded score from Stage One.

Kathryn, white British, grew up in Dagenham, along with her sister and was taken to church by her mother from a very young age until the age of eleven, at which point Kathryn decided that it was boring. She said,

All I can remember from Sunday School is we would sit around in a semi-circle and we would open up one of the Gospels and someone would read. Literally that was my memory.⁴⁹³

Kathryn occasionally chose to stay in the adult service, but was so bored she fell asleep on the pew. She stopped going from the age of twelve to seventeen.

Kathryn explained the specific trigger for leaving church was a phone call one Sunday morning by Charlie, a close friend. Her father was honest and said Kathryn was at church. This utterly horrified Kathryn, thinking she would be alienated at school and lose all her friends. She said,

My friends are going to think I am really weird because I go to church. Who goes to church? No one goes to church at that age!⁴⁹⁴

Asking how Kathryn reconnected, she explained:

So skip forwards to when I was 18, last year of sixth form, studying, crazy year, finishing A levels. I don't really know if there was a specific thing but I just felt within me...it must have been God just prompting me... this kind of question of, 'Is God real?' and if He is real, why aren't you going to church? I just felt such a strong desire to go and explore^{Bf+Ep} and to discover for myself as a teenager, young adult.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹³ Kathryn's Transcript pp.1-2

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., p.2

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., pp.2-3

Kathryn was clear that this matter required action but if God was not real that would be the end of it for her. With the support of her mother, Kathryn then began to explore other churches, visiting first a Baptist church near her home in Dagenham. This felt too much like her home church, not very modern and mainly an elderly congregation. Her journey moved on to a large contemporary church meeting in a sports hall, next to her secondary school. This was an entirely different experience, which Kathryn described as overwhelming as a new person; it was so big with hundreds of people attending. Kathryn loved the worship and said they were so welcoming. It was here she had an experience of the Holy Spirit^{Ep} she said.

I think the Holy Spirit hit me actually during some of the worship time. I didn't really know what the Holy Spirit was. This is weird why am I so emotional like? This is weird but kind of good I don't really know what this is? So I obviously had encountered God there but didn't feel I connected with anyone as it was such a big church and felt quite lost and if you are not coming every week no one is really going to notice.⁴⁹⁶

Though experiencing God here, the lack of belonging and connecting with other people led to her search continuing elsewhere. A return to the Methodist church she grew up in for a special service led to a chance encounter with a lady she had known from childhood. This older lady suggested EGG to Kathryn as there are young people there. Kathryn was a little sceptical about what this might really be and it was a lot further away. Kathryn and her sister make the trek about a

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., pp.3-4

month later and arrive for EGG's 'pod meal.' Kathryn describes how it was for her:

That freaked me out because being 18, very, very shy 18, like ridiculously shy, such an introvert; so even me going to new churches was very like, it just wasn't really me but obviously God was helping me with that because it was very much out of my comfort zone. So we were at EGG and I had my sister there and although she is five years younger than me, she was the outgoing one and able to talk to people. So I was able to kind of hide behind her. I remember we were instantly welcomed by so many different friendly people, just really genuine lovely people.^{Bh} I remember thinking, why, why are they so nice, why are they so lovely? I just thought, what do they want? What do they think they are going to get from me? I couldn't grasp it. I had never encountered stuff like that. From then, I guess the rest is history because we stuck, from that Sunday we kept coming back^{Bl} and yeah and I don't know if I should continue. That's how we got to EGG.⁴⁹⁷

Kathryn had experienced a good welcome at the large contemporary church.

A follow-up question was asked to unpack what was different at EGG and why she thought had helped her. She explained:

I think if people hadn't been as friendly and just to seek me out every time I have been on a Sunday, I think I could have easily thought forget this because as I say I was so shy and I would never instigate conversations with other people but people would come to me^{Bh} and say to me how's it going, how was your week and kind of drew me out of my little shell at 18. So I think yeah, perhaps that played a big part, the just the welcome from everybody and I felt very accepted... I just felt really loved for what I was. So that I think that stuck with me there in the beginning.⁴⁹⁸

It was not just the welcome Kathryn noted but the relevance of EGG's content to life and this surprised her.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., pp.2-5

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., pp.4-5

I have never been to a church like this, it has actual stuff that you can apply to your life today. You know it's not preaching some boring Old Testament story and think what's the point of that. But it's actually, lets preach it, the Old Testament story, and bring it to life. What is God saying to that person and what has He done? What is He teaching you about obedience and bringing these topics to life?⁴⁹⁹

Furthermore, Kathryn recognised the very modern function and use of technology at EGG for worship and gatherings, looking nothing like the church she had grown up with. However, Kathryn said,

...this is really cool, like this can't be church. I wouldn't feel afraid to bring a friend to this and that like really messed with my head.⁵⁰⁰

In contrast, Kathryn noted her father really struggled with EGG, having visited a couple of times. As a child he had been brought up in the Church of England and thought EGG was too relaxed, too informal to be recognised as church.

Week by week Kathryn was given "food for thought" every Sunday and she would go away and think^{Bf},

Do I really need to change my life and to start living differently?⁵⁰¹

With her sister, they started attending in September 2007 and around March 2008 EGG ran an Alpha course which Kathryn decided to attend. Still being shy she mostly listened saying,

I wouldn't put any answers out there, because I thought I don't know anything. I was just in awe of everyone's knowledge. I thought wow these people are younger than me or they were maybe the same age as me and they knew

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., p.6

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., p.6

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., p.6

so much about God and I thought wow this is really amazing.⁵⁰²

At this point, Kathryn knew she had experienced God while at EGG through the Holy Spirit^{Ep} but not really known what God was. She then said,

I really feel it was the Alpha course that really lead me to make a decision. I am pretty sure it was “Who is Jesus?”-week. I am sure that was the session. I think Ruth was doing the talk and I am sure she was saying in her talk, if you believe Jesus is who he says he was, that then in return needs a response. You can’t just say ‘oh that’s nice,’ and go home. You’ve got to decide what you are going to do with that. Are you going to live for God and give your life to him? So I was really chewing it over and I think it was after the group sessions that I spoke to Ruth. She just sat down with me and said ‘Are you okay?’^{Bh} and I said, ‘Yeah... I just really feel like I need to give my life,’ and even though back then I didn’t really fully know what being a Christian was, I decided to pray the prayer that evening^{Bf}.⁵⁰³

Kathryn recognised she did not have all the knowledge of what being a follower of Christ meant but knew the next step was to ask to pray a prayer of commitment. The leader’s question to her was nothing more than a caring question that opened up the space for Kathryn to respond. Both her sister and her mum also committed their lives around the same time through the same Alpha Course.

Following on from this Kathryn was asked what changes, if any, she noticed in herself after this significant moment on the Alpha Course.

Kathryn knew she used to swear a lot and did not see a problem with it before EGG and coming to faith, but that was now gone. She said,

⁵⁰² Ibid., p.7

⁵⁰³ Ibid., pp.5-8

I didn't really know what happened but I just didn't feel that it was right and didn't have the desire to say those terrible things. So that was quite an instant thing.⁵⁰⁴

Her reply notes an immediate inward change that appears to be undemonstrative in which her "new normal" behaviour of not swearing seems to have almost gone unnoticed. However, something that took a little longer was her attitude to worry. Kathryn said,

That was a massive part of my life throughout school and my Dad was like the world's worst worrier and I am really like my Dad. So that growing up, I would just worry about worry, just like the most insane stuff. I remember having sleepless nights about school work, about friendships, and this and that. So worry kind of just ruled my life. I was such a fearful worrier and I think then becoming a Christian and knowing that... it says to cast your cares upon the Lord and not to worry and be anxious but to pray about things. So there was an alternative and I didn't have to internalise all of this and process this all in my little brain but actually I could just pray and it was quite releasing that there is another way. You can give this all to God and you can be free of that burden. So that was more of a journey but yeah now, I am just a completely different person looking back to the old Kathryn.⁵⁰⁵

Kathryn notes that her confidence grew over the next year and although she did not suddenly become an extrovert, she had changed a great deal and was contributing to discussions and airing her thoughts and opinions. In self-analysing her journey, Kathryn noted the conduits of both 'Belonging' and 'Experience of God' took her to a place where she could engage more deeply with the questions of 'Belief'. Kathryn commented,

I won't give my life to Christ if I didn't believe what I was hearing on the Alpha talks and if I thought it was nonsense, probably after that course I would have said, well this is really nice but it's a nice club that you have but you know I have got better things to do because I don't

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., p.8

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., pp.8-9

believe in it. I am not the kind of person who would stick around for the people.⁵⁰⁶

To the question about her current obstacles preventing her from following Jesus now, Kathryn recognised the time her young family took up in her day in contrast to before and the demanding challenge it was to find space and time for God.⁵⁰⁷

Lastly, to Questions Gi. and Gii., Kathryn was aptly sensitive to others and would more naturally encourage engagement with faith or connection with EGG once she had built some level of relationship with a person.

Kathryn's journey is an interesting one in that her invitation to explore faith comes from within and centres around questions of belief. Again, it is the combination of being accepted as she was, while experiencing God through the Holy Spirit that provided the place for her to journey in faith and discover it for herself.

4.2.8. EGG Narratives, reference E-DM-29. Reggie

Reggie is a white British man married to Alice, a Nigerian-born but British-raised woman, with no children yet. Reggie had just turned thirty and they both work in the city of London. Apart from his years at university studying Physics, Reggie had lived in the same area all his life.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., pp.11-12

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., pp.12-13

In Survey One, he scored three in the difference between questions Nine b and Nine a and he scored twenty-three between Questions Ten and Seven. Reggie scored twelve in his coded score from Stage One.

Both Reggie's parents were involved and regular attenders of their local Methodist Church, taking him along in his early years^{Bl}. By the age of twelve Reggie had decided playing football clashed with Sunday morning church and stopped going for a period of four years. His dad did try and encourage him to try other things and they visited Holy Trinity Brompton and other Christian events to meet with other young people^{Bh}.

Reggie describes his story:

I grew up in church for which it was very uneventful, but my parents did take me to Easter People where you see a bit more of that living faith type of stuff. So I don't think I ever doubted God was real but I think the question for a long time was actually, do I care enough?⁵⁰⁸

For Reggie, it was not a moment of choosing belief but rather a moment of deciding to become a follower of Jesus, a disciple^{Bl}. It was a couple of years in, after joining the manse Bible Study group with those his own age as EGG was being formed, that he took this decision amongst a bit of positive peer pressure^{Bl}.⁵⁰⁹

The Circuit had appointed a ministerial couple to do youth work in a new way across the Circuit and Reggie's parents encouraged him to go and meet some people his own age. So, he reconnected initially through becoming friends with Ruth and Jamie's⁵¹⁰ four sons who were of a similar age, when Reggie was sixteen or seventeen. Reggie had met them at Easter

⁵⁰⁸ Reggie's Transcript p.3

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., p.3

⁵¹⁰ Ruth and Jamie are ordained ministers and co-founding leaders at EGG.

People a few years earlier, which helped the relationship and Reggie noted that it initially was a mainly social draw for him with guys his own age and who liked the same things. This like-mindedness helped the dynamic of exploring faith together. Reggie said:

It becomes less about the social and more about the revelation about Jesus and what the whole point is. I guess you come to the point whether you are going to take it seriously or not, but in most people's walk you get to a point where there is a cost for this, in terms of your lifestyle, and in your time, and everything. Do you really believe this is true and am I willing to pay that price...⁵¹¹

Reggie affirmed the influence of role models^{Bh}, both his contemporaries and those who were a little older or visiting speakers to EGG, who professed following Jesus.⁵¹² Being able to relate to them helped him overcome the following significant issue. He said:

I think seeing it lived out in other people who I could relate to, who were not hugely different to me and that it was authentic^{Bh}. I think what I really struggled with, in church, was actually 'what difference does it make?'⁵¹³

It was clear growing up in church Reggie had observed the culture and behaviour of church attendees, both in church and outside it, which caused him a problem. The faith in Christ he witnessed before EGG had had a negative impact upon him and now he was seeing something different in the lives of his contemporaries in EGG.

In response to the question 'Was there anything in particular that he recalled which significantly helped?' Reggie replied,

⁵¹¹ Ibid., p.3

⁵¹² Ibid., pp.2-3

⁵¹³ Ibid., p.5

Yes, I think there was some fairly significant moments where I had to make choices and I can see now, influenced me. Some more significant than others.⁵¹⁴

Choosing to attend the Tuesday evening group and give up a commitment to a cricket club was one such decision, which Reggie could not quite explain why other than,

I just had this sense it was something worth investing in and so sacked off cricket and didn't go to that anymore. I can see now that actually it was a big decision that allowed me a lot of freedom in my life to make choices down the line that were perhaps more difficult.⁵¹⁵

Although Reggie thought this was a 'head' decision, he also described several moments in Christian Conferences where he had experiences of God, calling him deeper into relationship, with fresh revelations of God's love for him^{Ep}. Knowing this experience would impact his daily life in practice.⁵¹⁶ Truth, reality, and experiencing God's love are very significant for Reggie in his deeply pragmatic view on life.

In answer to Question E, Reggie noted,

I think belonging and experience are the two... Ultimately you need to come to that personal choice and choose either yes or no and I think other things make that easier. So for me I put 'uncertain' that belief was the strongest feature, I don't think it was because I would have said I had a belief. I wouldn't have said God wasn't real but that didn't inform anything to do with life. Having that in the background it then meant that the decision wasn't 'Is this true or not?' but 'How does this go?' Am I prepared to pay the cost?⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., p.6

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., p.6

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., pp.6-7

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., p.7

Reggie had mentioned 'the cost' quite a bit. In answering what he understood this to be, he said the following and then added what he also thought the benefits were of coming to faith in Jesus.

I think it impacts everything, your whole worldly structure, it's no longer about you. You are no longer number one. It's about your life and living it for Him and how that unpacks living it relationally; the money, the way you spend your time, your values. Some of these Biblical values are so countercultural and not just in terms of your lifestyle but in terms of your attitude towards stuff. The world is no longer 'you-centric'^{Bh}. I think I was very keenly aware of those behavioural things that would need to change but then on the other hand you get a whole other toolbox of other stuff, like your prayers, supernatural stuff and then you start to inherit all this other stuff. Open your eyes to a world of all other stuff that you didn't know existed before. It's definitely for me aware of that and the supernatural for me increased.... I think once I decided, there was that awkward stage to reorganise your life to live it out.⁵¹⁸

Reggie identified that he was around sixteen or seventeen when this took place and he still went to parties but started to live a different way^{Bh} in following Christ. Once these decisions were made he found he had an increased appetite to understand more about his faith^{Bf}, studying the Bible and investing in the vision and direction of EGG. Other behavioural changes occurred in line with his type of personality. Reggie said,

Things like my language, for me that transformed really quickly. Whereas things like, self-worth or pride, where do I value myself in the chain of things, took a lot longer to iron out and still does. I think in the initial stage those things were a lot harder to see a change in than perhaps some of the other things.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., pp.8, 9

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., pp.8-9

Reggie notes again the value of EGG's community and his peers. Spinning this around, he was asked how things might have been if he had been trying to do this on his own. Reggie commented,

I think it would have been very different. I just don't think I would have stayed in situ long enough to have absorbed those truths. I would not have said never but it definitely wouldn't have happened in the same way or in the same timeline, 'cause I think, yes I guess growing and going to festivals and stuff, I had experiences of God but it hadn't really brought me to that decision point.⁵²⁰

In contrast, noting the value of group shared experiences, Reggie said,

As we got more comfortable with each other that became a lot easier. It was, once it became cool, I guess. There were definitely moments where someone would have a breakthrough and that would kind of permit the rest of the group to talk about it; 'oh yes that is what I am feeling' and 'this is what I am thinking' and 'I am really struggling with this.' Even in terms of coming to the conclusion of what faith is about. I guess it is permission giving and you feel comfortable that you can share, whereas on your own you don't have that same sort of safety net or the information that other people are experiencing the same things as you.⁵²¹

In response to Question F, 'What makes it difficult for you following Jesus?', Reggie's response was extensive but it detailed some significant issues of self-reflection around expectations of call, conflict, contentment, and living under discipline. He expressed all of this with a mature theological framework:

In one sense, I think I have been 14 years walking this out now and so I don't think much comes out that actually is making it impossible to follow Jesus. You do get those difficult events in your life, which you think how is this compatible with what I think this walk should look like. For me it is more about my expectations of what God is

⁵²⁰ Ibid., p.10

⁵²¹ Ibid., p.10

calling my life to be like or what I think my life should be like and how it is panning out and the tension between the two. I don't think... Or there is that journey of discipleship I think...I guess it is healthy but it is fairly unpleasant at points along the way or you get a fresh picture of yourself and you think, 'I really don't like that' or 'I really don't think that's an area of my life that should be there'. And again, you almost need to make that decision again; are you going to die to self and hand this over? I don't know if it's just me but the longer you go and you find those bits, it all the more painful because you think, 'Surely I should have dealt with this before?' So, I don't think it gets in the way but sometimes it's a bit difficult and makes that journey of faith a bit painful. For example, I think recently, it was the last 18 months, it has been really journeying through my relationship with church, versus my relationship with Jesus, and they are not one and the same. Trying to unpick whether I get my worth from church or from Him, which I think ultimately I am playing a dangerous part that I just didn't want any kind of idol in my life and I think God has probably answered it by this sabbatical. That even though the start was very difficult just to get used to, but I think there is enough resolve and a lot of understanding that I just need to get on with this, even if it is unpleasant. So that verse in Hebrews, God disciplines those he loves, so sometimes a good dose of discipline is quite painful but you also have that bank of truth from the past and you know it is good for you so you just have to suck it up.⁵²²

Reggie works in project management and consultancy, so he also went on to explain the challenge of behaving as a Christian in the workplace, when the truth is not really what a company wants a client to hear. Though quite settled, he has had to balance his time and ambition with work. These were live issues for him in answering Question F.

To Question Gi, Reggie said he was very likely to encourage others but to Gii, Reggie caveated his response of 'very likely.' He said that he initially found it very difficult to encourage people to find Jesus and not

⁵²² Ibid., pp.10-11

bring them along to EGG. However, as he has matured he knows that he works in Victoria the other side of London from EGG, therefore taking a Kingdom approach is his greater priority and is happy to see them established in faith somewhere else.⁵²³

In closing the conversation, Reggie shared his thoughts on the journey, values, and development of EGG. He said:

As I have reflected on the journey of EGG, I think it is values driven and I think any fresh expression needs to be values driven, rather than models because models become outdated very quickly. There was stuff that we did in the first year that we thought was really cool, but I think goodness...if we did that now. But at the time it made sense and it is about that constant evaluation, how is what we are doing matching up with the model and how is the model matching up with the values. Do they still align and having those honest conversations and saying this isn't working anymore and it doesn't match up with the values so actually it has to go. It's about getting the values right in the beginning that is important.⁵²⁴

The researcher asked if Reggie could identify or name those values?

He said that hospitality and a risk-taking element were the two values holding primary relevance. Internal discussions within EGG about such risks and how many they ought to take, formed a regular dynamic of their community's sharing. They also analysed how many things failed, holding in mind if nothing is failing they were not taking enough risks. Innovation for the Gospel helped them keep true to the question 'Is what we are doing right?'

⁵²³ Ibid., p.12

⁵²⁴ Ibid., pp.13-14

Reggie also said that the Biblical principles of mission, outreach, inclusion, and being the body of Christ at EGG were key. In particular, he recognised,

The gifts of the Holy Spirit^{Ep} and that everyone gets to play and then what are the things we do that invites people in?^{Bf} So that you don't have an 'us and them mentality.'^{Bh} I think it is one of the challenges because it was easy at the start as everyone was the same sort of age and the same sort of experience but as you stretch things you have people who are decades further along in their journey of faith but there is no reason why everybody can't get involved and it is just creating space and mechanisms for those values to be lived out.^{Bh 525}

This short, rich excerpt from Reggie detailed multiple attributes that are worthy of mention. The openness to the Holy Spirit, with an emphasis that everyone, regardless of experience or capability, is encouraged to participate. This fresh expression of church began with a nuance of homogeneity, but now EGG is populated with a great degree of diversity in which there is still the openness and welcoming atmosphere emphasised within a creative, safe place.

4.2.9. EGG Narratives, reference E-DM-36. Simon

Simon is married to Kathryn with two young children and one on the way. Simon is in his late twenties and is involved in a range of activities working with offenders, ministering to them in prison, and helping ex-offenders rehabilitate when out of prison. He was also studying garden design to expand into new work.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., p.14

In Survey One, Simon scored five in the difference between questions Nine b and Nine a and he scored fourteen between Questions Ten and Seven. His coded score from Stage One was nine.

Simon's story is significant as it is the most demonstrative of all the interviews. Simon's narrative shows that people can choose to journey away from faith as much as they can be drawn towards it. His narrative is particularly unusual as he is a child of the manse,⁵²⁶ acknowledging his journey in faith started at the age of four, when he gave his life to Jesus after hearing from his parents who Jesus was^{Bf}. Simon was born in America but grew up in rural Norfolk and Suffolk, with a quintessential English, 'Swallows and Amazons' background, until he was fifteen. His parents were sent to Birmingham to train for ministry and Simon found himself changing from a tiny monochrome school to a very large, multi-faith, multi-cultural school in the suburbs of Birmingham. This became a real test for his faith.

At that point... in Birmingham because I didn't know any other Christians apart from my brother in the school and it was atheists, Sheiks, Muslims that kind of background. Where before it was respected, it wasn't in the same way. So I started to lie about going to church because people laughed at it, which was wrong because I felt God actually say 'tell this particular group about me'^{Ep} and they were the worst kids in the school. It was so strong that I even covered my ears up to block it out... Yes it was really strong, so I didn't do that... and then I guess if you are compromising a little, then you are compromising a lot but then it sent me in a downward spiral.⁵²⁷

Simon described how he felt his foundations had been eroded so when he moved to a suburb of London and started going to school there he

⁵²⁶ The manse is the accommodation provided to a presbyter or deacon for duration of their circuit appointment for the Methodist Church.

⁵²⁷ Simon's Transcript p.2

began to display more errant behaviour. The isolation he experienced in Birmingham led him try and find identity. Simon described his fascination at the time with street graffiti. He found it something of a mystery, with an almost superhero-like quality to it. He started tagging with permanent markers on the streets. At that age he admitted that he could not work it out in his head why it appealed to him, but recognised that he did like the identity it brought him. Simon described how and why it became an addition for him.

I just started doing it and slowly fell into addiction. Like drugs or alcohol, it became an addiction. Because I was bullied at the school in Romford, it was kind of like a mask sort of thing, you know. So in the school I was this quiet person, but then when I would go out, I would go crazy... on train tracks or just around all those kinds of people and all the things that it entailed. It became my identity and then the more you did the more respect you got but even after being arrested for the first time I thought that's it, I will quit but obviously I could of but the draw was so strong that I just went back to it, even though there was so many consequences. You know doing community service and all of that stuff. And then I got deeper into a gang and all through it, you don't usually stay at one level, you go in deeper. Most people who get into drugs start off with weed then they might go on to cocaine and then possibly heroin at a later date. And that was what it was like going straight to heroin. So it was like a slippery slope and I got deeper involved.⁵²⁸

After leaving school, Simon did a public service course part-time which left too much space for further gang activities. In response to the question, 'What brought the change?' Simon described the dual lifestyle he was occupying and the role his conscience and sense of guilt played in this.

The crazy thing is I was still going to church at the time and my house got raided. My parents' house, the manse.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., p.2-3

That was the shame that I brought upon them. Because you know people knew it was a church manse and having live meat wagons outside, you know, taking loads of bags of evidence and everything. So I was still going to church through the whole time^{Bl}. So it was like living a double life. I never gave up on my faith completely, but I was living for God sometimes and living for the devil others. Obviously, I know you can't do that but that was what I was doing then. It wasn't right. So I still had a conscience^{Bh} and there were other people in the gang and they didn't really, they had eroded their conscience so much that they didn't feel guilt for what they were doing or even if they did they didn't show it. Whereas I felt real guilt^{Bh} so I remember being at a squat rave, you know where people are smoking crack and everything in this warehouse in Kings Cross and someone got a commuter by the neck, with a wooden pole around their neck and some other people went through his pockets and I remember feeling terrible and picking up the guy's coat and helping him along. Even though I was around those people, I never went as deep as them, but I was still around doing stuff.⁵²⁹

Coupled with his own recognition about his behaviour and inner conflict was Simon's mindfulness of the church community's investment in him and his belief in the effect that had upon him.

So obviously people were praying for me^{Bh+Bl} and I felt that was what stopped me from going deeper and compromising and doing really bad things and what potentially could have happened.⁵³⁰

Although Simon did not have any form of 'up front role' in EGG, he kept attending, going to things like the Alpha course or turning up to all the different events that were being held.^{Bl} During this time, he even was still evangelising, bringing people along to church. However, it came to a point

⁵²⁹ Ibid., p.4

⁵³⁰ Ibid., p.4

one night when it seemed the conflict within him came to a head and Simon felt God ask him:

... you need to choose me or you need to choose your own way^{Ep}. And that was real because I was down on my knees in my bedroom and thinking of what life would be without God completely. Then I thought well I wouldn't feel guilt and I would be able to go to the next level of darkness, which is crazy that I was even contemplating that, but I was even thinking I would rather not have a conscience and go on like everyone else, where I wouldn't have that guilt. So I had a real decision to make. After really praying into it and wrestling with God, I actually said: "God, no, I want to follow you." Then that opened up and my Dad had a vision of me moving to America and living with his cousin and that's what I ended up doing. I went on an intense discipleship for a year in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The director said I made ten years of change in a year because I so submitted to the Holy Spirit and submitted to the course and everything and what God wanted for me.⁵³¹

In probing a little, Simon revealed how full of fear he was when he was with those engaged in criminal activities.

I think all of these things was bringing me to a place of even wanting to not follow God anymore but then God presented it like how I felt God in the room and this terror that this is going to be the biggest decision I will ever make in my life and I can't say confidently where I would be if I hadn't; in prison, serving a long sentence because a lot of my friends have done very long sentences.⁵³²

Simon described this period of his life being populated with regular arguments with his parents and brothers, looking to pick fights. He identified his feelings and the perceived causes, saying:

I had all this anger and stress. Also, I realise it now that a lot of it was from the bullying, I hadn't ever dealt with it.⁵³³

⁵³¹ Ibid., pp.4-5

⁵³² Ibid., p.6

⁵³³ Ibid., p.7

Simon portrayed this as a traumatic period of his life that opened up further conflict and bitterness within him. However, he did remember breaking down in tears, opening up, and speaking to someone about it at the national Christian event Easter People, after they had given the talk. This was the first time that he had actually told anyone that he was being bullied. He had suppressed it the whole time.

This presented a vulnerable context for Simon over the coming time in which it was evident some factors remained a struggle and he had to keep wrestling with. Simon said:

I was still in some situations that were compromising... So it wasn't like I was perfect... And then what I realised was that I needed to cut them off completely because I was waiting to go to America, raising money and getting my documents together and all these different things and I knew that was my destiny that I couldn't allow this to not happen...that was a massive decision for me.⁵³⁴

After the year spent in the States, Simon returned to EGG. He said, 'When I came back, first of all people saw the difference in me immediately.' Simon had before and after photographs, which dramatically showed the contrast in him. It was transparent that Simon's fear was not just of being caught, but he had a strong sense of the 'fear of God.'

...if I was to die, would I go to heaven or hell because I was living this double life? ... and that put a real healthy fear in me^{Bf+Ep}. I thought no I don't want that. So that was one of them. Secondly it's because I love God and I had moved away from that love and I realised what it was to have a close relationship with God and also the excitement of evangelising and sharing the Gospel with people that was something that brought me alive and I realised there was so many things I would be missing out on and also if God did create me surely he deserves all that I am in pursuit of him^{Bf+Bh}. So that was another thing that led me

⁵³⁴ Ibid., pp.6-9

back. And the other thing is the positive peer pressure and the positive influence of my parents not wanting to let them down or friends and family^{Bl.535}

Fear has been a predominant part of Simon's life and return to faith. This still came out in Question F in a positive way. Simon saw that doubting himself was his current obstacle in faith and he didn't want that anymore, knowing that perfect love casts out all fear.⁵³⁶

Simon is a natural evangelist and is regularly prompted to share his faith. He recounted multiple stories of other opportunities he takes in the public square to share faith. Simon knows how challenging this can be but equally knows it is a natural fear he is seeking to overcome.

Despite all his efforts, my concluding inferences around Simon's story are of how he was held, prayed for, and not rejected by the EGG community. Is this a very active dynamic of non-judgmentalism?

4.2.10. EGG Narratives, reference E-DM-38. Jack accompanied by Kathryn

Jack identified as a "Baby Boomer" in age from a de-churched background. In Survey One, he scored zero in the difference between questions Nine b and Nine a and he scored seven between Questions Ten and Seven, but scored eight in his coded score from Stage One.

Though his clothes are clean and smart the rest of his appearance is somewhat unkempt. Jack's speech is very quick and almost seems rushed,

⁵³⁵ Ibid., p.12-13

⁵³⁶ Ibid., p.13-14

making it difficult to understand all of what he says. It was for this reason that Kathryn accompanied him to facilitate mutual understanding.

The leadership at EGG know Jack well and know he has some form of special needs support, but it has never been clear what that is. Jack is always accompanied and safeguarded as a vulnerable adult but never patronised. His comprehension of the interview and conversation was never in question.

Jack grew up around the Romford area and first worked in a laundry in the 1960's, but because he did not drive and local public transport was not available at the time, he was not able to move with the work to the new town of Basildon. As a result, Jack earned a living delivering newspapers until 1990.

A summer fun event held at the front of EGG's premises, which are right next to the street, was Jack's first point of connection. Jack said,

Well it was one night there was a barbecue just at the front of church and I was getting a bus travelling to Southend, my brother lives in Southend... It was August time. Your husband, Simon he said come in and have a free burger^{Bh}, and I said I can't stay too long because I am meeting my brother for dinner...⁵³⁷

Jack came back the following week and attended the informal worship service that is held every week on Sunday evenings by EGG. To the question, 'What was it that made you want to stay at EGG?' Jack replied, 'The atmosphere^{Bh+Bl}. Back in the days they had a disco in the church.'⁵³⁸

The worship had lights, a band, and was lively and loud but it was not a

⁵³⁷ Jack's Transcript p.2

⁵³⁸ Ibid., p.3

disco. However, it is easy to see what Jack saw, noting his Catholic background.

The church I used to go to was Catholic and every Sunday I would go to church. Even then I used to just sit down and stand up and say a prayer.⁵³⁹

Probing more about Jack's understanding of the atmosphere and what it was that he really liked about EGG he said, "Friendly...It's like a new family^{Bl}."⁵⁴⁰

In response to reviewing Question E and asking what Jack had valued and what had made the most difference for him, Jack replied,

Healing^{Ep}... In a day I have had Kayley, Jamie, and Chris have prayed for me. Then Jamie came back and said he'd pray for me and help me stand up straight... The year before I came here I had a very bad accident. I slipped over and I was black and blue and could hardly walk...⁵⁴¹

To the questions about encouraging others to engage with Jesus and participate in EGG, Jack noted he had brought other family members along and Kathryn affirmed that his aunt had come along and his uncle attended the Bible Studies in the lighter nights.

Though this was the shortest of all the interviews, it was perhaps the most challenging in the moment to hear and understand Jack's responses and then follow up with the next question. Until the recording was attentively listened to and transcribed, only then were Jack's replies fully appreciated. With hindsight this interview was set up at the end of a long day and to suit Jack's availability. Also, with the advice from the EGG

⁵³⁹ Ibid., p.3

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., p.4

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., p.4

leadership, it was also encouraged not to be too prolonged because of Jack's situation and to care for him.

Nonetheless, this interview again portrayed the welcome, friendliness, and openness of EGG's community. It seemed genuinely a place where all were welcome as they were.

4.3. Summary Comments

This long chapter offers a depth of detail of the participants' stories in a way that represents the main focus of the data being sought. It is important to give space to their narratives to discover, in the raw data, the questions of how and why people are finding faith in fresh expressions of church.

These were semi-structured, responsive interviews and all held the potential for revealing the unknown. It was unpredictable what each of the interviewees would say in response to each of the questions and a real privilege to sit and listen to their narratives. These were very different people from quite a diverse set of backgrounds and ranging in ability, education, age, socioeconomic, and ethnicity.

In looking at these stories as a whole, I began to see some common threads emerging. Firstly, the theme of not being judged comes across more strongly than I had appreciated at the time of the interviews. In both contexts, the communities reflect an authentic non-judgmental spirit which goes beyond a simple welcome. This is evident in almost all the stories above, in one form or another.

Secondly, the role and influence of the Holy Spirit arises in a significant number of their accounts, which is particularly noticeable when deeper or further questions are asked about their encounters. This is a rich vein which has come to the surface through the nature of the responsive interview. Their experiences are varied and triggered by quite different reasons, but the function and influence of the Holy Spirit, as evidenced in the narratives, is interesting.

Thirdly, the role and function of the coding has not contradicted the theoretical material in recognising the different influences along their respective journeys to faith. Moreover, this data illustrates a little further the theory that the combining conduits are significant in an individual's pathway to faith. However, the order and frequency by which they appear are not prescriptive but indeed unique for each person. Table 4.2 offers a consolidated but subjective portrait of the order and frequency by which the conduits are arising from their narratives. This holds two subjective dynamics: a) their own perceptions of what has happened; and b) my interpretation of their narrative. With these potential vulnerabilities recognised, it is then fair to observe the following. There are common threads, as noted in the first point, for which there is perhaps a stronger affiliation with a person's sense of belonging, but this cannot be separated too far from considering how the community's behaviour influences this conduit too. This bears good corroboration with Markham and others' work on the acquisition of virtues in Chapter 1.4.3.

Table 4.2 Summary table of Conduits, noticed in Participant narratives

Participant	Conduits in order of narrative appearance (*stopped attending Church) (^ denotes conduits before attending)
Paul	<i>Bl, ^ Bl, Bh, Ep, Bf, * Ep, Bh, Bl, Bf.</i>
Lynda	<i>Bh, Bl, Bf, Ep, ^* Bl, Bh+Bl, Ep, Ep+Bh, Bf.</i>
Stuart	<i>Bl, ^* Bl, Bh+Bl, Bh.</i>
Martyn	<i>Bl, ^* Bl, Bh+Bl, Bh, Ep+Bf.</i>
Colin	<i>Bl, ^* Bl, Bl, Bh, Bl, Ep, Bf.</i>
Stephanie	<i>Bl, Bh, Bh, Bh+Bl, Bh, Bl, Bf, Bl.</i>
Imogen	<i>Bf, Bl, ^* Bh, Ep, Bf, Bl+Bh, Ep, Bh.</i>
Trudy	<i>Bf, Ep, ^ Bh+Bl, Bh, Bh+Bl.</i>
Kathryn	<i>Bl, ^* Bf+Ep, Bh, Bl, Bh, Bf, Ep, Bh, Bf.</i>
Reggie	<i>Bl, ^* Bh, Bl, Bl, Bh, Bh, Ep, Bh, Bf.</i>
Simon	<i>Bf, Ep, ^ Bl, Bh, Bh, Bh+Bl, Bl, Ep, Bf+Ep, Bf+Bh, Bl.</i>
Jack	<i>Bl, Bf, ^* Bh, Bh+Bl, Bl, Ep.</i>

Furthermore, in this new context, the work of the Holy Spirit can be tangibly observed in ten of the narratives and in all of the four conduits, adding validity to the theory of Co-operant Grace in Chapter 1.4.4.

Fourthly, it is interesting to observe that most of the western pedagogies of evangelism, since the Eighteenth Century, focus on belief and its cognitive communication thereof. However, belief did not feature as highly in the data as might have been expected. The Alpha Course does feature but most of the narratives place some form of encounter with God, often narrated as experience with God, as their significant conduit to faith in Jesus Christ. Moreover, in several stories, belief in God is accepted and accredited but it is narrated as making no difference to how they lived or

responded to God in their actions, values, or practice. What implications does this have for our learning and practice about evangelism? Does this bear a resonance with Liu's pedagogy of evangelism, in that something more authentic had to be practiced and encountered before belief could be received?⁵⁴²

The following chapter offers more in-depth analysis of the participants' narratives. Considerable thought was given to combining these two chapters and adding the analysis here. However, this would have made this chapter intolerably long and would possibly compromise attention to the narratives and to their analysis. Therefore, the decision to separate the analysis became the optimum choice as a distinct chapter. Furthermore, in the cycle of Practical Theology, having considered 'what is happening,' the logical progression is to move to analysis and consider 'why is this happening?'

⁵⁴² cf. Chapter 1.5 pp.52-66

Chapter 5

Stage Two Data Analysis

MAKING MEANING OF WHAT IS THERE

This chapter analyses how and why people find faith in fresh expressions of church in a Methodist context. It holds the summary data from Chapter 4 in dialogue with the four conduits captured from the Literature and Methodology Chapters and explores the findings this presents.

5.1. Stage Two Data Coding

Saldana notes that all coding is not a precise science but an interpretive act.⁵⁴³ Therefore as presented in the Methodology, this chapter links the information of the previously unknown data presented in Chapter 4 and the research coming from the Literature presented in Chapter 1. Harding notes:

Once data analysis is complete, the researcher should decide which of a number of existing theories fits best.⁵⁴⁴

Rambo observes the pitfalls for researchers who demonstrate too little: careful, objective, and systematic observation, while maintaining a distance from personal bias. Inevitably such approaches close down the opportunity for new perceptions and insights. Therefore, this chapter attempts to minimise bias and approach the data without a pre-determined set of ideas on how people in fresh expressions of church are coming to

⁵⁴³Saldana, 2009: p.5 p.5

⁵⁴⁴ Harding, 2006 pp.131-32; Harding, 2013 p.13

faith. However, it does seek to generate an analysis that rests on the four key dynamics that form resilient codes applied to the data from the informal qualitative interviews.

These four codes are: Background Factors, Triggers for Engaging, Triggers of Response, and Establishing Factors. They are combination of the researchers thirty-five years' experience from the field, and reflections on how people have come to faith over that period, interwoven with the literature in Chapter 1 and the developing insights that has brought. A explanation for each of these codes follows below. Each of them form a relevant part of the scaffolding that surrounds the structured detail of what takes place in the respective participants' narratives.

Firstly, Background Factors. No one starts with a blank sheet in the journey of coming to faith. Therefore, considering each person's story before connecting with the fresh expression of church is a legitimate code to extract from the data. In doing so, their previous life experiences, influencing beliefs, values that affect behaviour, and relationships, may all be considered relevant. Someone who might say they have no Christian background and were previously opposed to Christian faith has a great deal of material on their page of life to present their objections. Alternatively, someone who may take an agnostic view has life experience with which to navigate human relationships and that cannot be considered irrelevant.⁵⁴⁵

Secondly, Triggers for Engaging. To consider what were the interviewees' respective triggers for engaging with the fresh expressions of

⁵⁴⁵ Note the Literature from, Aisthorpe, 2014; Day, 2011; Hay, 2006, 2007; Hollinghurst, 2010; and Hunter, 1992 referred to in pp.48-58 of this thesis.

church held in the data below. These may differ widely but that in itself is an informative piece of evidence to discover. This should be seen as a threshold. The journey to become part of a community from not being part of it. This might range from a one-off event to something that happens over a much longer period of time. Rambo's adaptation of the work of Lofland and Stark and the missiological model of Tippet illustrates the complexity of data that can be represented.⁵⁴⁶ Contrast Rambo's systemic stage model with the example from Liu's research evidencing a relational development.⁵⁴⁷ This relational development is further compounded by the *Talking Jesus* Research.⁵⁴⁸

Thirdly, Triggers of Response. What were the triggers for each person that made a difference? What was it that brought a response from them, whether over a longer period of time or perhaps in a single moment? A code that seeks to capture this analysis again may differ significantly for each person, but it is important to recognise what the individual records as part of their own reflection on their coming to faith in Christ.

Much of the literature referenced in Chapter 1, in the sections looking at the Biblical Material, the Theological Engines, Conduit Components and Current Practice since 1940, has illustrated the variety and complexity that exists in peoples' experience and explanations of coming to faith in Christ. Though not exhaustive, within this material lies the demonstrative evidence that people encounter faith in different ways.

⁵⁴⁶ Rambo, 1993 pp.17-18, Lofland and Stark, 1965, Tippet, 1977

⁵⁴⁷ Hunter, 1992 pp.83-5; Thesis p.51

⁵⁴⁸ Barna Group on behalf of the Church of England, 2018

Hiebert's work is a helpful lens through which we can consider this data.⁵⁴⁹ Therefore a code that openly and transparently focuses on this definitive aspect is essential.

Fourthly, Establishing Factors. What other factors were contributory and what aided the interviewee to remain in this community? Much has been made in research about the reasons why people leave the church.⁵⁵⁰ So what was it for these people that helped them become established in the fresh expressions of church?

Having presented the key data from the interviews in Chapter 4, Table 5.1 presents a summary picture of these twelve people and highlights the key elements of their stories. This is an eleven-page table which, in the course of writing this thesis, has been moved between being presented here in the text or added as an Appendix in order to create a good flow of analysis. However, this is core source material upon which much of this thesis is based and therefore the final decision presents Table 5.1 below.

Five of the narratives have two distinctive parts to them therefore these different times of life have been separated out as Part A or Part B so it is easy to relate their respective narrative segments to the appropriate time or experience in the other columns. Another phrase like 'early life or later life' could have been used but that would have required great qualification and is information which was not gained at the time.

Key quotes from the transcripts have been inserted to help define the inferences discovered. This, as noted above, is an interpretive act and

⁵⁴⁹ Hiebert, 1983; Hiebert, 1994

⁵⁵⁰ Francis and Richter, 2007; Jamieson, 2002

therefore to be as transparent as possible significant amounts of the transcripts were evidenced in the previous chapter, recording the most salient aspects that make meaning of each person's narrative.

This data might then be filtered through the interests of this piece of research detailed in the methodology chapter of the four conduits of: Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God, to determine what findings can be analysed from this research. It is hoped this learning will come to influence future research in this area, will help shape the development of more apt methods and practice of evangelism, and assist developing ecclesial forms of church.

To represent the data in Table 5.1 the most clean and efficient presentational form was in landscape.

Stage Two Data Coding Table 5.1

Name	Background Factors	Triggers for Engaging	Triggers of Response	Establishing Factors
Paul R-P-01	<p>Part A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Previous experience as a young child of Sunday school was negative - Youth Club encounter positive - not interested in God stuff but liked the people running it. <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Falls away while at Uni 	<p>Part A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trusted the people leading - Went to Christian festival with the FEC <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Life crisis - Asks for help (phone to prayer network) & directly to God - Time and courage help overcomes his perceived fears of the community and he returns to ROD 	<p>Part A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belief by direct experience the Holy Spirit, in youth event (physical & emotional) best feeling ever and chooses to give life to God. - 'Shame' holds him back from immediate reconnection, perception of being judged <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcomed with inclusive embrace on return to ROD - Five years later, invitation for re-affirmation of baptism at Christian Festival. 	<p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nurture and care within ROD - Invitation to participate in worship group. - ROD understands and explains the extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit. - ROD understanding and nonjudgemental of past behaviour

Name	Background Factors	Triggers for Engaging	Triggers of Response	Establishing Factors
Lynda R-P-04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Father atheist and intolerant to God being mentioned in the home - Catholic Auntie, modelled different behaviour, more loving and forgiving, sparking curiosity about faith - Previous bad Church experience with boys special needs 	<p>Part A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attended Church connected Children's group with other family members - Invited on to an Alpha Course <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Special needs group, invitation from one participant to ROD. Boys attend youth groups. - Positive encounter for the boys provokes inquisitive request - Behaviour of community noticed, 'treat you like family' relationship built - Noticed ROD was different to previous encounter. - Prayers of a friend who would say they were not yet a believer 	<p>Part A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Said the prayer at Alpha Away Day but didn't understand it, though aware of God being there. - Negative encounter of someone's contrary Christian behaviour causes them to leave that church. <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trust built with ROD community, slow process. - Emmaus course retreat encounter of prophetic experience: God speaking to her about her life re 3 friends leads to life reality and subsequent life transformation. - Self confidence changed in response to knowledge of God's love. - Change of behaviour and belief of self - Nurture belief in others - belief in God increased through the extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit. 	<p>Part A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Character of God seen as different to D-church experience so does not remove God from her life. <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support and trust offered by leadership and community members - Strong sense of belonging to ROD and being an intrinsic part of the community - God's revelation to her comes true - ROD understanding and nonjudgemental through marriage breakdown. - ROD environment in which healing for past hurt takes place - ROD understands and explains the extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit.

Name	Background Factors	Triggers for Engaging	Triggers of Response	Establishing Factors
Stuart R-P-05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - taken by mum to church at a young age - belief in God and Jesus nurtured in the home and first church, before attending ROD 	<p>Part A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negative encounter of someone's contrary Christian behaviour causes them to leave that church. <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduced to ROD by mum's connection - Life Crisis (parents separated) 	<p>Part A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decisions made by mum to leave <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trust built with ROD community, slow process. - Asked for help and prayer from ROD community 	<p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support and trust offered by leadership and community members - Strong sense of belonging to ROD and being an intrinsic part of the community - nurtured existing faith and discipleship - ROD environment in which healing for past hurt takes place
Martyn R-P-06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - taken by mum to church at a young age - belief in God and Jesus nurtured in the home and first church, before attending ROD 	<p>Part A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negative encounter of someone's contrary Christian behaviour causes them to leave that church. <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduced to ROD by mum's connection - Life Crisis (parents separated) 	<p>Part A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decisions made by mum to leave <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trust built with ROD community, slow process. - Praying on his own 	<p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support and trust offered by leadership and community members - Strong sense of belonging to ROD and being an intrinsic part of the community - nurtured existing faith and discipleship - ROD environment in which healing for past hurt takes place

Name	Background Factors	Triggers for Engaging	Triggers of Response	Establishing Factors
Colin R-P-07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attended Anglican Parish Church with parents before family moved to a Methodist Church - Attended Youth Club & Boys Brigade but had stopped attending Sunday worship (going to Church) - Not part of ROD when it began - Not able to respond to questions from attendees of ROD (youths off the estate) - reluctant to go to church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invitation by life partner to attend home group Bible Studies - Invitation to help out at ROD with he youth work be an extra pair of hands and transport - Increased participation to support youth band involved in Christian events. - recognised the barrier that couldn't forgive himself - Invitation to respond at a Christian event, feels something urging him to stand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - noted the change of behaviour in youths stopping swearing when at ROD - shared problem in the home group and received prayer, felt the burden lift. - First event after the above he responds at Christian event (previously never felt the urge) and describes presence and peace of God with him. - Belief and forgiveness - The longer term this experience changes his attuned and behaviour re attending church and being money oriented - Much more open about faith, prays for work colleagues and answers their questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcoming inclusive place encouraging participation without prejudice. - ROD understanding and nonjudgemental through the Home Group Bible Studies. - ROD environment in which healing for past hurt takes place - ROD understands and explains the extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit.

Name	Background Factors	Triggers for Engaging	Triggers of Response	Establishing Factors
Stephanie R-P-09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Occasional attendance of Catholic Church with Grandmother when very young, shaped expectation of strictness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invited by Godmother to ROD - Connected with activities for young people (mid-week Clubs at ROD) - heard 'Church' (Sunday worship) was good from other Club attendees - Loneliness - Life Crisis (death of school friend) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curiosity sparked to attend Sunday worship (Church) - Positive experience of ROD's Sunday worship shattered previous expectations of church. - Not alone, supported through the death of her friend - Comfort through Christian belief in heaven - Signs of spiritual maturity, offering astute and apt invitations to friends, aware of their contexts. - Evangelism intention demonstrated but recognising the struggles of sharing faith at school (Catholic School) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support and trust offered by leadership and community members - Strong sense of belonging to ROD and being an intrinsic part of the community - 'Accepted for who you are' - nonjudgemental, community with a family atmosphere - relational nature of gathered community worship, before and after services. - Worship leader(s) connected with their community

Name	Background Factors	Triggers for Engaging	Triggers of Response	Establishing Factors
Imogen E-DM-02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Islamic Father, occasional practice, Pentecostal mother, practicing regularly. - experiences church but not committed to faith in God - subconsciously aware of God but no connections made, quite sceptical. - experiencing God is fake, questioning attitude. - moves cultures and continents. - Mother attended church next to their new home - not interested in attending church in UK context, looking to provoke or be repelled by church community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific conditional invitation by Mother (Holy Spirit prompt), made with trepidation but brave certainty in the moment. - first impressions of EGG very different, friendly, current and modern to previous church encountered in Nigeria. - Resonance with similar life story being shared (as testimony in the Sunday Service) but challenge of a different understanding. - Unique, in the moment felt the presence of God for the first time. Like a flush of warmth, like hugging yourself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the moment; emotions of anger, jealousy, puzzlement and then longing all preceded the experience. - Experiencing the presence of God brought instant response to seek prayer. - All inhibitions gone, feeling euphorically inert and certain. - Knowledge that it is now or never - Realisation of being known by God. - positive reaction in encountering an understanding leadership, acting with patience and grace, brought behavioural change over the longer period of time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action to go forward, seeking prayer and talking to leader afterwards made it undeniably real. Cemented the experience with an increased sense of peace. - Unique experience is a share reality. Other people have these encounters too. - Welcoming, non-judgemental community, full of patience and grace. - Intentional nurturing and discipling community, participation quickly encouraged. - Individual responsibility for personal faith development encouraged.

Name	Background Factors	Triggers for Engaging	Triggers of Response	Establishing Factors
Trudy E-DM-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Always believed existed God but didn't know much about Him or want to. - Had an experience of answered prayer as a teenager. - occasional, previous experience of church was traditional CoE - Dealing with Multiple Sclerosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invitation by life partner (prior to getting married) - Observed something different in his behaviour and temperament. - encounter with EGG very different to previous experience of Church. Normal people, relating well. - A lot of questions, in the midst of a bad time in life, helped through it by EGG. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - slow steady engagement with EGG - desire to know more - recognition of the passionate authentic faith in EGG but not overbearing - recognition of change with her own behaviour through engaging with the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcoming community of diverse eclectic backgrounds, non-judgemental of current beliefs or contexts. - A safe place to bring someone who may seem quite different but was loved and accepted.

Name	Background Factors	Triggers for Engaging	Triggers of Response	Establishing Factors
Kathryn E-DM-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taken to Church by Parents until age 11, left because it was boring and feared social shame from peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intelligent search, aged 18 desired to follow inner question 'Is God real?' - Explored various churches over several months, with support from mum. - Chance encounter with an old acquaintance from her mum's church prompts the suggestion of meeting with other younger people at EGG - despite scepticism of perceived ideas and the distance from home, makes the effort to visit EGG. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although other Church visits had been made no connection stayed solid, yet the search persisted. - Freaked out at the large church meal at EGG. Introvert welcomed by so many different friendly people. - Initially sceptical of why were people so kind and nice? What did they want? - Went with sister and mum. - Persistently welcomed well on each visit. Recognition of never been to any church like this. - Invitation to an Alpha course and subsequent response to faith in the week 'Who is Jesus?' - Recognition of depth of faith, belief and understanding amongst those of the same age or much younger than her. - Post Alpha decision change in behaviour observed, in the absence of swearing and overcoming being a worrier. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intentional nurturing and discipling community, participation quickly encouraged. - Preaching and teaching made very relevant to life application. - Gospel challenge to change, without being judged. - Someone to talk it through with and pray with. - Belonging to the community and experience God, opened up engagement in deeper belief.

Name	Background Factors	Triggers for Engaging	Triggers of Response	Establishing Factors
Reggie E-DM-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taken to Church by Parents until age 12, left play football on Sunday mornings - Dad encouraged other forms of engagement, Christian festivals and other one off events but mostly church was seen as uneventful and better options could be made. - Didn't doubt God was real but apathetic to faith 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social draw to be with other young people - EGG's leaders sons were same age and formed friendships. - Rising personal question 'Do I care about this enough to count the cost and choose to follow Jesus?' - Observing slightly older Christian role models living authentically, who he could relate to. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive peer pressure. - Considered question over time and deliberate choice. Not a moment of new belief, nor a triggered experience. - Answering the question, 'What difference does this make?' - Pragmatic life choices to prioritise faith in Christ and commitment to EGG, over sports and other life events. - Sense of worth for who he is rather than from what he does. - Relationship with Jesus is not the same as relationship with church. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The peer group, waking though a journey of faith and discipleship development together. - What was happening made a real difference to life. This was not abstract behaviours with no traction for life. - Trust and honesty with the group - A church community that seeks to keep on evolving and being relevant to those who join. - Intentional inclusive participation for a growing diverse community and an openness to the Holy Spirit that encourages all to contribute

Name	Background Factors	Triggers for Engaging	Triggers of Response	Establishing Factors
Simon. E-DM-36	<p>Part A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faith in Jesus from a young age, nurtured in a supportive small rural village context. - a move to an inner-city, multi-faith and antagonistic school environment, brings really challenge to his faith. - Lies about going to church and begins to compromise and erodes the foundations he had of faith. Begins an interest in graffiti. - moves again with parents job and is bullied at his new school but surprises it. Begins to hang with the wrong crowd. - lives a double life and gets involved with crime while still attending church. <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is sent to America on a year's discipleship programme 	<p>Part A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knows the reality of faith in Christ from earlier life, while living a dual existence. - Parents leaders EGG - Self-imposed perception of peer pressure, knowing he was letting the family down but didn't want to. - EGG and family members praying for him. - Encounter at a Christian Festival <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - came to a point of revelation, God saying to him, choose me or your own way, it cannot be both. - Gets on his knees and deliberates the choice and two directions and their outcomes - Dad has a vision of Simon moving to America with his cousin. 	<p>Part A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conflict and guilt, cold and bitter. - Strong sense of fear of a life without the love of God. - Shame of what his behaviour upon the rest of his family. - Though living a dual existence, he was still inviting people to EGG and participating on an Alpha course. <p>Part B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wrestles in prayer and chooses to follow God - attends a year's discipleship programme in America - returns, noticeably different, both in physical appearance and behaviour. - fear of God and the love of God have palpably transformed his life and ministry now. Sharing faith very publicly as a street preacher. - Now works with a prison ministry team helping ex-offenders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Persistent prayer and love of a community. - Prophetic words both to him and his dad leading to new beginnings and ending old ways. - Welcoming community of diverse eclectic backgrounds, non-judgemental of current beliefs or contexts or behaviour. - A community that believes in the power of the Gospel to change a life.

Name	Background Factors	Triggers for Engaging	Triggers of Response	Establishing Factors
Jack E-DM-38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Catholic Church - retired - receives Care in the Community support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walking past EGG's summer street BBQ, received an invitation to have a free burger (by Simon) - When asked why he came back he noted two things, the atmosphere of the worship and prayers for healing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joined in the event in front of the church and accepted the burger. - Came back the following week to the evening worship and attended ever since. - Loved the family, friendly atmosphere, made him feel really welcome. - Received prayer after a bad accident. - He helps in the kitchen team and clearing up, for all EGG meals and socials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcoming community of diverse eclectic backgrounds, non-judgemental of current beliefs or contexts. - His experience of church through EGG was inclusive with great participation

5.2.1. Background Factors

It is important to consider one qualifying caveat to this presentation of the data. The socio, economic, educational, or cultural backgrounds of each participant are not necessarily the primary concern. In such a small sample, it would be an error to make any stereotypical judgments upon class, academic ability, or context, which might distract or overshadow their narratives. Therefore, the Background Factors highlighted in Table 5.1 have focused on the elements from their narratives that may have had Christian influence, one way or another, upon their journey to faith and involvement with the fresh expressions of church.

There is a broad demographic present in the twelve participants from the two locations. The participants cross the four recognised generational bands of: Baby Boomer, Generations X, and Y, and Millennial.⁵⁵¹ There is educational diversity, the majority have undertaken focused employment training and one participant from each location has been to university. Three were still in the secondary educational system. All but three have had work experience, one is now retired. Two are full-time mothers. Five are in work, across a broad spectrum of pay-scale. Seven were married, one no longer. Two are dealing with major health issues. Two were born on other continents, the rest are White-British. Five were female and seven male. Five now participate in leadership roles within their respective fresh expression of church (two female, three male).

⁵⁵¹ There are variations in defining these terms, hence the years were stated in the questionnaire and explained above. Cf p.125

From the data in Table 5.1, all the participants from both fresh expressions of church evidence some previous church involvement.⁵⁵² Although all the encounters are different, each narrative has some form of experience with other forms of mainstream or denominational church, though some are almost negligible. However, with the exceptions of Stephanie and Jack, all the other narratives contain some form of aversion, obstacle, or rejection with what has been previously encountered.

Most of these Background Factors are provoked by subjective responses in consequence to external actions or behaviours from their previous church experiences. Paul, Lynda, Stuart, Martyn, Colin, Imogen, Kathryn, and Reggie all narrate in varying degrees and time-scales the choice to stop attending Church, and in particular, Sunday Services. The most common response was that church was boring. Kathryn said, ‘it wasn’t cool and Sunday School was really boring... the leader would complain if we missed a week or forgot our Bibles.’⁵⁵³ This theme of boredom, coupled with irrelevance, is not uncommon and found in wider research of why people leave the church, a view echoed in the research and observations of Francis and Richter, for example.⁵⁵⁴ The intention to hold church and all its life implications at bay and prioritise some other interest is quite a dominant aspect in this first column of the table.⁵⁵⁵

Lynda, Stuart, and Martyn had a negative experience which triggered their decision to leave the Life Church. Lynda said,

⁵⁵² This emphasises Day’s question about those from a British culture being de-churched and holding some form of ‘pre-formed belief’ Day, 2011 pp.191-2

⁵⁵³ Kathryn’s Transcript pp.1-2

⁵⁵⁴ Francis and Richter, 2007 pp. 53, 67, 227-8, 237-8

⁵⁵⁵ Richter and Francis, 1998 p.115

I had a bad experience with a previous church ... I wouldn't say I walked away from God, but walked away from church.⁵⁵⁶

Trudy had only attended church once or twice and Stephanie had only been at an early age with her Nana.

A significant observation present in each of these narratives is that most had some understanding, knowledge, even belief in God. However, at this point in their respective narratives, prior to engaging with the fresh expression of church, this awareness has not impacted their life in such a way to make different lifestyle choices.⁵⁵⁷ For example, Trudy records experiencing her prayer as a teenager being answered but this was not enough to make her inquisitive to explore things further at that point.⁵⁵⁸

Reggie, sums up one of the sentiments with the phrase 'I don't think I ever doubted God was real but I think the question for a long time was actually, do I care enough?'⁵⁵⁹ This belonging and believing, without any recourse to how that shapes or informs one's values points to the question: 'What is being asked of you by the church you attend?' Is there any Gospel challenge being presented or is it that the veil of experiencing God's love has not yet broken through?⁵⁶⁰ Richter and Francis make the observation that it does matter how serious a church is about its task, noting that twenty-five percent left because the church they were part of 'lacked purpose and vision.'⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁶ Lynda's Transcript pp.1-2

⁵⁵⁷ See their respective Stage One Results in the scores for Question 7.

⁵⁵⁸ Trudy's Transcript p.4

⁵⁵⁹ Reggie's Transcript p.3

⁵⁶⁰ Billings, 2013 pp.96-97

⁵⁶¹ Richter and Francis, 1998 p.101

Simon's and Paul's stories reveal that it is very possible to have had a dynamic encounter with God and know you are following Jesus but then, if under pressure, facing harsh realities, or when your faith is challenged, to make choices that are contrary to a Christ-like life and consequently over time, lead one away from a closer relationship with Christ. Simon's testimony is quite sobering as he started to lie about going to church because people laughed at him for it. He knew this was wrong, especially as he had experienced God prompting him to actually share this faith with this particular group, recognising that they were the worst kids in that school.⁵⁶² However this denial leads on quite quickly to deviant behaviour, which results in criminal punishment. The story of inner conflict and competing influences demonstrate how both Simon's and Paul's choices could have gone either way.

Understanding these background factors offers context and detail to the dynamic of change for each individual. Although most of the participants encountered some form of negative experience with church before engaging with the fresh expression of church, it has not been insurmountable. One immediate observation for the future learning of the church and any pedagogy of evangelism, is the insight is that there is always opportunity to open a new page on someone's background story. Imagination, innovation, and invitation should not be limited by what might have gone before.

⁵⁶² Simon's Transcript p.2

5.2.2. Triggers for Engagement

The Triggers for Engagement highlights the following eight consolidated insights from the analysis of Table 5.1.

- i) Invitation (by individuals in the community)
- ii) Non-judgmental (action of the community)
- iii) Modern (nature of the fresh expression)
- iv) Intelligent Search (pro-active by the participant)
- v) Nurturing Discipleship (Learning within community)
- vi) Holy Spirit (subtle often unseen activity)
- vii) Life Crisis (of the participant)
- viii) Care, love, support (of the community)

i) Invitation

Firstly, the majority of the data for both EGG and ROD displayed intentional invitation as a deliberate act.⁵⁶³ In multiple narratives this appears as either a considered approach over time or an instant, spur of the moment act, usually by someone close e.g., Stephanie’s Godmother, Colin’s partner, Lynda’s friend from the special needs group, Trudy’s partner, Imogen’s mother, Jack’s free burger offered by Simon.

The culture of invitation as recognised and evidenced by the Back-to-Church-Sunday movement is still not prevalent. In May 2020 the Back-to-Church-Sunday organisation published the story of the “82% & 2%.”⁵⁶⁴ It appears that eighty-two percent of people currently not attending any church would be interested in coming to church, if invited by a friend, yet from their research only two percent of church attendees have ever invited someone. This compares similarly to the *Talking Jesus* research in 2015, which recorded that sixty-seven percent of non-Christian adults in England

⁵⁶³ This is long before ‘Back to Church Sunday’ was introduced in 2009 and became widespread church activity in Churches towards the third week of September.

⁵⁶⁴ <https://www.backtochurch.com> accessed 1st May 2020

knew a practicing Christian and one in five of them would be open to learning more about Jesus.⁵⁶⁵

ii) Non-judgmental

Secondly, as noted above, many of the participants have a de-churched background and therefore hold varying degrees of scepticism about their previous encounters with the church. Consequently, their respective journeys emit a sense of caution and trepidation, to different levels. Significantly, Lynda, Martyn, and Stuart note the non-judgmental nature at ROD as they were welcomed as a family, including understanding concerning the boys' ADHD issues. Lynda remarked that though it was a slow process and she had to take time to build up trust once again with a church, she appreciated that they were welcomed just as they were.

It was just the way they basically accepted you where you were at and you didn't have to fit in any kind of box.⁵⁶⁶

In both EGG and ROD, the descriptions under this coding narrate ordinary people welcoming the participants well. Imogen and Kathryn describe this as something counter-cultural in their previous experience, which has included large, growing, welcoming churches. Imogen expected to be judged and actually tried to provoke a reaction with her style of dress but found nothing but kindness and welcome despite her intentions. She said 'They accepted me just as I was... I was loud, I was opinionated, I was angry...how did they cope?'⁵⁶⁷ Kathryn recorded that she had remembered

⁵⁶⁵ Barna Group on behalf of the Church of England, 2018

⁵⁶⁶ Lynda, Stuart and Martyn's Transcript p.2

⁵⁶⁷ Imogen's Transcript p.16

questioning ‘Why are they so nice?’ and suspiciously thinking ‘What is it that they want from me?’, as she had never encountered this type of behaviour, despite visiting other churches on her search for meaning. She said,

I couldn’t grasp it. I had never encountered stuff like that... the welcome from everybody... I felt very accepted... I just felt really loved for what I was.⁵⁶⁸

Again, attention is drawn to the value present within both fresh expressions of church of, ‘come as you are,’ and ‘you will be accepted just as you are.’ It is important to note in many of the participants’ narratives that being accepted for who you are does not mean you stay as you are. Both ROD and EGG have very clear Gospel values to live more like Christ as will be recorded later. However, it is important to note neither of the fresh expressions of church could be identified as what Frost and Hirsch call a ‘Fuzzy Set,’ a grouping with no ideological centre or boundary, but is made up of people hanging out together.⁵⁶⁹ Imogen’s next words detail the context of expectation and the nature of how that happened for her. She said,

As I learned more about what God expected of me and what living a holy life meant that things started to change.⁵⁷⁰

This exposes an interesting balance between receiving people in a non-judgmental way, while a Gospel or Kingdom narrative was clearly evident.

Both these communities do not express or emit an aura of “nothing matters

⁵⁶⁸ Kathryn’s Transcript pp.2,4-5

⁵⁶⁹ Frost and Hirsch, 2003 p.206-7

⁵⁷⁰ Imogen’s Transcript, p.16, 17

in the longer term” or that one can live as one likes. It would appear the contrary dynamic is true. The Gospel imperative, with Christ as the central focus of orthodox Christianity and influencing all of the aspects of one’s life, seems apparent. Reggie had reflected that he thought it impacted everything of a person’s whole life structure and world view. He emphasised the change in perspective from self-seeking and self-serving, only looking after yourself, to a perspective where a person’s life is about living it for Jesus, which for him altered his focus about his relationship with other people, the use of money, the way he spent his time and how the values he held had changed.⁵⁷¹ This change brought about selfless priority in which he was no longer number-one.

Imogen’s narrative holds a one-off conditional invitation, which her mother reflects on at a later date, as being something of very high risk but described it as the impulsion of the Holy Spirit. It is not completely the spur of the moment because a friend is invited to accompany her, for protection from ‘brain-washing.’ Nevertheless, this is one of the more in-depth interviews that captures the question of prevenient grace. God at work in advance, through the Holy Spirit, for a given moment that seems uniquely for one person. Though there are a wide range of theological and missiological opinions around such possibilities, it would be errant not to consider at some point what has taken place here and the extraordinary coincidence. Byassee, quoting Lash, makes the point that this is God’s nature and natural way to work and it is errant to speak of God working

⁵⁷¹ Reggie’s Transcript p.8

‘supernaturally.’⁵⁷² Markham has written extensively about the Co-Operant Nature of God at work through the Holy Spirit.⁵⁷³ It may be worth considering what is appropriate language with reference to the work of the Holy Spirit and does any such action warrant the use of the word ‘ordinary’?

The significant insight arising from this work of the Holy Spirit presents the question of the potential non-judgmental nature of the Holy Spirit in pre-evangelism.

iii) Modern

Thirdly, there is one further note from this narrative which may seem more ordinary but nonetheless significant as a Trigger of Engagement. Imogen draws attention to the modern nature of EGG and not being like anything she had seen before,⁵⁷⁴ as do Kathryn and Jack in their stories. Kathryn said in her transcript ‘...this is really cool, like this can’t be church. I wouldn’t feel afraid to bring a friend to this.’⁵⁷⁵ Jack described the church atmosphere as being like a disco, thus giving the impression of bright colourful lights and loud music.⁵⁷⁶

It is worth reminding the reader that the context of this event is around 2007 and much has moved on in mainline churches over the last decade. Lighting rigs, a band, and loud music are now a fundamental part of some church streams such as Hillsong, but back in 2007 this was not

⁵⁷² Byassee, 2015 p.57; Lash, 1992

⁵⁷³ Markham, 2007

⁵⁷⁴ Imogen’s Transcript p.6

⁵⁷⁵ Kathryn’s Transcript p.6

⁵⁷⁶ Jack’s Transcript p.3

commonplace and rarely had been witnessed by most of the British public.⁵⁷⁷

iv) Intelligent Search

Fourthly, Kathryn's trigger the only one of its type in the small sample, details another significant area as it highlights the question of 'intelligent search.' Kathryn, having deliberately left the church at the age of eleven and then at the age of eighteen felt the internal prompt: is God real and if so, what should I do about it?⁵⁷⁸ Kathryn attributes this prompt to God, but her experience is not uncommon. Anecdotal stories around church growth note the frequent testimonies of those who 'woke up one morning and felt they should go to church.'⁵⁷⁹ Where does this prompt originate and why? This may well need further enquiry but nevertheless this was Kathryn's reality and the trigger to begin looking for a church to explore the questions she had.

Despite some American nuances, research by Gary McIntosh over a ten-year period evidences twenty-five percent of people walking into church of their own volition.⁵⁸⁰ The research recognises that a significant proportion of these people came out of a willingness to further explore their own questions around intelligent design.

Everts and Schaupp make the valid point that a sparked curiosity or the award of someone's trust does not necessarily lead to belief or a

⁵⁷⁷ Byassee and Wells, pp. 68-70

⁵⁷⁸ Kathryn's Transcript p.3

⁵⁷⁹ McIntosh, 2016

⁵⁸⁰ McIntosh, 2016 p.117

following of Jesus.⁵⁸¹ In their taxonomy of a pathway to faith in Jesus, Everts and Schaupp pose a set of thresholds which must be crossed before the possibility of entering the Kingdom can be made by someone.⁵⁸²

v) Nurturing Discipleship

Fifthly, what is evidenced in a number of the participants' narratives for EGG (Kathryn, Reggie, Imogen, Trudy, and Simon) and ROD (Lynda, Martyn, Stuart, Colin, and possibly Paul) is their intentional nurturing towards authentic discipleship in following Jesus. The small groups focused around life application of Bible Studies, the teaching, and the preaching referenced in the worship events demonstrate the help and relevance for the current context to live life well.

The Alpha course is referenced by Kathryn and Simon and forms, for Kathryn, a significant decision-making trigger moment. It should be noted that Kathryn initiated this response in her narrative. The only question from Ruth (the Course leader that night) was to ask Kathryn, 'Are you okay?' So although the Alpha material for the week 'Who is Jesus' poses provocative questions, albeit indirectly, on this occasion no avert question like 'Do you want to invite Christ into your life?' had been made. Ruth just offered an open, "state of being" question that met Kathryn in her inward thought processes and gave her the open space to explore with Ruth what was happening internally.

⁵⁸¹ Everts and Schaupp, 2009 p.51

⁵⁸² Everts and Schaupp, 2009 pp.23-4

vi) Holy Spirit

Sixthly, the subtle trigger of engagement that might perhaps go unnoticed is the work the Holy Spirit was undertaking in Kathryn's life.⁵⁸³ Up to this point, Kathryn had been attending EGG but had not made any firm commitment to follow Jesus or pray a similar Christian prayer to invite Christ into her life. Kathryn describes and attributes this change to the work of God in both her life and that of her sister and mother.

As a further point of note, Imogen's trigger can also be attributed to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, as she describes her mother's observation on reflection.⁵⁸⁴ This is further reinforced by the extensive work done by Markham, illustrating the potential influence and work of the Holy Spirit in the i), ii), and iv) Triggers for Engagement.⁵⁸⁵

vii) Life Crisis

The seventh notable conclusion from the data is found in Paul, Lynda, Stephanie, and Simon's respective journeys. Each of these narratives speak of some level of life crisis. Though each is unique and a result of quite diverse circumstances, the ensuing triggers for engagement are not dissimilar. Lewis Rambo's investigations into conversion and individual narratives of coming to faith also offers some further substance and evidence to these findings.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸³ Chapter 4, Stage Two Data p.175-78

⁵⁸⁴ Imogen's Transcript p.20

⁵⁸⁵ Markham, 2007 pp.131-92

⁵⁸⁶ Specifically, see the chapter, Crisis; Rambo, 1993 pp.44-55

viii) Care, love, support

The eighth trigger is closely connected with the seventh. Each respective need is met with care, love, and support, no matter whether this crisis has been self-inflicted or not. Both ROD and EGG display the values of a Christian community that seeks to restore, heal, and bind up the broken hearted.⁵⁸⁷ Paul remembers the prayer network back at ROD when he hit his lowest ebb. Lynda, although part of ROD, hits a very low point and finds Elaine waiting for her to help. Stephanie is nurtured through her sadness and loneliness within ROD's community after the death of her friend at a very young age.

Simon's story forms a very unusual narrative. The complexity within his account encompasses: bullying, a crisis of faith, dual-personalities depending upon the company he is in, and deep inner conflict about these two very polar lifestyles. The EGG community does not reject him, nor do his family, but both invest in prayer for him and still include him in the general activities of EGG.

It would seem the substantial trigger holding Simon and keeping him engaged with EGG is his own knowledge and previous experience of God, His love, and God's desire to want the best for Simon. This is Simon's place of conflict and he wrestles with this but it is hard to deny Simon's assertion that without the community's support, prayer, and engagement with him, it would have been much easier for him to choose a different way. He said,

I can't say confidently where I would be if I hadn't...
(made this choice), in prison, serving a long sentence

⁵⁸⁷ Psalm 147.1-3

because a lot of my friends have done very long sentences.⁵⁸⁸

Reggie notes something similar in his interview about the influence of the community and being part of EGG with people of a similar age and background.

I think it would have been very different. I just don't think I would have stayed in situ long enough to have absorbed those truths.⁵⁸⁹

This comment records the value, medium, and impact of those around you and the significant dynamic of time. It implies that not everything of transformational substance is received instantly and that an essential period or duration is required to permeate one's understanding. This can only be imagined as a variable coefficient, subjective to the individual but nevertheless a period of importance to note at this juncture and given greater attention in the following coding.

5.2.3. Triggers of Response

There are a range of key issues to consider under this heading, not least because this is perhaps the heart of the initial question posed: How and why are people coming to faith in these new forms of church called fresh expressions? The desire to crystallise down their responses and discover what the key component is, is perhaps a natural desire for any piece of research but that would miss something more profound that the Stage Two Data uncovers.

⁵⁸⁸ Simon's Transcript, p.6

⁵⁸⁹ Reggie's Transcript p.10, Chapter 4, p.185

Firstly, the factor of time should be observed. Both of the terms ‘trigger’ and ‘response’ could unhelpfully imply an instant action, but that may not be the case. Finney notes that for only around one third of people in their research this response was described as a dateable event. The majority (sixty-nine percent) describe their response in coming to faith as a gradual process.⁵⁹⁰ The *Talking Jesus* data echoes a similar narrative but breaks the data down to include the influence of growing up in a Christian family and the dynamic of several key decisions or experiences as well as a process over time and one sudden decision or experience.⁵⁹¹

What transpires from the data collected for this thesis is a combination of all these things. There are instant experiences, and the gradual reflection over time, coupled with several experiences or decisions and those who describe the influence of a Christian family. For some, these journeys are a matter of months, for others they are a matter of years.

Linked with time, and prevalent in the participants’ Triggers of Response, is the influence of ‘more than one conduit.’ This dynamic will be considered in depth later in this chapter. Therefore, it would be unwise to distill one conduit as the principal reason for their coming to faith in Jesus. As Liu notes in her research, the combining conduits of ‘Behaviour’ and ‘Belonging’ create the opportunity for ‘Experience of God’ to happen, which then opens up a change of attitude towards ‘Belief’ or, as Liu depicts it, the transfer of theological knowledge.⁵⁹²

⁵⁹⁰ Finney, 1992 p.24

⁵⁹¹ Barna Group on behalf of the Church of England, 2018, p.12

⁵⁹² Hunter, 1992 p.84

Time is the unmentioned element of each of these conduits. What is interesting from the participants' narratives is their moment of leaving a church. For those who did leave church, it is often quite clearly an almost dateable event, but their coming to faith is much more imprecise, often the culmination of a significant period of time, with notable events along the way. This is illustrated in Lynda, Colin, Paul, Reggie, Trudy, and Simon's stories. Martyn and Stuart's narratives indicate that a longer period of time aided them in their faith development, but there is not enough detail to make more of this.

Stephanie and Jack both reference different encounters in healing, which the foundation of time, in their respective communities, had opened up their levels of trust, to make such a response and ask for prayer. Although these encounters are not referenced as the defining influence in their responses, it does illustrate the effect of invested and reciprocated time in a community that has produced trust and relationship. It also resonates with the *Talking Jesus* research of multiple events or experiences over time having a contributing effect.⁵⁹³

Imogen's trigger is the clearest demonstration of an instant moment being key in her response. She said,

As she was speaking... I was trying to understand; that was when I would say I felt the presence of God for the first time. I literally ran to the front for prayer.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹³ Barna Group on behalf of the Church of England, 2018 p.12

⁵⁹⁴ Imogen's Transcript, p.6

It is not only that moment that contributes, but it is evident that this experience was over a very short period of time and that brought her significant response to get up and go forward and ask for prayer.

The concept of an instant response is not new. Wesley tells the story of one W. Fish being born of God as an instant act.⁵⁹⁵ Linking time with momentary experiences or encounters is a fair interpretation of the data, so long as a perspective is held that for Paul, Colin, Lynda, Simon, and Imogen, it is not the only contributing factor for their respective responses. Paul described a spiritual encounter that brought his emotions to the fore and in which he gave his life to God. He described feeling the immense love of God for him. Colin describes a similar encounter having faced a previous struggle around forgiveness of self. Colin has a breakthrough moment at a Christian worship event after receiving prayer at the Bible Study group a week or two earlier. At the invitation to respond Colin said,

something overpowered me and I just had to stand up and say yes I want to give my life to God.⁵⁹⁶

He feels ‘something,’ he said. The Holy Spirit lifted him to his feet and Colin describes the conflict within him as gone, replaced with an indescribable sense of peace. No one is immediately near him and, like Paul and Imogen, this experience precedes any interaction or explanation of what might happen at the event they are respectively attending. The experience for each of them is unexpected. It is extraordinary to their previous

⁵⁹⁵ Wesley, 1938 Vol.II p.108

⁵⁹⁶ Colin’s Transcript, p.2, Chapter 4, p.157

experiences of emotion. They try to explain it as ‘very hard to describe,’ yet wonderful.⁵⁹⁷ In fact, better than anything they have ever felt before.

These experiences took place a substantial number of years prior to their Christian journeys. However, each participant describes it in a way that gives the impression that it was still very prominent in their memory. The effect was distinctive, unqualified by anything they had encountered previously or since, and it was definitive, as life changed for each of them after these separate moments.

As noted by Finney,⁵⁹⁸ the authenticity of their narratives is not in question. Though describing subjective religious experience, the narratives held no hint of fabrication. When the participants completed the Stage One Questionnaires, no indication of what would be asked in Stage Two was known to them. They had no reason to lie or seek attention. Nothing could be intentionally gained by them and their stories can be considered as genuine and authentic.

For each of them it took further questioning to help unpack what they initially chose to describe briefly, so they might not be misunderstood. Their respective caution regarding their experiences would seem to have arisen from the view that what had happened was not normal. Alongside their experiences being hard to understand or explain, there was an element of fear concerning being perceived as weird, mad, or worse by someone not aware of such encounters. Imogen said, ‘I don’t usually tell people in this much detail. I usually just say, “I felt it”’.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁷ Colin’s Transcript, p.2; Imogen’s Transcript, p.15; Paul’s Transcript, p.5

⁵⁹⁸ Finney, 1992 pp. 93-9

⁵⁹⁹ Imogen’s Transcript, p.9

Therefore, the validity of these experiences should be considered and examined further, exploring the cooperant nature of the Holy Spirit as the active agent in awakening their spirit to God. John Wesley's 'Order of Salvation' is described by Hunter as a four-step structure. It reflects Wesley's own experience of moving, over time, from an awakening to God, being justified by grace, to finally experiencing sanctification. All of this resulting from the second step of the weekly investment and experience of the Class Meeting facilitating the journey.⁶⁰⁰ However, this does not appear altogether the same as Wesley's eighteenth-century form of evangelism: making people aware of their 'lostness,' their need of God, a desire to 'flee from the wrath to come,' and experience new life in Christ. Nor does it compare to the four spiritual laws that formed common evangelical practice noted in Chapter 1.⁶⁰¹

Imogen, Paul, Colin, Kathryn, and Lynda all articulate that it was more directly their response to the love of God and feeling known by God.⁶⁰² Imogen described her experience with depth, noting a sense of radiating warmth, like the glow of a fire. She said,

It felt like I was hugging myself. It was almost like as though time stood still and everything was like...(pause), nothing else mattered at that moment and I just felt grounded all of a sudden. I felt like I was real and this was real and I knew I had an instance choice to make.⁶⁰³

For Imogen this experience precipitated an instant reaction that urged a response. Though she described it as if being pulled forward, she

⁶⁰⁰ Hunter, 1992 pp.81-2, 181-2

⁶⁰¹ Ward, 2017b pp.117-21

⁶⁰² Transcripts: Imogen's pp.12-13; Paul's p.5; Colin's pp.3-4; Kathryn's pp.4-5; Lynda's p. 10

⁶⁰³ Imogen's Transcript, p.8

knew she could choose to sit down. However, she also knew that if she did not get up she would never do it again. It is interesting that her perception was that she would never put herself in that place to receive that again if she sat down and resisted the drive to go forward. She said of the moment,

...it's kind of now or never, so I just let it take me. I just got up and I can't remember how I got to from where I was sitting to the front. It's really weird to put it like that but is it kind of like being high; everything just feels great and safe. I think safe is the right word but yeah, just safe. It's like you have never been sure of anything more in your life and it is also scary because you are not sure exactly what is happening but it was more exciting. It was like a scary excitement...⁶⁰⁴

Imogen owned this moment and experience as God letting her know it was real. God was not so far off that he knew her.

Other than Colin's previous expression of needing to know forgiveness, none of these narratives spoke typically of any form of repentance at this stage.⁶⁰⁵ Their experiences do not describe, as Wesley does in many instances, a "crying out to be saved from the sin".⁶⁰⁶ These twenty-six journal entries from Wesley span some thirty-five years. Notably from these many accounts recorded by Wesley, the circumstances and contexts for each of these testimonies are quite unique and the range of people responding is diverse. Their respective journeys are nuanced by time, experience, and the role others played in supporting them. Hence, it is not surprising that the results from the participants' Stage Two data offer a range

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., , p.8-9, 12

⁶⁰⁵ This is not uncommon as also noted also by Ward, 2017b pp.134-8

⁶⁰⁶ Wesley, 1938 Vol.II. pp.80, 147, 181-2, 279, 378-9, Vol.III. pp. 223, 261-2, 267, 319, 374, 398, 454, 438-4, Vol.IV. pp.159-60, 169-70, 191-2, 202, 425-7, 512, 522-3, 524-5, Vol.V. pp.143, 181, 446, 481, 507

of responses, nuanced by these similar components but not in the classic order noted by Hunter.

That said, it is observable that for all the participants interviewed, both at ROD and EGG, a combination of the conduits acknowledged in the literature search are influential in their respective journeys in becoming followers and disciples of Jesus. These conduits of: Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God all form a complimentary dynamic within the realm of time, but the order or combination for each person's development varies.

To illustrate, Paul does not believe in God when he joins ROD but starts to attend because of the welcoming behaviour of the group. So much so that ROD becomes a place in which he may describe it as a community he belongs to. This, as Liu depicts in her model, opens him up to an experience that begins his transformation. However, in a new era at university he makes a series of life choices which take his behaviour in a different direction, away from the likeness of Christ.⁶⁰⁷ While in crisis, Paul has a turning point through prayer and returns to ROD and because of their non-judgmental behaviour towards him, Paul is nurtured back to being an active follower of Jesus. Faith in time is affirmed through his re-affirmation of baptism and committed participation is practiced.

Imogen, does not believe in God or feels, at first, like she belongs at EGG, but she does take notice of the open and friendly behaviour of the other members at EGG. Imogen has an experience of God and is nurtured straight away to belief. After this encounter she begins to increasingly feel

⁶⁰⁷ 2 Corinthians 3:18

like she belongs both to the EGG community and as a Christian, part of the Body of Christ. Imogen also recognises the changes in her own behaviour over the coming months.

Kathryn initially does not believe in God, while belonging to a church but then hosts the notion of belief and starts to observe behaviour while exploring belonging. Once belonging is established, the behaviour at EGG leads to participation in the Alpha course and an experience leads to a commitment to follow Christ as belief is realised. She then notices transformation of behaviour in her own life in the following months.

Simon experiences the love of God from an early age and believes, belongs, and behaves as a Christian, but his behaviour changes when his circumstances change and, as a result, his belief is challenged. Though belonging is still practised and experiences are still happening, the challenge of behaviour over his whole life is a conflict. Prayer of the EGG community and wider brings a moment of decision which seems drenched in experience as he wrestles in prayer in his room. The commitment of belonging and behaviour by EGG invests in a new start for Simon and the year in America breaks the cycle of conforming with the wrong crowd. This discipleship training programme restores his behaviour. Simon's belief about God,⁶⁰⁸ the consequences of his deviant behaviour, and his experience of God were combining conduits for his change, in the context of a community who held his belonging and did not exclude him or judge him.

⁶⁰⁸ Simon's belief about God embodied the words of Proverbs 1:7 Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. NRSV

Lynda observed both bad and good behaviour in family members. Lynda started to feel like she believed and belonged, but after an Alpha course experience her belief was recognised as just beginning. Damaging behaviour disconnected her from feeling like she belonged but her belief remained strong. ROD's non-judgmental behaviour restored her trust and her sense of belonging. A unique experience lead to a deeper understanding of belief (not just for Lynda) and life transformation, for her, Martyn, and Stuart.

The three-dimensional model, Figure A⁶⁰⁹ below, is used to aid articulation and understanding of how people journey in faith. This model, now incorporated in the *Mission Shaped Ministry* course (*msm*) within the Unit B10 on Personal Evangelism, is a helpful image for interpreting the Stage Two data.⁶¹⁰ The three-dimensional image offers a representation of four dynamics all functioning concurrently. Firstly, it presents holding multiple conduits⁶¹¹ to faith in view and active at the same time. Secondly, it offers these four conduits an interconnectivity, so more than one dimension, possibly all four could be having an effect on a person's journey in faith towards the likeness of Christ at any one time. Thirdly, it shows no boundary line to cross and one can journey away as well as towards Christ. The point of faith being acknowledged or responded to can originate anywhere within the realm of the sphere. Fourthly, it holds a perspective

⁶⁰⁹ Used with kind permission.

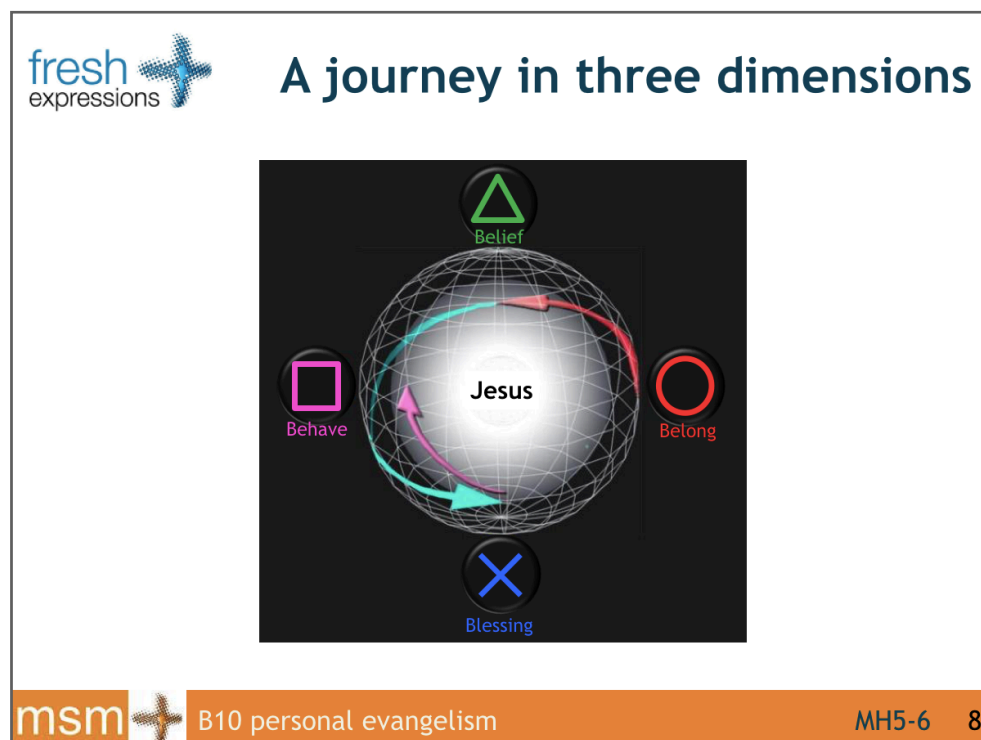
⁶¹⁰ course, 2012

⁶¹¹ The four conduits referred to are: Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God, denoted as Blessing. Blessing was re-named as Experience for the academy in this thesis to more appropriately define what was being referred to.

that a person's faith journey is not necessarily linear or one or two dimensional.

This concept builds upon the missiological and theological principles of the Centred Set developed by Hiebert⁶¹² and referred to by Hill.⁶¹³ It was brought into contemporary thinking by Frost and Hirsh as 'wells and fences,' as it contrasts the previous missiological and theological thinking around what was considered as the Bounded Set.⁶¹⁴

Figure A. Playstation Model - *msm*. Unit B13 Personal Evangelism.⁶¹⁵



Hiebert's original questions and concepts about the possibilities by which people receive or encounter faith in Jesus Christ were revolutionary

⁶¹² Hiebert, 1983; Hiebert, 1994

⁶¹³ Hill, 1986 pp.26-7

⁶¹⁴ Frost and Hirsch, 2003 pp.47-51, 206-10

⁶¹⁵ An explanation of the symbols is detailed in Appendix IX pp.328-330

at the time, asking questions about what do we mean by the word ‘Christian’ and ‘conversion.’ How are such things to be judged with or without a boundary?⁶¹⁶ The concept of the Centred Set still looked for a distinction to be made, but that was determined in movement or the direction of travel, i.e., towards Christ (and all that implied in living like Jesus) or away from Christ. The three-dimensional image extends Hiebert’s initial concept that one might come to faith at any moment under God’s grace. Therefore, to imagine all the four conduits represented, being potentially relevant in one’s discipleship and journey to faith, seemed prudent to consider.

As observed in the synopsis of the narratives above, quite different trajectories were taken by each of the participants in the Stage Two Data Results. Therefore, serious consideration ought to be given to the operant dynamics for a pedagogy of evangelism in each of these four conduits of Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God.

5.2.4. Establishing Factors

The fourth metric used for coding the Stage Two Data considered the constructs that surrounded the respective Triggers of Response. As noted above, experiences and/or beliefs can be had or held but this does not necessarily translate into a commitment of faith in Christ nor is it necessarily substantiated in the longer term. Therefore, this coding attempts to discover what made the participants stay, both with faith in Jesus and within the fresh expression of church, where faith became more realised and engaged.

⁶¹⁶ Hiebert, 1983, p.425

Examining the two communities separately, beginning with ROD and their respective participants' narratives, the six participants of ROD highlight the nature of the community of which they are now a part. Care and nurture form a frequent part of their narratives. This is evidenced in the detail Lynda described while facing her breakdown and in the initial contact with ROD and her concern with how her boys would be treated. Martyn and Stuart would no longer be part of ROD had their ADHD been responded to in a different manner. Lynda remarked,

No matter where you are at in life they were there to support you with whatever you go through... it was a different way of teaching God's love... You sometimes get the wrong impression of God from different churches, but it was like wow, this is different.⁶¹⁷

Paul and Colin also emphasise the welcoming nature with which ROD embraced them and the non-judgmental behaviour that radiated from the community around their problem issues.

Noting that the age spectrum is wide amongst ROD participants, this is not a community where like has attracted like but demonstrates something of an ecclesial group that echoes the nature of an extended family. Though this is a relatively small community, the sense of fellowship and relational engagement is much more than a "hello" at the point of entering the event and a "goodbye" when leaving.

Stephanie's narrative describes the space for intentional conversations both before the gathered worship and after. She notes,

At the actual church services it was like nothing I had been to before. Before it starts everybody is speaking and

⁶¹⁷ Lynda's Transcript, p.3

its really nice and you get to know new people before and it's like a connection between who is doing the speaking (the preacher). It is more relatable because you know the people most times.⁶¹⁸

Though it was not directly asked in the interviews, their respective narratives indicated that they were in touch with those within the ROD community several times throughout the week. Life challenges and problems are shared and prayed about. Loving care is clearly being demonstrated by those within the ROD and not just the leadership. This is noted by Lynda, Stuart, Martyn, and Stephanie. Stuart remarked,

They helped quite a lot over the past year because with Mum and Dad obviously split up. So that was a really hard and tough time for us all and they were there for us.⁶¹⁹

This suggests that this is a friendly, welcoming church that is very hospitable and with further study it may be determined why this is so. Is ROD just a good place, with nice people, or is there an intentional theological, missional motive or Christian value at the heart of their ethos that is prioritised, emphasised, and practiced within the leadership? The strong sense of belonging portrayed in each of their narratives would imply that this is not a haphazard choice for the community but a deliberate, intentional practice. The participation that is required to form such levels of relationship within a community speaks clearly of sincere commitment to the group. Once EGG's Establishing Factors are considered I will return to the nature of belonging.

⁶¹⁸ Stephenie's Transcript p.3

⁶¹⁹ Lynda, Stuart and Martyn's Transcript, p.12

The second significant implication of an Establishing Factor comes out of the data around an understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul experiences something he has never encountered before, Lynda has a revelation from God and thinks she is going mad, Colin experiences forgiveness and a spiritual encounter that brings him to respond and find peace. Stuart, Martyn and Stephanie all encounter something they affirm as answered prayer and describe healing as part of their life encounter. This is a place that understands such things and seems to embrace the more extraordinary and ordinary work of God through the Holy Spirit. These encounters are not dismissed but recognised, considered, and interpreted with respect to the context and ongoing discipleship of the individual. What should not be ignored in this analysis is the unfortunate reality that such willingness to embrace both the extraordinary and ordinary work of God through the Holy Spirit is not universal across church experience.

Noting their narratives span a number of years previous to the research undertaken, the teaching about the Holy Spirit and an understanding of these experiences of the Holy Spirit were not commonplace within the Methodist Church of Great Britain at that time. The phenomenon known as the Toronto Blessing was viewed by many in the Western Church with great scepticism in the early 1990s.⁶²⁰ Personal experience was once again put under the microscope to determine intention and purpose. Is this of God or is this more self-seeking consumerism of spiritual individualism?⁶²¹

⁶²⁰ Luhrmann, 2012 p.336, Note 53.

⁶²¹ Roberts, 1994; Porter and Richter, 1995; Percy, 1996

As in Wesley's time, illustrated by the events at Everton over several years, these religious experiences though questioned are qualified by the transformation of the individual(s) and then the society they inhabit.⁶²²

Wesley's visit four years after this all began, noted how the people's hearts and minds at Everton had changed towards these experiences, seeing them as not part of genuine faith. Wesley seems to doubt their scepticism describing them as in danger of 'running from east to west.'⁶²³

Luhrmann claims that "charismatic Christianity," the form that takes 'Biblical miracles at face value and treats the Holy Spirit as if it had a voltage,' is exploding in growth. This form of Pentecostal church is among the fastest growing around the world, except in the Western hemisphere⁶²⁴ that seems to pejoratively doubt such experiences.⁶²⁵

The anecdotal evidence witnessed firsthand in a visit to the Cuban Methodist Church in December 2018, demonstrated that their primary objective is to help people experience the reality of God's love. The Methodist Bishop, Ricardo Pereira stated, as did many of the church pastors: once someone has truly encountered God's presence through the Holy Spirit, the experience is so transforming, it changes everything for a person. Thus, in one part of the Cuban Methodist Church twenty years earlier a prayer meeting brought an encounter of the Holy Spirit which has now spread further and wider than Cuba. The Cuban Methodist Church has been in growth for each of these twenty years, amounting to approximately

⁶²² Wesley, 1938 Vol.IV pp.291, 295, 317-22, 333-43, 344, 349, 434,

⁶²³ Wesley, 1938 Vol.IV p.483

⁶²⁴ There is growth but by comparison it is much slower note; Goodhew, 2012 pp.127-59, Orton and Hart, 2017

⁶²⁵ Luhrmann, 2012 pp.302, 361

ten percent year on year growth, under this Pentecostal-type approach, of an openness to the Holy Spirit.

The community at ROD or their worship, would not classically be recognised as Pentecostal at all. However, their openness to the Holy Spirit and their ability to explain and help understanding, around the work of the Holy Spirit, is perhaps a very significant factor in helping those who experience such things become established within their community.

Analysing the Establishing Factors within the EGG community from Table 5.1 shows some similar traits of behaviour as ROD's. Trudy, Imogen, Kathryn, and Jack come from not knowing how this community operated before they encountered it. Their coding results describe a welcoming, hospitable environment, which hosts a spectrum of people. The theme and expression of a non-judgmental community appears in five narratives and merits some further scrutiny and theological reflection, which is offered in the following chapter. Accompanied by the brief ethnography piece building the narrative picture of EGG in Chapter 2.5, this gives greater context to this rising new theme of non-judgmentalism, which might helpfully be considered as an added a priori code.

Similarly to ROD, EGG displays an investment to understanding, explaining, and encountering the work of the Holy Spirit within their worship, teaching, small groups, and all dynamics of their mission and ministry activities. In comparison to ROD, EGG could fairly be recognised as a much more Pentecostal expression of church in its openness to the Holy Spirit. Understanding this in parallel with the description in Trudy's narrative, that EGG was a safe place to bring people to, holds the correct

perspective about how the ministry of the Holy Spirit is experienced, with sensitivity and gentleness. Imogen's narrative also tells of her experience of Pentecostalism in Nigeria and her scepticism of anything false or contrived, which is not observed in her experience of EGG. She said,

I grew up in a Nigerian Pentecostal community where there is a lot of true faith but there is a lot of really false things going on as well. There was loads of prosperity gospel people, just wanting money and using faith as a way to get it. So, I always come at faith as you have to prove something to me, and I could never get that. Whereas, what made that instant for me was that no one was trying to prove anything to me. This girl was just having a chat about what she experienced in her life and then something happened to me completely removed. It didn't seem to be happening to anyone else and it felt so specific to me that it couldn't have been her.⁶²⁶

With larger numbers than ROD, EGG's small group structure with devolved leadership of indigenous younger leaders, as noted by Kathryn, Reggie, Imogen, and Simon, makes the human dynamic of relationship a more realised goal. The pragmatics of spending quality time with larger numbers of individual people by one or two leaders at a single event is an impossibility. Therefore, with devolved leadership and small groups many people can share, talk, and engage with their discipleship.

Kathryn spoke of the Pod meal, in which the whole company first ate together before then spending time in much smaller groups (Pods) to discuss the passage of Scripture being studied. It is also evident that the responsibility to invite others along is an active dynamic of all EGG participants, not just the leadership. It would appear that the majority of invitations to attend EGG come through those not in leadership at EGG.

⁶²⁶ Imogen's Transcript, p.10

This intentional investment encouraging participant invitation strikes at the very heart of Finney's work and the Back to Church Sunday research noted above and the more recent evidence found in the *Talking Jesus* research.⁶²⁷ A personal invitation from a family member or friend not only helps the initial connecting but also helps in the Establishing Factors. The significant sense of belonging should be recognised as a supporting conduit along many of the journeys narrated. However, it should also be noted that this conduit of belonging is not recorded, other than by Reggie, as playing a significant factor in establishing a more committed form of discipleship.

Although all the participants interviewed, other than Jack, had family members connected in or around EGG that did not initially appear to bring significant influence to their respective responses in faith. However, it was not recognised as detrimental either within their narratives and therefore should not be discounted as having a positive supporting role in the dynamic of belonging. The *Talking Jesus* research demonstrated that forty-one percent of Christians recognised that growing up in a Christian family helped their respective journeys to faith.⁶²⁸

The last observation from the Establishing Factors for both EGG and ROD, and not unconnected with some of the above evaluations but deserves a distinctive mention, is the simple fact that someone was there to talk to when these moments of response were made. Imogen notes that had she not spoken to Ruth at the end and been able to qualify what she was experiencing she may have dismissed the experience later and never

⁶²⁷ Barna Group on behalf of the Church of England, 2018

⁶²⁸ Barna Group on behalf of the Church of England, 2018 p.12

returned. Similarly, Kathryn noted the conversation with Ruth that led to her opening up and finding that moment to articulate a decision to follow Christ.

At ROD, Lynda also highlights the importance of the time spent speaking with Elaine. Colin mentions the man at the Bible Study Group drawing out his problem and offering to pray for him. Martyn, Stuart, Stephanie, and Paul all record people's availability to them to help in times of struggle. This theme of personal availability narrates something of the culture of both ROD and EGG. It appears that community is practised when they gather. Events or meetings are not just about the delivery of an activity or worship, so that once it is finished the expectation is everyone will leave more or less immediately. It seems one of the key Establishing Factors for both ROD and EGG is this space before and after gatherings where discipleship is enacted and practised.

This is both a commitment to invest time in people's lives and a demonstration of the love of God outflowing in the active discipleship of those already established with these fresh expressions of church. This nature of ministry can be both costly, painful, and emotionally draining, but it is nevertheless the fine example of true Christian community where lives are changed, for the better.

5.3. Concluding Observations

The four columns from Table 5.1 have distilled a number of key themes within both the ROD and EGG narratives and therefore the method of coding has justified its use. The themes have brought substance to the a

priori codes and potentially added one more of non-judgmentalism. This theme might naturally be considered as part of the conduit of Behaviour, but as it spans into the dynamics of experience and belonging, it also treads quite firmly into the theology of belief about the character and nature of God the Holy Spirit and thus justifiability deserves a category of its own.

These findings do bring fresh, unique, and previously undiscovered data to the compendium of research in this field, confirming much that has been seen elsewhere. How and why people are coming to faith in Jesus Christ in the contemporary Western world when many mainline denominations are noticing stark decline is of great merit and has been worthy of study. The following are an attempted summary of these findings.

- 1. The non-judgmental nature of the fresh expressions of church in this research is a significant precursor for evangelism and an active conduit facilitating the process of the participants finding faith in Jesus Christ.**
- 2. The work of the Holy Spirit is openly supported, understood, and encouraged by the fresh expressions of church in this research, and it is an operant dynamic in the process of the participants becoming followers and disciples of Jesus Christ.**
- 3. No two journeys to faith in Jesus Christ are identical and although different forms of evangelism are present in their respective narratives, no uniform method of evangelism is dominant or exclusive to all. Therefore, a taxonomy of evangelism is required.**

4. **The a priori codes used to test the hypothesis that people find faith in Jesus Christ through a complimentary combination of the four a priori codes Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God over time has not been disproved.**
5. **The fresh expressions of church in this research are populated by an eclectic ethnography modelling something of the Body of Christ. This results in effectively establishing new people in recognised patterns of discipleship in which participation is encouraged and leadership is organic.**

Chapter 6

Non-judgmental? A Theological and Missiological Reflection

SO, WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Ward argues that there is no single way to reflect theologically but suggests the answer lies in being clear about what prompts us to reflect, not necessarily in following a methodology.⁶²⁹ He states:

The issue dictates the method. Issues are those things that nag at us from time to time.⁶³⁰

Swinton and Mowat are an example of one of Ward's points, in which theological reflection does not always use the pastoral cycle in its entirety.⁶³¹

This qualitative piece of research has endeavoured to approach the complexity of how very different people have encountered faith in Jesus Christ in the context of Methodist fresh expressions of church. The previous chapter considered their data, looking for what insights, themes, or patterns have arisen. It is evident that one 'issue,' as noted by Ward, has become clear. It rises in almost all the participants' narratives, though described in slightly different ways, most of the participants speak of the principle of 'not being judged.'⁶³² This chapter seeks to reflect theologically upon this

⁶²⁹ Ward, 2017a p.115

⁶³⁰ Ibid., p.115

⁶³¹ Ibid., p.103

⁶³² Transcript references: Paul pp.7-8 'I'll get judged', Lynda, Stuart and Martyn p.3 'felt truly accepted as they were, despite the boys ADHD', Stephanie p.2 'they just accepted you for who you are', Imogen p.16 'these people are definitely going to judge me', Trudy p. 10-11 speaks of the openness to any who might seem different, Kathryn pp.4-5 'I just felt really loved for what I was', Reggie p.14 'So that you don't have an "us and them mentality"', Simon p.4 the community were praying for him and did not reject him, Jack p. 4 'So friendly...it's like a new family'

noticed theme and consider what future action within the church, might be practiced.

The findings from the Stage Two Analysis exposed this new and added a priori code of non-judgmentalism as an operant value within a community, acting as a precursor to the participants coming to faith in Jesus. Having researched but not uncovered anything about this subject of non-judgmentalism within the literature, this chapter seeks to theologically reflect on the concept of ‘not being judged’ while a person was connecting with a Christian community and discover what might be learned for the future pedagogy of the wider Church in evangelism.

One caveat to this reflection is the discursive question of: What is the distinction between “welcome” and “non-judgmentalism”? While complex, it is reasonable to assert from a Christian perspective that a welcome is an action of greeting someone, predominantly based on a lack of knowledge of them,⁶³³ which may change once that knowledge is informed.⁶³⁴ However, a non-judgmental approach may be a conscious and proactive action regardless of our knowledge about a person.⁶³⁵

6.1. Theological Engine of non-judgmentalism

A “welcome” is a momentary state. Whether a noun or a verb, it is a transitional act. It is the crossing of a threshold, but non-judgmentalism is a perpetual continuum built upon a bespoke value. Therefore, to consider the

⁶³³ Hebrews 13:2

⁶³⁴ Philemon 17

⁶³⁵ This is so much more than Bretheron’s Toleration, Hospitality, and Receiving the Stranger. Bretheron, 2019 pp.272-283

possible source of such a value is a justifiable question. Frost and Hirsch argue the context of a Christian community that is rooted in Trinitarian theology should be drawing its ethos from Christ: of his teaching, practice, and belief.⁶³⁶ Therefore this should invite some examination.

Wright considers the “Profile of a Prophet” and in chapters seven and eight of *Jesus and the Victory of God*, holds the tension between the open invitation to the individual and the pronounced, generalised judgments over the corporate groups.⁶³⁷ So though Jesus spoke of judgment over Israel,⁶³⁸ the current generation,⁶³⁹ Jerusalem and the Temple,⁶⁴⁰ he also demonstrated and taught about not judging the individual.⁶⁴¹ Barrett states, according to John that:

Judgment by the Father’s will, belongs equally to the
Father and the Son (and the Holy Spirit, Jn.16:8, 11).⁶⁴²

It is not that Jesus is seeking self-justification, rather he is pointing beyond himself, which is echoed in the theology offered by St. Paul writing to the Philippians;

⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard
equality with God as something to be exploited,
⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness. And being found in
human form, ⁸he humbled himself and became
obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.⁶⁴³

⁶³⁶ Frost and Hirsch, 2003 p.48

⁶³⁷ Wright, 1996

⁶³⁸ Matthew 5:20, 6:15, 7:13-14, 18:35, 22:11-14, 26:52; cf. Luke 12:58-9, 13:24

⁶³⁹ Matthew 10:14-15, 23:32-6; Luke 10:11-12, 11:45-52; Mark 6:11, 9:43-9, 12:1-12

⁶⁴⁰ Luke 19:39-44

⁶⁴¹ Matthew 7:1-5; Luke 6:37-42, 12:13-14; John 7:24, 8:1-11, 8:15-16

⁶⁴² Barrett, 1978 p.339

⁶⁴³ Philippians 2:5-8 NRSV.

The content we have in St. John's Gospel puts on to the lips of Jesus, 'I judge⁶⁴⁴ no one.'⁶⁴⁵ Coupled with Jesus' teaching from Matthew 7 not to judge and in the texts referenced above in John and Luke, it is difficult not to perceive the teaching and practice of Jesus as taking a non-judgmental approach to the individual. Jesus' view of the corporate or institutional is quite different. The religious leaders, the generation, the nation, and the temple all are bequeathed judgments in one form or another. So, it is not that Jesus offers no judgment.

This non-judgmental pervading tone comes through in the following Biblical theology summarised by Kreider and Kreider:⁶⁴⁶

- Christ present in the stranger (Matt 25:35)
- Practice hospitality (Rom 12:13)
- Welcome others as Christ has welcomed you (Rom 15:7)
- Church leaders to be hospitable (1 Tim 3:2)
- Christians taking in strangers may entertain angels unawares (Heb 13:2)

There are numerous examples of a non-judgmental approach scattered throughout the New Testament. It is not difficult to find the evidential proof that such an approach is relevant in contemporary twenty-first British mainstream churches. Francis and Richter's *Gone for Good* picks up in several places the way this has been researched why people leave church.⁶⁴⁷ Although the language used is not that of being non-judgmental, they record the opposite forms of behaviour that take place, such as feeling judged about specific life-style issues, conflicting values, doubting or questioning

⁶⁴⁴ Greek, κρίνω - Strongs G2919 verb, second person, plural, present, active, imperfect tense. Bible, 2018 accessed 8th February 2018

⁶⁴⁵ John 8:15 NRSV.

⁶⁴⁶ Kreider and Kreider, 2011 pp.233-7

⁶⁴⁷ Francis and Richter, 2007 pp.102, 128, 157-160, 176-7

faith, social exclusion, and not being allowed to play an active part in church life. Hence, this inversely infers the relevance and importance of such a value of being openly received and not being judged. Jamieson's research, set in the context of New Zealand, offers very similar evidence in that fifty percent of his interviewees described being 'knocked back' by the church as their reason of leaving.⁶⁴⁸

Billings argues from the perspective that greater openness provides the forum in which anyone can belong,⁶⁴⁹ quoting Faber's hymn, second verse:

But we make his love too narrow
By false limits of our own;
and we magnify his strictness
with a zeal he will not own.⁶⁵⁰

Does this portray God's love as a dissolving power to which nothing can be resisted and no judgment made? Billings would argue that it does. However, Spencer contrasts what may happen if people purely have their way, remaking the church in their own image, draining Christianity of its meaning and distinctiveness.⁶⁵¹ Furthermore, the evidence from the respective research of Finney,⁶⁵² Hay,⁶⁵³ Richmond,⁶⁵⁴ and Hollinghurst⁶⁵⁵ all document relational experience as incredibly significant as a dynamic of a person's faith journey.

⁶⁴⁸ Jamieson, 2002 pp.30, 40

⁶⁴⁹ Billings, 2013 pp. 60-2, 116

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., p.117

⁶⁵¹ Spencer and Richmond, 2005 p.177

⁶⁵² Finney, 1992 pp. 36-47

⁶⁵³ Hay, 2007

⁶⁵⁴ Hay, 2006 p.11; Croft, 2005 pp.11-13

⁶⁵⁵ Hollinghurst, 2010 pp.41-63

Therefore, the space, place, people, and environment that provides the opportunity to engage with God's love is very pertinent. EGG and ROD communities are centered around Christ. Their practice, teaching, and ethos is to mirror that of Christ's and seek transformation into His likeness.⁶⁵⁶ The findings in Chapter 5 of this thesis would suggest both ROD and EGG are practicing this ethos well.

Eleven of the twelve narratives in the Stage Two Data in Chapter 4, revealed some aspect of non-judgmentalism by the receiving community, which played a significant part in their faith journey development. Exploring how this operant value acted as a precursor to their developing faith forms the next step in my theological reflection. Understanding the conclusions we draw from these theological reflections provides further purpose for action: to influence the development of our missiological pedagogy and to aid the wider mission of the Church.

6.2. Theology in Context

6.2.1. Theology in the context of community, with missional practice.

Hill's⁶⁵⁷ description of Hiebert's⁶⁵⁸ work on the Bounded and Centred Sets begins an understanding of models of church which Frost and Hirsch develop and bring a helpful missiological perspective.⁶⁵⁹ They

⁶⁵⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:16-18

⁶⁵⁷ Hill, 1986 pp.26-7

⁶⁵⁸ Hiebert, 1983, Hiebert, 1994

⁶⁵⁹ Frost and Hirsch, 2003 pp.47-51

reproduce a table from an unpublished policy document for Youth for Christ staff workers in Sydney prepared by Chris Harding.⁶⁶⁰

Although some of the language used (i.e., ‘lost’, ‘saved’) is problematic and may be seen as stereotypical from a definitive brand of church theology, nevertheless the table illustrates the pervading generalised differences between the two models.

Table 6.1 The Contrasts of Missional Practice in the Sets

<i>Bounded-Set Approach</i>	<i>Centred-Set Approach</i>
<i>The evangelizer is the expert who has special knowledge regarding God that the lost person must take in to be saved.</i>	<i>Each person is the expert on his or her own life and the God-given ability to seek for truth. The evangelizer respects this.</i>
<i>The “lost” person is viewed as flawed in character and sinful.</i>	<i>Each person is viewed as created in the image of God-precious, valuable and loved by God.</i>
<i>Seeing people as simply lost or saved, it tries to paternally “fix up” sinners and make them like us.</i>	<i>Seeing people as seekers, it tries to stimulate others to ask, seek and knock, while understanding we don’t know it all ourselves.</i>
<i>The goal is to get them to sign on, to profess belief, to become part of our team.</i>	<i>The goal is for the process of discovery of Christ and the search for truth to be furthered in the person.</i>
<i>A cataclysmic change occurs in people called “conversion.”</i>	<i>Conversion is a process that does not begin and end with the profession of faith in Christ but begins with the Holy Spirit’s prevenient grace on the person’s life and continues through repentance for a lifetime - the Kingdom comes.</i>
<i>We Christians know and have the whole truth.</i>	<i>We don’t know everything about life or God – humility and wonder remain.</i>

Frost and Hirsch successfully describe a form of missional church theology that points beyond itself to Christ, making the argument that Jesus’ faith community was a Centred Set model, with him at the centre.⁶⁶¹ All

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., p.50, Table 6.2

⁶⁶¹ Frost and Hirsch, 2003 p.47

participants of the Centred model are valued, no matter what degree of temperature their spirituality may be. Whether they are: confirmed followers, ardent non-believers, sceptical questioners or curious seekers, Christian or not, they can all contribute in the community of the Centred-Set.⁶⁶² Note these different characteristics in the community at EGG, documented in the ethnographic study in Chapter 2.5. of this thesis, particularly Alicia, Charlotte, Tao, Tom, Jack, and Phil.⁶⁶³ Also note Imogen's view of herself in her early months of attending EGG, recognising that she herself displayed challenging behaviour that was often angry and/or loud, and yet she was impressed with how the leadership and those mentoring her coped. Imogen noted they showed great grace in the face of her objectionable behaviour.⁶⁶⁴

This is a theology of a community in mission, operating a non-judgmental value and placing its affirmation of the work of the Holy Spirit to open up the opportunities within someone for faith to be received, accepted, or responded to. Although Imogen described it as 'really bizarre' she explains this in several places in her story, recognising God's prompting by the Holy Spirit in these choices, both from her own experience and experienced in others' interactions with her life.⁶⁶⁵ She said,

I have had several crossroads as it were on the journey, where I have had another chance to make the choice. 'Do I keep trusting God, and keep trusting these people He has put around me?' Or do I think 'no, they must all have it wrong and I just do what I want to do?' It's interesting

⁶⁶² This was a fundamental principle originally espoused by Hiebert and cited by Lee, Hiebert, 1994, p.127; Lee, 2007 p.29

⁶⁶³ Chapter 2.5.1 pp.85-91

⁶⁶⁴ Imogen's Transcript, p.17

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., p.18

how at those specific points its usually about something someone has said to challenge something in my life that I didn't want to challenge. Yes, so I feel like it's the kind of thing you just have to go with not your gut, your spiritual gut. Just like my Mum, telling me - because I asked her about it years later. I said, "Mum why did you tell me to go to church". She said she suddenly really felt that it would be the right thing to do. Now she recognises it was the Holy Spirit but in that moment after it left her mouth, she was like "Why did I just say that?" I may have done the worst thing. I may have just ensured that my daughter never finds God but it was the right... perfect moment and I think there is a lot of that.⁶⁶⁶

The work of the Holy Spirit appears prominently in the data of Chapter 4 and in the findings of Chapter 5, showing significant interaction in nine narratives, as operant in their experiences of coming to faith. The theological point to notice from these encounters is observing that the Holy Spirit, at this point, appears to be non-judgmental also.

As detailed in the literature reviews, Markham calls this Co-operant Grace.⁶⁶⁷ Two key inferences are brought to bear here. Firstly, the recognition of the Holy Spirit's involvement that this is not 'just' human kindness from a generous community. Secondly, if it is accepted that the Holy Spirit is involved, it reveals something of the nature and character of the Spirit at work, which appears not to judge Imogen, Paul, Kathryn, Simon, Paul, Lynda, Stuart, Martyn, Stephanie, Reggie, Jack, or Colin, at these respective moments in their lives. This thought is initially expanded below, focusing on God's activity in relation to the 'disciple,' but then towards the end of the chapter greater attention will be paid to the character and nature of the Triune God.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., p.18-19

⁶⁶⁷ Markham, 2007 pp. 131-92

In considering the Holy Spirit's non-judgmental action upon the participants at these important life moments, does this logically affirm the theology of God's omniscience, standing outside time to observe our later choices and actions? No judgment is required now because it will be realised at a later point? Also, does this work of the Holy Spirit help us imagine something more than a one-dimensional understanding of coming to faith and exploring more of a multi-dimensional model of the four conduits of Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God, held in the paradigm of the Centred Set over time? To consider these two thoughts, it is worth looking at the call of the first disciples and the facets at work.

Jesus invited his first followers, with no apparent record made by any of the Gospel writers, of those disciples' doctrinal affirmations, character record of worthy behaviour, or their references to be dedicated to the task ahead. Their only participation was encountering Jesus and choosing to accede to his request... 'follow me.'

This poses a question about the nature and dynamic of choice. Why did the first disciples decide to follow Jesus? It seems a deeply relational investment. The cost of following is to leave their employment and surroundings. St. Marks Gospel chapter one, verse seventeen holds something of an explanation as to why the disciples made this choice to follow Jesus. In the latter part of the verse Jesus instructions hold three dynamics that might best be interpreted as,

'I shall be making you... to-be-becoming... fishers of people.'⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁸ Mark 1:17 Researcher's interpretation of the greek words used. It is surprising that the following commentators make no mention of the nuances illustrated and discussed below - Cranfield, 1963 pp.69-70, Myers, 2019 pp.132-3, Lane, 1974 Kindle, loc.pp.66-8.

The act of transformation is located in Christ's work; ποιήσω⁶⁶⁹ which is immediate, intentional and ongoing for all of them, (ὕμᾱς).⁶⁷⁰ The work within them is not of their own origin, power, or design, but is placed in the work of the Godhead, through Jesus, by St. Mark.⁶⁷¹

The second dynamic emphasises the nature of this transformation. The word γενέσθαι⁶⁷² has no easy English equivalent but implies both journey and continual development. So when they first chose to follow Jesus they are not what they can be and there is something of a process of transformation to happen. The emphasis is not 'when' this happens but that it 'is' happening and is 'going on' happening. This nuance is key to understanding that the recipient disciples are now 'performing' as they receive; and this dynamic is infinitive, so this process does not stop.

This is a most profound theological insight. As soon as they choose to follow Christ, they are not just becoming disciples, they are disciples and can perform immediately as a disciple. This may not mean they are necessarily good or proficient at the task.⁶⁷³ The theology of sanctification noted in Chapter 1, should be an active dynamic within the Christian's life and practiced. However, as presented in the concept of the Playstation model, sometimes a Christian's life choices take them away from their central focus in Christ. Both Simon's and Paul's stories have illustrated this truth. As does Imogen's narrative in noting these particular moments in life,

⁶⁶⁹ ποιήσω - I shall be making (This verb is singular, the Tense is Future, the Voice is Active, the Mood is Indicative) Blue Letter Bible,

⁶⁷⁰ Blue Letter Bible, ὑμᾱς - you (plural)

⁶⁷¹ Edwards, 2002 Kindle loc.p.91

⁶⁷² γενέσθαι - to-be-becoming (The Voice is Second Aorist, the Tense is the Middle Deponent and the Mood is Infinitive), Blue Letter Bible, , Rawlinson, 1960, p.15

⁶⁷³ France, 2002 p.94

the ‘crossroads,’ where a fresh choice or decision could mean a change of direction. At this point, there is opportunity to hear or ignore the action, voice, and intimation of the Holy Spirit’s nudging.

Lastly, the third dynamic presented is the purpose or function from the disciples’ decision to become followers of Jesus, to be ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων.⁶⁷⁴ This simple phrase to Peter, Andrew, James, and John, and now held with two-thousand years of interpretation under Christian theology, may lose something deeply profound and meaningful for the contemporary reader, which at the time made far more sense without explanation. Their past profession as fishermen held a complexity of knowledge, passed down from generation to generation and held an understanding about their context, the Sea of Galilee. The rhythm of the seasons, the influence of the weather, the phases of the moon and the time of day or night were all significant in knowing when it was right to go fishing. This understanding of context, time, and season is overlaid upon the new fishing objective of ἀνθρώπων.

The term ‘fishers’ also implies the ongoing nature of the work. This is their new vocation in which context, time, and circumstances will play a part. So these dynamics ought to influence Hiebert’s question of ‘Who is a Christian?’⁶⁷⁵ Hiebert’s work (also critiqued by Lee⁶⁷⁶ and Yoder, Lee, Ro and Priest⁶⁷⁷) goes into greater depth, offering the four characteristics of the

⁶⁷⁴ ἀλιεῖς - fishers, ἀνθρώπων - of humans (though the noun is plural and masculine, the wider interpretation in the Bible refers human beings and not just one gender, which the Researcher chose to use the word ‘People’ in their interpretations above.) Blue Letter Bible, Wassell and Llewelyn, 2014

⁶⁷⁵ Hiebert, 1983 p.424

⁶⁷⁶ Lee, 2007

⁶⁷⁷ Yoder, Lee, Ro and Priest, 2009

intrinsic and extrinsic, Bounded and Centred Sets, nuancing it with the language of ‘Fuzzy Sets’ to describe the difficulties of porous boundaries⁶⁷⁸ and appraises the theological language and missional practice in cultural context.⁶⁷⁹

It may be too harsh to summarise Hiebert’s intention to contrast Western missiology as predominantly driven by its ecclesiological obsession to determine who is in and who is out (and by what means), over his perception of a relational approach offered through Christ in the Gospels, but it is hard not to come to this conclusion. Hiebert’s missional writings seek to open up opportunities for the Gospel and seek an inclusive approach for Jesus to be engaged with. His inference is to push the understanding that belief alone is incomplete if one’s behaviour (values in action) or belonging (signs of commitment and allegiance) are not forming part of a life practiced within a community mutually seeking to journey closer to the one with whom they are in relationship with, i.e., Christ.

The subject of non-judgmentalism with regard to a Christian community and its mission or evangelism does not readily appear within a review of the relevant literature. However, held in conversation with concept of the Centred Set, it may be possible to consider why both EGG and ROD make such non-exclusionary judgments.

Volf asks, ‘What kind of person is capable of making them?’ and redirects the question to: ‘If the self has a centre, then what kind of centre

⁶⁷⁸ Taylor, 2007 pp.35-43

⁶⁷⁹ Hiebert, 1983

ought one to have?’⁶⁸⁰ Using St. Paul’s statement about the character of the Christian life in Galatians 2:19b-20

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.⁶⁸¹

It seems St. Paul presumes a centred self, more precisely a wrongly centred self that needs to be de-centred by being nailed to the cross then re-centred by participating in the death and resurrection of Christ through faith and baptism.⁶⁸²

It is not that the self is lost in this process but that the distinct centre of the self is transformed, so that the old self and centre receive a new centre that reinforces what previously existed. Volf argues that the old is not obliterated or dissolved but ‘refined, creating a most proper and unassailable centre that allows the self to stand over against persons and institutions, which may threaten to smother it.’⁶⁸³

The key to this newly received centre is not self-obsession but self-giving love, as Paul notes in Galatians. Therefore, it opens itself up to the self-same identity and makes it capable and willing to give itself for others, and to receive others in itself. For Christians, this “de-centred centre” of self-giving love is the doorkeeper deciding the fate of otherness at the doorstep of the self.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸⁰ Volf, 1996 pp.68-9

⁶⁸¹ NRSV

⁶⁸² Romans 6:5 NRSV.

⁶⁸³ Volf, 1996 p.70

⁶⁸⁴ Volf, 1996 p.71

Volf sees the metaphor of the door as a helpful one insofar as it implies a necessary demarcation but misleading insofar as it suggests a sharp and static boundary. The Centred Set is defined by a centre and the relationship of things to that centre by a *movement* toward or away from it. A demarcation line may exist by the natural boundaries of a community, where and when it meets, but the focus is not on ‘maintaining the boundary’ but ‘on reaffirming the centre.’⁶⁸⁵

Volf notes in the following quotes that Christian theology has a long tradition of tracing all sins to one basic form of sin, for example:

- “sensuality” (Clement of Alexandria, *On the Making of Man*, 18,4)
- “pride” (Niebuhr 1964, 1:178ff),
- “violence” (Suchocki 1995)

Though, all were criticised for failure to explain all concrete sins of all human beings.⁶⁸⁶ Moltmann argues that such a task is too abstract.⁶⁸⁷ Volf considers the argument that the conceiving sin which results in exclusion often seeks to pass itself as a virtue, especially in religious circles.

In contrast, Volf notes in Jesus’ day, the sinners were not simply the “wicked” who were therefore religiously bankrupt,⁶⁸⁸ but also were social outcasts, people who practiced despised trades, Gentiles and Samaritans, those who failed to keep the Law as interpreted by a particular sect.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁵ Hiebert, 1983 p.424.

⁶⁸⁶ Volf, 1996 p.72

⁶⁸⁷ Moltmann, 1992 p.127

⁶⁸⁸ Sanders, 1985

⁶⁸⁹ Dunn and McKnight, 2005

Jesus' table fellowship with 'tax collectors and sinners,'⁶⁹⁰ something that was a central feature of his ministry, offset this conception of sin.⁶⁹¹

In quoting Johnson, Volf makes it clear that this is not to state that Jesus was a prophet of inclusion for whom the chief virtue was acceptance and the cardinal vice intolerance.⁶⁹² Rather, Jesus was the bringer of grace, not the re-namer of what was "sinful" but the re-making of people who had actually sinned and suffered because of it.

This re-naming and stopping the "false boundaries" with regard to food,⁶⁹³ or what was unclean, a woman's blood flow for example,⁶⁹⁴ as Wegner argues,⁶⁹⁵ is extended in Volf's argument to describing Jesus' ministry and mission as re-making things. Volf illustrates this from reflection from St. Mark Chapter 5.

Jesus made clean things out of truly unclean things; People indwelt by unclean spirits; spirits that cut off a person from their community, made them deeply at odds with themselves, and drove them to seek the company of the dead; such people were made clean, delivered from oppression and reintegrated community.⁶⁹⁶

Likewise, Volf further mentions people caught in the snares of wrongdoing were forgiven and transformed: the tax-collectors, those who harmed others in order to benefit themselves. Those, like the prostitutes, who debased themselves in order to survive, people who, like most of us, are bent on

⁶⁹⁰ Mark 2:15-17

⁶⁹¹ Volf, 1996, pp.72-3

⁶⁹² Volf, 1996 p.73; Johnson, 1996 pp.43f

⁶⁹³ Mark 7:14-23

⁶⁹⁴ Mark 5:25-35

⁶⁹⁵ Wegner, 1988 pp.162-67

⁶⁹⁶ Volf, 1996, p.73, Mark 5:1-20

losing their own souls in order to gain a bit of the world.⁶⁹⁷ The mission of re-making impure people into pure people aimed at tearing down the barriers created by wrongdoing in the name of God, the redeemer and restorer of life, whose love knows no boundaries.

So, Volf sees the belief that the source of evil does not lie outside a person in impure things but inside a person, in the impure heart⁶⁹⁸ as central to both strategies for fighting exclusion.⁶⁸⁶ Against the background of the two strategies, the *pursuit of false purity* emerges as a central aspect of sin, thus enforced within community seeking purity that tries to purge the world and/or seeks isolation from the evil out there rather than deal with the evil within. Volf's point about sin masquerading as virtue is significantly demonstrated in 'the deadly politics of purity,' to cleanse, remove all trace of what is not pure. History is littered with narratives that make this point.⁶⁹⁹

In her doctoral study *Restorative Witness : Evangelism and Reconciliation: A Wesleyan Theological Exploration*, Kimberly Reisman uses Volf's metaphor of embrace to explore and attempt to recover a more apt and relevant contemporary understanding of evangelism.⁷⁰⁰ Reisman argues that people tend to privilege homogeneity and are wary of differences,⁷⁰¹ therefore Volf's metaphor of embrace is significant and though his focus is reconciliation of human to human, his argument is

⁶⁹⁷ Mark 2:15-17; Volf, 1996 p.73

⁶⁹⁸ Mark 7:15, Volf, 1996 p.73

⁶⁹⁹ Volf, 1996 p.74

⁷⁰⁰ Reisman, 2012

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.131

grounded in the deeper theological premise of Christ's reconciliatory task noted above. So the case is made that:

this *space making*, this *will to embrace*, must be present before any judgment about others is made. The will to embrace is 'absolutely indiscriminate and strictly immutable; it transcends the moral mapping of the social world into "good" and "evil."'702

Reisman concludes that the will to embrace must be present before any judgments about the other are made and should be seen as an end in itself rather than as a means to achieve the greater goal of presenting the gospel. However, Reisman does believe this space created for embrace embodies evangelistic practice in its ultimate fullness and therefore aids understanding of Volf's metaphor of embrace as a metaphor to theologially ground the evangelistic task. Moreover, Reisman claims that Volf's assertion regarding reconciliation grounds the evangelistic task as well:

The will to give ourselves to others and 'welcome' them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity.⁷⁰³

Though this line of thought begins in the notion of embrace, it does identify the concept is prior to any judgment taking place. This may seem like semantics, but one might equally argue that a non-judgmental attitude is present and therefore there is never any thought or possibility of making such a judgment even after embrace is enacted. The real theological question is: Why is this non-judgmental attitude present and what lies behind it, what is its cause?

⁷⁰² Reisman, 2012 p.135, Volf, 1996 p.29, My annotations.

⁷⁰³ Volf, 1996 p.29; Reisman, p.137

This progression of reasoning considers both the nature and focus of the community centred on Christ, and the function, practice, and transformation of an individual within the community. The heart of both these dynamics is becoming Christ-like by the activity of God through the Holy Spirit, upon both the individual and the community. This imperative, recognisable in ROD and EGG, to love as Christ loved, ‘regarding no one from a human point of view,’ (i.e., not to judge them) is an ancient instruction as perceived by St. Paul and communicated to the Corinthian Church.⁷⁰⁴ This is both the recognition of change within a person, reconciled to God through Christ, and the commission to further this divine task.

These verses portray that by the very nature of accepting Christ, it seems the character and practice of a disciple, with their community, is then the vessel by which the Holy Spirit continues to make the appeal to those who do not yet know it to be reconciled to God. In summary reflection, the evidence from the data gathered would highlight both EGG and ROD have found a significant way of practising this task.

6.2.2. Theology in context, with missional practice in relation to the Holy Spirit

I have articulated above something of God’s activity upon a person as they discover and respond to a call to follow Christ in the context of a Christian community, partnering in God’s redemptive mission. The following discussion seeks to return to the question posed earlier

⁷⁰⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

considering the non-judgmental nature of the Holy Spirit in the threshold moments of the participants narratives. This exposes something fundamental to the character and nature of the Triune God, which might offer insight for the pedagogy and practice of evangelism today.

In *Trinity, The God We Don't Know*,⁷⁰⁵ Byassee asserts the mystery and challenge of trying to articulate anything about such a matter as our words will always fail us,⁷⁰⁶ yet he reminds us of Karl Barth's affirmation that we must speak of God.⁷⁰⁷ More helpfully noted earlier in the book is the assertion:

The Scriptures and the Christian tradition is clear. For us to confess anything true about God, the Holy Spirit has to be working on us first.⁷⁰⁸

Whatever attribute or character is considered regarding speaking of God, Christian theology affirms that God, the Holy Trinity, always works inseparably.⁷⁰⁹ Therefore as we explore the concept of the Holy Spirit being non-judgmental, so we must conclude this argument would also pertain to all the Godhead.⁷¹⁰

One further caveat to this discussion is to note the classic approaches to the Trinity by the Eastern and Western Churches, which have equally brought influence to the theological debate. The Eastern Church reflections on the Trinity originating from the Cappadocian fathers (Basil of Caesarea, c.330-79, Gregory of Nazianzen, c.329-89 and Gregory of Nyssa, c.330 - c.

⁷⁰⁵ Byassee, 2015

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.82-83

⁷⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.83; Barth and Horton, 1957 p.186

⁷⁰⁸ Byassee, 2015 p.31

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.64; Moltmann, 1993 151-90; McGrath, 1994 pp.19-20, 247-698; Volf, 1998 p. 210; Zizioulas, 1985 pp.17-20

⁷¹⁰ See the earlier discussion in Chapter 6 relating to the Father and Jesus' actions pp. 254-257

395) start from the different ways the Father, Son, and Spirit are experienced. The Western Church, associated with Augustine of Hippo, focused on the unity of the God, and how the love of God influenced our understanding of the Godhead. While at all costs this discussion seeks to avoid any forms of modalism or tritheism, this work notes the dangers of emphasising one aspect over another and the theological traps that await any analogy pushed too far.⁷¹¹

If we accept Byassee's assertion above is true, it might suggest that this is not an original thought but a revelation of the Spirit in the first case and that this is part of the very nature of God the Father, Son, and Spirit. However, as Barth suggests, every generation is called to speak afresh of their encounter with God and articulate, as best as possible, God's redemptive plan through Christ reconciling all creation to himself.⁷¹²

Through this thesis' research and data from Chapter 4, having peered through a lens in one direction observing the visible behaviour of people showing us a perception of God's action upon us in the form of the Holy Spirit, we now attempt to peer through this lens from the opposite direction and observe something of the character and nature of God from what we see through the lens of the Spirit's activity on us. This ineffable task might benefit from a dialogue with Wesleyan practical theology. The argument for this rests in Wesley's own affirmation that 'nothing is in the mind that is not first in the senses,'⁷¹³ holding a more holistic view that later became interpreted as the Methodist quadrilateral: of experience, scripture, reason,

⁷¹¹ McGrath, 1994 pp.20, 256-60

⁷¹² Colossians 1., 2 Thessalonians 2:13f, Romans 8:28-30.

⁷¹³ Maddox, 1994 pp.27, 262.

and tradition, with scripture being the central strand around which the other elements interacted.⁷¹⁴

One of the contributions of Wesleyan theology, helping our understanding of God's character and nature, is the understanding of grace and particularly that of prevenient grace. One of the observable, repeated, narratives shows us that the Spirit of God was at work, at times and places beyond the church community. Reisman stated that,

‘God works where God will, and with whom God will, whether within or beyond the church.’⁷¹⁵

Note Kathryn's desire to investigate faith that seemed to come from nowhere or Imogen's mother's strong urge to push her invitation one day or Lynda's friend who was prompted to pray for Lynda long before she knew or believed in Christ. This idea is that God goes before us, preveniently working in places we have yet to go and within people we have yet to meet. This generosity of character, nature, and gift places no perceived requirements upon those who receive it. Wesley's most notable reference comes from *Sermon 12, The witness of the Our Spirit*.

By ‘the grace of God’ is sometimes to be understood that the free love, that unmerited mercy, by which I, a sinner, through the merits of Christ am now reconciled to God. But in this place it rather means that power of God the Holy Ghost which ‘worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure’.⁷¹⁶

Wesley observed the influence and emphasised a definition of grace as the power of the Holy Spirit enabling us to believe, love, and serve

⁷¹⁴ Maddox, 1994 pp.36-47

⁷¹⁵ Reisman, 2012 p.118

⁷¹⁶ Maddox, 1994 p.120; Wesley, 1831 Vol.1 Kindle loc:3069

God.⁷¹⁷ Therefore we might ask: Is the very nature of grace a dynamic of reconciling love that cannot act in a way as to separate or judge someone in these moments of engagement? Is the very nature of God reaching out in Christ, self-giving love that puts no obstacles in a person's way, yet offers free will to choose? The choice may then be to adopt over time this same nature of self-giving love, but in this key moment or space of a new threshold to cross, is there an open dynamic of love which is totally non-judgmental? I believe there is.

God cannot compromise. This is not a reconciliation between human to human, but if the very nature of the Trinity is self-giving love, as history has described person after person encountering God's free gift of love in Christ, though they do not deserve it, then this reflection on the non-judgmental nature of God in these moments puts some considered thought upon the simple statement that God receives us as we are. Perhaps it might be acceptable to say the notion of non-judgmentalism being part of the character and nature of the Holy Spirit is one further way we consider the practical theology of God's love for us in action.

6.3. Concluding remarks

Holding the value and operating a non-judgmental approach within a Christian community has a significant benefit for any evangelistic method. To meet someone as they are with no pre-judgment opens up whatever may be next for them with God. Though this is not a claim for all fresh expressions of church, it can be said of EGG and ROD that they have

⁷¹⁷ Maddox, 1994 p.120

demonstrated their ability to receive and nurture people in Christian faith from a diverse ethnographic spectrum by working from a non-judgmental ethos.

Chapter 7

Conclusion - Theology in Action

This qualitative research investigated twelve interviews through the tools and methods of Practical Theology and this final chapter considers what action may follow. The central research question asked: How and why people connecting with a select group of Methodist fresh expressions of church were discovering faith in Jesus, choosing to follow him, and becoming part of these new forms of church? The initial enquiry looked predominantly for those who had no previous church background, but in reality, the sample of people available and interviewed all had some form of previous church experience, even though some of it was almost negligible.

The twelve people interviewed for the Stage Two Data has provided a unique and original contribution. In the broader context of denominational church decline, this work examined their narratives to try and discover:

- a) Why the identified participants had found faith in Jesus
- b) Was anything happening within these new contexts of church that significantly helped them?
- c) What could be learnt for the future pedagogy of evangelism within the wider church?

This concluding chapter seeks to offer remarks upon those three elements and note what further work might be considered. One additional piece of learning from this research comes from the two-stage process of research and the methods used in looking for change. The adapted Hoge Intrinsic Religious Scale proved very helpful in discovering where change had taken place. This, coupled with semi-structured, responsive interviews, formed a

very effective method of drawing out some very rich data, which may be useful for further research within this field.

a) Journeys to Jesus

This phrase is not new⁷¹⁸ and though disliked by some, it has a working brief that describes accurately what it means. It describes movement over time to a focus of revelation. It is evident from the respective participants' stories that moments of revelation were key to making this decision. Some happened over time, some were more instantaneous. It was evident that some of the conduit dynamics could be present such as, belief in God and Jesus, belonging to a church, and even behaving appropriately, but according to the participants' narratives, this was not sufficient in bringing them to the choice of following Jesus. In fact, nine of the narratives described a moment when they left their former churches.

This revelation, as noted in the observations in the previous Chapter, has an infinite dynamic and still requires ongoing movement, in which daily choice can take one closer or further away from the central focus. Without doubt, the narratives portray the language and dynamic of 'relationship' to Christ once faith is genuinely found. This relationship can potentially grow distant and cold as well strengthen and develop.

The details uncovered in this research have complimented and brought affirmation to other work about how people come to faith in Christ.

Much of the *Talking Jesus* research evidences very similar inferences.

⁷¹⁸ Webber, 2001pp.11-16.; Easton, 1934

Coming to faith in the context of the Christian family demonstrated it was a journey over time with several key decisions or experiences culminating in the eventual outcome, or it was one sudden decision or experience that led a person to faith in Jesus. These four themes can be identified in the twelve narratives, but they are not the whole story.

In a modest way this research has brought further evidence to the unique nature of each person's journey. It also makes evident the complexity of factors that bring influence and shape to their respective journeys. The a priori codes used as a hypothesis for this work have not been discounted. Each interview brought forward evidence which articulated the interplay, over time, of the four conduits of Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God, thus justifying the method.

It is suggested that further research employing this method could do so over a greater range of contexts to provide an even fuller picture. These narratives provide an observable indication that different aspects of the Gospel are different triggers for their respective coming to faith in Jesus and going on in faith with Christ. These conduits do not happen in pure isolation but are a significant collaboration of the work of the Holy Spirit, the fresh expression of church, and the individual's set of choices.

The background factors for the twelve participants were diverse, as were their respective triggers of response in deciding to follow Jesus. However, though these expressions of response are different and unique, most of the narratives conveyed the high function of experience, mainly attributed to the Holy Spirit, revealing something more of God to them.

There is some commonality to recognise here. A number of the participants found it hard to articulate the full extent of their experience, using words like: ‘wonderful,’ ‘warmth,’ ‘peace,’ ‘safe,’ ‘known,’ and ‘loved.’ All seemed inadequate to do justice to what they felt at the time. In some cases, these encounters led to an immediate response, but not always. At times, some participants were unsure of what was happening and did not have an understanding that it might be God meeting them. Only at a later point did they discover the language and explanation to articulate the experience.

There is a significant degree of commonality around their initial points of connection with the respective fresh expressions of church, invitation being the main one. Ten of the narratives detail being invited by someone from within EGG or ROD, notably not the leader(s). Not being judged was the second principle in common. The positive behaviour of those in the respective communities went way beyond a kind welcome of ‘Hello, here’s a hymn book.’

It should be noted that this research only encountered those individuals who remained at ROD and EGG and therefore there may be those who did not find the same encounter represented in the ‘establishing factors’ observed in Chapter 5. Consequently, what follows can only be offered as a summary of the evidence gathered from their data and should be considered within these limits.

b) Fresh expressions of church - A helping context

The beginnings of this research had approached four Methodist fresh expressions of church and would have been all the richer had the original intentions been realised. That said, this work deeply values all who participated in the preparatory Stage One and focused work of Stage Two. The twelve participants' narratives are incredibly rich and hold a wealth of information about the two contexts of EGG and ROD through which the Good News about Jesus has been received into their lives.

All their narratives spoke in a very affirming way about both EGG and ROD communities and it is this dynamic which has perhaps offered something quite insightful for this work to acknowledge. Though Chapter 6 gave prominence to considering it, the nature of having or practicing a non-judgmental environment, within the fresh expression of church community, clearly acts as an operant precursor for evangelism. From their respective evidence within their data, it was observable in ten cases that an engagement with faith in Jesus was preceded by the way the communities of ROD and EGG behaved towards the participant interviewed.

Paul thought he would be judged by his actions at university but wasn't. Imogen tried to be provocative in order to be rejected and judged but found kindness and grace instead. Lynda was fearful of how Stuart and Martyn's behaviour would be judged, but they were supported and welcomed. Colin received God's forgiveness for himself, Stephanie found understanding, healing and support. Kathryn and family discovered a welcome she thought was counter cultural and Trudy and Jack loved the atmosphere and welcome of the community, despite being quite different.

Simon did his best to sabotage his life with God, his family, and the church but was held in prayer until things changed.

Perhaps again one should recognise that this concept is not new. Wilkinson, writing on ‘The Activity of God in Methodist Perspective,’ asks the age old question of “How does God act in the world?”⁷¹⁹ Markham would argue the correct response is ‘Co-operant Grace.’⁷²⁰ Volf defines this in Christ ‘*re-naming and remaking*’ of what might be considered unclean or excluded and places the active reagent of God’s Holy Spirit within the transformed life of the Christian.⁷²¹ Thus the recognition is a threefold emphasis: i) God’s activity, ii) the communities’ receptivity and response to God’s activity, and then iii) how the individual encounters God’s activity upon themselves, both in and through the community’s behaviour and actions.

By the virtue of difference, within the backdrop of decline within the British Methodist Church at the time this research took place, it may be possible to state this non-judgmental approach clearly had an effect and is a worthy facet to observe further. It may not be the only contributing factor present within these two fresh expressions of church, but it is one clearly identifiable trend, evidenced in the participants’ transcripts.

How the community behaves towards those who are new and unestablished within EGG and ROD does seem to be the outworking of what they believe God is like and how they should live accordingly. This is

⁷¹⁹ Marsh, 2004 pp.142-54

⁷²⁰ Markham, 2007

⁷²¹ Volf, 1996

not of their own abilities, but it is of their own choices. The ability would be placed in the power of the Holy Spirit at work within them.

The second significant observation aiding a number of the participants to engage in a greater way with faith was both EGG and ROD's approach to participation and the dynamics of community involvement. The ethos that forms a foundational part of the Centred Set is the value placed on everyone who is attributing their investment towards being part of the community.

Within weeks of being part of EGG, each new person is invited to complete a form detailing their background and how they might like to contribute in time or abilities. No one is ever forced into anything, but participation is expected. Both ROD and EGG see their respective communities as involved and engaged with little room for "bystanders," seemingly holding to a philosophy that community is not a "spectator sport."

This resonance with the New Testament observation that Jesus facilitated discipleship not in a classroom but on the road, as practised based formation, is perhaps quite counter-cultural in most contemporary forms of Westernised training for ministry and mission. In fact, quite the opposite is true in Latin America and Africa.⁷²² Training in ministry only happens after someone has proved themselves by "planting" several churches.

Therefore, this culture of invitation extends into practical application and one might say discipleship is done through learning "on the job."

⁷²² From personal visits to the Methodist Churches in Cuba and Nigeria, both only consider training for ordained ministry those who have first planted at least one, usually two new churches which are growing.

Nevertheless, one tangible inference is that many serve within the community and the roles and functions are not the occupation of the few. Further, it seems such practice is not done in isolation. Learning from one another with support, advice, and mentoring is an active dynamic.

EGG, as a larger community, had multiple levels of leadership and shared responsibility, creating an infrastructure that could cope well with lots of new people. Their small groups were populated with many young leaders who were themselves mentoring the next generation of younger leaders. A similar practice was in operation at ROD but on a smaller scale.

c) Pedagogy for evangelism

As like the image of a key that opens a door onto a new world or reality but if the occupant never steps over the threshold and seeks to discover this new world, well it is just a key and a door and what may seem a nice new view.

That sounds quite cryptic but the principles around the Centred Set, expanded in the parameters of the four conduits of Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God, visualised within the three dimensions of a sphere, holds a very powerful set of concepts for the future of evangelism.

As evidenced in the data, a receptive church community that allows anyone to enter, no matter what their current belief,⁷²³ no matter how they appear to behave⁷²⁴ or what experiences of God have shaped their journey thus far and makes ‘space’ for them to become a part of the community,

⁷²³ Atheist, agnostic, other faiths or some form of heterogeneous mix.

⁷²⁴ They feel they are the greatest saint or the worst sinner or greatest sinner or the worst saint.

creates opportunities for encounter to happen. This is more than a concept of welcome. It creates a dynamic that looks beyond boundaries, fences, or borders that discriminate and separate. It also opens up a space for a non-judgmental approach that receives a person 'as they are,' with no value judgments or expectation of prescribed and adhered to conformity, before participation is allowed.

This kind of community notices that something has changed by the very presence of new people being there, whether the new people realise it or not. These new people have opened the door, perhaps tentatively, with great scepticism or caution, hoping to disprove it all and go back to a normal life, leave these nagging questions behind... But, nevertheless, they have opened the door to explore.

Portraying this as an image in reference to the Playstation model, it suggests that they have 'turned' to 'face' the centre. Nothing more has happened, yet the operant dynamic is that there is a hint of openness with an opportunity for trust to be built and a next step to be taken. This next step in a three-dimensional model allows for any direction to be chosen. Free choice is a fundamental element in our relationship with God and one of the most powerful tools of evangelism.

People are always made aware that this is no one's choice but theirs. No one is forcing them, it is all in their own time and decision matrix. This is between them and God. Imogen spoke of this, talking about the person she spoke to after her experience of God,

She just wanted me to see the Gospel and get what the Gospel was and understand that my faith was my own and

no one else's and the responsibility to learn about my faith was my own and no one else's.

The model of the sphere with the four conduits presented at the polar edges represents the interconnectivity and complementarity of each of them. Belief is not being subverted by Experience, nor Belonging a requirement of Behaviour. Each dynamic is an active part of whole-life discipleship. The sphere conceptualises that there can be varying and different intensities of each and all four elements. It is important to state that all models have their limitations and to hold the purpose of this model is to convey relationship and the dynamic of interplay between the four conduits.

To illustrate the interplay of relationship with a couple of people from the data set, under the analogy as detailed in Appendix IX where Christ is at the very centre of the sphere and the perfection of Belief, Belonging, Behaviour and Experience of God expressed, with the extreme opposite held at the edge of the sphere. So, the following are snapshots from a moment in these people's respective lives.

Simon, before faith being challenged demonstrated a high intensity in Belief, Belonging, Experience of God, and Behaviour. However, Simon before his trip to America, demonstrated a high intensity in Belonging but displayed a very low intensity in his Behaviour. His Experience of God could be seen as fluctuating, yet his Belief remained a high active dynamic.

Lynda held a low intensity of Belonging after leaving the first church but kept a high intensity of Belief, principally held by her first Experience of God despite encountering appalling Behaviour. Lynda then has a high intensity Experience of God, that is encountered with Behaviour

that is both positive and negative but is nurtured through this with a high intensity of Belonging. This leads to an increased depth of Belief.

Kathryn gives up Belonging to a church but by an interplay between Experience of God and Belief starts seeking. Further Experiences of God do not lead to Belonging until a different Behaviour is encountered. Belonging becomes the platform in which further Experiences of God lead to new levels of Belief and transformed Behaviour.

The classic line “no one size fits all” is an understatement for these and the other participant narratives. Therefore, our practice of evangelism should not just focus upon developing excellent programmes that instruct our cognitive engagement with faith in Christ, but seek to work on an openness for people to experience the love of God in tangible ways. This experience supported by explanation with the appropriate place of response is just as important as the right environment and belonging within a community.

The practical dynamics of discipleship ‘as you go’ also for some will be the key that opens the door for some to engage with Christ at a new level. Recognising at a performative level the huge variety of personality types and ways in which cognitive function operates so diversely in modern neurological science.⁷²⁵ After all this is the God who knows us.⁷²⁶ Therefore it seems errant to only propose extending and exploring faith in one limited dimensional way.

⁷²⁵ Mosley, 2020

⁷²⁶ Psalm 139 NRSV.

This thesis closes by suggesting that a future pedagogy of evangelism that does not invest in all four conduits: Behaviour, Belonging, Belief, and Experience of God, as a cooperant whole will not be as effective as one that does. Sharing Good News about Jesus has to be matched by an environment in which all are genuinely welcome. These dynamics are not limited to any one denomination and although the thesis focused on what British Methodism had to learn, it would be errant to limit this scope. There has to be an operant dynamic within the church to balance being a non-judgmental community, with seeking to be an intentional Christ Centred Set, open to the divine and wonderful action of God at work through the Holy Spirit. Then, and only then, might the words latterly of Acts 2:47 be realised,

ὁ δὲ κύριος προσετίθει τοὺς σωζομένους καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό⁷²⁷

⁷²⁷ Blue Letter Bible, 2020 Acts 2:47b And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. NRSV

Appendix I

Fresh Expressions in the mission of the Church

Report of the Anglican Methodist Working Party

4.6 Recognising a Christian community as a church

4.6.1 From what the Church of England and the Methodist Church respectively teach about the Church itself, based on Scripture, it is possible to state a number of criteria by which it can be said that a particular Christian community is a church in the true sense of the term. For both the Church of England and the Methodist Church the presence of all of the following elements is the necessary and sufficient condition for a particular Christian community to be recognised as a church:

1. A community of people who are called by God to be committed disciples of Jesus Christ and to live out their discipleship in the world;
2. A community that regularly assembles for Christian worship and is then sent out into the world to engage in mission and service;
3. A community in which the Gospel is proclaimed in ways that are appropriate to the lives of its members;
4. A community in which the Scriptures are regularly preached and taught;
5. A community in which baptism is conferred in appropriate circumstances as a rite of initiation into the Church;
6. A community that celebrates the Lord's Supper;
7. A community where pastoral responsibility and presidency at the Lord's Supper is exercised by the appropriate authorised ministry;
8. A community that is united to others through: mutual commitment; spiritual communion; structures of governance, oversight and communion; and an authorised ministry in common.

Appendix II

Church Growth Research Project Report on Strand 3b

An analysis of fresh expressions of Church and church plants begun in the period 1992–2012

Conducted by Church Army's Research Unit

What is an Anglican fresh expression of Church? (fxC)

Ten parameters

1. Was something Christian and communal brought to 'birth' that was new and further, rather than an existing group modified?
2. Has the starting group tried to **engage with non-churchgoers**?
There was intention to create a fresh expression of Church, not begin an outreach project from an existing church. The aim was for the Christians to change, to fit a culture and context, not make the local/indigenous people change, to fit into an existing church context.
3. Does the resultant community meet **at least once a month**? In cases of monthly meetings further questions about how to deepen community, build commitment and increase discipleship follow.
4. Does it have **a name** that helps to give it an identity? An active search, not yet yielding a name, is allowed.
5. Is there **intention to be Church**? This could be from the start, or by discovery on the way. This admits the embryonic fxD (fx of developing community) and cases of fxE (fx of evangelism) and even some fxW (fx of worship). The key is that they are *not* seen as a bridge back to 'real church'.
6. Is it Anglican, or **an Anglican partner** in an Ecumenical project? 'Anglican' here means the bishop welcomes it as part of the diocesan family, not whether it only uses centrally authorised worship texts, or has a legal territory such as a parish.
7. There is some form of **leadership** recognised within, and also without.
8. At least the majority of members (who are part of the public gathering) see it as **their major expression** of being church.
9. There is **aspiration for the four creedal 'marks' of church, or ecclesial relationships**: 'up/holy, in/one, out/apostolic, of/catholic'. We question validity in an absence of 'mission/out'. (Our Church Army team see the two dominical sacraments as a given consequence of the life of a missional community which follows Jesus, but not the sole or even best measure of being church.)
10. There is **intent to become 'three self'** (self-financing, self-governing and self-reproducing). These factors need contextualisation, but are some marks of advancing maturity. They are not to be interpreted as indicators of congregationalist independency, or breakaway tendencies.

Appendix III

The Engel Scale

Spiritual Decision Making Process Created by James Engel			
God's Role	Church's Role		Human Response
General Revelation		- 10	Awareness of the Supernatural
		- 9	No effective knowledge of Christianity
Conviction	Presence	- 8	Initial awareness of Christianity
		- 7	Interest in Christianity
	Proclamation	- 6	Awareness of basic Gospel facts
		- 5	Grasp of the implications of the Gospel
		- 4	Positive attitude to the Gospel
	Persuasion	- 3	Awareness of personal need
		- 2	Challenge and decision to act
Regeneration		- 1	Repentance and faith
A New Disciple is Born Matthew 28: 19-20			
Sanctification		+ 1	Evaluation of Decision
		+ 2	Initiation into the Church
		+ 3	Becoming part of the process of making other disciples
		·	Growth in understanding of the faith
		·	Growth in character
		·	Discovery and use of gifts
		·	Christian lifestyle
		·	Stewardship of resources
		·	Prayer
		·	Openness to others
·	Effective Sharing of faith and life		

Appendix IV

Durham University & Fresh Expressions Research Survey - Stage 1.

Introductory Notes

This is the first of a two-stage piece of research with people attending new forms of church (*fresh expressions of church* is their official term). Stage one will help understand more about those who attend and stage two will seek to talk to a smaller number from stage one about their faith journey. Therefore if you are over 18 years of age and willing to participate further please enter a current email when asked. Stage one is open to all ages. However stage two must comply with safeguarding regulations. No details will be passed on or used for any other purpose without written permission. All information will be stored securely in accordance with the Durham University Ethics Board's requirements.

This survey should take about 10 minutes and I am very grateful for your time. You can do part of it and save it before finishing and submitting it. You can also request a copy for your own records.

Many thanks, Stephen Lindridge

(National Methodist Missioner for Fresh Expressions
& Durham University Postgraduate Part-time Student)

By participating in this survey you are consenting that the information you give may be used in this research and published for the learning and development of others.

{if not agreed participation will not be possible}

- Agree
- Decline

Qu. 1 Please select the fresh expression of church that you attend.

Qu.2 Gender (please circle) Female Male

Qu.3 Please choose one of the following eras in which you born.

1945 or before 1946-1964 1965-1981 1982-1998 after 1999

Qu.4 Please provide your home Post Code – this is only to be used for this piece of research.

post code or street name

Qu.5 Before you started going to the fresh expression of church named in question 1, please choose below which of the following most accurately describes your background of any other previous church attendance.

- Never been to church or hardly ever
- Went occasionally to church, (less than 5 times a year)
- Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)
- Used to go to church but stopped
- how long ago did you stop attending church?

Qu.6 How many different churches have you attended (regularly)

0

1-2

3-5

5+

Qu. 7 In your life before attending the fresh expression (named in qu.1) how would you have answered the following ten questions?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My faith/spirituality involved all of my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You should seek God's guidance when making every important decision.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my life I experienced the presence of the Divine.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My faith/spirituality sometimes restricted my actions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nothing is as important to me as serving God as best I know how.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try hard to carry my spirituality/faith over into all my other dealings in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My spiritual beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It doesn't matter so much what I believe as long as I lead a moral life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Although I am a spiritual person, I refuse to let spiritual considerations influence my everyday affairs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Although I believe in my faith, I feel there are many more important things in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Qu.8 How long have you been attending the fresh expression named in qu.1?

Less than a month 1-3 months 4-6 months 7-12months
 1-2years 3-5years 5-10 years more than 10 years

Qu.9a Please choose one from the scale below that best describes your view before you started attending the fresh expression?

‘Not interested.’ ‘Christians are ok.’, ‘Jesus is interesting.’,
‘Jesus could be for me.’, ‘Jesus is worth taking seriously.’,
‘I’ll turn to Jesus.’, ‘Help me to live like Jesus.’

Qu.9b Please choose one from the scale below that best describes your view now, you have been attending the fresh expression?

‘Not interested.’ ‘Christians are ok.’, ‘Jesus is interesting.’,
‘Jesus could be for me.’, ‘Jesus is worth taking seriously.’,
‘I’ll turn to Jesus.’, ‘Help me to live like Jesus.’

Qu.10 In your life now how would you answer the following ten questions?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My faith/spirituality involved all of my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You should seek God's guidance when making every important decision.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my life I experienced the presence of the Divine.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My faith/spirituality sometimes restricted my actions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nothing is as important to me as serving God as best I know how.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try hard to carry my spirituality/faith over into all my other dealings in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My spiritual beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It doesn't matter so much what I believe as long as I lead a moral life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Although I am a spiritual person, I refuse to let spiritual considerations influence my everyday affairs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Although I believe in my faith, I feel there are many more important things in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Many thanks for your time and thought. All of the above information will be anonymous

If you are willing to be part of Stage-two please indicate below and offer your first name and the contact details e.g. email address

<p><u>Name :</u></p> <p><u>Contact details :</u></p>
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Please return your response to the collection box.

Fresh-Expressions-Research-Survey-Stage-1-7

Dot Mailer ID	DThM Ref	Date	By participating in this survey you are consenting that the information you give may be used in this research and published for the learning and development of others.	Qu. 1 Please select the fresh expression of church that you attend.	Qu.2 Gender	Qu.3 Please choose one of the following eras in which you born.
26890695	E-DM-01	2015-02-04T08:27:31	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
26897177	E-DM-02	2015-02-04T12:19:55	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
26898648	E-DM-03	2015-02-04T12:50:59	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
27103410	E-DM-04	2015-02-09T14:22:51	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
27171131	E-DM-05	2015-02-11T13:19:47	Agree	EGG	Male	1982-1998
27252782	E-DM-06	2015-02-13T00:41:43	Agree	EGG	Male	1965-1981
27318115	E-DM-07	2015-02-14T14:25:44	Agree	EGG	Male	1982-1998
27329165	E-DM-08	2015-02-14T20:37:55	Agree	EGG	Male	1982-1998
27347899	E-DM-09	2015-02-15T14:29:28	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
27559483	E-DM-10	2015-02-21T15:18:40	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
27559900	E-DM-11	2015-02-21T15:39:09	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
27560431	E-DM-12	2015-02-21T15:59:23	Agree	EGG	Male	1946-1964
27560703	E-DM-13	2015-02-21T16:09:54	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
27561432	E-DM-14	2015-02-21T16:41:54	Agree	EGG	Male	1982-1998
27561159	E-DM-15	2015-02-21T16:42:07	Agree	EGG	Male	1965-1981
27561912	E-DM-16	2015-02-21T16:54:26	Agree	EGG	Male	1982-1998
27562895	E-DM-17	2015-02-21T17:32:15	Agree	EGG	Female	1965-1981
27564975	E-DM-18	2015-02-21T18:55:06	Agree	EGG	Male	1982-1998
27568977	E-DM-19	2015-02-21T21:26:57	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
27571424	E-DM-20	2015-02-21T23:08:49	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
27572232	E-DM-21	2015-02-21T23:54:58	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
27571510	E-DM-22	2015-02-22T16:05:29	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
27586466	E-DM-23	2015-02-22T16:08:00	Agree	EGG	Male	1982-1998
27563583	E-DM-24	2015-02-23T08:05:21	Agree	EGG	Male	1982-1998
27619881	E-DM-25	2015-02-23T16:49:10	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
27621540	E-DM-26	2015-02-23T17:38:09	Agree	EGG	Female	1965-1981
27621728	E-DM-27	2015-02-23T17:46:56	Agree	EGG	Female	1946-1964
27621904	E-DM-28	2015-02-23T17:49:42	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
27655670	E-DM-29	2015-02-24T18:32:36	Agree	EGG	Male	1982-1998
27932562	E-DM-30	2015-03-05T14:35:49	Agree	EGG	Female	1982-1998
27933049	E-DM-31	2015-03-05T14:48:45	Agree	EGG	Male	1946-1964
27933311	E-DM-32	2015-03-05T14:54:01	Agree	EGG	Female	1945 or before
27933484	E-DM-33	2015-03-05T14:58:51	Agree	EGG	Female	1946-1964
27933653	E-DM-34	2015-03-05T15:03:28	Agree	EGG	Female	1965-1981
27933784	E-DM-35	2015-03-05T15:07:03	Agree	EGG	Female	1945 or before
27933883	E-DM-36	2015-03-05T15:10:56	Agree	EGG	Male	1982-1998
27934005	E-DM-37	2015-03-05T15:15:57	Agree	EGG		1945 or before
27934152	E-DM-38	2015-03-05T15:20:03	Agree	EGG	Male	1946-1964
30000002	E-P-10	2015-03-05	Agree	EGG	Female	1946-1964
30000001	E-P-9	2015-03-05	Agree	EGG	Male	1982-1998
27649078	N-DM-39	2015-03-16T18:14:10	Agree	NOW	Female	1965-1981
28252491	N-DM-40	2015-03-16T18:41:04	Agree	NOW	Female	1946-1964
28253152	N-DM-41	2015-03-16T18:52:05	Agree	NOW	Female	1982-1998
28253731	N-DM-42	2015-03-16T19:08:02	Agree	NOW	Female	1946-1964
28254909	N-DM-43	2015-03-16T19:33:09	Agree	NOW	Female	1946-1964
28253381	N-DM-44	2015-03-16T20:50:54	Agree	NOW	Female	1946-1964
28259361	N-DM-45	2015-03-16T21:16:34	Agree	NOW	Female	1946-1964
28261891	N-DM-46	2015-03-16T22:21:53	Agree	NOW	Female	1965-1981
28263288	N-DM-47	2015-03-16T23:08:34	Agree	NOW	Female	1965-1981
28322966	N-DM-48	2015-03-18T17:11:43	Agree	NOW	Female	1946-1964

Dot Mailer ID	DThM Ref	Date	By participating in this survey you are consenting that the information you give may be used in this research and published for the learning and development of others.	Qu. 1 Please select the fresh expression of church that you attend.	Qu.2 Gender	Qu.3 Please choose one of the following eras in which you born.
28884761	N-DM-49	2015-04-07T15:22:46	Agree	NOW	Female	1946-1964
29087853	N-DM-50	2015-04-14T22:39:57	Agree	NOW	Female	1965-1981
30000003	N-P-01	2015-03-22	Agree	NOW	Female	1982-1998
30000004	N-P-02	2015-03-22	Agree	NOW	Male	1965-1981
30000005	N-P-03	2015-03-22	Agree	NOW	Male	1965-1981
30000006	N-P-04	2015-03-22	Agree	NOW	Female	1965-1981
30000007	N-P-05	2015-03-22	Agree	NOW	Female	1982-1998
30000008	N-P-06	2015-03-22	Agree	NOW	Female	1946-1964
30000009	N-P-07	2015-03-22	Agree	NOW	Female	1946-1964
30000010	N-P-08	2015-03-22	Agree	NOW	Female	1965-1981
30000011	N-P-09	2015-03-22	Agree	NOW	Female	1945 or before
30000012	N-P-10	2015-03-22	Agree	NOW	Female	1965-1981
30000013	N-P-11	2015-03-22	Agree	NOW	Male	1946-1964
30000014	N-P-12	2015-03-22	Agree	NOW	Female	1946-1964
30000015	R-P-01	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Male	1982-1998
30000016	R-P-02	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Female	1982-1998
30000017	R-P-03	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Male	1982-1998
30000018	R-P-04	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Female	1965-1981
30000019	R-P-05	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Male	1982-1998
30000020	R-P-06	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Male	After 1999
30000021	R-P-07	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Male	1982-1998
30000022	R-P-08	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Male	1982-1998
30000023	R-P-09	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Female	After 1999
30000024	R-P-10	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Female	1982-1998
30000025	R-P-11	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Female	1982-1998
30000026	R-P-12	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Female	1945 or before
30000027	R-P-13	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Female	1965-1981
30000028	R-P-14	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Female	1982-1998
30000029	R-P-15	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Male	1945 or before
30000030	R-P-16	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Male	1945 or before
30000031	R-P-17	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Male	1982-1998
30000032	R-P-18	2016-03-31	Agree	ROD	Female	1945 or before

Dot Mailer ID	Qu.4 Please provide your home Post Code – this is only to be used for this piece of research.	Qu.5 Before you started going to the fresh expression of church named in question 1, please choose below which of the following most accurately describes your background of any other previous church attendance.	Qu.6 How many different churches have you attended (regularly)	Qu.7.1 My faith/spirituality involved all of my life. 1
26890695	Rm14su	Never been to church or hardly ever	1-2	Strongly Disagree
26897177	Heath Park Road	Went occasionally to church, (less than 5 times a year)	1-2	Strongly Disagree
26898648	Rm111eb	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Neutral
27103410	rm3 0lj	Used to go to church but stopped	3-5	Disagree
27171131	RM3 8PG	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Agree
27252782	Brentwood road	Used to go to church but stopped	3-5	Neutral
27318115	rm2 6da	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Agree
27329165	RM2 5XJ	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Neutral
27347899	IG11	Went occasionally to church, (less than 5 times a year)	1-2	Strongly Disagree
27559483	RM5 2PT	Used to go to church but stopped	3-5	Agree
27559900	RM3 8RP	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)		Strongly Agree
27560431	RM3 0QL	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Disagree
27560703	RM11 3ST	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Strongly Agree
27561432	rm11 3st	Went occasionally to church, (less than 5 times a year)	3-5	Disagree
27561159	rm2 5xj		1-2	Agree
27561912	Rm13 9qj	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Neutral
27562895	Rm7 0dl	how long ago did you stop attending church? - 2 years	3-5	Disagree
27564975	RM11 1LN	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Agree
27568977	Rm6 5aa	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Disagree
27571424	rm30du	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Strongly Disagree
27572232		Never been to church or hardly ever	1-2	Disagree
27571510	Ig96hw	Never been to church or hardly ever	1-2	Neutral
27586466	RM11 3SG	Used to go to church but stopped	1-2	Neutral
27563583	RM11 2AE	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Agree
27619881	RM2 5TP	how long ago did you stop attending church? - I'd stopped going for 5years +	1-2	Neutral
27621540	RM2 6RC	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Agree
27621728	rm26rr	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Neutral
27621904	RM1 2SP	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Disagree
27655670	RM3 0LJ	Used to go to church but stopped	1-2	Strongly Disagree
27932562	RM1 4XA	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Disagree
27933049	RM11 1AT	Went occasionally to church, (less than 5 times a year)	1-2	Disagree
27933311	RM2 6JX	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Strongly Agree
27933484	RM11 2BZ	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Strongly Agree
27933653	RM3 7RS	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Agree
27933784	RM1 4DN	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Agree
27933883	RM2 5TP	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Neutral
27934005	RM2 6JP	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Agree
27934152	RM2 6JJ	Used to go to church but stopped	1-2	Agree
30000002	RM1 2DH	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Strongly Agree
30000001	RM5 3TJ	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Strongly Agree
27649078	WA7 4XH	Went occasionally to church, (less than 5 times a year)	1-2	Disagree
28252491	WA4 6EU	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	6+	Strongly Agree
28253152	WA7 2UD	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Agree
28253731	WA5 3EQ	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Strongly Disagree
28254909	Wa6 0bf	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Strongly Agree
28253381	WA4 5AG	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Agree
28259361	WA3 5NR	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Agree
28261891	Ch2	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Strongly Agree
28263288	WA3 5SH	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Agree
28322966	WA7 6RL	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	6+	Agree

Dot Mailer ID	Qu.4 Please provide your home Post Code – this is only to be used for this piece of research.	Qu.5 Before you started going to the fresh expression of church named in question 1, please choose below which of the following most accurately describes your background of any other previous church attendance.	Qu.6 How many different churches have you attended (regularly)	Qu.7.1 My faith/spirituality involved all of my life. 1
28884761	Warrington	how long ago did you stop attending church? - I dont fit any category and 6 is not clear what you mean. I think you may be referring to joint membership people. What about people who drop in and out of faith based activities that are not churches. eg. Maranatha community. Faith and spirituality affecting actions could also be taken a number of ways, hence neutral in my answer. Second question from end not clear neither, Q9 could do with some more options as I did not fit any box.		Strongly Agree
29087853	WA3 4JU	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Agree
30000003	Poaches Lane	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Agree
30000004	WA4 1SF	Never been to church or hardly ever	0	Disagree
30000005	Hough Lane	Never been to church or hardly ever	1-2	Strongly Disagree
30000006	WA7 4XH/U?	Went occasionally to church, (less than 5 times a year)	1-2	Disagree
30000007		Never been to church or hardly ever	0	Strongly Disagree
30000008	WA5 9PY	Went occasionally to church, (less than 5 times a year)	3-5	Strongly Disagree
30000009	WA5 1RD	Went occasionally to church, (less than 5 times a year)	3-5	Disagree
30000010	WA4 1SF	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Neutral
30000011	WA4 1LN		3-5	
30000012		Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Neutral
30000013	WA1 1JQ	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Neutral
30000014	WA1 1JQ	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	6+	Agree
30000015	DN35 7NL	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	0	Strongly Disagree
30000016	DN31 2HD	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Disagree
30000017	DN34 4TA	Used to go to church but stopped	1-2	Disagree
30000018	DN32 9PG	Used to go to church but stopped - About a yr and a half	3-5	Neutral
30000019	DN32 9PG	Used to go to church but stopped - 1 year 6 months	3-5	Neutral
30000020	DN32 9PG	Used to go to church but stopped - About a yr and a half	3-5	Neutral
30000021	DN32 0QA	Used to go to church but stopped	1-2	Neutral
30000022	DN32 9PG	Used to go to church but stopped - About a yr and a half	3-5	Neutral
30000023	DN32 0JQ	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Disagree
30000024	DN33 1DR	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Disagree
30000025	DN32 0QA	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Agree
30000026	DN37 0UX	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	x
30000027	DN32 0QA	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Agree
30000028	DN34 4ER	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Neutral
30000029	DN37 0UX	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Agree
30000030	DN32 8JD	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Agree
30000031	DN32 9NT	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	1-2	Neutral
30000032	DN32 8JD	Went regularly to church, (monthly or more often)	3-5	Strongly Agree

Dot Mailer ID	7.1 SCORE	Qu.7.2 You should seek God's guidance when making every important decision. 1	7.2 SCORE	Qu.7.3 In my life I experienced the presence of the Divine. 1	7.3 SCORE	Qu.7.4 My faith/spirituality sometimes restricted my actions. 1	7.4 SCORE
26890695	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1
26897177	1	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Agree	4
26898648	3	Agree	4	Disagree	2	Agree	4
27103410	2	Strongly Disagree	1	Disagree	2	Disagree	2
27171131	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Neutral	3
27252782	3	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Agree	4
27318115	4	Disagree	2	Neutral	3	Disagree	2
27329165	3	Disagree	2	Agree	4	Disagree	2
27347899	1	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Neutral	3
27559483	4	Neutral	3	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree	2
27559900	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4
27560431	2	Agree	4	Strongly Disagree	1	Agree	4
27560703	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Neutral	3
27561432	2	Agree	4	Agree	4	Disagree	2
27561159	3	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
27561912	3	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Neutral	3
27562895	2	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Agree	4
27564975	4	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Agree	4
27568977	2	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Disagree	2
27571424	1	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Disagree	2
27572232	2	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Neutral	3
27571510	3	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Neutral	3
27586466	3	Neutral	3	Disagree	2	Neutral	3
27563583	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
27619881	3	Disagree	2	Neutral	3	Strongly Disagree	1
27621540	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Neutral	3
27621728	3	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
27621904	2	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree	2
27655670	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Agree	4	Neutral	3
27932562	2	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4
27933049	2	Agree	4	Agree	4	Disagree	2
27933311	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4
27933484	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4
27933653	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5
27933784	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree	1
27933883	3	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5
27934005	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree	2
27934152	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
30000002	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4
30000001	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27649078	2	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Disagree	2
28252491	5	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
28253152	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Neutral	3
28253731	1	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
28254909	5	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
28253381	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
28259361	4	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Disagree	2
28261891	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
28263288	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
28322966	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4

Dot Mailer ID	7.1 SCORE	Qu.7.2 You should seek God's guidance when making every important decision. 1	7.2 SCORE	Qu.7.3 In my life I experienced the presence of the Divine. 1	7.3 SCORE	Qu.7.4 My faith/ spirituality sometimes restricted my actions. 1	7.4 SCORE
28884761	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Neutral	3
29087853	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
30000003	4	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Disagree	2
30000004	2	Disagree	2	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1
30000005	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1
30000006	2	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1
30000007	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1
30000008	1	Disagree	2	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1
30000009	2	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Agree	4
30000010	3	Agree	4	Disagree	2	Disagree	2
30000011							
30000012	3	Agree	4	Agree	4	Disagree	2
30000013	3	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Agree	4
30000014	4	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Agree	4
30000015	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1
30000016	2	Disagree	2	Neutral	3	Neutral	3
30000017	2	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1
30000018	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3
30000019	3	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Neutral	3
30000020	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3
30000021	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Agree	4
30000022	3	Neutral	3	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree	2
30000023	2	Neutral	3	Disagree	2	Strongly Disagree	1
30000024	2	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Disagree	2
30000025	4	Agree	4	Disagree	2	Neutral	3
30000026		Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree	4
30000027	4	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3
30000028	3	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5
30000029	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Neutral	3
30000030	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
30000031	3	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree	4
30000032	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree	2

Dot Mailer ID	Qu.7.5. Nothing is as important to me as serving God as best I know how. 1	7.5 SCORE	Qu.7.6 I try hard to carry my spirituality/faith over into all my other dealings in life. 1	7.6 SCORE	Qu.7.7 My spiritual beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life. 1	7.7 SCORE	Qu.7.8 It doesn't matter so much what I believe as long as I lead a moral life. 1
26890695	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Agree
26897177	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Disagree	2	Strongly Agree
26898648	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Agree	4	Neutral
27103410	Disagree	2	Strongly Disagree	1	Disagree	2	Agree
27171131	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree
27252782	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Agree
27318115	Agree	4	Disagree	2	Agree	4	Disagree
27329165	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Disagree
27347899	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree
27559483	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Agree
27559900	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
27560431	Agree	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Neutral
27560703	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree
27561432	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Disagree
27561159	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Strongly Disagree
27561912	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Strongly Disagree
27562895	Neutral	3	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Disagree
27564975	Agree	4	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree
27568977	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Agree
27571424	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Neutral	3	Agree
27572232	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Disagree	2	Agree
27571510	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Agree
27586466	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Neutral
27563583	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Disagree
27619881	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Disagree	2	Strongly Agree
27621540	Agree	4	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree
27621728	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree
27621904	Disagree	2	Neutral	3	Strongly Disagree	1	Neutral
27655670	Strongly Disagree	1	Disagree	2	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree
27932562	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Agree	4	Disagree
27933049	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree	4	Strongly Disagree
27933311	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
27933484	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree	4	Strongly Disagree
27933653	Agree	4	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
27933784	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
27933883	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Disagree
27934005	Agree	4	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Neutral
27934152	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree
30000002	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Strongly Disagree
30000001	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
27649078	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Agree
28252491	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Strongly Disagree
28253152	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree
28253731	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree
28254909	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Disagree
28253381	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Disagree
28259361	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Disagree
28261891	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
28263288	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Disagree
28322966	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Agree	4	Strongly Disagree

Dot Mailer ID	Qu.7.5. Nothing is as important to me as serving God as best I know how. 1	7.5 SCORE	Qu.7.6 I try hard to carry my spirituality/faith over into all my other dealings in life. 1	7.6 SCORE	Qu.7.7 My spiritual beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life. 1	7.7 SCORE	Qu.7.8 It doesn't matter so much what I believe as long as I lead a moral life. 1
28884761	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree
29087853	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Disagree
30000003	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Disagree
30000004	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Agree
30000005	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Neutral
30000006	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree
30000007	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Neutral
30000008	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Agree
30000009	Agree	4	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Neutral
30000010	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Disagree	2	Agree
30000011					Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
30000012	Agree	4	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Disagree
30000013	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Neutral
30000014	Agree	4	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Disagree
30000015	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Neutral
30000016	Disagree	2	Neutral	3	Disagree	2	Neutral
30000017	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Agree
30000018	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Disagree	2	Neutral
30000019	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Disagree	2	Neutral
30000020	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Disagree	2	Neutral
30000021	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Agree
30000022	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Disagree	2	Disagree
30000023	Neutral	3	Strongly Disagree	1	Disagree	2	Strongly Agree
30000024	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Disagree	2	Agree
30000025	Disagree	2	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Neutral
30000026	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Disagree
30000027	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Neutral
30000028	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
30000029	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Agree	4	Disagree
30000030	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree	4	Disagree
30000031	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
30000032	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree

Dot Mailer ID	Qu.7.9 Although I am a spiritual person, I refuse to let spiritual considerations influence my everyday affairs. 1			Qu.7.10 Although I believe in my faith, I feel there are many more important things in life. 1		7 SUM	Qu.8 How long have you been attending the fresh expression named in qu.1?
	7.8 SCORE		7.9 SCORE		7.10 SCORE		
26890695	2	Strongly Disagree	5	Disagree	4	18	1-2years
26897177	1	Strongly Agree	1	Strongly Agree	1	16	5-10 years
26898648	3	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	35	7-12months
27103410	2	Agree	2	Agree	2	18	3-5years
27171131	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	42	3-5years
27252782	2	Disagree	4	Agree	2	32	7-12months
27318115	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	33	more than 10 years
27329165	4	Disagree	4	Neutral	3	31	more than 10 years
27347899	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	26	5-10 years
27559483	2	Neutral	3	Agree	2	27	3-5years
27559900	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Disagree	4	48	4-6 months
27560431	3	Neutral	3	Disagree	4	30	3-5years
27560703	4	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	47	1-2years
27561432	4	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	28	1-2years
27561159	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	43	5-10 years
27561912	5	Disagree	4	Neutral	3	33	5-10 years
27562895	4	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	29	5-10 years
27564975	4	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	41	1-2years
27568977	2	Agree	2	Disagree	4	24	3-5years
27571424	2	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	22	5-10 years
27572232	2	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	25	3-5years
27571510	2	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	36	5-10 years
27586466	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	29	more than 10 years
27563583	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	40	5-10 years
27619881	1	Neutral	3	Agree	2	23	5-10 years
27621540	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	41	1-2years
27621728	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	39	7-12months
27621904	3	Agree	2	Agree	2	23	5-10 years
27655670	5	Disagree	4	Agree	2	24	more than 10 years
27932562	4	Disagree	4	Agree	2	33	1-2years
27933049	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	40	5-10 years
27933311	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	49	3-5years
27933484	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Disagree	4	46	1-2years
27933653	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	45	1-2years
27933784	5	Strongly Agree	1	Strongly Agree	1	29	1-2years
27933883	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	36	5-10 years
27934005	3	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	41	3-5years
27934152	2	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	36	5-10 years
30000002	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	48	5-10 years
30000001	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	7-12months
27649078	2	Agree	2	Agree	2	20	1-2years
28252491	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	44	3-5years
28253152	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	42	7-12months
28253731	4	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	45	1-2years
28254909	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	41	5-10 years
28253381	4	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	42	3-5years
28259361	4	Disagree	4	Neutral	3	36	7-12months
28261891	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	3-5years
28263288	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	40	3-5years
28322966	5	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	40	3-5years

Dot Mailer ID	7.8 SCORE	Qu.7.9 Although I am a spiritual person, I refuse to let spiritual considerations influence my everyday affairs. 1	7.9 SCORE	Qu.7.10 Although I believe in my faith, I feel there are many more important things in life. 1	7.10 SCORE	7 SUM	Qu.8 How long have you been attending the fresh expression named in qu.1?
28884761	4			Strongly Disagree	5	42	3-5years
29087853	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	40	3-5years
30000003	4	Neutral	3	Disagree	4	32	1-2years
30000004	2	Agree	2	Neutral	3	19	7-12months
30000005	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	16	3-5years
30000006	5	Strongly Agree	1	Agree	2	16	1-2years
30000007	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	16	7-12months
30000008	1	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	15	1-2years
30000009	3	Agree	2	Neutral	3	29	1-2years
30000010	2	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	27	1-3 months
30000011	1	Strongly Agree	1	Strongly Agree	1	8	3-5years
30000012	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	36	5-10 years
30000013	3	Neutral	3	Disagree	4	38	5-10 years
30000014	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	38	3-5years
30000015	3	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	20	more than 10 years
30000016	3	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	28	3-5years
30000017	1	Strongly Disagree	5	Neutral	3	17	5-10 years
30000018	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	29	3-5years
30000019	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	30	3-5years
30000020	3	Disagree	4	Neutral	3	31	3-5years
30000021	2	Neutral	3	Agree	2	29	more than 10 years
30000022	4	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	37	3-5years
30000023	1	Agree	2	Neutral	3	20	1-2years
30000024	2	Neutral	3	Agree	2	23	5-10 years
30000025	3	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	33	more than 10 years
30000026	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	37	3-5years
30000027	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	34	more than 10 years
30000028	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	41	5-10 years
30000029	4	Disagree	4	Neutral	3	37	3-5years
30000030	4	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	43	more than 10 years
30000031	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	46	5-10 years
30000032	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	44	more than 10 years

Dot Mailer ID	Qu.9a Please choose one from the scale below that best describes your view before you started attending the fresh expressions?	9a SCORE	Qu.9b Please choose one from the scale below that best describes your view now, you have been attending the fresh expressions?	9b SCORE	9b-9a
26890695	Not interested	0	Help me to live like Jesus	6	6
26897177	Not interested	0	Help me to live like Jesus	6	6
26898648	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Help me to live like Jesus	6	2
27103410	Christians are ok	1	Help me to live like Jesus	6	5
27171131	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Help me to live like Jesus	6	2
27252782	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	0
27318115	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Help me to live like Jesus	6	2
27329165	Jesus could be for me	3	Help me to live like Jesus	6	3
27347899	Not interested	0	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	4
27559483	Jesus is interesting	2	Help me to live like Jesus	6	4
27559900	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
27560431	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
27560703	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
27561432	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Help me to live like Jesus	6	2
27561159	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
27561912			Help me to live like Jesus	6	
27562895	I'll turn to Jesus	5	Help me to live like Jesus	6	1
27564975	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
27568977	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Help me to live like Jesus	6	2
27571424			Help me to live like Jesus	6	
27572232	Christians are ok	1	Help me to live like Jesus	6	5
27571510	Jesus is interesting	2	I'll turn to Jesus	5	3
27586466	Christians are ok	1	I'll turn to Jesus	5	4
27563583	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
27619881	Christians are ok	1	Help me to live like Jesus	6	5
27621540	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4			
27621728	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
27621904	Jesus could be for me	3	Help me to live like Jesus	6	3
27655670	Jesus could be for me	3	Help me to live like Jesus	6	3
27932562	I'll turn to Jesus	5	Help me to live like Jesus	6	1
27933049	Jesus is interesting	2	Help me to live like Jesus	6	4
27933311	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
27933484	I'll turn to Jesus	5	I'll turn to Jesus	5	0
27933653	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
27933784	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
27933883	Christians are ok	1	Help me to live like Jesus	6	5
27934005	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Help me to live like Jesus	6	2
27934152	Jesus is interesting	2	Jesus is interesting	2	0
30000002	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
30000001	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
27649078	Christians are ok	1	Help me to live like Jesus	6	5
28252491	Help me to live like Jesus	6		6	0
28253152	Help me to live like Jesus	6		6	0
28253731	I'll turn to Jesus	5		5	0
28254909	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Help me to live like Jesus	6	2
28253381	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Help me to live like Jesus	6	2
28259361	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
28261891	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
28263288	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	0
28322966	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0

Dot Mailer ID	Qu.9a Please choose one from the scale below that best describes your view before you started attending the fresh expressions?	9a SCORE	Qu.9b Please choose one from the scale below that best describes your view now, you have been attending the fresh expressions?	9b SCORE	9b-9a
28884761					
29087853	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Help me to live like Jesus	6	2
30000003	Christians are ok	1	I'll turn to Jesus	5	4
30000004	Not interested	0	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	4
30000005	Christians are ok	1	Help me to live like Jesus	6	5
30000006	Not interested	0	I'll turn to Jesus	5	5
30000007	Not interested	0	Help me to live like Jesus	6	6
30000008	Christians are ok	1	Help me to live like Jesus	6	5
30000009	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Help me to live like Jesus	6	2
30000010	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
30000011	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	0
30000012	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Help me to live like Jesus	6	2
30000013	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
30000014	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	0
30000015	Christians are ok	1	Help me to live like Jesus	6	5
30000016	Christians are ok	1	Help me to live like Jesus	6	5
30000017	Not interested	0	I'll turn to Jesus	5	5
30000018	Jesus is interesting	2	Help me to live like Jesus	6	4
30000019	Jesus is interesting	2	Help me to live like Jesus	6	4
30000020	Jesus is interesting	2	Help me to live like Jesus	6	4
30000021	Jesus could be for me	3	I'll turn to Jesus	5	2
30000022	Jesus is interesting	2	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	2
30000023	Jesus could be for me	3	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	1
30000024	Jesus is interesting	2	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	2
30000025	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	I'll turn to Jesus	5	1
30000026	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Help me to live like Jesus	6	2
30000027	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Help me to live like Jesus	6	2
30000028	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	I'll turn to Jesus	5	1
30000029	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0
30000030	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	0
30000031	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	Jesus is worth taking seriously	4	0
30000032	Help me to live like Jesus	6	Help me to live like Jesus	6	0

Dot Mailer ID	Qu.10.1 My faith/spirituality involved all of my life. 2	10.1 SCORE	Qu.10.2 You should seek God's guidance when making every important decision. 2	10.2 SCORE	Qu.10.3 In my life I experienced the presence of the Divine. 2	10.3 SCORE	Qu.10.4 My faith/spirituality sometimes restricted my actions. 2
26890695	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
26897177	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Neutral
26898648	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree
27103410	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
27171131	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Neutral
27252782	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree
27318115	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
27329165	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
27347899	Strongly Agree	5			Strongly Agree	5	Agree
27559483	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
27559900	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
27560431	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree
27560703	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Neutral
27561432	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
27561159	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
27561912	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
27562895	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
27564975	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
27568977	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
27571424	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree
27572232	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree
27571510	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
27586466	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
27563583	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree
27619881	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
27621540	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Disagree
27621728	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Agree	4	Neutral
27621904	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
27655670	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
27932562	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
27933049	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
27933311	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
27933484	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
27933653	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Strongly Agree
27933784	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	
27933883	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
27934005	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
27934152	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
30000002	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
30000001	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
27649078	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
28252491	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree
28253152	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
28253731	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
28254909	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree
28253381	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree	4	Neutral
28259361	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Neutral	3	Strongly Disagree
28261891	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
28263288	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree
28322966	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Strongly Agree

Dot Mailer ID	Qu.10.1 My faith/spirituality involved all of my life. 2	10.1 SCORE	Qu.10.2 You should seek God's guidance when making every important decision. 2	10.2 SCORE	Qu.10.3 In my life I experienced the presence of the Divine. 2	10.3 SCORE	Qu.10.4 My faith/spirituality sometimes restricted my actions. 2
28884761							
29087853	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree
30000003	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Disagree
30000004	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Agree
30000005	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
30000006	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
30000007	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Neutral
30000008	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
30000009	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
30000010	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree
30000011	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
30000012	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
30000013	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree
30000014	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Disagree
30000015	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Neutral
30000016	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree
30000017	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Strongly Agree
30000018	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
30000019	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
30000020	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
30000021	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree
30000022	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
30000023	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
30000024	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Neutral
30000025	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree
30000026	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
30000027	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree
30000028	Neutral	3	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree
30000029	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree
30000030	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree
30000031	Agree	4	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree
30000032	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Disagree

Dot Mailer ID	10.4 SCORE	Qu.10.5 Nothing is as important to me as serving God as best I know how. 2	10.5 SCORE	Qu.10.6 I try hard to carry my spirituality/faith over into all my other dealings in life. 2	10.6 SCORE	Qu.10.7 My spiritual beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life. 2	10.7 SCORE
26890695	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
26897177	3	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
26898648	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5
27103410	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27171131	3	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
27252782	4	Agree	4	Disagree	2	Neutral	3
27318115	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27329165	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27347899	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27559483	1	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27559900	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27560431	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Neutral	3
27560703	3	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27561432	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4
27561159	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27561912	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4
27562895	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27564975	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27568977	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27571424	2	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27572232	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27571510	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
27586466		Agree	4	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5
27563583	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
27619881	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27621540	2	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27621728	3	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Agree	4
27621904	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27655670	4	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27932562	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
27933049	1	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
27933311	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27933484	1	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27933653	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27933784		Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27933883	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27934005	1	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree	4
27934152	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000002	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000001	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
27649078	1	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
28252491	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
28253152	4	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
28253731	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
28254909	4	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
28253381	3	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
28259361	1	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Disagree	1	Strongly Agree	5
28261891	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
28263288	4	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
28322966	5	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5

Dot Mailer ID	10.4 SCORE	Qu.10.5 Nothing is as important to me as serving God as best I know how. 2	10.5 SCORE	Qu.10.6 I try hard to carry my spirituality/faith over into all my other dealings in life. 2	10.6 SCORE	Qu.10.7 My spiritual beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life. 2	10.7 SCORE
28884761							
29087853	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000003	2	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000004	4	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Neutral	3
30000005	1	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000006	1	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000007	3	Neutral	3	Agree	4	Agree	4
30000008	1	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000009	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000010	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
30000011	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000012	1	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000013	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4
30000014	2	Agree	4	Agree	4	Neutral	3
30000015	3	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Neutral	3
30000016	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Neutral	3
30000017	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000018	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000019	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000020	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000021	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree	4
30000022	1	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5
30000023	1	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5
30000024	3	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4
30000025	1	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000026	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000027	2	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000028	5	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Strongly Agree	5
30000029	4	Agree	4	Agree	4	Agree	4
30000030	4	Strongly Agree	5	Agree	4	Agree	4
30000031	4	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5
30000032	2	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5	Strongly Agree	5

Dot Mailer ID	Qu.10.8 It doesn't matter so much what I believe as long as I lead a moral life. 2	10.8 SCORE	Qu.10.9 Although I am a spiritual person, I refuse to let spiritual considerations influence my everyday affairs. 2	10.9 SCORE	Qu.10.10 Although I believe in my faith, I feel there are many more important things in life. 2	10.10 SCORE	10 SUM	Qus. 10-7
26890695	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	47	29
26897177	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	48	32
26898648	Neutral	3	Disagree	4	Neutral	3	42	7
27103410	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	32
27171131	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	39	-3
27252782	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	37	5
27318115	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	49	16
27329165	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	19
27347899	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	43	17
27559483	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	46	19
27559900	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	49	1
27560431	Neutral	3	Neutral	3	Agree	2	34	4
27560703	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	47	0
27561432	Strongly Disagree	5	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	46	18
27561159	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	7
27561912	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Disagree	4	46	13
27562895	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	21
27564975	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	9
27568977	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	26
27571424	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	46	24
27572232	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	44	19
27571510	Strongly Disagree	5	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	43	7
27586466	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	40	11
27563583	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	40	0
27619881	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	27
27621540	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	42	1
27621728	Strongly Disagree	5	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	39	0
27621904	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	27
27655670	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Disagree	4	47	23
27932562	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	Agree	2	41	8
27933049	Strongly Agree	1	Strongly Agree	1	Strongly Agree	1	30	-10
27933311	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	49	0
27933484	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	46	0
27933653	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	49	4
27933784	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	45	16
27933883	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	14
27934005	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Neutral	3	40	-1
27934152	Neutral	3	Disagree	4	Agree	2	43	7
30000002	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	2
30000001	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	0
27649078	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	46	26
28252491	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	44	0
28253152	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	Disagree	4	46	4
28253731	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	48	3
28254909	Strongly Disagree	5	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	46	5
28253381	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	46	4
28259361	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Neutral	3	38	2
28261891	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	0
28263288	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	44	4
28322966	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	46	6

Dot Mailer ID	Qu.10.8 It doesn't matter so much what I believe as long as I lead a moral life. 2	10.8 SCORE	Qu.10.9 Although I am a spiritual person, I refuse to let spiritual considerations influence my everyday affairs. 2	10.9 SCORE	Qu.10.10 Although I believe in my faith, I feel there are many more important things in life. 2	10.10 SCORE	10 SUM	Qus. 10-7
28884761							0	
29087853	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	43	3
30000003	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	42	10
30000004	Disagree	4	Neutral	3	Agree	2	32	13
30000005	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	46	30
30000006	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	46	30
30000007	Agree	2	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	35	19
30000008	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	46	31
30000009	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	47	18
30000010	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	42	15
30000011	Agree	2	Agree	2	Disagree	4	42	34
30000012	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	46	10
30000013	Agree	2	Agree	2	Disagree	4	38	0
30000014	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	35	-3
30000015	Disagree	4	Neutral	3	Disagree	4	39	19
30000016	Agree	2	Strongly Agree	1	Neutral	3	35	7
30000017	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	Disagree	4	47	30
30000018	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	21
30000019	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	20
30000020	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	50	19
30000021	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	43	14
30000022	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	45	8
30000023	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	44	24
30000024	Agree	2	Agree	2	Neutral	3	35	12
30000025	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	46	13
30000026	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	47	10
30000027	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	44	10
30000028	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	47	6
30000029	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Neutral	3	39	2
30000030	Disagree	4	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	44	1
30000031	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	Strongly Disagree	5	47	1
30000032	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	Disagree	4	44	0

Appendix VI

Table 1.4 Coding Values - Gross Scores achieving the Criteria (Descending)

Fresh-Expressions-Research-Survey-Stage-1-2

DThM Ref	Qu.5 Before you started going to the fresh expression of church named in question 1, please choose below which of the following most accurately describes your background of any other previous church attendance.	Code A	Qu.6 How many different churches have you attended (regularly)	Code B	Qus. 9b-9a	Code C	Qus. 10-7	Code D	Code Sum
N-P-03	Never been to church or hard	4	1-2	3	5	4	30	3	14
E-DM-01	Never been to church or hard	4	1-2	3	6	4	29	3	14
N-P-05	Never been to church or hard	4	0	4	6	4	19	2	14
E-DM-21	Never been to church or hard	4	1-2	3	5	4	19	2	13
N-P-02	Never been to church or hard	4	0	4	4	3	13	2	13
E-DM-04	Used to go to church but stop	3	3-5	2	5	4	32	4	13
R-P-03	Used to go to church but stop	3	1-2	3	5	4	30	3	13
E-DM-25	how long ago did you stop a church? - I'd stopped going	3	1-2	3	5	4	27	3	13
E-DM-02	Went occasionally to church,	2	1-2	3	6	4	32	4	13
E-DM-29	Used to go to church but stop	3	1-2	3	3	3	23	3	12
N-P-06	Went occasionally to church,	2	3-5	2	5	4	31	4	12
N-P-04	Went occasionally to church,	2	1-2	3	5	4	30	3	12
E-DM-22	Never been to church or hard	4	1-2	3	3	3	7	1	11
R-P-04	Used to go to church but stop	3	3-5	2	4	3	21	3	11
E-DM-23	Used to go to church but stop	3	1-2	3	4	3	11	2	11
N-DM-39	Went occasionally to church,	2	1-2	2	5	4	26	3	11
R-P-01	Went regularly to church, (mo	1	0	4	5	4	19	2	11
R-P-05	Used to go to church but stop	3	3-5	2	4	3	20	2	10
E-DM-10	Used to go to church but stop	3	3-5	2	4	3	19	2	10
R-P-06	Used to go to church but stop	3	3-5	2	4	3	19	2	10
E-DM-17	how long ago did you stop a church? - 2 years	3	3-5	2	1	2	21	3	10
R-P-07	Used to go to church but stop	3	1-2	3	2	2	14	2	10
E-DM-09	Went occasionally to church,	2	1-2	3	4	3	17	2	10
E-DM-31	Went occasionally to church,	2	1-2	3	4	3	-10	1	9
E-DM-36	Went regularly to church, (mo	1	3-5	2	5	4	14	2	9
E-DM-28	Went regularly to church, (mo	1	3-5	2	3	3	27	3	9
E-DM-08	Went regularly to church, (mo	1	1-2	3	3	3	19	2	9
E-DM-19	Went regularly to church, (mo	1	1-2	3	2	2	26	3	9
R-P-09	Went regularly to church, (mo	1	1-2	3	1	2	24	3	9

DThM Ref	Qu.5 Before you started going to the fresh expression of church named in question 1, please choose below which of the following most accurately describes your background of any other previous church attendance.	Code A	Qu.6 How many different churches have you attended (regularly)	Code B	Qus. 9b-9a	Code C	Qus. 10-7	Code D	Code Sum
R-P-08	Used to go to church but st	3	3-5	2	2	2	8	1	8
E-DM-38	Used to go to church but st	3	1-2	3	0	1	7	1	8
E-DM-14	Went occasionally to church,	2	3-5	2	2	2	18	2	8
N-P-07	Went occasionally to church,	2	3-5	2	2	2	18	2	8
R-P-02	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	5	4	7	1	8
E-DM-07	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	2	2	16	2	8
R-P-11	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	1	2	13	2	8
R-P-10	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	2	2	12	2	8

Table 1.5 Coding Values - Gross Scores not achieving the Criteria

(Descending)

Fresh-Expressions-Research-Survey-Stage-1-1-1

DThM Ref	Qu.5 Before you started going to the fresh expression of church named in question 1, please choose below which of the following most accurately describes your background of any other previous church attendance.	Code A	Qu.6 How many different churches have you attended (regularly)	Code B	9b-9a	Code C	Qus. 10-7	Code D	Code Sum
E-DM-06	Used to go to church but st	3	3-5	2	0	1	5	1	7
E-DM-20	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	24	3	7
E-DM-30	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	1	2	8	1	7
E-DM-35	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	0	1	16	2	7
E-DM-37	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	2	2	-1	1	7
N-DM-43	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	2	2	5	1	7
N-P-01	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	4	3	10	1	7
N-P-10	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	2	2	10	1	7
R-P-12	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	2	2	10	1	7
R-P-13	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	2	2	10	1	7
E-DM-03	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	2	2	7	1	6

DThM Ref	Qu.5 Before you started going to the fresh expression of church named in question 1, please choose below which of the following most accurately describes your background of any other previous church attendance.	Code A	Qu.6 How many different churches have you attended (regularly)	Code B	9b-9a	Code C	Qus. 10-7	Code D	Code Sum
E-DM-05	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	2	2	-3	1	6
E-DM-16	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3			13	2	6
E-DM-18	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	0	1	9	1	6
E-DM-32	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	0	1	0	1	6
N-DM-41	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	0	1	4	1	6
N-DM-42	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	0	1	3	1	6
N-DM-44	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	2	2	4	1	6
N-DM-45	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	0	1	2	1	6
N-DM-46	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	0	1	0	1	6
N-DM-50	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	2	2	3	1	6
N-P-08	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	15	2	6
R-P-14	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	1	2	6	1	6
R-P-17	Went regularly to church, (m	1	1-2	3	0	1	1	1	6
E-DM-12	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	4	1	5
E-DM-13	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	0	1	5
E-DM-15			1-2	3	0	1	7	1	5
E-DM-24	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	0	1	5
E-DM-27	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	0	1	5
E-DM-33	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	0	1	5
E-DM-34	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	4	1	5
E-P-10	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	2	1	5
E-P-9	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	0	1	5
N-DM-47	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	4	1	5
N-P-11	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	0	1	5
R-P-15	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	2	1	5
R-P-16	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	1	1	5
R-P-18	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2	0	1	0	1	5
E-DM-26	Went regularly to church, (m	1	3-5	2			1	1	4
N-DM-40	Went regularly to church, (m	1	6+	1	0	1	0	1	4
N-DM-48	Went regularly to church, (m	1	6+	1	0	1	6	1	4
N-P-09			3-5	2	0	1	0	1	4
N-P-12	Went regularly to church, (m	1	6+	1	0	1	-3	1	4
E-DM-11	Went regularly to church, (m	1			0	1	1	1	3

DThM Ref	Qu.5 Before you started going to the fresh expression of church named in question 1, please choose below which of the following most accurately describes your background of any other previous church attendance.	Code A	Qu.6 How many different churches have you attended (regularly)	Code B	9b-9a	Code C	Qus. 10-7	Code D	Code Sum
N-DM-49	how long ago did you stop attending church? - I dont fit any category and 6 is not clear what you mean. I think you may be referring to joint membership people. What about people who drop in and out of faith based activities that are not churches. eg. Maranatha community. Faith and spirituality affecting actions could also be taken a number of ways, hence neutral in my answer. Second question from end not clear neither, Q9 could do with some more options as I did not fit any box.	3							3

Appendix VII

Durham University and Fresh Expressions Research Survey – Stage 2

Introductory Notes

This is the second stage following on from your completed survey and seeks to understand more about your faith journey from your answers in stage 1. This will be a recorded informal interview, which is in your control. These questions will help you explain and explore what: began and helped your journey in coming to faith in Jesus Christ. As in Stage 1, no details will be passed on or used for any other purpose without written permission. A transcript will be produced of the interview. All information will be stored securely in accordance with Durham University Ethics Board requirements.

The following questions may take as long or as short as you feel necessary to answer them but as a rough guide the whole interview will be somewhere between 20 and 40 minutes. Once again I am very grateful for your willingness to participate (as indicated in the Stage 1 survey) and for your time today.

Many thanks, Stephen Lindridge

(National Methodist Missioner for Fresh Expressions 2009-2015 & Durham University Postgraduate Part-time Student)

Stage 1 – Reference No.

By participating in this survey you are consenting that the information you give may be used in this research and published for the learning and development of others.

[if not agreed participation will not be possible]

Decline / Agree (please sign)

Question A

Thanks so much for your time today. To ease into our conversation, tell me a little about yourself and where you are at in life at present? (e.g. employment, education, any other background information).

Question B This section is to help the research comprehend how you first connected with (name their fresh expression of church).

How did you become connected to the fresh expression of church?

Question C

From your Survey response the change between your answers in question 7 and 10 are quite dramatic. [Or] There's a big change between before you went to the Fresh Expression (insert the name) and now.

- i. What happened to make that change? (tell me how you came to faith in Jesus)
- ii. What would you say helped you the most along that journey? [use Stage 2 Interview Supplement Sheet if helpful]

Question D

- i. Coming to faith in Jesus Christ happened...(tick selected choice below)

Instantly for me (y)	Gradually over time (x)	Still exploring what that means (z)

[Depending upon the answer above go to the next relevant section]

(x only)

- ii. What kind of time scale would you describe for your account of coming to faith in Jesus? (circle selected choice)

Less than a month	1-3 months	4-6 months	7-12months
1-2years	3-5years	5-10 years	more than 10 years

(x only)

- iii. What most helped you come to faith over that time?

(y only)

iv. Please describe when and how this happened?

(y only)

v. In this instant, what most helped you to decide to follow Jesus?

(z only)

vi. What is helping you to explore what it means to follow Jesus?

Question E

We are all different and the way we discover who Jesus is, and what that means for our lives, can begin in a variety of uniquely diverse ways.

That said there is substantial research that points to four generic dimensions that help people to connect with the Gospel. In the questions 7 & 10 from survey 1, they imply these influences changes of;

- thoughts, i.e. what you believe or understand (cognitive),

- of behaviour (changes in actions),

- of experience (things that you felt that brought a change),

- and though it is not explicit, it is evident the relationship to the people in the fresh expression has brought some degree of change for you, in your sense of belonging or commitment to the group.

So in the light of this, please read the following four statements and share which you feel most influenced your coming to faith in Jesus. If there is anything you do not understand, please feel free to ask.

Belief - Some people through the centuries have come to believe in the truth about Jesus before they actually know it through a relationship with Him. Whether reading the Bible or hearing a message (testimony, sermon or article) they have engaged with who Jesus is as God's Son and started to believe in Him.

Behaviour - Some people connect not through the cognitive words but through observing the actions of Christians. Their service in the world draws a curiosity that leads to inquiry. Love of God found in outward action often draws more attention to the Gospel than words. Whether acts of kindness, justice, service or stewardship of the earth, doing things that are often counter cultural (i.e. not being selfish but caring for others) creates the opportunity to see Christ at work in the world today.

Belonging - For many people they find Jesus through a friend or a circle of friends to which they belong first and as relationships strengthen so the individual is drawn closer to Jesus and begins to seek Him for themselves. Though this might sound very similar to the above observation of behaviour it is much more relationally based and one might say it is through the faith of the group or individual, that acts as a sort of surrogate to give new life in Christ to them. For many people who come to faith in Jesus this way, it is important to recognise that their belief, behaviour and/or experience of Christian faith may often not form part of their value system initially but they do like belonging to a group of people or church who care about them.

Experience - Many people unconnected with the church are spiritually seeking and have all kinds of experiences in which God meets them, whether in their physical or emotional needs, naturally or supernaturally. Through these experiences of the Holy Spirit (ordinary and extra ordinary encounters with Jesus), people can respond to God's love with no real beliefs in place, without belonging to a group of believers, or without any behavioural influence in their values or practice. However it is through the experience that something of the reality of God meets their life in a tangible way and enriches or blesses them. From these moments as the reality of God breaks into their lives, the opportunity to respond is made, seeking some measure of a relationship with God.

Please circle the most relevant choice below but feel free to circle more than one statement or all, or none of the four statements.

Belief was the strongest feature of my coming to faith.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

Behaviour played the dominant part of my coming to faith.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

Belonging was of primary importance to me in coming to faith.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

Experience was the most significant thing for me coming to faith.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

If you did not mark any please explain what was the most significant influence in your coming to faith?

--

Question F What currently gets in the way or makes it difficult for you in following Jesus?

--

Question G i. How likely are you to encourage others to help them find Jesus Christ?

Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Uncertain	Likely	Very Likely
---------------	----------	-----------	--------	-------------

Question G ii. How likely are you to recommend the Fresh Expressions to someone else as a good place to help them achieve meeting Christ?

Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Uncertain	Likely	Very Likely
---------------	----------	-----------	--------	-------------

Thank you so much for your time today and it was really great to hear your story.

NB.

If not previously covered in the Introductory Question, then ask...

Qu. What part (if any) has your cultural and/or educational background played in your journey to faith in Christ? [Looking for an open response through their narrative]

Ethnicity / Cultural background	
Education/Qualifications	Y / N

2 – Interview Supplement Sheet

What was it that helped you stay at the Fresh Expression? Code :

The following table is to explore what helped you to stay connected while exploring faith? It may be helpful to read all the options and then tick them appropriately, picking your top options first, then do the rest. If nothing presented applies to you then please insert in the spaces below what was very relevant for you and mark it as requested.

	Very Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Neither	Relevant	Very Relevant
Invited by a friend					
Drawn in by the publicity					
Liked what was happening so went along					
Heard a bit about it and wanted to know more					
The team running it seemed to be good people and I wanted to help					
Wanted to know more about Jesus and Christian faith					
This looked like fun					
My family/friends went and I went with them					
Found what I'd been looking for in a church					
Went by chance, liked it and stayed					
No idea why I'm here					
The community were wonderful. I felt really welcome					
Really liked the leaders					
The people were genuine and had integrity					

Got involved through helping out					
Had a spiritual experience here					
The values taught and encouraged here, impacted my life					
Felt I belonged					

	Very Irrelevant	Irrelevant	Neither	Relevant	Very Relevant
Heard the good news about Jesus for the first time, believed and accepted God's love for me.					
Found healing					
Made new friends					
Experienced 'life-issue' breakthroughs here					
Invited Christ Jesus into my life					
This was a 'safe place'					
Their spiritual practices really helped me					
Set free from past problems					
Loved and cared for					
Accepted and not judged					
Found peace/hope here					
I cannot explain why but I felt I had to go to church					
I needed help and this seemed the right place to ask for it.					

Appendix VIII

Research Advisors

Rev. Professor David Wilkinson, Principal of St John's College, Durham and DThM Supervisor

Rev. Dr. David Goodhew, Vicar of St Barnabas Church, Middlesbrough, England and visiting Fellow of St Johns College, Durham and DThM Supervisor

Rev Canon Dr George Lings, former Director of Research at the Sheffield Centre.

Rev Bob Jackson, Church Growth Consultant and former Archdeacon (2009).

Steve Aisthorpe, Mission Development Worker for the Church of Scotland.

Ruth Pickles, former Methodist Vice President and researcher with Leslie Francis.

Rev. Dr. Philip Richter, Research and author.

Rev. Professor John Drane, Theologian and author

Rev. Dr. Stephen Skuce, District Superintendent, Methodist Church in Ireland, former Director of Research and Principal at Cliff College, Sheffield.

Rev. Dr. Alan Piggot, Director of Research for the Methodist Church in Great Britain

Dr. Hamish Leese, former Researcher for the Methodist Church (2011-18)

Toby Scott, Methodist Church Media Director and online surveys (2004-2016)

Appendix IX

Mission Shaped Ministry, Unit B10 Personal Evangelism, Teacher Notes

An explanation of the Playstation Model

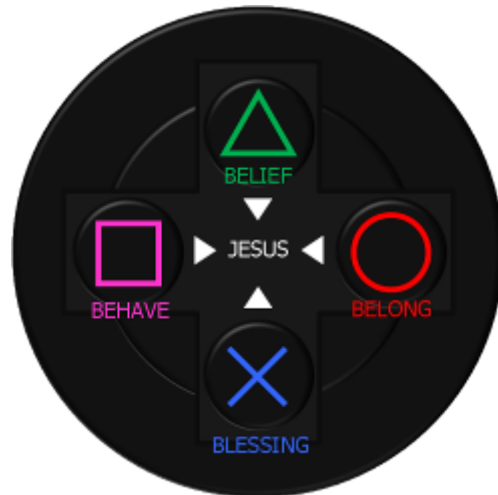
Any journey of faith has four basic elements, which can be summarised as belong, believe, behave and blessing. These may already be familiar to you. In most cases these four emerge sequentially but each of them can lead directly to Jesus. They then go on to define our continued life as a disciple of Christ.

Because the four areas do so often unfold in sequence, our understanding of this process can offer us an excellent guide for how to take part – or even help lead – in other people’s faith journey. It also guides our expectations of how other people’s faith journeys ought to progress.

So often in the past we have expected people to behave first, then believe and only at this point to belong. And blessing was often not considered at all! But if we understand these four areas and work harder at helping people to belong, we are likely to see much more of the faith journey unfold and be more aware of how and when we ought to respond.

These four areas then go on to define our continued life as a follower of Christ. Therefore, as we seek to engage in these four areas for ourselves, it shapes our personal discipleship. As we seek to engage in these areas for others, it shapes our personal evangelism. Let us consider each of the four areas briefly.

The diagram we are going to follow as we unpack these four areas corresponds to the four control buttons on a PlayStation video game handset. This is not just because it is an iconic image of today’s culture... in each case the shape of the PlayStation controller relates to the principle at hand to help reinforce it visually.



The Circle = Belonging

MH4



Many people find Jesus through a circle of friends to which they belong and as relationships strengthen so the individual is drawn closer to Jesus and begins to seek Him for themselves. Belief,

behaviour and blessing are often not part of many not-yet-Christians' value systems but they do like belonging to this group of people at church who care about them.

The Triangle = Believing

MH5



The use of a triangle here aptly denotes belief born from origins of the Trinity. Many people come to believe in the truth about Jesus before they actually know it through a relationship with Him. Grace Davie (in her book *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging*, Blackwell, 1994) and Pete Ward (in his book *Liquid Church*, Carlisle, 2002) have both worked on this dynamic of belief without belonging.

The Square = Behaving.

MH5



How many times has the Christian been marked out as a 'square peg in a round world' because they want to conform to the Kingdom's way and not the depravity of the world's way? (See John 17.16-17, Romans 8.29, Philippians 3.21, 1 Peter 1.14) This approach is undoubtedly a smaller number statistically.

The X = Blessing into relationship

MH5

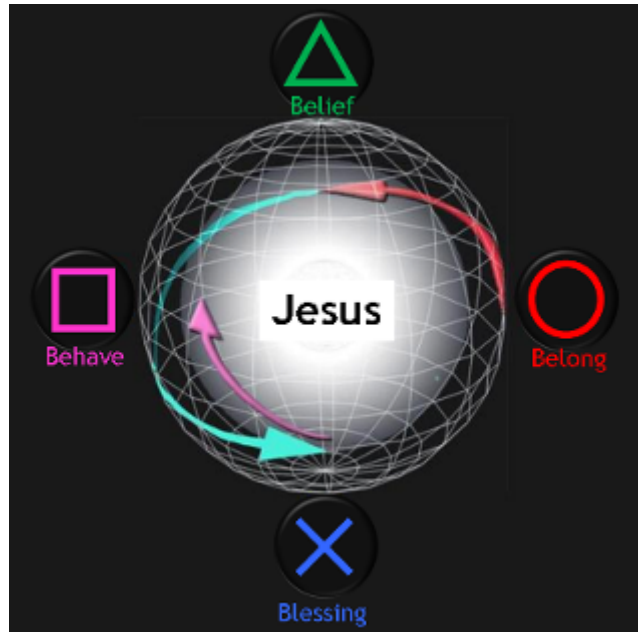


We denote love with an 'X' in correspondence. Hence by the work of the Holy Spirit through ordinary and extraordinary encounters with Jesus, people can respond to God's love with no real beliefs in place, without belonging to a group of believers or without even being moral in their values and practice. However, it is through the blessing they experience something of the reality of God. God breaks into their lives and they respond to journey towards a relationship with Jesus. Consider the woman at the well in John 4 and the concepts offered by John Wimber in *Power Evangelism*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1985 as examples.

Consider these four elements fitting into a three dimensional sphere, with each element held at the four polar points. The very edge of the sphere represents the opposite extreme of the centre. If the very centre is Christ and the perfection of behaviour, belonging, belief and blessing, then the inference is as one journeys towards Christ we are transformed into His likeness. The renewing of our minds affects the rest of our lives (Romans

12.2). Hence we can create an image that visually allows anyone to begin anywhere with any appreciation of the four themes.

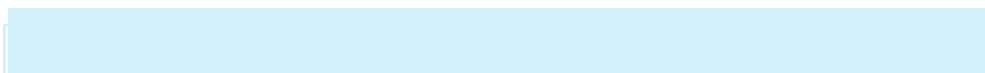
The significance of this infers a very non-judgmental approach to the development of discipleship in a process of evangelism and builds a strategy that looks at the long-term aim, i.e. a true disciple of Jesus Christ. In recent years this discipleship has often been



a weak point in the church. Moreover, conversion was perceived as an end in itself, rather than being a journey that has no end in this life.

Entering the Kingdom has no defined territory or boundary. The moment of response can appear anywhere in the sphere, where continued revelation produces fresh daily challenges of choice to either journey toward Jesus or not. As disciples, the sum of our Christian experiences and life choices lead generally towards Christ but there are life moments when the opposite direction is taken. The death of a loved one, a bad choice in behaviour, dryness of faith, could all cause our journey to be away from Christ. That journeying may have a specific direction in our model. It may reflect a diminishing level in one or more elements but perhaps not all four.

It is usually through an accepting, understanding and nurturing church environment that any such experiences can be overcome and the journeying towards Jesus encouraged again. The key things are wisdom, patience and persistence, whilst recognising these advancements will not happen overnight. Therefore any good contemporary strategy for evangelism should hold a right expectation and a long-term perspective in nurturing people to faith and discipleship.



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