



General Synod hears.

More than 50,000 people are attending non-traditional church gatherings thanks to the success of a drive to attract worshippers with no previous contact with the Christian faith, the General Synod heard today.

Members of the Church's national assembly gave their backing to an expansion of 'Fresh Expressions' churches – new forms of church gatherings meeting often in venues such as cafes, community centres and pubs.

Fresh expressions churches now account for 15% of congregations in the Church of England and are estimated to attract more than 50,000 worshippers, the equivalent to the size of two new dioceses, the General Synod was told.

Mark Sheard, Chair of the Ministry and Public Affairs Council of the Church of England, leading a debate at the General Synod said: "I am firmly of the belief that Fresh Expressions of church is one of the most significant ways in which we are seeing the Kingdom Come – which after all is what we pray for so fervently day by day.

"What we are witnessing here is a real and exceptional movement of the Spirit."

The movement was given the backing of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, who said: "This is moving the heart of our mission to where it should be – recognising Jesus beyond the borders of the institutional Church."

As part of plans to boost the movement, the Church of England is planning for up to 6,000 'pioneer' ministers within the next decade– both lay and ordained - to serve fresh expressions churches.

Members heard a presentation from Heather Cracknell, Head of Development for the Fresh Expressions for the Church of England on plans to give further support for the growth of new forms of church gatherings in 10 dioceses.

She said: "I would argue that Fresh Expressions is the most influential missionary movement of the last 50 years, and a significant means of allowing our church to thrive now and in the future."

The General Synod voted to approve a new motion celebrating the success of the Fresh Expressions movement and encouraging every parish and diocese to be part of the movement.

Here is the wording of the motion that was approved by the General Synod:

That this Synod:

- a. celebrate this new missionary movement of the last 20 years and the impact made on the Church and society through the planting of thousands of fresh expressions of church since the Mission Shaped Church report in 2004.

encourage every parish and diocese to be part of this movement forming new disciples and new congregations through a contextual approach to mission with the unreached in their community.

- c. call on the Archbishops' Council to bring to General Synod an update on the progress of the new project being led by the Head of Development for fresh expressions to develop fresh expressions in ten dioceses by July 2021.'

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/general-synod-backs-expansion-new-forms-church-gatherings>