

MISSION:
~~IMPOSSIBLE~~

WEEK **Five**

***God's mission
awaits if we choose
to accept it.***



Recap

- What is the *missio Dei*?
- Who are the “Athenians” that we are called to serve?
(Hint: there were four groups.)

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Missio Dei...

We have seen in the previous weeks that God is at work in the world, moving in the lives of people even in they don't use spiritual or religious language to describe it.

We have been asked to be “divine detectives” to discern where God is at work and have looked at four categories of people we are called to serve.

But how are we connected as a church to the society that we now find ourselves in?

Choluteca bridge....visual parable

- The church is **no longer at the centre** of a uniform and clearly recognized culture (Christendom).
- We recognize a **growing gap** between where much of the church is and where much of our society now is.



The good news is that God is at work in the river...the river is full of “Athenians.”

- We need to discern **WHERE** God is already at work in the world and run to catch up.
- Remember that the mission of God is to bring **ALL** of humanity and creation back into right relationship with God.



Let's try to follow God's lead and get wet in the river.
We are going to now look at different ways of being church
to navigate the river.

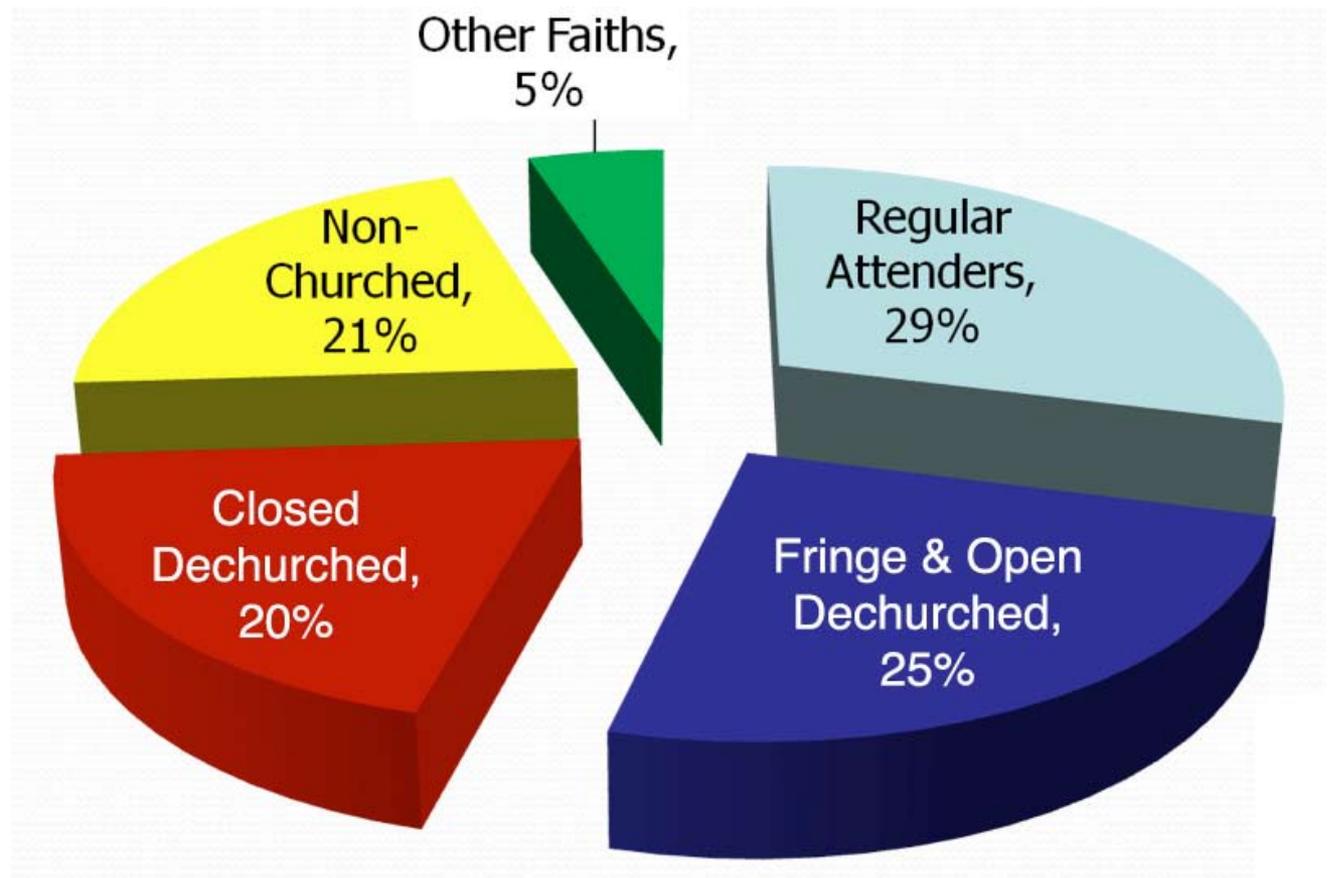


Attractional church

A style of church that operates on the assumption that many people will still come to the church...that a healthy church will “attract people.”



Referring to the quadrant we introduced last week, which of our four groups will this style of church potentially reach?



Attractional church

- Can potentially reach the fringe and open dechurched.
- Operates on the principle, “If YOU come to US we will make it worth your while...promise!”





- Experience tells us that healthy attractational churches place high priority on
 1. warm welcome
 2. transformational preaching
 3. engaging worship
 4. opportunities for all ages to learn who Jesus is.



Discuss

- Regardless of your theological or liturgical tradition, would you describe your parish church as a healthy “attractional church?” Why or why not?
- Which of those four priorities of a healthy attractional church do you feel could be strengthened in your parish?



Missional church

Mission church is a style of church that operates on the assumption that many people will **not** be naturally attracted to a healthy church and so the church needs to go where they are.

- Which of our four groups can this way of being church potentially reach?

Both...and

- Missional church can serve those in our communities that healthy attractional church cannot (non-churched).
This is good news.
- Many people in our communities can still be reached by healthy attractional church (fringe, open dechurched).
This too is good news!



- Local churches are called to have both healthy attractional and missional aspects.

God was willing to go to extraordinary lengths to connect with us. What lengths will **we** go to in order to connect with those in the river?



This is the challenging question to have in your mind as we now read Philippians 2:5–9.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the very **nature of a servant**, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he **humbled himself** and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

Discuss

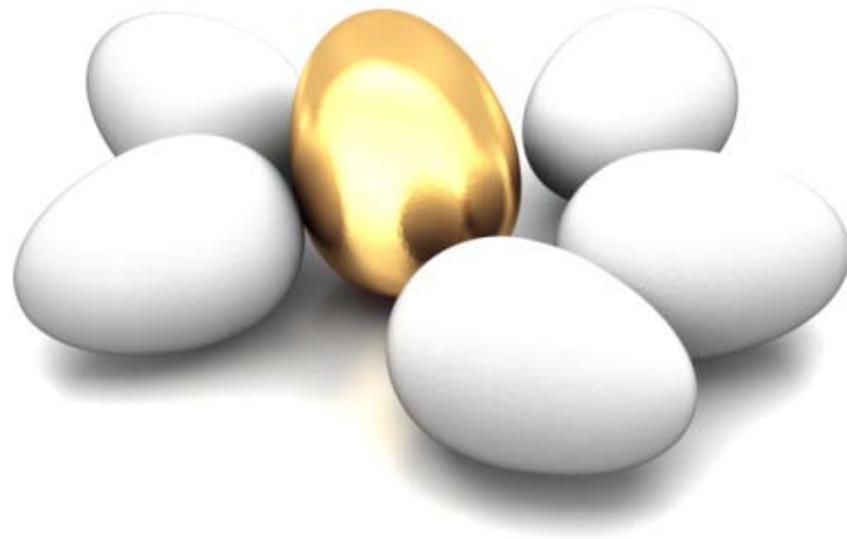
- We are called to live lives that reflect Jesus. What did Jesus give up when he became incarnate? What attitude did Jesus embrace when he embraced our humanity?
- Jesus is God's way of completing God's mission to the world. How might our churches be called to give some things up, and embrace certain attitudes, as Jesus did?
- How far are we willing to go to “become incarnate” in the lives of those in our local communities?

Both...and

- All parishes are called to be shaped by the *missio Dei*. Being missional is not optional—it is of the essence of church, not merely an attribute of some churches. Being missional is not what “some parishes do.” We are all called to join in God’s work in the world.



- Regardless of our theological, liturgical or historical background, all parishes are called to be shaped for mission. Being missional will look different in different contexts.



One way to respond to the work of God in the world is to re-imagine church. Fresh Expressions of church are **one** way to be missional. This is the official definition from the Church of England:



- “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**.
- It will **come into being** through the 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.”

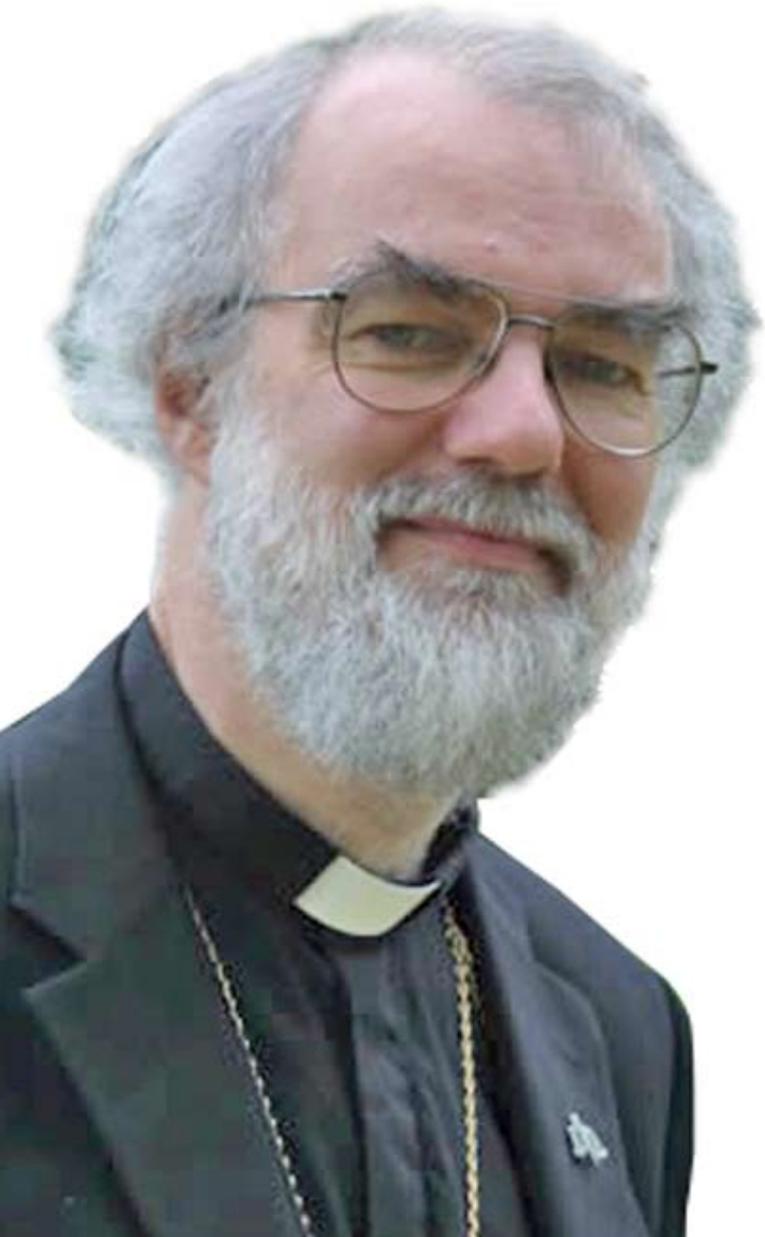
Dig a little deeper into FX

- Fresh Expressions is not a new program, to be potentially added to the already busy schedule of events in a parish.
- Fresh Expressions is one way to be missional as a church. It is about re-imagining church in our post-Christendom culture.



- Exploring Fresh Expressions of church may be the way **your** parish is called to be missional.



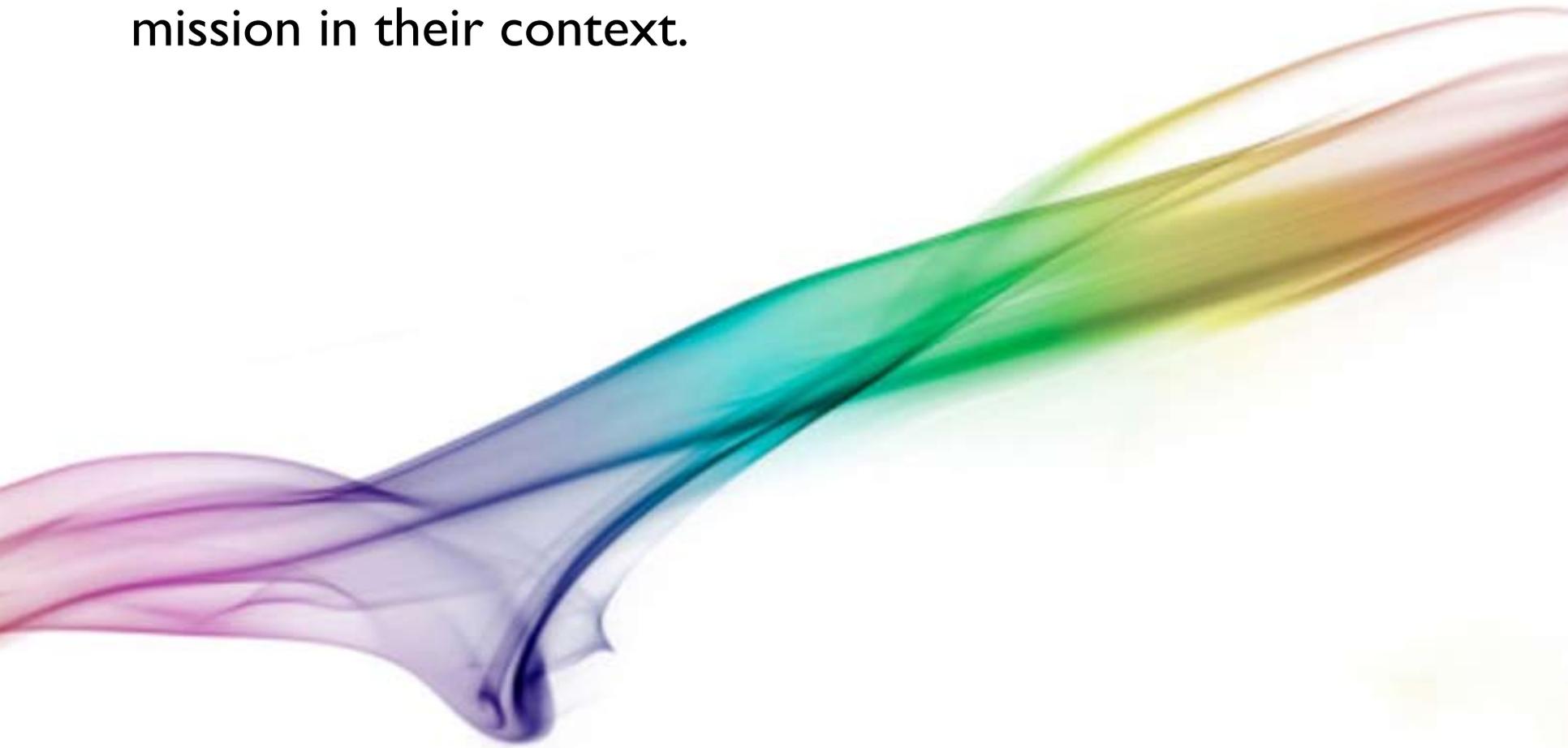


Room for everyone....

“The mixed economy church is where Fresh Expressions of Church and inherited churches exist alongside each other within the same denomination in relationships of mutual respect and support.”

—*Archbishop Rowan Williams*

- Not all parishes are called to start a Fresh Expression of church, but ALL parishes are called to be shaped for mission in their context.





Next steps...

mission possible!

- Walk around your **neighbourhood** with a team and pray that God would show you where God is at work and how you could join in.

- Prayerfully ask:
WHO is God calling us to serve:
Fringe/Open dechurched/Non-churched?
- And then ask, how can we shape our ministry to reflect this call? Might it be a Fresh Expression of church? If not, what would it look like for our church to be shaped for mission?

Closing prayer

“Gracious God, we thank you for the privilege of serving you as the church in the world, of being your people, chosen and holy. Thank you that you go before us preparing the hearts and minds of people in our communities to hear the good news about Jesus. Open our eyes to see where you are calling us to re-imagine church so we can be faithful to your mission in the world. We ask for this courage in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Food for thought....

Thanks so much for your time over the past five weeks. We hope that this course will start (or continue) a conversation in your church about what it means to be shaped for mission in our post-Christian culture.

We would encourage you to have a look at two websites to explore more:

www.freshexpressions.org.uk to see what our sisters and brothers in Christ are doing in the U.K.

www.freshexpressions.ca to see what our brothers and sisters are doing in our own backyard.

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