

# A breath of fresh air

## Fresh Expressions not an either/or proposition, says Canadian team leader

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Editor

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The Rev. Canon Nick Brotherwood  
Photo: Art Babych

See video interview: [www.youtube.com/watch](http://www.youtube.com/watch)

There's nothing stale about the Rev. Canon Nick Brotherwood, team leader of Fresh Expressions Canada (See [www.freshexpressions.ca](http://www.freshexpressions.ca)).

A professional rock drummer in the 1970s, Brotherwood is marching to a different beat these days. But it is no less radical.

It's called "fresh expressions" of church and it's a "both/and" addition to traditional expressions of church, insists Brotherwood, who was introduced to General Synod Mon. Jun. 7 by Archbishop Colin Johnson of the diocese of Toronto. Archbishop Johnson, one of a growing number of Canadian bishops who actively support an increased focus on mission-shaped church, is also metropolitan (senior bishop) of the ecclesiastical province of Ontario.

"Nick has a passion for the church and is committed to the health and vitality of congregational life," said Archbishop Johnson, who was clearly delighted to welcome Brotherwood.

What is a Fresh Expressions? According to Brotherwood, "It's not an either/or proposition. It's a response to our changing culture and can run alongside more traditional forms of worship," he told delegates. Importantly, he added, a fresh expression "is established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church. "We need a mission-shaped inherited and traditional church alongside fresh or fresher expressions of church for those who will never be able to relate to our traditional forms of church," explained Brotherwood.

Originating in the Church of England in 2005 (See [www.freshexpressions.org.uk](http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk)) Fresh Expressions has been formally sanctioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. Fresh Expressions Canada is looking at how initiatives in the U.K. might be adapted or prove helpful in various cultures in this country.

“I am talking about change and how we response to change,” said Brotherwood, who is also assistant director of the Institute of Evangelism at Wycliffe College in Toronto. “Do we ignore it or get swept away [by it] or is there a more principled way for us to respond?”

In 2003, Brotherwood and his wife Sue, who have six children, led a team which planted a new church called “Emerge,” focusing on 18-25 year olds in downtown Montreal. Nick continues to pastor this congregation half-time and mentioned his gratitude for the office space provided to him by Bishop Barry Clarke of the diocese of Montreal. (See [www.veoh.com/videos/v3092498nWcK6Mgd](http://www.veoh.com/videos/v3092498nWcK6Mgd))

Importantly, Fresh Expressions provides a tool for delivering the gospel to a culture in which Sundays are used more for soccer practice or shopping than worship. It could take the form of holding services on alternative weekdays or in alternative spaces outside a church. Brotherwood said Fresh Expressions can also be adapted to connect with “networks” of people joined by mutual career and personal interests rather than geography or mere physical proximity.

Fresh Expressions, which have the potential to grow into a mature expression of church, can provide a response to the spiritual hunger of a rapidly changing, electronically connected multicultural Canada. “We need to be respectful of other cultures who express the same core beliefs in different ways,” Brotherwood said. “It’s not about what I like or what ‘we’ like. It will come into being though principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and discipleship.

Examples of Fresh Expressions of church currently taking root in Canada include:

**Church on Tap** (See [www.portcolborneanglican.org/cot.html](http://www.portcolborneanglican.org/cot.html)) in the parish of St. James and St. Brendan, diocese of Niagara, is church in a pub;

**The Jeremiah Project** (See [jeremiahproject.ca](http://jeremiahproject.ca)) is a social justice worship community in Toronto’s west end;

**and Saturday@St. Michael’s** (See [www.wix.com/saturdaysam/welcome](http://www.wix.com/saturdaysam/welcome)) is a new church community in the Anglican Parish of St. Michael and All Angels in St. John’s Nfld. It provides a “Messy Church” experience for children, their parents and other individuals to worship together.

Fresh Expressions Canada has created a curriculum for those parishes interested in becoming more missional. It includes a Vision Day for “complete beginners.” There is also a six-week downloadable course that looks at the changing church and how to forge a more mission-shaped response; and an eight-month course called “Mission-shaped Ministry” that prepares individuals and teams for pioneer ministry.

As of this September, students registering for the Master of Divinity program at Wycliffe College will now have two options: the regular Master of Divinity to become a missional leader of an existing congregation; and the pioneer Master of Divinity to begin new ministries, churches and fresh expressions of church. Both streams have the same foundational courses.

Resources on Fresh Expressions are also available through the Anglican Book Centre. Go to [www.afcanada.com](http://www.afcanada.com), email [info@afcanada.com](mailto:info@afcanada.com) or phone 1-800-265-6397.

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