FOREWORD BY THE BISHOP OF DORCHESTER

As the Bishop who has had the privilege of chairing the Cutting Edge Ministries Steering Group over the past five years I wanted to take the opportunity of thanking all those who have been involved, whether on the Group itself, in the different ministries, or more widely in the Diocese and beyond. What they have given has been quite outstanding and I am deeply grateful to them for their hard work, their prayer and their vision.

As we look back from the perspective of 2008 we have seen the growth of six vibrant new Christian Communities. Each in its own way, like all young trees, remains fragile but, despite our declaration that we were taking risks, and that some might well fail, all have in fact grown and continue to do so.

A particular word of thanks, however, goes to our Project Director and the author of what follows, Angie Paterson. In her self-effacing way she fails to underline in this account just how important her work has been and we owe her a huge debt.

If there is one word of advice that I would add to this account it is in relation to her role: You will need a Project Director – and make sure that you get a good one.

+ Colin Dorchester
Pentecost 2008
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has been a delight and an honour to have been the Project Director for this exciting initiative. It has given me the opportunity to work with some wonderful people both within the Diocese and in the wider church. I have personally learned a great deal and the spiritual depth of those leading the new ministries has been an inspiration.

In writing this account I have reflected on the work of others; namely those leading the ‘projects’. I have tried to do this accurately and sensitively and hope that I have succeeded in this. Inevitably there have been challenges and differing views during the life of this work and the perspective offered in this account is mine alone. Overall the difficulties have been occasional and it has been a privilege to walk alongside these people – Ian Adams, Russell Dewhurst, Penny Joyce, Sam and Yvonne Milligan, Matt Rees and Philip Roderick, during this period.

The Steering Group chaired by +Colin included +Bill Down, Andrew Gear, Stuart Murray-Williams, Rosemary Pearce, Tim Partridge and in the early stages Norman Russell and Stephen Kirkham. They have been a genuine support and encouragement throughout this project and have wrestled with issues and problems as they have arisen. There have been times of celebration and times when we have had to work through difficult questions – all was done prayerfully. Taking a step back from work in which you have been deeply engrossed to write a coherent account of the experience for others to read is never easy. I am indebted to the Steering Group for their help with this too. They have taken the time to read my various drafts and help me clarify things where I have made assumptions.

On behalf of the Diocese my thanks go especially to Stuart Murray-Williams who as a member of the Steering Group external to the Diocese brought a different perspective to guide the thinking. His insights and experience of Fresh Expressions in the wider church have been invaluable.

Finally I am thankful to +Colin who has been there when I have called but has also trusted me to get on with the job.

The Rev’d Angie Paterson
Project Director – Cutting Edge Ministries
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INTRODUCTION

From the outset of the Cutting Edge Project it was agreed that the experience and learning would be written up so that we could share it with others within and beyond the boundaries of the Diocese of Oxford.

There are many stories to tell about this initiative and different journeys that have been travelled in the course of it. Each of the new communities established has its own story to tell. This is my story; the story of the Project Director. There have been three key facets to this work:

- It has been my task to work with the Steering Group to develop the ideas for the work, to coordinate different aspects of the work on their behalf, and to work with the Project Leaders on their behalf.
- In relation to those supported to implement their vision for ministry it has been my task to work with them to try to ensure that they have things in place to give the new communities the best possible chance of coming into being and to move towards being self-sustaining.
- A third aspect of the work has been to build links with those trying to do similar things within the wider church. There has been much shared learning in this area however this report will not focus on that area of the work as it is largely about the Diocese of Oxford and the experience in relation to the Steering Group and the Project Leaders.

At the beginning of this report I have recorded the end of the story so far. In writing I have inevitably recorded problems and concerns but before reading these it is important to know that the end of the story is one of success.

Following this the report works through the progress of the initiative in chronological order. My starting point in this report is actually before I joined the initiative. It is a historical look at how the whole thing came about. Starting at the beginning inevitably means that all the early deliberations and the uncertainties along the way are recorded. Let me say before I start on this process that the overriding feeling as we draw the initiative to a close is that it has been a wonderful experience with the outcome that we have new Christian communities developing slowly and surely. They have touched the lives of over a thousand people in their short life so far and many of their members would say that these ministries have had a significant and positive effect on their spiritual lives. It is a story of Good News and this is what enables me to report the story
in truth. I hope that knowing that it was not all plain sailing will encourage others working in similar ministries to keep going.

The ministries are growing rapidly and each has a website where you can keep track of their activities. I encourage you to look and share in their experience.

The addresses are as follows:
Discovery Days – www.discoverydays.co.uk
mayBe – www.maybe.org.uk
hOME – www.home-online.org
Contemplative Fire – www.contemplativefire.org
i-church – www.i-church.org
JAC – www.jacoutreach.org

So, having set the context I then look at how the vision was put into action. It was during this stage that I came on board. A large part of the report is about getting the projects up and running and the issues that we had to address to enable each to happen. For each project I have summarised the original vision presented to the Steering Group and commented on specific issues relating to them encountered in the very early stages. The next reflection is a year or so into the work when some things had settled down and other issues had arisen.

It was around this time that the national Fresh Expressions initiative was set up. The term ‘fresh expressions’ was given similar meaning to our title of ‘cutting edge ministries.’ Being a national initiative with much publicity it had a direct impact on the work already underway in the Diocese and this is explored in this report.

Having looked at some of the wider and longer term issues that arose as time went on the report finishes by looking at what we have learned and issues that have arisen which might need further exploration.

Inevitably it is a quick skate over the years. Having started our journey before the advent of Fresh Expressions we were often held up as a model. However we learned as we went and made our mistakes along the way. It is my hope, and I know that of the Steering Group too, that our learning may be of value to others embarking on a similar journey.
THE END OF THE STORY

This section summaries the growth and development of each of the ministries by the middle of 2008. It is the end of the story in terms of this piece of work and shows the progress that has been made over the years. Although edited for consistency these summaries are largely in the words of the project leaders. Together the different projects have touched the lives of about 1000 people and many say that they have been very significant in their spiritual lives.

Discovery Days

After four years the 'Discovery Days' project is fully functional at two levels. Firstly as a community resource it offers people a point of engagement through a monthly newsletter which informs them of community events whether it be an Easter Egg hunt, Ladies Pamper Evening or children's event being run by the project. It offers a means by which new activities can be initiated and by which the Residents Association of whom the project leader is the chair, is able to keep residents abreast of estate based needs, building activity and joint efforts such as litter picks etc. The house provided has been pivotal in that new initiatives can be started and gatherings for events such as book groups and study groups are inaugurated in the house. This is particularly vital when there is no community hall or place of meeting for groups as is usual on a new estate. Members of the community comment frequently that there really is a sense of belonging in the community and consider that the project has been the vehicle by which this has been achieved.

From a Christian perspective the project has seen success. There are now six small groups on the estate with membership of just under 60. These groups are for committed Christians, seekers, and those at the early stage of Christian faith, some of whom have been baptised and confirmed recently. These groups also gather for a monthly Pastorate which ensures they feel part of the worshipping community on the estate. They pray regularly for the estate, and are active in setting up the next stage of the process which is to hold 'Cafe Church' style worship locally. This is the next stage in spiritual growth for the estate. On Sunday afternoon JIGSAW also meets weekly with about twenty core families. This interactive seeker style event has been a good gateway to faith. There is a 60 bed Care home where weekly services are held, and monthly communions. The Christian input into the school is welcomed through weekly assemblies, religious education lessons and contribution to the Governing body.
With regard to finance, the working project is now being funded by two individuals, two churches and revenue from events and is therefore self-sufficient other than the house and stipend.

**maybe**

maybe is continuing to evolve as it seeks 'to become a community following in the way of Jesus by prayer and action for a better world now'. The pattern of life is well established: weekly community meal, a rhythm of daily prayer, weekend Eucharist, looking out for our neighbour, engaging with contemporary culture and creative action.

maybe has continued to see around one new person per month becoming part of what we are doing, and there are now three community meals in different locations each week involving around 30 people. The community continues to have a wide age spread - from a few weeks old to pensioner age - with the largest grouping in their 20s and 30s.

The community's leader is employed by the community two days a week in the leadership role, reducing the costs of the community, sharing out the tasks of the community more, and enabling him to get involved more widely in encouraging other new projects like maybe.

**i-Church**

i-church has evolved quite steadily during the period from its conception to the present day. There have been three Web Pastors to date and the Trustees have recently appointed a new Web Pastor and priest-in-charge of i-church to take everything to the next stage in its development. The Bishop of Dorchester together with the other Trustees continues to exercise pastoral oversight of this growing church whilst the Web Pastor and the elected i-church Council manage the day to day business. There are also Moderators for the Forum Discussion Boards.

i-church now has 311 community members from all around the world. People join i-church for many reasons and enjoy a wide range of activity through the new web site launched in April this year. There is an on-line chapel, a café area for live chat plus numerous discussion forums with as many threads as there are members on a very wide variety of topics. There is a shop and a library facility as well as sermons posted regularly. There is an outside area for visitors including a Prayer Board where requests for prayer can be posted.
**Contemplative Fire**

Contemplative Fire has just over 80 Companions on the Way. In September 2008 the community plan to have their annual community weekend and were excited that this would include the celebration of three baptisms and a confirmation. All the baptismal candidates were brought up in atheist homes. Contemplative Fire for all three has been pivotal on their faith journey and formation. The "Exploring Baptism" evenings are really thought-provoking and profound.

Contemplative Fire is divided into three regions: firstly, the area covered by the Dioceses of Oxford and St Albans; secondly, by the Diocese of Ely; thirdly, by the Diocese of Chichester There is also an emergent group in the Diocese of London. In addition, of course, there are individuals and small groups engaged and engaging in places such as Stroud, Exeter, Lincoln, Portsmouth.

The focus upon the nurture of a contemplative discipleship and ministry continues. As the network expands, it also needs to consolidate. The development of equipping and training for group catalysts and leaders is well under way, so as to maintain the high calibre of leadership and oversight which is so important in this work. Skills and gifts in theological, psychological, spiritual and pastoral areas need to be identified and resourced and the Core Team (which comprises three clergy, an Licensed Lay Minister and the Administrator) has this as its primary mandate.

One of the primary areas of outreach currently is through percussion and chant. This is part of the worship, but they are also offered in workshops such as the "Play in Presence: Drum 'n Chant" monthly evenings locally. A fascinating mixture of people attend these evenings from very different spiritual backgrounds, and none. Contemplative Fire is leading four worship sessions at Greenbelt this year and the leader is one of the speakers.

**hOME**

Since it began hOME has ministered to approximately 130 people who have been, at one time or another, part of the Home community. This is made up of a mixture of people who had 'fallen off the edge' of church or previously been a part of another church with a handful having had no prior church background. There are currently 25 members of the Home community.

hOME has been searching for its own property for the last two years but has not found a viable place yet. They hope to open a Centre for Spirituality and the Arts
in East Oxford. Over the time they have developed a much clearer sense of the mission and ministry that God has called them to; that is to share spiritual practices with spiritual seekers in the East Oxford area. They have started StillPoint (www.still-point.org.uk) which is a spirituality and meditation group held on Monday evenings at The Magic Cafe in East Oxford. It is a spirituality group designed specifically for people who would not be interested in coming to church.

Over the last couple of years hOME has become a registered charity and formed themselves as a company with its own trustees. They describe themselves as ‘a small Eucharistic community which has developed an 'ancient-future' spirituality blending ancient spiritual practices with contemporary cultural forms.’

The concern over its financial future remains. The Priest-in-charge of the community is having to cut to half time.

**JAC**

JAC now has regular meetings on Sunday evenings with about an average of 25 people per night attending. These include sung worship, prayer and discussion around the bible passage or on biblical principles. The Sunday evening meeting gives them the opportunity to guide the young people they meet in the other work of JAC, for example on the streets and schools, to a place where they can experience and explore spirituality.

Youth bibles are given out free of charge to all regular new people. Six young people have become Christians and are now looking to be baptized. There is a core group of people who are coming through as leaders. One cell group has now been established out of the Sunday night meetings and another one is about to take off. There is a regular prayer group meeting weekly to support the work. There has become a greater openness to prayer on the streets – so opportunities to pray for people during their detached sessions during the week are opening up.
THE VISION
This section sets Cutting Edge Ministries in context. It looks back at the origins of the idea, the early thinking and discussions at Bishop’s Council; it is essentially about how ‘Cutting Edge Ministries’ came to be. It goes on to look at the process for putting the vision into action from recruiting a Project Director to calling for proposals for projects and setting up the processes to monitor and evaluate initiatives once funded. This section covers what was envisaged - hopes, doubts, and issues identified at the time. Thoughts and comments are included even if they were not deemed relevant at a later stage. This is to make it possible to follow the thinking through and to show what issues were considered.

Early Thinking
In 1998 the Diocese of Oxford launched a widespread internal consultation to develop a Strategy for Evangelism for the decade from 2000 to 2010. After much debate and discussion this was presented under the umbrella title ‘Sharing Life’. It was about shaping every aspect of the common life of the church not just as a diocese but at local and individual level too. In November 2000, Diocesan Synod endorsed the principles, priorities and values of Sharing Life which among other things committed itself to ‘creating new forms of emerging church’. The aim of this was to connect to people, both in their communities and their culture, in new ways. A payment from the Church Commissioners of just over £310,100 spread over a three year period from 2002 enabled the Diocese of Oxford to set up an initiative to help make this a reality.

The money given by the Church Commissioners was primarily for ministry and mission. Bishop’s Council had the task of deciding how best to spend this sum of money. Following discussion in May 2002 it was agreed to use £250,000 to develop some emerging church projects under the working title of ‘Cutting Edge Ministries’ and a small group were tasked to develop the ideas for this.

In July 2002 Bishop Colin presented a paper to Bishop’s Council outlining the plan for the initiative. As he conceived it Cutting Edge Ministries would seek to fund ideas and proposals that set out to create a new Christian community and which would become self-sustaining in their life, finance and ministry within a five to seven year period. The hope was that these new ministries would act as an inspiration to others and that from them some valuable learning would come.
The Plan

In putting forward proposals for the scheme the planning group thought through a number of critical issues which later formed the basis of the scheme including selection, development and monitoring of the proposals that eventually became accepted and funded.

At the heart of the scheme was the creation of new forms of Christian communities which reflected the values of ‘Sharing Life’. Although the term ‘project’ came to be used as a generic term for the proposals put forward, it is important to note that this was simply a shorthand way to refer to them. Projects are often seen as having a clear start and finish whereas this work was seen to be ongoing and, it was hoped, sustainable. However as with a project there was an expectation of the fulfilment of the specific proposal. The term will be used in this way in this paper.

When inviting proposals it was made clear that they would be expected to indicate key aims and objectives. They would need to spell out how they envisaged building sustainability in terms of both people and finance and indeed how the community might develop and replicate itself.

Another critical factor would be the track record of the person proposing the new ministry. They would need to show evidence not only of their creativity and imagination in conceiving the idea but also of their drive and determination in seeing things through. There would also be a need for solid organisational skills including planning and financial management. As it was anticipated that new ministries would become self-sustaining within a five to seven year period business and financial planning were not optional extras but at the heart of what would be required. Whilst all of these may not necessarily be strengths of the individual putting forward the proposal themselves they would need to show appreciation and working understanding of them and how they would ensure that they had the necessary support in them.

Whilst seeking new and creative ministries it would be important to recognise that these were part of the Anglican Church and that an identity with the Anglican traditions would need to be expressed in some form or another. In addition they would need to work within the structures of the Church of England, be accountable to their Bishop and also share in mutual support and learning with others in the Cutting Edge Ministries. Thus there would need to be some
boundaries to ensure that they remained in unity with the Bishop and the ethos of the Church of England.

Whilst it was anticipated that financial support would be a key need in the early stages it was recognised that other support would be important too. Ideas were put forward for a twin track approach of mentoring and appraisal that would help those offered funding to see their projects move forward according to plan. It would also help them to evaluate progress on a regular basis and make adjustments as and when appropriate.

Although the money from the Church Commissioners was a good start it was recognised that it would only fund the vision set out for a few new communities to be given support to become established. Thus it was decided to undertake some specific fund-raising to augment the initial sum. A target figure of £750,000 was set to augment the original £250,000 and bring the fund available to £1,000,000.

It was difficult to predict the financial needs entirely as it was a step into the unknown. However as a starting point it was anticipated that the key need in getting a proposal to action would be to fund the livelihood of the person or people leading it. There might also be a need to rent a building and there would be associated expenses. Thus on the basis of the equivalent of a clergy stipend and a house or housing allowance a figure of £40,000 p.a. was anticipated as an initial figure at the time. With the need for a new ministry to become self-sustaining an assumption was made that this sort of sum would be needed on a reducing scale over the five to seven year period as other funding became available. Thus the opening amount from the Church Commissioners grant would have comfortably supported two new ministries with others coming on stream as new funds became available.

However whilst becoming financially independent was an important part of the criteria concern was expressed over the potential for new forms of Christian community to become established among those who would not be able to support themselves financially. The example of young people or those in low income groups was given. It was accepted that whilst this may be an issue there was no immediate or obvious solution and thus it would be considered further if and when it arose.
Response from Bishop’s Council
Bishop’s Council did accept the proposal although not without reservation. It is worth noting some of the concerns expressed at this stage and revisiting them further down the line.

One concern expressed was how any new projects would link with parishes. The nature of the Church of England is such that geographically everywhere is included in one parish or another. Thus any new initiative or ministry would necessarily fall into someone else’s parish. In response to this concern it was agreed that the issue would be part of the business planning process of any project.

The question of what is meant by ‘Cutting Edge’ was raised. What is new and different to one person may be ‘old hat’ to another. A key part of the proposed work would be that it sought to form new Christian communities. These may or may not be radical, but it was anticipated that it would be different from the more traditional pattern with which we are familiar and would not be about re-building established congregations.

There were also concerns expressed over whether the Diocese should invest in this way or not. Indeed the issues of funding new forms of ministry are challenging, and against concerns over the general finances of the Church of England seem even more so. Questions were raised about whether funding new forms of ministry should be core budget work rather than use the Church Commissioners funding.

On balance it was felt worth moving forward with the initiative funded through the Church Commissioners funding and there was encouragement for a forward thinking approach.
INTO ACTION
This section is about putting the vision into action from recruiting a Project Director to calling for proposals for projects and setting up the processes to monitor and evaluate initiatives once funded.

Once the decision had been made to pursue the vision for Cutting Edge Ministries it needed to be made public. Ideas for new ministries were needed. Equally it was necessary to get others to capture the vision to start the fund-raising to augment the initial sum of money. The planning group became known as the ‘Steering Group’ and they got into action.

An initial brochure was prepared which set out the vision in context, encouraged proposals to be put forward, outlined the criteria against which proposals would be considered and asked people to become financial friends to the initiative. In going public and encouraging new ideas the original team were keen to emphasise that this in no way undermined the traditional parish work going on across the Diocese. The brochure said:

‘none of this is meant to detract from the local Parish Church as we have known it for centuries or the Parochial System which guarantees that everybody is included in our Church’s pattern of Mission and Pastoral Care.’

At the same time as preparing and distributing this brochure the Steering Group decided to recruit a Project Director. The purpose of this role would be to work with those interested in receiving grant funding and support from the Cutting Edge Scheme. The person would facilitate the evaluation of projects submitted and then once there were some new ministries up and running would work with the leaders to help them develop their ministries effectively. It was anticipated that in order to do this work a person would need to work on it for one day a week. In the event the volume of work exceeded this.

When the Cutting Edge initiative went live there was much interest shown in it and many ideas were put forward. An initial assessment of ideas against the criteria led to seventeen proposals tabled that appeared to be close enough to the criteria to warrant further investigation. This was far in excess of expectation and meant that the work started quickly with the Project Director speaking with those submitting ideas to work through the criteria in relation to the specific project.
The overall criteria that were laid down for assessing projects have been mentioned when writing about the original vision. When people made initial contact to put forward a proposal they were given early advice and guidelines to help them shape their proposal as shown in figure one below. Key issues such as the aim of creating new and self-sustaining Christian Communities which would sit alongside the traditional system were stressed. It was also important that the ministries aimed at working amongst those who had little or no connection with Church rather than cutting across the current system and into current congregations.

Early planning of the Cutting Edge Scheme had envisaged one or two initiatives being moved forward at the beginning with others gradually being added. The initial level of interest was such that this thinking had to change and the Steering Group considered ways to enable more initiatives to get off the ground in the early days.

It was helpful that criteria for projects had been set prior to seeking proposals. This gave a level of objectivity against which to begin to assess the many proposals submitted. Some of the initiatives rejected for funding under this particular scheme were excellent ideas and went ahead despite not being taken under this particular umbrella.

After several months of discussions the initial proposals were refined and from a short list five projects were initially funded.

The five projects initially funded were:
- a community project on a new housing estate.
- an internet church.
- a local network Christian community.
- a network of small communities drawing on the contemplative tradition.
- church among those for whom the club culture is the most natural.

Over time each of these projects found itself a name and a more specific identity. Although discussions began with all of them at roughly the same time the journey from initial discussion to actually getting set up varied in length. In the next section each project will be explained in more detail working through them in the order in which they were established.
WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR
In your proposal you will need to show the following:-

a) **AN UNDERSTANDING OF MISSION AND CHURCH:** We are not looking for ‘projects’ but new expressions of Church. You will need to explain how you plan to ‘birth’ Church, what it might look like and how it would function as a Community. You would need to show how your proposal works with Sharing Life values.

b) **DEVELOPMENTAL POSSIBILITIES:** In your proposal you will need to show your key term aims and objectives. How will you build in sustainability, in terms of finance and people, and how might the community replicate itself? Could the principles by which you plan to work become a model for others?

c) **LEADERSHIP:** You will need to show evidence of creativity and imagination, an ability to spot opportunity and a willingness to take risks. It will be important for planning, financial and personnel skills to be in place. Obviously these Gifts and abilities will not be present in one person, so you will need to describe the Team you hope to build and how it might function.

d) **ACCOUNTABILITY:** We are looking for people willing to work in an accountable creative relationship with their Bishop and willing to share in mutual support and learning with others in the Cutting Edge Ministries.

HOW WE CAN HELP YOU
In the past those in ‘the cutting edge’ have often found it a lonely and isolated place to be. In acknowledgement of this the monitoring team want to give:-

i) a framework of support and accountability which will give the encouragement you will need.

ii) a process of mentoring and review.

iii) the provision of financial stability.

Hopefully these will set expectations which are clear, but capable of adaptation and change, develop a sense of community and shared learning across the whole Cutting Edge Ministries, and raise the recognition of the importance of the work across the Diocese.

HOW DO I APPLY?
In the light of the above and in no more than 2 sides of A4, please identify the following:-

a) The area you believe could be developed into a viable new Christian Community. This should include a brief action plan of how you propose to initiate and then develop your Community into a mature Ministry.

b) The human and physical resources you believe you will require to build this community over a period of 5 – 7 years.

c) Your proposal of your financial requirements (See note below)

NOTE: **FINANCIAL PLANNING.** The following should be kept in mind:-

i) The maximum grant is £40,000 per annum for stipend/salary, housing, pension costs and expenses. This will be payable (if needed) in the first 2-3 years of the Ministry and will then reduce, particularly in years 5-7 to encourage the development of a self-sustaining community.

ii) It would be hoped that Partnership funding could be part of the proposal for most projects.

iii) Financial advice would be available to successful proposals.
Getting the projects up and running
This section examines the process of setting up the selected projects and getting them off the ground. It offers discussion on the general issues that had to be sorted out before the project actually started and provides case study material on the individual projects.

Once the decision to offer funding to a particular project had been made there were several things that needed to happen to get the project up and running. Although each project is unique and the specific needs of each had to be addressed individually, there were some common issues that needed to be addressed for each one.

As has been mentioned, the Church of England parish network covers the whole of the country thus any new expression of church is going to be within an existing parish. It was therefore important to seek the goodwill of the appropriate parish as a first step in agreeing the location for a particular project. Discussions were also initiated with the Area Dean where appropriate. In some cases it was particularly important to consider the area beyond the parish boundary as many fresh expressions tend to draw people from a wider area.

Part of the early vision, in addition to offering some funding to enable the new ministries to get off the ground, was to also offer a framework of support and accountability. A key part of support and accountability for any minister is enshrined in their licence. Thus a person leading a project would need to be licensed by their Bishop in some way or another. The type and length of licence were important questions.

The type of licence also raised issues of income. Given that the new ministries were to be self-supporting it was anticipated that the leaders would probably not be in stipendiary positions. However it was important to help to ensure that the leaders did receive income especially in the early stages when the community was not established to support them.

If the project leader was to be on a Stipendiary type of licence then there were employee costs to be met too, specifically National Insurance Contributions and Pension Contributions. These needed to be accounted for in the project budget plan and the logistics for payment determined. However if they were to be non-stipendiary and were moving from a stipendiary post there were issues over
continuity of pension provision and entitlement to stay in the Clergy Pension Fund to be sorted out.

Housing was always high on the agenda. It was not only location that was important but also who would pay for the house and associated and ongoing costs.

Finally there was a promise of mentoring and review offered to the projects. A two-fold process was developed. One part of this was a regular review of the projects. Once every six months the Project Director was to meet with each project leader. On an annual basis one of these meetings would be just the two people and once a year there would be a more formal review at which an external reviewer would be invited to share in the process. For the latter review a set process was developed. (See appendix 1) Although the process was structured it had an inherent flexibility to enable it to be adapted to the particular projects, which was necessary due to the different nature of each one.

The mentoring process developed into the idea of an Accompanier for each project. This would be someone to walk alongside the project and to be available to reflect with the project leader on the issues as they emerged. The original idea was to align someone who had some expertise in an area of ministry closely related to that of the project with each particular project. Thus they would be able to understand where the vision holder was coming from and help inform their thinking. The title of mentor was rejected on the grounds that the role was not to guide the vision but to help the project leader develop their own vision. It was felt that the title of mentor usually assumed greater knowledge imparted from the mentor and that this was not what was required in this context.

As has been indicated in the section ‘Into Action’ five projects were funded in the first tranche. In the following sections the vision for each project as put forward by the leader will be reported and then the process for getting them off the ground and the common issues described above will be explored in relation to each project.
THE PROJECTS

DISCOVERY DAYS

_Emerging church from building community on a new housing estate_

Discovery Days is a Community Project on a new housing estate. It was set up with the aim of building community where no real community existed. This project was set up in September 2003 and was the first project to get up and running. The project already had the name Discovery Days when first presented to the Cutting Edge Ministries Steering Group.

The Vision

The original idea for Discovery Days had grown from the originator of the idea listening to people talking about their spiritual search. In her submission she said that the idea had grown from people who ‘whilst expressing a spiritual longing and searching were not finding their need met by traditional church.’ She quoted a couple of these comments:

‘…..I have been attending church for 17 years as a young person and adult. I am no longer prepared to sit in a large room looking at the back of a person’s head, hearing things that do not relate to my life, or equip me for Monday morning…’

‘..I am 22 and church of my parents has no relevance to me..’

From the start it was imagined that Discovery Days would complement the traditional forms of church by giving people a different or alternative opportunity to engage with God in a natural and culturally relevant way. It was recognised that the particular day of the week was less important than the opportunity itself. The main weekly expression of church did not need to happen on Sunday.

Early imaginings were of a day long ‘discovery experience’ that could be accessed at different times of the day by different groups, at a time most suited to them.

An example of this might be:

- A morning slot for carers and toddlers with something for both age groups.
- A lunchtime slot when local people could drop in for refreshment.
- An afternoon slot when senior citizens would have some time.
- An early evening kids club.
• An evening session for people who have been at work all day.

It was imagined that these events would take place in a neutral environment such as a community centre or hall and that these separate groups would gradually link together into a community encouraged by social events and community related projects.

Making It Happen
Practical Issues

Location, housing, licence, finance

Given the nature of the project a variety of possible locations could have been considered as a first location. However it was envisaged that an area with a rapidly growing community would be a good place to start. New estates where there are many houses but little or no community facilities were ripe for consideration. One such estate near Witney was identified where the only community building initially was a school, built at the same time as the first houses. The estate is in a parish where much new building was occurring and the existing parish was unable to reach out effectively in this area through lack of resources.

Initial discussions with the vicar of the parish in which the estate is situated were begun well before the proposal was submitted to the Steering Group. This enabled time for prayerful reflection so that when the proposal was finally submitted the vicar was able, on behalf of the parish, to offer a pastoral support network for the project leader and also envisaged that practical support would be forthcoming for the work.

It was clearly important that the Project Leader lived on the estate as part of the community. Not only would the leader be part of the community, living and working among the residents but it would also provide an initial meeting place.

An Area Bishop has at his disposal one or two discretionary posts over and above the fixed parish posts. The Area Bishop decided to use one of these in this area for this particular project. He saw the work as having the potential to grow and flourish but also to model a pattern that may be replicated on other new estates elsewhere. The Diocese bought a house on the estate and thus the salary and housing costs associated with the project were be met by the Diocese. As part of the application process a budget was submitted to cover the initial set up costs,
including some capital equipment. In line with the application requirements it predicted that income could be generated through giving and subscriptions. Money was made available from the Cutting Edge Ministries fund to pay for the set up costs and the running expenses of the project and was given over a three year period on a decreasing scale.

The Project Leader was licensed as an Associate Minister within the local parish team although reporting directly to the Area Bishop in relation to Discovery Days. This gave a positive link to the local parish and a support team. It did not involve any cost to the parish.

**Getting Going**

The Project Leader moved into her new house in September 2003. The work of building relationships with her new neighbours began immediately. Inevitably the initial setup work was an individual job but it was part of the vision that very quickly others from the Estate would be drawn into the project. So a key part of the initial work was to identify people with whom to share the vision and who might be able to get involved on a practical level too.

Prior to working on this particular project the Project Leader had previously been involved in setting up a church plant. She had demonstrated her ability to empower, enable and equip other people to lead new initiatives.

As the only community building on the estate was the local school this was the place to focus activity on. The school was not a church school and it was quite clear from the beginning that, although funded as an initiative of the church and spurred by faith in action, activities within the school were to be about building relationships – discovering community – rather than open proclamation of the gospel. It was no secret that there was a hope that one day there would be opportunities to share faith too but only when expressly stated as Christian activities so that anyone coming along would know what to expect.

Thus in the early days the work in the school involved putting letters into envelopes, baking cakes for different events and generally helping out whilst getting to know people. In parallel early preparations were made to run distinct ‘Discovery Days’ in the school.
Over the following months different activities moved forward apace. Outside of the school-based activities flyers were put through the letterbox of every occupied house inviting people to social evenings so that they could meet some of their new neighbours and start to get to know one another. A Residents Association was set up and going through snagging lists with builders was a key activity. At that time 260 of the 1100 houses to be built were occupied.

**MAYBE**

*a community following in the way of Jesus for a better world now.*

mayBe is a community which seeks to pursue a way of life together that is 'authentic, simple and creative'. The community meets weekly for food and fellowship, share leisure activities and engage in activities in the local community. When first presented to the Cutting Edge Ministries the group did not have a name. This emerged in its early days.

**The Vision**

The original idea for this ministry was to grow a new local and network Anglican Christian community amongst people with little or no church background. It was envisaged that it would grow through relationships within small groups meeting in homes, eating together and sharing life. It planned to be light on its feet and inexpensive in that the costs would be confined a house with a study, the equivalent of a vicar's stipend and some minor expenses.

The driving force behind the idea was a perception that the church was struggling to reach post-modern people. It was felt that it was not engaging sufficiently with the culture in which we live and although it was recognised that local churches were doing many good things the originator believed that there was space for a new disciple community such as this within the city.

It would be a community that a person became part of rather than a church people go to with the heart of its life being focused on the small group meeting regularly together to eat, talk and pray. Whilst it may meet on a Sunday, midweek gatherings were thought to be important.

Although the focus on relationships was to be important, a key factor was that it would not be an inward-looking community, but would regard itself as prayerful and active within and for the wider community. It would create sacred space and
draw on ancient Christian symbolism and patterns of life whilst also using current experience and art forms to enable worship.

In the initial proposal themes from the creation story were presented to help discover and explain how this new community might emerge and grow.

**the first day**
- begin a small group around our kitchen table, pray and begin to work out and practise the key components of community life

**the second day**
- grow the young community through local and network relationship with friends, at work, at the sports club, with neighbours, and in our local communities

**the third day**
- multiply into more groups, each group meeting in a home
- small groups cluster together as bigger community meeting weekly for a meal, Eucharist, worship, and social stuff

**the fourth day**
- as the community grows, new clusters of small groups emerge, each cluster working out its own identity and mission calling
- the clusters of small groups meet all together for worship

**the fifth day**
- make a home for the community in a neutral place hired for the purpose - a place of gathering, hospitality, prayer, sacred space, creativity and worship - initially monthly

**the sixth day**
- make this bigger home; a place of interaction with the wider community 7 days a week where more relationships can be formed - a cafe, a music-art-film venue, and a place to explore spirituality and healthy living

**the seventh day**
- rest, enjoy, prepare for more
Making it Happen
Practical Issues
Location, housing, licence, finance

From the outset it was envisaged that this community would be close to the centre of Oxford in an area where there was a mix of housing stock and socioeconomic type. Deep within the proposal was the idea that the community would have a presence in a café and that the café culture was already in existence in Oxford appealed.

Initially there was an idea to make a base in Jericho but there was resistance from the local churches already there. There was concern that Oxford was chosen as the base for many new initiatives and that this was having a detrimental effect on the established church communities. After much discussion a base was found in the New Hinksey area of Oxford. A large vicarage in the area had already been converted into two properties with one half being occupied by the Vicar of the local church and the other rented out. The rented part of the accommodation became free at the time that the project was seeking a base. Both the Vicar of the local church and the Area Dean were willing to have this new ministry within their area and so the property was rented by the project.

The project leaders were a husband and wife team. The husband left his post as a Team Vicar in order to pursue this work. His wife continued to work in secular employment but also committed time to the ministry.

Having found a place to make both their home and the base for the ministry it was necessary to finance the work. An application was made to the Cutting Edge Ministries fund for the maximum grant available which would cover both living costs and start up costs for the ministry. The grant was awarded over a four year period with the amount reducing in each year to encourage a transition to being self-supporting.

Getting Going
In the early part of 2004 the final details were worked out and the family move to New Hinksey took place with the new ministry beginning in the April.

A small group gathered for a meal and worship, supported by people who travelled specifically to help get the community started. A small core was quickly
established which included some people with a strong faith who had the potential to share the leadership and help the community grow.

An Accompanier was put in place to be with this project. At first this seemed to work well and the Accompanier quickly felt that she would like to be part of the community as well as accompany it. Thought was given to whether this would cause a conflict of interest and it was agreed that it may be a good thing for the person to be part of the community and experience its life first hand.

As the months passed the members of the community built relationships with each other and explored how they would spend their time together, how they would worship, what public activities they would join in and other expressions of their life as a community.

**I-CHURCH**

*An on-line Christian Community*

i-church is a Christian community of the Church of England based in the Diocese of Oxford. It is led by a Web Pastor together with a team of Pastoral Assistants. It is open to all and offers opportunities for worship, fellowship, and discussion.

**The Vision**

The original vision was to use the internet to create a new spiritual community; a network church for people who do not wish, or are not able, to join a local church. It was also hoped that it would be available as ‘added value’ to existing church members who travel or who are otherwise unable to be part of their local church.

Although there were other Christian websites and interactive forums it was envisaged to be something distinctively different. It was recognised that, as with any other church plant, a core community would be needed to get it started. However this community would be virtual rather than geographically defined. The hope was that a core community drawn from those who are exploring spiritual commitment within the Christian community but who do not find local church engagement helpful would be identified. The core community would hope to support a fringe group, and would seek to discover those things that help both groups grow in faith, commitment, understanding and action. It was envisaged that if i-church were successful, it may well spin off other expressions of i-church.
In summary i-church stated its purpose as:
- providing a Christian community for people who want to explore Christian discipleship but are not able to belong to a local congregation.
- providing an additional means of support to those who do not find all that they need within their own worshipping community
- providing a supportive spiritual community for people who travel, and who are not able to maintain relationships with a geographical Christian community.

Making it Happen
Practical Issues
Location, housing, licence, finance

The initial needs for i-church were distinctively different from other new ministries. It was also unique in that the vision holder was not to be the leader of the new church. There was much debate over the need for geographical proximity of the leaders and core group to enable them to have face to face discussions to move things forward. Initially it was agreed to put in post a half-time Web Pastor who could be lay or ordained. Whilst the leader of the church was to be licensed to the Diocese of Oxford it was not considered necessary for them to be located in the Diocese.

The main financial needs for the project were for money to pay for the salary of the Web Pastor and the set up costs including a computer and the web space and access. The Cutting Edge Ministries fund agreed to a three year grant to cover this with a view to the project generating its own funds to continue thereafter.

Getting Going
The advertisement for the Web Pastor generated a huge response world-wide, not just from potential applicants but also from people who want to belong to the church. The level of response surprised everyone and indicated that i-church was likely to grow much more quickly than anticipated. It became apparent that part of the attraction to people was that it is authorised by the Church of England and thus people felt secure in signing up to it and have an idea of the basic doctrines. Whilst endorsing the need for such a church the size of interest also brought with it an early need to re-think initial plans.
From thirty-nine applications for the position of Web Pastor a short-list of seven people were interviewed face to face. In drawing up the short list a first screen of candidates was carried out through a structured interview conducted by e-mail. This not only helped to prepare the final short list but the responses were also used to structure the face to face interviews.

An Accompanier was put in place at the start of the project to accompany the vision holder in his thinking and establishing of the church. The Accompanier was part of the interview panel to select the Web Pastor. A structured pattern of working was set up between accompanier and vision holder and regular, though not frequent, meetings were held.

A Web Pastor was appointed with the unanimous agreement of the interview panel. The person was a lay person based in Scotland and work quickly began. The publicity generated from the advertisement for the pastor meant that there was a long list of people waiting for the doors of the church to be opened and the initial volume of work was far greater than anticipated. It was all very encouraging and energy for the project was high.

The Web Pastor was conscientious and tried to respond to as many as possible of the people approaching the church. Every effort was made to encourage all who applied but despite huge amounts of work the level of interest was just too much to cope with in the early stages. It was quickly realised that this was not only impossible through sheer volume but also that people approaching church on the internet seemed to both demand and expect a far greater level of one to one contact time than would be expected in a more traditional parish church.

I-church was unusual in that the person leading the ministry, the web-pastor, was not the original vision holder commissioned by the Cutting Edge Steering Group. As the Web Pastor started to get into the work inevitably her own ideas began to take shape and influence the way the project was developing in the early stages. This was not entirely the same way in which the vision holder had envisaged the new church community developing.

Although many discussions took place to seek to address the early problems it became clear that different perspectives were not to be reconciled sufficiently for the working relationship to be maintained, and the Web Pastor resigned.
At the time this was perceived to be a great setback to the project and in many ways it was deemed that it was a victim of its own success. In the short term the doors of i-church had to be shut and no new members were admitted for a while. The opportunity for public worship through the website continued to be available for those who wished to visit but not join the community. For a while the vision holder took on the role of Web Pastor and then a new Pastor was recruited. This interim period with the vision holder taking a more active part in the day to day running of the church turned out to be a valuable learning period.

**CONTEMPLATIVE FIRE**

_A movement, a community and an adventure, celebrating life in all its fullness on the Way of Christ._

Contemplative Fire seeks to present and promote an imaginative, active/reflective expression of Cell Church. Its missiology might be expressed as a ‘contemplative evangelism.’ A personal and corporate outworking of Trinitarian theology, together with a commitment not only to spiritual formation but also to religious formation within the context of the Biblical tradition and the liturgical year, will provide the dynamic framework for the emergence and seeding of new Christian communities.

**The Vision**

The original vision for Contemplative Fire was as a network church of small communities which would seek to foster members and reach out to others. The originator of the vision was also the founder of the Quiet Garden Movement and learning from the development of that was applied to Contemplative Fire.

Three words were at the heart of the three part action plan for the new ministry – call, equip, and send. The driving force behind the initiative was the recognition of a search for spiritual depth and authenticity in the world. ‘Call, equip and send’ was set out as Contemplative Fire’s central imperative.

Calling - educational outreach was a key strategy from the beginning of the life of Contemplative Fire. The process of identifying and recruiting those who had clear gifts as facilitators, presenters, teachers and mentors began early on and a core team, clergy and lay, engaged in selecting a leadership group who would guide the formation of the small communities.
Equipping - development for leaders to enable them to establish new cells. Based on specific models for growing small groups there would be a structured approach to growing the church.

Sending - it was envisaged that leaders with proven communication skills within Contemplative Fire would be sent out into contexts which are appropriate to their specific professional or vocational expertise.

**Making it Happen**

**Practical Issues**

*Location, housing, licence, finance*

In one sense Contemplative Fire could have been based anywhere. The ministry did not demand any particular geographical location. However much of the potential growth of the network depended on the contacts already established by the vision holder and thus having been based for many years in the east of the Diocese of Oxford it was thought to be preferable to be based in that area as a start. A glebe house was found which was part of the financing of the project the Diocese agreed to contribute for a limited period.

As the leader of Contemplative Fire was not to be linked to any particular Parish he was given ‘permission to officiate’ within the Diocese rather than a licence.

The main source of finance for this project was from funds donated specifically to the leader. However this was only released due to the contribution from Cutting Edge Ministries. A specific sum of money was committed to the project from the Cutting Edge fund which together with provision of housing indicated an endorsement of the project and a commitment to work with it to help it get off the ground.

**Getting Going**

Contemplative Fire officially got off the ground in September 2004 and like most of the projects swung into action. Contemplative Fire seeds were planted across the Diocese and beyond not only nationally but internationally! Interest in and attendance at open events was encouraging and membership began to grow. The first year of Contemplative Fire was very hectic for the leader and small team that he developed around him.
Initially an Accompanier for the project was not found, one or two people asked did not feel they had the time to give to it. However a pattern of accompaniment emerged from this project with two people offering to take on the role. One of these people was not a member of Contemplative Fire and remained external to the everyday workings of the ministry. The other became one of the community members and so experienced things from the inside. This combination turned out to offer good support to Contemplative Fire.

**HOME**

A community which exists to embody God’s invitation in Jesus to all who are tired and lonely, all who have lost their way, to come home.

The aim of hOME is to provide a spiritual home for people in the Oxford city area who are interested in Christian spirituality but have no place they can call their spiritual home. It is particularly aimed at young adults and began by meeting in a pub/café.

**The Vision**

The original vision presented was to plant and grow a new expression of church in the Oxford city area which will reach out in mission to the mobile young adult population across the city, making them disciples of Jesus Christ, and providing them with patterns of worship, teaching, leadership, community and discipleship appropriate to the host culture.

In an early description on its website hOME described itself thus:

‘Today many young adults who see themselves as being very open to the spiritual dimension of life find that the church hinders rather than helps them in their search for God. Church is just not where they go to scratch their spiritual itch. And whilst the church is often very good at making connections with children and teenagers and older people, people in their 20’s and 30’s can often feel that church does not relate to them and their lifestyles. ‘home’ is an attempt to recognise these difficulties and do something about them. It’s a stab at finding a way of being church together that’s a bit more indigenous.’

The original idea was for the new Christian community to start by the assembling of a team of people committed to the vision drawn from local Christians. It was imagined that they would probably begin their pattern of life together with a
single small group – focusing on worship, Bible study/teaching, prayer and the building of community. It was planned that this would take place in people’s homes and possibly also in a café. The core group would look to reach out into each other’s networks using appropriate mission strategies. From the outset it was thought that monastic values of rule, vows and community would be explored and reinterpreted within contemporary culture.

**Making it Happen**  
**Practical Issues**  
*Location, housing, licence, finance*

The leader of the group already lived in Oxford in his own home and so the location and provision of housing was not an issue. He was in the last phase of training for Ordination and thus placement for his title post had to be linked in with getting this new ministry off the ground. In December 2003 he was licensed as a non-stipendiary minister within the Diocese and employed by one of the large Oxford churches. Here it was planned that he would both get the early training necessary to prepare him for his life in ministry and also have the opportunity to bring this new and much needed work among the particular age group.

The Cutting Edge Ministries fund put in the necessary money to pay a housing allowance for the first two years.

**Getting Going**  
Under the wing of experienced ministers in Oxford the project began to blossom from early days. The members of the hOME community found a café pub in which to establish their base and began to draw in new people. Supported by members from the established church they developed their own way of being community and their own worship resources to suit their style and pattern of worship. By its own admission the community accepted that in the early days they did not have a strong sense of identity and that this began to emerge as they worked and worshipped together.

In addition to developing the concept of hOME the project leader also undertook aspects of ministry within the parent church as part of the three year period as a curate in training that all newly ordained ministers within the Church of England embark upon after ordination. This is a standard part of the training and preparation for a lifetime in ministry. Among other things the project leader was
charged with developing a run down building owned by the church within the centre of Oxford. Not only was this a much needed project for the parent church but there was also potential that this building would provide the base for the new community. There was potential for both communal space and also living accommodation which would enable the vision of a contemporary monastic life to become a reality.

An Accompanier was put in place in the early stages of this project and the relationship worked well. The person had good experience of the type of ministry being developed and they developed an informal relationship, meeting regularly to discuss issues and think things through.
EARLY ISSUES
This section reviews some of the issues and problems that arose in the early stages of setting the projects up.

As the projects got set up and off the ground new questions were arising constantly. It seemed that there was always at least one of the projects having a crisis moment! Almost every question seemed to spark off a whole new line of enquiry. The questions often led to the need to question and even challenge previous systems or assumptions. It was not always a comfortable ride for all concerned.

Some of the issues that arose early on were specific to particular projects, others, although arising from a specific issue had wider implications. Questions had to be asked at different levels both within the Diocese and beyond. It is good to be able to record that every time we asked a question we found others willing to scratch their heads and help find solutions wherever possible.

One of the first issues to arise was over housing. Whereas a priest moving to a new parish would expect that there would be a house for them to move into, this was not the case with Cutting Edge Ministries. The majority needed to find housing and this was a burden to both those entering the new ministries and the Diocese.

For the project leader there was the fundamental question of ‘where am I going to live?’ which was followed closely by ‘how am I going to pay for it?’ The Diocese of Oxford is fortunate to have some property that it rents out and with only a few ministries to work with it was possible to find housing for each project leader. As housing was part of the budget of a new ministry rent was paid to the Diocese. However, the rental properties tend to be smaller than typical vicarages so for someone moving from a parish ministry to a Cutting Edge Ministry there were issues of downsizing. Not only did they have to get used to living in a smaller house, possibly with family, but also property had to be put into store.

Within the Diocese the question was asked as to whether every cutting edge ministry would come with the need for a house. Obviously if it did it potentially placed a new strain on the housing stock of the Diocese. In addition if the rent charged was at the lower end of what might be expected from a commercial let this would have implications on the budgeted income from housing stock.
Similarly the stipend that they may have been used to receiving was no longer guaranteed. Although the seed corn funding meant that they could get off the ground the fact that the grant money would run out in a given period was always there. There was indeed an act of faith in trusting that funds would come in. Linked in with stipend were issues relating to national insurance contributions and pension. These things are taken for granted by stipendiary clergy, but when moving away from the security of such a position these things have to be thought about and provided for. If a person had been in the clergy pension scheme for some time the implications of pulling out had to be considered. If a person is not in receipt of a stipend they are not eligible to be members of the clergy pension fund. However the Pensions Board recommended that if people were seconded by the Diocese to the new ministries then contributions could continue to be made. Initially this could be for ten years and should this prove too short a time they have indicated that they are open to further discussions on the issue.

Whilst these are very practical issues they are fundamental to living and the impact of them on someone already taking a risk in their ministry should not be underestimated. It was not only the provision of a house and an income that could not be taken for granted. Given that there was no ‘parish’ there was no infrastructure so the things that a parish priest might reasonably expect were non-existent. There were no churchwardens to ease the way in; there was no administrative set up to help things flow; there was not even a building to draw attention to new activities.

Other practical issues were overlooked in the early stages. One example of this was a system to keep clergy moving away from established posts on circulation lists and therefore fully informed of what was going on in the Diocese. For a traditional move a movement form would be completed which would have a routing around various departments to ensure that all people were informed of the change of address and contact details. This did not automatically happen in the case of these new ministries and led to feelings of isolation.

There were also some specific issues that arose which in hindsight could have been avoided. For example in Discovery Days an accompanier was not assigned to walk alongside the project leader from the beginning. The unexpected speed at which several projects were getting off the ground simultaneously led to simple errors such as this. The start of a new project is a very lonely time and
there are inevitably many issues to think and pray through and thus the support of an accompanier is important at this time.

There was excitement in the Diocese over these new ministries and another problem for Discovery Days was created when a feature on the work was made front page of the Diocesan Newspaper. An article was written about the work within the school which was simply a toddlers group. Although everyone knew that the project leader was an ordained minister and that the work was sponsored by the church there was an understanding that the toddler group was not an explicitly Christian group. There was no problem with this – there are many examples within the church of Christians working in secular groups within communities. However when the Diocesan Newspaper labelled the group as a ‘new form of church’ some people within the school thought that there was surreptitious work by the church to enter by the back door. They were understandably angry and it took sensitive discussion to restore faith in the work.

It was mentioned that in setting up the projects the location had to be carefully considered in relation to the good will of the parishes in the area and of the Deanery. Although this good will was gained within each deanery before location was agreed, and there was generally enthusiasm for having innovative work in the area, tensions did begin to emerge quite early on. In the early stages there was no apparent cause of these tensions although some issues became apparent as time went on and these will be discussed later. In the early days there were often simply feelings expressed that those in new ministries have drawn a long straw. It seemed to some in traditional parish ministry that they had an easy time in that they have been able to relinquish many of the burdens that come with a traditional parish role and yet have all the good parts of ministry. They also may have appeared to have the luxury of time to contemplate things and move at a pace deemed impossible for others. In addition it was perhaps felt that where they were linked to a parish they were not pulling their weight in helping with the routine things. All this led to what has been termed ‘the Cinderella effect’ which will be considered later. In reality those in the new ministries had, on the whole, taken risks that brought with them their own tensions and it was hard for them to see that anyone could accuse them of having an easy time.

A final early issue was how close the Cutting Edge team, and in particular the Project Director, should be to the ministry against how much space they should be given to allow things to emerge. This was also an issue in relation to
communication with the Accompanier where one was put in place. The correct balance is probably different in relation to each project but for the Project Director it was a difficult issue and it later emerged that the balance was not always perceived to be right.
ONE YEAR ON

This section considers the issues that had arisen after about a year to eighteen months into the running of the projects.

As the projects began to settle each into their own pattern a range of issues began to arise. Some of these were again practical issues and others were on a range of subjects that gave rise to new thinking in relation to fresh expressions of church. The more practical issues will be considered first and then the wider questions will be raised. It is important to note that whilst tensions and issues have arisen in some areas and every effort made to address them, some remain without solutions.

Tensions with local parishes and the Deanery

Tensions with the local parishes and Deanery have already been mentioned. As time went on some of the issues became more explicit. For example what happens when a member of a new community wants to get married or have a baby baptised. Often, regardless of their feelings about church in its traditional form, people coming for these pastoral services expect that they will take place in a traditional church building. Who then takes responsibility? Who has pastoral oversight for the family? Is the traditional parish at liberty to invite the people to their events or do they ‘belong’ to the new community? The new ‘church’ may be accused of poaching the members of the parish church.

There is also potential for tension around the festivals of the church. Christmas is often a time when the parish church sees congregation numbers rise, and income with it. Does the new church compete with it over Christmas Carol Services and other seasonal events? If a new facility opens in the parish who makes the moves to encourage links with the church? Again are the parish and the new church in competition with one another?

Another possible source of tension was around liturgy. Whilst parish churches mostly stayed within the boundaries of authorised services the new churches seemed to be free to do what they like. Where was the balance between being authorised and accountable and freedom to operate as a completely independent church?

There was often the underlying tension that these new churches were drawing people from the parish churches rather than reaching out to those not going to church and bringing new people to faith. Whilst it was good that they encouraged
the disenfranchised who had already ceased to attend church, they appeared to also be encouraging others to make choices where previously they had, it seemed, been happy where they were. There were also issues in this for those seeking to establish new churches. Most started out with a mission imperative, hoping that they would draw new people to faith. Most found that many of those they attracted were those who were discontent with traditional church to varying degrees. Some people had left church and made the new church their spiritual home whilst many others came to the new church for respite and continued to support their parish too. Whilst happy to provide this type of ‘healing’ ministry (or respite care as one new church called it) it did lead to divided loyalties for individuals and potential for further tensions.

**Financial Issues**

A number of issues around raising and managing finance emerged as the months went on. On the overall scale it proved more difficult than had been hoped to raise large sums of money to augment the original pot from the Church Commissioners. One member of the Steering Group dedicated his time to pursuing grants and other fund-raising opportunities. In direct donations to the central pot just over £83,000 was raised. In addition substantial sums of money were raised towards specific projects through partnership working. Taking into account donations, partnership agreements and fund-raising by individual projects a total figure in the region of £500,000 was raised.

What emerged, however, was that some people and grant making bodies were willing to give to a specific project rather than give money to a central fund. So whilst it was difficult to add to the overall fund it was possible to secure grants for individual projects to help them in their set up. This raises questions of how to ‘market’ a fresh expression of church. This is both in terms of external funding and also in relation to giving from members of the new church. There were different degrees of success in getting members of new church to begin giving, especially in the early days. Some projects were able to secure giving from supportive friends who remained in their own parish church but tithed to the new church. Where members of the new church were transferring from a parish church there was also an expectation of needing to give money. However where people were coming to a new church to explore faith it was less easy to get giving to a level to enable the church to be self-financing in the foreseeable future.
It was found that some people were willing to enter into partnership funding, often in very generous ways. If the Diocese of Oxford was willing to put its weight behind an initiative and give it both its seal of approval and some funding, then others were willing to accept the authenticity of the project and put their money in too.

Another financial issue was over the new churches taking full responsibility for their finances, not only raising the cash but also managing it. In the early days the Diocese offered a banking facility to the new churches. This meant holding the grant offered from the Cutting Edge pot and also making available a means for people to donate to the church via the Diocese. This provided a simple way for the project leaders to manage their funds in the early days. Not only was money given to them paid through the Diocese but also salaries and expenses were paid to the project leaders in much the same way as they would have received a stipend in the past. Whilst some project leaders were keen to manage their own money as soon as possible others were more hesitant.

It was not long before it became apparent that it would be helpful for each new church to be set up as a charity and to have its own bank account. In some cases they also established themselves as a company limited by guarantee.

**Independence and Accountability**

One of the great attractions to setting up a fresh expression of church was the freedom from those things that seemed to some to encumber mission in many parish settings. The new churches started with a blank sheet; there was no building demanding hours spent considering maintenance and restoration, no established group of people wanting things to remain unchanged, no competing groups vying for their own preferences to be pursued, no set patterns of liturgy, no set structure to the week.

Alongside this freedom each project had a leader licensed by the Bishop and was clearly under the authority of and accountable to the Diocese. This, in many ways, offered a security to the new churches – an authenticity which gave them immediate credibility within the established church and to those looking in from the outside.

This combination of independence and accountability in the projects made an interesting combination. On one hand there was the freedom and the benefits of the endorsement of the Diocese and on the other hand there were the rules and
regulations of the Church of England that were part and parcel of an authorised ministry. The danger of failure to be accountable had been widely reported in the media prior to the Cutting Edge Ministries initiative being started and people were well aware of the value of links with the institution. Certainly in the early days the security and support were of great value. However it was not long before questions began to arise over various aspects covered by Canon Law and these questions were likely to multiply rather than disappear. Questions over initiation, liturgy, holy communion were among the first to arise and people experimented as close to the edge as they could with the spirit of Canon Law to guide.

It was anticipated that as the new churches expanded and sought to be authentic to the people who belonged to them the challenge on the accepted rules would grow and the value of the stamp of approval may be reduced. In fact what happened was that the relationship with the Bishop became particularly important. This is something that it will be interesting to monitor as time goes by.

**Representation in the Wider Church**

Given that these new churches were licensed within the Diocese there was a question about where they fit in the structures. Tensions with parishes and deaneries have already been mentioned. The links that the leaders of the new churches had with their local churches varied and much depended on the type of licence they were working under. Whatever the official links the actual links were as much as anything dependent on the willingness of those involved to develop them. Some leaders of the new churches joined in with Deanery meetings and made sure that they were represented at Synod meetings. However being outside of the main parish structure meant that there was no voice on Diocesan Synod and certainly not on General Synod. There were calls for the leaders of the new churches to set up their own Chapter for mutual support but others considered this would only add to the separation and hinder long term integration.

**A Public Presence**

The merits of not having a building to maintain and the limitations that a set structure may bring with it have already been mentioned. However it was not long before each new church was seeking a place to call their own and a place to be seen. One of the great merits of a church building is that everyone knows what it is and what it stands for. Even if people are nervous about going in they
know that it is a public building and open to anyone who wishes to enter. People can go along and see if they like what takes place without having to make any commitment, indeed without having to speak to anyone else if they prefer not to.

The new churches often had no public building. Meetings took place in private venues or places that were much less obviously open to the public. Whilst this made it easy for new communities to experiment and get to know each other quickly it also made it more difficult to attract new members and for potential members to have a look without commitment.

Without a public presence there was also a danger that the church may become inward looking focusing on the needs and desires of the members and loosing an outward focus. Whilst this may bring comfort in the early days it is very easy to establish a way of being that excludes others and manifests itself more as a club than a church.
THE ADVENT OF FRESH EXPRESSIONS
.. and the title ‘Cutting Edge’

As indicated at the beginning the Cutting Edge Ministries Group was set up in response to the Sharing Life initiative which committed Oxford to a policy of ‘encouraging and supporting new forms of emerging Church’. The initiative was sparked by the money available from the Church Commissioners at the time. The label ‘Cutting Edge Ministries’ was selected as a fitting way to describe what it was about.

Cutting Edge Ministries had not been going long when the scene in the church, both nationally and at a more local level, began to change. Early in 2004 the book ‘Mission Shaped Church’ was published and over the following months was widely read. In September 2004 the Archbishops appointed a Missioner for Fresh Expressions to lead a new initiative of the national church. Locally Deaneries and Parishes were seeking to respond to the new ideas and plans were being made to ‘do church differently.’

The term ‘Fresh Expressions’ quickly became the accepted way to describe new forms of church. The Diocese of Oxford also found itself being held up as a model of ‘fresh expressions’ for its work in Cutting Edge Ministries. Many approaches were made to the Diocese and to the individual project leaders from people wanting to know what we did and how we went about it. There seemed to be an assumption that we had a master plan all well thought out before we launched into things. Although the conceptual thinking had been well considered and the overall plan worked through from there on we had made a start and dealt with issues as they arose. And arise they did! We were very much learning as we went, tackling new issues as they emerged, as is indicated at various stages in this paper.

In parallel to this, one thing that began to emerge early on was around the use of the term ‘Cutting Edge’. In travelling the Diocese and speaking about Cutting Edge Ministries it became apparent that the title had the potential to be divisive. The term was applied to the few projects to which we had given finance and other support to enable them to happen. The reactions ranged from those who are antagonistic to Cutting Edge Ministries to those who were very encouraging. Of those who were antagonistic there were perhaps different reasons.
There were some interesting projects submitted and there is both room and scope for doing many different things in the church to reach out to both the ‘unchurched’ and ‘de-churched’. However the ministries under the Cutting Edge Ministries umbrella were distinctive and whilst perhaps not entirely unique were sufficiently different to be set apart. As had been clearly stated from the beginning, the projects funded were specifically to ‘create new forms of Christian community which would become self-sustaining’. Many of the other initiatives taking place would be better described as innovative mission or outreach; seeking to bring people into an established church one way or another. The national initiative ‘Fresh Expressions’ did not make this distinction. Thus it was thought to be important for us to retain the distinctive difference between the ministries we had funded and many of the initiatives being developed.

Having retained the distinctive nature of the projects there was a desire to bring things together under one umbrella. After all, whilst it was hoped not to lose sight of what was becoming widely regarded as valuable work, none the less too great a distinction, or the creation of some sort of hierarchy, is neither helpful nor necessary. In an attempt to bring things together the Diocese decided to adopt the overarching term of ‘Fresh Expressions’ as the banner under which all the initiatives would be gathered and to regard the Cutting Edge Ministries projects as ‘pilot projects’. Indeed this was entirely in keeping with the remit for the projects as it had been agreed form the outset that the learning from these ministries and the overall work would be captured and shared with others.
JAC COMES ON BOARD

At the outset of the Cutting Edge initiative the intention had been to have eight new self-sustaining churches within a seven year period. This was against the background of original fund-raising plans. It was envisaged that projects would gradually roll out. In the event, as has been noted, things moved at a much faster pace than anticipated.

The projects originally offered support under the Cutting Edge banner were ready to move towards the vision of becoming a self-sustaining community when we started out. There were many other projects that had the potential to become self-sustaining church communities but at the time of the initial consideration of projects the vision had not been developed sufficiently for it to be clear as to how it might grow. In these cases funding was not initially granted but they were not forgotten. One such project was called JAC (Just around the corner).

The Vision
JAC was formed in 1998 by a group of concerned Christians from local churches in the Woodley area (Reading) who saw the need to support work amongst young people who feel constrained by the setting of a structured youth club and who look for excitement and escape in alcohol, drug and other substance abuse and inappropriate sexual activity. It has operated as a detached youth and community organisation working with young people in the parks and streets where they naturally congregate using the JAC trailer, an exhibition trailer, which opens out to give a covered area. Many of the young people that JAC work with come from broken homes, single parent families or have other family and social pressures. The main aim of JAC was, and still is, to see young people given the opportunity to make something of their lives. The youth leaders running JAC were Christians who believed that ultimately in order for lives to be radically transformed and given real purpose then the young people needed to be led to a relationship with the living God.

Making it Happen
Having built bridges into the community JAC began to explore how the gospel can more effectively travel across these bridges. However, as their funding largely came from local authorities, whilst they could share their faith with the young people, they could not give dedicated time to developing the distinctively Christian ministry from it. Thus when they got to the stage of needing to give this part of their work committed time they approached Cutting Edge Ministries
to fund time to explore this further. The financial support from Cutting Edge Ministries enabled some time to be given to concentrate on developing the vision to establish a congregation amongst the un-churched young people in the area of Woodley.

This was the first Cutting Edge project working with young people.

**Getting Going**
Building on what was naturally beginning to emerge in the late summer of 2005 their JAC leaders started taking their camper van to the park on a Sunday evening and creating a space for the young people to talk to them about the spiritual issues that were on their minds. The tragic death of one of the teenagers known to JAC had led to many questions from the young people about spirituality, life after death, and what the leaders, as Christians, believe.

The Sunday evening sessions took the form of a discovery group where each week the young people would discuss topics raised by their member. The sessions ended with prayer ministry. Although the sessions were not church as many people would describe it the young people began to call the time ‘Holy Hour’ and in talking about it with others they would describe it as their church.

The Sunday evening sessions became established in the weekly pattern with the park being a prime venue. Gradually meetings have started to take place in peoples’ homes too. The prayer ministry to individuals is also developing.

As JAC came under the Cutting Edge Ministries umbrella later than the rest of the projects it is still in early stages of development.
BECOMING ESTABLISHED
This section explores some of the wider and longer term issues that have emerged as the new churches seek to be recognised as individual churches. It will look at specific issues and where appropriate offer examples from the projects.

Allowing the Vision to mature
As has already been mentioned, in seeking support from Cutting Edge Ministries each person had to present their vision for a church and how they saw that vision being realised. Those who presented their visions did so with passion and in some cases that passion has been the driving force to make things happen. However in allowing the vision to grow there has been a fundamental question of how far to hold on to and protect the original vision and how much to let go as new ideas or possibilities emerge.

Whilst there are a few people who propose new ideas and are able to support them with a vision to enable the idea to come to fruition, once an idea is in the open there are often people who want to adapt it. This can indeed be enormously constructive. Often a new pair of eyes on something will spot something that the originator had missed. However there are also those who might like to adapt the vision along their own preferred lines and seek to influence change against their own agenda. In most cases there would be a genuine belief that the amended approach would be for the greater good but there may also be an alternative agenda which moves things away from the original vision. One of the tasks of the Project Director was to work with the project leaders to enable them to work through external influences to understand the implications of them in relation to the vision.

An example of different facets of this issue can be seen by looking at the development of i-church. i-church is unique in the Cutting Edge experience in that it is the only project put forward where the leader of the new church was not to be the vision holder. This inevitably left plenty of opportunity for influence and variation. In the early days when the vision was being developed and prior to the church being opened a small steering group was set up. People joined this group out of interest in the project but some also came with their own idea as to how the project should be pursued. One specific example was in relation to the spirituality of i-church. From the outset it was envisaged that it would be based on a Benedictine spirituality and this was central to the vision. When the small steering group was established there were those who questioned if this was the
right way forward. Whilst there was agreement that part of i-church could be Benedictine there was a parallel suggestion that there could be different spiritual dimensions within the overall concept. Whilst this may not be impossible in the long run to have tried to develop too much in parallel would not only have been a mammoth task but may well have caused confusion among those seeking to join.

Another interesting issue with i-church was the public interest which with the benefit of hindsight did influence the vision and remedial action had to be taken to reassert the vision. In the original vision i-church was imagined to be a small community. It was to welcome visitors but the community itself was not anticipated to be larger than about thirty people. In the event the interest in i-church was so great that people were queuing in cyberspace to join. All those involved were astounded by the interest and so encouraged by it that the implications of a larger membership than envisaged were initially overlooked. It was when the doors were temporarily closed that the leaders were able to re-establish their vision.

In another of the projects members of the new church came with their own ideas for how the church should be developed. Although the ideas put forward were sound in their own right they seriously challenged both the vision and the leadership of a fledgling church. In this situation the new members left the church feeling disenfranchised. This destabilised the young church for a while. Again with the benefit of hindsight perhaps the vision could have been more overtly articulated and new members encouraged to be sensitive to working with it in the early days rather than seeking to influence changing it.

Whilst these two examples suggest that the vision should be held onto, other projects illustrate that a process of trial and reflection can lead to a reworked and stronger vision. Contemplative Fire and hOME offer examples of this.

The new hOME community did not start with a clear vision of its own identity. However as a thinking community it set about on a period of exploration which led to the development of its own identify. As it explored its theology it realised that it did not necessarily agree with the parent, the church under whose wing it was being nurtured. Whilst this in itself is neither unusual or necessarily a problem the vision for the direction for growth that the hOME community began to develop was also not in harmony with the ideas of the parent church.
Uneasiness developed between them which ended in a mutual decision that it was untenable for them to continue to coexist.

After about 18 months the new community set out to find a new base, which it did not far away in east Oxford. At the time the split was very difficult for both sides, but especially for the fledgling community. The parting of the ways was in many ways like a divorce with financial issues among those that needed to be worked out. Over time the rift began to heal and the new community set out to re-establish itself and understand more clearly what it was about.

For Contemplative Fire the developing vision was less traumatic. It established a structured process for ongoing discernment of the vision so that working together the members of the growing community worked alongside the vision holder to enhance the original vision.

Sometimes practical circumstances influenced the vision and led to change that was simply an alternative way of doing things rather than detracting from the ethos of what the vision set out to achieve. For example Discovery Days set out with the idea that there would be one day a week that was the central focus of the church. There would be a long and full ‘discovery day’ which would then spill out into other expressions of the church. It was not long before it became apparent that focusing on one day was not the best way forward. The central ideas of the vision were still pursued but in a different time frame.

The lesson from this is to be mindful of the vision at every step along the way. It is important not to be closed to ideas and suggestions but to evaluate them against the purpose. It may be that the vision holder is not the best person to undertake this evaluation as they may be too close to it. It is also important not to be so open to change that the original concept is lost. This is an area where the accompaniers can offer particular support as a sounding board. There is also an important issue to consider in relation to settling in one place and building alliances too soon. There may be good reasons for a new community to coexist with an established community in the early days but the new community needs to be given space to grow and develop its own ideas.
Leadership within the new churches

Effective leadership is a concern for all churches and especially so when there is something new to get up and running. Often the people with a vision for a new church are entrepreneurs and have specific skills which enable them to drive something forward. Whilst they may also have other leadership skills this is not necessarily the case. The skills needed to lead others, to delegate effectively to others, to include and involve others in a meaningful way, to set things up to allow for them to step back or move on, are another set of skills.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the vision holder can want to hold the vision close to their chest and be directive over the way in which it is brought to life. There is often a tendency to want to do everything themselves to make sure that it is done in the way they imagine and to the standard that they desire. However, if the church is to grow, at some stage it will be necessary to share the leadership. Whilst this is obviously linked with the issue above over holding to the vision there are some separate issues to be explored within this.

The problem may be exacerbated by the fact that in the early days it is not only possible for the project leaders to do everything themselves, but indeed this may be the only option if anything is to happen. Thus a routine is established and certain tasks naturally fall to the project leader. As things grow help is needed and helpers will want to work in their own way or bring their ideas into play. This can, of course, be of great value. It can also be a cause of friction.

If there is to be a smooth transition to shared leadership issues around sharing the vision and growing leaders alongside will be critical. In Contemplative Fire the project leader spent a great deal of time sharing ideas with others and then reflecting on the ideas in the light of comments and refining them accordingly. Through this process others began to capture the vision and leaders emerged who could take the vision out to others. Initially the project leader tried to be at every event or meeting that the church held but again as things grew this became a real strain and he realised that he not only needed to but also could allow others to lead things. Hence in this case leadership emerged through an inclusive style in the early days.

In mayBe the community focused itself around weekly fellowship with a meal together, worship and discussion. It had a very distinctive style which was very much the vision of the project leader. As the size of the community grew questions arose over whether the community could continue to meet as one
group. This was a serious challenge to the group as much of its value to its members was the sharing fellowship of a close knit community. If the group was too large something of this was lost but to split into two groups would give rise to a different set of issues. In addition, when considering two groups the project leader felt that he needed to be at both meetings to encourage consistency and thus a unity through his presence. This was a challenge not only in terms of time but also with regard to sharing leadership. In the end it was decided to break into three groups with different leaders for each group. Whilst this inevitably changed the dynamics, having three groups rather than two was much more healthy and avoided any ‘us and them’ issues. The individual groups come together for a larger worship gathering at regular intervals.

Leadership and Authorisation
Over the five year period of the Cutting Edge Ministries work the leadership of the communities has evolved. Whilst the issue of sharing leadership with initial members was important the question of calls to vocations in the new churches began to emerge. The people who were attracted to the new churches did not necessarily identify with the traditional structures of the church yet the exploration of calls to authorised ministry and the training schemes available tended to focus around a more traditional parish ministry. There were a number of issues within this.

Firstly exploring a call to authorised ministry. In one sense the call to authorised ministry within a new expression of church is no different from a call to a traditional church. The call is to ministry itself rather than the type of church. However for people who have no background in traditional church the processes set up for helping people to explore a call to authorised ministry may seem alien. Similarly, those trained to help people explore a call to authorised ministry found the language used and the vision expressed by people coming from new style churches unfamiliar to them. Indeed concern was expressed by people in the Diocesan vocations team that they felt unable to fully understand and appreciate what was being articulated to them.

Secondly, the training for authorised ministry, by and large, comes from a traditional standpoint. Whilst much of what is taught would be necessary for any form of authorised ministry the underlying structure and approach was not geared to people coming from something new and different. For example those coming to training from a fresh expression of church have a different approach to things like liturgy. However they may also underestimate the importance of quite
traditional approaches to pastoral rites such as baptism and funerals. Whilst people often come to a new style church for the particular approach it offers week by week, when it comes to specific events in life they often call for a more traditional and structured approach. This was certainly the experience for some of our projects. For example when young parents attending different Discovery Days activities wanted their children baptised the local parish church was called on to provide a venue. It seemed the ‘right place’ to go.

By their nature the new churches often find that the average age of the members is lower than in many parish churches. Thus it may be that when someone dies the Minister finds themselves dealing with the funeral of a young person rather than someone who has led a full life to old age. The training – both theoretical and practical – in such areas of ministry comes into its own in such situations but until the circumstances arise the minister in training may not see the value of such training.

These issues can be easily addressed if they are recognised and adjustments made. Indeed over the duration of the Cutting Edge initiative some changes began to take place in the structures of the church which started to address some of these issues. For example the category of ‘Pioneer Minister’ was identified and recognised in the national selection process.

As the Cutting Edge Ministries initiative was moving to its next stage the Church of England developed ‘Mission Orders.’ This is a way to recognize new forms of church within the structures of the Church of England that do not fit into the existing parish system. It would have been interesting and useful if this had been around at the time of setting up some of the Cutting Edge Ministries and certainly seems a positive step forward for work such as this.

A further concern for future leadership comes when the new church is led by a lay team. These might be house churches that grow in their own way and then seek recognition as a church. Do they then need one of their membership to become licenced? What happens when they want to have a rite of initiation and to celebrate holy communion in their fellowship? What are the implications for oversight and financing these churches? Are they simply excluded from the Anglican church and set themselves up as Free Churches? There are many questions in this area to be explored and perhaps the most fundamental is whether all churches need ordained leadership? There are various implications whether the answer to this is yes or no.
Integrating into the Diocesan Structure
When the Cutting Edge initiative was set up discussions with deaneries and parishes were part of the initial conversations, and indeed where there were objections to a project being located in a particular place alternative locations were found. However the nature of the projects meant that they did not naturally integrate with the parishes and deaneries within which they sat. Some of the projects were based on a network which was geographically spread and thus did not sit in one location. With oversight of the project from both the Cutting Edge team and from the Bishop and with support from the Project Director and the Accompaniers the Area Deans did not have the same role with them as with the other clergy in their area. As a result the projects sponsored largely sat adjacent to the main Diocesan Structure.

A more deep seated issue that emerged as the new churches began to take shape was over their place in the structure. Questions were asked as to whether they would be best to be part of the deanery in their specific geographical location where appropriate or whether they should have a Chapter for these projects on their own? This was an issue about oversight and support and also about representation. In terms of oversight in the early days the Bishop was in direct contact with the project leaders on a regular basis, much in the same way that an Area Dean might be in the usual course of life. In the longer term it became apparent that this was not sustainable. Whilst any new venture will take more Episcopal time than something that has been established for a while the availability of the Bishop for day to day oversight was a concern. It was also a concern that these new churches were at the same time in the limelight and also on the edge. They were in the limelight as they were new and different and many people wanted to look and see what was going on. They were on the edge also because they were different and because they were attracting attention. There was a mixture of admiration and envy from various quarters.

Without a place in the Diocesan structure the projects did not have a voice at either Deanery or Diocesan Synod. Whereas most churches could send representatives to the Synods to voice their concerns and share their opinions, for these new churches there was no allocation of places in the synodical structure. Thus although the clergy leaders did sometimes try to join in with the local clergy Chapter and had a right to be at Synod meetings themselves, the church itself was not represented.
Then, of course, there is the sensitive issue of money and parish share. Finance for the new churches has been a major concern and this has been considered separately. However little was said about when they might start to make a contribution back to the very structure that has enabled their being and seen them through their infancy. Parish Share and raising money is a difficult issue for many parishes and events in recent years relating to church finances have not eased the situation. Among the parish churches there were those who felt that they were subsidising the new churches and perhaps unfairly. If these new churches are within an area and were drawing on the resources available to all churches, and if their numbers are to be included in the headcount, then they would be receiving from and should give to the Diocese. So the argument goes! The critical issue then is at what point and at what level do the new churches make a contribution.

**Establishing the Structure of the new Church**

At start up the new churches the projects set out to establish had no predetermined or required structure. They started with a blank sheet and mostly with one person. As they began to grow the need for some sort of organisation grew too. The first person that they most needed to appoint was a treasurer! As the membership grew there was a need for others to help in organising things. Whilst there were often volunteers to undertake the practical tasks to help the group function there were organisational tasks to be done too.

The fact that the Diocese offered a banking facility to the new churches in the early days has already been mentioned, as has the fact that was appreciated. However, whilst financial independence had been part of the agreement from the beginning there was reluctance, in some cases, to take responsibility for finances. There seemed to be a misunderstanding over this. From the perspective of the Steering Group managing their own finances gave a degree of independence and control and was an expression of trust – being left to get on with the work. However it transpired that from the perspective of the leaders this could be, and in one case was, taken as lack of concern. It was perceived that they were being cast off and left to fend for themselves. This is probably two sides of the same coin and it is interesting to reflect on the different perspectives.
THE BENEFIT OF HINDSIGHT
This section begins to question what we would seek to do differently if we did this over again.

Hindsight is a very exact science and given that perspective it is easy to think that problems which we encountered along the way should have been foreseen.

Planning and Finance
A key part of the whole Cutting Edge initiative has been to monitor our own work to capture the learning. We did not start with a nicely worked out plan but rather responded to circumstances and worked things out as we went along. Some might suggest this a foolhardy approach but even if we had waited and planned there is no certainty that we would have foreseen some of the issues that emerged over the years. Indeed had we waited we might have lost some of the initiatives taken.

From the perspective of the Steering Group there has been much emphasis on the organisational side of the ministries with the spiritual development being the focus of the work of the individual ministries themselves. This in itself may have been a cause of tension with project leaders from time to time. Whilst they were trying to focus on their community and the things that needed to be put in place for the spiritual heart to grow, we were asking for budgets, plans and reviews. However rather than apologise for the businesslike approach this time around, if the exercise were to be repeated there would be benefit in a much stronger focus on the organisational aspects of the work in the early days.

The value of business plans has become apparent as has the need for a thorough and realistic assessment of costs. If a project leader is coming from a traditional church setting it is easy to make assumptions that certain things will automatically be in place. As far as the Steering Group were concerned each project started with a blank sheet. In many ways this was an attraction – a release from preconceived notions of ‘church’. However it has also been one of the greatest causes of concern, heartache, and frustration. Sometimes simple things such as the cost of reproducing paperwork were overlooked. Many churches have a photocopier and so these things are taken for granted. Personal expenses were another issue. In the new setting expenses had to be claimed from the limited resources available to the new community whereas previously expenses such as mileage would be put through the PCC.
At times there appeared to be a tension between planning and faith. If plans are too detailed and practical aspects given too much concern does this represent a lack of faith? However no business would regard planning as a limitation on creativity and opportunity for growth. Thus plans are not counter to allowing an openness to the guiding of God. What they do is to help focus thinking to make sure that there is clear direction and, hopefully, no unwelcome surprises on the financial front.

In our original criteria it was envisaged that communities would be self-sustaining within 5-7 years. Experience has shown that this is quite a short time frame and it has been difficult for some. What is also clear is that if communities are to become self-sustaining there needs to be a degree of financial independence right from the start. The financial footing for each of the projects was quite different but our experience has shown that front-loading grants, whilst easing early pain, created difficulties in the long run. An element of self-sufficiency from the outset is helpful for the longer term establishment of a community.

In addition to the need for some self-sufficiency there is also a need for each community to take responsibility for managing its money from the beginning. What happened is that the Diocese held money in ring-fenced accounts for some of the projects. Grant money was put into it on a regular basis and expenses paid from it. Whilst the Diocese was both willing and able to offer this service in hindsight it may have been debilitating. There are two reasons for this. Firstly there is a need for the communities to take ownership for their finances from the beginning. Whilst they were given regular statements not actually having to work out the figures meant that there was some distance from them. Secondly it was soon discovered that most of the communities would need to seek charitable status and to enable them to do this they needed their own bank accounts. Thus if this had been arranged early on it would have been one less thing to deal with among the paperwork of registering for charitable status. It is perhaps worth mentioning that on realising that charitable status was needed additional financial help was given to enable this to happen.

In future the need for charitable status should be considered in the early planning stages and this got underway as soon as possible. All Parochial Church Councils have charitable status which, among other things, enables them to benefit from gift-aid contributions.
Support Mechanisms
As has been mentioned in the section on ‘Getting the projects up and running’ part of the original scheme was that each project leader would have someone to accompany them on their journey and someone else to work with the Project Director to review their work at regular intervals. It was envisaged that the accompanier would be a combination of mentor, spiritual friend and coach who would be in regular contact with the project leader.

The role of the accompanier met with varying degrees of success. Initially the Cutting Edge team tried to match accompaniers to projects rather than leaving people to find their own accompanier. There was a deliberate policy to seek to match people with someone who could offer constructive challenge as well as support. There was a perceived risk that if people chose an already known friend there may have been barriers to setting up the relationship on the envisaged footing.

In one of the projects the role seemed difficult to establish and before sufficient time had elapsed to allow it to develop the accompanier unfortunately became ill. In another of the projects the role initially began well. The accompanier then became quite involved in the ministry itself. This lead to lack of clarity between roles and the relationship became quite difficult. In yet another two accompaniers were identified, one external to the community established and one who became a member of the community.

Although the latter model was not planned it does seem to have worked best. The combination of the internal and external perspective - the everyday involvement and the more distance on looking - and having three-way conversations between them seems to make for a good support process enabling and encouraging robust reflection combined with genuine support. This is certainly a model that would be encouraged in the future.

On reflection it may have been helpful to establish the accompanier role on a stronger footing in all cases if there had been a protocol or agreement between the project leader and the accompanier. Such an agreement could have set down the nature and frequency of meetings and thus helped to avoid misunderstandings and confusions.

In addition to the accompanier there was a review process, details of which are in Appendix 2. The task has been essentially an annual review looking at the
business plan and objectives, reflecting on what has transpired during the preceding year and helping to set objectives for the next phase. The review was undertaken formally with an external person working with the Cutting Edge Ministries Project Director. There was a different external reviewer for each project but the same person worked on each specific project each year. The reason for seeking different people for each project was to work with someone who had experience or specialist knowledge on the particular type of ministry that they could bring to bear when looking at the work. This process has generally been helpful. The same process was repeated each year to allow for a consistent approach with comparable responses.

Another area of support that is important is that similar to the support received in Chapter. The early suggestion from the project leaders that they might form their own Chapter was rejected for particular reasons. Firstly, it was agreed that it was important for those running projects to link into the Chapter in their local parish network. Integration with the local Chapter helped to break through this with a sharing of issues and concerns on all sides and the realisation that the ministries were different rather than one easier than another.

Secondly, if there was to be another support group outside of the local Chapter it became apparent that the different project leaders needed to talk with people running similar types of ministries to themselves. Being innovative ministries there was not a readily identifiable and established network for project leaders to simply join. However over time each identified like-minded people with whom they found it helpful to share ideas and discuss concerns.

Despite the need to seek out people with similar ideas it was clear that the project leaders did have something to offer each other. Two opportunities were created to encourage sharing between those collectively involved in the initiative.

Firstly the Cutting Edge Steering Group together with project leaders and their accompaniers met together for an annual retreat. This was usually over a 24 hour or 36 hours period and allowed for a concentrated time of sharing and update, of worship and reflection and of discussing common issues that were arising for project leaders. These retreats became an important part of the work during which there was quality time to work through concerns in detail. Much of what has been reported in this write-up has come from these times together. Bringing together the Steering Group and the project leaders allowed for consideration of a wide range of issues from practical to theological. At these
gathering a Facilitator was invited to be present who would listen to the stories and discussions and reflect back to the group the tale they were recounting. This was enormously helpful as it drew out issues that might otherwise have been lost or put to one side.

A second opportunity was created for the project leaders to engage in some academic thinking through a series of seminar group meetings at a theological college. Whilst there was great enthusiasm for this initiative and some excellent discussions began in the early days the initiative did not survive among others pressures and commitments.

A further point to note with regard to support mechanisms is the distance that developed between the project leaders and the ministry support structures already in place within the Diocese. This was neither deliberate nor planned. With the existence of the Cutting Edge set up it was simply overlooked and the links were not made. It was only as the whole Fresh Expressions initiative grew and much greater interest taken in this whole field that it was realised that this had happened.

Whilst considering support it is important to note the wide array of support that has come from those in the legal, financial and housing departments of the Diocese. Especially in the early days, there were constant questions arising that needed specialist advice from experts in these fields.

Finally it is worth noting that the overall amount of support needed for these projects from the Diocese was greater than anticipated. Whilst not resenting it, Bishop Colin and other members of the senior team within the Diocese found that he was giving a disproportionate amount of time to these ministries when compared with other parishes. It is clear that the support mechanisms for those embarking in new forms of ministry need to be comprehensive to ensure that they are given all the help possible to enable them to set up the community imagined in their original visions.
ISSUES FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

During the course of this work many questions have arisen and thankfully many answers have been forthcoming. Some questions and issues that require further exploration remain – the process is ongoing and others may be able to offer thoughts and ideas. Some of these are outside of the scope of this story and are mentioned here so that they are not lost altogether and in the hope that others may explore them further.

Is there a particular type of person for these ministries?
As has been mentioned when this initiative was started ‘Fresh Expressions’ had not emerged as a distinctive area of ministry. Neither had the idea of Pioneer Ministers. When projects were selected to be part of the Cutting Edge initiative the actual person putting the idea forward was a critical factor. The track record of each potential leader was considered as was whether the Steering Group believed that they had the personal characteristics to see their idea through.

At that time we did not have any specific set of skills and characteristics to work with. Certain things did arise in relation to training, experience, and personality over the years. It became very clear that anyone leading a new ministry still needed the robust all round training that all ministers benefit from in the usual pattern of training to enable them to deal with the range of pastoral issues and circumstances that may arise.

During the life of the Cutting Edge work the concept of Pioneer Ministers was developed and some of the issues we had encountered identified. A working party was put together in the national church and specific criteria were identified as necessary for someone seeking to enter a pioneer ministry. Some of their reflections are interesting in the light of the experience of those involved in the Cutting Edge work. For example it was suggested that those involved in the selection of Pioneer Ministers will need to be aware that those coming forward for such a ministry may not be committed to the more traditional expressions of ministry and that this in itself does not undermine their calling to ordained ministry. This is certainly something echoed in the Cutting Edge experience. Issues associated with the particular stresses that a pioneering ministry may bring with it and the lack of traditional support mechanisms are also identified for special consideration in selection. The table below gives the specific criterion
identified for those testing a calling to Pioneer Ministry and are taken in the context of the other criteria for selection for ministry.

**Criterion H Mission and Evangelism** states that 'Ministers are called to work in mission in a variety of ways. Candidates should therefore demonstrate an awareness of both the missionary impulse and the missionary context of their potential ministry. They should be able to show an awareness of the interaction between gospel and culture and demonstrate a desire to be part of the re-shaping of the church for mission. Bishops' Advisers should explore with candidates their theological understanding of mission, appropriate to their level of learning, and of the key features of today's world, exploring particular challenges to the gospel from contemporary culture.' All of this should be well developed in candidates sponsored for pioneering mission.

**Core Elements**
- Vision for planting fresh expressions of church within contemporary culture
- An authentic, integrated understanding of the particular ministry envisaged
- Capacity to innovate and initiate
- Mature and well developed devotional life
- Well developed abilities to initiate change and enable others to face it in a flexible, balanced and creative way
- Demonstrable maturity and robustness to face the demands of pioneering mission and ministry
- Self-motivation
- Well-developed understanding of the interaction between gospel and culture
- Clear vision of the place of their envisaged ministry within the wider church's response to God's mission to the world
- The ability and desire to work in a team and collaboratively
- Commitment to reshaping the church for mission

These core elements certainly resonate with our experience. The vision, spiritual maturity and self motivation are critical at the outset. Some of the other criteria have developed in project leaders as the work has progressed. For example the ability and desire to work in a team grew for some over time. The pioneering nature of the work meant that in the early days some had to go it alone and team working was not at the fore. Similarly the understanding of the particular ministry and its place in the wider church emerged in some cases over time as has been reported. Whilst not entirely mutually exclusive an individual who has the capability and inspiration to innovate is not always the person most drawn to
team working and collaboration. These are wide concepts and care needs to be exercised in assessing the strengths of a potential pioneer minister against traditional understandings of the terms.

**Language**

Language emerged as an area of concern in the early days of the churches growing. The question as to what to call these new ‘churches’ arose quite early on. The word ‘church’ can be negative to some people especially if they have an experience of traditional church which has left them disenfranchised or disillusioned. In one of the early retreats together this issue was raised and discussed. It was agreed that it was more helpful to describe what is being formed as a community rather than as a church.

The debate on language went on to look at the language used *within* the new ‘church’. This was a particular issue where people joining perceived themselves to be joining a community rather than a church. Most found that the language traditionally used in church and in liturgy did not work in the different contexts and thus began to explore their own language, a language which emerged from the community and was not simply inherited ‘church’ language - which can come with ‘baggage’. However it was also realised that changing language needs to be done with great care as it may not just be about losing tradition, (which could be good or bad), but also about losing what is essentially Christian. Change of language can also lead to change of meaning which may be a slow inadvertent shift but over time may be a move away from the core.

**Exploration of monastic models**

In several of the new Christian communities there has been a strong attraction to monastic models. However monasteries are ‘closed’ communities, which is counter to the vision for the new churches. There are religious orders where structures are, in many ways, very open and flexible (such as the Franciscans) and themes and patterns of these religious orders have been a source of the pattern of life for some of the Cutting Edge communities. There have been adaptations in order to sustain the vision for the new community. It would be interesting to explore further both the attraction to the monastic life style and the variations required in the current context.
Mission Element
Establishing new Christian communities has been seen as a way of reaching out to those not drawn to a more traditional model of church. However in the early days there was some doubt, shared by the wider church, as to whether people are actually drawn to faith through these new initiatives. The new communities established through the Cutting Edge initiative have been attractive to those who have moved away from traditional church and to those still within the traditional church as an additional dimension to their spiritual life. Fewer people seemed to actually come to faith through these new communities. Wider experience within the church (not just the Anglican Church) seems to indicate that people come to faith through more traditional contact with church and then move out to different expressions of church for their spiritual nurture and growth. This is an important area for further exploration in the context of mission and has huge implications for both the traditional church and for new expressions of church.

Within the Cutting Edge Projects it seems that as time has gone on the ability to attract those with no church background has grown. It is beyond the scope of this report to explore why this is but it may be that as they become more established themselves there is something perceived to be more solid that attracts people.

Measures of success
The question as to how one measures the success of these new Christian communities was often raised. For some in the traditional church there has been an expectation that there would be a Sunday gathering and that the existence and size of that would indicate the degree of success of the new community. However for many in new communities such a gathering was exactly what they did not want! Whilst recognising that Sunday is the traditional Christian Sabbath and thus the day for Christians to meet together, the demands of contemporary life are such that it is not always possible to meet on that day. One can argue about priorities, but it is part of the very essence of these new communities that they enable people to join rather than put up barriers.

Similarly whilst the number of people in the congregation is often taken as a measure of success in a traditional parish setting within these new communities the depth of relationship is often considered to be more important than the number of people involved. Of course, a critical mass is needed for long term sustainability, but the overall number in itself is not considered as a crucial measure. It is possible to regard these new communities as small and marginal
seeds of hope or alternatively as far reaching examples of change and transformation which could have great impact on society. Perhaps it is necessary to challenge whether we need large and powerful churches that have wider significance and command respect before we can consider there to be ‘success’. If we look at the situation within the new communities at the end of the period it is difficult to condemn them as unsuccessful; they have certainly been transformational in the lives of many whatever the size of individual gatherings.

On a similar note the question has been asked as to whether the communities can be considered to have been successful if they do not last for generations. The prevailing trend has been that churches are established to last indefinitely and to be a permanent sign of the presence of God. However in the case of these new communities is aiming for permanence appropriate? It may be that communities come together for a certain time and then disperse. This is particularly true if they are appealing to a specific social group bounded by a micro culture. If they have been of value to those in them during their life span can others deem them to have been a failure? Perhaps it is a good thing to be willing to close something down once it has achieved its task rather than seek to perpetuate something that in the long run can become a hindrance to effective mission.

Whilst many issues have arisen in the course of this work these are a few of the key ones that warrant further investigation.
IN CONCLUSION

As this initiative moves on to its next phase of life and the Steering Group is dissolved there is a great deal of reflection, much of which is contained within this report.

As we draw this phase to a close we entrust five new Christian communities to others within the Diocese. As has been discussed the communities are very different in shape and size and each continues to explore in its own way the nature of its individual calling and where its journey is leading. Each is growing at its own pace; but without doubt each is surely growing.

Many things have been learned along the way and the journey has not always been smooth and easy. With the benefit of hindsight it is easy to dwell on the mistakes and on what could have or should have been done. In writing this story mistakes have been highlighted in the hope that others may learn and not repeat them. In ending this write up it is important to record the positive learning too. The will and effort of many within the Diocese, lay and ordained, to help advise and support these communities, to grapple with problems as they have arisen and to work to find solutions, is an inspiration and offers hope for the future. Through the very existence of these new communities, which may well not have come into being without the encouragement of Cutting Edge, it has been demonstrated that it is possible to establish new Christian communities within the Anglican structure.

As was said at the very beginning the story of this work is a success story and there are now thriving new Christian communities that may not have existed had the Diocese of Oxford not had the foresight and courage to endorse the proposal and allow the Cutting Edge Ministries initiative to be set up. It is also a great encouragement to know that the wider church has watched and learned.

Angie Paterson
Project Director – Cutting Edge Ministries
July 2008
AFTERWORD FROM THE REV’D DR STEVEN CROFT

The Cutting Edge Ministries project has been an inspiring initiative from beginning to end and in my view has had a very significant impact across the Church of England and beyond.

As this report indicates clearly, the Diocese of Oxford was ahead of the rest of the Church of England in realising the importance of new forms of church and investing wisely in helping these new communities to grow. At every stage the lessons learned within the diocese have helped to influence and shape the wider movement.

The stories of the different Cutting Edge projects and other similar initiatives in this diocese have been told and retold across the church in this country and elsewhere in the world. Many others have been inspired to begin similar adventures of faith. Other dioceses in particular have seen the need to begin to encourage fresh expressions of church in a strategic rather than a sporadic way. The remarkable individuals who had led the Cutting Edge initiatives themselves have all been generous with their time and encouragement to others and are a resource to the wider church.

Over the last four years the Church of England has attempted to develop policies and training at national level to encourage what we are now calling ordained and lay pioneer ministry. The experience and lessons of Cutting Edge has fed into that process. There are now over 50 pioneer ordinands recommended for training and over 500 people engaging with the one year part-time training course, Mission-shaped Ministry.

Over the same period, the Church of England nationally has developed new ways of affirming and recognising fresh expressions of church as part of parish, deanery and diocesan structures through a new device called a Bishop’s Mission Order. The different Cutting Edge projects all provided important test cases. As the different aspects of the Order were developed we were constantly asking “How would this work for Maybe, Contemplative Fire or i-church?”

There has been a rich seam of learning for the whole church therefore in Oxford’s experience both in the lessons learned by the individual projects and by the lessons from the initiative as a whole, so ably summarized in this report. One of the challenges for the diocese in the next five years will not only be to continue
to sustain these new initiatives but to enable the lessons learned to spread across every deanery and parish so that many different fresh expressions of church grow as a normal part of diocesan life.

So, if I may say so, thank you to the Diocese of Oxford for Cutting Edge ministries and thanks particularly to Bishop Colin, to Angie Paterson and to the project leaders themselves for being willing to share what you have learned. The impact on the church as a whole and the fruit of your faith has been very significant indeed.

The Revd. Dr. Steven Croft
Archbishops’ Missioner and Team Leader of Fresh Expressions.
Cutting Edge Ministries Project Accompanying and Appraisal

By definition projects funded by the Cutting Edge Ministries Fund are new and experimental. In order to give these projects the best chance of getting off the ground the Steering Group have committed to offer both a framework of support and accountability and also a process of mentoring and review.

There will therefore be a number of people involved in each project, each working to do all they can to make the projects work according to the agreed criteria.

Accompanying Projects

The role of Accompaniers is to be along side Project Leaders to ask them pertinent questions, to unpick assumptions, and to help them ensure that they have thought through identifiable issues. Accompaniers would:

- Listen - they would seek to understand the vision for the new ministry as envisioned by the Project Leader. They would not seek to change the vision.
- Question - having understood the vision they would ask questions to help clarify thinking or to address any concerns identified. Questions may be in
a wide range of areas depending on the needs of the particular project and the expertise of the Accompanier.

- Reflect - feed back impressions and observations to Project Leader
- Discuss - help Project Leader to unblock thoughts
- Signpost - point to other sources of specific help

This is likely to be an on-going circle of activity over a period of time.

Each project may have one or more Accompaniers depending on need and specific areas of expertise of the Accompaniers. The Cutting Edge Project Director also acts as an Accompanier working to do all possible to help the new ministry blossom and grow. Thus it is expected that all Accompaniers will keep in contact with the Project Director to enable her to help this to happen. It is also hoped to capture the learning from the projects and so appropriate ways to do this need to be agreed.

In the Accompanying context no judgements will be made as to the overall success of the project. Accompaniers, other than the Project Director will not be part of the Appraisal process. However Accompaniers may wish to guide the Project Leader in preparing for appraisal. This is to allow the Accompanier and Project Leader to have open discussions in which all ideas may be shared even if only to be discarded; and in airing ideas and possibilities to be free from any form of judgement.

**Review and Appraisal of Projects**

As each project gets underway stages of development will be identified. Projects will be reviewed on a regular basis in order to ensure that they stay on track. Early identification of problems often aids finding solutions. In one sense this will be a constant informal process. However it is helpful to have a structure in place to keep check on this. Projects will therefore be reviewed in the following timescales:

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<th>Timeframe</th>
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<td>After 3 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>After 6 months</td>
<td>with Project Director</td>
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<td>After 1 year</td>
<td>with Appraisal Team*</td>
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<td>After 18 months</td>
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<td>After 2 years</td>
<td>with Appraisal Team</td>
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<td>After 2.5 years</td>
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* The Appraisal Team will consist of the Project Director, one or more representatives from the Cutting Edge Steering Group, and other people selected for particular expertise as required by the particular project.
The Annual Review with the Appraisal Team will be more formal than the interim reviews. A report will be required (guidelines to be issued) and a financial statement of accounts will be required. This is required not only for the Steering Group but also for the Church Commissioners.

After each Review or Appraisal the Project Director will report back to the Steering Group. The Steering Group may make recommendations for particular support or development or remedial action.
Cutting Edge Ministries Review Process

Purpose

- To review the particular ministry against the original vision and proposal made to the Cutting Edge Ministries Steering Group.
- To plan for the next phase of growing the new ministry.

The review process involves the completion of an initial report by the project leader. This will then be shared with the Review Team in advance of meeting together to discuss it. The Review Team will include a range of people who can offer different perspectives on the work. The exact group may vary but will include the vision holder, the accompanier, the CEM Project Director, and an external appraiser.

It is intended that this proposed process is undertaken in an appreciative style - using constructive and collaborative conversations to explore what has already happened within the life of the ministry and to discern what will give it life in the next phase.

Process

The report is structured based on a five key areas:

A. Part 1 Review of work since last review
   Part 2 Review of new ‘church’
B. Choices for the next stage
C. Objective setting
D. Review of support
E. Practical/personal issues

In recognition that every project is different and to allow for some flexibility in the review to meet the needs of different projects an outline of key areas has been produced rather than a set questionnaire. In order to ensure that the process is robust all of the sub-questions should be considered, and where it is appropriate questions may be amalgamated. Whilst the review needs to be thorough it is also important that it is a constructive exercise and provides an opportunity to step back and reflect on work which has, in most cases, been very intensive. To this is end additional information may be included at the discretion of the project leader.
SECTION A Part 1 - Review of work since last review
In this section you should provide an overview of the work that you have undertaken in the course of the review period.

- Give a summary of the key activities during the period indicating the proportion of your total work that each represents.
- What have you accomplished during this period?
- At the end of this period are you where you hoped to be, not as far forward as you had hoped, ahead of yourself? (Consider this in relation to your original plan and in the light of any previous review)
- What has gone well? Is this as hoped or better than expected?
- What has not gone well? In hindsight could you have anticipated this or could it have been avoided?
- What have you enjoyed and/or found most rewarding about this work, and why?
- Which parts have you least enjoyed and/or found most difficult?
- What have you learnt from this period of work?
- In the future, what might you do differently, and why?

You should also review your budget for the project.

- How does actual expenditure compare with budget?
- Are there any items that you did not budget for that have been necessary to add in?
- Is the income stream as projected? If there is a shortfall and how might you be able to bridge the gap?
- What budget adjustments are necessary for the foreseeable life of the project?

SECTION A Part 2 - Review of new ‘church’
Whilst Part 1 of the review focuses on the vision and your own work this section focuses particularly on the outcome of your work and should also include input from members of your church or community. The sections provided to guide your thinking are ‘Seven Marks of Healthy Church’ from Robert Warren’s Healthy Churches Handbook. These are specifically aimed at traditional parish churches and thus some of the sections will be more pertinent in this scenario than others. However these are offered for two reasons. Firstly they are all important things to consider and secondly using the same criteria will provide a useful comparison between more traditional approaches to being church and the innovative ministries that we are sponsoring.

You are asked to consider the following sections:
1. energised by faith
2. outward-looking focus
3. seeks to find out what God wants
4. faces the cost of change and growth
5. operates as a community
6. makes room for all
7. does a few things and does them well

More detail is provided on each of these in the Appendix and there is also a simply chart that may be used to ask others to express their perceptions. This could provide some useful feedback for you and help in structuring the new phase of your work. (Note: The appendix was supplied as part of this process. For further details see ‘Healthy Churches Handbook’ by Robert Warren)

SECTION B Choices for the next stage
This section provides a bridge between your reviews, looking back at what you have done, considering where things have got to within the new church and looking forward to the next phase.

In this section you should consider any options that are before you for the future direction of the project.

- Is the project in line with your original plan? If not what has changed?
- If the plan has changed are there alternative options to consider? If so what are they and what are the implications of each?

SECTION C Objective setting
In the light of the previous two sections, in this section you should reassess your objectives for the project and particularly identify specific objectives for the coming year or next phase of the project (whichever is most appropriate).

When identifying your objectives you should also identify how you will measure your success.

SECTION D Review of support
This section particular relates to your Accompanier. This will be a person who has been asked to journey with you in your work in a semi-formal relationship rather than your personal network.

In reflecting on your journey with you accompanier:
  a. What do you find helpful that you would like them to continue doing?
  b. Is there anything that you would like them to stop doing?
  c. Is there anything that you would like them to start doing?

SECTION E Practical and/personal issues
This section is designed to enable you to reflect on issues that may impinge on your work. There may have been changes which have added to the challenge (for better or for worse).
For many people embarking on these new projects has involved a change in personal circumstances for themselves and also for members of their family. This may have included a house move, change in financial management (eg from regular monthly income to managing lumps sums); loss of colleagues, changes in work patterns etc... Transitions can drain or generate energy and thus it is important to acknowledge these aspects of life.

- What practical changes have been necessary for you?
- How would you describe the effect of these changes on you?
- Could anything have been done to make transitions flow more smoothly for you?
- What support do you have from others and how does this help you?
'Cutting Edge Ministries' was a specific initiative, set up by the Diocese of Oxford in 2002, to encourage and support new forms of emerging church.

The initiative developed in response to the Diocesan 'Sharing Life' strategy for evangelism and committed the Diocese to a policy of encouraging and supporting new forms of emerging church. Funding from the Church Commissioners for mission enabled the first few initiatives to be supported financially as well as in other ways. The aim was to have eight 'emerging' churches by 2010 which would be self-sustaining in their life, finance and ministry and which would act as an inspiration to others. By the end of 2004 five new ministries were already receiving support from Cutting Edge Ministries.

From the outset of the Cutting Edge Project it was agreed that the experience and learning would be written up so that we could share it with others within and beyond the boundaries of the Diocese of Oxford. This document tells the story from the perspective of the Project Director whose task it was to work with the Steering Group to develop and oversee the whole initiative; to work with those coming forward with a new vision for ministry to try to ensure that they have things in place to give the new communities the best possible chance of coming into being and to move towards being self-sustaining; and to build links with those trying to do similar things within the wider church. It is hoped that it will encourage others and enable them to learn from our experience.

‘The Cutting Edge Ministries project has been an inspiring initiative from beginning to end and in my view has had a very significant impact across the Church of England and beyond.’

Rev’d Dr Stephen Croft
ARCHBISHOPS’ MISSIONER AND TEAM LEADER OF FRESH EXPRESSIONS

This report is also available on the Diocesan website
www.oxford.anglican.org

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