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Who Goes There? Attendance at Fresh Expressions of Church in Relation to Psychological Type Preferences among Readers of the *Church Times*

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Author note

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Abstract

Fresh expressions of Church (FxC) is the term used to refer to a range of initiatives within the Church of England designed to move the church from maintenance to mission. Theoretically, those who attend such churches should present a different socio-psychological profile from those who attend traditional forms of Anglican worship. This idea was tested on a sample of 4485 *Church Times* readers who completed a wide-ranging questionnaire published in two editions of the weekly newspaper in 2013. The questionnaire included an item asking about attendance at FxC, alongside the Francis Psychological Type Scales. Compared with the rest of the sample, those who attended FxC were more likely to be female, more likely to be ordained, more likely to be under 60, and more likely to attend congregations of the evangelical rather than broad-church or Anglo-catholic traditions. For psychological type, attendees of both sexes showed a stronger preference for intuition over sensing, and for extraversion over introversion, compared with non-attendees. Among men but not women, attendees showed a stronger preference for perceiving over judging compared with non-attendees.

Keywords: Church of England; Francis Psychological Type Scales; Fresh Expressions; mission-shaped church; psychological type

Introduction

Fresh Expressions of Church (FxC[[1]](#footnote-2)) is a movement within the Anglican and Methodist churches in the UK that is aimed at re-imagining the ways in which Christians express their faith. The term was originally coined in the seminal Church of England report *Mission-shaped Church* (Archbishop's Council 2004), which arose from the wider movement that has attempted to move churches from ‘maintenance to mission’ (Rivers 2005; Warren 1995). The underlying notion expressed in this widely used catch-phrase is that mainstream churches have tended to put their energy and resources into servicing the needs of the worshipping community, notably in the provision of expensive buildings and professional clergy. The result has been the loss of contact with those outside the church, and the loss of the skills and structure required to service the work of mission. Shifting the focus to mission rather than maintenance is thought to be a return to the priorities of the first Christians (Alexander 2008; Dunn 2008), and a necessary response to the decline in mainstream church attendance (Barley 2008).

The report looked at the phenomenon of church planting, which at the time usually meant establishing congregations in locations other than in the parish church, but which nonetheless followed patterns of worship that were broadly in the Anglican tradition. The section on FxC referred to initiatives that were less tied to traditional notions of church, and which may or may not have involved acts of explicitly recognisable Christian worship. Some of the initiatives mentioned in the report included alternative worship communities, base ecclesial communities, café churches, multiple and midweek congregations. The key idea marshalled to link these disparate phenomena was that they were not merely new ways of church people meeting the ‘unchurched’, but new ways in which the church itself expressed its worshipping identity. Underlying the thinking of the report was the recognition of the effects of postmodernity on challenging the ‘meta-narrative’ of a more or less uniform and traditional expression of Christian identity in Anglicanism.

Since the report was published there has been a flourishing of FxC and writings on the movement, including critiques of it (Davison and Milbank 2010; Hull 2006; Nelstrop and Percy 2008; Croft 2008; Croft and Mobsby 2009). Recent research suggests there is now a wide variety of new forms of church, with significant growth in new starts since 2006 (Church Army's Research Unit 2013). Those who have criticised the initiative and its championing by the Church of England hierarchy have sought to uphold the parish system as the best expression of the Church of England, and warn of the dangers of a slide to congregationalism if gatherings of individuals with no sense of affiliation beyond themselves are considered to be churches (Davison and Milbank 2010).

Notwithstanding the theological and ecclesiological arguments that have surrounded FxC, there has been a great deal of interest from those who are concerned about the decline in attendance at traditional churches (Church Growth Research Programme 2013). The notion of mission over maintenance suggests that FxC should be offering ways in which those who are disillusioned with traditional churches, or who have never had contact with them, might find a place in which their particular faith can find a corporate expression. This idea is similar to the notion of Emerging Church, a movement with its roots in the United States (McLaren 2000, 2001, 2010; Marti and Ganiel 2014), which has tended to be a vehicle for Protestants to re-express faith in ways that would be unacceptable in mainstream evangelical churches. In addition, emerging churches aim to cater for people who would never be likely to come to faith through traditional churches by enabling the formation of worshipping communities that express religion in ways more familiar to postmodern rather than modern generations.

Although both FxC and Emerging Church have had a widespread impact across several mainstream denominations, they have both tended to be associated largely with evangelicalism. The evangelical understanding of individual conversion has fuelled a concern for the sort of mission that draws unbelievers and lapsed believers into the life of faith. FxC in evangelical eyes is a way of reaching those people that traditional forms of church expression will never reach. The implication is that there is something about traditional expressions of church that is fundamentally unattractive to non-church people, and that it is that repulsion, rather than any innate refusal to becoming believers, that can be overcome by FxC. The Christian God can be accessed in different ways that suit the context, lifestyle and dispositions of those outside faith communities.

This question has been addressed by empirical and practical theologians, who have approached it through the notion of individual differences. For them, humans in any particular social or religious context are most likely to affiliate with faith organisations if they can express their faith in ways that suit their underlying psychological dispositions. Although faith itself in not a matter of personality, the way faith is expressed (individually and corporately) may depend to some extent on how people express corporate or individual identity generally in their lives. Faith needs to work with the grain of individual dispositions, not against it.

Perhaps the most well-developed line of research in this area has been the application of psychological-type models of personality to the study of congregational profiles (Craig et al. 2003; Francis 2005; Francis, Craig, et al. 2007; Francis, Mansfield, et al. 2010; Francis et al. 2011; Francis, Robbins, et al. 2007; Robbins and Francis 2011; Village 2013, 2014) . Jung (1923) first proposed the idea that the observed range of human personality could partly be explained by differences in the way that the mind handles information. His three-dimensional model of psychological types suggested that individuals differed in their preferred locus for handling information (extraverts in the outer world of human interaction, introverts in the inner world of contemplation), their preferred way of perceiving information (sensing physically or intuiting imaginatively), and their preferred way of making decisions (empathetically through a strong awareness of shared values, or logically though the application of rational principles). Jung’s model was developed into a 16-fold typology by Katharine Briggs and Isabel Myers (Myers and Myers 1980), who added a fourth dimension of ‘attitude to the outer world’, which posited the idea that some of the variation in how people interact with things around them may depend on whether they prefer to externalise their perceiving or judging functions.

The interpretation of psychological types has varied in the literature, and has included those who tend to stick to Jung’s original model, those who prefer the notion of temperaments (Keirsey 1998; Keirsey and Bates 1978), and those who focus on the ways in which the dynamic interaction of preferences lead to particular expressions of personality (Myers et al. 1998). The four-fold type model associated with Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI) is probably the most widely used, but the same four dimensions are used in temperament models and they also form the basis of the Francis Psychological Type Scales used in this study. The dimensions of the type model have been well described elsewhere (Myers et al. 1998; Quenk 1999; Myers and Myers 1980), so only a brief description is necessary here.

Extraverts prefer to handle information in the outer world by interactions with others. They tend to be energised by interpersonal contact, have a wide circle of friends or acquaintances, and process ideas most easily by ‘thinking out loud’. Introverts prefer to handle ideas by turning inwards. They are energised by solitude, tend to form fewer, deeper friendships, and process ideas most easily by ‘thinking to themselves’.

Sensing types prefer to perceive information using their senses, and are observers of detailed information relayed by sound, sight, touch, taste and smell. They are also people who prefer the familiarity of routine and repetition, and who are down to earth and practically minded. Intuitive types prefer to perceive information through their imagination, ‘seeing with their mind’s eye’. They tend to link disparate pieces of information, and are excited by the novel, the intriguing and possibilities that lie ahead.

Thinking types prefer to make judgements about matters by the application of principles and logic. They are concerned to apply rulings fairly and are able to be detached and dispassionate when it comes to making tough decisions, even if sometimes they are unaware of the pain that might cause others. Feeling types prefer to make judgements with reference to others, looking for mutual consent and shared values. They are concerned with maintaining group harmony and will be acutely aware of the effects of decisions on those who are in the minority.

Judging types prefer to project their judging process (thinking or feeling) into their outer world. This makes them more comfortable with order and routine, and they prefer closure and coming to decisions. They value organisational structures that promote this sense of order, which they may see as instruments for getting things done. Perceiving types prefer to project their perceiving process (sensing or intuition) into their outer world. This makes them more comfortable with disorder and novelty, so they prefer open-endedness and may avoid making decisions if they can. They tend not to join organisations, which they may see as overly restrictive and prescriptive.

Type models have been criticised by those who prefer dimensional models of personality, though some of this criticism may be ill-founded (Lloyd 2008, 2012), and there is growing evidence that the differences expressed by preferences in type models may map onto some dimensional models (Cowan 1989; MacDonald et al. 1995; McCrae and Costa 1989; Tobacyk et al. 2008). Whatever the relationship between models of personality, research over the last two decades or more has shown that psychological type models can explain some of the variation between individual expressions of religion (Carskadon 1981; Delis-Bulhoes 1990; Francis 2005; Hall 2012; Lewis 2012; Village 2010). The studies that relate to this paper are those that have led to predictions about which psychological types are most or least likely to attend traditional Anglicans churches.

*Psychological type and congregational profiles*

Early studies of Anglican congregations in England and Wales were of relatively small samples (Craig et al. 2003; Francis, Butler, et al. 2007), but subsequent replications confirmed significant differences in the frequency of type preferences when compared with national norms (Francis, Robbins, and Craig 2011; Francis, Robbins, et al. 2007). Work on clergy at around the same time suggested they were in turn different from the congregations whom they served, and this early work was followed by repeat studies on larger samples that demonstrated the same trends (Francis, Craig, et al. 2007; Francis et al. 2001; Francis, Robbins, and Craig 2011; Francis, Robbins, et al. 2010). In England, Anglican congregational profiles tend to show a higher incidence of preference for introversion (rather than extraversion) and judging (rather than perceiving) when compared with the public at large (Francis, Robbins, and Craig 2011). Preferences in the perceiving process tend to reflect those in the general population, where most people prefer sensing over intuition. A large majority of female churchgoers show a strong preference for feeling over thinking, which reflects the trends among women in the population at large. Moreover, among male churchgoers preference for feeling over thinking tends to be much more frequent than among men in the population at large. The authors interpreted this as a reflection of the nature of an institutional religion that values the notion of the inner spiritual life, is concerned with human values and interpersonal relationships, and in which members value a sense of belonging to an ordered and regulated church. This sort of profile seems to be common in other countries and other denominations (Robbins and Francis 2011).

Parallel studies of clergy in the Anglican Church have shown that in some dimensions their profiles match that of congregations, whereas in others they are distinctly different (Francis, Robbins, and Craig 2011;Village 2011). In the Church of England, incumbents more frequently show preference for intuition than do their congregations. Preference for feeling over thinking is generally much more frequent among women than among men, and this is also true among clergy, though male clergy tend to be more likely to prefer feeling over thinking than is the case for lay men in congregations. Overall, clergy in the Church of England have profiles that suggest they may be more open to change than is perhaps the case among the congregations whom they serve.

The implication drawn from this is that traditional, mainstream churches tend to attract certain psychological types who feel most at home in the environment that is on offer. The converse implication is that those people with preferences that do not match the congregational norm may find it more difficult to belong (Francis and Robbins 2012). Extraverts may find the quiet individualism of worship a difficult place in which to operate mentally and spiritually. Intuitives may find the repetition of worship, and the conformity to well-trodden creeds uninspiring and suffocating. Thinking types may find that the need to always be empathetic and understanding of others stifles rational debate and fudges the decision-making process. Perceiving types many feel unduly restricted by the confines of belonging to an organised religion that requires regular times of worship and the assent to corporate decisions and beliefs.

Applying these findings and type theory to FxC suggests that those attracted to fresh expressions are likely to have a different psychological type profile from those who attend only traditional churches. If the typical profile of traditional churchgoers tends to be ISFJ, then perhaps FxC churchgoers will be more likely to display an ENTP profile. The first study to test this idea was conducted on a sample of 74 women and 49 men who attended some sort of FxC in the UK (Francis et al. 2014). Type profiles were compared with those from a much larger sample of people attending traditional Anglican churches, with the expectation that FxC attendees would be more likely to prefer extraversion, intuition, thinking and perceiving that would other attendees. The results showed that there were significant differences in the profiles of FxC and traditional churchgoers, but the results varied between the dimensions of the type model and between the sexes. In both men and women, intuitive types were more frequent among FxC attendees, and the researchers suggested this might be because intuitives are attracted to new things and are less tied to the traditional or conventional. Among women but not among men, extravert types were more frequent among FxC attendees, and the researchers suggested this might be because FxC offer the kinds of social engagement that is particularly attractive to extravert women. Among men, but not among women, perceiving types were more frequent among FxC attendees, and the researchers suggested this was because FxC create the sort of flexible environments that offer forms of spontaneity, creativity and fun that are particularly attractive to perceiving type men. There was no difference in the judging process, and both FxC and traditional churchgoers tended to have a higher than expected preference for feeling over thinking. This preference is also associated more with women than with men, and the researchers suggested that the FxC they sampled may not have overcome the embedded stereotype of church as a 'feminine' environment.

The above study provides a framework for suggesting what might be the key differences between Anglicans who go the FxC and those who do not. Based on these initial results from a small sample, it could be suggested that FxC attendees should be those who tend to prefer intuition over sensing, those who are extraverts rather than introverts, and those who use their perceiving rather than judging functions in the outer world. It would be useful to test these ideas on a larger sample of laity and also to look at whether similar predictions would apply to clergy. Clergy may be more constrained in whether and when they can attend FxC if they not actually running one, but theoretically they should show similar trends to those among laity.

One problem with the initial study was that it compared FxC attendees to a completely different sample of regular churchgoers collected at a different time (some of whom may have been FxC attendees). The present study uses an opportunistic sample based on a survey of readers of the *Church Times*, the main newspaper of the Church of England. Although this is not a random sample of Church of England attendees, it does represent a cross section of lay people and clergy who mostly attend traditional churches at least once or twice a month. There was an item in the survey that asked about attendance at FxC, and this offers the chance to compare those who did so regularly with those who did not. This is not the same as sampling members of fresh expression churches, many of whom would not read the *Church Times*, so it is not sensible to assume attendees of FxC in this study are typical of all such attendees. However, if attraction to FxC is related to certain social characteristics and psychological dispositions, then these may emerge by comparing the two groups of *Church Times* readers. Are those readers who go to FxC regularly a recognisably different social or psychological subset of the main sample?

Method

In 2013, a four-page questionnaire was published in two editions of the *Church Times,* one in July and one in October. The newspaper is published in hard copy and online, and the questionnaire appeared in both formats. It was based on the 2001 *Church Times* survey, which was designed to assess a wide range of beliefs, attitudes and practices (Francis et al. 2005). The 2013 version included many of the same items, but also some new ones (including one related to FxC), and a measure of psychological type.

The *Church Times* is the main newspaper of the Church of England, with a circulation of around 25,000. It is widely read by a cross section of the Church of England laity and clergy who tend to be mainly, but not exclusively, broad church or Anglo-catholic. Evangelicals are probably under-represented in the readership, partly because the alternative weekly, *The Church of England Newspaper,* is aimed at this constituency. Despite this, *Church Times*  readers come from across the Church of England, and survey respondents in 2001 ranged from extremely Anglo-catholic to extremely evangelical (Village 2012). The *Church Times* readers who responded to current survey were likely to represent a sample of committed Anglicans spanning most of the traditions of the Church of England, with some over-sampling of those who are more Anglo-catholic or broad church.

*Participants*

The total response was 4,909, of which 54% completed the survey online and 46% completed the hardcopy version. Nearly all respondents lived in England and the majority were lay people. This study is based on the results from 4485 readers who gave sufficiently complete answers to be used in this analysis. The majority of the missing values (80% of 424 respondents) were from those who did not fully complete the psychological type sorter. Of the valid replies, 2750 (61%) were laity and 1735 (39%) were clergy.

*Instruments*

*Attendance at FxC* was assessed using a single forced-choice question: 'Do you attend a Fresh Expression of worship?' There were four possible answers coded into an ordinal scale: 'never' (= 1), 'rarely' (= 2), 'regularly, but less than once a week' (= 3); 'as your main weekly worship event' (= 4). To compare profiles, respondents were divided into attenders (scores of 3 or 4) and those considered as non-attenders (scores of 1 or 2). To analyse FxC attendance more thoroughly, the original were scores used as the dependent variable in regression analyses.

*Psychological type* was assessed by the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS: Francis 2005). This is a 40-item instrument comprising four sets of ten forced-choice items related to each of the four components of psychological type: orientation (extraversion or introversion), perceiving process (sensing or intuition), judging process (thinking or feeling), and attitude toward the outer world (judging or perceiving). Participants were asked for each pair of characteristics to check the ‘box next to that characteristic which is closer to the real you, even if you feel both characteristics apply to you. Tick the characteristics that reflect the real you, even if other people see you differently’. Previous studies have demonstrated that this instrument functions well in church-related contexts. For example, Francis, Craig, and Hall (2008) reported alpha coefficients of .83 for the EI scale, .76 for the SN scale, .73 for the TF scale, and .79 for the JP scale. In this sample, the equivalent reliabilities were .83 for the EI scale, .74 for the SN scale, .71 for the TF scale, and .76 for the JP scale. Scores on each scale were used to assign preferences in each dimension, using the conventional practice of assigning ties to I, N, F or P. These binomial preferences were used to compare profiles, but the original scores were used in the more detailed regression analyses because they contained more information and are better for this purpose (Cowan 1989).

*Church tradition* was assessed using a seven-point bipolar scale anchored at one end as ‘catholic’ and at the other as ‘evangelical’. The scores were coded 1 (most catholic) to 7 (most evangelical). The scale was used to produce a three-point tradition variable using Randall’s (2005) classification whereby 1 and 2 are referred to as Anglo-catholic, 3, 4 and 5 as broad church, and 6 and 7 as evangelical. For regression analysis this was used to produce two dummy variables, ‘Anglo-catholic’ and ‘evangelical’. In addition, respondents were asked for their sex (1 = male and 2 = female), age (four-point scale with 1 = <50, 2 = 50s, 3 = 60s and 4 = >60s), and whether or not they were ordained (laity = 1 clergy = 2).

*Analysis*

Laity and clergy are known to have different socio-demographic and psychological-type profiles (Francis, Robbins, and Craig 2011; Francis, Craig, et al. 2007; Francis et al. 2004; Craig et al. 2004; Village 2011). Furthermore, attendance in these two groups could be affected by the different duties and responsibilities of clergy compared with laity, and their different availability during the week. Clergy may be required to lead or attend FxC but they may also be prevented from attending because they are required to lead other church activities, especially on Sundays. Lay people who work may not be able to attend weekday events, but those who are retired may be more available than working laity or clergy. Men and women also have different type profiles, usually in the judging process, where women tend to prefer feeling to thinking and men tend to prefer thinking to feeling (Kendall 1998; Myers and McCaulley 1985). The distribution of men and women is also very different among clergy and laity in the Church of England, where women predominate among lay people and men predominate among clergy. Given that the early study of FxC attendees showed differences between men and women (Francis, Clymo, and Robbins 2014), the sexes were treated separately throughout this analysis.

Univariate contingency tests were used to compare the profile of men and women and to explore relationships between FxC attendance and ordination status, age, church tradition and the four psychological type preferences. Multiple linear regression was used to test the hypotheses that preferences for extraversion, intuition, feeling and perceiving exerted independent positive effects on the likelihood of attending a FxC, after controlling for age, ordination status and church tradition.

Results

In both sexes, only around 1% of the sample attended a FxC on a weekly basis, and over 60% never attended at all (Table 1). Regular attendance was more common than weekly attendance and roughly one in ten of the sample went to a FxC at least regularly, with women being slightly more likely to attend than men.

The profiles of male and female *Church Times* readers were significantly different in terms of ordination status, church tradition and psychological type preferences (Table 1). Men were much more likely to be ordained than women, and were slightly more likely than women to assign themselves as Anglo-catholic or evangelical rather than broad church. Psychological-type preferences reflected sex-differences seen among the general population, with the only significant difference being the greater preference for feeling over thinking among women compared with men (Table 1). In this sample, preference for feeling was relatively high among men (47%) and low among women (57%) compared with population norms reported by Kendall (1998), where the figures were 35% and 70% respectively. The other preferences were similar between the sexes and typical for Anglican churchgoers, with preferences for introversion over extraversion, sensing over intuition and judging over perceiving. Overall, the psychological profile of these churchgoers could be typified as ISFJ, which was similar to findings from previous studies (Francis, Robbins, and Craig 2011).

*Attendance at FxC*

Taking weekly or regular attendance together, women were more likely to attend FxC than men (11% of 1865 women versus 8% of 2620 men, χ2 = 7.51, *df* = 1, *p* < .01), a trend that was apparent among both the laity (8% of 1415 women versus 6% of 1335 men, χ2 = 4.24, *df* = 1, *p* < .05) and the clergy (20% of 450 women versus 11% of 1285 men, χ2 = 22.95, *df* = 1*, p* < .001). In both sexes, clergy were more likely to attend FxC than were lay people (Table 2). Attendance at FxC declined significantly with age among both men and women. Church tradition was also a strong predictor of attendance at FxC for both men and women, with evangelicals being more likely to attend, and Anglo-catholics being less likely to attend, than those in the broad-church category (Table 2), a trend that was significant in both laity (χ2 = 32.5, *df* = 2, *p* < .001) and clergy (χ2 = 38.7, *df* = 2, *p* < .001).

Psychological type preferences were associated with attendance at FxC in both men and women (Table 2). Among both sexes, preference for extraversion was in a minority, but female extraverts were slightly more likely than female introverts to attend a FxC (13% versus 10%). The trend was apparent in men, but not statistically significant. Preference for intuition over sensing was less frequent in both sexes, but intuitives were more likely than sensers to attend a FxC (12% versus 6% for men and 15% versus 8% for women). A similar pattern emerged for attitude toward the outer world, with preference for perceiving over judging being unusual, but attendance being more likely in perceiving than judging types for both men (15% versus 7%) and women (17% versus 10%). There was no difference between preferences in the judging process (thinking versus feeling) both for the overall sample and when the sexes were examined separately.

The above associations suggested that the likelihood of attending a FxC was greater among intuitives than among sensers and among perceivers than among judgers. However, the distribution of these preferences was not independent in this sample, and there was a strong association between preference for intuition and preference for perceiving: 24% of 1673 intuitives preferred perceiving over judging, compared with only 5% of 2812 sensers (χ2 = 351.2, *df* = 1, *p* < .001). The results of the multiple regressions (Table 3) confirmed the effects of ordination, age, and tradition, but modified slightly the original analysis of the effects of psychological type. In both sexes, average attendance scores were lower among laity than among clergy, lower among older people than among younger people, and lower among Anglo-catholics than among other traditions. Evangelicals had higher average attendance scores compared with other traditions. Among men, attendance scores were higher among extraverts than among introverts, among intuitives than among sensers, and among perceivers than among judgers. There was no difference in the judging process (feeling versus thinking). Among women, attendance scores were higher among extraverts than among introverts, and higher among intuitives than among sensers. There were no differences in the judging process (feeling versus thinking), nor in attitude to the outer world (judging versus perceiving).

These results suggest that psychological-type preferences may influence a person's predisposition to attend a FxC. Extravert orientation and intuitive perceiving were associated with higher attendance in both sexes. For women, but not for men, the association between attending FxC and a preference for perceiving the outer world was explained by the link between perceiving and intuition and was not significant when controlling for other preferences. In neither sex was preference for feeling or thinking linked to attendance at FxC.

Discussion

Readers of the *Church Times* are not a group of Anglicans that would normally be thought of as typical FxC attendees. They tend to be traditional, elderly members who mostly align themselves with the Anglo-catholic or broad-church traditions. To find that almost 11% of this sample attended weekly or regularly is in some ways surprisingly high, and is an indication of the important of the movement in the Church of England. It was not possible in the scope of a large general survey to find out exactly what people meant by a fresh expression, and it might be that not all the things denoted would have fallen under the sorts of initiatives mentioned in *Mission-Shaped Church* or subsequent surveys. In time it may be possible to do more detailed empirical work that would allow some categorisation of FxC that would facilitate more meaningful interpretation of the results of surveys such as this.

*Social and demographic factors*

In terms of socio-demographic factors, these results are in line with what might be expected from the origins and nature of the FxC movement. Much of the impetus has come from evangelical concern for reaching people beyond traditional churches with the Gospel message, so it is not surprising that evangelicals in this sample were much more likely to attend than Anglo-catholics. Evangelicals are underrepresented in this sample, and those who were in this sample may not be wholly representative of Church of England evangelicals at large, who, if anything, could be more likely to attend FxC than those who read the *Church Times.*  There have been efforts to include Anglo-catholics in the FxC movement, notably by stressing that these initiatives are linked to the wider church and may contain sacramental worship (Croft and Mobsby 2009). Nonetheless, FxC seem to continue to be initiatives that appeal more readily to evangelicals.

Clergy in this sample were more likely to attend that lay people. This might reflect the fact that clergy are more likely to be involved in leading FxC, though most initiatives tend to stress the importance of lay leadership. The recent survey organised by the Church Growth Research project found that 52% of the 477 FxC studied were lay-led (Church Growth Research Programme 2013). The most likely explanation of the finding here is that lay people who read the *Church Times* are atypical of the sorts of lay people likely to be involved in FxC. The results here are, however, a reminder that a great deal of the initiative for promoting FxC has been led by clergy and bishops (and notably by former archbishop Rowan Williams), so it would be wrong to assume that this is a wholly 'grassroots' movement.

Part of the aim of FxC was to attract the younger generations that seem to be so underrepresented in traditional Anglican congregations. The results from this study suggest that FxC attendance is 4-5 times more likely among those who are under 50 than those who are 70 or older. This study is not of people who are likely to have been 'unchurched' without a FxC to attend, so it does not show if FxC are countering declines in traditional churches, though this has been claimed (Church Army's Research Unit 2013). It does, however, suggest that FxC appeal particularly to younger people who might nonetheless be attending traditional worship most of the time.

The greater likelihood of women attending than men held true for clergy and laity, and could not be explained by differences in psychological type preferences between the sexes. Women are generally more likely to attend worship than men, but this did not explain the sex difference observed in this study, which persisted after controlling for attendance (unpublished analysis). It might be that some forms of FxC are much more likely to involve women than men, especially those that are aimed at parents and children. One of the most rapidly growing initiatives that is often classed as a FxC is Messy Church (Moore 2011; Lings 2013), which is designed for adults and young children. A recent survey of around 70 Messy Churches found that women predominated among both adult attendees and helpers (Amanda Aspland, personal communication). In the future, more detailed surveys might be able to identify which expressions of church are most likely to attract men or women.

*Psychological type and FxC attendance*

The findings of this study were very similar to those of the early study of FxC attendees (Francis, Clymo, and Robbins 2014). In both studies, intuition emerged as a key type preference that is associated with FxC attendance. It seems that the general disposition towards innovation and change may predispose people to attending novel and unconventional forms of Christian expression. This could arise because intuitives like to try something new, and will therefore go along simply to escape the traditional and conventional. If so, then eventually one might expect fewer intuitives to come along when 'fresh' expressions are becoming stale. What is attractive to intuitives about FxC may be the very fact of their freshness. On the other hand, it might be that FxC are offering particularly 'intuitive' forms of worship that appeal to the imagination and require the sort of psychological processing of information that intuitives find more natural. Intuitives are likely to be able to use apparently non-religious images, texts or actions to access religious ideas through analogy, metaphor and symbol, even when the connections to traditional faith are somewhat obscure. If this is why intuitives seem to like FxC it suggests that even when such worship is no longer 'fresh' it may nonetheless be attractive. Again, surveys that can more precisely distinguish different types of FxC may shed more light on the link between intuition and this form of church.

The early study found that extraversion was associated with FxC among women but not men. This finding was also repeated here with the simple, univariate comparison, where the greater frequency of attendance among extraverts was apparent in both sexes, but statistically significant only among women, suggesting that there may be some reason why FxC appeals particularly to extravert women. Many FxC are built around social interaction and network groups, and these may be attractive to extraverts. It is not clear why extravert men are not so attractive, but this may again be related to the precise form of activity. If women are much more likely to be running a Messy Church, which requires a lot of interaction with children and adults, then extraversion may be a particularly useful orientation. Controlling for factors such as age, ordination status, church tradition, and other psychological preferences suggested that extravert men may also be more likely to attend FxC, but this association was masked by other factors in the raw data in this sample.

The earlier study found that perceiving was associated with FxC among men but not women. This finding was also repeated here, though only after controlling for the association of perceiving with intuition, which removed the association among women and weakened it among men. There seems to be a residual independent effect of perceiving, which may be due to perceivers' preference for less rigid, organised worship and more spontaneity and creativity. Male perceivers may find the traditional structures of church particularly unattractive, and perhaps find the more informal atmosphere of FxC a welcome change from operating in work or church organisations.

As with the early study, there was no evidence that FxC was especially attractive to the thinking types who are underrepresented in traditional church congregations. Francis et al. (2014) suggested that the stereotype of the 'feminine' (feeling) church has not been overcome in FxC. FxC do seem to foster the sorts of values-based, interpersonal expressions of faith that feeling types appreciate but which thinking types may not warm to. There may be more emphasis on shared values and inclusion, and less on logical application of theological principles. If so, it might be expected that thinking types would actively avoid FxC more than traditional church, but this does not seem to be the case. Instead it seems that, at least in terms of the way in which decisions are made and ideas are evaluated, FxC may be not that dissimilar to traditional churches.

Conclusion

This study has built on an earlier study that investigated a small sample of FxC attendees. It is not directly comparable because the base sample here was drawn from people who mostly did not attend FxC, and the method was to identify predictors of attendance at FxC among the few that did. The sample was not wholly representative of the Church of England, but nonetheless included a larger number of attendees of FxC than has hitherto been studied for this purpose. The psychological type predictors of FxC attendance turned out to be similar to those found in the initial study, in some preferences even down to the difference between men and women. This suggests that these findings could be stable across the church generally, though replication would be needed among samples that are more wholly representative of the Church of England generally to test this fully.

Despite the limitations of this study, it is clear that psychological type does indeed predict to some extent whether someone in the Church of England is likely to attend FxC. Interpreting why the disposition to extraversion, intuition or perceiving seems to predict FxC attendance depends on what exactly is meant by a fresh expression of church. Given that the term covers such a wide variety of events and structures it is all the more surprising that the same predictors should emerge in both studies. Ideally, future studies should look in a more focused way at attendees of particular sorts of FxC, which may help to explicate the reasons for the associations observed here and elsewhere.

Table 1 Profiles of men and women in the *Church Times* survey

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Men |  | Women |  |  |
|  | N = | 2620 |  | 1865 |  | χ2 |
| FxC Attendance | Weekly | 1% |  | 1% |  |  |
|  | Regularly | 7% |  | 10% |  |  |
|  | Rarely | 25% |  | 28% |  |  |
|  | Never | 66% |  | 61% |  | 21.3\*\*\* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Status | Laity | 51% |  | 76% |  |  |
|  | Clergy | 49% |  | 24% |  | 285.2\*\*\* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Age | <50s | 14% |  | 13% |  |  |
|  | 50s | 17% |  | 17% |  |  |
|  | 60s | 29% |  | 27% |  |  |
|  | >60s | 40% |  | 43% |  | 6.3 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Tradition | Anglo-catholic | 44% |  | 40% |  |  |
|  | Broad church | 41% |  | 48% |  |  |
|  | Evangelical | 16% |  | 12% |  | 26.7\*\*\* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Orientation | Extraversion | 32% |  | 34% |  |  |
|  | Introversion | 68% |  | 66% |  | 2.1 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Perceiving | Intuition | 38% |  | 36% |  |  |
|  | Sensing | 62% |  | 64% |  | 2.8 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Judging | Thinking | 53% |  | 43% |  |  |
|  | Feeling | 47% |  | 57% |  | 45.2\*\*\* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Attitude | Perceiving | 12% |  | 12% |  |  |
|  | Judging | 88% |  | 88% |  | 0.0 |

Note. Chi-squared values are based on counts and test for differences between the sexes. \*\*\*  *p* < .001.

Table 2 Associations with FxC attendance among men and women

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Men | | | | | |  | Women | | | | | |
|  |  | *N* |  | Not attending |  | Attending | χ2 |  | *N* |  | Not attending |  | Attending | χ2 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Status | Laity | 1335 |  | 94% |  | 6% |  |  | 1415 |  | 92% |  | 8% |  |
|  | Clergy | 1285 |  | 89% |  | 11% | 21.18\*\*\* |  | 450 |  | 80% |  | 20% | 49.96\*\*\* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Age | < 50s | 368 |  | 85% |  | 15% |  |  | 232 |  | 81% |  | 19% |  |
|  | 50s | 432 |  | 84% |  | 16% |  |  | 324 |  | 81% |  | 19% |  |
|  | 60s | 770 |  | 91% |  | 9% |  |  | 511 |  | 89% |  | 11% |  |
|  | > 60s | 1050 |  | 97% |  | 3% | 96.50\*\*\* |  | 798 |  | 95% |  | 5% | 64.19\*\*\* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Tradition | Anglo-catholic | 1139 |  | 95% |  | 5% |  |  | 741 |  | 94% |  | 6% |  |
|  | Broad Church | 1064 |  | 90% |  | 10% |  |  | 894 |  | 87% |  | 13% |  |
|  | Evangelical | 417 |  | 86% |  | 14% | 38.62\*\*\* |  | 230 |  | 83% |  | 17% | 30.60\*\*\* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Orientation | Extraversion | 830 |  | 90% |  | 10% |  |  | 629 |  | 87% |  | 13% |  |
|  | Introversion | 1790 |  | 92% |  | 8% | 3.10 |  | 1236 |  | 91% |  | 10% | 6.56\* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Perceiving | Intuition | 1616 |  | 94% |  | 6% |  |  | 1196 |  | 92% |  | 8% |  |
|  | Sensing | 1004 |  | 88% |  | 12% | 23.07\*\*\* |  | 669 |  | 85% |  | 15% | 23.14\*\*\* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Judging | Thinking | 1382 |  | 93% |  | 7% |  |  | 794 |  | 90% |  | 10% |  |
|  | Feeling | 1238 |  | 90% |  | 10% | 5.46 |  | 1071 |  | 89% |  | 11% | 0.29 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Attitude | Perceiving | 2292 |  | 93% |  | 7% |  |  | 1634 |  | 90% |  | 10% |  |
|  | Judging | 328 |  | 85% |  | 15% | 21.19\*\*\* |  | 231 |  | 84% |  | 17% | 8.82\*\* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Note. Chi-squared values based on counts and for each sex test the difference between in proportion attending or not attending. \*  *p* < .05; \*\*  *p* < .01; \*\*\*  *p* < .001.

Table 3 Linear regression of FxC attendance for men and women

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  | 95% CL | |  |  |  |  |
| Men |  | B |  | Lower | Upper |  | *β* |  | *t* |
| Ordained |  | 0.17 |  | 0.12 | 0.22 |  | .12 |  | 6.49\*\*\* |
| Age |  | -0.13 |  | -0.16 | -0.11 |  | -.21 |  | -10.78\*\*\* |
| Anglo-catholic |  | -0.17 |  | -0.23 | -0.12 |  | -.13 |  | -6.24\*\*\* |
| Evangelical |  | 0.16 |  | 0.09 | 0.24 |  | .09 |  | 4.38\*\*\* |
| Extraversion |  | 0.10 |  | 0.15 | 0.04 |  | .07 |  | 3.50\*\*\* |
| Intuition |  | 0.07 |  | 0.02 | 0.13 |  | .05 |  | 2.68\*\* |
| Feeling |  | 0.03 |  | -0.02 | 0.08 |  | .02 |  | 1.18 |
| Perceiving |  | 0.11 |  | 0.03 | 0.18 |  | .05 |  | 2.66\*\* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | 95% CL | |  |  |  |  |
| Women |  | B |  | Lower | Upper |  | *β* |  | *t* |
| Ordained |  | 0.26 |  | 0.19 | 0.34 |  | .16 |  | 7.01\*\*\* |
| Age |  | -0.12 |  | -0.15 | -0.09 |  | -.18 |  | -7.94\*\*\* |
| Anglo-catholic |  | -0.20 |  | -0.26 | -0.13 |  | -.14 |  | -5.95\*\*\* |
| Evangelical |  | 0.13 |  | 0.03 | 0.22 |  | .06 |  | 2.58\*\* |
| Extraversion |  | 0.08 |  | 0.14 | 0.02 |  | .05 |  | 2.43\* |
| Intuition |  | 0.12 |  | 0.05 | 0.19 |  | .08 |  | 3.54\*\*\* |
| Feeling |  | 0.04 |  | -0.02 | 0.10 |  | .03 |  | 1.19 |
| Perceiving |  | 0.06 |  | -0.04 | 0.16 |  | .03 |  | 1.20 |

Note. B = unstandardised regression coefficient, CL = confidence limits, *β =* standardised regression coefficients, *t* = Student's t-statistic testing if the regression coefficient is significantly different from zero. \* *p* < .05; \*\*  *p* < .01; \*\*\*  *p* < .001

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1. This paper adopts the abbreviation used by George Lings in the 2013 Church Army report on Fresh Expressions in the Church of England. The UK website for the Fresh Expressions Movement can be found at: <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)