

## FACT Chairman's Reflections AGM 2017

Thoughts framed by two verses heard in our churches on Sunday: **John 10:10, Acts 2:42.**

**John 10:10** 'I have come that you might have life to the full.' God is committed to life: giving life, saving life, enriching life, restoring life, fulfilling life. God's engaged in a life-giving enterprise *with communal dimension* - 'you' = plural. Calls us to be part of this enterprise. What does this look like?

**Acts 2:42** 'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.'

### Institution

Held together by rules/procedures  
Decisions made procedurally/slowly  
Value: security/predictability  
Importance of accredited people  
Stable/slow to change  
Emphasis on tradition  
Rowers  
Safe guarding

### Movement

Held together by common purpose/vision  
Decisions made relationally/rapidly  
Values: risk/serendipity  
Flexible to outside people/groups  
Dynamic, quick to change  
Emphasis on present/future  
Canoeists  
Intentional

**Both** have their strengths, **both** are needed – the challenge is to occupy the difficult space in the centre, the place of tension. An institution without movement is dead! A movement without some organisation will fragment. Job of a leader to steer between the two.

Am a relative newcomer but had the joy of preaching in many local churches. My passion = renewal.

Challenge faced by each and every church bar none – age profile (most rowers); numbers (ages!); lack internal unity; lack organisational unity, lack mutual unity. Too institutionalised – not local problem .....! Shaped by culture long since disappeared – Christendom. Live in a post church culture. Huge challenges – within and without (so did Early Church – addressed huge challenges – Acts 2:42) Can consume huge energy/resources of dwindling number).

And yet ... extraordinary opportunity set before us here in Frome:

- Intentional – eg Friday in football club; creative; 'does things differently' .....; 'alternative'
- Each of these characteristics offer extraordinary 'seed bed' for the Gospel.
- Can only be addressed *together*. Leslie Newbiggin: 'The only hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.' See Acts 2:38f

**'A church without mission is like a fire without burning' Emil Brunner**

To conclude, 'Can these dry bones live?'

I am filled to overflowing with hope for the Body of Christ in Frome. Why? Because almost everything that emerged from the FACT Prayer Meeting (see the summary) echoes a desire among us to be part of a movement (with organisation), not stuck in an institution.....

'Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain.' (Ps 127). The Lord builds by inviting us into partnership with him through prayer, equipping the saints with Word and Spirit.

**'Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work among us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.**