

# Evangelising Effectively

## What have we learned about making disciples in our year of mission?

Our starting point is the great commission. Jesus' command that we "make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28. 19) and therefore share the gospel with all people.

But in order to do this we need some theological understanding of what we mean by the ministry of evangelism.

Our starting point is these seven inter-connected truths –

- God is the evangelist. Only God can bring people to faith.
- The ministry of evangelism is our share in God's ministry. We witness to, proclaim and tell the story of what God has done in Christ and invite people to receive the free gift of his love; that love won for us by Christ's death and resurrection.
- Evangelism is a ministry that belongs to the whole church. It is something we do together, and every Christian has a part to play.
- For most people today becoming a Christian is like a journey
- Therefore the work of evangelism is best understood as 'helping people make the journey.'
- The end point is not membership of the church but participation in the life of the kingdom as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Each church community needs to develop different skills and ministries to enable this to happen

This year every church community was invited to do one thing in evangelism it has never done before. Hundreds of Mission Weekends and mission events have taken place. We have started to reflect on all this activity, and what is offered here are **four broad headings** to help us understand this ministry and then within them **nine selections of scripture** and **nine brief reflections** that try to draw together something of what we have learned and where we need to go next. It is offered for individual and corporate reflection across the diocese. Most of it isn't new. But we have been reminded of things we have forgotten or neglected; and we have discovered things where more attention and training is needed. Please look at these scriptures and follow them up in context. Certain passages are particularly rich for helping us think about evangelism. They are –

- Colossians 4. 2-6
- Luke 24. 13 -35
- Acts 8. 26 – 40

So share this in your church. Consider what you and your church need to do next. Devote one PCC meeting in 2015 to thinking about developing the ministry of evangelism in your parish or benefice. A suggested plan for such a meeting is at the end of this document.

## 1. PRAYER

*“Devote yourselves to prayer...” (Colossians 4.2)*

*“It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks” (Luke 6.45)*

You can't give what you haven't got. All ministry, and especially evangelism, is replenished by and flows from our relationship with God. Renewing our faith through, prayer, scripture and sacrament are the indispensable wellsprings of ministry. **Teaching people to pray is the beginning of a revolution which will change the world.** Through prayer we discern what God's word and God's will might be for a particular person or situation. We see how the story of Christ speaks to our stories. Prayerful listening is also needed so as to understand the context in which we minister and the people we serve.

## 2. SERVICE

*“Be doers of the word” (James 2. 22)*

*“Remember the poor” (Galatians 2. 10)*

This is what Peter said to Paul as he set off on his great evangelistic mission. Unless our churches and our lives are a blessing to the local community, and **unless we give ourselves in service to those in need then we are not the church of Jesus Christ.** And unless the gospel that is on our lips is also manifest in our lives there is no reason why anyone should take us seriously. Serving our local community is the living out of the gospel we proclaim.

## 3. PROCLAMATION

- **Witness**

*“They told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them.” (Luke 24.35)*

*“We cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4. 20)*

Every Christian has two stories to tell: the story of what God has done in Christ, and the story of what God has done in their own life. **We need to grow in confidence in telling both stories,** and this is an area where we need to do some additional work.

- **Encounter**

*“What are you discussing while you walk along?” (Luke 24. 17)*

*“Do you understand what you are reading?” (Acts 8. 30)*

A pivotal point on many people's journey into faith will be an encounter with the Christian community and the Christian story through some sort of evangelistic event in the community.

This is what our Mission Weekends were all about. That discipline of **making evangelistic events and Mission Weekends a normal part of parish life is the great challenge that we must take forward from this centenary year of mission.** That question, ‘How can we serve the people with whom we have contact in such a way that the gospel is challenging, intriguing and appealing’ needs to be puzzled over every year so that we can put on small, do it yourself evangelistic events in our communities regularly and then be ready to help people find out more. Like Jesus on the Emmaus Road and like Philip on the wilderness road we need to meet people where they are, travel with them on their pathways, and open up opportunities for them people to an encounter the Christian church and the Christian story.

- **Initial proclamation**

*“This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses” (Acts 2.32)*

*“Pray that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ... and reveal it clearly...” (Colossians 4.3 & 4)*

These evangelistic events need to have some proclamation of the Christian story woven into that. This need not always be a talk – there are other ways of telling and presenting the story – but we need to learn how to do it. The feedback from the Mission Weekends shows us that some clergy and laity feel ill equipped for this sort of initial proclamation. This is an area where help and further training is needed. But **the story of what God has done in Christ is the power of the gospel.** We need to set it loose to do its work of renewing and redeeming.

- **Apologetics**

*“Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence” ( 2. Peter 3. 15)*

*“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone” (Colossians 4.6)*

Apologetics is that ministry of commending and explaining the Christian faith. As with so much evangelism today it is most likely to happen through dialogue. People have questions and objections to Christian belief. **We need to listen carefully to what people have to say and be ready to give reasons for our hope.** This is another ministry where additional training and resource is needed.

- **Nurture/catechesis**

*“Starting with scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus...” (Acts 8. 35)*

*“Jesus began to speak and taught them saying...” (Matthew 5. 2)*

So begins the Sermon on the Mount. There is a huge need to teach and form people in the Christian faith –

- Those enquiring into faith need basic instruction in the faith, a place to ask their questions and ways of learning about how to be a Christian.

- New Christians need to go deeper in their faith and grow in discipleship
- Existing Christians need to grow in confidence about their faith so that they can tell the story of Christ and give reasons for their hope.

**Every church should have a place of nurture.** Every church should be providing opportunities for people to find out more. Courses like *Alpha*, *Pilgrim* and *Christianity Explored* are there to help with this ministry. As well as our very successful *Course in Christian Studies*, every local church should be enabling people to grow in faith through theological learning programmes. Every church needs to be putting on a nurture course at least once a year; and other opportunities for deepening faith (Home groups, cells, reimagined Sunday mornings) need to become a normal all year round activity of the church.

#### 4. THE APOSTOLIC LIFE

- **Discipleship**

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers”* (Acts 2. 42)

*“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”* (John 20. 21)

Growing in faith is not just growing in knowledge *about* God, but growing in relationship *with* God. Learning to pray is fundamental. As is participation in the sacramental life and reading and praying the scriptures. But **the disciple, the follower of Jesus, is also the apostle who is sent out by Jesus.**

#### 5. Ministry

*“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”* (1 Peter 2. 9)

*“He sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go.”* (Luke 10. 1)

Our participation in the apostolic life means that every Christian is commissioned for service in the world. This is where ministry really happens. This is what teaching the faith leads to. Jesus sends us into the harvest to use our gifts, time, and passion in his service. But it is something we do together. Ministry belongs to the body. We use our gifts in harmony with others, discovering what part we can play in God’s ministry of evangelism. **We are called to be God’s transforming presence in the world.**

+Stephen Chelmsford

All Saints Day 2014

## PCC Meeting on Evangelism

*Give an hour of your meeting for this agenda item.*

1. Choose one of the following passages from scripture.

- Colossians 4. 2-6
- Luke 24. 13 -35
- Acts 8. 26 – 40

Read the passage aloud. Reflect on it in silence. See which words or phrases jump out at you. Share them with each other without discussion. Then answer the following questions, either in small groups or altogether –

- What does this passage tell us about the ministry of evangelism?
- What surprises us about it?
- What challenges us?

2. Reflect back on last year's year of mission and your own Mission Weekend.

- What did you do?
- How did it go?
- What have you learned?
- What will you do differently next time?
- What help do you need?
- How does this passage encourage you to think differently about evangelism?

And don't worry if you didn't do a Mission Weekend. Think about what you have been doing to try and share the faith and apply the questions to that.

3. What are your plans for the future?

- How are you going to make sure there are regular opportunities in your parish for people to encounter the Christian faith?
- Are you going to put on another Mission Weekend?
- How are you helping people in your parish to tell their faith story and grow in their faith? What more could you be doing?
- Does your church have a place of nurture where people can find out about faith?

With all these questions also ask what help and training you need. **Once you have agreed your plans please report them to your Area Bishop, Archdeacon and Mission and Ministry Adviser and to your congregation.** We want to know what is happening so that we can pray for you and support you and make sure our own training is arranged accordingly.