

**GENERAL SYNOD****Challenges for the Quinquennium: Intentional Evangelism**

## Foreword

In July the General Synod reviewed progress on the three themes identified by the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops in Challenges for the Quinquennium (GS 1815). That take note debate was on a report from the Council and the House (GS 1895) and was intended as the prelude to three more focused debates over the coming groups of sessions.

The purpose of this paper is to set the scene for a debate in November on evangelism. It builds on the report 'Making New Disciples' (GS Misc 1054) and on the discussion paper written by the Bishop of Sheffield- 'The Seven Disciplines of Evangelisation' -which was circulated as an Annex to GS 1895.

We are particularly grateful to the Bishops of Chelmsford, St Albans and Sheffield for their work in producing this important paper. It begins with the understanding that the Church is renewed in her understanding of evangelism only as we are renewed in our appreciation of Jesus Christ and the power of the gospel and the vision crafted by Jesus for the future of God's world.

It goes on to explore the challenges faced by the Church throughout the world in the transmission of faith and the need for a more intentional evangelism. It describes the main lessons learned by the Church of England over the last sixty years and then sets out the case for a renewed commitment to **Intentional Evangelism** in the next decades and what this might mean.

The paper goes on to describe a new **Archbishops' Task Group on Evangelism**, whose work will be informed by the 'Seven Disciplines of Evangelisation' Synod member will have read of in July (GS 1895). The following section looks at a creative pattern for **resourcing** new initiatives in evangelism through the Task Group. Finally the paper identifies the priority of regular engagement with this key theme in every governance meeting of the Church, and the undergirding **importance of prayer**.

The paper includes the motion for debate, and the terms of reference for the Task Group. It also sets out in section 7 some questions for further discussion by members of the General Synod, PCCs and individuals and groups as a way of engaging with the paper and contributing written responses to the Task Group.

✠ Justin Cantuar

✠ Sentamu Eboracensis

October 2013

## Section One - The Pearl

*“The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”<sup>2</sup>*

1. The Church is renewed in evangelism only through being renewed in love for Jesus Christ and love for God’s world.
2. The first step in this renewal is therefore for the Church to focus once again on the wonder of God’s love revealed in Jesus Christ.
3. Jesus Christ is the one foretold by the prophets<sup>3</sup>, the image of the invisible God<sup>4</sup>, the fulfillment of God’s promises, the one through whom all things were created, God’s own Son, present with the Father and the Holy Spirit before the foundation of the world<sup>5</sup>.
4. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took flesh and was born of Mary<sup>6</sup>. The gospels tell of his remarkable and unique life and ministry. Jesus healed the sick, he raised the dead, he calmed the storm, he overcame the forces of evil, he fed the hungry, he witnessed to the compassion and love of God, he taught as one having authority<sup>7</sup>.
5. Jesus proclaimed the coming kingdom of God in his actions and his words<sup>8</sup>. Through the image of the kingdom, Jesus articulated and focussed a vision for the creation and for the whole of human society. He called both men and women to follow him as disciples, to be with him and to be sent out.<sup>9</sup>
6. Willingly Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem, suffering and death<sup>10</sup>. Freely, he offered his life on the cross, in fulfillment of the scriptures, so that sins may be forgiven, humanity redeemed and creation renewed<sup>11</sup>. He was crucified and on the third day God raised him from the dead, in fulfillment of the scriptures<sup>12</sup>. The risen Christ met with his disciples and gave them a solemn commission:

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 13.45

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 3.8

<sup>3</sup> Romans 1.2-3

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 1.15

<sup>5</sup> John 1.1-3

<sup>6</sup> John 1.14, Luke 2.7

<sup>7</sup> See for example Mark 5 and 6; Matthew 7.29

<sup>8</sup> Mark 1.15

<sup>9</sup> Luke 8.1-3; Mark 3.14

<sup>10</sup> Luke 9.51

<sup>11</sup> Mark 14.22-25

<sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 15.3-5

*“All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age”<sup>13</sup>*

7. Jesus ascended into heaven<sup>14</sup>. He sent the Holy Spirit on the disciples to bring new life and transformation and to empower them for ministry.<sup>15</sup>
8. As the disciples proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ the Church was called into being first in Jerusalem, then in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth<sup>16</sup>. The gospel message of Jesus Christ was proclaimed and celebrated as the power of God for salvation to everyone who believed: not only for the Jews but for every nation on the earth<sup>17</sup>. The good news of Jesus Christ is not a human invention but the revelation of God’s grace to humankind<sup>18</sup>.
9. This gospel of Jesus Christ offers forgiveness for sin for those who are alienated from God and a renewed relationship with our creator and with one another<sup>19</sup>. The gospel offers guidance for the lost, spiritual food for the hungry, healing for the broken in spirit, freedom for those who are captives, order and safety for those whose lives are in chaos, fruitful living for those whose lives are barren<sup>20</sup>. The gospel offers the gift of life in all its fullness<sup>21</sup> and fellowship in the life of God the Trinity both now and for all eternity<sup>22</sup>. The gospel offers the rich gift of resurrection and life beyond death for, in Christ, the power of death itself has been vanquished and resurrection life is offered to all<sup>23</sup>.
10. The gospel offers hope for the transformation of the world both through the witness and actions of the people of God, as agents of change, and most of all in the promises of God that the kingdom will come in all its fullness and that Christ will be Lord of all<sup>24</sup>. The Church is a sign and instrument of God’s kingdom on earth, a channel of peace and reconciliation in a world divided, a witness to God’s purpose for humanity and an agent of God’s compassion in the world.
11. This gospel with all its profound benefits, is offered by God’s grace, as God’s gift, free of charge<sup>25</sup> to every man, woman and child in creation. Each person is invited to respond to God’s offer of new and eternal life in Christ Jesus and to receive these

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<sup>13</sup> Matthew 28.17-20

<sup>14</sup> Luke 24.50; Acts 1.9

<sup>15</sup> John 20.22; Acts 2.1-4

<sup>16</sup> Acts 1.8 and Acts 1-28

<sup>17</sup> Romans 1.16; Ephesians 3.6

<sup>18</sup> Galatians 1.11-12

<sup>19</sup> Ephesians 1.13-22

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Psalm 107 and Mark 5-7 for these great gospel images of salvation

<sup>21</sup> John 10.10

<sup>22</sup> 2 Corinthians 13.13

<sup>23</sup> 1 Corinthians 15.20-28

<sup>24</sup> Philippians 2.9-11

<sup>25</sup> 2 Corinthians 11.7

gifts through repentance and faith in God's Son<sup>26</sup>. Each person is called by God to find fulfillment and grace through offering their lives in return to God's service as part of God's household, the church<sup>27</sup>. The gospel is good news for all people, of whatever race, gender, background or social class.

12. This is the gospel which the Church explores, rehearses and celebrates in her worship, in her engagement with the Scriptures and through the celebration of the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. This is the gospel which the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation, including our own generation in this present age.

13. "Woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel" writes St. Paul.<sup>28</sup> The Church is compelled to proclaim the gospel with imagination and perseverance out of love for God, whose gospel this is, and out of love for the world. We have nothing more, and nothing less, to offer to the world around us than this pearl of inestimable value. The world around, at different times, may ridicule, scoff or reject the message. But the response of the world does not invalidate the gospel or excuse the Church from the call to proclaim it. We have been entrusted with the words of love and of eternal life. We need continually to recall one another to a fresh vision of Jesus Christ, a fresh vision for the gospel of God's kingdom, and a persistent and imaginative proclamation of the whole gospel to the whole world in this generation in the power of God's Spirit.

*"The Christian faith is not simply teachings, wise sayings, a code of morality or a tradition. The Christian faith is a true encounter and relationship with Jesus Christ. Transmitting the faith means to create in every place and time the conditions which lead to this encounter between the person and Jesus Christ" **From the Instrumentum Laboris of the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops, 2013***

*"Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen."*<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Acts 2.38-39

<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 2.19; Romans 12.1-2

<sup>28</sup> 1 Corinthians 9.16

<sup>29</sup> Ephesians 3.20-21

## Section Two - The Vision

14. To proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ is also to proclaim the vision of Jesus Christ for God's world, for humankind and for the whole creation.
15. That vision is summarized in the phrase Jesus uses over and over again in the gospels: "the kingdom of God" or, in Matthew's gospel, "the kingdom of heaven"<sup>30</sup>. Jesus' concept of the reign of God draws on the vision of God's kingdom which runs through the Old Testament, in the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.
16. The central features of God's reign are that the world might know both peace and justice. Peace, or shalom, means more than the absence of conflict. The peace of God brings security, stability, health and well being. Justice is about equity and fairness, about the right ordering of human affairs and the protection of the weak and vulnerable. God is proclaimed as king over and over again in the Psalms with the twofold emphasis on both peace and justice in Israel and in the whole of creation<sup>31</sup>.
17. The Law articulates the ideal of the just and good society. The prophets offer a critique of Israel's rulers when they depart from God's standards and also articulate a positive vision of the coming of God's kingdom:

*"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"*<sup>32</sup>

*"No more shall there be an infant that lives but a few days or an old person who does not live out a lifetime....They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit; they shall not build and another inhabit..."*<sup>33</sup>

18. The kingdom of God will be established not through human effort alone but through God's actions. God will send his chosen Messiah, or Christ. Jesus came proclaiming that the kingdom has come near. Through his coming, this vision for the world is established yet not fully realized. Jesus teaches his disciples to pray: "*Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*".<sup>34</sup>
19. The coming of the kingdom is profound good news for the whole earth. In the words from Isaiah quoted by Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour"*<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Mark 1.14, 4.26, Matthew 13.24, Luke 4.43, John 3.3

<sup>31</sup> See Psalms 47, 48, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99

<sup>32</sup> Isaiah 2.4;

<sup>33</sup> Isaiah 65.20-22 see Raymond Fung, *The Isaiah Vision*, World Council of Churches, 1992

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 6.10 cf. Luke 11.2

<sup>35</sup> Luke 4.18-19 drawing on Isaiah 61.1, 58.6 and 61.2

20. Our present world is thirsty for a vision for creation and human society which cherishes peace, freedom, justice, reconciliation and care for the earth. This vision is at the heart of the Christian gospel and all the Church proclaims.
21. Evangelism is not simply the attenuated proclamation of a formula to draw individuals to salvation. To evangelise is to announce at one and the same time both the coming of the Saviour and this rich vision of the kingdom of God. True evangelism invites the response of personal repentance and faith and a call to whole life discipleship following the pattern of Christ and lived in response to this vision of the world.
22. For this reason, for Anglicans, evangelism can never be separated from other aspects of the mission of God: from loving service to our neighbours, from social action, from proclaiming God's desire for peace and justice, from care for creation. Although there is real merit in considering evangelism as a distinctive activity in order to allow for due focus and reflection, it must also, always be considered as part of the whole which is God's mission to the world.
23. For many, the Anglican Communion's five marks of mission<sup>36</sup> offer a solid foundation for an understanding of evangelism grounded in this comprehensive concept of God's mission. The Church of England has used the five marks as theological basis of its mission since 1990. They are:
  - To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom
  - To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
  - To respond to human need by loving service
  - To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
  - To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth
24. In the Quinquennium Goals of the General Synod and the Archbishop's Council it is vital to hold together the call to grow the Church through making disciples with the call to serve the common good of the whole of society and the re-imagining of ministry which will make both possible.

### **Section Three - The Context**

25. The Church in every generation is called to pay careful attention to the context in which we are called to proclaim the gospel. In our own generation, the Church is faced with a particular and challenging set of circumstances which must shape our approach to evangelism. The transmission of faith is difficult at the present time whether we focus on the transmission of faith from Christian parents to their children or the transmission of faith from those who are Christians to those who are not.

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<sup>36</sup> It is worth noting that there are moves in some parts of the Anglican Communion to add a sixth mark of mission, namely *peace making, conflict resolution and reconciliation*.

26. The recent Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops in Rome underscored the truth that the circumstances faced by the Church of England are part of a wider, global picture. While the growing role of religion in world affairs in recent years has made some of the previous assumptions about secularisation look dated, it has also been accompanied by a growing wariness and antipathy towards faith in place of the sympathy or at least neutrality which was previously more prevalent. This greater polarisation has meant that, with every decade that passes, it has become more, not less difficult, to communicate the Christian faith to those who are outside the churches.
27. Exploring the reasons for this is beyond the scope of this paper (though a fuller exploration is urgently required). However it is important for the Church of England to recognize that the problems we are grappling with are not particular to the Church of England or the Church in the United Kingdom. We are caught up in a global process and are called to proclaim the Christian gospel in a period in which that proclamation is particularly challenging and difficult. These difficulties in the transmission of the faith lie at the root of many of the other problems and questions we grapple with as a church, particularly questions of finance and resourcing and the re-imagination of ministry.
28. Many of the challenges facing the Church have been well documented in the recent paper: *Resourcing the Church's Mission and Growth: The Challenge and Response*<sup>37</sup>. That paper raises the challenges of declining and aging congregations; declining numbers of stipendiary clergy; the limitations of present parishes as mission units; congregations lacking confidence skills or depth of discipleship; geographic areas where the Church of England's presence and reach is limited and buildings which have become a burden among the principle challenges. These challenges are summarized in a quotation from the Synod paper, *Making new Disciples*<sup>38</sup>:
29. **“Over recent decades there has been a progressive squeeze on the Church’s ability to sustain a nationwide presence. Put simply, fewer clergy are now ministering to a larger population and having to oversee a roughly similar number of buildings, with fewer worshippers to pay for them. Further significant decline would make it impossible to maintain the Church of England as a national institution, which is present in every community.”**
30. This difficult climate should not deter us from our calling to evangelise with love, with passion and commitment. Nor should we believe the lie that evangelism and the growth of the church is impossible in the present circumstances. There are many living testimonies to children, young people and adults finding Christian faith in the present day. There are very significant points of growth in the Church of England at the present time, including the growth of cathedral congregations and of fresh expressions of church. There are many growing parish churches and some growing dioceses.
31. However the present environment should call us to renewed effort and emphasis. Evangelism is not something which will happen in the present climate on its own without a deliberate and intentional emphasis and strategy to guide us forward which is

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<sup>37</sup> The paper was produced for the College of Bishops and the Archbishops Council on behalf of the Spending Plans Task Group and summarises a series of meetings between members of the Task Group and diocesan senior leadership teams.

<sup>38</sup> GS Misc 1054, December 2012

owned at every level across the Church of England. The lessons we have learned and are learning need to be shared, owned and developed in a clear and systematic way. We need the urgent investment of resources, time and energy into each of the different aspects of evangelism over the medium and long term. We need to be focussed in our prayers and in our resourcing of this aspect of our calling in the local church, in dioceses and in the national church. We need, in brief, to be intentional about evangelism in this next period of our life as the Church of England, not for a five or ten year period but for a generation or more in order to reverse the decline we have seen over the last century and to lay a foundation for the growth of the Church in this land in future generations.

32. It is important to be clear about our motivation in evangelism and its relationship to the growth of the Church. The numerical decline of the Church of England over the last century forms part of our motivation to communicate the gospel afresh in this generation. However, it cannot be our whole motivation. This must be the motivation of love for our society on the one hand and, on the other, a fresh appreciation of the gospel and the vision of the kingdom of God contained within it. Evangelism and the passing on of faith to children and young people are the primary means by which the Church grows.

#### **Section Four - The journey of the Church of England**

33. The Church of England has taken a particular journey in our learning about evangelism over the period since 1945. The beginning of the post-war period saw the publication of "Towards the Conversion of England" with its call that "the state of the Christian religion in this country urgently calls for definite action"<sup>39</sup>. The report lifts up and highlights the discipline of evangelism, stresses that this is the responsibility of the whole Church not the clergy alone, emphasizes the role of the parish and commends both a network of diocesan missionaries and a national Council for Evangelism.
34. It is widely acknowledged that the report, "Towards the Conversion of England" was far sighted yet at the time not carried forward. Evangelism over the next three or four decades was largely left to parishes and mission agencies. The primary means of evangelism was the parish mission or large crusade. In these events, a short summary of the gospel would be presented by a gifted speaker. The preacher was, by and large, speaking to those who had learned the Christian story as children. The main elements of a Christian understanding were already present in their memory. The speaker's appeal was to repentance and faith on the basis of an understanding of faith gained earlier in life. Many did respond, including many clergy called to ministry in the post war years.
35. However, with each generation, the level of background knowledge of Christian faith among the population fell. By the early 1980's, these evangelistic missions became less effective. The background understanding of the faith was no longer present. Those exploring faith did so over a longer period of time. Churches began to rediscover the pattern of Christian formation based around learning the faith in a small group, separately from the Sunday congregation. These small groups began initially as

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<sup>39</sup> Towards the Conversion of England, Recommendation 1, para 331, p.150

“follow-up” to evangelistic missions or groups for the renewal of faith among the existing church members. However they were seen to be increasingly effective for teaching and learning the faith among those who had very little church background.

36. John Finney’s groundbreaking research in the early 1990’s, *Finding Faith Today*, established that the normal pattern for an adult coming to faith was now a journey of two or three years duration. What local churches needed to do was to support that journey through a process of Christian formation, centred around a small group where adults could come and learn the faith but also become part of a Christian community. Key resources for these groups were developed: Alpha, Emmaus, Christianity Explored and others.
37. These nurture courses became the principal emphasis of the Decade of Evangelism supported by the Church of England and other churches worldwide in the 1990’s. Over forty years after *Towards the Conversion of England*, the Church of England began to be more intentional about evangelism and the growth of the church with the appointment of a national officer, the growth of diocesan missionary posts, the beginnings of diocesan strategy and an Archbishops’ Initiative, *Springboard*, focussed around sharing and developing best practice.
38. However in these developments, still deeper patterns were being rediscovered. The Church of England was learning again how to become a Church in mission after centuries of seeing itself as part of Christendom. Evangelism was seen as one part of the Church’s response to the mission of God (most commonly expressed in the five marks of mission). As such it was not an alternative to social action, service to society or prophetic witness but a vital complement, ensuring the transmission of faith and the proclamation of the gospel to a society in need. The Church of England increasingly saw itself as engaging with the mission of God (the “*missio Dei*”). We share in the hope and expectation that God is at work in the whole of creation. At its heart, mission is about discovering where God is already at work and joining in<sup>40</sup>.
39. The development of nurture courses and the small ecclesial communities which flowed from them was seen by many as the recovery of the early church practice of catechesis: teaching and learning the faith for those preparing for baptism and confirmation over an extended period of time. Wherever this catechesis is practiced prayerfully and carefully there has been significant fruit in terms of new Christians and the growth of the church. This fruit has continued over the last two decades.
40. Meanwhile, the level of faith and awareness of Christian faith in the surrounding population continued to decline. There remained a steady stream of those who became part of the Church from the surrounding culture but this was diminishing. At the end of the 1990’s and in the early years of this century, a growing number of new missionaries began to “go” to the surrounding culture, to discover God’s grace and love at work, and seek to form church in new ways for those with little or no church background.
41. Initially the Church of England and other churches had no vocabulary to describe what was happening. Church Army in particular gathered and told the early stories in what

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<sup>40</sup> See David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, Orbis, 1991 and John V. Taylor, *The Go Between God*, SCM, 1972

became a new movement of mission<sup>41</sup>. The report *Mission-shaped Church* (2004) described these developments in detail and developed the language of fresh expressions of church to describe the formation of new ecclesial communities through incarnational and contextual mission. The phrase “mixed economy church” was coined by Archbishop Rowan Williams to describe the resultant shape of the Church of England. For the sake of mission to a complex society we are called to become a more mixed economy church with different forms of church connecting with different parts of our culture, often within the same parish.

42. The policy of developing fresh expressions of church has been gradually embraced by the Church of England over the last decade through the statements of vision and policy, through the Archbishops’ initiative, with the Methodist Church, of establishing the Fresh Expressions team, through the mission agencies especially Church Army and CMS, through the development of pioneer ministry and Bishop’s Mission Orders and in theological resourcing and support<sup>42</sup>. The emerging methodology is one of an intentional journey of discovery of God’s grace at work in wider society outside the Church and of working in partnership with the Holy Spirit.<sup>43</sup>
43. The Church of England has played a key role in the two major movements of the development of catechesis and the formation of new ecclesial communities through contextual mission. This journey has been an ecumenical one and shared with our partner churches. Both movements have been widely influential ecumenically and elsewhere in the world. Both have been widely taken up within the Church of England in diocese and parishes but good practice is by no means universal.

### **Section Five - Intentional Evangelism: the next decades**

44. There has been no lack of commitment to evangelism and to growing the Church in the resolutions of the General Synod and the lead given by the Archbishops over the first half of the life of this Synod (2010-2015).
45. In November 2010, in his presidential address to the Synod, the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, highlighted three themes for the next quinquennium, the first of which was the call:

*“To take forward the spiritual and numerical growth of the Church of England – including the growth of its capacity to serve the whole community of this country”*

46. In January 2011, The Archbishops Council and the House of Bishops submitted a report to the new Synod, *Challenges for a New Quinquennium* (GS 1815). The report commended three themes as a robust framework for shaping the work of the next five years namely:

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<sup>41</sup> See the series *Encounters on the Edge*, Church Army, 1998 onwards.

<sup>42</sup> The most recent report is *Fresh Expressions in the Mission of the Church*, The Report of an Anglican-Methodist working party, Church House Publishing, 2012 and debated at the Synod in July 2012

<sup>43</sup> See Michael Moynagh with Philip Harrold, *Church for Every Context*, SCM, 2012

*“Contributing as a national church to the common good, facilitating the growth of the Church and re-imagining the Church’s ministry”.*

47. In July 2011, the General Synod passed a motion calling on the Archbishops Council and the House of Bishops to develop these priorities into a national mission strategy that will support dioceses, deaneries and parishes in their own church growth and mission planning. This strategy was developed in GS Misc 1054, *Making New Disciples, The Growth of the Church of England*, which was published for the July 2013 Synod and is one of the papers which will inform the debate on evangelism in November 2013.
48. In July 2013 the Synod debated a progress report from the Archbishops’ Council and the House of Bishops on Challenges for the Quinquennium (GS 1895). The report notes the progress made for each of the challenges and contains as an appendix a discussion paper by the Bishop of Sheffield on The Seven Disciplines of Evangelisation, a paper written in part as a reflection on his experience as the Anglican Fraternal Delegate to the Synod of Bishops in Rome and in dialogue with the annual meeting of Archbishops and Diocesan bishops.
49. The Synod expressed appreciation for GS 1895 and GS Misc 1054. It further passed a following motion proposed by the Revd. John Dunnett encouraging the House of Bishops:

*“to devote a substantial amount of time over the next two years to considering a strategy for the re-evangelization of England and how they might lead the Church in that task”*
50. The Archbishop of Canterbury in his first Presidential Address to the General Synod in July highlighted evangelism as one of his three personal priorities (alongside the renewal of prayer and the religious life and the theme of reconciliation):

*“The Quinquennial goals aim at spiritual and numerical growth in the church. That includes evangelism, the third of my emphases.....Here again we need new imagination in evangelism through prayer, and a fierce determination not to let evangelism be squeezed off our agendas. ....The gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed THE good news for our times. God is always good news; we are the ones who make ourselves irrelevant when we are not good news. And when we are good news, God’s people see growing churches”.*
51. The Archbishop of York has over the last two years pioneered a new project, “Towards the evangelization of the north” which has included networking and encouragement of bishops, missionaries and young evangelists as well as the Archbishops own significant ministry as an evangelist to the Northern Province and beyond.
52. There can be little doubt from the motions carried and the tone and content of the debates that evangelism and the growth of the church stands high on the agenda of the General Synod, that there is a deep desire to deepen the Church’s engagement with these themes through more substantial debate and action. This desire has resonance across the Church.

53. Creative work has been done in the first half of the quinquennium in researching Church growth at a number of levels<sup>44</sup>, in developing *Pilgrim*, a major new resource for teaching the faith on behalf of the House of Bishops<sup>45</sup>, on further developing fresh expressions of church<sup>46</sup> and in researching chaplaincy. The Youth Evangelism fund continues to stimulate engagement with and by young people. Back to Church Sunday, HOPE and the resources focussed around the Olympics and the Diamond Jubilee in 2012 have all played their part. Much of this creative work has been ecumenical.
54. However, the translation of this desire for a strategy into a meaningful and workable plan for the next period of our common life has still to be achieved. Motions in the General Synod about evangelism and the growth of the church are in danger of becoming bland. We seem to be at the point where evangelism cannot be taken forward by the embracing of one or two big new ideas but is more about an intentional shift across a whole range of disciplines.
55. Headline motions about the growth of the church cannot by themselves prevent this agenda being squeezed by the seemingly more pressing calls to focus time and attention on questions of gender and ministry or human sexuality. These are undoubtedly also questions of mission and need to be addressed but often it seems the time invested in them excludes other priorities. Dialogue between bishops and other senior leaders in the church on this subject is often difficult but absolutely vital for mutual encouragement, learning together and the spread of good practice. The call to evangelise and to grow the Church must be taken forward at local and diocesan level primarily yet there remains a role for the national Church in setting priorities, learning and co-ordination and resourcing initiatives.
56. In the light of the stated priorities of the General Synod and the Archbishops and the urgent and complex nature of the task we propose that the General Synod commits to a further period of intentional evangelism in the coming decades and manifests that commitment through:
1. Strong support for an Archbishops' Task Group on Evangelism which will enable national leadership and co-ordination in this area of Church life
  2. Support for a national call to prayer around this agenda in the coming years.
  3. Support for a programme of action to be articulated by the Task Group around the Seven Disciplines of Evangelisation as set out in the following sections
  4. A call to every PCC and every diocesan and deanery Synod to take time annually to develop and focus on this agenda and
57. We believe that this commitment to national leadership in a complex task will better serve the Church in the present moment than a single master plan or strategy document. We believe that the Church of England needs to give a clear priority to this range of tasks and disciplines in its own life, whilst taking every care to work ecumenically and in partnership wherever possible.

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<sup>44</sup> See the excellent website <http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk>

<sup>45</sup> The first three books were published in October. For details see <http://www.pilgrimcourse.org>

<sup>46</sup> See [www.freshexpressions.org.uk](http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk) for up to date information and research

## **Section Six - A Task Group on Evangelism**

58. The Archbishops have determined in consultation with the House of Bishops and the Archbishops' Council to establish a national task group on evangelism. The task group will support the Archbishops in taking forward the call to evangelism, to make disciples and to grow the Church.

The purpose of the task group will be:

- To hold the vision and priority of evangelism before every part of the Church of England
  - to deepen the prayer life of the Church and promote intentional prayer for the work of making new disciples at every level of church life
  - To co-ordinate and encourage the many different initiatives which are helping to take this vision forward
  - To propose new initiatives to further this aim
  - To act as a channel for resources to support those initiatives which are bearing fruit
  - Enable the Church of England to work in ecumenical partnership in evangelism wherever possible
59. The Task Group is called into being for a five year period after which it will be subject to review. Much of its work will be done in a series of sub groups or round tables drawing together a range of views across the Church.
60. The Task Group will report directly to the Archbishops but will also produce updates from time to time for the Archbishops Council, the General Synod and the House of Bishops.
61. The terms of reference and composition of the task group are appended to this paper.

## Section Seven - The Seven Disciplines of Evangelisation<sup>47</sup>

62. There has been a positive response across the Church of England to the Bishop of Sheffield's discussion paper on the Seven Disciplines of Evangelisation. This was evidenced in responses from Bishops and dioceses and in comments made during the General Synod debate in July.
63. The term discipline is used in two senses. It describes a commitment to **perseverance** in a range of practices which are demanding and which may not be instantly fruitful. It also describes a series of distinct **subject areas** or disciplines within the overall task of evangelization which merit focus, co-ordination, learning and strategy in their own right. One of the arguments of the paper is that we need at the present time a more nuanced vocabulary for our debates about evangelism.
64. If the Church of England is to be intentional in our approach to evangelism over the coming decades, that will mean steadily gaining proficiency in and shifting resources towards these disciplines in a strategic way and in such a way that our evangelism bears fruit in an increasing number of disciples and the overall growth of the Church.
65. The Seven Disciplines are described in the following paragraphs<sup>48</sup> with some new questions and possible practical steps after each. The questions are intended as a way for parishes and diocesan senior teams to reflect on each discipline, to stimulate members of the General Synod as they prepare for the debate and, alongside the contribution of Synod members, to form an initial agenda for the Archbishops' Task Group.

### 1. Prayerful discernment and listening

66. This first discipline is both a distinct set of practices and the foundation for each of the others. The transmission of the Christian faith is a divine as well as a human activity. It is only possible in the life of the Spirit. This deep truth is carried in the story of Pentecost and Jesus' instruction to the disciples to wait for the power of the Spirit. It is carried in the beautiful picture of the vine, where it is the life of Christ which flows into the branches and bears fruit. The Church is called to abide deeply in Christ continually as the foundation and source of her life through prayer, worship and the sacraments. **Contemplation** is the wellspring of evangelism<sup>49</sup>.
67. This deep abiding in the life of Christ needs to be accompanied by a careful attention to what God is doing already in each different place, community and context and out of that listening to discern carefully the best and most helpful place to begin. One of the features of the gospel stories and the Acts of the Apostles often commented on in the tradition of the Church is the way in which Jesus and the apostles deal in different ways with different people. There are no repetitive formulas to be repeated in each place but

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<sup>47</sup> The broader term evangelization has been retained at this point in the paper as the term evangelism is used by many to refer not to the whole range of disciplines but to initial proclamation of the faith.

<sup>48</sup> Adapted from the Appendix to GS 1895

<sup>49</sup> See the address by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams to the Synod of Bishops at: <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/2645/archbishops-address-to-the-synod-of-bishops-in-rome>

prayerful and careful openness to the Spirit and discernment in context. The contextualisation of mission and in the life of the Church flows from this deep and careful listening.

***For discussion and response:***

*How does a local church, a diocese and the national church grow this habit of prayerful discernment and listening? What time is set aside and identified for prayer for evangelism and the growth of the church? What are we doing to listen to our culture and our local communities? Do we need new tools of mission audit to help us to do this?*

## **2. Apologetics (defending and commending the Christian faith)**

68. **The discipline of apologetics** is the practice of **defending and commending the Christian faith** in dialogue with individuals, with specific communities and ideas and with whole cultural movements. Its roots are deep in Scripture (in Job and Daniel, in the Acts of the Apostles). It serves to strengthen the faith of believers, to remove obstacles to faith in hearts and minds and to prepare the ground for the initial proclamation of the gospel. It is a discipline which is massively under resourced in theological education and research and in the life of the Church. It is a discipline exercised through a variety of media: through films, novels, new media and the sciences as well as philosophy and theology. It is a ministry exercised in the pulpit, in pastoral encounters, in schools, in engagement in the public domain, in writing and broadcasting.

***For discussion and response:***

*Where does apologetics feature in preaching and pastoral conversation; in ministry to schools and young people? How are we engaging Christian academics in this task? Is a major new initiative needed? How are clergy and lay ministers prepared for this task through initial training and continuing development?*

## **3. Evangelism (the initial proclamation of the faith)**

69. **The discipline of evangelism** (or **the initial proclamation of the faith**) is the habit and practice of sowing the seed of the gospel in the lives of those who have not yet heard its life-giving message. The Roman Catholic vocabulary is “initial proclamation” and the term evangelism is reserved as a generic, non-technical term used both for the whole and the parts of the process. We have a similar tension in the Church of England usage.

70. This discipline is somewhat better resourced in our own life. We have a College of Evangelists, Church Army Evangelists, a network of Diocesan Missioners and often local licensed evangelists in dioceses dedicated in different ways to the initial proclamation of the faith in imaginative and effective ways. Nevertheless as our culture changes and evolves there is a need to continue to reflect and to develop resources and tools for this initial proclamation of the faith.
71. The Scriptures are clear that some are gifted as evangelists. However Christian disciples are called to bear witness, to be ready to give account for the hope which is in us. This discipline of consistent witness to our faith through conversation is a key challenge for every Christian and is the task of the whole people of God, not simply the clergy or recognized ministers. One of the major challenges for a church in mission is the equipping of all of its members to bear witness to their faith in the home, the workplace and the wider community.

***For discussion and response:***

*Is there a need for new resources for the effective communication of the heart of the gospel in print or other media? How is the Church of England able to grasp the opportunities presented by new media to share the faith? How can the Church better equip all its members to offer a confident and compassionate witness to their faith?*

**4. Catechesis (teaching and learning faith)**

72. **The discipline of catechesis** is the discipline of **teaching and learning faith** and especially teaching the faith to those preparing for baptism (and confirmation) and those who have been recently baptized as they grow into mature discipleship. This is a discipline where the Roman Catholic Church has done very significant work over the last two generations (evidenced in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the RCIA). This discipline is heavily disguised in our own discourse. We have developed the habit of referring to it either by the brand names of popular courses (Alpha, Emmaus, Christianity Explored) or else by generic titles such as “nurture courses” which cannot carry the weight of the Christian tradition or the range of pastoral practice involved in catechesis.
73. Catechesis of adults and children and young people is absolutely critical to the growth of the church. It is the discipline through which new disciples are formed and take their place in the life and witness of the Christian community. We need urgently to recover a sense of the family as a primary agent of catechesis in teaching the faith to children and young people. We have tremendous responsibility and potential to develop catechesis in Church of England schools over the next decade.
74. Catechesis engages three theological disciplines of doctrine, liturgy and formation. As the Church of England we have done some work in each of these areas but little to bring them together in a systematic way.
75. As indicated above, the House of Bishops and the Archbishops Council have recently taken an initiative to develop new resources in this area.

***For discussion and response:***

*Is there a need at this time to deepen and extend this work of catechesis through a revision of the catechism and the development of more extended resources for Anglican catechists? How are dioceses training and equipping people for this key ministry? Is there a call for new training materials? Where does catechesis feature in the initial formation of clergy and licensed ministers? How are families equipped to teach the faith to their children? How can the place of catechesis in Church of England schools be strengthened?*

**5. Ecclesial formation (growing the community of the church)**

76. **The discipline of ecclesial formation** is the discipline of **growing the community of the church** as the number of disciples grows. In many places, church congregations are now primary communities not subsets of existing communities. As a number of authorities recognize, making disciples (rather than converts) is absolutely vital.
77. Christian disciples need more formation and intentional support in living out their discipleship in a more secular environment. This discipline, like the others, has very deep roots in scripture and the tradition (“My little children, for whom I am again in childbirth until Christ is formed in you” Gal. 4.19). However it is a discipline which is undergoing change because of the wider environment and the changing role of the stipendiary clergy who are increasingly called to oversee the life of several parishes each with its team of recognized ministers.
78. This discipline is absolutely vital to the growth of the church. Those who come to faith need to be incorporated into living, growing, supportive and Christ like Christian communities.
79. Small ecclesial communities have emerged over recent decades as one of the chief building blocks in the church worldwide as it engages with the task of mission and growth. Within both the Protestant and the Roman Catholic Churches it is clear that in many places they have become a significant pastoral movement of renewal and support of congregations.
80. The Church of England has invested considerably into research into growing the Church in recent years in several separate streams of enquiry. The outcomes of this research will be available in the autumn of 2013 and will inform the work of the new Task Group.
81. One of the core activities associated with growing the community of the Church and widely used in the Church of England over recent decades is Mission Action Planning (MAP) which GS 1054 commends as a key tool for parishes.

***For discussion and response:***

*What further work is needed to ensure that the fruits of the extensive research into Church growth are feeding through into the initial and ongoing formation of all clergy? How can the key tool of Mission Action planning be still more widely used across dioceses? How are bishops being equipped to be leaders of the Church in mission and to oversee the growth of the Church in every diocese?*

**6. Planting and forming new ecclesial communities (fresh expressions of church)**

82. The discipline of planting and forming new ecclesial communities. This is the discipline rooted in the earliest days of the New Testament Church which has been slowly recovered in the Church of England through the insights of returning missionaries such as Roland Allen, the church planting movement, Mission-Shaped church and the development of fresh expressions of church.
83. As a Church we have invested significantly in this discipline in recent years. We have recently committed ourselves, through the General Synod Debate on Fresh Expressions in the Mission of the Church to continued investment and development. There are very clear indicators that investment here is leading to the growth in the church. However there remains a significant agenda for the future.
84. The growth in fresh expressions of church over the last decade has been remarkable. Across the six dioceses where there has been detailed research, people in fresh expressions of church now make up on average ten per cent of those attending church. The average growth rate of the teams being sent out is 250 per cent. Over 70 per cent of the 14,000 people involved in those dioceses were previously de-churched or non-churched. Our ecumenical partners have seen similar if not greater fruit, and part of the fruitfulness has been the ecumenical working, particularly with the Methodist Church.

***For discussion and response:***

*The take up and development of fresh expressions of church and pioneer ministry is not consistent across dioceses. How can the good practice learned in some dioceses be embedded elsewhere? How can the lessons which continue to be learned about the development of these new communities be passed on to the whole church? In particular how will the Church of England reach the point where there are fruitful fresh expressions of church in every deanery in five years time?*

## 7. Incarnational mission (following the pattern of Jesus)

85. Like the first of these disciplines, the seventh needs to run through our practice of each of the others. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus commissioned the disciples with these words: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (20.21). The incarnation and the ministry of Jesus is to be the pattern of all Christian mission, including the ministry of evangelization and growing the Church. The discipline of patterning our mission on the life of Christ takes us back to the first discipline of prayerful discernment and attention to context. However it must also include ensuring that we are a church which not only invites people to come to us but which continually goes, in different ways, for the blessing of society and in search of the last, the least and the lost, taking the message of salvation.
86. We must ensure that the evangelization we attempt is not in word only but supported by our actions and our service of the common good and the wider ministry of reconciliation. We must ensure that our evangelization is contextual, that the one gospel takes flesh in different forms with different people and therefore that we must pay attention to the way in which the church takes a particular form in different contexts (inculturation). We must be alert to particular moments of opportunity both as individuals and as a Church in reading the signs of the times, not slaves to a single strategy or programme but alert to the movement of the Holy Spirit. We must be prepared for the untidiness and mess which always accompanies experiment, evangelism and growth. Above all we must clothe our apologetics, our proclamation, our teaching, and our planting and building of the churches in love, without which all we do is nothing.

### ***For discussion and response:***

*How can we so watch over and lead the Church of England that the Church grows together more deeply into the likeness of Jesus Christ even as we seek to grow the number of Christian disciples and the number of church communities? How does the Church of England continue to build the connection between the different marks of mission and ensure that as we are intentional about evangelism we are equally intentional about pursuing God’s vision of justice and peace?*

## **Section Eight - Resourcing intentional evangelism and making disciples**

87. One of the learning points for the Church of England from the last two decades of encouraging evangelism is that most of the initiatives which have resulted in numerical growth in the Church of England have not come from centrally organized initiatives but from local churches, individuals or particular dioceses. As so often in institutions, leadership in innovation has come from the edges and margins but has then been identified and spread through a blend of encouragement and resourcing from within the structures and entrepreneurial energy from the original bearers of the vision.
88. This is true of the Alpha course (from Holy Trinity Brompton); the Emmaus Course (from the Diocese of Wakefield); Back to Church Sunday (from the Diocese of

Manchester); the fresh expressions movement more generally (with initial support from Church Army and CMS); Messy Church (from a single church in Portsmouth supported by the Bible Reading Fellowship); Leading your Church into Growth, from a team of diocesan missionaries and many other initiatives<sup>50</sup>. However other initiatives which might have borne much more fruit have not been taken forward because of a lack of resources.

89. This is now a proven approach and one that will continue to be helpful in a changing future. The new Task Group will provide essential leadership in identifying innovations in dioceses and parishes which can make a difference. It is hoped that the Archbishops will create a fund which can support such initiatives and enable their effect to be amplified and good practice to spread in the coming decades.

***For discussion and response:***

*What are the initiatives in evangelism which have been helpful and fruitful in your own context over the last five years? How can the Church best spread that good practice?*

**Section Nine - The priority of Intentional Evangelism**

90. One debate at General Synod is not enough to place evangelism on the agenda of every parish church and fresh expression of church across the land. Intentional evangelism needs a continual focus. For that reason we invite the General Synod, through this debate, to invite every Parochial Church Council, Deanery Synod and Diocesan Synod to give substantial time in each year to focus on evangelism, making disciples and, we pray, growing the life of the Church in numbers and in spiritual depth so that serious consideration can be given to taking forward the Seven Disciplines in every context in the coming years.

**Section Ten - The vital importance of prayer**

91. We return, finally, to the challenges we face in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ in this present generation, a challenge shared by the Church around the world.
92. Our end point and our starting point in meeting this challenge must be prayer: not only intercession but a deep abiding by the Church in the life of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in order that this deep abiding might in time enable the good fruit of justice and service to the common good (Isaiah 5); the good fruit of holiness in discipleship (Galatians 5) and the good fruit of a harvest of new disciples of Jesus Christ to serve him in the body of the Church (Luke 5 and Matthew 11).

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<sup>50</sup> For an excellent discussion of the spread of fresh expressions using complexity theory and the notion of amplification to enable wider take up see Michael Moynagh, Church for Every Context, SCM, 2012 pp. 58-63.

## **The motion for debate**

‘That this Synod in the light of the priority of evangelism and making new disciples:

- (a) support the formation of an Archbishops’ Task Group on Evangelism with the terms of reference and timetable as set out in GS 1917;
- (b) call upon the Task Group to make its first priority a new call to prayer;
- (c) commend to the Task Group an initial programme for its work around the seven disciplines of evangelisation as set out in the same paper;
- (d) call upon every diocesan and deanery synod and every PCC to spend the bulk of one meeting annually and some part of every meeting focusing on sharing experiences and initiatives for making new disciples.’

## **Annex: The Archbishops' Task Group on Evangelism: Terms of Reference**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the task group will be:

- To hold the vision and priority of evangelism before every part of the Church of England
- to deepen the prayer life of the Church and promote intentional prayer for the work of making new disciples at every level of church life
- To research, co-ordinate and encourage the many different initiatives which are helping to take this vision forward
- To propose new initiatives to further this aim
- To act as a channel for resources to support those initiatives which are bearing fruit
- To enable the Church of England to work in ecumenical partnership in evangelism wherever possible

### **Membership:**

The Archbishop of Canterbury  
The Archbishop of York

Up to ten members appointed by the Archbishops following nominations from the Archbishops Council and the House of Bishops Standing Committee.

The membership of the Task Group should contain the different skills required to undertake the task and reflect the diversity of tradition, age, gender and ethnicity across the Church of England.

### **Working Groups**

The Task Group shall have the power to establish focussed working groups to engage with different aspects of its agenda.

### **Frequency of meetings and duration**

The Task Group shall meet between four and six times per year in the first two years and thereafter be subject to annual review.

### **Accountability**

The Task Group is accountable to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and shall also report annually to the Archbishops' Council and the General Synod.

## **Timetable**

1. Membership established and first meeting of the Task Group: 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2014
2. Issue a new call to prayer: Pentecost, 2014
3. Commission and complete a first consultation and research exercise based on the Seven Disciplines of Evangelisation: July 2014
4. Agree a programme of work to encourage and resource new initiatives: December 2014

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