

By Alison Coulter

## About Alison

Alison works with leaders in the NHS and in the not-for-profit sector as a facilitator and coach. She has a background in NHS management and Public Health. She is a member of the Church of England's General Synod, Lay Chair of Winchester Diocesan Synod and Chair of the student mission team at St Andrew's University. She is also a member of the Archbishops' Council's Lay Leadership Task Force as a member of the Archbishops' Council's Lay Leadership Task Force. She is also a member of the Archbishops' Council's Lay Leadership Task Force.



I live in Winchester where our Cathedral has a link with St Swithun's Cathedral in Stavanger, Norway. To celebrate the feast of St Swithun in July, the Dean of Stavanger, Dean Stefan Emmerhoff, sent a video message to Winchester which talked about the challenges of the past year during the Covid pandemic. He talked about 'going back' after Covid and reflected that we cannot and must not go back. But we do need to go 'back to basics', which he described as 'going back to the simple and most important things.' I found his message very compelling, not just for us in Winchester, but for all of us as we look forward, and this resonates with the Church of England's Vision and Strategy.

I think being a Church of Missionary Disciples is one of the 'simple and most important' things. Although, it turns out not to be that simple to actually do! There is still some way to go, in my opinion, before we all understand that we are the church Monday to Saturday not just on a Sunday, and that how we live our faith every day matters a great deal. It matters to God; it matters to each of us for our own witness and integrity and it matters to each other for the building up of the body of Christ and the living out of the Kingdom of God. We are all called to be Missionary Disciples.

I juggle a number of different work roles, some paid and some unpaid, as well as being a mother and now grandmother, friend, member of my local church community, and choir and dance class member amongst other things. Life for each of us is already complex and busy – how are we supposed to fit in being Missionary Disciples as well?! I believe that God chooses and calls each of us to be Missionary Disciples, where we are in our everyday lives: it doesn't need to be something extra. I think it's about living our lives rooted in God's love, spending time with him each day, keeping on praying whatever we are doing, and believing that he is at work with us and through us. I pray before and during meetings, and when I am planning my work, asking for God's help, wisdom, and inspiration. I find it helpful to take time to reflect at the end of my work and ask myself 'Where was God today? What was he saying?' Sometimes I write my thoughts in my journal, and sometimes I pray through the day as I walk the dog in the early evening.

Being a Missionary Disciple is about living as a Christian in the places and with the people where we live and work. It may not always involve conversations about faith, but in my experience, it will mostly involve listening to the people we work with or share life with, being friendly, generous, and kind, responding when they ask us about our lives, offering to pray for situations if that's appropriate, doing our work as well as we can, caring for and loving our family and friends. This is some of what's involved in living our faith everyday as a Missionary Disciple.

Perhaps you think that being a Missionary Disciple is not for you. My prayer is that everyone in our church would know that what they do every day is important and valuable to God for the building up of his Church and his Kingdom. That we would each feel called and inspired to live out our faith in the everyday tasks of life. This is the 'simple and most important thing', but it is not easy for us to do or to help others to do. Let's keep working at this and encouraging each other.

On the [Everyday Faith section on the Church of England website](#), there are some useful resources to encourage you. I have also found the work of the [London Institute for Contemporary Christianity](#) very helpful for living as a Christian at work.

I hope and pray that our work on developing and supporting this vision can help to inspire and encourage all God's people to know they are called to live out their faith every day – this is what it means to be a Church of Missionary Disciples.

Find out more about the Church of England's Vision for the 2020s

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