

## About Bishop Emma

Rt Revd Dr Emma Ineson is Bishop to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. She was previously Bishop of Penrith in Carlisle Diocese, before that Principal of Trinity College, Bristol. She is author of *Ambition: What Jesus said about power, success and counting stuff* (SPCK 2019) and her new book *Failure: What Jesus said about sin, mistakes and messing stuff up* (SPCK, forthcoming) will be the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book for 2023. She is Chair of the Minority Ethnic Vocations Advisory Group, Central Chaplain for the Mothers' Union, and a member of Tearfund's Theology Committee.

I think the word 'strategy' is a bit like marmite. You either love it or hate it. There are those who love it, cannot get enough of it – 'how can we possibly get ourselves out of all the challenges we face as a church unless we have an inspiring vision and a clear strategic plan?'

Then there are those who say that businesses, governments and industries have 'vision and strategy' – not the church.

'Strategy' is at its root a military term (from the Greek word stratós, meaning 'army') and some react to the 'Onward Christian Soldiers' feel of it.

Yet the Bible is no stranger to strategy – even of the military kind.

Repeatedly in the pages of scripture we see people drawing up plans and putting them into effect.

Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah drew up plans and objectives.

Jesus himself spoke about the need to weigh resources and to consider carefully before setting out on a particular course of action, particularly the radical journey of being a follower of his (Luke 14.31).

So perhaps we shouldn't shy away from talk of strategy at all, but rather think about what good strategy looks like, as opposed to bad strategy.

A good strategy will be more than a catchy slogan.

A good strategy will involve an accurate diagnosis of the issues the strategy is supposed to address.

It will seek to solve a problem, rather than simply set unobtainable goals.

It will have a set of values, or a guiding policy by which all the strategic decisions are made. In the case of any strategy produced by the church, that guiding policy must be the ways of the Kingdom of God, which was so clearly the guiding policy of Jesus's own life and ministry.

A strategy for the church will necessarily turn worldly expectations of what success looks like on their head.

A strategy for the church will have God as its primary actor, not we humans, since it is God who builds his Kingdom, not us. We simply herald it, point to it, and live in line with its values.

A strategy for the church will be flexible – more like a murmuration of starlings than a straight line, because we live in complex times, and we cannot always predict where the wind blows. A strategy of the church will allow space for trying things, failing, and trying again.

Pope Francis said in a homily to his priests, 'the cross shows us a different way of measuring success. Ours is to plant the seeds: God sees to the fruits of our labours.'

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