

GENERAL SYNOD

Missionary disciples: Jesus Christ centred and shaped in the whole of life

1. The heart of our vision and strategy for the 2020s is simply and fundamentally about recalling the Church of England to its primary vocation to be Jesus Christ centred and Jesus Christ shaped. It is around this centre that the strategic priorities of being a church of missionary disciples, a church where a mixed ecology is the norm, and being a younger and more diverse church are set. These priorities serve this ambition and this calling.
2. The first priority is that, we believe that God might be calling us to be much more a church of missionary disciples. Stating this as a priority for the Church of England at this time is in keeping with a wider move of God observable across the Anglican Communion and within other denominations. It affirms our personal and corporate identity in Christ, reflected in baptism and encourages each of us to be more attentive how we 'shine as lights in the world.'
3. By disciples we affirm that we are a church of people whose lives are shaped by Jesus Christ. We participate in God's mission in and to the world. In particular, this will be about allowing our lives to be shaped by the five marks of mission. We are those that are called to gather around Jesus through worship, prayer and fellowship, and we're also called to be sent out by him, both in groups and individually, in the whole of our lives.
4. The phrase missionary disciple can be attributed to Pope Francis in his 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel).¹ It addresses a perception that the 'missionary' calling of the church can be seen as a task of those in specific roles or ministry callings. Similarly that our involvement in mission is distinct from our following of Jesus in everyday life. It is a provocative term because it requires us to reflect on our self-understanding as the church. Yet, before Christian churches were established, Jesus was sending out disciples in the whole of life (Luke 10:1-17, Matthew 28:19-20). We are all called - regardless of who we are - to share God's love with others wherever we go.
5. For some, this might involve spreading love and encouragement. For others it will be about actively pursuing an agenda for justice and peace. Others might belong to a workplace group or might feel called to share faith with colleagues or friends at school. For others, faith in God is what gets them through difficult situations. For everyone, prayer and a renewal of the Spiritual life of the Church will be at the heart of this.
6. God calls every one of us to be a missionary disciple. In the New Testament the same twelve who are named 'disciples' are also called 'apostles'. There is no point when they graduate from one to the other. They are always those who gather around Jesus and follow him. And they are always those who are sent out by him.
7. It must be the same with us. We are called to gather around Jesus in worship, prayer and fellowship. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we are sent out by Jesus to be his witnesses and ambassadors in the world.

Strategic priorities and bold outcomes

8. Within this vision our three strategic priorities are not distinct strands, but related aspects that creatively interact with and provoke the dioceses and local churches of the Church of England to renew their life in Christ. In seeking to be communities of missionary disciples we cultivate an attentiveness to how God might be calling us to re-connect with our wider communities in different ways. By nurturing new forms of Christian community we discover fresh expressions in which to live and witness as missionary disciples. By growing congregations, enriching chaplaincies and planting new churches of missionary disciples that are younger and more

¹ [EVANGELII GAUDIUM \(vatican.va\)](http://www.vatican.va/evangelium-gaudium) p.97

GENERAL SYNOD

diverse, particularly in our poorest communities, we will better serve the breadth and diversity of our nation by becoming the church of the networks of 21st century as well as its neighbourhoods.

9. This places the outcomes that relate to being missionary disciples as core to empowering our overall vision for the 2020s. So that our **bold outcomes** are:

A church for everyone through:

- 1) Doubling the number of children and young active disciples in the Church of England by 2030.
- 2) A Church of England which fully represents the communities we serve in age and diversity.
- 3) A parish system revitalised for mission so there is a pathway for every person into an accessible and contextual expression of church.
- 4) Creating ten thousand new Christian communities across the four areas of home, work/education, social and digital.

Empowered by:

- 5) All Christians in the Church of England envisioned, resourced and released to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the whole of life, bringing transformation to the church and world.
- 6) All local churches, supported by their diocese, becoming communities and hubs for initial and ongoing formation.

Empowering and encouraging missionary disciples

10. Being a church of missionary disciples is an intentional aim, but it is not an instrumental task. It is woven with our personal and corporate abiding in Christ and in Christ's self-giving mission. As such the first and unifying priority is to prayer.
11. Different terminologies and approaches to 'being missionary disciples' help articulate the richness and diversity for being Jesus Christ centred and shaped within the Anglican tradition. The approach taken to nurture our renewal does not aim to reduce this richness, but to identify how best to relate this to the challenges faced by individuals and communities in being faithful to our calling. As such, the bold outcomes act as framing questions within which the national church, dioceses, worshipping communities, chaplaincies, networks and groups can determine the actions that best engage and support individuals, families and communities as we engage in holistic mission.

The General Synod workshops will focus on these questions

1. How can we demonstrate being followers of Jesus Christ in the whole of our lives as individuals and communities?
2. Choose one or two aspects of your life – home, your neighbourhood, place of education or workplaces or online. Thinking about these places could you imagine one or two opportunities as missionary disciples to make a difference and bring change to the church and the world?

Some possible examples might be around the five marks of mission including talking about your faith, serving others, standing up for justice and developing more sustainable lifestyles.

What help might we need us to do this as God's people in these places? (Bold outcome 5)

How can all our churches be communities which better form and everyone as missionary disciples? (Bold outcome 6) What kind of changes might this require of us individually and collectively?