

sharing the good news

developing effective evangelism in the local church

contents

an introduction to this resource	2
when to use this resource	2
how to use this resource	2
what is evangelism?	4
reclaiming the word 'evangelism'	4
proclaiming the good news in scripture	4
doing evangelism well	6
the marks of Christ-centred evangelism	6
what does Christ-centred evangelism look like?	8
helping the church into evangelism	9
making it for everyone – witnesses and evangelists	9
giving God's people a story to tell	10
helping God's people tell their story	11
helping God's people tell their story appropriately and well	12
calming fears	13
making contact with those outside the church	14
speaking the right language	14
identifying need	14
community engagement – the vital work	15
beginning with community engagement	17
how people come to faith	18
the Engel Scale	18
"Alpha no longer works"	19
an evangelism programme	19
welcome, integration and discipleship	22
welcome	22
integration	23
discipleship	23
measuring success in evangelism	25
further information, questions and comments	27

an introduction to this resource

The purpose of this resources is to help any church to think through the issues surrounding how they do evangelism. It is designed to be used primarily by the leadership team of a church.

who is our leadership team?

The leadership team of a church usually means the incumbent alongside the PCC, but this isn't always the case. There might be a separate leadership team or standing committee, or it might include the PCC plus others, such as readers, other staff or those who oversee ministries.

Whoever they are, the leadership team will be the 'influencers' – those who help the church move forward together in the direction that God is calling. Because each church is different, you should decide who your leadership team is.

but we don't have a vicar

Just because a church doesn't have a vicar, it doesn't mean that it doesn't have a leadership team. Every church has a PCC! If the church is in vacancy, or is without an incumbent for other reasons, the PCC can still usefully work through this resource together.

Sharing the Good News with those outside the church is central to God's calling for us, and so it's unlikely that any new incumbent is going to say it was a waste of time. It may even help that new incumbent to see how best to take the church forward.

when to use this resource

This resource can be used at any time to help a church think about evangelism. It can help if you don't really like the word 'evangelism' and what it means to you, if you're only just thinking about how you do evangelism as a church, or if you've been doing this kind of thing for a while and simply want to reflect on it.

It fits in very well with the Mission Action Planning (MAP) for Derby Diocese process, which helps churches to become growing, healthy churches that reflect the purpose and character that God intends for them. If you'd like to know more about MAP for Derby Diocese and how it can help you, then get in touch with the Mission and Ministry Team at Church House, who will be more than happy to help you.

how to use this resource

The resource is designed to be worked through by the leadership team together, thinking and praying through the areas it touches on, reflecting and discussing the issues it raises, and deciding together about how the church should respond to those issues. How that is done is up to you. You might set aside time in a series of PCC meetings, hold some separate evening sessions or even plan an away day.

Once you have worked through the resource together, you will have a range of ways in which you feel God is asking you to respond to the issues that it has raised. The next stage is to form those into an action plan, being clear on who will do what and when, and ensuring that you have all the support and help you need. Whether this forms a part of your MAP (see above) or is a separate plan, it's essential to ensure that what you discover isn't just talked about.

Each section starts with some input. It's helpful if the leadership team can read through and think about this input before they meet to think about it together. Following on from that will be a range of ideas for discussion, reflection and activities that can help the leadership team to engage with the input that they have read.

navigating the resource

We use symbols to denote these different ways in which you will engage with the resource:



Input Some information for the leadership to consider.



Discussion An issue or topic to discuss together as a leadership team.



Reflection Questions or issues for the leadership team to reflect on and pray about.



Action An activity or a task for the leadership team to have a go at.



Information Something that may be helpful for the leadership to know about.

In addition, key points are highlighted in a box, like this:

Evangelism is what we do when we proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in the world.

what is evangelism?

reclaiming the word 'evangelism'



There are a lot of fears and misconceptions around the word 'evangelism'. For many, it conjures up unhelpful images of pushy people with large floppy Bibles and megaphones in town centres, or of teams of people going out with handfuls of tracts to knock on doors. For others, the word comes with certain associations and assumptions:

- "Evangelism is for evangelicals – I'm not an evangelical, so it's not for me."
- "Evangelism is intrusive and manipulative and erodes freedom of choice."
- "People aren't interested in hearing about Jesus, and we're likely to offend."
- "Evangelism is only for those who are gifted in it."

Sometimes, therefore, people are uncomfortable with the word and so we try to use other ways to express the same thing. The trouble is, no one has really come up with another word that means the same thing. Instead, it is perhaps worth reclaiming what the word truly means. The word 'evangelism' comes from the Greek word *euangelion*; someone who brings good news. Our word for 'angel' comes from the same root. The verb form, *euangelizo*, therefore means 'to bring good news'. It's related closely in the New Testament to the word *kerusso* – to proclaim. In other words, the word evangelism simply means, 'to proclaim the good news' (and when we're talking about the context of the New Testament, that good news is the Good News of Jesus Christ).

Evangelism is what we do when we proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God in the world.



If you have been uncomfortable with the word 'evangelism', reflect and pray honestly about where that discomfort comes from for you.



1. What images, thoughts and feelings does the word 'evangelism' conjure up for you?
2. What experiences in your life has shaped your reaction to the word 'evangelism'?
3. Do you think people in your church might have similar thoughts and feelings, and if so, how might you help them as a leadership team to overcome them?

proclaiming the good news in scripture



Proclaiming the Good News was central to the mission of Jesus during his time on earth. We see it in his declaration in the temple in Nazareth (Lk 4.18-19) and his intent for the surrounding towns and cities (Lk 4.43). He made good on his promise – everywhere he went, Jesus 'proclaimed the

Good News' (Matt 4.23; 9.35; Mk 1.14; Lk 3.18). However, this wasn't just something that was for Jesus alone. That which Jesus did, he asked his disciples to do as well (Matt 10.7; Mk 16.15), and they did as they were asked (Mk 16.20).

Neither was the proclaiming of the Good News something just for that time. The last recorded words of Jesus before his ascension were to instruct his disciples to be his witnesses in, 'Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (Ac 1.8); and we see the disciples start to do just that throughout the book of Acts (Ac 8.12,25,40; 14.7,21; 16.10).

The five marks of mission, formulated by the Anglican Consultative Council in 1984, are summary of what the mission of the Church is all about. The first of these marks is, 'To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom'. They note, "The first Mark of Mission ... is a summary of what all mission is about, because it is based on Jesus' own summary of his mission. This should be the key statement about everything we do in mission."¹

In March 2015, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, delivered his Lambeth Lecture on the topic of evangelism. In that lecture, he said, "... all we endeavour to do is done with the intention that we serve and enable the lives of every follower of Jesus to be faithful witnesses to the transforming love of God ... For this country will not know of the revolutionary love of Christ by church structures or clergy, but by the witness of every single Christian."²

Evangelism is central to God's mission for his Church today and an essential part of what each and every local church is called to do.



Do you think that evangelism has the priority in your church that is suggested above? If not, why do you think that might be?



Write down a list of all the activities that go on in your church. You don't need to do them all – there are probably a lot!

Now put a tick against everything that results in people outside the church hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ. Be strict and honest! As we shall see, demonstrating the love of God in our actions and behaviour is essential to evangelism; but just for the moment, we're talking about activities that are about *telling* people who Jesus is and what he has done through his cross and resurrection.

One to get you started... baptism services?



1. What does the exercise above reveal about the church's approach to evangelism?
2. Do you think the church needs to think more about the importance of evangelism?
3. What could you do to increase the priority of evangelism in the church?

¹ <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1L8PgA-Kkzo>

doing evangelism well

the marks of Christ-centred evangelism



One of my lecturers at theological college used to say that people didn't like the word 'evangelism' because, if you said it quickly enough, it sounded like 'vandalism': an invasive and intrusive process. Certainly, evangelism badly done can be uncaring, less about love and more about getting numbers in the church up. However, evangelism well done is none of these things.

motivated by love

Our evangelism must be rooted in and motivated by love; wanting to share with someone else something that we have found to be life sustaining and transforming because we want the very best for them. It must recognise that we don't have anything to offer for ourselves, but what we offer comes from God.

Jesus, in probably the most famous verse in the Bible, clearly tells us that it is God's love for his people that caused him to act in history in Jesus:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.
John 3.16

Our evangelism should come from loving relationships with those to whom God calls us. If we believe that the Good News that we carry is the most precious thing that anyone can hear, and can transform lives and communities, then surely, we would want to tell people that Good News.

Moreover, which of those comes first (evangelism or love) matters. Rather than love being motivated by evangelism (we love people *in order to* evangelise), our evangelism should be motivated by love (we love people *and therefore we* evangelise). The latter is genuine love; the former is love with an ulterior motive.

When Paul writes to the Corinthian church about his own motivation, he starts with love:

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others ... For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.
2 Cor 5.11a, 14-15

starting with the needs of the person

If our evangelism is motivated by love, then it naturally follows that our evangelism starts with them and not with us. The best evangelism begins with listening, not with speaking; hearing the needs, joys and difficulties of the other and seeing God's image in them, so that we can speak to them not as a 'target', but as a human being, precious and loved by God.

The encounters that Jesus had were always unique because they always started with the person. When encountering two blind people on the road from Jericho, even though it might have been

obvious to others what was needed, he asked the question, “What do you want me to do for you?” (Matt 20.32). The encounters with the rich young ruler (Lk 18.18-22) and the woman at the well (Jn 4.4-26) were both challenging and unique, because Jesus got very quickly to the heart of their need.

Our evangelism must recognise the uniqueness of the person before us, and that although each person has a need for a relationship with Jesus, where they are on their faith journey, how they arrived there and how they can best continue to travel will all be totally different.

authenticated by transformed lives and loving service

Someone once wisely said, “It’s difficult for someone to proclaim the good news if they themselves are bad news.” In other words, we must show in our lives what we are proclaiming with our mouths. Bob Jackson, in his book *What Makes Churches Grow?* speaks about the importance of integrity and authenticity among the church community.

The first question people have about the Christian faith is rarely ‘Is it true?’ (‘Did the resurrection actually happen?’) It is more likely to be ‘Does it work?’ (‘Does it transform people’s lives?’) or ‘How does it feel?’ (‘Does it feel good to be a part of this?’ ‘Is it authentic?’ ‘Life-enriching?’) The truth question is answered by the arguments of the experts, the work question by the testimonies of the people, the feel question by the quality of the church community.³

Those outside the church will want to see lives transformed if they are to take seriously the transforming Good News of Jesus. Therefore, there will need to be evidence of the difference that Jesus can make in the attitudes, actions and behaviours of his people. The church will need to be actively engaged in the community through love and service that starts with people’s needs. It will need to encourage every Christian to demonstrate that love not only by getting involved in the church’s service for the community, but also through meaningful individual relationships, acts of kindness and distinctive, Christ-centred lives.

proclamation and incarnation in partnership

Occasionally, evangelism is identified with evangelicalism – a specific tradition of the church. “That’s not for us,” some will say. “Ours is an incarnational model.” Proclamation (telling people about the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God) and incarnation (walking alongside those in our communities and modelling the love of God through Christ-centred lives) are not mutually exclusive. Both are needed; they can and should work together.

Nowhere do we see this more clearly than in the life and ministry of Jesus. Mark shows us the incarnational life that Jesus led, alongside his proclamation of the Kingdom of God:

- Jesus proclaims the good news in Galilee (1.14-15)
- Jesus casts out an evil spirit and healing others (1.21-33)
- Jesus preaches in the villages (1.38-39)
- Jesus heals a leper (1.40)
- Jesus preaches to those gathered around him (2.2)
- Jesus heals a paralysed man (2.3-12)
- Jesus teaches a large crowd (2.13)
- Jesus eats with outcasts and sinners (2.14-17)

In the words of the current Pope:

³ What Makes Churches Grow? – Kindle Edition, *Bob Jackson* (CHP, London, 2015), Loc 2111

An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others.
Pope Francis, February 2014

So, far from incarnation and proclamation existing in tension, they form a necessary partnership. Differing parts of God's church have much to teach and learn from one another as we see the strengths and importance of what we bring to evangelism.

the whole church together

As we shall see, it's not reasonable to expect everyone to be an evangelist. That is a specific gift, given by the Holy Spirit, to specific individuals. But that doesn't exclude any in God's Church from being active in evangelism; we are all called to be witnesses. However, we can go further. The best evangelism is carried out together as the body of Christ. If evangelism must be backed up by loving relationships, service and hospitality, each of us has a part to play. As a seminar speaker I once heard said, "Not everyone can be an evangelist, but everyone can bake a cake."

In order to be effective, every member of the church must be willing to contribute to its evangelism, each bringing the gifts God has given them and their own story of a life transformed through faith.

***Christ-centred evangelism is:
motivated by love
based in the needs of the person
authenticated by transformed lives and loving service
partnered by incarnation
done by the whole church together***

what does Christ-centred evangelism look like?



1. Do you agree with all of the marks of Christ-centred evangelism above? If not, how would you change them?
2. Are there any other marks that you would add to the list?
3. Think about types of evangelism you have seen and experienced. Which ones exhibit the marks of Christ-centred evangelism? Which do not? Why?
4. If you are already doing evangelism as a church, how does it reflect the marks of Christ-centred evangelism, and what would you need to change to help it better reflect those marks?



Describe an 'ideal' piece of evangelism together. You can do this in words, or by drawing a picture or a diagram. In what ways does it reflect the marks of Christ-centred evangelism?

helping the church into evangelism



There are things that a church can do through programmes to enable evangelism. However, as the Archbishop of Canterbury pointed out, evangelism requires that the members of that church are effective witnesses for Jesus Christ among their family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues.

That witness was the last command of Jesus before his ascension, and throughout the Epistles we are encouraged to be ready to share 'the reason for the hope within us' (1 Pet 3.15). God has entrusted the message of reconciliation to us (2 Cor 5.19) and has created his Church to proclaim his glory in the world (1 Peter 2.9).

All this means that the fundamental task of the church in evangelism is to encourage, enable and equip God's people to be the witnesses he calls us to be, in both word and action. If people outside the church are to hear stories of transformed and enriched lives and see those stories authenticated by distinctive, Christ-centred lives lived within the church community, then the spiritual growth, vitality and maturity of God's people will be paramount. A church's evangelism depends on disciples who make disciples.



A half day workshop called 'Talking Faith (for Ordinary People)' is available for delivery from the Mission and Ministry team and is suitable for church people in any context (church, parish, benefice, deanery or any other grouping).

However, there are some areas to consider when encouraging the church to be a witnessing community.

making it for everyone – witnesses and evangelists



'Ah, but we're not evangelists,' they cry! It's true – to be an evangelist is listed among the spiritual gifts of which Paul writes in his letters and, as such, some are gifted as evangelists, and the gifts of others lie elsewhere (Eph 4.11). But that doesn't mean that we are not all called to be witnesses.

Evangelists are those who are gifted in proclaiming the Good News to a wide variety of people in many different contexts, and regularly see people coming to faith as they do so. This is a work of the Holy Spirit in both the evangelist and in those who come to faith. Billy Graham was perhaps the most positive and well-known example of such a person. However, if people think they must be another Billy Graham, then either they will be discouraged by the enormity of the challenge before them, or they will become discouraged when others don't flock to the church as a result of their evangelism. Either way, they will be convinced that evangelism is not for them.

However, if instead we see evangelism as the task of the whole church (as well as those particularly gifted for it), and the task of witness (to which every Christian is called) as a part of that evangelism, then the hill to climb becomes a little less steep.

A witness is someone who gives first hand testimony from their own perspective of something that has happened or is happening. As witnesses, our task is simply to share our own story of our relationship with God in Jesus Christ. As we shall see, that simple distinction can make a very big difference to the way the church, and individual Christians, approach the task of evangelism.



1. Do you agree with the differences here between being an evangelist and a witness?
2. How do we know if someone might be a gifted evangelist?
3. How are you encouraging and enabling those who are gifted evangelists in your church?



The idea that everyone is called to be a witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ might be a challenging one for you, and for many in the church. Equally, being released from not having to be another Billy Graham might be liberating! Bring these things to God, giving thanks that he never asks of us more than we can do and asking him for courage in the tasks to which he does call us.

giving God's people a story to tell



It's difficult to be a witness if you have no story to tell. Sadly, some Christians are muddled about, or even unaware of, their own faith story. I once visited a church who were thinking about their future working together with others. As an encouragement, I asked them to reflect on what they would like to celebrate in their last five years of journeying with God by writing those things on sticky notes and putting them on a flipchart. One of the sticky notes said, "Nothing." Another said, "Not much."

It's unlikely that God has remained completely silent in that faith community over those last five years! Instead, it's much more likely that the authors of these notes were not aware of God's work in them, as individuals or as a church.

a lively faith

The first step in helping God's people to be witnesses to God in their lives is to help them to find that story for themselves. That is a work of Christian discipleship; of deepening faith, prayer and worship. God's people will need to share their faith story out of a motivation of love for God and for other, not out of a sense of duty or 'because the vicar said we had to'.

Of course, if we wait until we are ready, then we'll never move. However, mission and discipleship are two facets of the same calling from God. Only when Christians know and have experienced the Good News for themselves in their own lives, will they wish to share that Good News with others – in the same way that we naturally cannot help sharing other good news, like the birth of a child. True discipleship leads naturally and inevitably to mission.

There are many, many ways that a church can help people to discover their own faith story. A part of it will be through teaching and preaching, through sermons and group work; it might also involve their own personal discipleship (encouraged through prayer and worship, reflection and Bible reading). However, sometimes it can be as simple as encouraging one another to listen and watch for God at work.

In one church where I was vicar, we started to have a regular slot during Sunday worship called 'God at work', in which we asked people to say what God had been doing in their lives and in the lives of others during the previous week. At first, the carpet became intensely interesting to the whole congregation! But slowly, with some gentle encouragements, one or two people started to tell

simple stories of where they had seen God at work. That encouraged more people, and soon it became difficult to finish! People started to see again the faithfulness and power of God in their own lives, and in the lives of others. They had a story to tell.

authenticity and Integrity

Of course, being a witness means that it becomes perfectly permissible to give answers like, “I don’t know...” or “I struggle with that too.” That’s a part of the authenticity and integrity that our society expects. Being a witness releases us from the need to be experts in doctrine who are bound to defend those doctrines when people ask awkward questions.



Anglican Witness is the Anglican Communion’s initiative for growth and evangelism. It centres on the link between living a Jesus-shaped life, discipleship, and effective witness. Find out more at <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/anglican-witness.aspx>.



What is your own faith story? How do you see God at work in your life and in the lives of others, day by day? Give thanks to God for the way in which he is at work in you, and pray that God will show you where and in whom he is at work.

Do you feel able to bring your own doubts and fears about your faith to God? Praying about them honestly may help – even talking with others who you trust about them. God already knows your heart, and you might find sharing them encourages both you and others that they are not alone... it may even help alleviate them.



Write down, or draw, your own faith story. Describe what difference your faith in Jesus Christ makes to your daily life. It might help you to think what life would be like if you didn’t have that faith.



1. In what ways does your church already encourage people to discover their own story? How could you encourage this more?

helping God’s people tell their story



Of course, knowing our faith story is one thing – it is another to tell it. People can feel uncomfortable doing so, especially if they have lived for a long time in the culture of faith as a private, personal thing about which you don’t talk with others. They may lack the language to express how they feel and what they think.

One simple way to help is to offer opportunities to practice talking about faith within the safety of the church, with other Christians. Getting used to sharing their faith story simply and succinctly can help them gain confidence and be ready when someone asks (1 Pet 3.15f).



The Church Army resource, Faith Pictures, is a six-session course for small groups that helps people to talk about their faith with others. It is free to download on registering, and is designed around a creative, pictorial way to help people find the language that they need to articulate their faith story. You can find more information and download the sessions from

[https://www.churcharmy.org/Groups/266913/Church Army/ms/Faith Pictures/Faith Pictures.aspx](https://www.churcharmy.org/Groups/266913/Church_Army/ms/Faith_Pictures/Faith_Pictures.aspx).



Following on from the last activity, where you wrote down or drew your own faith story, in pairs share that story with one another briefly in your own words.



1. How did it feel, as listeners and those sharing, to do the exercise above? What encouragements did you gain from it?
2. How could you similarly help the church to regularly and naturally tell their own story, both in the church and to those outside it?

helping God's people tell their story appropriately and well

As we have already seen, if our evangelism as a church, and the witness of God's people, does not clearly show love as its motivation, then we are being unfaithful to God, ourselves and those to whom we witness. This means that we not only need to encourage the Church to witness, but we need to enable them to witness well and appropriately.

The recent survey 'Talking Jesus'⁴ found that, contrary to the assumption that most Christians never shared their faith, the contact we have with non-Christians is actually quite high. In that survey, completed across the general public in the UK, 67% of non-Christians knew a practising Christian and two-thirds of Christians had spoken to a non-Christian about their faith within the last month.

However, the response of non-Christians after these encounters is slightly less encouraging. 42% felt glad that they didn't share their faith. 30% felt more negative towards Jesus Christ.

Some have argued that this means that we should simply stop evangelising. However, we have already seen that this would be contrary to the will of God for his Church. It also implies that it is the message that is to blame. It seems much more likely that, rather than the message, it is the way we communicate it that needs attention.

Sadly, sometimes the only model most Christians have of how to speak about faith comes from the pulpit; a theological pronouncement handed down as unassailable truth without the possibility of discussion. For personal witness in our current culture, that's probably the worst possible model!

Instead, as leaders we need to offer a different model to the Church; one that:

- *avoids defensiveness*
God is all powerful and all knowing – he doesn't need us to leap to his defence. We are called to win people, not arguments.

⁴ See <http://www.talkingjesus.org/>.

- *is based on testimony not theology*
As we've seen, starting with theology in today's culture is not usually helpful. Story works much better, for the hearer and the speaker.
- *comes out of relationship*
If our witness comes out of genuine relationship, we will be able to earn the respect and permission we need to speak about faith, it will be received more openly, and we can speak more relevantly.
- *listens and learns*
As we witness, we need to be listening to the views and opinions of those with whom we are speaking, and let those things inform the conversation. We may even learn something or be challenged by God through what is said!
- *shares rather than preaches*
Witness is a conversation, not a lecture. It involves a faith story shared and responded to.

This will mean not only teaching a new model but demonstrating that model in the way that we interact with our congregations in preaching and teaching.



1. What models of witness have you experienced and seen? Were they positive or negative? Why?
2. Do you agree with the pointers above on how to witness? If so, why? If not, what you change?
3. In what ways is your church helping people to learn a good model of how to witness? How could you do this better?
4. How are you modelling how to witness to the people in your church?

calming fears

As we work together as God's church to release his people to be witnesses to the Good News of Jesus Christ, we can start to answer some of the fears that can often paralyse people and stop them from witnessing effectively. For example:

- Ensuring that our motivation is one of love can overcome the idea that our evangelism is invasive, intrusive, manipulative and erodes freedom of choice.
- Explaining that our witness is carried out in the context of genuine relationship can overcome the idea that evangelism is about knocking on doors and preaching with a megaphone.
- Making the distinction between evangelism as a work of the church, the evangelist who has a specific gifting and a call to witness for every Christian can overcome the idea that evangelism is just for the keen, the gifted or certain Christian traditions.
- Reassuring people that witness is simply about telling our faith story can overcome the idea that we need to be experts in doctrine who are ready to argue the thorny issues.



The book 'Creating a Culture of Invitation in Your Church' by Michael Harvey (published by Monarch Books, ISBN 978 0 85721 632 8), has some useful things to say about the fear around speaking about our faith and inviting people to church.

making contact with those outside the church

speaking the right language



Whenever we communicate, we need to do so in ways that help others to understand us. That's no less true when we're communicating the Good News of Jesus Christ. In every group or individual, the way faith is perceived and the level of knowledge about the Christian faith is likely to vary widely. There will be many world views represented. Consequently, the language we use and the way we communicate, both in word and action, needs to adapt accordingly.

This isn't a new thing. Paul knew the value of ensuring that he identified with his context when speaking about the Gospel (1 Cor 9.19-33). Paul put this into practice when he was speaking to the assembly at the Areopagus in Athens. He spent time beforehand understanding the people to whom he was speaking. By doing that, he could speak into their context:

²³For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, "To an unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.
Acts 17.23

The way in which we do evangelism will have to change constantly to meet the constantly changing characteristics of our increasingly complex, multi-faceted society. The message doesn't change but the way we communicate it must, otherwise it will not be received well (or at all).



1. How do you feel about changing the language and manner of our evangelism to fit our culture? What dangers might there be in this, and how can we overcome them?



Make a list of words and phrases that you have heard when evangelism is happening that have been unhelpful. Why were they unhelpful (if it isn't obvious!)?

Now, against each word or phrase, try and find a different one that would have been better (this will obviously depend on the context of the phrase).

identifying need



As we have seen, mission is about more than just words; evangelism is only effective (and genuine) if it is accompanied by showing the love of God through acts of loving service. So, as well as knowing the right words, we need to know the right actions. If we are to meet the needs of others in God's name, then we need to know what those needs are.

A part of the power of the parable of the Good Samaritan lies in the fact that the Samaritan, unlike the priest and the Levite, interrupted his journey and went over to spend time with the man lying on the side of the road. He got down in the dirt, found out what his needs were in detail and then met them, despite the cost to him. He stayed with the man until he knew those needs would be met.

³³But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend."
Luke 10.33-35

Too often, the Christian church assumes it knows the needs of others without asking, and then 'generously' provides what it *thinks* is needed. This can result not only in real needs not being met, but wasted church resources and a community feeling disgruntled because they have been, from their viewpoint, disempowered by a condescending church.



1. How much do you really know about the community of which the church is a part? Is that knowledge based only on what church people think (who will have a particular world view) or have you spent time finding out about your community recently?
2. How might you increase your knowledge and understanding of the church's host community?



MAP for Derby Diocese has some excellent tools and ideas for finding out more about the community in which the church is placed. Go to <http://www.derby.anglican.org/en/our-mission/mission-action-plans-map/stage-2-reflect.html>, and head to the foot of the page where you'll find them in the 'Further Help and Resources' section.



Using the MAP for Derby Diocese tools, make a plan together about how your church could find out more about the needs, joys and concerns of the community.

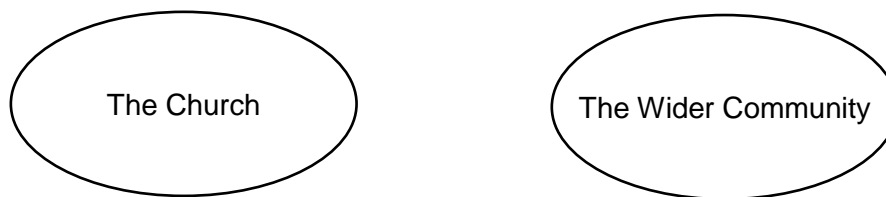
community engagement – the vital work



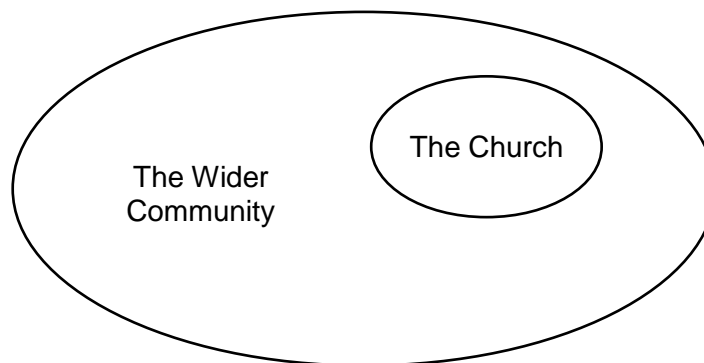
All this means that for our evangelism to be effective, we need to be truly engaged with the community around us. However, in the same way that the development of relationships with individuals isn't just so that we can share the Gospel with them, so our engagement with the community isn't simply a means to an end. There is more to engaging with the community than engineering an opening for our good works.

a recognition of our place in the community

Often, we can fall into the trap of speaking about the local church and its community as two separate entities, rather like this:



In fact, of course, the reality is this:



We are already a part of the community that we seek to love and serve, whether we like it or not!

We can offer much into our community for its good, but it also means that our community has much to offer the local church. The relationship we have with our community, far from the benevolent benefactor bestowing gifts on the needy, is one of symbiosis. Remembering this helps us to avoid approaching our community with an attitude that could be misconstrued as patronising or condescending, but rather one that seeks partnership and working together, into which we might bring the love of God and the Good News of Jesus Christ.

genuine community relationships of love

As the local church becomes more and more a part of its host community, there is the opportunity for that local church to build relationships of trust with those groups and organisations within it. The reputation and regard in which the local church is held will then increase, which in turn produces more opportunities to work within the community and show more of God's love, breaking down barriers of mistrust. This has the potential to form a positive cycle of improving relationships.

meeting need and receiving blessing

If the church starts by recognising it is a part of its host community, and responds by fulfilling its role in that community, then its engagement with that community becomes a genuine relationship based on the interests of the community, rather than one that simply serves the agenda of the church. This provides a starting point for the church and wider community to discover how they can work together to help one another, and to develop the mutual trust that is needed to do that work.

The relationship of the local church with its host community is central to its evangelism, because through that relationship the local church has the opportunity to:

- show the love of God in appropriate, sensitive and fruitful service that meets genuine need
- receive from the wider community and acknowledge its need of that community
- gain opportunities to speak about the Good News of Jesus Christ



Create a network diagram of the church's current engagement in its community:

1. Start with a large piece of paper. Write 'Church' in the centre of it and place a ring around it.
2. Now write around that all the different organisations, areas and parts of your community around the page, each with its own circle round it, to represent those different entities. Think of housing, retail and industrial areas, voluntary organisations, statutory and government bodies – as many as you can think of.
3. If the church has a regular link between itself and an organisation, draw a line linking them (and you might write on the line what that link is, whether it's a person, an event or whatever).



1. How easy did you find the exercise (that might tell you something about your knowledge of the community)?
2. What does the network diagram tell you about your engagement in the community? What would you like to celebrate? Where are there links missing?

beginning with community engagement

One of the best ways for the local church that has not previously been good at engaging with its community to start to do so, is simply to listen to that community. That will mean going into the community and asking the people within it what they think about:

- The church and its role
- Attitudes and beliefs in the community about the church
- The character and needs of the community
- How the community can help the church
- How the church can help the community

Such questions can be asked in all sorts of ways; through community events, questionnaires, meetings with key community leaders. Each community will provide different opportunities. The local church may need to be prepared to listen to some rather difficult feedback and to do so without becoming defensive or combative. However, opening that dialogue is the start of establishing and developing a genuine relationship of partnership and trust.



MAP for Derby Diocese has some excellent tools and ideas for getting in touch with people in the community and asking what they think. Go to <http://www.derby.anglican.org/en/our-mission/mission-action-plans-map/stage-2-reflect.html>, and head to the foot of the page where you'll find them in the 'Further Help and Resources' section.



1. When was the last time your church did some work to find out from those in the community and outside the church what they thought about their community and the church?
2. How could you help the church to get back in touch (or increase the contact, if you're already in touch) with your host community?

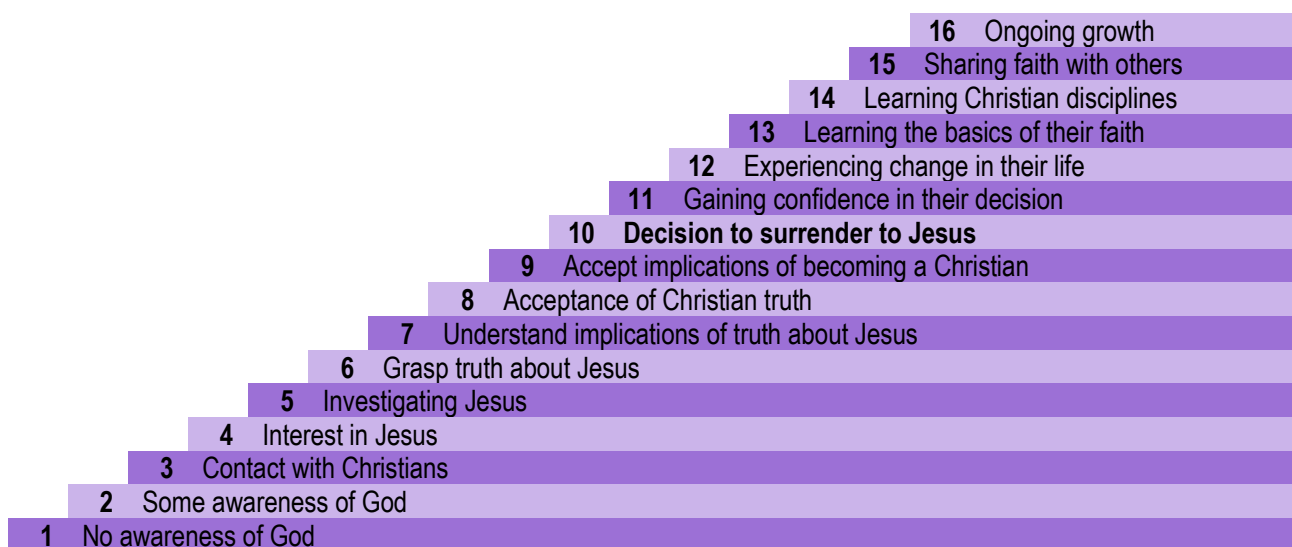
how people come to faith

the Engel Scale



The faith journey is both multi-staged and messy. It is too simplistic to suggest that there are only two stages of faith - 'non-Christians' (whom we evangelise) and 'Christians' (whom we do not). People have varying degrees of knowledge of, sympathy with and commitment to the Christian faith. A person's decision to give their life to Christ is one stage on that journey (albeit an important one).

The Engel Scale, which was developed by James F Engel from Wheaton College in the USA, attempts to encapsulate this journey. A modified version of this scale is shown below.



The Engel Scale can tend to suggest that the progression along a person's faith journey is linear, even and ordered. In reality, of course, people often stop for long periods at a particular point whilst moving rapidly through others, as well as moving back and forth. Different traditions and changing cultures may also mean identifying the individual stages differently.

Nevertheless, the point is that the population is much more nuanced than a simple binary model of 'Christian / Non-Christian' might suggest.

Understanding this makes a dramatic difference to the way in which we do evangelism. It means that not only are people coming from a variety of backgrounds, world views and attitudes, they are also coming at differing stages in their faith journey. Each person will have dissimilar needs; someone who has 'no awareness of God' will need something different than someone is close to 'acceptance of Christian truth'.



1. How do you respond to the idea of the Engel Scale? Does it accurately reflect your own faith journey, or those whom you know?



As you think about the Engel Scale, think about those whom you know who are still travelling towards having a faith in Jesus – and those who are journeying having discovered that faith for themselves. Pray that God will help them to move forward on their journey.

“Alpha no longer works”



Alpha is perhaps the best known of a range of different nurture courses designed to offer an opportunity for people to explore the Christian faith. Churches will often declare that, “Alpha no longer works,” when they experience a drop-off in the number of people joining these courses.

Alpha is, of course, not the only such course, but most of them operate similarly to Alpha, for people who are at a certain point in their spiritual journey – roughly stages 5-8 on the Engel Scale above. However, most unchurched people in our society today are roughly at stages 1-3 on the same scale.

Our society has become increasingly secular, with knowledge of the Christian faith increasingly disappearing from our schools, homes and public life. Therefore, people’s familiarity with the Christian faith has decreased significantly, meaning that a course such as Alpha (or the many like it) are not yet appropriate; many of those outside the church are just not ready for it. It’s like employing an electrician to wire a property the foundations of which have yet to be laid.

Churches that offer a single course for all faith enquirers will inevitably find that they will only be able to reach a small section of those enquirers, because the course will not be appropriate for the rest. They need something else that caters for where they are on their faith journey.



Liverpool Diocese have produced an excellent summary of a wide variety of different nurture courses for different traditions and situations. You can find it at <http://www.liverpool.anglican.org/userfiles/files/Making%20it%20Easier/processes/grwoyourchurch/Nurture%20Courses.pdf>.



1. Do you, or have you recently, run a ‘nurture course’ in your church?
2. If not, can you say why?
3. If you have, how effective do you feel it was, in terms of attracting people to come on it and helping people to move forward in their faith journey? What might the reasons be for your answers?

an evangelism programme



Nurture courses are still appropriate in many contexts and for many people – but they need to form a part of a wider mission and evangelism strategy, providing multiple entry points for those coming

at different stages, and allowing people to move from one stage to another with the appropriate support from the church in doing so.

Churches will need to ask themselves what they are providing for those coming at the various stages of their faith journey, forming those differing approaches into a coherent programme that provides a pathway to finding faith in Jesus Christ and for discipleship after that faith is found.

For example, near the start of the faith journey, the church will need a mix of *presence*, *proclamation* and *persuasion* events, each one offering an opportunity to move to the next:

- **Presence events**

A fun, engaging and social event designed simply to build relationships between the church and those outside the church (e.g. a quiz evening). Faith matters are not touched on as a part of the event, but those attending might be invited to an upcoming proclamation event.

- **Proclamation events**

An engaging social event at which a presentation of the Gospel will be given (e.g. a meal with a speaker). Those attending will be invited to an upcoming persuasion event.

- **Persuasion events**

A smaller, group gathering, offering the opportunity to explore and find out about the Christian faith, including the opportunity to ask questions (e.g. Alpha).

This doesn't cover all of the stages of the journey of faith, but it serves as an illustration as to how the parts of an evangelism strategy work together to form a coherent whole, offering the opportunity for people to move on to the next stage if they are ready to do so.

The essential question for any church to ask concerning any event aimed at faith enquirers is, "What's the next step and how are we offering an opportunity for people to take it?"

This may sound rather like a conveyor belt that is all rather too neat; and of course, many people would not take up the invitation to move to the next stage. People should never be pressured to do so, and neither should they be invited to an event under false pretences. If there is to be a presentation of the Gospel, or worship, or praying, that should be made clear so that they can make an informed choice about whether to go.

Another concern may be one of complexity for the church, particularly in contexts where it needs to cater for people from different communities and as well as different points along the journey of faith. All the more reason to ensure that the way the church approaches its evangelism is well thought out and coherent, rather than ad-hoc, so that it meets this complexity in the best way possible both for the church and for those whom it seeks to reach.



Seasons of Invitation is the next stage on from Back to Church Sunday, helping churches to plan around well-known and understood festivals times when the church can be thinking about offering an invitation to come to church. You can find out more, and how to get involved, at <http://seasonofinvitation.co.uk>.

the whole church together

Offering a coherent programme for evangelism will mean that, as Christians witness to their friends and neighbours, they always have something to which they can invite those friends to take them further. Otherwise, they are likely to feel that all the responsibility for the evangelism of the church lies with them and become discouraged.

Churches with small congregations and limited resources might be daunted by the evangelism task as it is today. They will need the help of other churches, so that the load can be shared (for example, churches within the benefice taking responsibility for certain parts of the programme).

Individual Christians and local churches need never feel alone in the task of witness and evangelism. Evangelism is a task for the whole body of Christ together.

central and long term

One final implication of the way people come to faith is that we can no longer do short-term evangelism, expending a large effort for a week or two and then putting evangelism on the back burner until next year's extravaganza, and expect it to be effective.

People's journey to faith usually takes a significant amount of time. Although God's Holy Spirit can work in any person at any time so that they come to faith immediately, more often it will take several positive and significant encounters with the Christian faith through Christians before someone will come to faith for themselves. In addition, if people are looking for authenticity and experience of a faith that works, those encounters will need to come out of genuine relationships with individuals whom they can see living out faith.

This adds further impetus, alongside the fact that making disciples is central to God's purpose for his Church, to ensuring that mission and evangelism is not an 'add on' to normal church life but an integral, long term and core part of the church's activity. It follows, therefore, that the events to which members of the church invite their friends cannot be one off or ad hoc. They need to be regularly and predictably provided, so that members of the worshipping community may share their faith story, confident that there will be an appropriate event to which they can invite their friend.



What were the key steps in your own faith journey? Who was it who helped you at each of these steps? Give thanks to God for those who helped you on your own journey, and ask him to give you the opportunity to be that key person for someone else.



Describe together your evangelism programme as it is now. It might help to draw it up like the Engel Scale.

What are you offering for those at each stage? Now think about how you might start to 'fill in the gaps' as a church. Remember, you can work with other churches (both across the deanery and in other denominations) to ensure that there is always something in answer to the question, 'What's next?'

welcome, integration and discipleship



How we welcome and integrate newcomers into the church is key to any evangelism strategy. As we share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others in word and action, we would expect them to respond (we hope!) This means that, sooner or later, new people that we haven't seen before are going to come into our church. If we cannot find ways to offer them a warm welcome, excellent hospitality and a place at the heart of the church, then our evangelism will be for naught.

“Only a truly welcoming church can get the most out of an evangelist.”⁵

This is more than just a smile at the door as we hand out the hymn books. Bob Jackson and George Fisher write in the introduction to their Everybody Welcome course:

*True welcome is about active encouragement into the heart of the community of the church, and its job is not done until someone is completely at home, a valued, contributing member of the Body of Christ.*⁶



The Everybody Welcome course is a great introduction for churches. Over six weeks (five for the whole congregation plus an extra session for the welcome team) it leads the church through various aspects of welcoming visitors and newcomers. For more information and to find additional resources for the course, you can go to <https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/features/everybody-welcome>.

welcome



Everybody is involved in the welcome of the church. Although it's a good idea to have a team that is particularly gifted in hospitality and welcoming people to lead the way, you never know who a newcomer is going to come across! The same is true for welcome as it is for witness and evangelism; some are gifted, everybody is involved.

Considering the welcome of the church will involve many aspects, for example:

- Good facilities, particularly for children, families and those with special needs
- Clear signage (inside and outside the church) so the newcomer knows where to go
- An open, inviting space that is not threatening
- People who seek out the stranger and involve them in what's going on
- Visitor friendly literature and liturgy which is easy to follow
- A place to go to find information, and the right information available when you get there
- A welcome team to lead the way and ensure welcome happens effectively

⁵ Everybody Welcome Leaders' Manual - Kindle Edition, *Bob Jackson & George Fisher*, (CHP, London, 2009), Loc 199

⁶ Everybody Welcome Leaders' Manual - Kindle Edition, *Bob Jackson & George Fisher*, (CHP, London, 2009), Loc 146



1. Many churches will say that they are welcoming... but sometimes that's because those who regularly come feel welcome. What steps have you taken in your church to make sure that newcomers receive a warm welcome and are made to feel at home?

integration



All too often, the way churches seek to integrate people into the church is to find them a job to do. This is partly because we're in a constant state of desperation as we try to fill the vacancies on our rotas and in our committees. Consequently, almost as soon as newcomers are through the door they are asked if they will stand for the PCC or help in the Sunday school.

However, our culture today is not one of commitment and lives are busy. People need to feel like they belong before they serve, not the other way around. So, offering a them a job to do or a committee to sit on is likely to scare them off, not draw them in.

Instead, churches need to establish ways in which newcomers can find and develop real friendships that are meaningful. It is these relationships that will draw them into the church and convince them to stay. People today won't commit to an institution, but they will commit to friends.

That's unlikely to happen on a Sunday morning, where there is little time to talk meaningfully and where there are usually too many people to get to know. Some churches offer a welcome event, where people who are new can come and meet each other and those from the church in a more relaxed environment, usually over food. Other churches will offer a small group programme, such as home groups, where people can get to know a smaller group better. All these help people to feel fully a part of the church.



1. Some once said, "I don't want a friendly church – I want a church where I can make friends." Many churches say that they are friendly... but is your church one where newcomers can easily make friends?

discipleship



¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food; ¹³for everyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is unskilled in the word of righteousness.

Hebrews 5.12-13

It is important to realise that, just as the decision to become a Christian is by no means the start of the faith journey, neither is it the end. We have already seen the close link between evangelism and discipleship, and the second mark of mission is to teach, baptise and nurture new believers.

Churches enable the nurture of new Christians in diverse ways. Sometimes this is very informal, perhaps through a developing friendship with a more mature Christian (a type of Christian 'mentoring'), or through more formal courses and events. Both the Pilgrim⁷ and Emmaus⁸ nurture courses, which have a similar purpose to Alpha, also have further 'modules' designed to lead new Christians through the basics of living out their faith. Alpha have also developed follow-on courses from their initial course, and many churches run 'Beta' courses that they have written themselves.

However the church achieves it, there must be an answer to the question 'So where do I go from here?' for new Christians. Otherwise, we will be in danger of becoming a church of milk drinkers; spiritually immature, yet to be released into the fulness of what it means to follow Jesus Christ and serve in the Kingdom of God.



Who has been important in nurturing your faith? Give thanks for them in prayer, and ask God that he might give you opportunities to nurture others in the way that you have.



1. How are new Christians or newcomers encouraged to grow in faith in your church?
2. What could you do to make this happen more effectively?

⁷ <http://www.pilgrimcourse.org/>

⁸ <https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/uploads/documents/0715149946.pdf>

measuring success in evangelism



Sadly, although they may not say so in quite these bald terms, it is true that many churches have 'tried evangelism and found it didn't work'. Consequently, the church as a whole, perhaps even the leadership, will give up on evangelism as too hard in our current culture and climate.

Often, this is because we have judged the success or failure of our evangelism by measuring the increase in attendance in the church. This isn't appropriate for a variety of reasons.

1. Seeing church attendance as the only measure implies an incorrect motivation

When asked what the objective of mission or evangelism is, churches are likely to respond with something like, 'to get more people into church'. If we see the purpose of evangelism as getting more people into church, then we will measure church attendance. Evangelism, as the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby has said, is not a survival strategy.⁹ We expect and pray that the number of those coming to church will grow as a result of the whole mission of God. However, this is not our primary motivation. Our motivation is to proclaim and demonstrate the good news of Jesus Christ and allow people an opportunity to respond to it, because that is God's mission. Our measures need to be derived from this vision and motivation.

2. We are not asked by God to get people to respond to the good news of Jesus Christ

People's response is concerned with a work of God's Holy Spirit in them. God brings people to faith, not us (Act 2.47b). He has not asked us to do this, because we are incapable of doing so. Our job is to demonstrate and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and give people the opportunity to respond to God's Holy Spirit working in them.

3. For most people, the next step is unlikely to be a commitment to Jesus Christ

We have also seen that people are on various stages of their faith journey. For some, to expect them to surrender their life to Jesus is unrealistic (humanly speaking). Their next step may be to grasp the truth about Jesus. If we measure only by whether they have 'made a commitment', then we will convince ourselves that we have failed and won't recognise the significant moves toward God that have already been made.

4. Not everyone who comes to faith will attend our church

Sometimes as we share the good news of Jesus Christ, they will respond but, for a variety of reasons, may join a different worshipping community. We must be careful not to see that as failure or be jealous because another church community has 'poached our new Christian'.

Therefore, to measure the success of an evangelism strategy purely by measuring church attendance is both inaccurate and inappropriate.

Any evangelism strategy must carefully consider what the true objective of implementing the strategy is, and then find more appropriate and effective ways of measuring whether this objective is being achieved. We need ways of understanding, for example, whether:

- Our people confident in sharing their faith story
- We are offering invitations for people to explore faith
- We are holding events at which those who are not churchgoers would feel comfortable
- Our Sunday worship is accessible to visitors and guests?

⁹ The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lambeth Lecture, Lambeth Palace, 4th March 2015

- Our evangelism is contextually appropriate
- We are offering opportunities for people at differing stages on the faith journey
- We are a church where people can make friends (as opposed to simply a 'friendly' church)
- We nurture our new Christians well

Having said all this, we believe and trust that if we are faithful in presenting the gospel, then God will, in his time, bring people to faith. We should expect the church to grow! If it does not, it should not lead us to abandon our evangelism, but rather to honestly ask ourselves the question, "Is there something more or different we should be doing?"



1. Is yours a church that has 'tried evangelism but it didn't work'?
2. How have you measured the success of your evangelism in your church up to now?
3. What changes could you make in the church to ensure that you use good measures for success?
4. How will you communicate those changes in the church?

further information, questions and comments

You've come to the end of this resource. Congratulations! However, the work continues – there are likely to be some things that you need to do differently in order to make your evangelism even more effective than it is already.

If you need any help, for more information, or to discuss anything in this paper further, please contact:

Rev. Jason Kennedy

Diocesan Missioner, Derby Diocese

direct dial 01332 388691

switchboard 01332 388650 ext. 1041

email jason.kennedy@derby.anglican.org

Derby Church House, Full Street, Derby, DE1 3DR

Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.