

Evangelism Way Ahead

Mission Action Planning
Guide

Evangelism in Newcastle Diocese

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Foreword

In our Diocese we are committed to being a church which reflects the generous, engaged and open nature of God and to sustaining a Christian presence in every place. An important part of this commitment is fulfilled in the way we tell others about our faith and encourage people to become disciples of Jesus Christ. This short booklet helps us to explore some priorities for encouraging evangelism in our Diocese. I hope it will give us confidence to listen, think creatively and speak out as we engage with others.

There is a great deal of emphasis on 'growth' in the church at the moment. The Evangelism Task Group are committed through prayer and action to support the parishes of the Diocese to "grow with the growth that is from God" as St Paul writes in his letter to the church in Colossae.

I hope you will use the ideas and resources in this booklet to encourage your church to step out in faith and reach others with the good news of Jesus.

Bishop Frank White

Evangelism in Newcastle Diocese

In the Diocese of Newcastle, we are committed to growing the faith of those who are already long established followers of Jesus Christ as well as those who are very new to faith or even unsure if they have any faith at all. As we consider how we can grow as a church and faith community, there are questions we must ask ourselves:

- 1. How do we engage in the mission work that God calls us to?**
- 2. How can we best communicate the good news of Christ's life, death and resurrection to others?**
- 3. How can we facilitate the growth of faith in ourselves and in others?**
- 4. How do we enable our congregations and church groups to become invigorated by the leading of the Holy Spirit?**

The Evangelism Task Group has produced this booklet in the hope that you will find answers to at least some of these questions. It is our aim to provide encouragement and support to parishes, individual churches, and church groups in, the Diocese of Newcastle, who are trying to develop ways of deepening and sharing their faith.

We have chosen to focus on the following areas, as we believe they can be useful in a wide range of church settings and traditions:

- **Sharing our story**
- **Invitation and welcome**
- **Spiritual growth and evangelism**
- **Fresh Expressions of church**
- **Evangelism and collaboration**
- **Mission action planning**
- **Celebrating success and growth**

Each section contains ideas on how to create a climate of welcome and facilitate the growth of faith within our congregations. Evangelism is about extending that welcome and sharing that faith. Jesus himself commands us to 'go and make disciples'. It is our prayer that this booklet be used to open up conversations, identify ways forward and ultimately plan and implement strategies that lead to the fulfilment of Jesus' command. May God richly bless you as you seek to serve Him.

Sharing our Story

In life, everywhere we look we encounter stories. The media is full of news reports and interviews where people tell of their experience. Each television channel has its soap opera or drama series. Many people blog, tweet and use facebook to let others know what is happening in their life. People love stories!

Just as our own life story defines who we are, our faith story defines how we relate to God and his creation. Jesus told stories to reveal the truth to people using everyday language and situations. The most effective way for others to hear and understand the good news of the Gospel is through our faith stories. People are interested in finding out how Christianity works in our lives so that they can begin to imagine how it might work for them.

Practice Together

Every church is a rich source of powerful stories that can be used as a way of connecting with others. Yet it is surprising how people who regularly worship together often don't know each other's faith story. We need to give ourselves time to share and practice our faith stories with each other. In this way they can become part of our ordinary conversation and something we enjoy sharing with others.

Some people feel that their faith story is of little value or interest to others; comparing their gentle acceptance of faith over a long time with those who've had a sudden transformation similar to St Paul on the road to Damascus. However, a slow and steady journey of faith is the experience of the majority and stories of a gradual transformation are just as powerful as a rapid conversion. Each of our stories will be a series of small events in which we encountered Jesus in a real way and were transformed by God's love.

Our faith story isn't finished. In our Christian journey we are continually being changed through prayer and worship. Sharing our faith story might be simply sharing our experience of God in the last few days rather than our whole life.

Listening

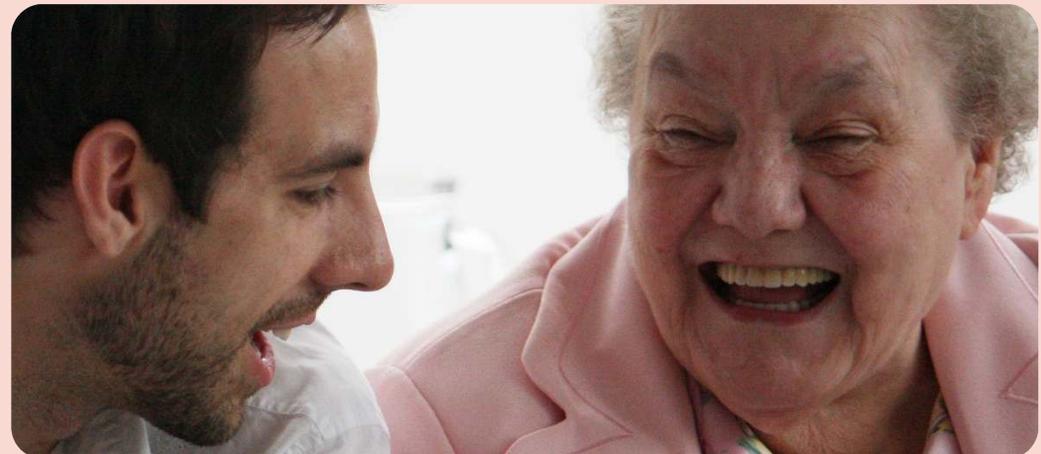
Listening is the first step in telling our story. We need to hear the story of the other person so that we can see the connections with our own story. Remember, we don't have to share the whole of our faith story, just the part which is relevant to the person we are telling. Not everyone has the type of personality which values personal stories. We shouldn't feel rejected if we think our story hasn't been understood or has been met with disinterest. Some people are interested in theories and ideas rather than stories and may prefer to ask questions. This could seem intimidating if we don't know the answers to their questions or if we find it hard to think on the spot. If so, it might be better to arrange another time to meet with the person to allow time to find out some answers to their questions. Often there are no right or wrong answers, just different perspectives.

Some things which you might include in your story:

The person who introduced you to Christianity and what it felt like to hear about Jesus for the first time

Your most memorable experience of God and how it changed you

The difference your faith makes to your everyday life



Invitation and Welcome

We invite our friends to all sorts of significant occasions – such as birthdays, weddings etc. and sometimes on the spur of the moment. We wouldn't worry about how to word our invitation and would accept it if the person was unable to attend on that occasion.

However, when it comes to inviting someone to church we are often very apprehensive. We sometimes worry whether the person we ask will accept or not. We may interpret a negative response as criticism, or feel that we are 'to blame' in some way. In reality, some will say 'yes' and some will say 'no' and we have to get over our disappointment. A successful invitation is one person inviting another person. It does not rely on that person saying 'yes.' The answer is in God's hands.

There are some common anxieties people have about inviting others to church. We might worry that those we invite will not value or appreciate the way we worship. Also, we might not be able to imagine our friend or relative fitting-in with the people and activities at our church. However, our churches are not supposed to be perfect places. They are full of imperfect people learning together how to relate to God. If we wait for the perfect time to invite someone, it may never arrive. We need to pray that those we invite will be able to see past our flaws and see God in our worship and fellowship.

A key question is, 'Why do people go to church on Sundays or visit churches on weekdays?' We need to reflect on how welcoming and inviting our church is. Think, what would make you feel welcome? Try to imagine what it might be like if you were a guest walking into the church for the first time.



How welcome would you be made to feel by the way you were greeted? In what ways would you be made to feel a part of the worship by the regular members of the congregation? If people have a good experience they are more likely to come back.



Sometimes we might be the person being invited. Perhaps it is easier to invite someone to church if we have accepted an invitation from them to join them for a meal, a drink, a social event or a club. How often do we go out into situations which are not church to be Christians?

'Season of Invitation', created by the 'Back to Church Sunday' Team, is an opportunity to invite people who aren't involved with church at all. Inviting friends along to church at festival times may seem more natural to you and to them. If for no other reason, they may come out of curiosity.

Some things you might do to make others feel welcome

Greet people with a smile and invite them to stay for coffee

Be sure to serve good coffee and cakes/biscuits

Give clear instructions during services and use accessible liturgy

Offer help to visitors if they appear unable to follow the service

Make available a handout describing features in your church which includes some of its history

Provide prayer cards, to take away, which include service times and contact details

Offer space for quiet reflection and prayer

Ensure good signage, up-to-date notice-boards, an attractive, current website and facebook page

...and keep inviting people

Spiritual Growth & Evangelism

Spirituality in Society

On the face of it society is becoming less spiritual and more secular. Certainly more people are vocal about being atheists. But in recent surveys 60% of people regarded themselves as spiritual and over half pray*. Many have an ambiguous relationship with organised religion and the church but they are still searching for spiritual meaning. People are largely unaware that Christianity and the church have anything to offer them when trying to make sense of their spiritual experiences. Some may find their spiritual experiences unsettling and so need reassurance. Yet there are very few safe places where people can talk openly about their spiritual experiences without feeling judged. Hopefully church can be one of those safe places.

Our Spirituality

We might be able to identify with those who struggle to talk about their spiritual lives. Perhaps we might feel reserved about our faith and consider our spirituality as a private matter. We too might be unsettled by our own spiritual experiences and find it hard to articulate how we feel about them. Talking about this with Christian friends is often a way to find our voice when spirituality becomes the topic of conversation with those outside the church. If we can see ourselves as spiritual beings we will find it easier to see others as spiritual beings too.

We might think of our spiritual life as being insignificant to others but we are the ordinary clay pots in which God displays His spiritual treasures.



Connecting evangelism and spirituality

God is already at work in the lives of others and a large part of evangelism is discovering how God is at work and joining in with Him. We need to take seriously the spiritual experiences people share with us. We might be disturbed by the spiritual experiences of others, but we need to start where they are and value their experiences as genuine. It is through discussing experiences and sensitively praying with people that we can connect their spirituality with the Christian message of hope. Creating a safe environment of listening, sharing and prayer is vital for people, including ourselves, to discover God and grow closer to Him.

To take the step of exploring our spirituality or talking to others about spiritual experiences could make us feel vulnerable. Just as St Peter did when he stepped out of the boat to walk over the water to Jesus, we have to take risks with our faith. As we step out in mission our faith can grow and we find that the Holy Spirit is with us. The first simple step could be praying faithfully for family, friends and neighbours that they might have deeper spiritual awareness and a desire to seek meaning in Jesus. Being ready to share your own spiritual experiences could be a second step. It is in taking one step at a time that our faith grows and we are more able to share it with others.

Further suggestions:

Think through how you might describe the way your spirituality affects your life.

How could you create a safe space for people to share spiritual experiences?

How does your church support and accompany people in their spiritual lives?

* Data from British Religion in Numbers, www.brin.ac.uk

Fresh Expressions of Church

Fresh Expressions of Church is a way of describing new congregations or churches which are different in ethos and style to the church which started them. They are designed to reach a group of people different to those already attending the original church. There is no single model to copy, rather a wide variety of approaches for a wide variety of communities and groups. The emphasis is on creating something which is appropriate to its context, rather than copying something which works elsewhere.

Some fresh expressions are very different to the familiar style of church. There are fresh expressions such as church in a café, pub, school or workplace. They can be found in rural areas as well as in towns and cities and have been designed to reach all age groups. The aim is to create church in the communities to which people actually belong.

Definition:

'A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.

- It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples.
- It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.'

Unpacking the Definition

It is primarily for the unchurched – for those who have never been or for those who have stopped going and are not willing to go back to what they experienced before. It is about trying to create a different form of church for those who are not reached by church as we know it.



At least a third of the adults in the UK and the majority of children and young people have never been regularly involved in any church in their lifetime.

There is no standard model of fresh expression of church. They cannot and should not be copied! Rather there is a process which begins with listening – to God and to the community. It is more about discernment than strategic planning: Looking for the Holy Spirit's opportunities and obeying God's call. Out of the listening – which may take some time – comes service: a way of serving the people we are trying to reach. Christians who want to share good news need first to be good news, to show genuine concern for others. This is the start of 'incarnational mission'. This means following the example of Christ and seeking to evangelise within the community we are serving. In that context we can begin to make disciples. The very last thing that is decided is the nature of the worship service. The diagram below shows how fresh expressions of church develop.



Some questions for further reflection:

Is there a particular group of people who your church has contact with but who don't regularly attend church? What might be the most appropriate place, time and style of worship which would reach this group?

Are members of your congregation part of other organisations, groups and networks? If so, do these places allow opportunities to listen, show loving service and build community where faith might be explored?

Do you have more questions or need help with fresh expressions of church? Find out more at freshexpressions.org.uk or contact the Local Evangelism Adviser.

Evangelism & Collaboration

It almost goes without saying that we need to work together on evangelism. In the New Testament, being together and working together as Christians is described by using the image of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12.12 onwards). This passage sets out the idea that we each have a role to play, a calling from God to live out and that together we become something greater than the sum of our parts. St Paul also describes those who work together with God and with others for the gospel. We read in 1 Corinthians 3. 9 for example that 'we are God's servants working together; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me... I laid a foundation and someone else is building on it.'

We know in theory that working together is a good thing but it is often more difficult in practice. We may instinctively act alone without meaning to. Working together can take more effort at first but the benefits are immeasurable. What does working together in evangelism mean?

Listening

'Most people don't listen to understand. Most people listen with the intent to reply' (Stephen Covey - author of 7 Habits of Highly Effective People). Evangelism is often thought of as a sales technique. If we can get the presentation and the words right, we will persuade, convince and convert someone. If at the heart of our faith, there is a desire to work with God then we can recognise that God works in us. If God is at work in us, then God is also at work in others. Getting to know others is a way of getting to know more about how God is at work in them. A key part of any evangelism then must be listening. As we seek to listen to God speaking into our own lives we need to listen to the needs and questions of those we meet on the edge of our churches and on the edges of faith, recognising how God works with them.

We also need to listen to each other within our congregations. Lots of individuals are already doing lots of bits of evangelism whether they

realise it or not. Can or should we coordinate this better? Should we find ways to encourage and support each other and to pray together about the evangelistic work we're already involved in?



Joining in God's Mission

God goes before us and is already at work in our parish and community. We can listen to where God may be calling people to faith and then seek to get involved, to support what is happening.

We need to discover the ventures in our area that are making a difference to people's lives. Is someone else doing good outreach work that we might support rather than starting a similar project of our own? Is another church denomination already engaged in youth work, for example? Is there a community project already running a lunch club for older people or a toddler group? Working together with others will probably mean letting go of the idea that we can do everything ourselves. When we realise this, we will be released to do those things we can do and enabled to share the gospel as truly good news.

Further suggestions:

Contact the Local Evangelism Adviser or your Area Dean to ask who might be planning similar mission ideas

Speak to the Local Ministry Development Officer about creating a ministry team in your church

Talk to the Together Newcastle Development Worker about social action projects in your area



Celebrating Success & Growth

So, you've followed the advice in the rest of this booklet! You've done the Healthy Churches Audit, you've preached about being welcoming and intentionally inviting and have launched new initiatives from your Mission Action Plan.

Success?

What might success look like? How should we celebrate? Success might be a congregation taking the risk of inviting others to special events. Whether the response is a positive or negative one, the fact that they've been prepared to give it a try is success. Success can be people being willing to share some of their faith story with others. It can also be the effect that story has on others and the conversations that ensue.

If we can get everyone to embrace the need for praying for our community engagement, outreach and mission, then that is an immensely powerful thing that makes a huge difference to whatever we decide to do. It's also something where everyone can feel included.

Success could be empowering new teams of people to work on different aspects of our Mission Action Plans – allowing space for the Holy Spirit to work amongst us in new ways. Watching members of our congregations grow in confidence as they take on these tasks is a real blessing.

Learning from what didn't go well

What about the times when an idea doesn't work the way we expect? Take the time to evaluate the situation. This can be a very positive experience, allowing new and better ideas to flow, or what we tried before to be tweaked and improved. Maybe it was the right idea but the wrong time. Perhaps invitations needed to be more personal including coming along with the person. Maybe we should have focussed on a different group of people. Sometimes it's important to just try something completely different. Throughout the process pray about it expectantly.

New growth

Growth should include the nurture and discipleship of newcomers and the faithful longstanding members of our churches. For existing church people, it could be about giving different people the opportunities to be involved in new ways – rather than always the 'same few' who always willingly offer. It can be about encouraging each other to be more alert to the needs of newcomers, helping them to feel welcomed and included. It can also be about encouraging everyone to continue learning, through house groups, Lent and Advent groups, Faith and Life.

For newcomers there should always be a regular pattern of explorers' courses available. Be prepared (before we know if you have any takers) to put on a Pilgrim, Alpha, START! or other course, to suit the needs of your context.

Be thankful, and express thanks to all who have given of their time, energy and prayer towards church mission initiatives. Always review what has been tried. What went well? How could it be improved? Look for ways to build on new confidence, new ideas and newly empowered people. Pray about what next.



Celebrate:

The little things along the way

A praying congregation

People flourishing as they work together for a common purpose

Continue to invite people to appropriate services, social events and church outings. Remember, the personal approach is much more successful.

What next?

We hope we've given you lots of ideas to think about and use in your church and in your personal faith sharing. It might seem daunting as some of it may be new and unknown. However, starting to think about mission is very important for the growth of our church and the longer term future of our faith communities. Prayer is always the starting point. Listening to what God wants for us is a vital, invigorating and firm foundation upon which to begin planning. Why not arrange for a simple prayer to be read out at church services, to ask what God wants for your Parish or area? Prayer brings us together in the presence of God and helps us discern a way forward.

We are the Good News to other people in all that we do and we should take confidence in the fact Jesus has shown us how to be in the world.

If you have any questions, would like to talk through any of the ideas in this booklet, or if you would like support in organising an event, please get in touch with us – we are here to help you!

For further information or assistance please contact our Diocesan Advisors who are happy to help facilitate discussions and use the resources:



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Resources

Books:

Faith Stories

- Ashton, C., and Nicholls, J., **A Faith Worth Sharing? A Church Worth Joining?** DLT, 1995
- Willis, G., **Won by One the Course: A Practical Guide to Helping Your Friends Find Faith.** Lion, 1997
- Price, J., **Telling Our Faith Story.** Church House Publishing, 1999
- Singlehurst, L., **The Gospel Message Today - Language That Connects in Communicating the Gospel.** Grove Books Limited, 2012
- Finney, J., **Finding Faith Today: How Does it Happen?** Bible Society, 1992
- Price, J., **Telling Our Faith Story.** Grove Books Limited, 2009
- Pritchard, J., **How to Explain Your Faith.** SPCK, 2006

Invitation & Welcome

- Gilchrist, A., **Creating a Culture of Welcome in the Local Church.** Grove Books Limited, 2004
- Blackmore, V., **Using Your Church Web Site for Evangelism.** Grove, 2001

Spiritual Growth & Evangelism

- Harkness, A., **Praying Together: Equipping Small Groups to Grow Their Prayer Potential.** Scripture Union, 2004
- Butler, A., **Personality and Communicating the Gospel.** Grove, 1999
- Sumpter, T., **Evangelistening: Recovering the Art of Listening in Evangelism.** Grove, 2011

Fresh Expressions of Church

- Goodhew, D., Roberts, A., and Volland, M., **Fresh!: An Introduction to Fresh Expressions of Church and Pioneer Ministry.** SCM, 2012
- Starting a Fresh Expression.** Church House Publishing, 2006
- Moore, L., **Messy Church : Fresh Ideas for Building a Christ-Centred Community.** Bible Reading Fellowship, 2006
- The Archbishops' Council, **Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context.** Church House Publishing, 2004
- Howell-Jones, P., and Wills, N., **Pints of View: Encounters Down the Pub.** Grove, 2005
- Stone, M., **Fresh Expressions of Church: Fishing Nets or Safety Nets?** Grove, 2010

Evangelism & Collaboration

Marsh, C., and Currin, J., **Mission-Shaped Unity; Missio Dei and a New Way of Being Churches Together.** Grove, 2013

Hope in Our Villages, Towns & Cities : Do More : Do it Together : Do it in Word and Action. Authentic Media, 2007

Mission Action Planning

Warren, R., **Developing Healthy Churches: Returning to the Heart of Mission and Ministry.** Church House Publishing, 2012

Howe, A., **Leading Ordinary Churches into Growth.** Grove Books Limited, 2005

Rendle, GR., and Mann, A., **Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations.** Alban Institute, 2003

Warren, R., **The Healthy Churches' Handbook: A Process for Revitalizing Your Church.** Church House Publishing, 2004

Samways, J., **More to Life: A Model for Mission for the Local Church in the 21st Century.** Grove, 2010

Archbishop's Council, **From Evidence to Action,** The Church Commissioners for England

Further Reading

Hodgson, J., **Good News Story Workshops: Based on the Five Marks of Mission.** Grove, 2011

Weekend at the Movies: The Best Retreats From Reel to Real. Abingdon Press, 1999

Booker, M., and Ireland, M., **Evangelism: Which Way Now?: An Evaluation of Alpha, Emmaus, Cell Church and Other Contemporary Strategies for Evangelism.** Church House, 2005

Bayes, P., and Sledge, T., **Mission-Shaped Parish: Traditional Church in a Changing Context.** Church House, 2006

Rural Evangelism in the 21st Century. Grove, 2006

Courses:

Cottrell, S., Croft, S., Gooder, P., and Atwell, R., **Pilgrim: A Course for the Christian Journey. the Lord's Prayer.** Church House Publishing, 2013

Gamble, R., **Start!: Discovering Christianity in Six Small-Group Sessions.** CPAS, 2006

Gamble, R., and Banbury, D., **Moving On!: Exploring Christian Discipleship in Seven Small Group Sessions.** Leading Your Church into Growth, 2011

Jackson, B., and Fisher, G., **Everybody Welcome: The Course Where Everybody Helps Grow Their Church.** Church House Publishing, 2009

Frost, R., **Essence.** Children's Ministry, 2003

Frank, P., Pittis, S., and Lawrence, J., **Lost for Words: Sharing Faith Naturally.** CPAS, 2003

Hazelhurst, B., and Chapman, C., **The DIY Kit for Estates Ministry & Outreach.** Board for Church in Society, 2002

Know Your Church, Know Your neighbourhood, Church Urban Fund, 2014

Other Resources:

Freshexpressions and Jordan, DL., **Expressions: The DVD 2 : Changing Church in Every Place.** Church House Publishing, 2007

Griffiths, P., Robinson, M., and Kite, J., **Table Talk for Friends: A Game of Conversations.** The Ugly Duckling Company

Growing the Church: Study Course: Lessons From the Acts of the Apostles and the Contemporary World Church. USPG, 2011

Alpha Manual. London: HTB Publications

All of these resources are available from:



www.resourcescentreonline.co.uk

Web Resources:

www.christianity.org.uk

www.churcharmy.org.uk/resources

www.dur.ac.uk/codec

www.fromevidencetoaction.org.uk

www.methodist.org.uk/deepening-discipleship/evangelism/resources

www.rejesus.co.uk



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