

## Exploring Intentional Evangelism

A discussion starter for BSM

January 2023

In October 2012 I was the Anglican Fraternal Delegate to the Synod of Bishops in Rome: a three-week gathering of 400 RC bishops and other delegates from across the whole world to discuss a single subject: *the New Evangelisation for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*.

The Synod heard around 400 summary statements from every Bishops' Conference in the world on the state of evangelisation and developed counsel and advice for Pope Benedict who presided at the gathering and for his successor, Pope Francis, appointed in January 2013. The first encyclical of Pope Francis was the concluding document of the Synod: *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)* later in 2013.

The Synod helped crystalise my own reflections on evangelism and evangelisation for the Church of England and gave me a new vocabulary. I developed this in materials for Sheffield and in training days for several other dioceses and then in two papers for General Synod: an annex to GS 1895 on Challenges for the New Quinquennium and then further in *GS 1917: Challenges for the New Quinquennium: Intentional Evangelism*.

GS 1917 is here and it's worth reading pp.14-19:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-01/gs%201917%20-%20intentional%20evangelism%20Nov13.pdf>

The paper is in the name of the Bishops of Sheffield, St. Albans and Chelmsford although I was the principal author. The paper introduced the Synod debate which set up the Archbishops' Task Force on Evangelism (which in turn developed Thy Kingdom Come).

The core of the paper presents this new vocabulary for reflecting on evangelism under the heading of The Seven Disciplines of Evangelism. Although 10 years old, the language remains helpful to a church which has a thin and attenuated understanding of what it means to share the good news of Jesus.

I revisited the seven disciplines recently in particular for a sermon on St. Andrew's Day in Headington and in dialogue with the recently published census statistics on religion:

<https://blogs.oxford.anglican.org/census-2021/>

The sermon has the seven disciplines in a slightly better order and with a partly revised vocabulary namely:

1. Contemplation
2. Incarnational mission
3. Apologetics
4. Initial proclamation
5. Catechesis
6. The formation of the Church (including everyday faith/discipleship)

## 7. Growing new congregations

The word discipline is used in a twofold sense: as an academic discipline and branch of pastoral theology and a practice the Church needs to engage in and grow better at.

The capacity of the Church to be sustained in the coming decades will rest in large measure on our proficiency to be formed and reformed in these disciplines. Many of our current debates about resources of finance and people should be seen as a call to return to these seven disciplines.

Revisiting the seven disciplines, they seem to map well onto our common vision, our values and our five key focus areas.

I'm intending to use them as the core shape and syllabus for the first term of Year 1 of the new lay formation course beginning in September 23.

My own reflection on where we are weakest is probably in the area of initial proclamation and that it would be helpful to look at ways of responding to this deficit through broadening the work and focus of the Christian Formation and Discipleship Task Group.

Are there ideas and other ways we might develop these themes including faith sharing weekends; regular gatherings of gifted evangelists; exploring evangelistic preaching in CMD etc.?