



# WITNESS6.7

Acts 6.7a - *The word of God continued to spread*  
**The Evangelism & Church Growth Initiative Newsletter**

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# Discipleship

When the ECGI Core Group met in Malaysia earlier this year we were given the book "From Village to Village" by Bishop Moon Hing, our host, about mission to the Kampung. Bishop Moon Hing talks in this book about being a FAT Christian:

**Faithful**

**Available**

**Teachable**

This is the essence of discipleship and the fact that the word "fat" in Chinese means "growth and multiplication and prosperity" further illustrates this.

We as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ need to reflect in our journey our faithfulness, availability and teachability – our willingness to take up our cross and follow the master and learn from him.

We often talk of our Christian life as a journey but the challenge is to journey with people to the point when they know they have arrived and that that is the starting point of the journey of discipleship.

In this issue we have perspectives from across the Anglican Communion – valuing the insights of other cultures to fully appreciate who Jesus is and his calling of us to the task of making disciples.

Discipleship should not be difficult if we are living it out and ensuring that we do not intellectualise "the simple purity of our love for Christ (cf.2Cor 11:3) – not simple-mindedness but sincerity in facing the spiritual demands of being a follower of Jesus, that we may be presented to Christ as mature in Him.

*Linda Jones is Senior Officer for Church Growth Diocese of Liverpool, England and a member of the ECGI Core Group*



## FOLLOW ME

The internet and mobile phone enables those of us with access to them to be part of a range of social networking, including Facebook which gives us the Anglican Witness Group and "Twitter" which enables users to "follow" one another; to send and read text-based posts of up to 140 characters informally known as "tweets". In some conference settings you are able to read peoples "tweets" on screen during a presentation or discussion. This ability to "follow" people and the popularity of it seems to really reflect out innate need for relationship and social interaction and challenges us about

how we go on the life changing journey with people into a deeper relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.



The primary task facing the churches in the UK is the re-evangelization of our four nations. A third of adults have never had a significant contact with any church of any denomination, whilst another third attended sometime in their life, often as children, but do so no longer. Allowing for the 7% who belong to other world faiths, this leaves the churches actively engaging about one quarter of the population.

Churchgoers are, on average, significantly older than the average of the population.

This is the scale of the task quantitatively. Qualitatively British culture, like that of most Western societies, is a mix of individualism, consumerism and constructivism – the assumption that personal identity is primarily a matter of individual choice and self-creation. This is a powerful worldview that makes disciples according to a very different story than Christian one. To this we may add major ignorance of the Christian story and a growing tendency towards a form of political correctness, which fears that the public display of Christian belief may 'offend' people of other views and religions. As the influence of Christendom fades away, the West is no easy mission field.

Much of the churches existing ministry was shaped during a time when the content of the Christian faith was better known; when British culture was much less pluralistic and when the year was shaped by religious public holidays, which everyone knew were religious holidays. Our culture used to bring people to our door. It does so no longer.

This situation is not a cause for despair. The missional challenge in Britain is no harder for the Holy Spirit than that of any other time or place. But faith faces facts as it trusts God, rather than evades them.

The decline of Christendom is as much a gift as it is a challenge. It weakens the grip of a superficial cultural Christianity and makes it much clearer that the call of Christ is to wholehearted, whole life, life long discipleship. Discipleship provides the key to the evangelistic task we face, and presents us with our most significant challenge. Affluent consumer societies, even during times of global financial crisis, need to be outclassed by a Christlike way of life.

The Spirit of God is the lead missionary in any context and I see the Holy Spirit leading the church here in two significant ways.

First, it is becoming increasingly missional. Invitational approaches, like the 'Back to Church Sunday' initiative are aimed at lapsed members. Engaged approaches, like the ecumenical Street Pastors teams which care for town centre and estate communities at night, are evidence of a growing grasp that mission requires word and deed. Above all (and I am involved so am biased) the Fresh Expressions initiative is helping churches across the country to plant new congregations to win for Christ those who are untouched by our existing parish congregations and approaches. Good practice for planting a fresh expression of church begins with discernment – listening to the Spirit – because mission is contextual, and the cloning of something which seems successful elsewhere is no guarantee that it is appropriate 'here'. It then involves an incarnational ministry: a willingness to enter the world of those being reached, at the price of the comfort and convenience of the planters. Most mission in the UK is now cross cultural mission: crossing the boundary between a Christendom shaped church and a post-Christendom society. Cross cultural missionaries pay the cultural price so that those they seek to win may face the challenge of Christ's cross within their own culture. The great strength of this approach is that it embodies the self sacrifice and love of others which lies at the heart of Christian discipleship. Discipleship is modelled in the way the new congregations are planted. Participation in mission is also a vital part of the formation of disciples; it is the environment in which disciples grow.

Second, there is a reconnection between mission and spirituality. At the heart of disciple making is character formation. Ignorance of the faith can be addressed by good programmes of instruction, but even more important are the disciplines of life that form Christian character. In an earlier time the emphasis here was on personal disciplines. These are essential, but in our powerfully individualised society, they need the vigorous mutual encouragement provided by Christian fellowship. The term 'one another' is frequent in the New Testament. There will be little sustained mission and discipleship here without it.

Prayer movement, like 24/7 prayer are becoming missionary movements. Mission agencies, like CMS, are becoming religious orders. The Holy Spirit is shaping a New Monasticism with mission at its heart. The challenge is to reach into our home mission field beyond the reach of our existing work. Increasingly it is being recognised that this requires commitment to one another, and a shared rule or rhythm of life and pattern of prayer, to shape missionary disciples.

We face a long haul. There is no quick fix strategy for the West. Long term incarnational mission, to engage with the majority who know little of the faith, is the task the Spirit has given us. Growth in discipleship and the effective making of disciples will be the evidence that we are succeeding.



*Bishop Graham Cray – Archbishops' Missioner - Leader of the Ecumenical Fresh Expressions Team*

## **“There’s no point getting them in if you don’t keep them!”**

We are not called to make attenders, or even converts, but disciples. When Bob Jackson and I wrote the [“Everybody Welcome”](http://www.everybodywelcome.org.uk/) Course (<http://www.everybodywelcome.org.uk/>) we were very aware that it needed to involve more than just the initial welcome. One of the keys to people staying is the nurture course where people can develop friendships and ask questions. There are numerous courses around: some courses are free, others expensive; some are 6 weeks, some are 12 weeks; some are DVD based, some are books and photocopyable papers; some have a particular theological bias. There is a nurture course to suit every church.

In Lichfield Diocese we had already developed a summary of the courses. We were recommending every church to run a nurture course at least once per year but found many clergy saying that they did not have the time or the money to find out what was available and suitable. We made this [summary of nurture courses](http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/chadnet/DynamicContent/Documents/Nurture_Courses_A4.pdf) ([http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/chadnet/DynamicContent/Documents/Nurture\\_Courses\\_A4.pdf](http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/chadnet/DynamicContent/Documents/Nurture_Courses_A4.pdf))

available on the web site but also in booklet form for when we visit churches. It needs to be continually revised and updated as new courses appear.

The Achilles heel of all nurture courses is what happens afterwards. We amazingly seem to act as if after 6 or 12 sessions the person knows enough about the Christian faith to be able to make it on their own. We need to look at ongoing nurture and discipleship recognising that commitment to Christ often takes months if not years and therefore a structure of ongoing discipleship in small groups is crucial. We have therefore followed up the information on nurture courses with [“Beyond Nurture”](http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/chadnet/DynamicContent/Documents/Post_Nurture.pdf) ([http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/chadnet/DynamicContent/Documents/Post\\_Nurture.pdf](http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/chadnet/DynamicContent/Documents/Post_Nurture.pdf)) a set of post-nurture discipleship materials. We encourage churches to invest in [small groups](http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/chadnet/DynamicContent/Documents/Developing_Small_Groups.pdf) ([http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/chadnet/DynamicContent/Documents/Developing\\_Small\\_Groups.pdf](http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/chadnet/DynamicContent/Documents/Developing_Small_Groups.pdf)) in their churches. Where people are part of a small group they are far more likely to stay in the church and keep growing in faith and service.



We have recently developed an overview of the courses that are available in discipleship and evangelism and are facing the challenge of how to deliver these in the churches across the Diocese, as well as trying to keep up to date with new courses and resources that are being produced. People need to keep learning and keep growing and to achieve this we need to make the most of the excellent discipleship resources which are available to us.

*George Fisher, Director of Mission, Lichfield Diocese, England*

## **Discipleship material from Nigeria**

The Diocese on the Niger, in Nigeria has shared with us both their confirmation material; this can be found at [http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/ecgi/documents/diocese\\_of\\_niger\\_confirmation\\_preparation\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/ecgi/documents/diocese_of_niger_confirmation_preparation_booklet.pdf) and their follow up studies for growth in Christ; this can be found at [http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/ecgi/documents/diocese\\_of\\_niger\\_follow-up\\_studies%20.pdf](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/ecgi/documents/diocese_of_niger_follow-up_studies%20.pdf)

***Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.***  
**Matthew 28.18-20**

**Rooted in Jesus** is a discipleship programme for Africa which began in 2002 with a word from God to Stanley Hotay, diocesan missionary and regional director of the Jesus Film in Tanzania: "I want you to make not just converts, but disciples." God spoke to others too, and, to cut a long story short, the result was a two year group discipleship programme first piloted in the Diocese of Mount Kilimanjaro, and now spreading rapidly all over the continent. *Rooted in Jesus* is currently in use in 23 Anglican dioceses and 3 denominational groupings in 10 countries, and has been translated into some 27 languages. It has become a remarkable example of how God takes the initiative in providing for his people.



The word 'disciple' or 'learner' is a translation of the Greek word 'mathetes', which means something like 'apprentice.' And whereas we, influenced by our own school and university education systems, have all too often understood discipleship as the acquiring of biblical and theological information, that doesn't really seem to be how

Jesus understood it. Jesus did not teach his disciples in a classroom, and he did not teach them to engage in theological debate. He taught them, apprenticeship style, to do the things which he did – things which he in turn had seen his Father doing. And then he charged them to teach others to do them too. So it seems that true discipleship, as Matthew suggests, is about encountering the Father, obeying the Son, and learning to live in the power of the Holy Spirit; and it's about doing all that, as Jesus did it with his first disciples, together – for it should not escape our attention that the word 'you' in the New Testament is normally in the plural. To be a disciple of Jesus is to be engaged, with others, in a process of growth and change which brings life both to those involved and to all those with whom they come into contact. Discipleship, it seems, is not about what we know at all; it's a much deeper and more dynamic process – discipleship is about who we are becoming. And – good news for the poor – it's the same process whether you are a university professor or a subsistence farmer.

*Rooted in Jesus* began in the Tanzanian town of Arusha and in the scattered rural communities of the Masai steppe, as small, interactive groups of would-be disciples of Jesus met under the leadership of a pastor or evangelist to deepen their faith. Soon we were hearing some remarkable stories. Simon, known for his quarrelsome nature, turning to God and asking for forgiveness; astonished to see him transformed by inner peace, his wives promptly joined the group. Elizabeth, discovering for the first time that God does not require her to offer her body to visiting preachers, now set free to live another way. Abraham, released from his overwhelming fear of the local witchdoctor. Leah, barren, prayed for in the group and soon pregnant. Paulina, catapulted from nightmares about snakes into dreams of angels. And, as time went on, others. Dorisia, illiterate but now learning about prayer and prophecy, standing in church and announcing that there was someone present with a problem in her abdomen – a woman stood, explaining she had for years been suffering bleeding for up to 21 days each month; prayed for then and there, she was healed. Or Japhet, an evangelist, telling how one day as his group was meeting in the church a passing Muslim rushed in, overcome by the sudden sensation that his feet were 'on fire', and saying he had no idea what they were doing but could he join in? Or Rebecca, sharing how challenging it had been to meditate, during a time of severe food shortage, on James 1.2, 'whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance' – and how the more she meditated, the more the Lord had filled her heart with peace.

*Rooted in Jesus* is introduced to a diocese by a joint UK-African team of experienced practitioners, through one or more four day conferences. Each conference has three elements: teaching, training, and ministry to those attending. Through a mix of plenary input on discipleship, the work of the Holy Spirit and the challenges of Christian ministry, through interactive small group workshops, demonstrations and practice sessions, through times of worship and direct prayer for repentance, healing, renewal and the anointing of the Spirit for ministry, a *Rooted in Jesus* 'seminar' is designed to act as a catalyst for change in the life of those attending and in the life of the diocese as a whole (and it is often, of course, also a catalyst for change in the lives of the facilitators!). We offer a follow-up conference a year later, and a third one when the first groups complete the programme and are ready to train a new generation of leaders. But the real work comes within the diocese itself, under the leadership of the bishop and through the commitment of the appointed diocesan coordinator; and it comes as a long, slow determination, often against all the odds, to avoid what Mark Russell, Chief Executive of the Church Army in the UK, calls 'the shrinking and wrinkling which comes to the Church when we teach people to be Christians and not disciples.'

The Diocese of Niassa, Mozambique, is a case in point. Helen Van Koevering, director of ministry, writes, '*Rooted in Jesus* is the basis for all our ministry and mission training, supporting as it does our diocesan vision to become a communion of communities in Jesus, through small groups studying, discipling one another, church planting and rooting, growing in faith and changed lives together.' Once isolated and starved of training during 30 years of war, the Church in Niassa is now growing rapidly. A team of 325 young leaders or 'adeptos' look after several groups each, working in every congregation of the diocese; group members are actively involved in caring for the community, and in 5 years the number of both priests and churches has doubled. Helen muses, 'We are looking for clues to this grace of God. Perhaps it's through our desire to be the church in new places, a new approach to training leaders as 'training the trainers' to reach and empower more people, offering new life through healing and development, new rootedness for believers and new belonging for communities.'

Similar stories are told in other places. Initially introduced into the Diocese of St Mark's in South Africa, *Rooted in Jesus* has now been adopted as a primary tool for discipleship throughout the province as part of the 'Growing the Church' initiative directed by Trevor Pearce. In St Mark's the programme has been running for 18 months, and Bishop Martin Breytenbach writes 'I have no doubt that God has commissioned and anointed this course for Africa in much the same way as he is using Alpha in more urban and 'western' settings. We are already starting to see remarkable things in this Diocese as people and congregations are set on fire with the love of Jesus.' As ever, growth is coming where it is most needed: 'St Andrew's Church exists in the very heart of extreme right wing Afrikaner nationalism – some of the strongest resistance to the New South Africa has been in that area. They have formed one group comprising people from the (formerly white) church in Modimolle and the (black) church in Phagameng. The RinJ material is helping them to find each other and share deeply.' Hearing the news from St Mark's, Bishop Dino Gabriel of Zululand said to the diocesan synod: 'I am convinced more than ever before that spiritual renewal and growth in our parishes is directly proportional to the intentional development of small faith-sharing groups. I dream of the Diocese of Zululand of the future as a dynamic network of cell groups where brothers and sisters are nurtured in their spiritual and human growth and equipped for mission.' *Rooted in Jesus* was introduced to the diocese in November 2010.

And so it is that *Rooted in Jesus* continues to spread from one diocese to another as discipleship increasingly surfaces as God's priority for his people. It's an exciting challenge to be involved in. For me, the highlight this year was returning to Eastern Zambia and finding that a young woman we had prayed for in Mfuwe two years previously, then suffering from genital sores and AIDS, had been completely healed, and has now tested HIV negative. Or the more recent testimony of ten prostitutes in Chipata who have turned to Christ and who now form a *Rooted in Jesus* group; or the story of the woman from Nchelenge who joined a group, committed her life to Christ, noticed as if for the first time the growing number of orphans in the village, and promptly took some of them into her own home. But there have been many, many encouraging stories – the UK team member healed of a three month illness on the plane as he flew out to Tanzania; the excitement of Sunday School teachers beginning to use the new *Rooted in Jesus Junior* in Uganda and Tanzania; new invitations to work in Burundi, Madagascar and Nigeria; the sparkling eyes of the UK team members who return to their churches spiritually challenged and refreshed; the remarkable ways in which the intercessors here pick up the reality of what is happening in the heavenly places as they pray for the seminars. Nobody planned *Rooted in Jesus*, it just happened – and I thank God for it, for all those who have responded to his call to be part of it, and for the glory which is his as his purposes are worked out through the inadequacy of our own human capabilities.

Finally, what of the 'developed world', and in particular what of those in the UK? Perhaps unsurprisingly, God seems to be speaking there too about discipleship. The vision of the Diocese of Carlisle is 'to see our Churches growing disciples of all ages', discipleship being understood as a life of faith, prayer, service, evangelism and relationships. So many people have asked us if *Rooted in Jesus* can be used in the UK that we have produced a UK version, similar in its relational, small group style to the African original, but adapted to deal with the particular challenges faced by Christians in the West.

One of things I notice about Jesus and his disciples is that they were always travelling. We too are always travelling – not just between continents but, more importantly, inwards, upwards and outwards as we learn together what it means to be apprenticed to the Saviour of the world.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – Ephesians 2.8.*

*First written in partnership between the linked Dioceses of Leicester and Mount Kilimanjaro, Rooted in Jesus is edited and directed by Alison Morgan, and published and supported by ReSource. It is currently in use in Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, Malawi, DR Congo, South Africa, Angola and Sudan. For more information please visit [www.resource-arm.net](http://www.resource-arm.net) or [www.rootedinjesus.net](http://www.rootedinjesus.net).*

**Global Connections** describes itself as the UK network for world mission. It organises a number of forums, which bring interested people from mission agencies, churches, bible and theological colleges together to explore common issues. The Thinking Mission Forum has a strong Anglican involvement, being convened by Dr Cathy Ross, an Anglican from the Province of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, and including Anglican Communion Office Mission Director, the Revd John Kafwanka, on its steering group. The October 2012 meeting, in exploring the issue of discipleship, managed to achieve quite a good global perspective. Cathy, in presenting her paper brought her experiences of working in Africa and the two other speakers, Paul Davies from All Nations Christian College and Carolyn Kemp from OMF (the Overseas Missionary Fellowship), brought their experiences of working in Latin America and both working in the Philippines and also working globally in discipling those within the Asian Diaspora. Discussing questions in small groups, followed by plenary feedback, brought out other insights from different people's contexts. Key issues that emerged through the input, discussion and feedback were:

Discipleship will look very different in different contexts. An Andrew Walls anecdote was shared of a traveller in both space and time visiting:

- ◆ a 1<sup>st</sup> century church comprising ethnically Hebrew speaking people, mainly families and persecuted;
- ◆ the church at the time of the first Council of Nicea, male, Greek speaking and politically powerful;
- ◆ 6<sup>th</sup> century Scotland, male monastic and aesthetic ;
- ◆ 19<sup>th</sup> century England, male, white and wealthy;
- ◆ 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigeria, African, vibrant, predominantly female worshippers including many young people.

The anecdote begs the question of what do these diverse groups of Christians have in common; the answer is that all are responding to the Lordship of Christ within their lives. What discipleship means for us will vary hugely depending upon our own context. Despite the difference of our differing contexts, it is important that we see our own discipleship as being enriched by being part of a world church, open to consider what it means to be a disciple in other contexts and the challenges that those contexts offer to our own discipleship.

In looking at the bible, and considering how Jesus did discipleship, we see that Jesus put the emphasis upon 'relationships' rather than on 'programmes'. There wasn't a series of weekly meetings, at the same time each week for a limited period, but an ongoing relationship with a group of people.

Our own discipleship is usually a response to the how discipleship is done, and the lifestyle of the discipler, rather than the teaching content.

Jesus didn't follow a pre-determined agenda but his teaching and action was often determined by what was going on in the local context; his response to the external stimuli existing at the time of his ministry. You are more likely to catch people's attention, and make discipleship seem relevant, if your starting point is an issue that is currently grabbing people's attention globally, or within the local context, and exploring Christian responses to this, rather than starting with 'Christian ethics'.

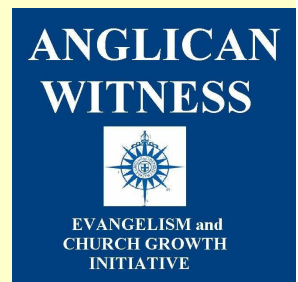
A Western enlightenment worldview often creates a tension between the gospel and the world. It is easy to either focus so much on the gospel that we lose sight of its relevance for the world, or to focus so much on the world that we water down the relevance of the gospel. Christians shaped by non-western worldviews will often have a more holistic approach that western Christians can learn from.

There is mutuality in discipleship; it is not the flow of teaching from one person to another but each will be challenged within their own discipleship. As growth occurs and contexts change the balance of who has the Christian insights, and who is discipling who, can change as well.

The available space means that the above doesn't do justice to the fullness of the presentations and the reader is encouraged to look at the original papers which will appear on <http://www.globalconnections.co.uk/forums/thinkingmission/Forum+Papers>

## ECGI FACEBOOK

*We now have 217 'friends' on facebook and it is proving a helpful forum for the exchange of resources and information and also for lively debate on certain issues. To join you need first of all to belong to facebook and then then simply go to <http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/anglicanwitness/> and join us.*



Sharing my personal experienced on 'Discipleship' training allows me to give thanks and glory back to the heavenly Father, and to those He appointed for me through this process and journey.

My born-again Christian life commenced eight years ago; the former Senior Pastor and founder of my non-denomination Church came from a denomination based church where the leaders were trained to disciple others. I learned my discipleship program there and was taught how to work with the Holy Spirit. My training was not in the classroom but in, and on, the field. I started in the traffic ministry and became a cell-intern before I left that church. I was also exposed to mission fields in Bekalarang in Sarawak, Philippines and Thailand. Through these experiences I realised that most discipleship training programs does not happen in the classroom.



All of us on those missions trips participated at our own expense but we were joyful to give in this way to the Lord. I also committed myself to many Christian short courses and Bible Studies which further developed my commitment to progress in maturity in my walk with Christ our savior. Many of my friends, mostly church members, still wonder why did I ever come to Ipoh, West Malaysia. I was born here but, to be honest, this is the place I hated most and there was nothing about the place that I wanted to recall during the thirty years I was away. After leaving Ipoh for so many years I hardly knew anybody there anymore, not even one. So, why Ipoh? Again it is obedience and submission to the heavenly Father's calling. How do I know or confirm that this is from Him? While I was still at the previous church my Christian maturity became stale. I was worried and started to pray and ask for solutions and answers.

The answer came after much persistence in prayer. The Word came, 'dig your father's well'(Gen.26:24,32). So, at first I was reluctant to submit but if it was the calling of the Lord it will be difficult to disobey. And the Lord just opened up the path for me to assure me that was His calling. Why? Confirmation came, as I mentioned I went for short courses and in this I met a believer from Ipoh and just to cut the story short that was how the Lord opened this door for me. We need to be willing to take risks and move on with God's desire to make disciples of the next generation of believers. Thanks be to God. I have now been at St Peter's for roughly twenty months and I am discipling two couples not in the classroom styles but more on commitment. I believe that discipleship is a deep commitment where nobody understands what you are doing except God and yourself; discipleship needs to be caught and not taught.

Abbreviated from an article by *Michael Foo, Ipoh, West Malaysia (who is shown pictured above in a café in Ipoh)*

## Vocations within work and home

A vocation is the response to God's call a person makes by using their God-given gifts; the Charism of the Holy Spirit. For priests and leaders but also for the whole people of God, our response is at the very heart of Christian discipleship. How are we to talk about vocation today with so many different cultural expectations in a modern world? Every vocation is the response to the question what and how does God want me to live? How do I love and serve him in the particular and uniqueness of my life? It is also the result of discernment; a process of prayer and reflection on the Word of God within the Church of God.

Discernment of vocation is the discovery and unearthing of what God has already given to a person; a gift of God. Every Christian vocation is conceived, and given birth to, in the context of the Church's vocation; both the wider Church and, perhaps more importantly, the local faith community. Each local Christian community has a calling from God to witness, serve, and love and all personal vocation is within this context, not isolated from it; every Christian has a vocation and discipleship is stillborn without it.

God's vocation may be experienced in a number of ways, perhaps: caring for married partner and children; in their place of work and with the people they work with; developing and nurturing the community of faith, perhaps through local evangelism and youth work; using God-given gifts in the service of the wider Church, perhaps fostering ecumenical relationships in the pursuit of social justice; alongside or within national religious or secular organisations, responding to human need by loving service.

Exploring the question, "What is God's call on my life?" is a lifelong process of becoming all that God wants us to be; growing from the image, to the likeness, of Christ for the Glory of God. This discernment is at the heart of any Christian discipleship. When vocation and discipleship are brought together, Christian Spirituality becomes something that is holistic, embracing the whole of life; bringing together the sacred and the secular; involving a journey outwards to others, and also a journey inwards to the Christ within us. This bringing together of Vocation, Discernment and Spirituality will be the foundation for any holistic experience of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ in our modern world.

Abbreviated from an article by *Revd Paul Davies, St Mary's Church, Sunbury, London, UK*

# What is the Gospel of Jesus?

Every Sunday we preach the Gospel, from a Gospel reading, read from a Gospel book. It is foundational to our Anglican expression of faith.

Each week we look at a facet of the Gospel of Jesus Christ - but do we ever get the full picture? What is the Gospel according to Jesus? Have you ever really sat down and tried to answer the question?

If you were given the title, *The Quest for the Gospel of Jesus*, what would you write? Here's a quote to start – it comes from the missiologist John V Taylor (*Mission as Dialogue*; quoted in Pray Every Day. Ed Ronald Jasper. Collins 1976 p51)

*'An essentially biblical emphasis – all too often ignored by the church – is that Christ is Lord and Saviour of the whole of a person, or he is no saviour at all. Because Jesus insisted on seeing the person whole, one could never be sure which aspect of a person's need he would tackle first. Here comes the paralysed man, helpless and obviously sick in body. His friends have brought him hoping for a simple cure, and Jesus talks about the forgiveness of sins. Here on the other hand comes a clear case of spiritual need, an enquirer asking how to gain eternal life, and Jesus gives him an economic answer, telling him how to give away his goods to the poor. Because ultimately Jesus cannot rest content until all of a person's needs are fully met, it does not matter much to him where he starts on the work of salvation. ('man' has been changed to 'person' in the last sentence.)*

So what is the big picture of the gospel message of Jesus?' Of course it is a non-verbal message of God's love demonstrated in action - an ontological question about the incarnation - but it is also about the words.

To Peter, James and John, we are told Jesus said 'follow me', while to Nicodemus, 'you must be born again. To the crowds listening to the Beatitudes, we read 'the one who endures to the end will be saved'. They are all facets. You could list many more.

Have you ever thought what message might have been in the mind of Jesus? Significantly, when two men asked him, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' he gave them different answers. There is no 'one size fits all' Gospel but a tailor made message that addresses the deepest need of the individual.

If you read all four Gospels and list all of the encounters with Jesus and his word to the individual, which has a bearing on 'the eternal question', I conclude that there are more than 50 possible answers, including the two above. I have put them on [www.jesus360.org.uk](http://www.jesus360.org.uk) for you to have a look and comment on your own interpretation of the text.

You can download a study on these texts from [www.grovebooks.co.uk](http://www.grovebooks.co.uk) by searching for *The 360 Gospel of Jesus*. It is in the evangelism series.

Although the study of the Gospel is fantastic and very exciting, of course the more important question is about communicating it so other people become disciples today.

Based on the John V Taylor quote above, I wonder 'is there a Jesus way for us today?' What do the four Gospels tell us? What about the woman at the well, or the man lowered through the roof, or the lessons from Jesus and the disciples and characters like Nicodemus and Zacchaeus? How do we connect with the individual needs and speak – as well as demonstrate – the good news?

Basically I think that there are three stories. The place to start is with 'their story' as you listen to another person. Then there is 'your story' as you share and get to know each other. Finally there is 'God's story' in Jesus Christ. The key is to connect the three stories together.

# Get Involved

**Register**, if you have not already done so, <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/ecgi> — we will let the core group person responsible for your region know about you;

**Tell others** involved in evangelism and church growth about the Initiative and the newsletter;

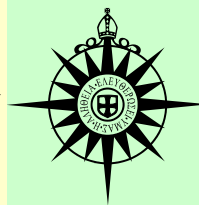
**Send us** your stories, of how God is working through your church or organisation to grow his church, to include in future issues, (300—800 words) by 2 January for the February 2012 edition. We are exploring how we can include more sensitive material on secure web pages;

**Tell us** about resources: books; websites; courses, good practice; prayers etc that we can include in future newsletters or on the website

**Read the website** to explore the various helpful resources that are already included;

**Translate** this newsletter, and other material, into the languages of those who cannot read in English; at this stage we do not have the resources to do this ourselves;

We call on you to **pray** for the ECGI and the work mentioned in this issue.



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How we learn from Jesus and connect these three stories, is explored in *Sharing faith the Jesus way*, Bible Reading Fellowship ([www.brffonline.org.uk](http://www.brffonline.org.uk)). *Sharing faith the Jesus way* can be used as a personal journey or a 6-week series of studies in sermons and small groups. Each week is based on one key and very well known Gospel reading.



*Jim Currin is a Church Army evangelist and currently serves as the Secretary for Evangelisation at Churches Together in England.*