

Southwell & Nottingham Bishop's Study Day

Setting God's People Free
March 2017

Setting God's People Free Findings, Recommendations, Next Steps

Lay Leadership Task Group: One framing question

1. "How can the Church of England increase the effectiveness and confidence of lay people in leading where they are called to serve - in wider society, in local community and within the Church - in ways that grow disciples, extend God's Kingdom and transform society?"

NB: Alongside this report, the Lay Ministries Working Group is looking specifically at lay ecclesial ministry within the Church and will report separately in due course.

1946 report 'Towards the Conversion of England'

- "We are convinced that England will never be converted until the laity use the opportunities for evangelism daily afforded by their various professions, crafts and occupations."
- "This being so, the Christian laity should be recognised as the **priesthood of the Church in the working world**, and as the Church militant in action in the mission fields of politics, industry and commerce."
- "The member of Parliament, the town councillor, the employer of labour, the trades' union official, the clerk the artisan, the farmer and the labourer, should be called on to address Church gatherings on "my job" as naturally as are missionaries on furlough."

Implications of not understanding secular vocation

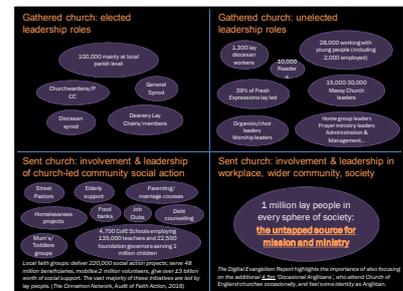
"In nothing has the Church so lost her hold on reality as **Her failure to understand and respect the secular vocation**. She has allowed work and religion to become separate departments, and is astonished to find that, as a result, the secular work of the world is turned to purely selfish and destructive ends, and that the greater part of the world's intelligent workers have become irreligious or at least uninterested in religion.... But is it astonishing? How can anyone remain interested in a religion which seems to have no concern with nine-tenths of his life?"
(Dorothy Sayers)

Chapter 1: Two essential shifts in culture and practice

1. Until, together, ordained and lay, we form and equip lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life in ways that demonstrate the Gospel, we will never set God's people free to evangelise the nation.
2. Until laity and clergy are convinced, based on their **baptismal mutuality**, that they are equal in worth and status, complementary in gifting and vocation, mutually accountable in discipleship, and equal partners in mission, we will never form Christian communities that can evangelise the nation.

Chapter 2: The situation today

- Previous efforts to release and empower lay people all failed to trigger or sustain the scale of change proposed in their recommendations
- Whilst lay involvement and leadership is clearly pervasive and essential to the mission and life of the Church of England, **only a very sketchy and incomplete picture exists** as to the nature and scale of this vital contribution
- Although there are many encouraging examples of innovative practice to equip lay people, **awareness of these initiatives is limited, demand and take-up is low, and resources are minimal**



Chapter 3: Four factors that constrain lay engagement and leadership

1. A deficit of **theology** and vision
2. **Weak lay voice** that is not well heard, listened to, understood or acted on
3. **Unhealthy relationships** between lay people and clergy
4. **Inadequate resources** and support

Chapter 4: Eight levers of culture change to enable the two shifts we highlight

1. Theologically grounded identity and vision for lay people
2. Front-line lay perspectives given voice
3. 'Lay aware' episcopal priorities and praxis
4. Equipping the front-line
5. Liturgy that underscores the role and identity of lay people
6. Re-focusing clergy selection, training and development
7. Reforming structures
8. Lay-integrated communications

Chapter 5: Next steps for the National Church

1. **National championing** of the two over-arching culture shifts.
2. A **national portal for whole life discipleship**, accessible by every member of the Church of England, designed to inspire and support them in their whole-life discipleship and vocational journey.
3. A **learning community of 'Pilot Dioceses'** that are prioritising both culture shifts.
4. **Re-modelling the selection, training and on-going ministerial development of clergy** in line with the priority of lay formation and discipleship.

Reflections on the first shift in culture and practice: **towards whole-life discipleship**

What is discipleship?

- "Discipleship is a way of life; a 'state of being'... It is rooted in a living relationship with Christ in which we learn and grow by following him and living in his Way. A disciple is one who is called to learn how to be a place in the world where the act of God can come alive."
(Rowan Williams, Being Disciples)

How does God call us to follow him?

Four elements of discipleship...



1. By developing relational intimacy with God

Four elements of discipleship...



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- "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. **And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'** The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."
(Romans 8:14-16)



2. By embracing a whole-of-life vision for discipleship

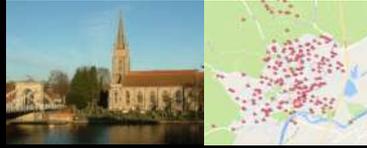
Four elements of discipleship...



We are called to 'Integral' Mission

- The **indivisible proclamation and demonstration** of the Good News
- The **participation in God's mission** of restoration of all things
- The **restoration of relationships** with God, with ourselves, with our neighbours, with wider creation
- Re-discovering the **Image of God** in all things
- Making **disciples**
- We are all missionaries

Which image best depicts the Church?



3. By discerning our specific vocation and calling

Four elements of discipleship...



Some frameworks and questions to help us think about our vocation

- What is your Holy Discontent?
- What is your passion and how can this intersect with service of people?
- If God was in charge in your workplace, how would things be different?
- Where do you see God at work in your workplaces, in your frontlines? How is God working to restore, redeem your workplace?
- LICC's 6M framework

4. By becoming a learning community of practitioners

Four elements of discipleship...



Becoming far more intentional about creating powerful learning communities



Discipleship is about the whole of life

"The Church gathers every Sunday, the day of resurrection and of Pentecost, to renew its participation in Christ's priesthood. But the exercise of the priesthood is not within the walls of the Church but in the daily life of the world. It is only in this way that the public life of the world, its accepted habits and assumptions can be challenged by the gospel and brought under the searching light of the truth as it has been revealed in Jesus."
(Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*)

Discussion:

What questions does this raise for you?

What opportunities do you see?