



Mission Strategy

...MORE THAN WE CAN IMAGINE



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of Norwich

A Guide to Reimagining **Church**

CHURCH IS...

Introduction

Sometimes the hardest thing is to become yourself. The call is to become the self that God designed and wills for us all, individually and collectively. That involves a constant process of learning and re-learning; as T S Eliot put it: *“We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”*ⁱ I have learnt through my visits to Papua New Guinea, where we have been linked with the church for over 50 years, that fresh scenarios and contexts will call for the same gospel of love, compassion and forgiveness, but so often with new ways of telling it. In our changing circumstances what will we each become as local church communities? How will we allow ourselves to be stretched to a new place where Jesus Christ may be seen afresh?

Rt Revd Jonathan Meyrick, Bishop of Lynn

“You are citizens with everyone else who belongs to the family of God. You are like a building with the apostles and prophets as the foundation and with Christ as the most important stone. Christ is the one who holds the building together and makes it grow into a holy temple for the Lord. And you are part of that building...”

Ephesians 2:19b-22a CEV

“The visible church of Christ is a congregation of believers in which the pure Word of God is preached and in which the sacraments are rightly administered...”

Thirty-Nine articles of Religion. Article 19

“The Church is the family of God and the body of Christ through which he continues his reconciling work among men and women.”

The Revised Catechismⁱⁱ

“Church is what happens when people encounter the Risen Jesus and commit themselves to sustaining and deepening that encounter in their encounter with each other...”

++Rowan Williamsⁱⁱⁱ

i T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets, Little Gidding, Section V

ii Revised Common Catechism, 1962, p.3-4

iii Mission-shaped Church Report, 2004, p.vii

CHURCH IS...

FOR THE HURTING AND THE HEALED.
FOR THE LOST AND FOUND.
FOR THE HUNGRY AND WELL FED
FOR THE REFUGEE AND THOSE AT HOME.
FOR THE SEARCHERS, THE REACHERS,
THE BETTER LIFE SEEKERS.
FOR THE ILLITERATE AND THE EDUCATED
FOR THE POOR AND THE PIGGY-BANKED
FOR THE GAY, THE STRAIGHT
AND EVERYONE IN BETWEEN.
FOR THE SORRY AND THE FORGIVEN
FOR THE PURPOSELESS AND THE PURPOSEFUL.
FOR THE PERSON WITH FAITH
AND THE ONE WITH NONE AT ALL.
FOR THE ONES THAT CRAWL
AND THOSE WHO WALK TALL.
FOR YOU. FOR ME.
FOR ONE. FOR ALL.
THAT'S WHAT CHURCH IS
(DAN DOWMAN) ^{IV}

LISTEN

What is Church?

Listening to Scripture

The word 'Church' in the New Testament simply means an assembly of persons called together for a particular purpose.^v The term appears only twice in the Gospels^{vi} but frequently in Acts, where it describes the spontaneous expression of community that grew out of the encounter with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which developed into the Church as a Christ-centred community.

What aspects of the Acts 2:42-47 do we see in our church? What aspects are lacking? What community aspects does God want us to renew?

Listening to Tradition

When we recite the Nicene Creed we say 'We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.' This signifies four ways of being: one in our commitment together as Christ-centred community; holy in our orientation and worship to God; catholic in our connection to the wider Church; and apostolic in our missional dynamic to the world.^{vii}

To be authentically Church we need all four

'ways of being', which of these is our church focussed on and which are neglected?

Listening to Community

How does our parish see our church? As an Anglican Outpost, Mission Station, Social Club, Community Hub, Worship Space, Discipleship School, Liturgical Society, Theology Group, Local History Centre, House of Prayer, or something else?

As a Christ-centred community, who do people say that we are? Ask a range of people in the parish their honest opinion of our church. Does this match with our perception of our church? Does it reflect the aspects of the early church?

Listening to Ourselves

Our church is made up of people, 'living stones that are being used to build a spiritual house.'^{viii} Each person brings gifts, talents and skills, as well as their flaws, quirks and failures.

What can we learn from the history of our church's ministry, mission and relationships that shape the way we are today? What are we meant to be?

v W. A. Elwell, & B. J. Beitzel, 1988, Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible (Vol. 1), p.458.

vi Matthew 16:18; 18:17

vii Mission-shaped Church Report, 2004, p.96-99.

viii 1 Peter 2:5



CELEBRATE

What are we like?

Sometimes looking in the mirror can be difficult, we can end up focussing on our flaws and imperfections, whilst missing the truth and beauty of who we really are and what God made us to be. We need to celebrate and treasure our uniqueness as Christ-centred community.

Celebrate – our own story

Churches often have a written history of their building and its contents, but seldom have one for its mission and ministry.

How do we celebrate our Church?

What good things can we celebrate from our own story?

How do we share our good news story beyond ourselves?

Celebrate – our uniqueness

The Church of England is called to be a 'Christian presence in every community'

This is not a call to uniformity but recognises our diversity.

How have the particular expressions of our belief, and the distinctive ways in which we feel comfortable worshipping, shaped us?

What are our core qualities, beliefs and values, and do people know them?

How would we describe ourselves to a complete stranger?

What is our worship and spiritual life like, and does it energise our faith?

What is our fellowship like, and does it make room for others?

What is our outward looking focus, and does it connect with our parish?

Celebrate – opportunities to grow

As a diocese we are 'committed to growth in discipleship, service and numbers.' Concerning this, what currently encourages, surprises, and challenges us in our Church? What do we need to put more energy into, and what might we need to stop to do this?

IMAGINE

What could we be?

Knowing and understanding our distinctive character helps us to be clearer about imagining what we could be. Therefore, gather a team and spend some time imagining and defining our Church identity and direction.

Vision

WHERE we are we called to go
(our purpose or task).

Take time to pray and make sense of our distinct mission and ministry calling as a Church. Through listening to scripture, tradition, community and ourselves who/what/where might God be pointing us toward?

Values

WHY we operate together as we do
(our Christ centred community);
WHO we truly are (our unique identity).

Understanding the distinction between vision and values is essential. When we start with a vision that builds on our

values then the best strategy for our Church can be developed. This can give it more flexibility to adapt our strategy in order to better reach the vision as local situations change, whilst the absolute values remain the same.

Strategy

WHAT we may need to do to get there
(relating to vision/purpose);
HOW we function and relate together
(relating to values/community).^{ix}

What help/advice do we need outside of our own skills and resources to achieve our strategy? How can we encourage creative new ideas? What changes do we need to make amongst ourselves to realise our imaginations?

EMPOWER

How do we become?

God does not call us without equipping us. Remember, after Jesus' Great Commission^x came Pentecost^{xi}: The Holy Spirit empowering the Church. Through research Robert Warren has collated the seven marks, expressing the life of Christ, as the path towards empowering healthy Church growth.

Seven marks of a healthy church^{xii}

1. Is energized by faith
rather than just keeping things going or trying to survive
2. Has an outward-looking focus
with a 'whole life' rather than 'church life' concern
3. Seeks to find out what God wants
discerning the Spirit's leading rather than trying to please everyone
4. Faces the cost of change and growth
rather than resisting change and fearing failure
5. Operates as a community
rather than functioning as a club or religious organization
6. Makes room for all
being inclusive rather than exclusive
7. Does a few things and does them well
focused rather than frenetic

Empowering Vision

"Church is where we listen to God, celebrate being together and then imagine and help bring about a transformed world called the Kingdom of Christ, where peace and love are eternal."

Bishop of Norwich (1999-2019)

So... if our mission is to grow and serve as Christ-centred community:

How will the Spirit empower us?

Where will the Spirit lead us?

What gifts will the Spirit give us?

What next - Turn to the back page for help



x Matthew 28:16-20

xi Acts 2

xii Robert Warren, 2004, The Healthy Churches' Handbook: a process for revitalizing your church

Help is Here

Do you want to become a healthy Church, the best version of yourselves?
Get help to reimagine your Church, work things through, and make it happen?

Contact the Mission Enabling Team

Bishop of Lynn's Office: 01760 755553

Archdeacon of Lynn's Office: 01362 688032

mission.enablers@dioceseofnorwich.org

Prayer for the Church

Father of mercies,

We ask your blessing on the Church in our diocese
and throughout the whole world;

by your grace may we find

our truth, unity, and stability in you.

Grant that generous love may flourish in us all,
and that your truth may triumph.

May your abundance supply what is lacking in our Church today,
and your merciful wisdom transform all that is flawed.

Glory, praise, thanksgiving and blessing be given to you,
by the voices and concert of voices,

in heaven and on earth, forever and ever. Amen.

Based on Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626) ^{xiii}

Web Resources

www.dioceseofnorwich.org/churches/mission/missionenablers

www.dioceseofnorwich.org/churches/mission/growth

www.dioceseofnorwich.org/churches/mission/spotlight

www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk

www.missionshapedministry.org

www.freshexpressions.org.uk