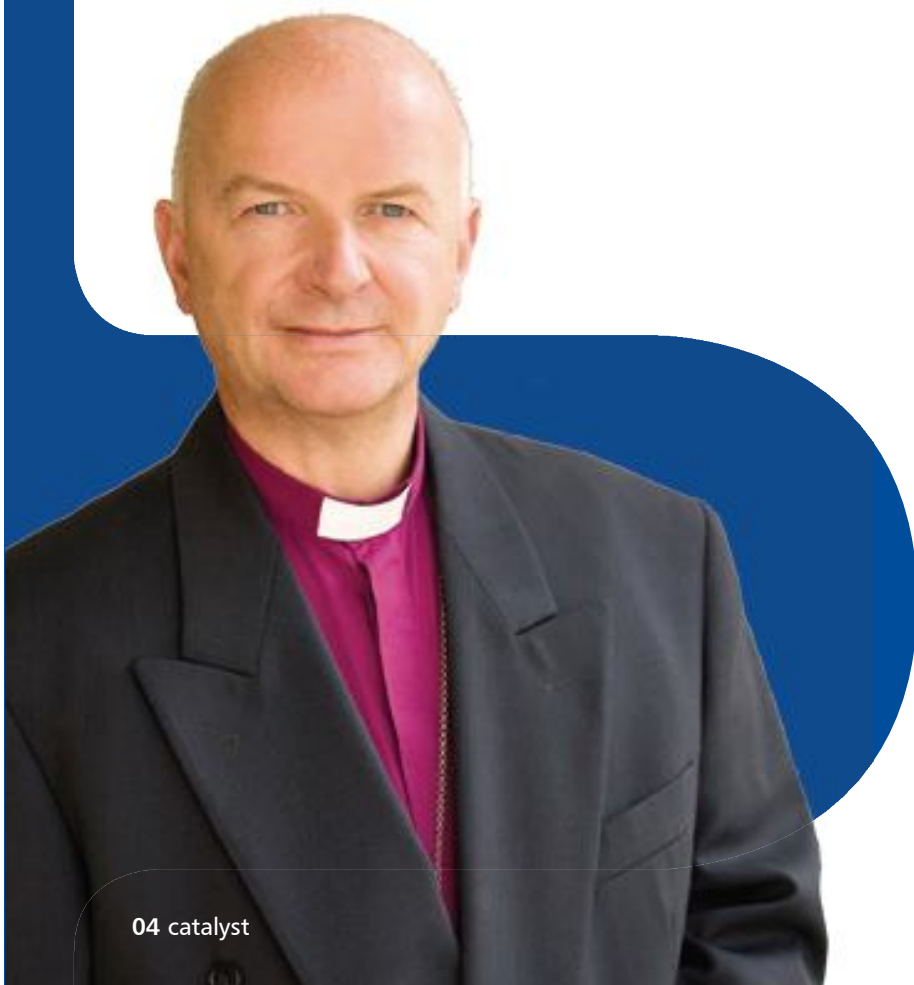




changing times

Much has been written in recent times about leadership and mission. This article is intended to be a brief critique of where we are, and where I believe we need to be. In that sense, it is provocative and intended to promote further reflection on these significant twin themes.



Firstly, despite the best efforts of Willow Creek, the Leadership Trust, the Foundation for Church Leadership and, of course, CPAS, leadership is not a 'done deal' in the wider Church of England. Many clergy wonder whether the call to priesthood is distinct from a call to spiritual leadership, and laity are left wondering whether the leadership they have to offer is ever going to be properly valued in the Church of England.

My own observation is that leadership is a critical input into any organisation – however voluntary or dispersed that organisation is – but *leadership is vital in any organisation where there is an overall conviction that change is required*. Whatever change is, it requires us to be less defensive about protecting organisational culture – with which many churches seem to be pre-occupied.

That's partly the reason I am proud to be president of CPAS. Their vision to encourage and resource spiritual leaders with biblical integrity is what's needed. I am more than happy to support this strategic direction.



The economic challenges facing most dioceses, together with escalating employment costs, mean there will be increased pressure upon the numbers of paid people dioceses will be able to afford. A key question therefore is *'How will we re-evangelise our nation with less paid people?'* I am aware that simply asking such a question will immediately energise some people, while at the same time, it will make others feel distinctly uncomfortable.

Will the future be more tent-makers and volunteers pioneering new forms of ecclesial community? According to the early 20th century missiologist, Roland Allen – now viewed by some of us as a prophet – a genuinely missionary church would necessarily be served by what he called *'voluntary clergy'*. These would be people who had a foot in both the Church and the wider world.

Secondly, what worries me is how much of today's *'new ways of being church'* begin with the assumptions of Christendom in what is increasingly a post-Christendom world. This can mean that alleged new ways

of being church are simply old ways served up in a new venue!

Assumptions about people's need to believe, their grasp of the Christian story, together with the increasing confidence in secular humanist thinking makes our task difficult, but not impossible. It was Lesslie Newbigin who noted that, unlike the early Church which evangelised a pre-Christian culture, the Church today has the challenge of evangelising a post-Christian culture.

We need to face the issue of how we preach the gospel in a culture which has largely lost any sense of the content of the Christian story. Interestingly, the only sermon we have recorded in the New Testament preached to a Gentile audience was in Athens (Acts 17). In this sermon, Paul's preaching style changed completely from that which he deployed in the synagogue, where at least a knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures could be assumed.

It is my conviction that those of us whose focus is the re-

evangelisation of our culture and pray earnestly for a new generation of missionary leaders to lead the charge, still have more thinking to do.

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The new *'gospel'* of universal inclusion is a worry to me because it implies that the gospel is no longer relevant. St John reminds us that though Jesus was full of grace, he was also full of truth. Any agenda that *'baptises'* every form of human disorder is not likely to be much light in the darkness. In the end, the gospel is not a call to be rich or successful or even fulfilled. It is a remedy for our sin and the implications of our sin.

How terrible, if in an attempt to be populist and inclusive, we effectively became ashamed of that gospel.

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