

MOTIVATE THE MILLION

BY DAVE MALE

A TIME FOR CHANGE

The recent General Synod in February 2019 was dubbed 'the Synod for evangelism'. There were six motions or presentations which centred on evangelism in some way. One of the motions was a combined paper from the Archbishop's Evangelism Task Force and from my new team, the Evangelism and Discipleship Team. Part of the motion called for:

- Every worshipping community to make evangelism a planned priority for the coming year.
- To affirm the importance of prayer in the work of evangelism, and call on every parish to be involved in 'Thy Kingdom Come'.
- Dioceses to envision, equip and enable lay and ordained people to be more confident in the sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ in their everyday lives.

This article sets out our ambitious approach, which is encapsulated in our vision 'to motivate the million regular worshippers in the Church of England to pray, articulate and live out their faith seven days a week'.

I think this is the most effective way for the Evangelism and Discipleship Team to support and realise a growing Church by motivating and enabling our greatest resource, our million regular worshippers, for both evangelism and discipleship.

This approach incorporates enabling worshippers to move from attendees, who through the narrative of continual decline can feel disheartened and unconfident, to advocates and apprentices who are outward looking and confident in their faith and church. Throughout the process of identifying our work the issue of confidence has been the topic most mentioned. We long to see the growth of confident disciples equipped for the work of living for Christ in today's world, from our biggest to smallest churches.

SOME SIMPLE DISCIPLINES

I often go with my son, who is in his 20s, to watch football matches. He is a qualified coach and so always ensures we are present an hour before kick off to see how the teams go through their skills drill. Once when we were watching Manchester United I realised the drills they were using were exactly those my sons under 7 team used when he was 6! My naïve



assumption had been that professional Premier League players would be using much more sophisticated drills. But they were still working on the same basics.

When it comes to evangelism the basic disciplines that we need to practice and develop are still the same. We suggest they are:

1. Praying for people (outside the church) regularly.
2. Equipping people to say something about their faith. We are not asking them to say everything about the Christian faith, but simply to say something. Maybe simply saying that they were at church on Sunday or a comment on how their faith helps them.
3. Living out everyday faith. Helping people to live out their lives when they are not in church in ways which reflect something of Jesus.

I really believe that if we can help people in developing these simple disciplines things will change in our churches.

Motivating the million, through equipping and liberating them as witnesses and disciples for the whole of life, is complementary to all we are doing as churches at a national, diocesan and local level. For example the success of church plants and resource churches depends partly on a huge increase in people who are enabled to be effective witnesses and confident disciples. A rise in leadership numbers will be ineffective if they are not releasing more people as confident disciples.

Our present investment, whilst substantial, will be insufficient on its own to return the church to a pattern of sustained growth. At best, together with other initiatives they will stem the decline. In order for the church to grow these focussed efforts will need to multiply and replicate confident disciples who are equipped and released to speak and live out their faith in the whole of their lives.

It is very exciting that some small behavioural changes around these disciplines for our million regular attenders would make a significant difference. I discovered that if one additional person in 50 from our regular attenders invited someone to a church event and subsequently they started attending it would totally reverse our present decline. Nationally the church would grow by 16,000 people per year, offsetting the current net loss of 14,000. **That is two per cent of our worshippers.** Surely that is possible?

THE ROLE OF LEADERS

So, what does this mean for what we are doing as leaders? The role of leaders is absolutely crucial in this and it is vital to understand our role. The Talking Jesus Research stated that 66% of the adult population of the UK knew a practising Christian. It also specified that only 1% of the adult population knew a church leader.

It is vital that we draw the right conclusions from this research.

1. The problem is NOT that we need to get our worshippers out of church or that they don't know non-Christians.
2. The problem is that they are often not confident enough to say anything about their faith to those they meet in their daily lives. They lack confidence and do not feel equipped.
3. The primary role of church leaders is NOT to be the person doing all the evangelism in the church. Based on the figures this would be a totally crazy strategy.
4. The primary role of church leaders is to equip and enable their congregations to be witnesses and disciples of Jesus. This is how church leaders are to lead the church in evangelism.

If we want to see the church grow in breadth and depth this must take most of our energies, time and concentration. This involves the five E's.



- **Envision:** How do leaders cast a compelling vision for this? How would you simply describe your church's vision for motivating your people to pray, articulate and live out their faith seven days a week. How will you ensure everyone is focussed on this vision?
- **Encourage:** How can you encourage people in your church to do this? How might you share stories that help people to see 'I can do this'? What might you need to cancel in the church's life to release people from other activities?
- **Equip/Enable:** Remember that telling is not training. You must not just be saying from the front you need to do this without finding ways of providing training that enable people to feel confident in these basic drills. What is your training plan?
- **Example:** You have to lead by example. There are no shortcuts to this. You have to be doing what you are asking everyone else to do. This will challenge your time, priorities and focus. But it may reconnect you with why you wanted to be involved in ordained ministry. Also, don't be scared for example of saying how you messed up in talking about your faith with your neighbour. This is both liberating and encouraging for those you serve. They will see that maybe you are not the expert here, but you are having a go. The Billy Graham Centre for Evangelism discovered in their research that 'The biggest factor for change is pastors and leaders who actually engage in evangelism'.
- **Expectancy:** How can you help to develop an expectancy in your congregation that God is at work and wants to use you all in his work?



FOR REFLECTION

1. How are you going to motivate your part of the million to pray, articulate and live out their faith seven day a week?
2. Where do you need to put your focus in terms of time and priorities?
3. Would people know the churches vision in this area? Could they state it simply?
4. What's the top training need for your church? What resources might be required for this?

Dave Male is Director of Evangelism and Discipleship for the Church of England. You can read more about leading in evangelism in his book [The Word's Out](#), co written with Paul Weston, which has been recently revised and updated.

