



# WITNESS 6.7

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

Inside this  
issue:

Volume 2, Issue 2

June 2011

# How Anglicans share their faith

Following  
Jesus our  
way 2

5 Marks & 10  
Tests 3

Two into  
one—  
Canada 4

Open  
Houses 5

Cathedral  
style wor-  
ship 5

Noise 6

Generous  
Love Study  
Guide 7

Post modern  
evangelism 8

Get Involved 8

As you will see from the stories and articles, from around the Anglican Communion, that are included in this issue, the answer is that they share their faith in a variety of ways. The article **Following Jesus Our Way**—A few thoughts about 'Insider Movements' quotes from the song *I did it my way*, made famous by Frank Sinatra, but the deeper point of the article is the need to make the gospel incarnate within the culture and context of the people that you are sharing the gospel with, and how this, for another person, may look very different from our own outworking of the gospel within or own lives and worship.

The article on the **Five Marks of Mission** is a reminder that it is a holistic gospel, or integral gospel, that we share. God, through Jesus is keen to bring the whole of creation back into relationship with him and we, too, need to proclaim the gospel to the whole person and the whole creation. It is when we are true to this that we earn credibility through our concern and actions and find that people take our words, and the beliefs behind these words, seriously as well. The second part of this article, **Ten Tests** provides a helpful checklist to make sure that we are being true to gospel values in our evangelism and also strategically think through what we are doing.

The story about **Two disparate communities** reminds us of the need to be open to trust the Spirit. Despite all of our planning, it is God's mission not ours and God often takes the initiative in surprising ways. Learning the language is an important aspect of this story, as is hospitality. The article on **Open Houses** continues the theme of hospitality and speaks of the importance of sowing seeds and breaking down barriers if we are to reach people for Christ. The piece **Cathedral style worship** reminds us that worship done well, and offered at different times of the week, can be very helpful in drawing people to Christ.

The story **Noise** illustrates the importance of holistic, or integral, mission and looking for fresh approaches and also stresses the importance of being part of the local community and making your outworking of the gospel relevant to the needs of the community. The article about the **Generous Love Study Guide**, illustrated by material on *Embassy*, is a reminder about our calling to go out to others and also the importance of resourcing ourselves in sharing our faith with those of other faiths. Again holistic mission undergirds the stories.

We have kept in the article about **evangelism resources**, from the last issue, to remind you of where you can find these and that we can all be encouraged by, and learn from, material that others have found helpful; hopefully it will also remind you that we would like you to share your resources with us to encourage others in their evangelism.

Finally, the piece on **Post-modern evangelism** reminds us of what we can learn from biblical examples and stresses the importance of starting from a position of humility, aware of our own vulnerability and being open to God changing us through the encounter with the other.

So, if you are asked how Anglicans share their faith, then there is no one way and I am also sure that there aren't any methods that we use that are unique to Anglicans, but there are certain strands that we find in these examples that stress the importance of being: incarnational, community-based and using the language of the people; holistic or integral in our mission; both strategic and open to trust the Spirit and be creative in our initiatives; followers of gospel values and biblical examples; hospitable and prepared to go out to the other; those who offer worship that is done well; humble and vulnerable; open to learn from others and grow in our own faith. I am sure that the above list is not complete so do share your stories with us, so that we can all learn from your stories of how Anglicans share their faith.

The singer Frank Sinatra sang "I did it my way"; at least two autobiographies have since used that line as a title. There is nothing more frustrating than a friend who looks over our shoulder while we are trying to perform some tricky repair to the engine of our old car issuing constant instructions as to how we could do the job more effectively. We want to shout out in reply, "Just go away and let me do it my way" adding in our mind, "even if it takes longer and I cut my thumb in the process!" Somehow doing it my way seems so much more satisfying that doing it in exactly the same way as everyone else.

But I am not you. I have different abilities, I think differently, I have a different level of experience, my values are different and I might even have larger hands which won't fit where yours did. We might also have different priorities – yours may be to fix the car as quickly as possible, mine may be to do it as cheaply as possible and my neighbour might just like working on cars for fun.

Followers of Jesus also come in very different 'shapes and sizes'. It is only natural then that my discipleship, my following of Jesus, may look very different from yours and from the young woman in Chennai or the miner in Bolivia. We will all be doing the same thing, following Jesus, but our background, our culture, our value systems, even our age and temperament, will mean that we do it differently.

We accept that our children will sing different worship songs from us and that Indian Christians might sit on the floor to pray whilst we use chairs and Russians stand. These are all expressions of our culture, as is the exchange of a kiss, hug, handshake or 'Namaste' at the peace in church. Now to the hard question; what about those whose culture has, for hundreds of years, been shaped by Islam or Buddhism or the shamanistic rites of central Russia? What if my Turkish brother in Christ wants to wash his hands and feet before worship, prostrate himself in prayer and ask his wife to pray in a separate room? What if there are words from the Qur'an that he has recited from youth, words about the mercy of God that he wishes to continue to use when he rises each morning?

As the gospel of Jesus Christ continues to spread around the world, people of very different cultures respond to the love of God shown forth in Jesus Christ, so we are faced more and more with these difficult questions. Do you need to become 'Christianised', to begin to behave like other Christians from other cultures, to be a true follower of Jesus? This is not a new question; Peter had to face the question of circumcision within a few years of the resurrection. In recent years we have seen a growing number of Jesus followers who have chosen to retain most of their cultural, and religio-cultural, heritage as they give expression to their discipleship of Jesus – often even avoiding the designation 'Christian' because of its close, and sometimes unfortunate, association with the political past and present of 'Christendom'. These movements have been called 'insider movements' (because they are seen from outside as groups of Jesus followers who remain culturally within Islam or another religious or social community). Personally I find this term unhelpful as it is a designation given by 'us' to 'them'. I prefer to think of them instead as following Jesus 'in their way' just as I, a British Anglican, follow Jesus 'in my way'.

There is a lot of helpful literature on this phenomenon of church growth and many who can help us explore the appropriate processes and limits for this enculturation of the gospel, but these debates are beyond the scope of this brief article. Instead I want to look at what might be the implications for evangelism.

Evangelism is essentially an invitation – but an invitation to what? Is it an invitation to believe certain truths, to adopt a certain life-style, to embrace a set of values, to join a community, or to begin a new personal relationship? In one sense we could answer, "All of the above, and much more", but at its most basic it is an invitation into a new relationship, a restored relationship with our Creator seen and understood in Jesus Christ. (It is that relationship which then leads to the new values, life-style, beliefs, community etc.) Relationships are all different. I and my brother both love our mother but we enact that love in different ways – so with our love for God. It helps then if we think about our evangelistic invitation as being centered on relationship. We make the introductions, we share our experience of knowing God, but we then need to stand back and let that new relationship grow in its own way.

If I have the privilege of introducing to Jesus a man whose whole life has been shaped by Islam, or a woman brought up with all the richness of Iban (tribal Malaysian) culture then I must not be surprised if I find them relating to Jesus in ways that are strange to me. My British reserve may lead me to sit for some time silently before the cross, but my friend from Iran may find himself reciting over and over again some words in praise of 'God the all-merciful' he has used from childhood. Of course we can, we should, question each other, but we also need to respect the relationships, the very different relationships, we each have with Jesus. Guided by the Holy Spirit, drawing daily on the Scriptures, we will each find our own ways to walk with Jesus in this complex world.



Mark Oxbrow - Faith2Share

## Five Marks of Mission

For a long time in my role in the Diocese of Liverpool in England I have been struggling with how to engage people in parishes on their part in God's mission.

Although I have been familiar with the Anglican 5 Marks of mission for a long time it was not until I discovered it in the "5 Ts form" that I have found it so helpful in engaging with Christians in how they play their part in God's mission:

# 5

<b>Tell</b>	To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God
<b>Teach</b>	To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
<b>Tend</b>	To respond to human need by loving service
<b>Transform</b>	To seek to transform the unjust structures of society
<b>Treasure</b>	To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

The way I have found it most helpful is to:

Identify 5 people who could facilitate a group for each of the 5 Ts

Allocate 5 spaces at the venue for each group to meet in

Teach on each one.

invite people to go to the group they find matches them most closely

Encourage the group to work out at least one way in which they could engage in God's mission from their "T"

Each time I have done it there has been both relief and realisation. Relief that not everyone is called to Tell – to *proclaim* the Good News of the Kingdom and a realisation that everyone has a part to play in God's mission.

So I commend this to you as a way of encouraging the people of God to "move up and move out in God's mission.

## & Ten Tests

In the Diocese of Liverpool, probably like many others, we are assessing how we encourage growth and what is it in our structures and areas of work that help or hinder it. Our Diocesan Synod agreed to set 10 tests for any proposed area of work or initiative as follows:

# 10

So does each area of work or initiative:

1. encourage growth numerically or in spirituality?
2. support and reflect the church that we wish to become?
3. affirm mutual support and collaboration within the diocese?
4. strengthen relationships between parishes?
5. Recognise the ethos and the characteristics of the diocese particularly highlighting issues peculiar to the diocese.
6. take appropriate account of the sustainability and viability issues of church buildings and congregations ?
7. provide for accountability throughout every step of the initiative within the diocese and beyond?
8. present an appropriate stewardship challenge?
9. provide appropriate support for local decision-making?
10. Is the proposed system or process transparent and easily understood?

We are now in the process of applying these 10 tests to any initiative that we are thinking about. Hopefully by doing this it will encourage us to think collaboratively, look wider, and apply the concept of subsidiarity to enable us to be good stewards of God's giftings for the building up of his kingdom.

*Linda Jones, Liverpool Diocese England*

# ***Acts of Trust Allow Two Disparate Cultures to Grow Into One Nurturing Congregation in Small-town Canada***

***Kimberley Reid***

Sometimes we as congregations seek opportunities for ministry. Other times they catch us by surprise or show up, literally, on our doorstep. How do we respond when a new ministry appears out of the blue if we are completely unprepared, and think we are utterly devoid of the skills and talents necessary to meet the needs we see before us? Well the inter-cultural, bilingual congregation that has grown in a most unlikely small-town parish in Canada is evidence that with enough trust, trust in each other and trust in the Spirit, the seemingly impossible can become a joyful reality.

The town of Beaverton lies just over an hour north of Toronto. It is home to around 5000 mostly homogeneous English-speaking people. The only traffic light is out on the highway and most things are within walking distance. I knew quite a few people here were not "culturally adventurous" when I began cooking dinners for the church and was asked questions like, "What is a panini, anyway?" or "Well I won't order the risotto because I've never heard of that before." In the summer of 2009, Beaverton celebrated it's 125th anniversary, and to participate in the festivities and do a little fundraising, I organized a bistro restaurant for the day in the church hall. Our Incumbent, the Rev. Ted McCollum, who is also my husband, was the greeter. Just as we were about to close for the evening, three men who spoke no English walked through the door. As he tried to show them to a table, they somehow managed, through a bit of charades, to convey to him that they were not there to eat; they had seen the doors open and wanted to go into the church and pray.

Over the next month we learned a lot. A former sod farm just outside town had been bought and converted to grow bok choy, and the farm owner had hired Seasonal Agricultural Workers from Mexico. Though we knew nothing about it before, the SAW program has been in place since 1974 and matches workers from Mexico and the Caribbean to solve labour shortages on Canadian farms and employment shortages in those countries. Workers leave their families to come in the thousands each year for up to eight months at a time, often to work long hours in any weather condition a physically demanding and repetitious labour. Usually they are not only isolated physically from the opportunity to be part of a broader community, by being housed on farmland with minimal transportation available, but also by a complete language barrier, as Canadian farm country is not known for being cosmopolitan or multi-lingual.

In spite of that barrier, over the past year and a half, an amazing community has grown here. Together Canadians and Mexicans have been enjoying weekly Eucharist services in Spanish, we have cheered on the Mexican soccer team in the World Cup, celebrated Mexico's 200th anniversary of Independence and Canadian Thanksgiving, ventured on numerous linguistically-awkward but funny shopping outings in nearby cities, laughed, planned birthday surprises for one another, shared meals, traditions, and pictures and stories of each other's families. At first a supportive Ecuadorian priest from Toronto, Fr. Hernan Astudillo, came and celebrated at our services, but soon, with the help of his Mexican parishioners, Ted learned to read the liturgy himself. Meanwhile, I and other Canadians did our best to learn some Spanish.

At so many stages along the way, modern technology proved to be the perfect tool to fill the gaps where our abilities were lacking. Some of the guys began to come to our home to skype with their families and ease the emotional strain of separation. Online translators filled in missing words in conversations where charades failed us. We were able to upload music onto their phones or mp3 players to lessen the boredom of long days in the field, and Ted and I began taking intensive Spanish lessons via skype from a relative of one the new parishioners who is a language teacher in Mexico City.

With spring upon us and the fields again ready for planting, we are now looking forward to the return of two types of snowbirds to our parish: the retired Canadians who winter in Florida and the young and middle-aged Mexican family men who venture far from home to find employment. We aim to begin our third season as an increasingly bilingual and multi-cultural parish, and have acquired grant funding to hire a bilingual ministry assistant to be the bridge we need to really overcome the barriers that hold us back from full integration. We intend to establish both English and Spanish lessons at the church free to anyone who wants them, and to provide open drop-in hours for people to use computers to skype home, to practice each other's language, or just to hang out and get to know each other better.

Had we not initially trusted each other, and been willing to take a chance on each other, our joyful, nurturing, mutually enriching congregation could never have come into existence. Though they felt like the obvious choices at the time, taking rides in strangers' cars, answering knocks at the door and inviting the unknown visitor in, accepting and extending offers of friendship with strangers to whom one could not speak might, in hindsight, seem like surprising choices to have made. But trust and openness allowed a wonderful community to grow. Our experience is proof that any congregation, no matter how small, can welcome and enfold newcomers from far away. It works because spiritual and emotional connections transcend linguistic or cultural differences. True friendship is a pure gift of the Spirit, pure and untouched by the fall of language into the babble of many tongues. These connections, we have found, are universal.

## OPEN HOUSES

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual nation. Each year the different ethnic or religious group will celebrate its New Year or Religious Festivals or Cultural Nights. The Muslims will celebrate the Aidr Fitri Day (Festival of the completion of Ramadan or the festival of Lights), the Buddhists will celebrate the Wesak Day (Birthday of Buddha), the Hindus will celebrate the Deepavali Day (The Festival of Lights), the Chinese community will celebrate Chinese New Year, the Ibans and Kadazans will celebrate the Gawai Day (Harvest Thanksgiving), and the Christians will celebrate Christmas. These are normally celebrated in a large scale called the OPEN HOUSE by the government as well as the public or the communities themselves.

The Christians will usually take advantage of the Christmas Festive season to have large scale Combined Churches Open Houses or medium scale Local Church Open House or small scale Home Open Houses by individual Christians. Friends of all walks of life and faiths as well as community from the vicinity are invited to attend the Open House where there are carol singings, dramas, Bible passages on Christmas account read, some sharing of the Word of God, some ice-breaker games, children or youth or adult song presentation and prayers. Of course, food is usually the main drawing factor. It is a joy filled occasion and many friends are made or friendship renewed.

This is an indirect evangelism approach where the sowing of seeds can be done effectively. There is certainly no compulsion or coercing. It can also be known as Friendship Evangelism. This is when many misunderstandings and man-made barriers can be broken. The wonderful thing is that such Open Houses are carried out by hundreds of churches and thousands of church groups or cell groups throughout the land. The public is looking forward to it annually. It is non-threatening instead it is more like a small scale carnival. Our churches often have such Open Houses in a large scale (invitation to a few hundred people) once in 3 or 5 years while the other years having a small scale Open Houses (invitation to 20 – 100 people).



*Bishop Moon Hing Diocese of West Malaysia*

*Food for sale at a night market in Kuala Lumpur*

## Cathedral style worship

At the end of April millions of people around the world watched the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton that took place in Westminster Abbey, on television and were able to witness Anglican wedding liturgy and Anglican teaching on marriage. We don't know what impact this might have on their own spiritual search, but we do know that cathedral worship is making an impact upon people in Britain.



Many new people are being attracted to worship at English cathedrals. The latest statistics from the Archbishops' Council's Research and Statistics Unit indicate that attendance levels at regular weekly services in Church of England cathedrals have increased significantly again this year, by 7%. This means that since the turn of the millennium, they have steadily grown by a total of 37%; on average about 4% each year.,

15,800 adults and 3,100 children and young people are usually present at Sunday services alone. Over the whole week the figures rise (by 73%) to 27,400 and 7,600 respectively. These figures don't include Westminster Abbey which adds, on average, 1,800 people each week to these numbers.

Cathedrals also offer well attended midweek services; they are key places of daily Christian worship outside Sundays. The statistics show that midweek attendance has more than doubled since the turn of the millennium and is now approaching the same level as Sunday attendance.

# NOISE

## A new concept in integral evangelism

Very few of us like a lot of noise in our neighbourhood but we certainly notice it when it happens whether it is a Temple celebration or teenagers racing cars. But noise can also be 'good news' – the music that announces the arrival of the ice cream van, or the excitement of relatives arriving for a wedding. Evangelism is about 'evangelium', 'good news' and the concept we describe here is designed to get the church noticed in the neighbourhood in a good way.

St. Paul's is a small church which has had a quiet ministry in a rundown part of the city for many years. In the graveyard drug addicts deposit their needles and foil. Down the road the fences are broken and covered by graffiti whilst weeds grow around the bent lamp posts and fast food packaging blows in the wind. Early one Saturday morning the church community began to arrive at St. Paul's dressed not in their Sunday best but in work clothes and carrying brushes, rubbish bags, buckets and water hoses. By mid-morning they were all hard at work. Weeds disappeared, broken needles were carefully placed in disposal boxes, graffiti was painted over, and by the row of shops where pensioners sometimes sat in the sun, seats were repaired and new flowers planted. Local people could not believe what they were seeing. Some brought out a cup of tea or a glass of juice for the 'workers' and one couple asked whether they might be allowed to join in the activities. Conversations began and the inevitable questions were asked – "Why are you doing this?", "Is the city Council paying you?", "Is this some sort of protest?".

Some sixteen months previously these same church members had spent a miserable evening knocking on doors inviting people to come to their church. Many doors were not answered, at others apathy was more evident than interest, and at some homes the visitors suffered verbal abuse. Now, on a warm Saturday afternoon it was the residents who were initiating conversations, conversations that centered on motivations and led to explanations about Christian service and discipleship. At long last the church was seen to have a place in the community and faith was on the agenda.

Elsewhere in the UK, a local park has a much stronger draw on local residents than the nearby church which proclaims on its notice board outside "Our services are free, but they may cost you your life". Sunday morning football matches bring in hundreds of children and their parents and others come into the park to play tennis or just to sit on the fresh grass and chat. The arrival one Sunday lunch-time of thirty people from the church, complete with gas grills, beef burgers, and sausages, was not, at first welcomed. The smell of cooking wafted across the grass and made hungry 8-year old footballers grumpy. But then the mood changed. Instead of enjoying the food themselves the church members started offering it to children and their parents – free! "What's the catch?" they we asked. "Is this some sort of promotion?" "No", replied the church members, "we just thought you might enjoy a beef burger after a game of football." The 'park cooks' have become a regular Sunday appearance once a month, and now some of the parents, whose children so enjoy the food, bring contributions of sausages and ketchup themselves. A new relationship has been established and the church has begun to offer coaching sessions on Tuesday evenings – coaching for parents and children in 'faith and football'. The numbers attending are not large but a new start has been made as the church has discovered a new relevance within its local community.

'Noise' can take many forms. It is normally fun. It breaks down stereotypes. It involves taking risks. In essence it is about the church making a splash in the local community, getting noticed, serving others and being a clear witness for Christ. The key is to do something surprising (and of course to get permission from any relevant local authorities first!). How about serving hot fresh coffee at your local bus stop on cold winter mornings?

**Mark Oxbrow—Faith2Share**



## Six editions per year

As from this issue, **WITNESS6.7** will appear every two months. The June and December issues each year will be 8-side issues and thematic whilst the February, April, August, and October issues will continue to be general and have just four sides but hopefully with some stories linking to longer articles on the ECGI website.

The theme for December 2011 will be on '**Discipleship**'. The themes for 2012 will be '**Hospitality and evangelism**' and '**Children and young people**'.

**Do remember these themes when you send in material for the thematic issues in June and December to [stuart.buchanan@anglicancommunion.org](mailto:stuart.buchanan@anglicancommunion.org)**

## Generous Love - Study Guide

An excellent resource for those who are involved with other faith communities is the Generous Love study Guide which can be found at [http://www.aco.org/\\_books/](http://www.aco.org/_books/) do cut and paste this URL into your browser to explore this study guide.

By clicking on hyperlinks within the text the reader is introduced to a whole series of articles, bible studies, prayers, questions, web-links and video clips. The article on Embassy is reproduced here as an example.

*The report 'Holistic Mission', produced by the Mission and Evangelism Advisory Team of the Anglican Communion as a resource for the Lambeth 2008 Conference, includes the following examples of embassy within the section on 'Mission and Other Faiths'.*

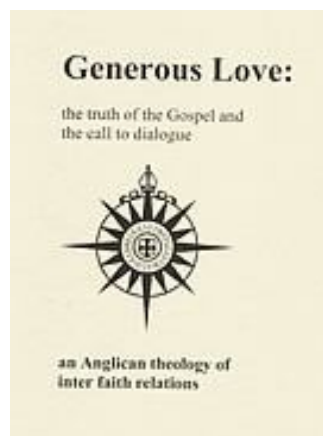
*"Many provinces speak of their mission and evangelism within an 'Other Faith', or 'interfaith', context (Australia, Melanesia, Philippines, Southern Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Tanzania) or, more specifically within the context of 'Muslims' (Egypt and Uganda) or 'Islamisation' (Pakistan) or 'fundamentalism' (Bangladesh and CNI). Among Muslims, "Christianity is perceived as a Western religion creating negative feelings among those who do not like the intrusion of Western values" (Egypt and Pakistan). "Evangelism in this part of the world (Pakistan) is becoming not just difficult but fatal."*

*In these situations the importance of holistic mission is stressed as being vital. In Nigeria "people are taking the gospel and Church seriously when the church is interested in their holistic wellbeing – spiritually, socially and physically." People need not to just hear words, but see Jesus "going around doing good" (Egypt). "Muslims give respect to the church and church leaders when, and if, they are serious with their faith" (Nuba Mtns, Sudan). The Christian community's response to an earthquake (Diocese of Peshawar, Pakistan), despite ever growing hostilities and hatred towards the Christian community, was the time when "the church decided to come out of its cocoon". In showing "it is possible to cross dividing barriers when the church reaches out with love to service the afflicted/suffering" it has broken down barriers, responded to need and is growing.*

*After the baptism of 50 Muslims (Tanzania) the bishop was congratulated by a Sheikh and told that "you deserve that because you show love to everyone without showing discrimination that is why Muslims come to join you." Over 250 people have been trained in Muslim evangelism in Kampala, Kasese, Fort Portal, Mbale and Arua (Uganda) and over 4,000 Muslims have converted to Christianity. Other denominations in Uganda as well as Anglican provinces in the Great Lakes region have sought this training in Uganda.*

*Addressing the needs of Muslim converts and seekers is an issue (Pakistan and Uganda); rehabilitation centres have been opened to help provide vocational skills for those disowned by their families (Nigeria)."*

The Booklet Generous Love can be downloaded at [http://nifcon.anglicancommunion.org/resources/generous\\_love/index.cfm](http://nifcon.anglicancommunion.org/resources/generous_love/index.cfm)



# Resources for Evangelism

Last February, the core group reflected on the words of the Great Commission, the growth of the church in the Acts of the Apostles and their own mission contexts seeing parallels between: Jerusalem and the **early modernity** context. Judea and Samaria and the **late modernity** context and the ends of the earth and the **post-modern** context. On this basis a wide range of resources were collated and are now available on the ECGI web pages <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/ecgi/resources/index.cfm> They appear under four different headings: **Please send your resources, so we can regularly update and expand these.**

Early Modernity	Late Modernity	Post-modern	General
<p>People who share with you a similar cultural, historical, religious background, people who are familiar with the Christian faith but have not embraced Christ (44 resources available)</p>	<p>People with a church background but moved away from church, people without a church background, people with a spirituality that is not Christ-centered (33 resources available)</p>	<p>People whose culture, religious, and historical background is completely different from yours who have no past or present connection to Christ (34 resources available)</p>	<p>Foundational documents on evangelism and resources that apply to all contexts (37 resources available)</p>

## Post-modern Evangelism

The first witness to the Roman world, by Peter to Cornelius and his household, told in Acts 10; is retold by Luke in Acts 11; broadening the context to include the impact upon the church. His writing style suggests that Luke is an advocate of post-modernity; using narrative rather than expounding doctrine. Acts 11 is the narrative about the narratives! Post-modernity is about telling my story, and what it means for me. You may disagree with my conclusions, but you need to take seriously my understanding of my story.

Acts 11 begins with the clash between modernity and post-modernity; between doctrine and narrative. Peter is told that he got the doctrine wrong, so replies not with his doctrinal understanding 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality', but with his narrative. It is also a narrative of God's Holy Spirit taking the initiative.

This is a story of evangelism from one culture to another, from the majority host Hebrew culture to a group of migrants from a minority culture; but with an interesting twist within the narrative. We usually associate majority and host with power and minority and migrant with powerless. But this is the story of the politically powerless sharing faith with a high ranking officer of the occupying army. So the biblical model of mission to the world is from a position of being aware of our vulnerability.

This sense of vulnerability is something that Christians in the West had lost and are just beginning to rediscover. God initiates the mission and Cornelius initiates the approach to Peter. Often, as in this story, conversion is a response to prayer and, as it involves a change of worldview, conversion occurs because people are challenged by how a different faith is lived out and want to know more; challenged by the lifestyle, actions and values of others. So, although we may focus on evangelism we must never lose sight of holistic mission.

Cornelius shared his narrative and Peter responded not with a well prepared story, but adjusting his words to Cornelius's story. The Holy Spirit needed to work on both of them. Cornelius, making sense of Peter's story, appears to have the easier conversion experience; in contrast Peter needed to realise that God and his purposes were bigger than he had previously assumed.

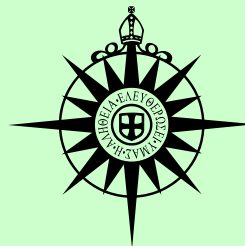
This is what happens when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable and, trusting in God, taking the other person's story seriously allows the Holy Spirit to interpret what it means for us. Post-modern evangelism isn't a matter of the new Christian taking on the faith of the one who witnesses; both are changed by the encounter.

In Acts 11, Peter is told he has been converting the wrong sort of people, or at least should have insisted that they conform to certain cultural norms before they are converted. Again he responds with his story and his accusers need to make sense of this narrative. Not only did Peter need to change in response to this evangelism, but the church needed to change and we know that it wasn't as straightforward as its sounds here; the debate rumbling on for a long time with even Peter backtracking at one point.

In his book *Transforming Mission* (Orbis 1991) David Bosch quotes Paul Knitter 'The early Christians did not simply express in Greek what they already knew; rather, they discovered, through Greek religious and philosophical insights, what had been revealed to them. The doctrines of the Trinity and of the divinity of Christ ... for example, would not be what they are today if the church had not reassessed itself and its doctrines in the light of the new historical, cultural situations during the third through the sixth centuries'.

## 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 1 July for the August 2011 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;



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*(continued from previous column)*

Over those early centuries there was increasing divergence between Christian and Jewish world-views. In a similar way to the engagement with Greek culture, theologians influenced by post-modernity would probably argue that post-modern philosophy has helped them not only to express to a post-modern world what they already know, but also what has been revealed to them about Christ through a post-modern worldview. Post modern evangelism, if true to the early church's experiences of reaching *the ends of the earth*, certainly involves the evangelist in being open to understanding the good news in new ways.

The full article, that this is adapted from, can be found at [http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/ecgi/resources/post\\_modern\\_evangelism\\_reflection.pdf](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/ecgi/resources/post_modern_evangelism_reflection.pdf)