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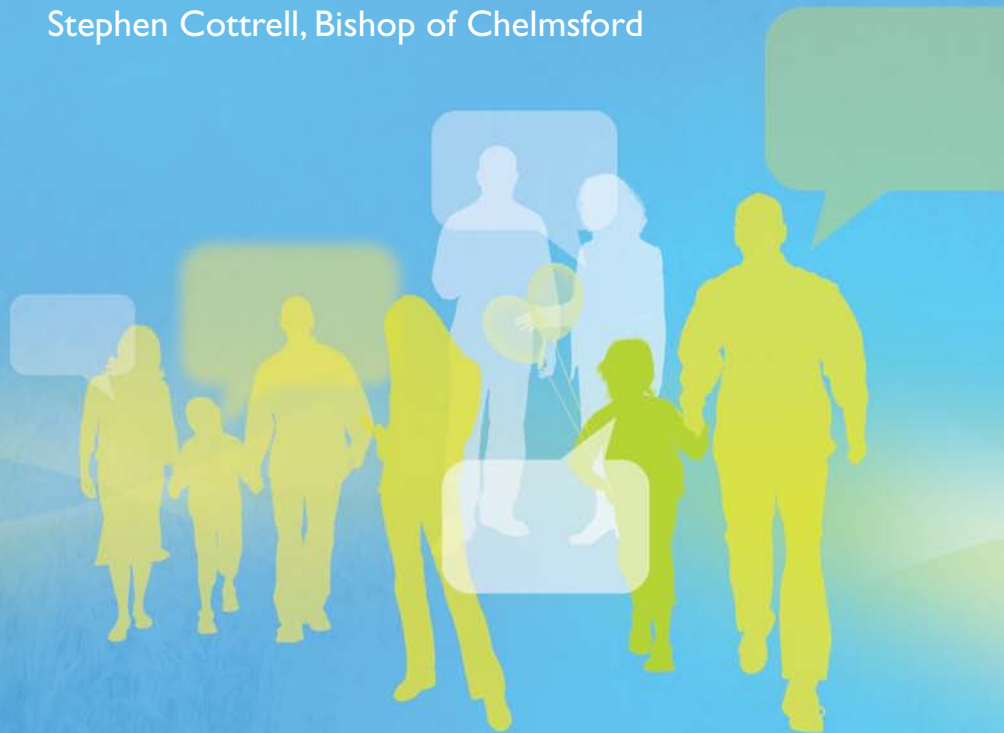


**CENTENARY**  
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# Transforming Presence: Evangelising Effectively

## Preparing for Mission Weekends

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[www.chelmsfordcentenary.org](http://www.chelmsfordcentenary.org)

Evangelising Effectively is one of the four strategic priorities for the Diocese of Chelmsford set out in *Transforming Presence*. This booklet provides information about how to put on a Mission Weekend in your church.

**For details of *Transforming Presence* see [www.transformingpresence.org.uk](http://www.transformingpresence.org.uk).**

*A Mission Weekend is a time set aside for specific events that share the gospel with people on the fringe or outside the church. It is set in the context of understanding how people grow and develop in faith, and of how we become a missionary church, renewing our faith as we share it with others*

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# How do people become Christians?

***There are many different ways. No two people have the same story. Many people are brought up in the church. They are evangelised and nurtured through their family and through all the contacts within the church that they have as they grow up.***

Some lapse away from church and then come back to a living faith later in life. Others stay as part of the church but are still not really sure what they believe.

Others come into contact with the God and the claims of the gospel through all sorts of circumstances, things as varied as moving house, losing a loved one, reading a book, the birth of a child, chatting to a friend, or looking into a star filled sky. Something happens to open people up to the possibility of God, and so begins the journey of discovery that we call coming to faith in Jesus Christ. But one thing is common to every story, and that is the presence and the loving purposes of God.

God is the evangelist. God is the one who calls people. God is the one who is known to people through Jesus Christ. Our job as the church isn't to convert people – only God can do that – but to allow God to use us in his constant desire to make Christ known to everyone.

We do this by trying to live Christ-like lives, by serving our local communities, by providing opportunities for people to find out about the Christian faith, and by sharing the story of our own faith and the story of Jesus.

This intentional ministry of witnessing to Christ and helping people make the journey of faith is what the church calls evangelism.

In the diocese of Chelmsford we have made it one of our priorities to learn how to do this ministry more effectively. Without it the witness

and impact of the church in the world – all the other things that God longs to do through us – will be hugely weakened.

## What is evangelism?

***We used to think evangelism looked like this:***

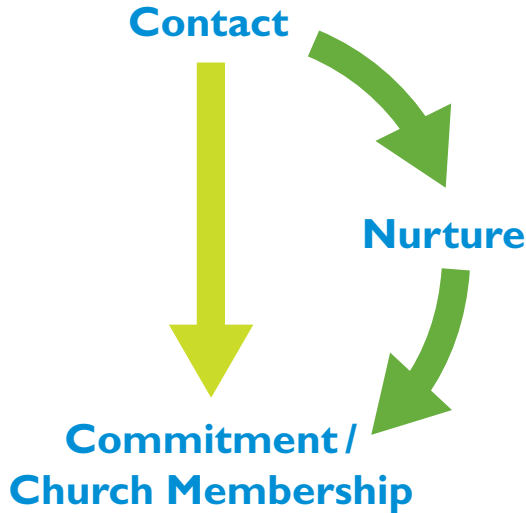


It was a fairly straight line sort of process. People came into contact with the Christian faith, they responded to the preaching of the gospel, they joined the church.

Research has shown us that although about a quarter of new adult Christians come to faith in some sort of sudden or dramatic way, three quarters don't. For most people becoming a Christian is like a journey. But even if people do come to faith suddenly or dramatically they still need to be nurtured into the life of the local Christian community and helped to grow in faith. Research has also clearly shown that many people need to belong before they believe, as they encounter Christ through his church and are gently challenged through the witness of others.

Therefore one of the best ways of understanding evangelism is this – helping people make the journey.

***A better illustration of the process would be this:***



***Between contact and commitment a journey takes place***

The word nurture describes the different ministries that are needed and the different stages people go through on this journey. People respond to the call of Christ in different ways and at different speeds. But it is nearly always an accompanied journey. Just as Jesus accompanied Cleopas and his companion on the Emmaus Road, so Christian people today accompany others on their way to faith (Luke 24.13 -18). In many cases this will include an opportunity to find out about the Christian faith through some sort of nurture course, such as Alpha, Pilgrim, Emmaus, Start or Christianity Explored (see ‘Two main ways forward’ on page 7). But even before this, the journey has to begin somewhere. This is where a Mission Weekend can really help.

The aim of a Mission Weekend is to gather together some of the people we already have contact with and put on at least one event – let us call this an evangelistic event – that will begin to present them with the joys and challenges of the Christian faith.

# How do you put on an evangelistic event?

## ***You need to start by asking the right questions***

Too often we ask how we can get more people to come to church. Or how can we get more people to come on our Alpha course. This is all understandable. But it is the wrong way round. We mustn't start with church and then wonder how to squeeze people in. We must start with people, with their questions and needs, and think how we can best serve and accompany them.

### ***This is the right question:***

***How can we serve the people with whom we already have contact in such a way as to make the gospel intriguing, challenging and appealing?***

Most of the planning for Mission Weekends revolves around trying to find the right answer for this question in the particular context of the community you are serving. In each parish the answer will be slightly different.

### ***Here are the five stages you need to go through***

- 1. Who are the people your church has contact with?*** Make a list of the people groups that you know. These could be anything from bell ringers, to parents at the church school gate, to the Yoga group who meet in the hall, to non-church going husbands of women in the congregation. Or it could be the art class or reading group that just one member of your congregation belongs to. But think of groups of people that you know and are part of. The only rule is that there has to be some sort of real and existing contact, i.e. at least one member of the church actually knows or is part of the group you are listing.

- 2. *What are these people's interests or issues?*** This is what you might call the Emmaus Road question. When Jesus comes alongside Cleopas and his companion the first thing he says to them is this: "What are you discussing as you walk along?" (Luke 24. 17). In our imagination this is what we ask of the 'people group' we are thinking about. Start with one of the groups you've identified. List the questions or issues they might be facing in life. This isn't as difficult as it may sound. We are part of these groups, facing similar issues ourselves.
- 3. *What is the gospel for these people?*** In other words, if you had an opportunity to share the Christian faith with them, what aspect of the gospel do you think would be good news for their life taken that they are facing the issues and questions you have already identified? Of course the big story of the gospel is the same for everybody. But what particular story from the Bible or aspect of Christian belief might speak directly to this group of people or this particular person from this group that you know? Don't worry for the moment how you will share it. Just think what it is.
- 4. *What sort of event might they come to?*** Think of an event that would naturally draw this group of people together and provide an opportunity for their issues and interests to be explored? In this way the event serves them. It is meeting a real need or desire. But before deciding to actually go ahead can you also think of a natural way in which the gospel can be shared and communicated through this event?

Now you have the beginnings of what will become an evangelistic event. Repeat the process with several people groups and you will have a few events that can become your Mission Weekend. This can of course be combined with other celebration events for the community and congregations, but at the heart there will be a few more focused events reaching out to particular groups of people.
- 5. *Is there a next step in place?*** Because becoming a Christian is like a journey, most people attending an evangelistic event as part of a Mission Weekend will not necessarily be in church the following Sunday. That

*A few ideas – not to copy, but to give you an idea of what others parishes have done*

- ***Four churches in Redbridge came together to design an art installation on the theme of peace. It was painted onto mirrored perspex panels to create a reflective space and was shown at each church. The installation was viewed by congregations, school groups and uniformed groups, among others, and created an opportunity for faith to be shared and explored.***
- ***In Radwinter they put on an event in their school called Questions Children Ask. There was food and drink, and parents were invited to come and share their concerns about tackling difficult subjects with their children. Because some of the questions were about spiritual things, the gospel was shared; and, anyway, the Christian faith is relevant to all life's questions.***
- ***In Boreham they had a similar event, only this time it was grill the bishop in the pub next to the church. It was part of 2011's Beer and the Bible initiative.***
- ***In Cranham Park they had a free BBQ for the community on a local housing estate where members of the congregation lived.***
- ***In East Springfield in Chelmsford they had a breakfast event where men who don't go to church (but knew some who did) came and heard a talk about the Christian faith and asked questions afterwards.***
- ***In Harlow they had an exhibition of paintings by Christian artists, part of the commission4mission initiative, in an otherwise boarded up shop in the town shopping centre.***



would be an unrealistic expectation. And, anyway, it is probably not the most appropriate next step. But there does need to be something. People who are beginning on the way of Christ need to find out more about the Christian faith. So some sort of nurture course or enquirer's course might be the best thing. Or a visit from someone from the church. Or similar events that can help nurture the contact.

### ***Two main ways forward***

- Stepping stones of similar events or a nurture course - like Alpha, Emmaus, Pilgrim, Start or Christianity Explored - that will, in God's good time, lead people into the worshipping life of the church. Or...
- The events themselves become fresh expressions of church, that is a new worshipping community, providing a place where people can not only learn about the Christian faith but begin to express the marks of Christian community through worship, witness and fellowship.

Don't worry too much about these different routes at the moment. It will be different from person to person and group to group. The important thing when planning your event is to make sure that some sort of next step is in place.

The hardest bit of all is finding an appropriate way to invite people to respond and make that step. Therefore at the event itself make sure you have some information available, not just about worship times at the church, but also other opportunities for people to find out more. So if you are planning to run a nurture course after the Mission Weekend, make sure some publicity is available.

One of the best ways of garnering these responses is to give everyone a feedback/response sheet. There only needs to be a few questions for everyone to fill in. This can provide useful information about how the event has been received. But also gives an opportunity to gently invite people to say whether they would like to find out more about the Christian faith. This needs careful wording; and those who want to find out more need to be followed up personally.

Further information and examples of response cards used by other churches are available on the website at [www.chelmsfordcentenary.org](http://www.chelmsfordcentenary.org)

### *What is an evangelistic event?*

- ***A way of expressing the good news of Jesus Christ***
- ***A place to experience Christian community***
- ***An opportunity for people to take the next step on their journey of faith***

## The morning after

A Mission Weekend is made up of a number of evangelistic events reaching out to different people groups in the parish. How many is up to you.

Because it is a time of celebration, it is also good to include in the weekend some sort of celebration service in church and possibly a social event, which itself can be an opportunity to invite people who are not yet Christians.

### ***But beware of two common pitfalls***

- You end up organising a whole weekend of social events and there is little or no opportunity to share the gospel.
- You end up with services in church and rather hope that someone will invite their friends along.

*Remember these three golden rules and you won't go far wrong*

- **Let the event fit the people (not the people the event!)**
- **Is there a next step in place**
- **Small is beautiful (three or four small events with non-church people in attendance, are much better than one big event just for ourselves)**

Our hope in the Chelmsford diocese is that putting on a Mission Weekend each year will become as normal and natural as other events in the parish calendar such as a Harvest Festival or a Christmas Fair.

## A few other issues

### **Prayer**

It is never too early to start praying for your Mission Weekend, and for those who will be invited. Pray regularly for the people you have identified and for those heading up the Mission. Produce a prayer card for the Mission Weekend and give a copy to everyone in the congregation.

### **Money**

Putting on a Mission Weekend costs. But you are in control of the budget. You know what you can afford. But, if you can, set aside some money each year for mission work in the parish.

### **Nurture courses**

This is one of the proven best next steps. If you don't yet run one in your parish, think about it.

# Growing in Faith



The journey doesn't end when you become a Christian and join a worshipping community. We all need to grow in our faith and discover our part in God's ministry and mission. This is sometimes called discipleship. But in this diagram we call it growth. It encompasses all the ways we carry on learning about our faith and putting it into practice in our lives. Therefore a growing, evangelising church will not only have a place of nurture for those who want to find out about the Christian faith, but also other opportunities for new Christians and existing church members to grow in their faith.

And of course the best evangelism of all is the Christ-like witness of ordinary Christian people in their ordinary daily lives. Through our living out of the Christian faith each day our lives will have an impact on others and on the world around us. This is one of the ways we carry on making contact with people. Therefore this diagram is not a circle going round and round, but demonstrates how the church grows upwards to God, growing in numbers, impact and faithfulness.

## **Name**

Don't call it a Mission Weekend! This is our shorthand. Give your Weekend a name. Other churches have called their weekend things like 'Come and See' or 'Celebrate'.

## **Team**

If you are to be successful in putting on a Mission Weekend you will need a small co-ordinating team, to be empowered by and accountable to the PCC. This team will be responsible for making sure the events happen and getting as many people in the parish as possible motivated and involved. The sooner you set up this team the better.

## Finally a word about motivation...

### ***Or put it another way, why are we doing this at all?***

Well, it is not to build the earthly empire of the church. It is not to drag the world kicking and screaming into the church. It is to see people as God sees them, and for them to know Christ.

God has a desire, a purpose and a love for every person and for the whole of creation. Jesus didn't just live and die for some people, but for everyone. The good news of the Christian faith is good news for all the world. Our job, as the people of God in this place, is to faithfully share and joyfully live the new life and the new hope we have in Christ. We long for every person to receive this life and obtain this hope. We believe it will make a difference to their lives. We also believe it will make a difference to the world, making it a more just and peaceful place. So there is no conflict between the desire to share the gospel and the demands of the gospel to build a world of justice and peace. It is all God's work of mission. By helping people become disciples of Jesus Christ, we don't only renew and fulfil their lives; we advance the mission of God.

A Mission Weekend is only a small part of this. But for many people it can be the start of a journey of transformation as they come to know Christ and live as citizens of his kingdom.

And there is one cast iron guarantee: the first fruits of any missionary endeavour is the renewal of those taking part. It is in giving that we receive.

# Help and training is available

Contact Charlie Kosla, the Diocesan Mission and Evangelism Adviser, or your Area Mission and Ministry Adviser or your Area Evangelism adviser. Contact details below. These people are ready to offer practical and consultative help with all aspects of this process.

## ***Diocesan Mission and Evangelism Adviser***

Revd Charlie Kosla.

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