

Saturday 1 March 2025

Dear brothers and sisters,

I begin with an apology. After the lunchtime meeting on 23 January about the Evangelism & Discipleship role I understand some of you feel left out of the decision-making process and hurt. I now realise some of the congregational meetings you've held before have been a key part of some decisions (for example, around the church building), rather than operating like an APCM (reports plus Q&A). I apologise for any things I've done that have led to that, and will be reviewing the process with the wardens and PCC.

After the meeting on 23 January I paused the recruitment process to give space for prayer, reflection and wider consultation (e.g. with Archdeacon Jenny). As a result of all those conversations, concerns and suggestions, I have updated the job description (see Appendices A and B), which has been agreed by the PCC via email vote (9 for, 4 against, 1 abstention), so the recruitment process will now restart. At the next meeting of the PCC (18 March) we will discuss and vote on appointing a panel with the authority to appoint a candidate – I hope that panel will include one external person, most likely from the diocese.

As far as I can tell, the main suggestion / critique concerning the role itself is that:

- a) it should be a part-time one simply covering youth and young adults;
- b) Evangelism & Discipleship is something I should do as vicar, not hand it on to someone else.

Our youth and young adults work is intentionally focused around Evangelism & Discipleship, so the right person to lead those groups in that way would be able to help other groups similarly – so in response to point (a) above, I see the two parts of this full-time role fitting together well.

I agree wholeheartedly with (b): leading in Evangelism & Discipleship is a key part of my role as vicar – one of the parts I enjoy most in fact – but please note the word *part*. My responsibility – shared with the PCC – is to ensure that *all* aspects of ministry are covered in the church. Some of that is done by me myself, some by paid members of staff – but most of it is you giving generously of your time, talents and treasure, to serve God in this place. I am hugely grateful to all that you give of yourselves. I am pleased to be part of such a generous church, in so many different ways; we could not sustain all that we do if I had to lead or even be at everything.

Therefore the aim for this role is to help us *all* as we serve God together – not as an 'expert' to 'outsource' Evangelism & Discipleship, but someone to work alongside and support us *all*. I have updated the job description to make it more clear that this person will work *with* me (not instead of me), adding extra capacity – not least in supporting groups that meet on my day off (Coffee Mates, Warm Welcome Friday).

I have also been excited and encouraged to learn at Deanery Synod today that it's not only we who have identified evangelism and discipleship as a priority for investment. The Church of England Birmingham has nine core principles;<sup>1</sup> Bishop Michael is asking us all to focus on 'grow in the number of disciples', particularly among younger generations who are under-represented in our churches. The National Church of England is also encouraging roles and initiatives that prioritise evangelism and discipleship, and grow young leaders. I think it is helpful to see ourselves and this role in that bigger picture.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.cofebirmingham.com/about-us/what-we-do/transforming-church/>.

Some specific challenges to me have been raised that it may be helpful for me to address.

This role is open to *anyone* to apply. The plan has always been to advertise locally, regionally (via the Church of England Birmingham) and nationally (e.g. via the New Wine network). And, if you know someone you think might be just right, please encourage them to apply! Details will be available on our website very soon.

As a PCC we have had many discussions about how best to use our legacy gifts, trying to get a good balance between investing in our building (for example, the recent significant kitchen upgrades) and in our future as a growing church – growing in depth and in number.

For various reasons I have not been attending our various groups and ministries as much as I would like, nor as much as some of you might expect. Having discussed this with the wardens, I am working on how I can increase the frequency with which I can visit each team and ministry – hopefully as often as once every half term. I hope to share more with you about what this might look like soon.

Finally, I have become aware that some of you feel hurt, ignored, or overlooked by me. That deeply saddens me because it is not in any way my intention, and I am so sorry for any action or inaction on my part that has led to that. Increasing my visibility at our various groups will I hope help. I also protect space in my diary almost every week to meet up with people. I love to get to know and pray with you! I am also going to make a renewed effort to stand by the door after services (when I'm not on the prayer ministry team) so hopefully I will catch some of you then.

I believe the mission statement we have – making, growing, sending disciples of Jesus – is good, of God, and I pray every day that he will help us do exactly that, in his service and for his glory.

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. 1 Peter 1.3-4*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ben'.

## Appendix A – Changes to Job Description

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I have rephrased certain parts of the job description to reflect the conversations I've been having, with many people inside Christ Church, and some from the Church of England Birmingham – including Archdeacon Jenny, Andy Winmill (Director of Mission Support) and Guy Donegan-Cross (whose role is to help churches grow in discipleship and mission).

The key changes are:

- a) I have removed 'change the culture' from the opening sentence ('Therefore we are recruiting...'). My intention was to reflect both the results of the ministry review questionnaire and the parish profile written during the vacancy ('We are not so great at building on the many connections that we have and sharing the good news of Jesus in a way that will bear fruit'). However to some the use of the word 'culture' implied I think we don't care about Evangelism & Discipleship at all – which has hurt them, for which I am deeply sorry – whereas I know we do care. For many of us it's not a question of desire but of confidence and opportunity.
- b) Before the list of roles and responsibilities I have added 'working alongside the vicar' to emphasise this isn't about delegation but collaboration.
- c) I have been more explicit that the groups the role will focus on being Renew & Young Adults, and the Friday ministries (Coffee Mates & WW Friday) plus Summer Drop-Ins etc.
- d) I have removed some of the deliberately vague language from the matrix at the bottom of the page.
- e) Instead of saying 'this would be an ideal role for someone exploring a vocation' I have used some of the language from the lunchtime meeting questions: we are not looking for an 'expert' or someone to 'outsource' this ministry to, but someone who can work alongside us. And therefore I have also included a stronger statement about training and study.
- f) As a way of summarising and emphasising all that I have changed the role to 'Evangelism & Discipleship Assistant'. Perhaps it is a minor change, but from what people have said subsequently, what it was called at the top affected how the rest of it was understood.

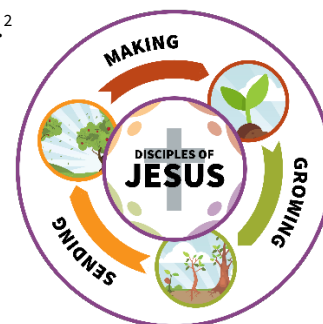
## Appendix B – Evangelism & Discipleship Assistant (v19)

Our vision is to see ‘God’s name honoured, His kingdom come, Lives transformed’.<sup>2</sup>

Our current priority is to ‘take root below and bear fruit above’ (Isaiah 37.31).

Therefore we are recruiting the person God is calling

to help the vicar and wider church leadership ensure that  
evangelism and discipleship are at the heart of who we are and what we do:  
‘making (new), growing (as), sending (out) disciples of Jesus’.



We are looking for candidates who are:

1. devoted to God, growing in godliness, and full of love for the lost;
2. gifted in sharing and helping people grow in the Christian faith as revealed in Scripture;
3. willing to work alongside the many gifted and mature people of faith in our church;
4. able to relate well to a range of people (e.g. age, socio-economics, Christian maturity);
5. able to work effectively and efficiently in a variety of settings.

Working alongside the vicar, the right candidate will:

1. help us ensure prayer for growth in depth and number is a priority as individuals, corporately, and in all our groups and activities;
2. identify ways that we can make the most of every opportunity to make new disciples and grow as disciples – with a particular focus on leading our Renew and Young Adults ministries (ages 11-30), and as part of the groups that meet on Friday (Coffee Mates and Warm Welcome);
3. encourage the whole church in evangelism and discipleship by modelling it personally and through teaching, working with us to grow in understanding and in practice;
4. organise seasonal events (e.g. Summer Drop-Ins), groups and courses (e.g. Alpha, 3-2-1) and other opportunities for people to explore the Christian faith;
5. join our informal mentoring group, meeting one-to-one with individuals who want to grow in evangelism and / or discipleship, and expand our discipleship mentoring programme for youth;
6. build networks and relationships with other churches and workers in similar roles.

Such a role requires someone who can operate and move between various focal points as required by the situation / group, for example:

evangelism	-----	discipleship
teaching	-----	modelling
youth	-----	young adults
supporting others in ministry	-----	delivering ministry

We are not searching for an ‘expert’ or someone to outsource these things to, but someone to work and learn alongside us. Therefore we will set aside time each week for study and external training, as well as regular supervision by the vicar.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://christchurchb29.org/resources/vision-mission/>.