



## **“Setting God’s People Free”**

### A Report from the Archbishops’ Council

*“He is the one we proclaim,  
admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom,  
so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.*

*To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ  
so powerfully works in me.”*

Paul of Tarsus, Colossians 1:28-29



*This report was commissioned by the Archbishops' Council and prepared by the members of the Lay Leadership Task Group. The Council has adopted it in full and presents it here as a report from the Archbishops' Council.*

*The report is accompanied by a high level Implementation Plan in Annex I, agreed by the Archbishops' Council.*



## I. Introduction

A great opportunity lies before us. It is the same opportunity that has presented itself to the Church in every decade for the last 100 years. It is an opportunity that arguably has not been fully grasped since the days of Wesley.

Will we determine to empower, liberate and disciple the 98% of the Church of England who are not ordained and therefore set them free for fruitful, faithful mission and ministry, influence, leadership and, most importantly, vibrant relationship with Jesus in all of life? And will we do so not only in church-based ministry on a Sunday but in work and school, in gym and shop, in field and factory, Monday to Saturday?

At the outset, to avoid misunderstanding, we emphasise the following points about this report.

- It calls for a shift in culture – not a narrow, centrally driven strategy.
- It looks beyond and outside Church structures to the whole people of God at work in communities and wider society – not to ‘fixing’ the institutional Church.
- It seeks to affirm and enable the complementary roles and vocations of clergy and of lay people, grounded in our common baptism – not to blur or undermine these distinctions.
- It proposes steps to nourish, illuminate and connect what is working already in and through frontline parishes – not to institute a top down approach.
- It aims to see confident involvement, engagement and leadership of lay people wherever they are called to serve – not to devise lay alternatives to clergy.

The Lay Leadership Task Group was originally asked to review lay leadership, in particular beyond the walls of the church. To do so, it became clear that they needed to broaden their focus to encompass lay discipleship. We maintain that the creation of a culture of forming disciples is the foundation and enabler of lay leadership. For this reason, the report maintains this broader focus – on lay discipleship - throughout.

This report is not an exhaustive exploration of the role of the laity or of lay discipleship. It would have been impossible for the Task Group to carry out such a task in 8 meetings over an 8 month period, working on a voluntary basis. Rather, we see the report as marking the start of a vital journey – where we frame the opportunity ahead of us, review the ‘lay of the land’, and propose a series of next steps that we might take together.

Alongside this report, the Lay Ministries Working Group is looking specifically at lay ecclesial ministry within the Church and will report separately in due course.

The report should also be read in the context of the Resourcing Ministerial Education (RME) initiative, which is seeking to secure a sustained 50% increase in the number of ordinands.

### I.1 Summary

We are all called to abundant life. Through his coming among us as a human being in Jesus Christ and by his dying and rising, God has rescued human life from chaos and absurdity and called us into the life of his Kingdom.

As a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9), we are summoned – clergy and laity alike – through baptism to a common vocation of divine blessing that originates in Jesus Christ. Baptism is the mark of our incorporation into the life of the Church and a commissioning to participate in God’s mission in the world. As such, the Church, as the whole people of God, clergy and laity, gathered and sent, are charged with continuing Christ’s priestly work of blessing, mediation and reconciliation on behalf of the whole of humanity, to bear witness to, and participate in the mission of God.

Indeed, it is only when understood in the context of God’s whole redemptive plan – at work in the life of the world, of the Church as a whole, and of the individual Christian – that the call to grow lay

ministry, influence and leadership can be seen to be biblically and missionally both urgent and essential.

The task we face as the Church is not a functional or managerial one. We are not trying to train up new volunteers to fill the gaps left by declining clergy numbers or make people work even harder to rescue the institutional Church. Rather our aim is that all should be able to respond to the saving work of God in Jesus Christ and rejoice to the full in following the vocation and using the gifts he has given them. Our aim in this paper is to find a way to enable Christians to live the life of Jesus Christ in all its fullness.

Our goal is not one of re-organisation. Rather it is about redemption. And it is not just a redemption *from*. It is a redemption *for* a life lived to the full in relationship with Jesus Christ. The opportunity before us is to help the people of God to live richer lives in Christ in all of life, it is an opportunity to serve our nation, to be the people that our God calls us to be and that our nation desperately needs us to be for their sake and for God's glory.

This report concludes that what needs to be addressed is not a particular theological or ecclesiastical issue but the Church's overall culture. This is a culture that over-emphasises the distinction between sacred and secular and therefore fails to communicate the all-encompassing scope of the whole-life good news and to pursue the core calling of every church community and every follower of Jesus – to make whole-life maturing disciples. We will not raise up cadres of godly leaders unless we create communities of whole-life disciples.

So then, what is required is not a set of centrally delivered programmes and resources. Instead, we need a root and branch, top to bottom examination of every aspect of church life through the lens of one question:

*“How does what we do as a church, ordained and lay together, enable God's people to grow in their capacity to live out the Good News of Jesus in all of life – in service in the church and in the world?”*

This report identifies the need for **two shifts in culture and practice** that we see as critical to the flourishing of the Church and the evangelisation of the nation.

- 1. Until, together, ordained and lay, we form and equip lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life in ways that demonstrate the Gospel we will never set God's people free to evangelise the nation.**
- 2. Until laity and clergy are convinced, based on their baptismal mutuality, that they are equal in worth and status, complementary in gifting and vocation, mutually accountable in discipleship, and equal partners in mission, we will never form Christian communities that can evangelise the nation.**

We believe that these two shifts would represent a seismic revolution in the culture of the Church. The first is about the focus of our activity and the scope of our mission, the second is about the nature of the relationship between clergy and lay. They are both vital. And they are both rare.

Amidst much analysis that clarifies the scale and urgency of the task, we have found gleaming examples of innovative practice and fruitful experiment in Dioceses, in local churches, in parachurch organisations and among many clergy and many lay people.

Yes, there are giants in the land. But there are pioneers to listen to, initiatives to invest in, wisdom to pool, particular theological knots to unravel and with all that in mind, priorities to be set. For there is an opportunity before us.

As you ponder and pray over this report, may “your love abound with knowledge and depth of insight,” for the honour of God's name, the beauty of his bride and the sake of our nation.

*Our Father in heaven,  
May your name indeed be hallowed.*

May your kingdom come, your will be done,  
As in heaven so in our nation,  
As in heaven so in our fields and cities, our homes and streets,  
Our schools and offices, our factories and clubs, our hospitals and hospices,  
As in heaven so in our church,  
As in heaven so in our hearts and minds and spirit.  
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

## 1.2 Two essential shifts in culture and practice

In writing this report it has become clear to us that any future action to enable and equip lay discipleship and leadership - for the purpose of evangelising the nation and transforming society - will only ever be sustained when and if the Church, clergy and laity together, embrace two over-arching shifts in culture and practice.

**First. Until, together, we find a way to form and equip lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life in ways that demonstrate the Gospel we will never set God's people free to evangelise the nation.**

This point has been made countless times in recent Church history. The prophetic 1946 report 'Towards the Conversion of England' produced by the Church of England Commission on Evangelism, established by Archbishop William Temple and chaired by the Bishop of Rochester, put it as follows:

*"We are convinced that England will never be converted until the laity use the opportunities for evangelism daily afforded by their various professions, crafts and occupations." [p. 58 paragraph 130]*

*"This being so, the Christian laity should be recognised as the priesthood of the Church in the working world, and as the Church militant in action in the mission fields of politics, industry and commerce." [p. 61 paragraph 138]*

*"The member of Parliament, the town councillor, the employer of labour, the trades' union official, the clerk the artisan, the farmer and the labourer, should be called on to address Church gatherings on "my job" as naturally as are missionaries on furlough." [p. 62 paragraph 138]*

These words remain as true and as urgently relevant today. Today, as in 1945, the Church of England finds itself in a situation where the significant majority of the 98% of people who are not in ordained ministry are neither adequately envisioned, nor appropriately trained, nor consistently prayed for, nor enthusiastically encouraged for mission nor ministry in the ~90% of their waking lives that they do not spend in church related activities.

One of the most common reflections we heard from frontline congregations was that people lacked 'confidence' in applying their faith into their Monday to Saturday lives. This is supported by recent data we were able to gather, for example:

- According to a survey of 2859 respondents conducted in 2009 (82% had been Christians for over 10 years, 67% in some kind of leadership role in the Church, 1204 were Anglicans):
  - 59% of those in working age said that the most challenging context to be a disciple of Christ was the workplace.
  - 62% of those in full-time paid employment experienced little, not much, or no help/preparation from the life and ministries of church to deal with the issues they faced at work.

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<sup>1</sup> Apprentice 2009, Spring Harvest/LICC

- 47% said they did not have a story to tell about how God has worked in their lives (Note 82% had been Christians for over 10 years).
- 59% (of Anglicans surveyed) said that their church does not equip people well for life in today's world at home, work, or elsewhere.
- Another recent ecumenical survey conducted within 30 churches in the West Midlands, found that whilst 95% of respondents agreed that they should take responsibility for their own Christian growth, only 37% believed that their local church actually helped them with that task.<sup>2</sup>

These insights are similar to those uncovered in surveys conducted in the 1990's, for example:

- 1997 Research on preaching 'Is anybody Listening?'<sup>3</sup>, reported that 47% of adult respondents said that the teaching and preaching they receive was irrelevant to their daily lives. In total, respondents found teaching and preaching was most helpful in their personal lives, and least helpful in their workplaces where they spend the most time.

This is a very significant loss of mission and ministry potential. Yes, huge numbers of lay people serve in positions of influence and leadership in the church, community, workplace and society. However, few claim to have been given a theological framework or to have the confidence to express biblical wisdom, in both word and deed, in these contexts. We will not raise up cadres of fruitful godly leaders in every sphere unless we create healthy communities of whole-life disciple-making disciples.

**Second. Until laity and clergy are convinced, based on their baptismal mutuality, that they are equal in worth and status, complementary in gifting and vocation, mutually accountable in discipleship, and equal partners in mission, we will never form Christian communities that can evangelise the nation.**

The primary sacrament is our baptism in Christ. Both clergy and laity are baptised disciples and live out our calling together. Lay people - like clergy - have vocations and callings. They just happen to be callings and vocations, which do not require ordination. In this way, clergy and laity are partners in discipleship. Our paths may sometimes separate to live out our different callings, but they are always aligned, and at times may intersect.

The spectre of 'clericalism' must be named and addressed. The term is sometimes used as a rebuke in what is sometimes crudely characterised as a 'power struggle' between clergy and laity. In fact (as this Task Group has found when speaking to a large number of clergy), the clergy often do not feel very powerful. This does not mean that power is not sometimes mis-used in the church by both clergy and laity. Examples of misuse can include rigid stratification of hierarchies, condescension (on both sides), the exclusion of voices from the margins and (in some cases) safeguarding abuses.

Clergy need to be honest and self-aware about the 'power' (real or imagined) that ordination may bestow on them in the eyes of the laity, and be careful about how they use it. Equally, lay people must not collude in passive-aggressive resentment of real or imagined clericalism. Our task as adults (whether lay or ordained) is to face up to our mutual responsibilities and the fact that - wherever we are called - our ultimate authority rests in Christ.

A shift here in culture and practice demands that we learn to see how existing structures, language and practice unintentionally damage healthy clergy-lay relationships. We must develop the habit to keep asking whether clergy-lay relationships are being strengthened or weakened. Is our mutual baptism being reinforced or sidelined? Are our roles complementing and enhancing one-another, or are we drifting into a comfortable, but lifeless, co-dependency?

**These two shifts in culture and practice reinforce each other.** Indeed it could be argued that our failure to focus on whole-life disciple formation is the primary cause of unhealthy relationships

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<sup>2</sup> *What helps disciples grow?* A Report from the Saltley Trust, Birmingham, 2016.

[www.saltleytrust.org.uk/whdg](http://www.saltleytrust.org.uk/whdg)

<sup>3</sup> "Is Anybody Listening?" *Anvil* 14.4 (1997)



between clergy and lay people. In contrast, as we renew our focus on equipping and enabling lay people to make visible the Gospel in our 'professions, crafts and occupations', we clarify and affirm our mutual baptism and discover the value of our complementary roles and vocations.

**What is needed, first and foremost, is not a programme but a change in culture.** A culture that communicates the all-encompassing scope of the good news for the whole of life, and pursues the core calling of every church community and every follower of Jesus – to form whole-life maturing disciples. And a culture that embodies in every structure and way of working the mutuality of our baptismal calling and the fruitful complementarity of our roles and vocations.

### **1.3 Stories that illustrate the shifts that are needed**

The following 'cameos' are included to help illustrate what these two shifts in culture and practice look and feel like at the front-line. The first eight are true stories. The final cameo 'Faith at Work' (also based on a real situation) imagines what might happen if the recommendations proposed in this report are implemented.

#### **Classes Apart**

*"I teach Sunday school 45 minutes a week and they haul me up to the front of the church to pray for me. I teach in a school 45 hours a week and the church has never prayed for me." - Comment from a teacher*

#### **Adult Learning**

*"An inner urban Parish in London decided that adult learning was the key to developing confident lay leadership in the church and the workplace. They started off by forming an Adult Sunday School and challenging people to give not just an hour a week but a morning to Church. Following the Sunday Mass and good coffee and doughnuts, there was a half hour of adult learning initially led by clergy. A wider variety of subjects was covered - Bible study, prayer, church history, patristics, apologetics, contemporary issues etc. Eventually a monthly evening group was added for those who wanted to go a little deeper. After some years a group of eight confident lay people were called together to form a locally commissioned team of Catechists and they took over much of the planning and some of the teaching. The initiative has led to significantly deeper commitment from large numbers of people who have become more confident in living out their faith in daily life. It has also broadened the ministry of the Parish as lay people have started to take initiatives (such as a free legal drop-in for the community) without clergy leadership."*

#### **Doing 'More' for Jesus**

*"Within four days I met three people with a great deal in common who were exploring Ordination. All were around the age of 50, all were playing key leadership roles in their local Churches, all had senior jobs and spoke of the confidence with which they lived out their faith in the workplace. I could not help feeling a sense of sorrow that three such competent lay leaders felt the need to explore Ordination so I pushed them quite hard. One woman told me that she felt that being Ordained was the only way to 'get her voice heard in the Church.' All three spoke about 'wanting to do more for Jesus.' I tried to explain to them that Ordination was not 'doing more' but 'doing something completely different.' It was not the next stage in a Christian journey, but was about putting an end to a significant lay ministry in order to start afresh with something wholly different. I am not sure to what extent I got through. The episode made me realise how little we honour lay leadership despite years of trying. It has caused us to rethink the way our vocations team explore a candidate's sense of call, and especially to probe that expression, 'I want to do more.'"*

#### **From Ordained to Lay**

*"A Diocese recognised that there were likely to be many fewer ordained stipendiary clergy in 2020 than at the start of the decade, so challenged each of its 10 deaneries to come up with a mission deployment plan on that basis. This involved re-thinking benefice and team ministry structures of course, but more radically deaneries began to think in new ways about the needs and opportunities of each area and to propose how a richer variety of ministries (lay and ordained) might be nurtured and deployed. Meanwhile, it was decided to*

use some of the money released from selling surplus vicarages to create a diocesan 'Growth Fund' to give grants for investment in mission through people.

What no-one expected was the scale of the dramatic and rapid transformation of the ministry landscape this would bring about – within five years, although the diocese had 12 fewer ordained stipendiary clergy, over 40 new paid lay ministry posts had been created, sixty new Fresh Expressions had been started and the diocese became one of just a handful in the country showing net overall growth.”

### **The Trellis or the Vine?**

“One of the great things as a church leader, I think, has been that it’s just transformed how I’ve thought about my own role in the life of the church. It’s so easy to get bogged down with the trellis of church life – all the things that need to be in place for church life to take place – and to forget that actually the real business is the vine that you grow on the trellis, lives lived for Christ, lives worked out for Christ... It’s put the focus back on the vine. It’s put the focus on people living and speaking for Christ in their workplaces, at the school gate. And that is the vine we are seeking to grow and having the trellis go a little bit further into the background – wonderfully liberating.”

### **Not a Failure, after all**

David and Jane were running four businesses – a farm, a car dealership, property rental company and a renewable energy initiative – employing around 350 people.

“We were really wanting to serve God, really wanting to be good Christian ambassadors but you always feel that you’re a failure, you’re not witnessing enough, you’re not having enough chats at the photocopier. All our staff knew that David was a Christian but we never really had huge opportunities. You can’t preach. We were often disappointed in our lack of opportunity to show our faith. And it wasn’t being addressed in the teaching we were receiving in a big city church. We very much had this sense that we were doing it alone and that, as Christians, we were working things out on the hoof all the time. Then there was a lightbulb moment. We heard teaching on God’s big mission and his purposes for work and we realized that by running a business employing 400 people and putting wages in their employees’ pockets, we were feeding families, preventing poverty. Then you backfill and we realized that the four core values on which we were operating our business were the most Biblical values you could come across. We hadn’t actually sat down with the Bible and drawn out some verses, but it was inherent within us, God’s creative good order.”

### **Kate’s ministry**

“Kate has 4 school aged children and has been exploring ordination. About 3 years ago, her homegroup used the ‘Fruitfulness on the Frontline’ study material, and Kate realised that she had an important ministry at the school gate. She organised to meet regularly with 2 other mums from homegroup who were also at the school gate, to pray for the families they met every day. They invited some of the other mums and toddlers for coffee about twice a term, and had some gentle conversations about faith. After about a year of praying and coffees, one of the Mums they had been praying for became very unwell with cancer, and as well as praying they were able to co-ordinate support for this family through the network that had started - meals, lifts to after school activities, laundry, babysitting etc. Very sadly the lady died of her cancer, but the prayer group met more often to pray for the grieving family and community, and continued to co-ordinate and organise practical care for the husband and children. Kate is still exploring ordination but now sees that her ministry at the school gate and in her community is no less important to God, and she sees how God used her and her praying friends in this particular situation.”

### **Diocesan Lay Chairs**

“A newly appointed Diocesan Lay Chair shared his experience with other Lay Chairs at a recent meeting. Having been elected, he thought it would be a good idea and assumed it would be normal practice to meet with the Bishop, to get to know each other a little and to talk about Diocesan Synod. He contacted the Bishop’s office, who were slow to respond and were not sure why he needed to meet with the Bishop. Eventually, after a few months, he did persuade them to allow him to meet with the Bishop for an hour, but there is no subsequent meeting planned apart from Bishop’s Council meetings. The discussion amongst the

*Lay Chairs revealed a wide spectrum of experiences: some Lay Chairs meeting and working regularly with Bishops and members of the Diocesan staff, and some almost never.”*

### **Faith at work**

*Pete is a middle manager in an engineering company. He is married to a curate and they have a 10 year old son. He struggles to work out how best to live his Christian calling and deepen his faith. The house group provides fellowship but he feels frustrated as he really wants to study the Bible at more depth. He has searched online for courses, but his busy job and family don't leave much space for formalised learning.*

*He receives an email via his church, which directs him to a central Church of England portal that includes learning resources. The website lists the different options and he finds that a theological college have put videos of their lectures online. He follows the lecture series on doctrine. He finds he can join a small group of others who discuss the weekly lectures through a WhatsApp group with a tutor. A few other people in his church are doing different things and they meet occasionally. The parish group start holding each other to a commitment of regular prayer and to the diocesan rule of life.*

*Pete starts looking for opportunities to apply his learning in his professional life. He realises that the company is making negative assumptions about the nature of people in its new forced ranking appraisal system. It is likely to create turf wars and competitive rivalries within the team and a wider sense of injustice. As a result of his intervention, the appraisal system is modified and employee engagement numbers go up, as indeed does retention, reducing recruitment costs considerably. And as a result of his initiative people are asking deeper questions - these are giving him natural opportunities to speak of his motivation and his faith.*

## **1.4 Clarifying terms**

We need to clarify our use of a number of terms in this report.

### **‘Discipleship’**

A disciple is someone who is actively seeking to know Jesus more deeply, to learn to love and live in his ways in every area of life. Discipleship is about the discovery of our baptismal identity and fundamental to our participation in the Church and the Kingdom of God. Whilst it may be broadly associated with notions of learning or apprenticeship, its Biblical usage also identifies the disciple as one who is a follower – of Christ, or the way of Christ – such that following Jesus is seen as the way in which we learn and grow, by assuming particular habits and ways of life.

So a disciple is someone who is learning the way of Jesus in their context at this moment. Discipleship is the process by which this learning happens. Rowan Williams puts it this way in ‘Being Disciples’ (p.1 and 18): *“Discipleship is a way of life; a ‘state of being’... It is rooted in a living relationship with Christ in which we learn and grow by following him and living in his Way. A disciple is one who is called to learn how to be a place in the world where the act of God can come alive.”*

This definition makes a number of assumptions. The way of Jesus is something to be learnt, and that this is relational learning - you need to be in relationship with God and others to learn it. The Bible and participation in the life of the church is important to learn what the way of Jesus is. Discipleship is not a course of study but is determined by circumstances. The context keeps changing and the times change so we never stop being a disciple. And there is a mutual commitment to learning this way - we learn with other disciples, lay and clergy alike.

### **‘Leadership’**

We fully accept that ‘leadership’ is a complex topic, and that the Church struggles with finding a shared understanding of the origins, legitimacy and proper conduct of leadership.

We have tried wherever possible to avoid a reductionist functional understanding of lay leadership as a way of either ‘plugging the gap’ left by retreating clergy numbers or of finding a willing army of

volunteers to lead tasks in the local church. This is a flawed, narrow and over-institutional vision of leadership which fails to comprehend the massive opportunity which lies before us.

Our contention is that the motivation for Christian leadership must arise not from a slightly greater willingness to 'do jobs' but from a compelling and positive vision of the redeeming work of Christ for all people. It is when people become aware of the great things that Christ has done for them and wake up to the gifts that the Holy Spirit has bestowed on them that a joyful and willing leadership emerges, for it is out of communities of disciples that cadres of leaders will appear.

For these reasons, the Task Group understands Christian leadership to be a sub-set of the broader theme of **discipleship**. In order to strengthen lay leadership we must focus on the formation of disciples. So, the task group has taken as the focal point of its work **the creation of a culture of forming disciples** as the primary foundation and enabler of lay leadership. The 2015 FAOC report on 'Senior Church Leadership' underscores this link between leadership and discipleship (for example, see Section 5.3 'Leadership and Discipleship, p.77).

We recognise that there are different modes of leadership and we have found it helpful to think in terms of 'functional' (or positional) leadership and 'influencing' leadership. Functional leadership is bestowed in the context of leading organisations, teams and tasks. Influencing leadership derives not from formal structures but from earned recognition in the eyes of others. This second mode of leadership is by far the most prevalent and widespread. Throughout this report we have focused on **leadership understood as influence**, expressed both in the Church, in the workplace and in daily life.

### **'Gathered and Sent church'**

When we ask, "What is the church? Who is the church? and Where is the church?" our answers should be framed by the lens of viewing the identity and purpose of the Church in the light of the missionary activity of God as it is constituted in the servant witness of Christ and in the outpourings of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout Jesus' ministry the disciples are dispersed and gathered (Luke 9.1-6, and Luke 10.1-12), a pattern that continues after his death and resurrection in the form of the great commission to go and make disciples in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28.16-20; Mark 16.14-18; Luke 24.44-53; John 20.21-22; Acts 1.6-11). This dynamic of 'gathering' and 'sending' forms a dialectical relationship within the one church as it participates in the redemptive activity of God. Throughout this report we will therefore use the language of 'Gathered' and 'Sent' to speak about the church.

## **2. The situation today**

The mission and life of the Church of England is critically dependent on the fruitfulness of lay ministry, influence and leadership in wider community and society, as well as within church structures.

Lay people in the sent Church are at the forefront of mission and evangelism as they live and work in the world - in politics, arts, industry, commerce, public services, local communities and families. And lay people are critical to the effective operation and leadership of the gathered Church, even more so given the near term very significant forecast decline in stipendiary clergy.

### **2.1 Previous reports on the role of the laity and lay leadership**

**Previous efforts by the Church of England to release and empower lay people into their roles of influence and leadership all failed to trigger or sustain the scale of change proposed in their recommendations. All the reports lacked clear implementation plans and contained no real strategy for funding and resourcing recommendations or monitoring their progress.**

The central role of the laity has been on the agenda of a host of modern theologians since the 1930s – Temple, Sayers, Lewis, Bliss, Stott, Newbigin – and it’s been the subject of numerous thorough, astute and inspiring Church of England reports (a review of these is available upon request). Taken together, these reports and publications demonstrate how the Church of England has repeatedly sought to think about the role of the laity over the last 80 years, from many different perspectives. Laity are variously seen as crucial to various aspects of the Church’s mission, ranging from ecumenism (in the 1940s – 1960s), evangelism and growth (particularly in the context of a rapidly-secularising culture in the 1960s onwards), as helping support dwindling numbers of clergy, particularly from the 1990s onwards. As well as these functional considerations, reports have sought to look at how the laity can be supported in their discipleship and learning and their roles in the secular world. The most recent concern is around inclusiveness, how by reaching out to and supporting the laity better, the Church of England can reach more diverse audiences.

Every one of these reports underscores the same issue: **the Church of England must urgently find ways to ‘liberate’ the laity to become confident disciples in the whole of life.** Doing so is an essential foundation for mission and evangelism and a prerequisite for growth.

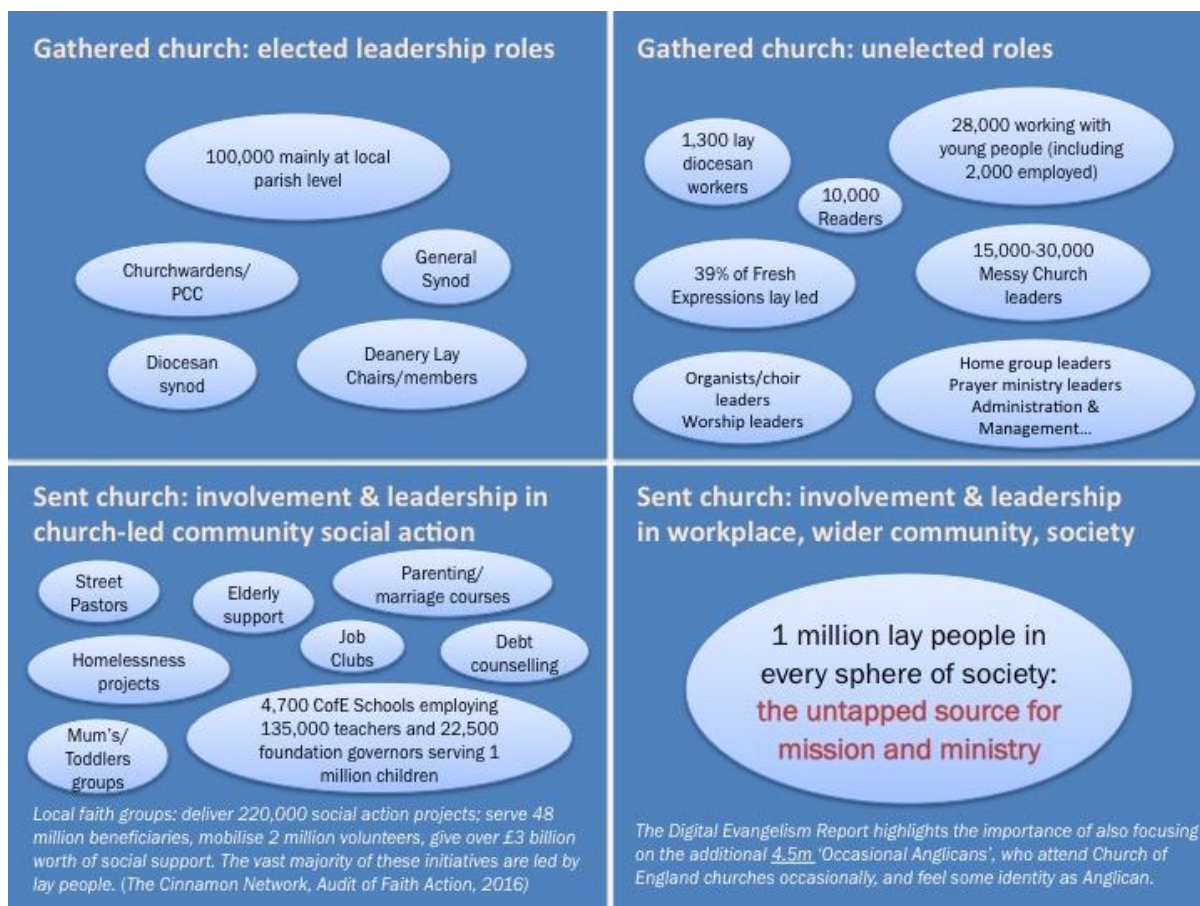
However, these efforts have resulted in no significant change. The national reports and publications referenced above were each laden with sound analysis, solid theology and creative proposals - yet all failed to trigger the scale of change proposed in their recommendations. We think there is one main reason for this. **All the reports lacked clear implementation plans to address the complex cultural issues** identified in each report. There were no strategies for funding or resourcing, for how a programme would be championed and sustained, for winning ownership by Dioceses, for changing culture. There were no goals, or proposals for measurable outcomes, or means to review and reflect on progress. Reports were produced followed by debates in General Synod, and little else.

## 2.2 Current scale of lay involvement and leadership

**Lay involvement and leadership across the gathered and sent Church is clearly pervasive and essential to the mission and life of the Church of England. However, only a very sketchy and incomplete picture exists as to the nature and scale of this vital contribution. Little is known about the support lay people would value or the pressures and opportunities they face.**

As part of our work the Task Group conducted a high level review of existing data and information on the scale and reach of lay involvement and leadership across the Church of England. This was surprisingly difficult to do, and generated less insight than we had hoped. There is no systematic or centralised effort to capture the extensiveness of lay involvement or lay discipleship either within or beyond the Church. Many influential lay roles remain hidden, unquantified and poorly understood, with no insightful research or data. Even where we were able to uncover the scale of lay involvement in Church-related roles and in wider society, we found very little that shed light on the perspectives and viewpoints of lay people - for example, what support they would value, the pressures they face, or the opportunities they see for mission in their workplaces and communities.

Lay involvement and leadership (influence) is expressed in four broad areas: in elected roles within the gathered church; in wider, unelected lay roles within the gathered church; in church-led community social action initiatives in the sent church; and in the workplace, wider community and society in the sent church. The chart below estimates the scale and breadth of lay involvement in each area. More detail is available upon request.



## 2.3 Current provision of support

**There are many encouraging examples of innovative practice to equip lay people, both at Parish and Diocesan levels, much of which is triggered and enabled through organisations and networks outside of formal Church of England structures. However, awareness of these initiatives and resources is limited, with very variable demand and take-up.**

The Task Group conducted a broad review of existing efforts to enable and strengthen the discipleship and leadership of lay people in all spheres. We invited 'expert witnesses' to share their experience and wisdom. We interviewed large numbers at local, Diocesan and National levels. A survey generated 264 detailed responses, notably with a bias towards lay people engaged in Church-based activities.

In doing so, we have found many stories and evidence of front-line fruitfulness, in which clergy and lay people are working fruitfully together, breaking new ground in many creative ways that equip lay people of all ages for mission and ministry in the whole of life.

Here, we briefly review provision in each of the four areas identified.

### **Gathered Church – elected roles**

The Church of England conducts much of its administrative business through elected bodies and committees. With about 12,500 Parishes, each with elected church wardens and a PCC, alongside Deanery and Diocesan Synods, as well as the elected members of General Synod, we estimate that there are over 125,000 elected lay leaders in the Church. Many PCCs and Church Wardens are playing far broader leadership roles - for example, in multi-benefice situations.

Dioceses run various training courses for some of these elected roles. This training tends to focus on Church policy, procedure and structures, as opposed to a focus on wider skills for lay people as disciples and leaders. There is no consistent pattern for support and training. Very little support and training exists for Lay Chairs of Deaneries and Dioceses, although there are volunteer-run groups for these roles. They organise regular conferences, which are valued. For members of General Synod, there is an induction day at the start of each Quinquennium, primarily focused on Synodical processes and policies.

Since 2013 Synod has made use of group work and shared conversations to help Synod members foster 'good disagreement' and work across traditions on controversial issues such as women bishops and human sexuality. Such initiatives play a role in forming and growing General Synod members - lay and ordained - in their national governance role. There is the potential for more to be done to vary the timetable of Synod meetings to enable seminars and symposiums with external speakers to help Synod members learn and reflect more informally about the issues under discussion outside the constraints of the process laid down in the General Synod Standing Orders.

### ***Gathered Church – unelected roles***

Many thousands of lay people are involved in unelected roles within the gathered church (both paid and unpaid), including organisational leadership, ministry (both ecclesial and non-ecclesial), governance and administrative positions. At non-local levels such roles include Diocesan Secretaries and senior managers within the National Church Institutions. At local levels lay people take on a huge variety of influential roles including: leaders of Fresh Expressions and Messy Churches, youth leaders, worship leaders, lay people spearheading church-based ministry and mission programmes, small group leaders, and parish administrators.

Respondents to the Task Group's questionnaire cited a wide range of courses, conferences and other training initiatives as being helpful to those in these lay roles. Some of these were provided by external organisations such as CPAS Growing Leaders resources, the Arthur Rank Centre Germinate Leadership course, the Church Urban Fund Together Network, Citizens UK Centre for Theology and Community, the HTB Leadership College and LICC. Many respondents praised general discipleship and formation courses in particular Pilgrim and Anglican Cursillo. A few respondents referred to courses for leaders run by local churches and Dioceses.

Two points emerge from these observations:

- Firstly, there are no systematic processes in place to track the scale and range of lay involvement and leadership across the Church of England. Unlike the annual published Ministry Statistics, which measure the number of ordained ministers in the Church, there are no corresponding Lay Statistics which measure lay people in church-related roles.
- Secondly, anecdotal evidence from the questionnaire points to a wide range of courses and resources. However, there is no 'core curriculum' for lay roles, no central point where training and development resources for lay people may be accessed and reviewed, no consistent approach to affirm and recognise these vital roles, and no sense of any centrally-coordinated strategy for the support and development of lay leaders across the Church.

### ***Sent Church – lay involvement and leadership (influence) in church-led community social action***

Many thousands of lay people take responsibility to lead a huge range of church-led community social action projects. Examples include: debt counselling services, homelessness projects, job clubs, supplemental education programs, parenting courses, marriage courses, food banks, caring for ex-offenders, children and youth work, drop-in centres, services for the elderly, support for those with special needs, and mentoring schemes. A recent report estimates that local faith groups (across the UK) deliver 220,000 social action projects, serve 48 million beneficiaries, mobilise 2 million volunteers, give over £3 billion worth of social support (The Cinnamon Network, Audit of Faith Action, 2016. Note 30% of the respondents are Church of England).

Training and support for those who lead these initiatives and projects is typically provided by a range of charities, networks and para-church organisations including: Street Pastors, TLG, Spear/Resurgo, Trussell Trust, CAP, Prospects, and New Wine. Many of these organisations recognise the huge potential of the local church in community outreach and, accordingly, invest in developing easy to access, focussed and high quality training resources and support for local churches. For example CAP provide highly rated training and ongoing support for debt counsellors, money coaches and leaders of job clubs.

**Sent Church – lay involvement and leadership (influence) in the workplace, wider community and society**

*“The primary action of the church in the world is the action of its members in their daily work.”*  
 Lesslie Newbigin

Lay engagement and influence in workplace, community and society is vast, as noted above. However, overall, there is very little curiosity, affirmation, prayer, theological or practical resourcing for these roles at local church level. We found that, where people are fruitful (in missional terms) in workplaces and wider society, they do not typically associate this as a mission, because of the tendency to define fruitfulness narrowly as direct social action and evangelism.

If they are managers or leaders most of the training they will have received will have come from the organisations themselves. It is a very rare person who is equipped to critique such training from a biblical perspective.

Churchgoers are often aware of one or two workplace resources and may have attended a seminar or two either at a conference. But few would have an overall robust theological framework for their role in the world or access to wisdom for their particular sector. The situation for people in manual, unskilled, or semi-skilled work, we think, is worse.

*“The Diocese of London has been growing for some time but when we asked how we can make a greater impact in our city, we recognised that the vast majority of lay people weren’t really aware of the amazing opportunities they have to make an impact for Christ in their Monday to Saturday lives. Our aim in equipping and commissioning Ambassadors is to inspire every Christian for mission in everyday life, confident in speaking and living the gospel where they already are. Debbie Clinton, Capital Vision Manager, Diocese of London*

The range of resources and initiatives that are designed to equip and train lay disciples and leaders in workplace and society fall into at least 8 categories. Given the massive scale of the missional opportunity, available resources are thin. Take-up is also low, reflecting the fact that most have never been given a vision for their role in wider society. The more successful recent initiatives have a whole-life, frontline focus, geared towards whole church engagement in lay mission in workplaces and community. A full list is available upon request. Some of the more fruitful leadership development examples are included below.

Category	Example initiatives and resources (further details can be provided on request)
Diocesan initiatives	London Diocese’s Capital Vision aims to commission 100,000 people as ambassadors representing Jesus Christ in daily life by 2020 - 14,000 so far. It has an integrated programme and strong episcopal engagement.
Para-church organisations	OneLife, aimed at 14 to 21s, focuses on developing leaders for all sectors. LICC’s ‘frontline’ resources and Executive Toolbox. The Bible Society and Theos support Christians in public roles, with an emphasis on politics.



Sector groups	There are sector groups for everything from architects to vets. Most are small. The most developed is probably the CMF, offering a wide range of resource and expertise on medical ethics, professional practice, Christian engagement and witness at work.
Publishing & web resources	Low level of focused resources on lay whole-life discipleship and leadership. DiscipleKit.org is a helpful portal that gathers together and reviews available discipleship resources.
Local church initiatives	CPAS Growing Leaders Course is well-tested, effective and popular church-based resource with a whole-life DNA. ‘Read Mark Learn’ is a long-standing bible study course that equips disciples to apply the bible in daily life
Chaplaincy	After years of decline, workplace chaplaincy, primarily voluntary, is on the rise with a surprisingly high level of take-up across a range of sectors.
Conference provision	HTB Leadership Conference is the only major conference on leadership in general, though its lay focus tends to stress senior positions and is testimonial rather than systematically developmental.
National initiative	Leading Your Church Into Growth is a successful national training initiative combining lay engagement, leadership and evangelism, where lay and ordained teams work together.

### 3. Constraining Factors

Significant factors continue to limit and constrain the effectiveness of lay people in influencing and leading in their areas of vocation, gifting and calling. As a result the laity are inhibited in their calling to serve and witness to Jesus Christ in every aspect of their lives, and the church is prevented from fulfilling its mission in all the different settings in which Christians may be found.

Many constraining factors were highlighted in our interviews, through the surveys and by our expert witnesses. These factors are captured under the following four headings.

#### 3.1 A Theological Deficit

**Liberating the laity to be confident and faithful disciples is integral to effective mission and to building a healthy church. Without proper theological undergirding, it will be impossible to form and nurture Christians who are capable of proclaiming and living out the gospel in their daily lives, engaging confidently and faithfully with the complex challenges of today, and becoming an effective presence for Christ in their communities.**

One reason why the contribution and role of the laity is misunderstood and under-valued may be the absence of any systematic theological framework for thinking about lay engagement and leadership. People are not equipped with the vocabulary or enabled to connect with the resources of the Christian faith in order to make theological sense of their own aspirations to leadership, influence and service.

*Curt is a policeman in his 40s. At an evening for 15 Christian men they are all asked, “What are you good at in the Lord at work?” No one says anything – Southern reserve perhaps. So the leader asks them to*

write something down on a post-it note. “Well, now you have done that, you might as well read it out.” Curt goes first. He speaks hesitantly, “I work at No 10 as part of the Diplomatic Protection Group. It’s a pretty macho team.” The people in the room don’t find it hard to imagine why. These are men and women wearing Kevlar and toting submachine guns and Glock pistols, people who are prepared to shoot to kill and put their lives on the line for others. Curt continues, “Over the years there’s been quite a bit of conflict in the team but I’ve found I’m quite good at bringing people back together.”

That’s all he says. And he looks a bit embarrassed and looks down at the coffee table. And then someone says, “You’ve got a ministry of reconciliation.” And Curt breaks into a smile the width of the Thames. And then someone else says, “You’re a peacemaker”. Blessed are the peacemakers. Here’s a Christian teaching people to forgive one another, teaching other police the ways of Jesus at No 10 Downing Street. But Curt hadn’t been able to read his own life through the lens of the Biblical and so he hadn’t realised how God had been working through him. Lay people don’t just need theological resources to grasp the range of ways they can be fruitful for Christ in the world, they need the theological imagination to see the ways they already have been.

It isn’t as if the task of articulating a theology of, and for, the laity has not been tried before. In Section 2.1 we noted the formidable historical legacy of creative, inspirational and ecumenically-minded thinking that has taken place over the past century around theologies of the laity. Similarly, there are many contemporary writers and organisations producing work and generating programmes that advocate strongly for the very kind of engaged, whole-life, robust lay discipleship we are seeking to promote in this report. For some reason, however, this material often fails to make inroads beyond specific constituencies, or has difficulty achieving long-term currency, let alone significantly informing policy and practice across the Church of England. One of the recommendations of this report, therefore, is that this deficit of robust and incisive theological thinking must be addressed. This will need to draw on the resources and wisdom of Scripture and tradition whilst being capable of responding to the challenges and opportunities facing the Church in its mission and ministry to the nation.

The terminology of *Towards the Conversion of England*, quoted earlier, which spoke of the laity as “the priesthood of the Church in the working world”; and as “the Church ... in action in the mission fields of politics, industry and commerce” [p. 61 paragraph 138] speaks powerfully to us across the years. It offers a focus on the theology of the laity as grounded in the centrality of *mission and evangelism*.

Whilst mission has sometimes been conceived as the work of rescuing souls from a degenerate world, a more holistic and inclusive vision understands it as the property and activity of God at work in the world as creator, redeemer and sustainer. The Triune nature of God establishes a pattern by which God the Father sends the Son and the Holy Spirit into the world, who, in turn, send the Church into the world. Mission is not about removing people from the world to seek refuge within the Church, therefore, but about releasing and empowering all God’s people to be the Church in the world in order that the whole of creation might be transformed and restored in Christ.

This emphasis on the primacy of mission, and of all Christians summoned through the Spirit to share in God’s mission, leads to further thinking about lay discipleship in theological perspective. We have focused on **four key themes** within the Task Group:

1. a focus on our common baptism into the priesthood of all believers;
2. the core dynamic of discipleship for the whole of life;
3. an ecclesiology that sharply clarifies the identity and scope of the Church as a sign and expression of the kingdom, rooted in the world, and characterised by unity and diversity of gifts and charisms; and
4. a renewed sense of purpose and vision for the education, nurture and formation of lay leaders.

We must re-affirm the centrality of our common baptism as the sign and expression of the shared calling of clergy and laity alike. As a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9), the whole Church is summoned through baptism to a common vocation of divine blessing that originates in Jesus Christ, and is charged with continuing his priestly work of blessing, mediation and reconciliation on behalf of the whole of humanity. Baptism is the mark of our incorporation as the whole people of God into the life of the Church and a commissioning to participate in God’s mission in the world.

The Church is the whole people of God – clergy and laity, gathered and sent - whose calling is to bear witness to, and participate in, the mission of God. From its very beginnings, the life of the church is characterised as one of unity and diversity. Lay people should be viewed as equal partners with the clergy as members together of the Body of Christ, in both its ‘gathered’ and ‘sent’ manifestations. However, lay people cannot make progress on their journey of discipleship without proper support and resourcing. While all Christians share in a common baptism, then, the church has always acknowledged the calling of *some* to equip the *many* to grow to maturity in Christ:

*“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13, NIV)*

This raises questions about the most appropriate models of theological education and formation for an empowered and confident laity. How are Christians who are not in specialist ecclesial roles within the Church (such as Readers) equipped to integrate their regular patterns of Sunday (and weekday) worship, personal devotion, Bible reading and other practices of faith with the demands of family life, finances, personal relationships, politics, media and consumerism? Does the Church really resource lay people to connect the insights of Scripture and tradition with the fast-moving realities of commerce and popular culture, the challenges of caring for those around them, or of responding to the concerns of non-Christian friends, relatives or colleagues?

### **3.2 Weak lay voice**

**The needs and perspectives of lay people are not well heard, listened to, understood or acted on. As a result the Church of England is nowhere near as effective as it might be in equipping lay people effectively for mission in the whole of life.**

Lay people number around one million regular church attenders and make up 98% of the Church of England. As we highlighted above, a review of what limited data we could find points to lay people being in positions of great influence in the world, gifted with extraordinary skill and experience, and playing vital, yet weakly supported, roles in the Church’s mission in the world – at the front-lines of community, workplace and society, and in churches at Parish, Deanery, Diocesan and National levels. Their role in the sent Church is pervasive and far-reaching – an indispensable platform for mission and evangelism.

Yet, as an institution, we know remarkably little about them, their role and influence, patterns of discipleship, their spiritual needs in the whole of life, their current contribution, their perspectives. In our research we have struggled to find insightful or systematic data on the demographics of lay people, on what they do Monday to Saturday in their primary fields of mission, on the pressures and challenges they face in their workplaces, and on what they perceive to be their development and formation needs. In short, there is a gaping hole in the Church’s understanding of both its primary field of mission (Monday to Saturday workplaces and communities), and the awareness, confidence and effectiveness of its front-line ‘workers’ in these primary fields of mission. Furthermore the Church often fails to make full use of the insights, experience and expertise of lay people in setting its own agendas and in ordering its own internal affairs.

One of the most significant challenges lay leaders say they struggle with is a perceived lack of understanding within the Church about their vocation and calling as people of influence in their wider communities and workplaces.

*“Interestingly or perhaps sadly, at no time did my clergy colleagues ever take any interest in my working life, ministry at work or offer to provide support such as prayer with regard to my employment. This was despite the fact they were aware of the pressure I was under due to the huge cuts in public finance that were affecting so many of the staff working for me, and my role as a senior leader in that situation.”*

Diocesan Lay Chair with a senior role in the Civil Service

Without such understanding and insight the Church will remain severely compromised in its ability to inspire, equip or support lay people in becoming confident, aware and effective disciples in the whole of life. The whole people of God will remain poorly equipped for the whole mission of God.

It is common practice in organisations, large and small, to invest significant resource, time and energy in understanding stakeholders - especially front-line volunteers, members, customers and employees. And then allow this insight and evidence to directly shape institutional culture and leadership, decision-making and resource allocation, at every level. Commercial organisations regard customer and market insight as their lifeblood. Charities invest huge efforts to understand both what their supporters think and the reality of life for those they are called to serve. It's good practice to survey employees and volunteers to determine their engagement, viewpoints and development needs. In each of these examples surveys are typically conducted regularly over time with baselines to determine trends and progress, both at local and national levels, with results published transparently to encourage debate and collective learning.

Such frontline, grassroots surveys and research are the foundation of effective accountability, learning cultures and continuous improvement.

We have struggled to uncover evidence of such practice across the Church. Beyond the Diocese of Coventry (see section 4.3 below), no approaches are in place to give regular and transparent voice to the authentic, unfiltered perspectives of front-line lay people.

Although lay people populate our elected governance structures, these bodies do not transmit accurately the breadth of lay perspectives that need to be listened to and heard by institutional leadership at local and national levels. Elected membership is not representative of the lay population at large. Younger people are under-represented and the voice of the laity from deprived and estates' Parishes is barely heard at all, except through the mouthpiece of clergy. Furthermore, the agendas of elected bodies tend to focus on the gathered church, and not on the sent church with its diversity of vocations, ministries and contexts, in wider community, workplaces and society. At national level, this focus is further narrowed. Since 'All Are Called' in 1985, General Synod has invested huge amounts of time and energy on the clergy – how to select, fund, train, ordain, discipline, safeguard, and retire them. It is easy for front-line lay people to feel like onlookers.

And it is unrealistic to expect clergy to accurately and fully reflect the frontline lay voice, in ways that are free of bias. Moreover, the formation and training of clergy de-emphasises such a perspective, and clergy inevitably develop distance from their prior workplace experience.

### **3.3 Relationships between clergy and lay people**

**Relationships between clergy and lay people are not always as healthy or fruitful as they need to be.**

This area of the report is rendered complex by the radically different perceptions of the problem that various people bring. It is rather like the children's optical illusion that, depending on how you look at it, could be either a vase or two heads staring at each other. In the same way, the complex issue of how priestly and lay roles should relate to each other depends hugely on one's context.

From the lay perspective the issue is usually perceived to be one of empowerment and disempowerment. Lay people all too often feel underused and disenfranchised by clergy who do not appreciate the skills they bring or the complexity of the environments in which they operate and

who fail therefore either to equip them as Christians in daily life or to use them adequately within the structures of the Church.

Seen from this lay perspective, the sacramental authority, which is the distinctive feature of priesthood, has been conflated with ecclesial power to establish a potent, unyielding clericalism. The result is that some laypeople at times feel little better than pew fodder whose task is no more than to give money, receive teaching, sing nicely and comply meekly. Clergy, with their close-knit networks and strong sub-culture, can appear to laypeople to be an insular and exclusive interest group who fail adequately to relate to or understand them or the wider world. Across all traditions there are unhealthy patterns of deference in which lay people feel inferior to their priest.

This perception is backed up by examples of unhealthy clergy leadership styles. Some clergy seem actively threatened by lay engagement, some will deliberately break up patterns of lay leadership established by predecessors, others seem unsure of where to start. Too many churches are dominated by an attitude which can be summarised as 'Father (or Mother) says' or 'Check with Susan (or Dave)' depending on one's tradition. Behind it all can lie a suffocating perception of clergy indispensability which both exhausts and burns out priests and undermines laypeople.

The views of many laypeople might be summarised as follows. Some feel they are part of a Church that institutionally takes advantage of them and are served by clergy who fail adequately to understand or meet their needs and who refuse to allow them to play the full and enriched part in Church life to which they are called. And many have no expectation that clergy would be interested in their life beyond local church engagement because they (laypeople) don't have a theological framework or vision for whole-life discipleship.

And yet, when speaking to clergy the vase becomes two heads and a radically different set of perceptions begins to emerge. In a clergy seminar in the Diocese of Blackburn, every priest present named releasing lay people as one of their foremost priorities in ministry and they understood to the full the link between lay leadership and church growth. Many MDR's make the developing of lay leaders a key objective and clergy often identify this as an in-service training priority. Whilst there are of course many unfortunate examples of clergy who actively want to control every aspect of the life of the Parish, it would appear that most clergy want to release lay leaders, but genuinely struggle to do so.

The reasons behind this are complex and wide ranging and at the same Blackburn seminar a number of different problems were identified. Some priests complain that they can't find laypeople with the time and talents who are willing to come forward and this is especially true of clergy who work in an inner urban or outer estates setting. Some say they haven't been properly trained to release lay talent either in 'gathered' and 'sent' contexts and lack the gifts required to identify and support leaders. Other say that lay leaders, as volunteers, will only offer service on their own terms and are too quick to give up when difficulties arise. Some priests say that, with so many demands on their time, they are simply too busy to invest the amount of time required to properly resource lay leaders and that 'it's quicker and easier if we do it ourselves.' Some complain that one or two very loud lay leaders, for example a Reader, act as a closed shop and hold back the talents of others.

Clergy are aware that healthy and sustainable patterns of lay leadership and ministry require more time in order that the proper levels of training and support can be offered and are unconvinced of the argument that lay people can 'fill in the gaps' left by reducing clergy numbers. Others speak of a 'creeping managerialism' in the Church, which they detect behind some of the language of lay leadership and fear that they are being forced into managerial rather than pastoral roles.

As referenced above, many say that lay people appear not to want to be empowered, either in 'gathered' or 'sent' contexts, and are happy with the situation in which they can expect their Vicar to do all the work and take all the responsibility. It can be much easier and far less time-consuming to let the Vicar do all the work whilst seeing oneself as a 'customer' on the receiving end of a service. This latter impression is backed up by the evidence of the Parish Profiles that PCCs are required to complete in a vacancy. These invariably list a vast and absurd range of expectations laid upon a new priest and show little evidence of a thought-through partnership between clergy and laypeople.

What we can conclude from this colossal mismatch in perceptions is that the traditional way of looking at the problem in terms of empowerment and disempowerment is unfit for the complexity of the situation. The problem is therefore fundamentally not one of power but of relationships. Rather than a transfer of power from one group to another, we need a restoration of right and healthy relationship between the two. If we are to form a priesthood genuinely capable of releasing lay people in every sphere, we need to recover a profound sense of baptismal mutuality.

### 3.4 Inadequate resources and support

Overall resources for the development of lay discipleship in gathered and sent contexts are extremely limited and demand is relatively weak.

Resource allocation for lay development is limited in many dioceses and parishes, and favours formal licensed lay ministry within the gathered church (for example Reader training) and more traditional education courses that are often poorly suited to the pressures and challenges many lay people face. Some of those we spoke to observed that lay training and development is often overly shaped by the concerns and experience of ordained people. Very little central funding, as far as we can ascertain, is directed to whole-life lay discipleship and development, especially when compared with the resources expended on clergy selection, formation, and ongoing development.

There is no strategic R&D programme (whether central or commissioned) for lay leadership and discipleship development. In addition, there is currently no way for the Church nationally to map and measure what resources (if any) are being devoted to lay development by dioceses and parishes, how fruitful these initiatives are, and what is being learned.

Few churches have developed the kind of learning culture that would illuminate the resource and support that is required to develop lay people. Few churches are equipped with the kind of 'action learning' approaches that we see in Jesus' disciple-making and in best practice adult learning models in wider society. These practices include: clear setting of learning goals, transparent accountability, constructive feedback, space for reflection, responsive and contextual adult learning content, and continuous improvement.

According to the recent research in one diocese: *“under 25’s are not interested in authorisation or extensive training for lay ministry but would prefer to get on with the task in hand and learn in context”*.

We asked many lay people at the front-line what support and resources (that they do not currently have access to) would most help them become more confident, effective and fruitful in their area of calling and vocation, be this in the gathered or dispersed/sent church contexts. They highlighted the following:

- support for discovering lay vocation and gifting;
- opportunities and the encouragement to step into these areas;
- fit-for-purpose, easy to access, contextual training;
- connections to others to learn from and share with;
- a framework for local accountability and learning;
- and appropriate affirmation.

For both lay leaders in church and lay disciples and leaders in community, workplace and society, there is low awareness of the resources and networks that exist – whether diocesan, parachurch, published or online. This, and the fact that few have been given a vision for whole-life discipleship, accounts for the relatively low take-up of the resources that do exist.

## 4. Proposed levers of culture change

Achieving the two highlighted shifts in culture and practice (outlined in Section 1) will require sustained and complementary interventions across eight levers of culture change.

Against each of the eight levers we have suggested a series of specific proposals, which seek to build on front-line perspectives and current fruitful practice and experience. We have included these in the attached Annex.

The eight levers of culture change introduced in this section will only be effective in realising the two over-arching shifts in culture and practice if they are integrated into a long term, appropriately resourced, implementation plan. As we highlight above, the most obvious weakness of previous efforts to tackle lay leadership and discipleship was the absence of any significant implementation planning commensurate with the challenge of culture change. In Section 5 we select a small number of these specific proposals as priorities for immediate action. We think these should be foundational in any implementation plan.

The House of Bishops and Archbishops' Council, with the input and support of Synod, should develop and champion a 5 year agenda of change, that: clarifies priorities and sequencing across all eight levers of culture change; allocates responsibilities; secures funding and resourcing; and sustains focus, accountability and learning through regular review.

### 4.1 Theologically grounded identity and vision for lay people

**We recommend that Dioceses and the National Church commit themselves to developing a sustained, practical theological understanding of lay engagement, lay leadership, discipleship and formation, and, on this basis, articulate a far clearer, theologically grounded vision for the role of lay people in the life and mission of the Church.**

One of the priorities to have emerged from our work as a Task Group is the need for a robust and theologically grounded narrative and vision of the role of the laity and of lay discipleship and leadership. In so doing we will build the confidence and ability of lay people to inhabit the Christian tradition faithfully, to engage meaningfully with the Bible in their context, and to communicate the gospel (in word and deed) to a world both fascinated and troubled by religion.

To this end, the National Church should take the lead in establishing and resourcing a broad-based and inclusive forum within which further work towards a contemporary theology of the laity might take place, including lay leadership, whole-life discipleship and formation. This would build on the extensive resources already available, including the prior reports we refer to in Section 2.1. Its objective should be to develop a clear and appropriately resourced strategy for the dissemination of its findings in ways that communicate a clear vision for the role of lay people across the whole Church. This should integrate with our proposals relating to lay-integrated communications, outlined below in section 4.8.

We think that a clear, consistently communicated vision for lay people and their role in society, 'Monday to Saturday' will play a vital role in inspiring an emerging generation to discover 'whole-of-life' vocation and calling in ways that lead to confident engagement with the urgent challenges and opportunities of our time - for example, instilling the Christian story across our schools and to young people, repurposing enterprise around the common good, bringing hope to the most marginalised as doctors, lawyers and care-givers, and redeeming local and national politics.

Current example of good practice:

*The Diocese of London launched 'Capital Vision 2020' in 2013 - a comprehensive vision to equip the whole Diocese to be more confident in speaking and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the whole of life, more compassionate in serving communities with the love of God the Father, and more creative in reaching*

*new people and places in the power of the Spirit. Capital Vision comprises three major themes, with ten specific areas in which the whole Diocese plans to be more purposeful and imaginative. One of these aims to equip and commission 100,000 ambassadors representing Jesus Christ in daily life. As one participant says: "The most powerful thing we can do for London is equip 70,000 or 100,000 for their everyday lives".*

## 4.2 Front-line lay perspectives given voice

**We recommend that the National Church take steps to ensure that the front-line perspectives and realities of lay people are heard, understood, and acted on at Parish, Deanery, Diocesan and National levels.**

In order to equip and support lay people, the Church must develop a deep, accurate and ongoing capacity to understand the contribution, effectiveness and needs of lay people in the mission of the Church, be this in workplaces, families, communities or gathered congregations.

We propose this is done through the development and promotion of a range of Parish level tools to enable local churches to hear, reflect on, and learn from the authentic lay voice expressed within their community. This would include surveys and action/learning approaches. We also propose the introduction and publication of an annual 'State of the Laity' review, which draws on the findings and insights at Parish level generated by the use of these tools. In such an exercise it will be especially important to hear the voices of marginalised groups such as young people, BAME and those from the urban Church, especially in poorer areas.

In time this would be published and reviewed annually at both Diocesan and National levels to inform strategy and policy, and to ensure that adequate resources are available to support and equip lay leadership, discipleship and formation in all spheres.

Current example of good practice:

*In the Diocese of Coventry 70% of local churches are using a diagnostic survey tool (developed by National Church Development and used in over 80,000 local churches around the world). Surveys are done annually, offering an accurate up-to-date "snapshot" of a church's health. The questions are framed around 8 core enablers of church health and growth - these are effectively a discipleship framework, although ideally these would include more explicit questions about work, society and community contexts. Successive surveys enable local church leaders to see the current state of health, how the church's health has changed over the previous year, and what areas need greatest attention over the coming year. One of the Diocesan leaders of this programme says: "It's very helpful because the approach is not programmatic or prescribed. Based on the survey, each church comes up with its own suggestions on how to improve its weakest areas, supported by a mentor who accompanies them on their journey. It's now in the culture of many of our churches to talk about their weaknesses. This is vital to growth."*

## 4.3 'Lay aware' episcopal priorities and praxis

**We recommend that the College of Bishops set time aside to consider their own praxis with regard to both the shifts in culture we highlight in Section 1 and to be mutually accountable in the way whole-life lay discipleship is developed in their Dioceses. We recommend that the voice of laypeople be clearly heard in such discussions.**

The two shifts in culture and practice called for in this report, will require determined leadership and engagement from Bishops who will be seen as role models and ambassadors for a church that equips, challenges and resources lay disciples for the Church and the World.

We are not suggesting that Bishops should do more but that in their current ministries they should be constantly aware of the imperative to nurture and develop lay vocation, whole-life discipleship and leadership.



There are a number of ‘one degree shifts’ that we believe could over time make a significant difference, for example: using confirmation as an opportunity to find out about where candidates live, what their vocation is, and to commission them into these mission fields; prioritising time in the diary to visit lay leaders in their workplaces and fields of calling; making time to disciple lay people; ensuring that clergy know they will always be asked “How are you getting on with whole-life disciple-making in your church?” And one story they will always be asked for “Tell me a story of a lay person being fruitful in society”.

#### 4.4 Equipping the front-line

**We recommend that the National Church take immediate steps to ensure that every Parish and every member of the Church of England is able to access fit-for-purpose support and resources around whole-life discipleship, lay vocation and lay leadership.**

*“Churches have to realise that the core of their calling is to be disciple-making communities, whatever else they do.”* Bishop Graham Cray

During the last few months we have asked many lay people at the front-line what support and resources would most help them become more confident, effective and fruitful in their area of calling and vocation, be this in the gathered or sent church contexts. Based on these conversations we highlight the following six priority areas for support and resource, where current provision is limited.

*Vocation.* Practical support in discovering lay vocation and gifting and how this is located in the full Biblical story.

*Opportunity.* Encouragement to take opportunities to explore and grow in this vocation.

*Training.* Easy access to, and signposting of, fit-for-purpose, practical and theologically grounded training in lay people’s vocation and wider skills. This should be designed with the learner and their context in mind and enable them to ‘put their theology to work’ on the most pressing questions facing them and their communities.

*Connections.* Easy access to, and signposting of the best available tools, resources, approaches, case studies, stories and experts to inspire and support people in their whole life discipleship and vocational journey.

*Affirmation.* Affirmation in this vocation at a local church level (and from wider Church leadership when appropriate).

*Ongoing learning.* Training and support in developing a learning culture, using survey tools, action/learning approaches, and learning communities (as also recommended above in Section 4.2).

We propose that the National Church take the lead, here, in two inter-connected ways. First, by investing in a national portal for whole life discipleship, directly accessible by every member of the Church of England, designed to inspire and support them in their whole life discipleship and vocational journey. And, second, by convening and then supporting a learning community of 5 or more “Pilot Dioceses” that are prioritising whole-life discipleship as a core strategic priority. We explore both ideas in more detail in Section 5.2 below.

Current examples of good practice:

*Learning resources:* CPAS Growing Leaders course in leadership development; Anglican Cursillo; LICC Imagine Church Team currently working with 7 Dioceses on creating whole-life communities; Pilgrim course  
*Connections and networking:* Germinate network; Stewards’ Trust programs  
*Affirmation:* London Ambassadors programme

## 4.5 Liturgy that underscores the role and identity of lay people

**We recommend that Parishes and Dioceses work together to recover worship as the work of all God's people, incorporating Monday to Saturday lives, and rediscover the shape of the liturgical year in order to connect worship and discipleship.**

Worship is the purpose of the Church and the heart of our life as Christians. It is profoundly expressive of our common life, our vocation as whole-life disciples and our baptismal mutuality. We feel that steps should be taken to bring to the fore two aspects of worship that are present but typically under-emphasised.

The first is the purpose of worship in emphasising our baptismal vocation. This report has emphasised the need to recover the shared baptismal identity, which is the heart of the Christian life, and it is in our worship that this baptismal mutuality is most profoundly expressed. Yet, in some quarters we have almost forgotten that Easter is the season of Baptism. In many churches, whilst their priests are able to renew the promises of Ordination at the Chrism Eucharist, lay people find that their own opportunity to renew their Baptismal Promises on Easter morning has been omitted.

The second is the relationship between corporate worship and daily life. In Mark 3:14 Jesus calls the twelve 'to be with him and to be sent out.' Worship should be at one and the same time the place where we gather to be with Jesus and bring to him the joys and burdens of the previous week and the place from which we are sent to build the Kingdom. We need to ensure that our worship reflects and celebrates midweek lives and then we need to recover worship as the point where the gathered Church is fed, commissioned and sent into the world.

Current examples of good practice:

*The Diocese of Sheffield has incorporated the broad shape of the liturgical year in its Diocesan Growth Cycle. The period between Advent and Easter Sunday is the season of nurture, recovering the early Church model of catechesis at this time of year culminating in the rites of Baptism at Easter. From Easter to July there is a season of Deepening, and again this coincides with an ancient tradition in which Eastertide is the time in which people explore more deeply the Baptismal vocation. The remaining part of the year is the season of Sowing and a time for intentional outreach and evangelism. This is a good example of the recovery of the liturgical year to deepen discipleship and foster deeper lay engagement.*

*LICC's 'Fruitfulness at the Frontline' resources encourage a series of 'one degree shifts' in liturgy that carry the 'whole-life' DNA, for example: 'This Time Tomorrow' interviews/testimonies of lay people in services; including prayer for Monday to Saturday issues in corporate prayer and worship; ensuring that the sermon is geared to the reality of Monday to Saturday issues and challenges.*

## 4.6 Re-focusing clergy selection, training and development

**We recommend far-reaching changes in the way clergy are selected, trained and supported in order that the skills to call and develop lay leaders are formed from the beginning.**

Many of our current practices in this regard are failing to prepare priests for a Church in which the releasing of lay leaders needs to be a foremost priority. Healthy relationships between clergy and laypeople, the capacity to discern and draw out gifts in others and a deep understanding of power dynamics in relationships should be integral to selection and formation.

The Ministry Division is currently undertaking a major review of criteria for selection and the selection process for clergy. We recommend that selection criteria are changed to ensure that candidates can provide evidence that they understand the right relationship between clergy and lay people and have the gifts to develop whole-life discipleship.

We recommend that we honestly address the clericalist culture of clergy training institutions and ensure that there be a strong contextual component to clergy training so that candidates are working with lay leaders in a supervised setting. Placements should be in Parishes where lay

discipleship and leadership is a priority and should involve lay people, perhaps as placement supervisors. At least one placement should be in a workplace setting (for example, prison or hospital chaplaincy or a school).

Curacies should be in Parishes where lay discipleship and leadership is prioritised and training incumbents should have a proven track record in lay formation. Curacy training should include the fostering of lay vocation, the discernment of gifts amongst the community of the baptised and sustaining and equipping lay people. Diocesan IME 2 provision needs to place much greater emphasis on the practical skills required to discern lay gifts and support and equip lay people. Lay people should play a more prominent role in delivering every aspect of clergy training.

CMD should pro-actively support clergy in developing whole-life lay discipleship. We recommend learning communities where clergy can address the issues they face in a mutually supportive environment. Clergy also need more support in building lay teams. We are also greatly encouraged by the Ministry Division initiative to promote the more effective use of MDR.

Clergy should have two days off a week rather than one. This will enable them to sustain friendships with lay friends and give them more time to engage with and understand the world, helping to address a 'church' clerical culture. It will counteract the all-prevailing cult of clergy indispensability and will also contribute to clergy wellbeing.

Current examples of good practice:

*There has been an explosion in recent years in pathways to Ordination that place a far greater emphasis on practical experience. These include the CEMES Schemes that have grown up around the country which provide a Parish-based year of ministry experience for young adults who are considering Ordination. In addition there has been a remarkable expansion of contextually based Ordination training such as that offered by the College of St Mellitus and St John's, Nottingham. Developments such as these mean that priestly formation is taking place in a context on which developing and nurturing whole-life lay disciples and leaders is normative.*

## 4.7 Reforming structures

**We recommend an early review to identify changes to church structures and legislation that carry significant potential to help realise the two over-arching shifts in culture and practice - enabling whole-life discipleship and strengthening relationships between clergy and lay people.**

Many structural and legislative issues were highlighted as potential barriers and constraints to lay engagement by respondents to our surveys and by those we interviewed. Many observed that there are no obvious structures or departments focussing on lay vocation, formation or whole-life discipleship within many Diocesan and National Church institutions. Others observed that specific, legislated responsibilities of the local parish priest are no longer appropriate, limiting the growth of mutuality between clergy and lay people, and placing unhelpful burdens on clergy. Still others pointed to Deaneries as carrying huge potential to enable local mission and disciple formation, strengthen clergy/lay relationships, and enable more of a whole-life focus on 'Monday to Saturday' challenges and opportunities.

We are aware that these play into some complex areas of Church governance (such as the role of Deaneries) as well as the day-to-day operation of Dioceses and parishes. They will also impact the operation and resourcing of a number of departments within the National Church Institutions, most notably the Ministry Division and the Mission and Public Affairs Division. Further work will be necessary to scope out these proposed changes and how they would be implemented.

## 4.8 Lay-integrated communications

**We recommend that Dioceses and the National Church develop ‘lay-integrated’ communication strategies that are framed by the overarching Christian story, and that spotlight the central role of lay people in the leadership, life and mission of the Church in the world.**

“Culture,” Clifford Geertz wrote, “is the ensemble of stories we tell each other about ourselves.” The primary story the Church tells to the world and to itself is essentially clerical. Furthermore, the Church as a whole, ordained and lay, has not been given a clear, shared understanding of its purpose, in both gathered and sent modes, to be a channel of blessing and salvation to the nation, and all nations.

As such, we see the urgent need for an integrated communication strategy that is framed by the overarching Christian story, and that spotlights the central role of lay people in the life and mission of the Church, and all its members, in the world.

There are two vital and complementary requirements for the Church’s use of media in relation to liberating and sustaining lay disciples and leaders.

First, media and communications need to highlight the contribution of lay people to the church’s mission in both gathered and sent contexts by: telling stories of God’s action through lay people; doing interviews with lay people; appointing and using lay spokespeople to represent the Church at national, diocesan and local levels; promoting initiatives that give lay people a profile concomitant with their contribution in the Church’s account of its activities and history. A practical step in this direction would be to relaunch ‘Anglican Voices’ in 2017 with a specific ‘lay only’ mandate.

Second, Church media need to inform both the Church and the World what the Church is for; and to communicate that it is only fully represented when seen as consisting of clergy and lay people, gathered and sent.

Current examples of good practice:

*‘Anglican Voices’ trained clergy and laity over a two year period (2013/14) to use social media and tell stories about what happens in church day to day and how Christians live out their faith ‘I happen to be a Christian and I think...’.*

*Dioceses which have developed the voices of lay Christians in hospitals, business, education, law etc., as well as clergy, on whom the DCO is able to call for comment particularly in response to a local media desperate for local stories to be told.*

*OurCofE is a central initiative in conjunction with Twitter (based on a model from Sweden) where Church members from different backgrounds contribute, with the first one a Prison Governor (who was retweeted by Russell Crowe!). A whole range of lay voices share stories about what people/the Church is doing day by day as the Church seeks to learn and to engage with the Twitter community and talk about some of the work we do.*

*The use of lay voices to speak on national and international issues on behalf of the Church such as John Spence on Renewal and Reform, Philip Fletcher on fracking and the environment, Margaret Swinson on the Anglican Communion.*

## 5. Recommended Next Steps & Priorities for Implementation

**We recommend that the Council requests the Secretary General to develop a detailed implementation plan over the Autumn of 2016.** This plan would draw on the four priorities for immediate action (listed below) and the wider range of specific proposals we have included in the spreadsheet attached as an Annex. The plan will clarify what actions are needed to achieve the shifts in culture, who will take responsibility, how and over what time period they will be taken forward, with clarity over ongoing accountability. We expect the plan to clarify funding requirements and sources. Also included should be a method of ongoing monitoring of progress, including consideration of a potential 'State of the Laity' annual review.

The aim would be to submit this implementation plan to the Council for discussion at its December meeting. Because this plan is focused on long-term culture change, visible and sustained ownership by the Council and the House of Bishops will be essential to effective implementation. Accordingly, any implementation plan presented to General Synod in February 2017 should be brought by the Council as an AC initiative seeking endorsement, not as a report of the Lay Leadership Task Group.

**We further recommend that the four priorities for immediate action highlighted below are included in the implementation plan as near-term actions.**

### **1. National championing of the two over-arching culture shifts.**

The need for leadership and communication of a robustly developed theology and vision for whole-life discipleship has been explored in Section 4.

We propose:

- A designated Episcopal Champion for the culture shift to whole-life discipleship.
- Tangible, iconic support and endorsement by the Archbishops for both culture shifts.
- The development of a theologically grounded vision for whole-life discipleship.
- The communication of this vision through the Episcopal Champion and Archbishops, including the affirming of existing grass-roots practice so as to begin to transform attitudes.
- Central communication to Dioceses, to Parishes, to Members, to the wider public that consistently integrates and supports the two culture shifts.

### **2. A national portal for whole life discipleship, accessible by every member of the Church of England, designed to inspire and support them in their whole-life discipleship and vocational journey.**

A huge strength of the Church of England is the capacity of front-line parishes to innovate and experiment. Isolation is possibly the most powerful factor in preventing this front-line creative energy and passion from becoming a sustained movement of change. Conversely when front-line efforts to enable whole-life discipleship and lay vocation are affirmed, connected, illuminated and nourished, change spreads rapidly. Networked, transparent communication drives continuous improvement; things that work get shared, resourced and improved, and things that don't work are critiqued and side-lined. The goal is not to get everybody on board, but rather to get behind what is working, allowing this to grow and spread as rapidly as possible.

The Church of England is one of very few organisations that cannot communicate directly with its 'members'. Most of our National and Diocesan communication only reaches a proportion of the clergy plus a very small proportion of the laity who are already deeply involved. We think that the digital evangelism project is an important part of the solution. A channel direct to congregations that affirms the centrality of whole-life discipleship and sign-posts resources is its complement. By collecting email addresses (with permission) and building a portal we can create this channel.

We propose:

- A national portal by which every member of the Church of England can be directly connected to the best available tools, resources, approaches, stories and experts to inspire and support them in their whole-life discipleship and vocational journey. Specifically:
  - The development and promotion of resources and tools to enable and support lay vocation.
  - Working with other organisations to showcase the best and most relevant resources and tools for whole-life discipleship.
  - Convening lay people and commissioning of resources where there are clear gaps in provision.
  - The facility for people to join small affinity/learning groups for support, discussion and accountability. This may include helping people to find local groups as well as virtual groups.
  - A group of expert mentors, coaches and spiritual directors that users can be put in contact with if required. (For example: you're setting up a Messy Church? Through the portal, BRF offers you an experienced person to call once a month in the first year for advice.)

### **3. A learning community of 'Pilot Dioceses' that are prioritising both culture shifts.**

The Church of England is Episcopally led, so Dioceses are an essential focus for implementation. Without support and ownership at Diocesan level, culture change will fail. As with the national portal for whole-life discipleship, the goal is not to get every Diocese on board straight away, but rather to get behind those that are prioritising whole-life discipleship and lay vocation, leveraging and supporting their efforts to innovate and experiment, allowing their experience to grow and spread as rapidly as possible. We accept that many of these Dioceses will not be very far advanced down the role of lay discipleship and leadership. However, by volunteering as Pilot Dioceses, they will be signalling their intention to approach this imperative in a systematic way.

We propose:

- The establishment of 5 or more 'Pilot Dioceses' supported and resourced nationally, that prioritise whole-life discipleship, meeting regularly as a learning community. Pilot Dioceses prioritise both culture shifts and have a vision to become whole-life discipling Dioceses. These Dioceses would pilot, test and champion ideas across the 8 'levers of culture change'. They would agree to meet every 9 months to reflect and learn together, and to share and be advocates of their experience around whole-life discipleship with the wider Church. This learning community will become a primary means for discovering and highlighting what is working, both at Parish and Diocesan levels, and sharing this across the wider Church. This would include a series of reports and a website tracking progress. Pilot Dioceses would commit to implement a narrow set of common priorities, including:
  - The development and promotion of resources and tools to enable every congregation to assess, review and own its progress towards whole-life discipleship, using surveys and 'action/learning' approaches.
  - Episcopal modelling of the two culture shifts, supported by lay feedback.
  - Diocesan communication that integrates and supports both culture shifts.
  - Development of MDR to support the two culture-shifts.
- Pilot Dioceses will be able to access central development funding to support these strategies and the website and coordination will be supported by central resources.

### **4. Re-modelling the selection, training and on-going ministerial development of clergy in line with the priority of lay formation and discipleship.**

There is already a great deal of activity in the area of clergy selection, training and formation. Rather than making a raft of new proposals we urge that these current workstreams be fully aware of the absolute priority of developing whole-life lay discipleship in the church, both gathered and sent.

We propose:

- The current review of selection and criteria should place a strong emphasis on lay discipleship. Candidates should be able to provide evidence that they understand the mutual and complementary relationship between clergy and lay people and have the gifts to develop whole-life lay discipleship. Laypeople must play a prominent rather than a token part in clergy selection.
- The contextual component of clergy training should be strengthened so that candidates are working with lay leaders in a supervised setting. Placements should be in Parishes where whole-life lay discipleship is a priority and should involve lay people, perhaps as placement supervisors. At least one placement should be in a workplace setting (for example, prison or hospital chaplaincy or a school).
- Dioceses consider how they can give a stronger emphasis to lay engagement in CMD provision and through MDR.

**Archbishops' Council  
February 2017**

**“Setting God’s People Free”  
ANNEX 1**

**GS 2056**

**High level implementation for the recommendations in the Archbishops’ Council’s report “Setting God’s People Free”**

This Implementation Plan sets out the high level next steps to implement the recommendations of the report “Setting God’s People Free” following the debate at General Synod in February 2017.

Priority	Actions	Owners	Date
<b>Developing priorities (dependent on Synod approval)</b>			
1. Develop a specification for the Portal, in consultation with key stakeholders from across the NCIs and within dioceses	Engage key stakeholders Develop specifications Prepare tender document, including the capacity for focus groups to test content and platform suitability Go out to tender	Comms Office and Project Management Office	01.12.16 04.01.17 06.02.17 Q3/Q4 2017
2. Enrich the theology	Develop a deep-rooted process for a rich theological reflection and renewal of understanding including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect further on the symposium of June 2016 and plan ongoing development of the theology.</li> <li>• Scope potential for engagement with TEIs, diocesan discipleship staff and theologians outside of TEIs.</li> <li>• Plan the promotion and dissemination of the subsequent output in order to enrich understanding throughout the Church.</li> </ul>	Ministry Division, FAOC staff, Project Management Office	Ongoing, from 1 March 2017



3. Develop a specific model for the pilot inter-diocesan learning community	Establish suitability of IDLC model. Scope outline programme. Identify potential pilot dioceses. Begin pilot programme	Project Management Office	06.02.17 01.03.17 01.04.17 01.07.17
4. Develop indicators for understanding development of discipleship at parish and diocesan level.	Review existing basket of measures. Identify in particular leading indicators of emerging activity.	Strategy and Resources, Project Management Office	Q2 2017 onwards
5. Determine potential funding access through SDF to assist pilot dioceses	Identify areas of financial support that may be required Engage with SDF to determine correct funding approach	Strategy and Resources, Project Management Office	Q2 2017 onwards
6. Ensure SDF criteria fully reflect the scope of SGPF.	Review existing criteria. Engage with Spending Plans Task Group over any proposed changes.	Strategy and Resources, Project Management Office	Q1 2017 Q2 2017
7. Ensure Peer Review processes incorporate opportunities for enquiry and learning about discipleship.	Review existing criteria/processes. Revise self-evaluation form. Issue new guidance to peer reviewers.	Project Management Office	Q2 2017 Q2 2017 Q2 2017

8. Develop governance	Determine make up of programme board (cross-functional, cross-departmental, mix of diocesan and NCI input). Identify staff chair. Establish mechanisms for oversight by Task Group Agree reporting procedures and on-going evaluation process for pilots	Secretary General, Project Management Office	Q2 – Q3 2017
9. Engage culture change champions	Determine the role description and key activities for culture change champions Identify and approach potential culture change champions from within the House of Bishops and from the laity	Secretary General, Project Management Office	31.01.17 Q2 2017
<b>Future priorities (dates and schedules to be established by Programme Board)</b>			
10. Regular review and refreshment of comms plan		Comms Office	
11. Engage with Nurturing & Discerning Future Leaders to identify how best to include training on releasing laity within existing CPD programmes		Archbishops' Adviser for Appointments	
12. Integrate with discipleship workstream, including staffing, planning and operations.		Project Management Office and others TBA	

13. Develop human resource and financial planning across all aspects of the implementation plan		HR Director and Project Management Office	
14. Post Synod begin planning for implementation of the remaining activities identified within the report – including systematic approach to each of the 8 levers	Programme Board to establish good feedback loop with pilot dioceses to assist with this longer-term planning	Project Management Office and AC staff	

**Membership of the Lay Leadership Task Group**

- Matthew Frost** Chair, Lay Leadership Task Group, member of the Archbishops’ Council
- Alison Coulter** Director of Leadership Development King’s Fund, Diocesan Lay Chair Diocese of Winchester, Lay Member of General Synod
- Professor Elaine Graham** Grosvenor Research Professor of Practical Theology, University of Chester
- Mark Greene** Executive Director, London Institute for Contemporary Christianity
- Jonathan Kerry** Diocesan Secretary, Diocese of Leicester
- Clement Hutton-Mills** Director, Rothschilds Bank
- Rt Revd Philip North** Bishop of Burnley
- Helen Ratcliffe** Senior Partner and Manager, Bircham Dyson Bell
- Joelle Warren** MBE, Founding Director, Warren Partners