

THE ST WILFRID LECTURES 2009

Rethinking Mission: The Role of the Church in Contemporary Society

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I am honoured to be asked to deliver the first lecture in this series to celebrate the 1300th anniversary of the death of St Wilfrid.

At this point, I have to share a secret with you. If I was asked to think of my favourite saint, would I choose St Wilfrid? Probably not, though as a loyal Yorkshire man, I might feel duty bound to put him on the short list!

Wilfrid was an amazing character and a true missionary who built up the community here at Ripon, ensuring the success of the Roman party at the Synod of Whitby and campaigning, eventually with success, to ensure that the English Church became part of the universal church.

However, he was something of an ecclesiastical bruiser with a tendency to take recourse to Rome when he experienced difficulties. The late Basil Hume kindly observed that Wilfrid continued to encounter difficulties with kings and bishops throughout his lifetime¹. Another more candid observation was that, “His manner and methods were not such to draw people to him at a personal level”². However, you have a lecture specifically dedicated to Wilfrid in this series so I shall leave it to you to decide!

The title of my lecture tonight is “*Rethinking Mission: the Role of the Church in Contemporary Society*”. In it I wish to do three things. First, to explore what ‘mission’ is, and why it is central to the Church’s role in contemporary society. There is no point trying to rethink mission unless we are very clear of what it is in the first place!

¹ Basil Hume, *Footprints of the Northern Saints*, DLT, 1996, p 70

² *Exciting Holiness*, Canterbury Press, 1997, P342

Secondly, I want to look at the needs of the world today, why the Church is called to meet these needs, and why we need to rethink our mission quite radically to do so.

In the final part, I will show how we can rethink our mission so that we, the Church, can carry this out. It will include a challenge, so don't think you've come here for an easy listen. This involves you!

1. *What is mission, and why is it central to the church's role in contemporary society?*

So, what is the role of the church in contemporary society? And what, if anything, does mission have to do with it?

Mission has everything to do with the Church's role – in fact it is the very reason that the Church exists.

What do I mean by 'mission'? Its starting point is God's love for us. This is greater and more amazing and powerful than we can possibly imagine. David Bosch talks about God's mission (*Missio Dei*) being one of self revelation as one loves the world, is involved with it, and embraces the church and the world.

Let's just think about this for a moment and take in what it means for us. God's love is rooted in the Trinity. That is: in love which exists between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That love doesn't stay within, but flows out like the great river Nile, to the world, and draws the world to itself. As David Bosch describes it, '*Mission has its origin neither in the official Church nor in special groups within the Church. It has its origins in God. God is a missionary God, a God who crosses frontiers towards the world. In creation God was already the God of mission with his Word and Spirit as 'Missionaries'*'³.

That love reached its climax in Jesus Christ because, in him, God offers us the way to receive God's love. Jesus Christ is God's Good News for us. For Christ did for us that which we couldn't do for ourselves. Through the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ a new power and hope came into our world, transforming us and freeing us from anxiety, fear, meaningless guilt and shame.

³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Orbis Books, 1991, P10

This is the Good News of God and it is the most precious gift we can have. And it is not just for us but for everyone. As St Paul writes in his letter to the people of Ephesus. God wants *everyone* to be reconciled to him. (Ephesians 2:13-22).

This is where we come in. From the starting point of God's mission to us, we in turn are called by God to mission.

God calls us to share the Good News of God by, "going out and making disciples of all people, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Christianity is missionary in its very essence because it's based on God's overwhelming love for us, which we must share. This is true for the Church in every age – just as much for us as it was for St Paul and St Wilfrid and St Francis.

And mission is the responsibility of every Christian person! You can't wriggle out of it and say, "Oh, I think I'll leave it to those who are really good at preaching or leading youth groups, or working with asylum seekers". Oh no! We have different gifts so some may be good at Evangelism, that is talking about what God has done in Jesus Christ. Others may have gifts of bringing peace and reconciliation to broken families and communities, or bringing comfort to those who are bereaved or in trouble. But remember, every Christian is a member of Christ's body. God calls us to mission at our baptism and gives us the gifts we need.

As Archbishop William Temple says, at the conclusion of his book, *Christianity and the Social Order*, "I should give a false impression of my own convictions if I did not here add that there is no hope of establishing a more Christian social order except through the labour and sacrifice of those in whom the spirit of Christ is active, and that the first necessity for progress is more and better Christians taking full responsibility as citizens for the political, social and economic system under which they and their fellows live"⁴

Our role is to respond to God's love by being faithful disciples. We do this by being witnesses to Jesus. Jesus said, "You shall be my witnesses" to his disciples when he promised them the power of the Holy Spirit. We share the Good News of God by what we think, by what we say and above all, by how we live our lives. As St Paul said, "You are

⁴ William Temple, *Christianity and the Social Order*, Shephard-Walwyn, 1942, p.98

living letters”,(2 Corinthians 3:3-4). Let us hope we are letters that are worth reading and re-reading!

2. Why do we need to re-think mission?

If every Christian is called to share the Good News of God in Christ, why do we need to re-think mission now? What’s changed?

The key to this is going back to the title of this lecture – the role of the Church in contemporary society. It has all to do with ensuring the Good News of God in Christ reaches people today, and in a way that communicates clearly. As it says in the Preface to the Declaration of Assent in the Ordination service, “... We are called to proclaim the Gospel afresh in each generation”. And as Article 24 of the Articles of Religion in the Book of Common Prayer says,

“Of speaking in the Congregation in such a tongue as the people understandeth. It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the Primitive Church, to have publick Prayer in Church, or to minister the Sacraments in a tongue not understood of the people.”

Let me explain a bit more what I mean. There are two simple but profoundly important reasons why we, as the Church, need to re-think mission.

The first is because the Holy Spirit is constantly leading us into all truth concerning Christ – fresh ways of understanding God in the world in which we live. There are lots of examples of this in the Bible. For example, the Holy Spirit led Peter, through a vision of animals which were, to Jews, unclean, to realise that God wanted the Good News of Christ to be taken to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. In a similar way, William Wilberforce was inspired by the Spirit to grasp that all people were made in God’s image, and hence slavery was an evil which must be stopped.

In our own age, the doctrines of Creation, Incarnation, Salvation and Pentecost challenge our perceptions of what it is to be human. For me it is only, ***“in Christ”*** and in him alone, that we know both God and human

nature as they are; and so in Christ Jesus alone we know ourselves as we truly are. There can be no meaningful description of human reality, in general or in particular, outside of the reality of Christ.⁵

So the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth, and we need to be alert to the Spirit's prompting.

The second reason we must rethink mission is to listen to the needs of this generation. We must ask, "What are the needs of our contemporary society? What are the things which really concern the men, women and children we live alongside?" These needs change – they aren't static or in a time warp. If we fall into the trap of believing things don't change, we will end up talking to ourselves in "*a tongue not understood of the people*". So we must rethink how to meet these needs, and take these opportunities.

3. What are the changes in our society today?

Let's think about some of the changes we've seen in the past thirty-five years since I came to this land of hope and glory.

Some of them have been good, and some perhaps more damaging. People have become wealthier. Opportunities for women have improved radically at school, in higher education, and in the work force. The standard of living has improved. We enjoy free health care which is the envy of most of the world. We have more free time than ever before. We have freedom and opportunities to travel and pursue all sorts of leisure activities. There's been a revolution in communications, particularly with the growth of the internet.

At the same time, our society has become more fragmented. More families are splitting up and we have a high percentage of children living away from their grandparents. There is a disturbing rise in broken marriages and the consequent number of children losing touch with one parent, usually their father. And what a shock it was for us all to learn of a 13 year-old boy becoming a father!

In many ways it has become a more isolated and lonely society. We enjoy greater freedom as individuals. But this has perhaps made us

⁵ The St Andrew's Day Statement, 1995, p.5

quite selfish. Lynda Barley, in her book *Community Value*, describes the people of Britain in the early 21st century as, “A nation of islands where individual aspirations may have gained us the world but at the expense of our social cohesion – and the cracks are beginning to show”⁶.

People used to gather together around the kitchen table for meals. In many homes now, people gather around the television, eating their individually warmed-up microwave meals.

We’ve also seen a sharp decline in community groups especially for our young people. There is a reluctance to join and, above all, to take responsibility for leading groups. It strikes me as particularly sad that many thousands of children are on the waiting list to join Brownies, Girl Guides, and Scouts. Why? They are unable to do so because there are no adults to lead them. What does this say about our priorities?

4. What are the needs of our contemporary society?

We’ve seen some of the changes in our society in the past thirty-five years. Let’s think now about what the needs are. What are most important concerns for people today?

We must ask these questions because they will show us where, as a church, we need to be directing our mission.

I’ll give you a few to start with. The greatest need is the hunger for belonging, meaning, hope and vision to meet the great spiritual hunger in this country and in the world today.

Belonging is a real challenge. Loneliness is palpable in our society today. “*All the lonely people. Where do they all come from? All the lonely people. Where do they all belong?*” So sang the Beatles many years ago.

An Age Concern Survey published in February 2008 showed that more than a million older people are shut out from society and ignored by government policy⁷. This research also showed that the risk of exclusion increased with age, leaving many older people without access to things

⁶ Lynda Barley, *Community Value*, Church House Publishing, 2007, P6

⁷ *Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Social exclusion behind closed doors*, Age Concern, 15 February 2008

that most people take for granted, such as a decent home, close friends and regular company.

Another major area of challenge is poverty. According to government figures cited by Shelter reports, 3.8 million children in the UK live in poverty after their housing costs have been paid; more than 112,000 homeless children live in temporary accommodation; and one in ten in overcrowded housing.

Since 1998/99 the present Government has lifted 600,000 children out of relative poverty and has halved the number of children in absolute poverty from 3.4 million to 1.7 million. The Government is committed to eradicating child poverty by 2020. For them, this is a long time. Child poverty must be our number one priority.

Then there is increasing violence on our streets, with young people walking in terror of their lives because of gun crime. Others have lives blighted by addiction to drugs – whether it's their own addiction or that of a family member.

And I could go on. I ask each one of you to go out from here tonight and ask yourself, "What are the needs in my community? How do they affect my neighbour's lives? What am I going to do about it?" Why do not we make the eradication of child poverty our top priority?

5. Why should the Church meet these needs?

Quite simply because that is what we are called by God to do. God gives us a great commandment and a great commission. Jesus tells the parable about how our love for God will be tested on the Day of Judgment. How have we fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger, and visited the sick? It is what being a disciple of Jesus all is about.

We need to **do** it, not just think about it. Someone has re-written part of Matthew 25 like this:

*"I was hungry and you formed a committee to investigate my hunger.
I was homeless and you filed a report on my plight;
I was sick and you held a seminar on the situation of the underprivileged;
You have investigated all aspects of my plight and yet I am still hungry,
homeless and sick".*

St Theresa of Avila, that fiery 17th Spanish saint, put it like this in her prayer, *Christ Has No Body*.

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
There was a little girl in a village in India who was cold and hungry. A visitor from England asked her, "Do you believe in God?" She said "Yes". The visitor asked her, "Do you believe God loves you?" "Oh yes", said the little girl – "I believe God loves me". "Then why", asked the visitor, "if God loves you, does he let you be so cold and so hungry?" The little girl thought about it for a moment and then replied, "I believe God did send someone to help me. But they never noticed me".

God gives us an enormous responsibility not just to tell people about the Good News of God, but to show it in practical ways. These expressions of love are all part of how we must meet the needs of the world today. St Francis of Assisi told his monks, "Go and preach the Gospel. Use words if you must."

6. Why does the Church need a radical re-orientation in its approach to mission?

I stress this responsibility because I believe the Church is in danger of taking a topsy-turvy approach to mission today and of getting its priorities wrong. Let me explain what I mean.

Just as the world has changed since the Second World War, so the Church has changed quite significantly in the past fifty years. Patterns and styles of ministry have evolved, many in response to changes in society. Let me give you some examples of this.

Firstly, the way the Church addresses evangelism – that is, the public sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Until the 1980s, this was often done through inviting a famous evangelist, such as Dr Billy Graham, and then inviting thousands of people to come and hear him. Now the Church tends to reach out to people where they are at local

level, seeking to build relations through such courses as Alpha and Emmaus.

Secondly, we have had a radical shift in the activities of religious communities and missionary societies of the Church of England. Before the War, these were at the height of their power and influence in society. They often ran major projects overseas.

For example, the Sisters of the Community of St Mary the Virgin in Wantage ran schools and hospitals in India and in Africa.

Now they are involved in being alongside people through providing retreats and maintaining a presence in some of the major cities, where people come to them for help.

Other major changes in the Church of England have included the ordination of women, first as deacons in 1987 and then as priests from 1994. Since the 1960s, we have also seen the growth of non-stipendiary or 'self-supporting' clergy. Both these changes have enriched the ministry which the Church is able to offer.

However, over the same period there have been other more negative changes. Many congregations have fallen in size and there has been a sharp decline in the number of children attending church. The number of active and retired clergy has fallen from over 23,000 in 1901 to just 9,762 stipendiary clergy in the dioceses in 1999. Increasingly, parishes in both rural and urban areas have been grouped together with other parishes and no longer have their own resident priest. Assistant stipendiary curates have become scarcer.

This has had an impact on the morale of some in the Church. These changes have tended to affect the ways in which church leaders and Christians in congregations in this country think about mission. They have said, "Because we have fewer people coming to church and less income and fewer clergy, we must be more modest in what we seek to do".

At the same time, the Church has taken something of a battering from critics. Some of these are uncomfortable about the church's role in public place, preferring to relegate it to the private sphere. These are the people who would prefer we didn't talk about 'Christian' schools and instead talked about 'faith' schools where all faiths could be conveniently

blended together and kept in a safe place. They are the ones who would ban talk of Christmas in public places and would advocate a bland 'winter wonderland' or 'Winterval' instead. They are not all hostile to religions in general or the Christian faith in particular. They simply don't want it in the public sphere.

But some are more hostile altogether. These are the illiberal secularists who believe religion has had its day and that it's time it packed up and went home. "You're fighting a losing battle so why not leave now?" they say.

Their motto is expressed in the words I saw plastered on the bus which passed through Bishopthorpe yesterday which proclaimed, "There probably isn't a God, so go out and enjoy your life!"

Well, sorry to disillusion you illiberal secularists, but it's too early to celebrate. In fact it will never be time for you to celebrate. For what we are seeing is undoubtedly a seismic shift in our society – what Bosch refers to as a 'paradigm shift'. These are really big changes – some have compared them to the moving of tectonic plates under the earth's surface. This affects the Church just as much as it affects everyone else.

But we should not see these changes as a sign of the Church's impending demise, or an indication that we should be planning our mission on the basis of preparing for end. In fact, quite the opposite! The Church has a crucial role to contribute in our society today, and the need for that contribution is stronger than ever.

What we are seeing is a major opportunity, which God through the Holy Spirit is giving us, to change. A fundamental change in the way we function and see ourselves as a society. Prophet Jonah speaks to us today, as he did to the people of Nineveh, "*You can't go on as you are.*" (Jonah 3:4).

Each paradigm shift, as the Japanese author Kosuke Koyama explains, "confronts us with danger but also with opportunities"⁸. For the death of the old order, whilst bringing us grief and mourning, also creates new space and opportunities for the gospel to take root and flourish.

⁸ Kosuke Koyama, *Three Mile an Hour God*, Orbis Books, 1980, P4.

7. Remember the Church has faced these major changes before

When living through a crisis, there is a danger that we lose our sense of perspective. We are so pre-occupied with the present demands and upheavals that we imagine that no one has ever faced such a crisis before.

Our present situation is a case in point. We are facing unprecedented problems caused by the credit crunch, upheaval in world financial markets and a lack of confidence in leaders and institutions which we thought were 'as safe as houses'. The crisis is global.

In this situation, the Church has a major role to play in enabling people to see that though times are hard, there is hope and a way through. This hope is rooted in the Good News of God, which endures and gives life and meaning, even when (and perhaps, especially when) the security of the world around us appears to be collapsing.

But for the Church to maintain that witness with confidence, we must be sure in our own faith and realise that God is with us in these times of profound change. Here, it's really helpful to remember that, as a church, we've been here before - not once but many times. Our origins began in Creation, and exiled from the Garden of Eden, but restored in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Let's just think of our northern saints, one of whom we're commemorating tonight. We tend to look at them through the rose-tinted spectacles of a National Trust brochure and see them as gentle souls, living amongst the sheep, but who nevertheless brought the gospel to our shores. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Both Paulinus, who converted Edwin King of Northumbria in 627 and built the first wooden church on the site of York Minster, and Wilfrid, who led his monastery here in Ripon, faced all kinds of dangers and threats. The Venerable Bede tells us that there were villages in these mountains and forests rarely visited by a Christian minister. The first three Archbishops were driven out – because of war and revolution. But a small band of Christians, like a tiny acorn, courageously stood their ground. Aidan, a monk from the monastery in Iona came to the rescue

and extended the Christian presence in the north of England. This radically transformed the existing social order.

So we need, as a Church, to get our priorities right. Instead of saying, “What can we do in these turbulent times with limited resources at our disposal?”, our question should be, “How is God calling us to proclaim and live his Good News today in a way that really *is* “good news” to those who see and hear it?

8. How can we bring the Good News of God to our world today?

We’ve seen that there have been fundamental changes in our society and in the world. These have created all kinds of needs and I have shown you some of the most pressing ones. These include poverty, debt, fear, loneliness and above all, a hunger for belonging and meaning in life.

So the challenge for us as a Church is: How do we meet these needs? How do we bring the Good News of Christ to those places in our world which are very loveless indeed? How do we bring God’s love where it isn’t?

Our starting point is to get our priorities right. Let’s start by thinking of the wonder of the Good News of God we have to share. Unless we are touched and moved to our very core by the love of God we’ve experienced in Christ, we won’t communicate it to others. So, let’s remember with joy and gratitude what God has done for us in Christ, and think how we might share this with others. Think of how the Christian faith spread in the early church. It spread through Christians sharing their experience of the living Christ and bearing witness to him, caring for one another – sharing their goods and possessions, and reaching out to those who were in need.

We also need to remember whose mission it is. It’s God’s mission, not ours! God has called us through his Son, Jesus Christ, to this glorious task of sharing his Good News. “You did not choose me, but I choose you, and I appointed you to go out and bear fruit, the fruit that shall last”. (John 15:16). When we’re scared or anxious about our skills or our resources (or lack of them), remember that it is God who is in charge not

you! He will give you all the gifts and resources you need – in fact he already has.

9. How do we share the Good News of God in a way that's relevant today?

We must hold onto the precious gift entrusted to us, which is the Good News of God in Christ. We remember that it's God's mission not ours, and we know that God has given us all we might possibly need for this task. But how do we share the Good News of God in a way which really meets the needs of our world today?

And how do we do so without compromising the gospel; that is, in our eagerness to communicate, giving way too much to the values of the world?

The remarkable Christian, John Stott, has addressed these issues head-on in his book *The Contemporary Christian: An Urgent Plea for Double Listening*⁹. In this book, this 'double listening' means listening both to the Word of God and to the world.

He writes, "*We listen to the Word with humble reverence, anxious to understand it, and resolved to believe and obey what we come to understand. We listen to the world with critical alertness, anxious to understand it too, and resolved not necessarily to believe and obey it, but to be sympathetic with it and to seek grace to discuss how the gospel relates to it*"¹⁰.

John Stott points out that it is vital for us to get the balance of our 'double listening' right, because if we go too far in one direction, to the exclusion of the other, the mission of the church will be distorted.

He writes that we must, "*Refuse to become either so absorbed in the Word, that we escape into it and fail to let it confront the world, or so absorbed in the world, that we conform to it and fail to subject it to the judgment of the Word. Escapism and conformity are opposite mistakes, but neither is a Christian option*"¹¹.

⁹ John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian- an urgent plea for double listening*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1992.

¹⁰ John Stott, *op.cit.*, 1992, P28

¹¹ John Stott, *op.cit.*, 1992, P27

It is my belief that we need to apply these principles of double listening today in the church. This is the real contribution that the church can make today, to bring the Good News of God to meet the great spiritual hunger of the world.

So let us listen to the Spirit. To meet the spiritual hunger of the world, the Spirit is calling us to witness boldly and faithfully afresh to the authentic Gospel. In this age when scepticism is rife both inside and outside the Church, let us share that Good News of Christ based on our experience of him in our lives.

Let us also listen attentively to the needs of the world. Let us find out what are the real needs of those who live in our local communities, in our cities and villages, in our nation and in the world.

God also calls us, as the Church, to act prophetically. This is about the Church listening faithfully to the Spirit in the light of the world's needs, and then proclaiming what is happening *in the present*. It may not be a message that people want to hear but we must proclaim it. In our present situation, this includes speaking out on behalf of those who are suffering from poverty, debt, fear of gun crime, racism and other ills. It means going on speaking and bearing witness until their needs are met.

It means bearing witness to our government and business leaders about the dangers of idolatrous love of money, the pursuit of profit without regard for ethic, risk or consequence.

But we also, as a Church, can make a major contribution by helping people to develop a new vision in which all are included. We know that neither a political nor an economic vision alone will work because they do not address our underlying spiritual malaise and hunger. Our mission is to help build this common vision, based on the principles of respect for each person, care for each other and service to one another.

10. The Church must be prepared to change.

If we are to be fit to respond to the Spirit's call, we must be 'fit for purpose'! This means that as Christians we must be prepared to let go of

some things in order to meet people's needs today. This may mean letting go of certain types of worship, traditions, or buildings we love. It can be really hard to do this because we feel they're part of our identity and they give us a sense of security. But they can be a block to the new directions in which the Spirit may be calling us. Jesus told us that, *"Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it bears no fruit. But if it does fall and die, then it will yield a hundredfold"*. (John 12:24)

At the same time, we also need to embrace the new. Remember Jesus warned his disciples not to put old wine into new wineskins. It doesn't work! So take risks, try the new wineskins and be bold. It's precisely at these times when we feel most exposed and uncomfortable that we are really listening to God and responding to the needs of the world.

We are already seeing it in some areas of our mission today. Steve Croft, one of the great leaders of mission today has pointed out that we are seeing this with the new ministry of the pioneer evangelists. Their ministry is new, challenging, difficult and definitely not for the faint-hearted. They are reaching out to those in most need in our world with perseverance and patient endurance, just like the ministry of Jesus' first disciples.

11. How far is the Church already meeting the needs of our world today?

Christians are reaching out in many ways already to meet the needs of our world today at local, national and international levels.

They are doing this,

1. By finding out the needs of their local communities and responding through an enormous range of projects which have transformed the lives of those who live there.
2. By fulfilling a prophetic role in areas of social justice, standing up on behalf of those who are without power, such as asylum seekers and the poor.
3. By developing new types of worship and ministry which reach out to where people are, rather than expecting them to come to us on our terms. The Fresh Expressions movement is a good example of this.

4. By developing ecumenical mission projects such as the street pastor scheme. These street pastors seek to bring the love of Christ to those they meet in the cities.
5. By seeking to understand contemporary society and developing a theology of mission in relation to people of other religions, as seen, for example in the report, '*Generous Love*', recently published by the Anglican Communion Network for Inter Faith Concerns¹².
6. By recognising mission as a key element of how we select and prepare candidates for ministry in the Church.

12. *But there is more the church can and should do to share the Good News of God.*

But while there is a lot that we are already doing to share the Good News, I want to offer you a challenge tonight to go and do more! And to do this through sticking to the core beliefs which are at the heart of our Christian faith.

1. Remember the Good News of God every day and think what God has done in your life. How has He made a difference?
2. Share this Good News with others. 'Don't hide your light under a bushel'. Remember, it needs to be set at the top of a hill so all can see it.
3. Remember God has called you and me to be disciples and share the Good News. It's his mission – we've received his love in Christ. Now he wants us to bring Christ to all those places where that love isn't found at present. Think of Theresa of Avila - we must be 'God's hands and feet' now.
4. Don't be afraid of your lack of skills or talents or resources. Remember who is boss. It is God who is equipping us for this task, not your Archbishop, bishop or PCC treasurer!
5. Listen to the Holy Spirit and listen to the world.
6. Be prepared to live out your faith in demanding and challenging ways as a disciple of Christ called to servanthood. As David Watson said, "*If we are genuinely excited by the gospel, because Christ is alive*"

¹² *Generous Love: The Truth of the Gospel and the call to dialogue – an Anglican theology of inter faith relations*, Anglican Consultative Council, 2008.

*within us, and if we are able to say, "Come and see" because the church manifests the life of Christ, evangelism will follow naturally*¹³.

7. Be bold and be strong.
8. Carry out the mission – think of the little girl for whom help never came. What are you going to do about it?
9. Put your trust in God and he will sustain you.

We have had a precious gift entrusted to us and a precious task to perform. Let us pray that with God's grace we may truly worship God and witness to his Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

At the end of Basil's Hume's account of St Wilfrid¹⁴, there is a moving account, that on the day he died, there was a sound of rustling. Many took this to be the sound of angels' wings rustling as his soul was carried to heaven. May we fulfil our sacred calling so that we too may share in that joy. We may not hear the angels' wings rustling, but we hope to hear the words of our beloved Master greeting us and saying, "Well done, thou true and faithful servant".

¹³ David Watson, *Discipleship*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1981, P41

¹⁴ Basil Hume, *op.cit.*, 1996, P72.