

Motion No. 4

Proposer: The Revd Andrew Quill

Archbishop,

Resolution 43 of the 1988 Lambeth Conference called on *'each province and diocese of the Anglican Communion, in co-operation with other Christians, to make the closing years of the millennium a "Decade of Evangelism" with a renewed and united emphasis on making Christ known to the people of his world.'* Statistics for the Church of Ireland in the Republic would seem to show that 1991 was the beginning of an upward trend, with 89,187 people identifying themselves as Church of Ireland in 1991 to 129,039 by 2011.

On 25th and 26th May 1991, I had the privilege of being part of the Billy Graham Mission in Edinburgh as a counsellor – seeing more than 3,000 people each day making a commitment to following Christ. This was part of the Diocese of Edinburgh's response to the call for a "Decade of Evangelism", together with other denominations. But from my experience of that mission and others, and looking at the attendance figures for 2013 – 2016, where 8 of the 12 dioceses saw a reduction in church attendance, what we are weak at as a Church is discipleship.

In the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18 – 20 we read:

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

It is a command to make disciples, not converts. Peter Crook, who was the National Director of Evangelism Explosion until 2006 says this:

'In our concern for reaching the lost...we can so easily lose sight of the fact that at its heart the Great Commission is not a call to evangelise, but to make disciples. Whilst Jesus calls us to be His witnesses – (Acts 1:8) and to preach the good news to all...that is just part of the task – the first step. The Great Commission is to make disciples of all who respond. When those who make decisions to follow Jesus are discipled – in practice and not just in theory – then they themselves can also respond to that command and in turn make disciples. This principle of spiritual reproduction – disciples who in turn make disciples – is our Lord's plan for an effective and growing church.'

On the Council for Mission, we have been promoting the Five Marks of Mission – last year producing 'Radiant Faith' – and believe that effective discipleship would impact the other marks of mission and hence bring transformation to our communities and beyond.

So, Archbishop, I propose the motion as you have it on page 2 of the Motions Document.

That the General Synod call on parishes to prioritise the Great Commission over the next ten years – "to make disciples...teaching them to obey everything..." – so that those in every congregation are better equipped to proclaim the good news about Jesus Christ and to disciple others to make a real difference in our world, bearing in mind the Five Marks of Mission.