

Handout for participants

Five I's – a process for parish evangelism

Evangelism is the process by which people become disciples of Jesus. Robert Warren

Mission should be a heartbeat not a hiccup. Canon Harry Sutton

We should do things more evangelistically rather than do more evangelistic things. Gordon Banks

Five I's is a way of looking at the full programme of the church and setting it within the context of intentional evangelism.

It is based on five stages all beginning with the letter 'I'.

1) Involvement 2) Introduction 3) Invitation 4) Induction 5) Instruction

- 1) **Involvement** (Incarnation) is being there in the community and getting on with life. You do not get all stressed because you did not witness to Jesus to the lady at the bus stop, but did spend some time just chatting. You will work with people of all faiths and none in acts of charity, care and concern. You do not hide the fact you are a Christian but neither do you parade it in front of people and badger them.
- 2) **Introduction** is when you are involved in an event in which Jesus or the Christian faith is purposefully introduced. The Parents and Toddlers starts with prayer and the clergy are regular visitors. The lunch club has simple prayers and possibly a short talk about the Christian faith.
- 3) **Invitation** – having been introduced to the Christian faith people are then invited to respond. This could be at the end of a series of sermons or perhaps a Christian Enquirers course such as Emmaus or Alpha. The call is 'come follow me'.
- 4) **Induction** – those who have come to faith or rededicated their lives to Christ are given an opportunity to make an appropriate public declaration. This could be baptism or confirmation, or the receiving of a Bible with the laying on of hands.
- 5) **Instruction** – being a disciple is about lifelong learning, perhaps eternal learning! So there would be a variety of courses set up by the local church. There would also be information and every encouragement for people to take on study at an appropriate level with both local one-off conferences and training day's right through to University level. The church should seek to develop a culture of lifelong learning and growing in discipleship.

Exercise One – the first session would set out the basic principles and outline the Five I's with possible examples.

Exercise Two – try and compile an exhaustive and comprehensive list of everything the church does. This should include 'everything', its local involvement in community groups through the individual members (if they are recognised by the church as in some measure doing this as part of the church life and witness), the acts of worship, flower arranging, etc. This is sometimes best done by splitting people into groups and asking them to mark up on poster sheets a certain section of the churches life, for example, worship, mission, social, etc. Post the sheets and have everyone agree that nothing is missed.

Exercise Three – from the composite list arising out of Exercise Two try and place all the activities in one of the Five I categories. In setting the activities there might be overlap and at this stage you will need to keep people focussed and remind them of the five stages. A certain amount of overlap is acceptable, for example Alpha could be introduction, invitation and to some degree instruction. With a large group you could get each group to look at just one of the Five I's, ie five groups. Again post the results so that people can concur or make adjustments.

Exercise Four – at the end of Exercise Three you should have all your church activities in one of the five categories and be able to discern whether you have a pattern of intentional evangelism. Again post the results so that they can be agreed upon or adjusted. Note that this process keys in with the idea of engaging with people who have little or no knowledge of God (involvement) right through to conversion and life as a disciple of Christ and integrated into the life of the church. From this information you can then build into your church programme anything to cover obvious gaps. For example your church might be brilliant and busy with Alpha but is it getting involved in the community? Or your church might be deeply involved in the life of the community but is it seeing people come to faith as disciples of Jesus in the life of the church? Remember we are called to be both salt and light, distinctive and yet engaged.

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