


# The Evangelist's Vocation, and their recognition and activation within the local church.

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I certify that this dissertation is based on my own original research and contains no  
material from any other source which is not referenced.

(Signed).....  


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**Dedication**

Written in memory of Annie O'Connor, with gratitude for her love for  
Evangelists.

# 1. Introduction

What is distinctive about the vocation of the evangelist? How can the church identify and encourage evangelists in their calling?

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ... (Ephesians 4:11-12)

For almost one hundred and forty years Church Army have been training men and women as evangelists within the Anglican church. On completion of their training (currently three years) they are admitted to the office of evangelist in the Church of England and commissioned as Church Army evangelists. I work as a tutor on Church Army's training team with a particular responsibility for formation, and I also sit on discernment panels for candidates seeking to train as evangelists with Church Army. I have observed over the last few years that the concept of vocation or calling to be an evangelist takes on many different forms amongst the potential trainees that we speak with. I have wondered whether our institutional Anglican understanding of an evangelist's vocation (if indeed we have an agreed or shared definition of the calling of an evangelist) is the same as the one held by the evangelists who come to train with us and join our mission community. This has led me to undertake this piece of research.

I was interested to hear evangelists share their own stories of how they came to discern their vocation, and when they realised they were called by God to be evangelists. What words would they use? Is vocation a term used mostly by the institution, or would the individual evangelists own it too? Indeed, how much would they identify themselves as evangelists, and at what point did that become part of

who they saw themselves to be? Are we able to distil the elements of an evangelistic vocation, to make it easier to recognise evangelists in our churches, and then train and release them to further walk in their calling?

The research consists of a brief literature review, surveying what has been written about discerning a vocation within the church, the role of the evangelist and how evangelists can be identified, trained and encouraged. I undertook ten interviews with Church Army evangelists, asking them to describe their discernment journey, as well as what they understand an evangelist's vocation or calling to mean, and how that looks for them in their context. I outline and justify my methodological approach in chapter 3, along with a description of my research process. Chapter 4 contains summaries of responses for each question, and chapter 5 provides some analysis of these responses under the themes of vocation, discernment, and 'evangelist'. Chapters 6 and 7 are conclusions and recommendations offered to develop and implement the findings.

## 2. Background

I commenced research with a brief survey of existing literature on this topic. As I am considering evangelists within an Anglican context, I have focussed my background reading on publications from within the Anglican communion – primarily within the Church of England. Much of the literature on the topic of vocations concerns discernment of vocation to ordained ministry – indeed, very little has been written on the nature of a specific evangelistic vocation. Currently the structures for discerning a vocation to evangelism are similar to the processes for ordained ministry, therefore much of that literature can be helpful for my research.

In this chapter I will consider the definitions and processes around three main areas: vocation, discernment, and the character and role of the evangelist.

Discussion of these themes will provide a framework and an understanding with which to interpret the data resulting from my interviews with evangelists. Each of these themes gives rise to further questions which I will mention as I go, and which have shaped the questions I have asked my interviewees.

### 2.1 Vocation

Firstly, what do we mean when we talk about a vocation? The word vocation comes from the Latin *vocare* which means ‘to call’.<sup>1</sup> In most of the literature around Christian vocations, the words ‘vocation’ and ‘calling’ are used interchangeably, with a slight tendency towards ‘vocation’ being used more when speaking of a priestly ministry (although as I have already noted, there is considerably more writing on ordained vocations than on lay vocations, so it is not possible to do a fair

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Magdalen, *Vocation: Exploring Call and Identity* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2008), p. 4.

comparison). Throughout my study I will also use 'vocation' and 'calling' to mean the same thing.

Croft and Walton frame their discussion of vocation within some teaching around Christian formation for those exploring ordained ministry in the Church of England and the Methodist Church. They point to baptism within both denominations as an expression of the calling of 'all the people of God to service and ministry'.<sup>2</sup> They claim that in baptism all are called to give their whole lives to God – and that a sense of vocation or call provides the answer to the question of 'how' to serve the Lord with our whole lives. Baptism ensures that we all start from the same point, we all in following Christ have equal calls to die to our old ways of life and to be raised with him out of the waters of baptism – subsequent callings to ministry or motherhood or medicine are not better or worse than each other – just different.<sup>3</sup>

Margaret Magdalen of the Anglican Community of St Mary the Virgin describes a calling as coming '*from someone to someone for something...[vocation] has to do with intentionality*'.<sup>4</sup> Magdalen's study describes vocation as 'a broad scope of life choices'<sup>5</sup> not limited to ministry within the church; one could claim a call to celibacy, to marriage, to school teaching or nursing, to banking or fatherhood. This book is an example of a trend towards using the word 'vocation' to refer to a follower of Christ discerning His leading or calling in a certain area of life and choosing to follow.

R. Paul Stevens wrote his influential book *The Abolition of the Laity* in 1999, and although he is not Anglican, I have included his work here because he sought to

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<sup>2</sup> Steven J. L Croft and Roger Walton, *Learning for Ministry: Making the Most of Study and Training* (London: Church House Pub., 2005), p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> Croft and Walton, *Learning* p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> Magdalen, *Vocation* p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Magdalen, *Vocation* p. 4.

reframe the thinking around vocation and to reclaim it for the whole church, not just for clergy. He explores four dimensions of calling which he has drawn from the New Testament. The first, similar to Croft and Walton, is experienced by all believers, and is 'the effectual call of Christ to become a disciple'.<sup>6</sup> The second is the 'providential call,' which refers to the elements of our life circumstances which contribute to our sense of call or purpose – our education, relationships, personality etc. The third is the 'charismatic call' or the 'sense of gifts and graces provided by God through the Spirit'.<sup>7</sup> These are both spiritual gifts and natural talents, and Stevens argues against distinguishing between the two, urging that our whole lives are spiritual, and all our giftings are spiritual/charismatic gifts. Finally, there is the 'heart call', which Stevens calls the desires given by the Spirit to orientate your life towards a specific area of service. The goal of his overall argument is to show that in the New Testament he finds no distinction between clergy and laity, and that these descriptors are harmful and prevent all of God's people from engaging in their ministry or calling. Later in the book he looks at the call of God from a slightly different angle, naming three stages. First the call to belong to God – this is a call to discipleship; second the call to be God's people in life – this is the call to holiness; finally, the call to do God's work – a call to service.<sup>8</sup> Stevens is keen to expand the definition of vocation to service beyond just 'evangelism and edification',<sup>9</sup> to include the entirety of human experience, as does Magdalen.

In 2020 The Faith and Order Commission in the Church of England released a report called *Kingdom Calling: The vocation, ministry and discipleship of the whole*

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<sup>6</sup> R. Paul Stevens, *Abolition of the Laity: Vocation Work and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (London: Paternoster Press, 2000), p. 80.

<sup>7</sup> Stevens, *Abolition* p. 81.

<sup>8</sup> Stevens, *Abolition* p. 88.

<sup>9</sup> Stevens, *Abolition* p. 88.



*people of God*.<sup>10</sup> This is the most significant source for my research as it is the most recent Anglican exploration of vocation. In it they consider a theology of vocation, which they see through three different lenses – a social vocation, a relational vocation, and a ministerial vocation. Throughout their report, they describe vocation as a ‘particular form of life-shaping commitment, entered into as part of the obedience of discipleship’.<sup>11</sup> ‘In responding to God’s call and finding our place among God’s people, we accept commitments that mark us in deep and lasting ways.’<sup>12</sup> They propose that vocation could be social – a call to a role/job within society, relational – a call to marriage, parenting, caring for parents etc, or ministerial – within the church. Again, in the same vein as Stevens, Magdalen and others, this Commission seeks to ensure that the term ‘vocation’ includes social and relational callings and not simply a calling to church ministry.

In applying these definitions of vocation to my research question considering an evangelist’s vocation, I want to understand whether the evangelists I interview view their own vocation in this way. Does it fit under a category of ministerial, relational or social vocation? Would they even refer to it as a vocation or calling, or would they use other terminology? Do they consider ‘vocation’ to primarily refer to a priestly calling, or would they confidently speak of their vocation as an evangelist, on an equal footing with a calling to ordination?

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<sup>10</sup> The Faith and Order Commission, *Kingdom Calling: The Vocation, Ministry and Discipleship of the Whole People of God*. (London: Church House Publishing, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> The Faith and Order Commission, *Kingdom Calling* p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> The Faith and Order Commission, *Kingdom Calling* p. 25.

## 2.2 Discernment

Having surveyed some of the literature around the nature of vocation, I now want to review what has been written about the process of discerning a calling or vocation. Understandably again, much of the literature in this area refers to ‘the discernment process;’ meaning the route into ordination training within the Church of England. This literature is still relevant for my study, because as well as containing some more widely applicable Christian teaching about receiving God’s direction for life, a route into licensed ministry as an evangelist with the Church of England also includes a discernment process which begins with the Diocese and concludes with Church Army. One of the questions I asked of the ten evangelists I interviewed was to ask them to describe their discernment story – how did they realise their vocation and was anyone else involved in that process (see chapter 5.2 for discussion of this).

Rev’d Andy Rider wrote a booklet in 2018 called *Life is for Giving: A Toolkit for Exploring your Calling*,<sup>13</sup> which was published by Church House and was aimed at helping people discern their next vocational steps. It is structured around four main aspects of life that Rider understands God’s voice speaking through in terms of calling – ‘your history, your present reality, your identity and the community you are part of’.<sup>14</sup> His final chapter looks at how God speaks directly, through His word, His Son, His Spirit, the sacraments, His creation, and His people. He urges the reader to take a step back and consider all these aspects of life – their upbringing, their giftings and personality, their life story, as well as listening for God speaking to them directly. I want to focus on the role that other people play in the discerning of a vocation. The discernment process for entry to training with Church Army draws on

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<sup>13</sup> Andy Rider and Jo Bailey Wells, *Life Is for Giving: A Toolkit for Exploring Your Calling* (London: Church House Publishing, 2018).

<sup>14</sup> Rider and Wells, *Life is for giving* p. 5.

written references from many different people, including an incumbent, a Diocesan Director of Ordinands (DDO) or another member of the Diocesan Vocations team, a mature Christian reference, a member of the Church Army Mission Community that has done an initial interview with the candidate, as well as someone who has benefitted from their evangelism directly. These reference forms ask for the referee to comment on the candidate's calling to evangelistic ministry. The voice of others clearly forms an important part of discerning a vocation – our interdependent nature as the body of Christ and as a community of believers should lead us to expect those around us to speak into our lives and our futures, and perhaps see things in us that we do not currently see.

Croft and Walton propose that the call of the Christian community plays a major role for an individual discerning a ministerial vocation. They point to the Biblical stories of Saul appointed as King of Israel, the selection of Mathias by the disciples, Paul and Barnabas appointing elders, and more.<sup>15</sup> They claim that in these stories the individuals had a willingness to serve, and some degree of calling, but 'the major emphasis in each account is on the Church recognizing a need and nominating suitable people to meet that need'.<sup>16</sup> This leads me to ask whether this is true today for those discerning a call to evangelism; do we hear the voice of the wider community 'nominating' someone for recognised ministry? See chapter 5.2 for exploration of this.

Greg Ogden describes three elements often found by an individual discerning a call from God. They are a sense of inner 'oughtness', an awareness that the call is bigger than ourselves, and a knowledge that that which you are being called to

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<sup>15</sup> Croft and Walton, *Learning* p. 63.

<sup>16</sup> Croft and Walton, *Learning* p. 63.

brings a strong sense of satisfaction and great joy.<sup>17</sup> This echoes words of Buechner, who described following God's call taking you to a place 'where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.'<sup>18</sup> These elements could be presented in the form of a Venn diagram – with vocation being the crossover centre between a joyful feeling of being made for something (and perhaps enjoying being good at that thing), and meeting a need within the world. In the case of an evangelist's vocation, the world needs to hear the gospel and people given an opportunity to 'come under the rule of God,'<sup>19</sup> (Tomlin's definition of evangelism), and evangelists have embraced a particular call to communicate the gospel to the world around them.

Very often when we speak of Christian vocation it is accompanied by an encouragement to 'test' the sense of calling. Testing the call is understood to be part of the discernment process, the purpose being to try and make sure that God's will is being perceived rather than purely the desire or will of the individual. Magdalen describes testing a call as, 'looking at it from every angle,' but that 'even when all the 'pros' and 'cons' have been weighed up, it is still a huge step of faith'.<sup>20</sup> She proposes that part of that step of faith is to test the sense of call with others whom we trust, who know us in different contexts. There is little else in the literature which describes 'testing' as a separate process from 'discerning,' so I have taken the two terms to be synonymous. However, I did ask two separate questions of my interviewees – one on discerning vocation and one on testing vocation (see Appendix 1), as I was interested to understand whether these evangelists ascribed differing meanings to the two words.

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<sup>17</sup> Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1990), p. 209.

<sup>18</sup> Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (London: Collins, 1973), p. 95.

<sup>19</sup> Graham Tomlin, *The Provocative Church: With Study Guide* (London: SPCK, 2004), p. 64.

<sup>20</sup> Magdalen, *Vocation* p. 13.

The final element of discernment which I will discuss here is the importance of external recognition. I have already referenced Croft and Walton and their emphasis on the role of the Christian community in encouraging individuals in their vocation. What about the voice of the Christian institution? Certainly, an element of discerning or testing a ministerial vocation is to enter into a formal process with an institution; in this case the Anglican Church and then Church Army. In his chapter on training evangelists in *Anglican Evangelists*, Greg Downes writes, 'For many evangelists the call to be an evangelist does not come from an inner voice, but from external recognition'.<sup>21</sup> This informed my question to my interviewees about who else was involved in their discernment journey – I was curious to know whether any of them had had their calling pointed out by other people, and more importantly for this study, how much value the evangelists placed on the recognition/affirmation of Church Army with regards to their vocation (see chapter 5.2 for this analysis).

### **2.3 Evangelist**

It is important to consider what we mean by the word 'evangelist'. Here I will provide some of the more prominent definitions and characteristics of evangelists from the literature, as well as the role played by evangelists in ministry with the Anglican church. As my research was about how evangelists viewed themselves and their journey of vocation and calling, I asked them to tell me what was distinctive about the vocation of the evangelist. I compare their responses with the definitions from the literature in chapter 5.3, along with some comment as to why there may be differences in understanding.

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<sup>21</sup> Martyn Snow, *Anglican Evangelists: Identifying and Training a New Generation* (London: SPCK, 2019), p. 109.

At the end of the Decade of Evangelism, a working party from the House of Bishops produced a report entitled *Good News People*, the aim of which was to consider the office of evangelist within the Anglican church, and to raise the possibility for and profile of diocesan evangelists. This report provided a brief history of the usage of the word 'evangelist'. It is used three times in the New Testament: in Acts 21:8 to refer to Philip the evangelist, in Ephesians 4:11 as one of the five-fold gifts of Christ to the Church, and in 2 Timothy 4:5, where Paul urges Timothy to do the work of an evangelist.<sup>22</sup> Whilst we can be sure that evangelism was taking place throughout early Church History as evidenced by the growth and spread of the church, the writers of *Good News People* found that within the era of the Church Fathers there is no evidence of a specific office of evangelist. They describe the Celtic monasteries sending out '*perigrinati*' (wanderers) to evangelise unreached areas, and similarly Dominican and Franciscan friars as evangelists of Europe and beyond from the thirteenth century.<sup>23</sup> The report then traces the development in usage of the word through the history of various other Christian denominations, where it enjoyed more widespread use than in the Anglican church; we find 'evangelist' used more widely within Church of England reports from around 1860. The formation of Church Army by Wilson Carile as a Society of Anglican Evangelists in 1882 introduced a pathway to licensed ministry for evangelists which continues to this day. *Good News People* argues that 'evangelist' is 'a New Testament word, which need to be rescued from caricature and honoured'.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Church of England, House of Bishops, and Working Party, *Good News People: Recognizing Diocesan Evangelists ; a Report of a Working Party of the House of Bishops*. (London: Church House Pub., 1999), p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> Church of England, House of Bishops, and Working Party, *Good News People* p. 41.

<sup>24</sup> Church of England, House of Bishops, and Working Party, *Good News People* p. 44.

## 2.4 Definitions

Given that there are just three uses of the word in the New Testament, and its meanings and connotations have shifted and altered through church tradition, it can be difficult to give a precise definition of an evangelist. I will give a few lists of characteristics of/activities undertaken by evangelists found in the prominent Anglican publications<sup>25</sup> here.

From Church Army's Vocations Booklet:

- Do you have a passion to bring people to a living faith in Jesus Christ?
- Are you committed to building community and sharing the Christian faith through words and action in a variety of contexts?
- Do you feel called to be part of a community of commissioned evangelists who are transforming lives and neighbourhoods?<sup>26</sup>

From the Church of England's Vocations Website:

An evangelist is someone called and equipped by God to share the good news of Jesus. Their main role is to lead people into the presence of Jesus to start following and serving him. They are people who can connect faith and people's lives in a way that makes sense to people, whether through public talks or individual conversations. Evangelists spend much of their time with those outside the church and are always on the lookout for other evangelists they can raise up. It is more than being a good communicator or an engaging personality, it is about the gift of God working in and through the person.<sup>27</sup>

From *Good News People*:

Someone who:

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<sup>25</sup> I have chosen these sources because they are most likely to have been seen as part of the discernment journey of those who I have interviewed, or they have influenced the perception of evangelists within the Anglican Church in the last 20 years.

<sup>26</sup> 'Dare to Step Out? - Church Army Vocations Booklet', p. 4 <<https://www.churcharmy.org/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=194984>> [accessed 26 April 2021].

<sup>27</sup> 'No Ordinary Ministry', *The Church of England* <<https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/vocations/no-ordinary-ministry>> [accessed 26 April 2021].

- Goes where the church is not;
- Proclaims and lives the gospel: the way in which this 'proclamation' takes place is essentially contextual, and is by no means limited to preaching or even to verbal communication;
- Interprets the Church to the world and the world to the Church;
- Comes from the centre of the Church and feeds from its riches and is accountable to it as well as challenging it;
- Encourages the whole Church in its work of evangelism, not least by communicating the gospel to those inside as well as outside the Church.<sup>28</sup>

From *The Work and Office of an Evangelist*, by Church Army Evangelist David

Sanderson:

An evangelist, then, is a member of the Christian community, and agent for change and a pioneer in and a focus for evangelism. An evangelist takes initiatives in communicating the story of Jesus to those who are not Christian believers. He or she will apply that story in ways appropriate to the particular situation, call for Christ-centred change in the lives of the hearers and invite them to enter the gospel community.<sup>29</sup>

Sanderson also advocates for evangelists to be understood as pioneers who break new ground with the gospel.<sup>30</sup> This is an aspect which Daniel Cozens notes is 'completely absent'<sup>31</sup> from the *Good News People* report, and one which urgently needs to be recovered. For Cozens, evangelists are pioneers, in that:

- They are preachers 'out there,' beyond the building. They are committed to the church, yet they are often loners, because they will go and pioneer preaching whether or not the church comes with them.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Church of England, House of Bishops, and Working Party, *Good News People* pp. 47–48.

<sup>29</sup> David Sanderson, *The Work and Office of an Evangelist* (Bramcote, Notts.: Grove Books, 1995), p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Sanderson, *Evangelist*, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> David Jeans and others, *Affirming the Evangelist: Responses to Good News People* (Cambridge: Grove, 2000), p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> Jeans and others, *Affirming* p. 16.



- They create new initiatives for the gospel, finding solutions for problems and obstacles they face in their ministry and adapting to changes in context and culture.<sup>33</sup>
- They create other people's ministries – recognizing the evangelists around them and encouraging, training and releasing them.<sup>34</sup>

At the beginning of *Anglican Evangelists*, Martyn Snow writes,

The gift of the evangelist is as much about equipping the saints in their witness as it is about proclaiming the Gospel to those who have never heard. The task of witnessing to God's kingdom and of helping all people hear God's call is a commission given to the whole church. Yet evangelists have a specific calling and gifting to set an example and equip the church for this work.<sup>35</sup>

This is drawn from the passage in Ephesians 4 describing the five-fold giftings to the church, and led me to ask the ten evangelists I interviewed to tell me how they see their vocation as evangelists as distinctive from the call of all believers to be witnesses to Christ and to share their faith with those around them. The other question raised for my research by this definition of evangelist, is that I wondered how many of them saw their vocation as a gift to the church as much as a call to the unchurched (see chapter 5.3 for exploration of this).

Although not from a predominantly Anglican context, Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch have been influential in missiology and teaching on evangelism in the last twenty years. Their argument for a five-fold understanding of leadership and ministry within the church (referred to as APEPT or APEST – Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor/Shepherd, Teacher) seeks to view these ministries not as distinct offices

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<sup>33</sup> Jeans and others, *Affirming* pp. 16–17.

<sup>34</sup> Jeans and others, *Affirming* p. 18.

<sup>35</sup> Snow, *Anglican Evangelists* p. 5.

within the church but as functions.<sup>36</sup> The difference here is that an office within the church is fulfilled by a specific individual, whereas a function is part of the ministry of the whole church, fulfilled by anyone/everyone. They propose a two-dimensional reading of the APEST functions – so for example, the whole church is to be evangelistic, prophetic, pastoral etc, but some will be called as evangelists, prophets, and pastors. In their perspective, the definition of the evangelist is ‘one who recruits.’<sup>37</sup> I felt it was important to be aware of this way of understanding the role of evangelist as function rather than office, as I anticipated some of my interviewees may see their own calling in terms of more than one function; a pastoral evangelist or a prophetic evangelist for example. See Chapter 5.1 for an example of this.

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publ, 2004), p. 168.

<sup>37</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping*, p. 170.

### 3. Methodology & Method

In designing my research, I opted to gather qualitative data using semi-structured interviews, and to interpret the data using a loosely narrative approach. The analysis of stories and narratives can provide a holistic view of the data from the beginning of the research project,<sup>38</sup> especially as respondents in a semi-structured/unstructured interview will often provide a narrative response to the questions asked. Punch writes, 'There is a storied character to much qualitative data,'<sup>39</sup> and this approach became the even clearer choice of methodology to use once I decided to ask each evangelist to literally tell their story of discerning their calling. Saldaña suggests that narrative analysis is 'particularly suitable for such inquiries as identity development,'<sup>40</sup> and again, this seemed the most appropriate approach given that I was seeking to understand how the respondents saw themselves in their calling, and at what point in their journey did they identify themselves as evangelists.

#### The Researcher

As an employee of the Church Army and a member of the Church Army Mission Community, even though I undertook this research as part of my independent studies, I was still a 'Practitioner-Researcher.' One of the disadvantages of this position compared with an 'outside' researcher, as described by Robson, is that 'the insider may have preconceptions about issues, solutions'.<sup>41</sup> In my situation I needed to be aware of my preconceived ideas about what constituted an evangelist's vocation, including any judgements of 'right' or 'wrong' answers to that question. My

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<sup>38</sup> Keith Punch, *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, 2nd ed (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2005), p. 217.

<sup>39</sup> Punch, *Introduction to Social Research*, p. 217.

<sup>40</sup> Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 3E [Third edition] (Los Angeles ; London: SAGE, 2016), p. 155.

<sup>41</sup> Colin Robson, *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers*, 1. published, reprinted (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 447.

previous involvement in discernment panels with Church Army's vocations process had trained my ears to prick up at certain words or phrases when we asked them to describe their sense of calling to evangelism and to Church Army, so I tried to design my questions to be open and not leading in a particular direction. There were also some clear advantages to my being a practitioner-researcher, and one of them listed by Robson resonated with me strongly; 'you will have a pre-existing knowledge and experience base about the situation and the people involved'.<sup>42</sup> It was my pre-existing knowledge and experience of the situation which sparked my curiosity to ask the question in the first place, and helped me to focus my questions in the interviews to try and get to the heart of how evangelists view themselves and their vocational journey.

The most important element of my role as practitioner-researcher in this context was my job as Tutor on the training team; by choosing to interview evangelists who commenced training between 2016 and 2020, there was a strong possibility that I could end up interviewing current trainees, with whom I have a tutor/tutee relationship. I made it clear on the Research Participant Information Sheet that, "you are under no pressure to take part, and whether you do or not will have no bearing on your training or employment with Church Army" (See Appendix 2). At the beginning of each interview I reiterated this point, reassuring them that I was not acting in my role as Tutor, but as a student researcher looking to learn about vocation amongst evangelists.

My prior knowledge of and interactions with the evangelists prevented me from being fully objective in my research; so, in order to remove bias in my analysis I used only the answers given to me in the interview; I did not bring in any other prior

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<sup>42</sup> Robson, *Real Word Research* p. 447.

knowledge I may or may not have had about the respondents (as some of them I knew better than others). The fact that I was known to them beforehand may have led them to respond positively to the invitation to take part, and could have influenced how much they were willing to share with me during the interview. Using semi-structured interview questions, I asked all of them the same eleven questions, but I also had the scope to ask follow-up or clarification questions too.<sup>43</sup>

### **Permission**

As I was undertaking this research as a piece of independent study for a qualification external to Church Army, I wrote to Church Army's Senior Leadership Team to request permission. I provided my dissertation proposal form, ethics form, a copy of the research participant information sheet and consent form, and a cover letter. I was granted permission to undertake the research and to use contact information available to members of the Mission Community (which I am one) to contact evangelists and ask them to take part. Church Army asked me to provide them with a two-page summary report of my findings, to be presented to their management group on completion of my studies.

### **Selection**

I decided to interview evangelists who had started their training with Church Army in the last five years: – this is a total of forty-one people. I made this decision because this would mean that they were familiar with the current vocations material, and they would be more likely to accurately recall and speak of their vocational journey than someone who trained twenty years ago. Church Army encourages our evangelists that the journey of discerning calling or vocation does not stop once they are accepted to train, or even once they are commissioned and licensed. Anyone in

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<sup>43</sup> Robson, *Real World Research* p. 231.

ministry, indeed any disciple of Christ should continually seek His leading and directing in their vocation. By limiting my research to only those who have recently trained/are still training, I did forsake the stories of those for whom the vocational journey had been life-long, weighted more heavily on the years post-commissioning. This would make an interesting development of the research/ follow-up study.

I chose to interview ten, as a manageable number for a project of this size, and this would give me data representing almost a quarter of that group. I took the forty-one names and randomised them, selecting every fourth name and emailing them to ask them to participate, providing them with a Research Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 2). I had eight positive responses at first, and two people say no – so I moved down the list to the next two names, and they each responded with a yes. I gained signed consent forms (see Appendix 3 for blank consent form) from each person, and scheduled Zoom meetings with each of them individually.

### **Process**

Whereas I would have preferred to have done the interviews face-to-face, the project took place during the COVID-19 pandemic so I was forced to use Zoom. I scheduled the interviews around nine or ten months into the lockdown restrictions, so all of my respondents were comfortable with Zoom by that point, having had to use it for work, church, training etc.

Each interview lasted around forty-five minutes, with the shortest at thirty-five and longest at fifty-five. At the end of each one I thanked them for taking part and told them that I would keep them informed as I did the write-up, especially with my conclusions and recommendations for Church Army.

Having completed all ten interviews, I went back through the notes and recordings and filled in a spreadsheet with key words and themes highlighted, to help with my analysis. I was particularly interested in what words they used (or omitted) from their stories of discerning vocation and their descriptions of the evangelist's role and calling.

As I told participants that I would keep them anonymous; it is not appropriate for me to include verbatim transcripts as an appendix to this report, but I will introduce them and their pseudonyms in Table 1.

<b><u>Evangelist</u></b>	<b><u>Age</u></b>	<b><u>Gender</u></b>	<b><u>Region</u></b>	<b><u>Ministry Context</u></b>
<b>A</b>				
<b>B</b>				
<b>C</b>				
<b>D</b>				
<b>E</b>				
<b>F</b>				
<b>G</b>				
<b>H</b>				
<b>I</b>				
<b>J</b>				

Table 1.

Here are the questions I asked of each person:

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Region
4. Ministry Context – Urban/suburban/rural
5. Please tell me about what you understand by the Vocation or Calling to be an Evangelist.
6. What is distinctive about that vocation?

7. When and how did you first realise your vocation?
8. Was there anyone else involved in that process? Who? Did someone else recognise/affirm your vocation before you did?
9. Did you do any “testing” of your calling? How?
10. Tell me about growing into your calling – research, study, talking with others etc.
11. What would you do for someone in your context in whom you saw the same calling?

I let the evangelist lead the conversation: – for example, a few of them when I asked question five looking for what they understood about vocation or calling, started to tell me the story of their journey, answering question seven. Rather than interrupt at this point, I took note of their answer and then repeated question five, but rephrased it to make it more clearly about what they understand ‘vocation’ to mean. It was more important for them to relax into the interview and give an honest account of their vocational journey than it was for me to ask the questions in the right order.

Their responses to questions one to four can be seen in Table 1. I will go through the answers to questions five to eleven next, pulling out some of the more common answers. Then in chapter 5 I will consider a few key themes which emerged from the whole picture before I close with some conclusions and recommendations.



## 4. Responses and exploration

### 4.1 Question 5

When asked what they understand by the vocation/calling of the evangelist, all ten evangelists referred to God as the source of the calling or gifting.

*“Seeking what God wanted me to do.” (C)*

*“A strong sense of being called to something, of God’s calling. External spiritual persuasion.” (D)*

*“Something you’re chosen for.” (F)*

*“Recognising one of the primary calls God has given on my life.” (I)*

While this might seem like an obvious observation, it is worth mentioning as it shows that they all understood that God is the one who calls, their vocation begins with Him and they could attribute it as coming from Him in their own lives.

Two of the evangelists in the Republic of Ireland raised the fact that for them in the Church of Ireland, ‘vocation’ usually refers to ordination. One Irish evangelist described the way that he has heard the word ‘vocation’, that it is sometimes used as an excuse for a lack of accountability, i.e., if you have been called by God you need not be accountable to man.

Half of them used the word ‘gift’ when talking of vocation or calling, and four of these spoke of the gift in terms of the five-fold giftings described by Paul in Ephesians 4. In particular, Evangelists E, H and J framed the majority of their responses around their understanding of the evangelist as one of the five-fold gifts/vocations.

In their understanding of vocation, a different five of the evangelists included descriptions of character or personality, or words associated with identity.

*“It is who I am, my identity, its completely who I am.” (A)*

*“This is who I am. The joy of being who you are. A definite, absolute certainty this is what I’m called to do.” (F)*

*“Someone’s character, who God has made them to be, should provide a floor, a foundation for a sense of vocation to flow from.” (H)*

Three of them answered with a particular fervour and enthusiasm, speaking of heart or passion: *“a heartfelt need to acknowledge...” (A)* *“your heart’s cry, your heart’s desire. The leading beat of your heart. You’re an evangelist because your heart burns for salvation.” (I)* *“Passionate about...” (J)* This strikes me as evidence of what Stevens describes as the ‘heart call’<sup>44</sup> (see chapter 2.1).

#### **4.2 Question 6**

Answers to questions five and six merged into each other somewhat, but here are some of the responses to questions six – what is distinctive about the evangelist’s calling?

All ten evangelists mentioned speaking of Jesus, or sharing the gospel, and they all said this was for people who do not yet know Jesus, or who are “lost,” or are outside of the church. Five of them said that this was not limited to proclamation:

*“Action as well as spoken word,” (E)* *“Not just verbal, but living life as an example, like Christ,” (G)* *“Go around doing good,” (F)* *“Through lifestyle,” (J)* *“The way they live their lives.” (H)*

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<sup>44</sup> Stevens, *Abolition* p. 81.

Six of the evangelists saw part of the calling of an evangelist as being for the church, perhaps stemming from the Ephesians 4 passage and an understanding of the five-fold giftings being for the building up of the church (Evangelist H made the direct link to this scripture in his answer). In their own words:

*“Part of the evangelist’s role is to motivate the church to get out there...to help believers realise the treasure they have, is worth everything.”* (D)

*“Particular gift to enable others in evangelism.”* (E)

*“Voice in the church, [saying] we could do better here.”* (F)

*“Discipling people to be evangelistic...runs ahead...out in front, encourage the body how to do it better.”* (I)

Three evangelists in their answer to this question compared the evangelist’s vocation to that of a priest or ordained minister, and all three framed the ordained vocation as being constrained, trapped by buildings or *“liturgical stuff”*. Their perception was that evangelists were more free, with one commenting, *“evangelists can go more places, I’m allowed to share my past, my vulnerability”*. (A)

Further to this, seven out of the ten evangelists spoke of some tension or difficulty with ‘the church’. This ranged from two of them describing the evangelist as having an *“irritant voice/irritant prophetic voice,”* (with this being part of what they are called to by God, not a negative aspect which needs to be addressed/changed), to, *“they’re a misunderstood breed. A lot of churches see them (evangelists) as a threat – they are challenged in their comfortableness”*. (D)

*“We want to give away our faith. That rubs up against the maintenance aspect of church in a way that’s uncomfortable...something a bit*

*rebellious, countercultural. Evangelist as a gifting is inadequately recognised, not historically well affirmed.” (E)*

*[An] “Evangelist will talk about hell, judgement, sin, get people off the fence. Church doesn’t like that.” (I)*

When speaking of the distinctiveness of the evangelist’s vocation, two responses included some of the specific struggle or challenge that accompanies the call.

*“The ability to deal with loneliness, sustain in the wilderness, like John the Baptist living in the desert.” (B)*

*“Maybe the evangelist has a different expectation around the challenge and quality of suffering for being willing to share the message.” (H)*

Many of them addressed the difference between the call on every follower of Christ to witness to their faith and to go and make disciples, and the specific vocation held by some to be evangelists. Evangelist B said, *“sometimes capability can be seen as call,”* and others agreed that perhaps if you were regularly and confidently sharing the gospel and people were coming to faith, this was a sign of a vocation. Evangelist I commented, *“If evangelism is a gift, it’s a gift anyone can operate in. Everyone can be evangelistic, but the evangelist doesn’t need a prompt”*. Some of them saw evangelists as the leaders in evangelism amongst the church, shaping the way outreach is done and training others in the church, and for some of the respondents this was directly linked to the Ephesians 4 understanding of gifting.

Evangelist J was the only one who communicated the view that among the five-fold giftings someone may have a primary calling as an evangelist, but *“at different times of life or in different contexts you could embrace all five”*. He mentioned later in the interview that he has been particularly influenced by Frost and Hirsch’s writings on APEST/five-fold ministry, and this is their view too.

### 4.3 Question 7

Question seven asks when and how they first realised their calling, and rather than re-telling their stories here, I will draw out some of the similarities and differences between the ten responses.

For three of them, their journey of growing in a sense of calling to evangelism was inextricably linked to and entwined with their journey of coming to faith in Christ. These three became Christians as adults, and their evangelism began almost straight away, by sharing their new faith with those around them.

*“My transformation was very fast. I wanted people to know.” (A)*

*“When I first became a Christian, I wanted to tell everyone about it. I always used to try and witness to friends and family. I realised that not many people knew about the Christian faith.” (D)*

*“Four months after following Christ, after receiving some prayer I had a dramatic transformation overnight. I wanted young people to know the hope I’d found. I felt an absolute call to bring hope and love.” (J)*

None of the other seven had a sudden realisation that they were called to be evangelists, and for some of them it was a very gradual process.

*“It’s been a journey of discovery for me...I’m still owning the journey.”*  
(E)

*“It came bit by bit, little by little.” (F)*

For many of these evangelists, the beginning of their discernment journey was with a sense of call to ‘ministry’ in some form, so this led to considering ordination as an option. In fact, for seven of the ten I interviewed, they had had ordination training suggested to them by their church or Diocese, with some being encouraged more strongly than others in that direction.

*“The Bishop encouraged me to explore ordination, but that wasn’t something I ever felt called to.” (C)*

*“I was told by the DDO (Diocesan Director of Ordinands) they’d be happy to train me as a vicar but they weren’t sure that was my calling.” (D)*

*“I went to an information weekend for ordination, but that didn’t fit.” (G)*

*“I discerned a call to leadership in the church, but I wasn’t comfortable with a vicar role. The Church of Ireland doesn’t have a Pioneer Ordinand Route. The DDO suggested Church Army.” (H)*

*“Training as a priest is a defined pathway. I had no peace about that route.” (I)*

*“I wondered about being a priest, but no.” (J)*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, all ten evangelists mentioned Church Army at some point in their story of discerning vocation; but for some of them Church Army’s discernment process played a more significant role than for others.

*“I felt the first panel didn’t go well, and then I realised my hunger had increased for this to be it.” (B)*

*“When I heard the Church Army guys explain what they were about, every fibre of my body became kind of active, excited. That’s what I’m called to be, that was what floated my boat.” (D)*

*“The 18 months in the Church Army discernment process was like confirmation...Church Army was a really good fit.” (G)*

I was particularly interested to discover whether these evangelists would have used the word ‘evangelist’ to refer to themselves, and if so, at what point in the journey did they see themselves as an evangelist? There were a variety of responses:

*"[on investigating training] I realised I'd been an evangelist, but I didn't know that word." (A)*

*"At what point do you start using that language ['evangelist']?" (B)*

*"Only recently could I tell you I'm an evangelist." (E)*

*"I was doing the work, I didn't actually realise what I was. I never saw myself as an evangelist, it was just a natural outworking of my faith in different contexts." (F)*

*"At church [as a young adult] people saw that I liked to connect with people, I was natural. I didn't know the word evangelist...[now] I've never seen myself as a 'traditional' evangelist, I'm far too thin-skinned. But an evangelist can look like many things..." (I)*

*"I would have used the word 'call' [soon after conversion] but not 'evangelist' until a year later." (J)*

None of the ten evangelists I interviewed said that they knew they were evangelists (with a certainty or confidence in using that word in self-understanding) at an early stage in their vocational journey. It seems that even those who had a strong conviction/sensed a strong call to share the gospel soon after their conversion would not have started identifying themselves as 'evangelists' until later.

#### **4.4 Question 8**

Question eight asked who else was involved in their discernment of vocation as an evangelist, and whether someone else suggested to them that they were an evangelist before they realised it themselves. Among the responses, three evangelists mentioned existing Church Army evangelists or employees, five of them said that their vicar or minister encouraged them towards evangelism as a vocation, and two of them mentioned their Bishop as playing a key role in affirming their call. Four evangelists referenced friends/lay members of their congregation/people who

heard them speak in their answers to this question. Evangelist E described quite a lonely and difficult journey in discovering her vocation and answered, *“No-one ever suggested to me that I might be an evangelist”*. She named some individuals who were influential in her faith journey, but for her it was going through the discernment process with Church Army and beginning her training which confirmed her sense of call. *“The affirmation of the panel...the institution recognises you...Being part of a community of evangelists is a homecoming experience. Realising you’re not alone in the world after the experience of being rejected by churches.”*

#### **4.5 Question 9. & 10.**

Questions nine and ten were often combined in my interviews, as they seemed to flow well one from the other. Also, by this point in the interview I had heard their discernment story; so, I had already picked up on whether or not their journey included a time of testing calling and/or growing in their understanding of their call. Therefore, I tended to ask the questions together, as a way of allowing the evangelists to reflect on their story from another angle and fill in any gaps/give me any information about areas they had not yet spoken about.

Six of the ten evangelists said that they did not do any ‘testing’ of their calling, for a variety of different reasons. Evangelist J said that he felt that everything he had done in ministry showed that God had been leading and guiding him in this direction, giving him opportunities.

*“I haven’t felt the need to test [the call]. I did however, test whether to explore Church Army. I went on a discovery day and asked God to make me feel uncomfortable if it wasn’t right – I felt comfortable right away, made friends, it was a very natural fit.”*



Evangelist D said he did not need to test his call because he was doing evangelism anyway: – his understanding being that a way of testing out whether you are an evangelist or not would be to do some evangelism and see if it is a vocational fit. His motivation for sharing the gospel was an *“urgency in wanting others to know and experience the love of Christ – everyone,”* rather than trying to determine whether he was called to it. In answer to this question, Evangelist I said,

*“If it’s a vocation, it’s just naturally there anyway. Either there is fire in your heart or not. I’ve never looked to define myself as an evangelist, I’m just desperate to see people saved, healed, set free, delivered.”*

Again, similarly to Evangelist D, he wasn’t concerned with giving his calling a name or a title as such, nor was he concerned with the recognition of the institution; he simply wanted to tell people about Jesus.

Evangelist G also answered no to this question; she did not do any testing of her vocation; but her reason was that *“If God calls you, you have to answer his call”*. She believed she had heard God and been called by him, therefore her decision to pursue that vocation by seeking training and commissioning from Church Army was an act of obedience in response to the call. She did not say so explicitly, but I gained the sense that for her, testing the call would have meant delaying the response, and therefore may have communicated a lack of trust in the call and the One who called.

The only evangelist who responded with a ‘Yes’ and could definitely identify a period of testing the call was Evangelist H.

*“It was probably a decade of testing, wrestling with the institutional nature of it. I’d discerned God’s call to a context and a place, but there*

*was discomfort at not fitting with the institution. Holding to a call which can be uncomfortable.”*

His primary sense of call was to reach out to those who were not yet following Christ in his part of the Republic of Ireland, and perhaps would have trained for ordained ministry had there been the option to become a pioneer ordinand within the Church of Ireland. So, his challenge was to remain faithful to God’s call to him to minister in that particular geographical location, while discerning what that meant for him within the institution.

A couple of the evangelists spoke of receiving ‘confirmation’ of their calling, or confirmation that they were doing the ‘right’ thing by pursuing training with Church Army. They mentioned that this occurred by receiving a prophetic word from someone at church, or by reading a particular passage of scripture at the right moment, or another kind of ‘sign’ that they were on the right path. Evangelist B said of these confirmations that they *“give you legs to keep going [in ministry], not thinking about the church roof”*. Evangelist F described how everything in her life seemed to come together at the point of considering Church Army training, a feeling like her life led up to that moment. *“Life experience, and ministry experience, and giftings. I didn’t realise I was an evangelist, a pioneer. All the pieces fell into place.”*

When it comes to growing a sense of call or nurturing vocation, many of the evangelists talked about what they had read or listened to.

*“I was reading books to understand how to communicate the gospel better.” (D)*

*“Training to become more effective; learn different [evangelism] styles and strategies.” (G)*

*“Read some stuff by Vaughan Roberts, Tim Keller etc, as well as some apologists – setting evangelism in the interface between faith and culture.” (H)*

*“Read revivalists of old...people that saw the miraculous happen. Smith Wigglesworth would probably be my biggest inspiration to date.” (I)*

*“The particular writer who has informed me the most certainly over the last ten years is Alan Hirsch.” (J)*

#### **4.6 Question 11.**

The final question in the interview asked if they saw someone in their church/ministry who had the same calling as them, what would they do for them? I asked this as it slightly reframed the questions of what is distinctive about an evangelist and what was their vocational journey, by getting them to think about someone else rather than themselves and their own experiences. I wondered whether this would cause some of the evangelists to reflect on what they wish was different about their own discernment journeys, perhaps avoiding the blips/struggles/delays – passing on their wisdom and looking to make the journey easier for those who come after them.

In thinking about how they might recognise an evangelist’s calling in someone they were working with, some of them provided some new insights into what an evangelist is like/what they are looking for in someone:

*“Someone humble, doing quiet things on the periphery. The gate-keeper, the glue in the community. There’s a perception that evangelists are gobby, always talking to people they don’t know.” (A)*

*“Someone dissatisfied with the status quo. Its easy to spot the bold ones, but there are others – those whose faith informs who they are beyond Sunday. Relational, gatherers of people.” (B)*

*“I spot the same disgruntlement that I recognised in me. Dissatisfaction with church because it hasn’t got everybody in it. Someone not satisfied with maintenance.” (E)*

*“Are they outward-looking? Are they speaking at every opportunity to tell people about God? Do they have passion, are they at outreach events, are they a people person?” (G)*

*“People who are not embarrassed by the gospel, who have an integrated life of faith. Inclination and ability.” (H)*

*“People who have joined in with everything I’ve done; listened, engaged, invited others. Even before they’ve committed their lives to Christ they’re telling others.” (J)*

The most popular response to what they would do for someone who they thought might be an evangelist, was to do some kind of mission or evangelism together.

*“Do something together. Hang out, get inspired, sharpen each other. With evangelism you can read books and listen to talks, but the best way to learn is to jump into the water and do it.” (I)*

*“It would be fantastic to find someone else likeminded! Would be company for me. We could support each other, work together, be better and more effective together.” (G)*

*“Raise people up locally and equip them – let’s try things and see what works.” (F)*

*“Bring them onto the team, enabling them.” (E)*

Almost all spoke of encouraging, getting alongside, releasing them and giving them permission and opportunities, investing in them. Alongside this, four of their answers mentioned Church Army in some way, usually that they would recommend getting in touch with Church Army and considering entering the discernment process or at least finding out some more information about what it entails.

Here are a few of the other interesting responses:

*“Having an awareness of church structure is key – to allow them to be able to speak what’s on their hearts, openly.” (A)*

*“I may recommend Church Army. But sometimes the gap is too broad between a person’s circumstances and an Anglican Evangelist’s license.” (B)*

*“I’d make sure they know that there were more options than just ordination and lay reader.” (C)*

*“I’d get them to explore whether they want to do it full-time. Whether they want to expand their gift in some way. Mostly I’d say don’t leave it, don’t be put off or distracted.” (D)*

*“I would use the label ‘evangelist’ if it made a difference to that person.” (E)*

*“I’d get alongside, give them opportunities – what people have done for me. Honour them and value them.” (J)*

In the next chapter I will offer further comment on these responses and provide some analysis of the data collected in the interviews.

## 5. Analysis

I thoroughly enjoyed speaking with these evangelists and hearing their stories. They were remarkably open and honest with me, especially in describing some of the challenges and obstacles they have faced along the way.

One of the main things that I observed was just how different their stories were from each other. Some of them had been around church and ministry for a long time, others were new to faith and new to ministry. Some of them had had positive experiences of discerning vocation, and had been encouraged, nurtured and honoured by their churches and Dioceses. Others described more of a struggle, a feeling of loneliness and of being quite deeply misunderstood by others in the church. In terms of evangelism, while they all pointed to the outward-looking nature of evangelists and the need to share the good news of Christ, between them they emphasised different aspects of the gospel in their evangelism, and even revealed differing motivations which drive them.

I was not surprised by their differences – I have been working with Church Army for over nine years and I have come to appreciate the amazing breadth and diversity among our evangelists. As I mentioned at the start of this piece of research, one of my main motivations for asking this question was an observation of a disparity in understanding of what vocation means between the institution and the evangelists and between evangelists themselves. What I saw in my interviews was a broader understanding of vocation amongst the evangelists, and a distinction between those who saw their vocation as part of their identity and personality, and those who saw it as very closely linked to the institution of the Church or Church Army.

In order to make further comment on the data, I will structure my analysis and conclusions around the same themes that I began with in my literature review and definitions: vocation, discernment and the term 'evangelist'.<sup>45</sup> I will reflect on the evangelists' responses and comments on each of these areas, comparing with what I found in the literature on these topics. I will finish with some recommendations for Church Army and for further research in this area.

## 5.1 Vocation

Much of the writing about vocation in the last decade or so has sought to frame the discussion around vocation in a way which dispenses with any notions of hierarchy, wanting to dispel the idea that a calling to priesthood is higher than a calling to be a schoolteacher or a police officer. In David Heywood's latest book about ministerial formation, he voices his support for the section of *Setting God's People Free* Report from Archbishops' Council, which states:

Until the laity 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.<sup>46</sup>

The key point here is that baptismal mutuality is the basis of an understanding of vocation that does away with hierarchical connotations attached to some areas of ministry. As I mentioned in chapter 2.2, writers like Croft and Walton also sought to affirm that our primary place of vocation and calling is found in baptism; and in this all believers are equal. None of the evangelists that I interviewed mentioned baptism anywhere in their responses to do with their vocation. This could be due to the way

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<sup>45</sup> I collected more data than I can analyse in a report of this length, so by focusing the analysis on the three main themes I have been able to concentrate on these key areas.

<sup>46</sup> David Heywood, *Reimagining Ministerial Formation* (London: SCM PRESS, 2021), p. 5.

in which I phrased the question: “Please tell me about what you understand by the vocation or calling to be an evangelist;” to answer in terms of baptism would have been unusual here. However, some of them did say something which expressed the lack of hierarchy in their view of vocations, such as Evangelist A, who said “*All Christians are called to ministry...different types*”. Interestingly, the evangelists who commented the most on the use of the word ‘vocation’ with regards to evangelism, were some of the evangelists ministering in the Republic of Ireland; and in their contexts the word carried connotations of priesthood and ordained ministry. Evangelist H said that this produced “*tension*” around describing evangelists as having a ‘vocation,’ and Evangelist C said that the institution (Church of Ireland) does not help this by requiring those discerning any form of vocation to go and see the Diocesan Director of Ordinands. In some places in the UK their title has been changed to the Diocesan Director of Vocations and Ordinands, or something similar, to try and address this issue.

I will now consider the data from my interviews in light of some of the prominent literature on vocation in the Anglican church. The 2020 *Kingdom Calling* report from the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England sought to offer a theology of vocation, ministry and discipleship of the whole people of God, in order that ‘the whole church can serve the whole mission of God in the whole of life’.<sup>47</sup> I have focussed on it in my study because it aimed to build on previous Church of England reports such as *Good News People* and *Setting God’s People Free*, by providing a theological grounding for our belief in vocation which extends beyond just the clergy – this includes evangelists. They seek to champion an understanding of vocation as applying to the whole people of God, and a recognition of the variety of

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<sup>47</sup> The Faith and Order Commission, *Kingdom Calling* p. ii.



vocations, 'in terms of both focus and duration'.<sup>48</sup> When I asked the evangelists to describe to me an evangelist's vocation, only one of them mentioned duration/time in their response; Evangelist J, whose primary paradigm for calling is the five-fold APEST model from Alan Hirsch, said that "*at different times of life/in different contexts you can embrace all five*". While none of the other evangelists explicitly said that their vocation as evangelists was life-long, many of them claimed that their vocation was just who they were and they could not imagine not being that way, which suggests to me that the majority of them would not consider their calling to be an evangelist as time-bound or just for a season.

Another of the clarifying statements on vocation in *Kingdom Calling* states, 'Vocation is about what gives continuity and distinguishing shape to our unfolding journey of discipleship'.<sup>49</sup> There is a strong connection between vocation and discipleship. I certainly saw amongst some of my evangelists the blurry boundaries between their discipleship and their calling as evangelists. Particularly for Evangelists A, D, F, H, I, J – they said similar things to each other, like: "*I was doing it anyway...it was a natural outworking of my faith...it's what I had been doing all along...there's been a natural leading, a guiding...*" etc. For them, there was not a clear distinction in their minds between their discipleship and their vocation – they were sharing faith and serving their communities as a response to what God had done in their lives, and because it came naturally to them – it was who they were. Given the experiences of these six evangelists, I do not fully agree with *Kingdom Calling* that it is vocation that gives shape to discipleship – even though I think it is true that calling and discipleship are inter-related and deepen each other, I do not think these evangelists would use the word 'vocation.' These are (on the whole)

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<sup>48</sup> The Faith and Order Commission, *Kingdom Calling* p. 25.

<sup>49</sup> The Faith and Order Commission, *Kingdom Calling* p. 26.

activists, get-on-with-it people, driven, passionate; like Evangelist I said, “*You’re an evangelist because your heart burns for salvation*”. All of the evangelists I interviewed have been through the Church Army discernment process and so have been forced to think of their mission and evangelism activities and ministry as evidence of a vocation, and then talk about it in terms of vocation (a calling to evangelism, and also to Church Army) in written applications and in panel interviews. Yet even some of these evangelists I had to nudge to expand their answer when I asked about what vocation was/what it looked like for them. They were much more comfortable talking about being an evangelist as “*just who I am*”. As the church seeks to identify those among us who are called as evangelists, let us not discount those who write off what they do as ‘nothing special’, or who assume that the way they are is just how all believers are. They may believe they are simply telling others what God has done for them, they are following the Great Commission and making disciples everywhere they go, and the idea that they are called specially to do that, or that the way they live is ‘a vocation’ could be alien to them.

Alongside the Faith and Order Commission, other writers are trying to increase the language of vocation amongst the whole church – helping everyday believers to see their work, their relationships, and their passions as part of their calling from God to increase His kingdom on earth. Derek Tidball wrote about this in *Called by God*<sup>50</sup> and many sermons by John Stott were on this theme.<sup>51</sup>

One of the main contributions from *Kingdom Calling* to this conversation is the recognition of three different types of vocation: social, relational, and ministerial. The

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<sup>50</sup> Derek Tidball, *Called by God: Exploring Our Identity in Christ* (Abingdon: BRF, 2017).

<sup>51</sup> John Stott, *Mission: Rethinking Vocation*. (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2019).

Anglican evangelist fits most neatly as a ministerial vocation as it relates to the church, but how would evangelists themselves view it?

*Kingdom Calling* describes a social vocation as a social role, a role within society. Some evangelists who come to train with Church Army are working primarily within secular employment, and their context for ministry is either with their colleagues or is outside of their paid work. It raises the interesting question of whether those who are called as evangelists should do full-time evangelistic work and be paid for it. Could someone feel called to be an evangelist, and also have a social vocation, feeling called to work as a carer in the community, seeing their work as part of their ministry and sharing the gospel with those whom they meet in the workplace? Evangelist I said, *“If you want to go fishing, you have to go where the fish are. The evangelist in the workplace has a ready-made mission field”*.

Evangelists D and H also communicated something similar – that you do not need to be in full time paid ministry as an evangelist, you could be working in the world. They felt strongly that in fact we need evangelists who feel called to roles within society.

The second type of vocation in *Kingdom Calling* is a relational vocation, which is a calling to marriage, or parenthood, or to a particular person or group of people. There is an element of this within Church Army because evangelists who train with us make promises to join the Church Army Mission Community – a recognised Mission Order since 2012. From the beginning of the discernment process and throughout their training, we ask trainees to continually reflect on their vocation as evangelists and the nature of their calling not just to evangelism but to Church Army, to be a Church Army evangelist. There is a strong relational element to this vocation because they join with hundreds of others around the UK and Ireland and meet in small groups locally as community. Two of the evangelists I interviewed (E and F)

identified particularly strongly with the relational aspect of their calling to Church Army, describing it like coming home or finding a place to belong. Their primary understanding of their vocation was in terms of communicating the gospel to those outside of church, but an unexpected blessing/additional vocation was the discovery of a like-minded community to do that with.

The remaining five evangelists (A, B, C, G and J) spoke of their vocation mostly in ministerial terms. One of the comments *Kingdom Calling* makes about ministerial vocations is that they 'are not the highest form of discipleship, but rather given by Christ to the church for the sake of discipleship'.<sup>52</sup> They emphasise the part of Ephesians 4 which states that the ministerial gifts are given for the building up of the body, and this emphasis was shared by at least half of my evangelists. As well as viewing their vocation as evangelists in terms of serving the whole body, these five in particular saw their vocation as primarily located within the institution of the church – albeit on the edges of the church looking outwards. Some of them, like Evangelists C and G, had 'ended up' at evangelist training after having first discerned a call to church ministry more generally. This is not to question their vocation as evangelists by any means, but it does carry more of an institutional flavour due to the route they took to get there. They began with a call to 'the church' and then they found that evangelist was their best fit; whereas for others that I spoke with, they were already operating in their evangelist's gifting and then they either sought training/recognition or they were nudged to do so by others. This is what I will consider next – what insights can be gleaned from the ten different discernment journeys travelled by these evangelists?

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<sup>52</sup> The Faith and Order Commission, *Kingdom Calling* p. 84.

## 5.2 Discernment

*Kingdom Calling* provided one of the most succinct and descriptions of Anglican discernment processes that I read:

Vocation is normally accompanied by an interior conviction on the part of the individual that this is the path God wants them to follow, a conviction which unfolds over time, is confirmed by interaction with others in church, and can be coherently narrated by the individual concerned.<sup>53</sup>

One of the areas I asked evangelists about was whether/how they tested their vocation as evangelists. *Kingdom Calling* claims that,

Discernment of vocation always involves some element of testing, as a person's willingness to take on a life-shaping commitment that enables them to serve others and contribute to the common good needs to be recognised and accepted by the people to whom it would most immediately commit them.<sup>54</sup>

The Faith and Order Commission would describe Church Army's discernment process as one way of testing a call to evangelism, and by that definition all the evangelists I interviewed have tested their vocation by applying to Church Army. However, some of them were clear with me that they had not felt the need to test their call, because their call to be an evangelist was who they were, it was how they understood God had made them to be and they could not imagine living any other way. For some of them, particularly Evangelist I, if Church Army had turned them down and not discerned an evangelistic vocation, it would not have affected how they saw their own calling. They are evangelists, and they do not need anyone to affirm that for it to be true.

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<sup>53</sup> The Faith and Order Commission, *Kingdom Calling* p. 36.

<sup>54</sup> The Faith and Order Commission, *Kingdom Calling* p. 40.

I was particularly interested in who else contributed to the discernment journey of my evangelists, and I have already noted that all of them mentioned Church Army at some point, which is not surprising. For Evangelists B, D, E, F and J, gaining the external recognition of their Diocese/Church Army was the most influential element of their discernment. However, to highlight Evangelist I again, he is the anomaly in that when he did speak about Church Army, it was with an off-hand comment about the training being too academic and essay-based, and it was evident to me that gaining Church Army's recognition of his calling made little difference to him.

In chapter 2.2, I referenced Croft and Walton's observation that in the New Testament we see the church community identifying a need and then nominating someone to fulfil a role that meets that need. Within the application process for Church Army, we request references from various members of their Church community, yet in the interviews only three or four evangelists included lay congregation members or friends as being influential in helping to discern their vocation. It would be interesting to imagine a situation where evangelists are encouraged to 'submit' their sense of vocation before their church communities and seek their 'nomination' for training and subsequent licensing.

Another example of someone who could be involved in helping to discern a vocation to evangelism is another evangelist. In *Anglican Evangelists*, Greg Downes writes, '...you don't need to be an evangelist to recognize one, but the maxim 'It takes one to know one' proves true here also, and evangelists are particularly adept at spotting others even when the gifting is underdeveloped and embryonic'.<sup>55</sup> Only three of the evangelists I interviewed (A, B and F) specifically mentioned other

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<sup>55</sup> Snow, *Anglican Evangelists* p. 109.

evangelists as being instrumental in their own journeys – this could be because Church Army is now relatively small in terms of numbers of evangelists, compared to how it was once. However, all ten evangelists confidently answered question eleven saying they would be able to recognise others with the same vocation as them, and they had clear ideas about how to help others with their discerning of an evangelistic calling. Perhaps Church Army’s best assets for recognising and releasing evangelists in the UK and Ireland are the commissioned evangelists themselves, and they should be encouraged more to be actively raising up local evangelists around them. This strategy is shared with the Church of England in order to meet their vision to raise up a thousand new lay and ordained evangelists: ‘An evangelist raises up other evangelists. Although much of their time is spent with those outside the church, they are always on the lookout for other evangelists whom they can mentor and develop’.<sup>56</sup>

The majority of the evangelists I spoke with did not know at the start of their discernment process that there was training in evangelism available with Church Army, and some had not heard of Church Army at all. Evangelist G said, *“the church needs to be more knowledgeable about other routes, they only really know about ordination or lay reader. Some people might be like me with a call, but they don’t know the training available”*. If we want to be able to recognise and activate the evangelist’s vocation then we need to raise the profile of their calling and gifting, and of the various training options, at every level from the local church, to the Diocese, and nationally. Much has been done on this by Church Army and other organisations since the Decade of Evangelism, but there is still room for improvement.

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<sup>56</sup> Snow, *Anglican Evangelists* p. 25.

I found that seven out of these ten evangelists described the evangelism they were doing as they were discerning in quite general terms – they were witnessing to family, friends, those on the fringes of church or the marginalised in the community – but not a specific demographic. Conversely, Evangelists C, H and J all began in youthwork, and all felt a strong sense of call to evangelism with young people primarily. This is worth noting, as I wonder if there are outward-looking youth-workers within our parishes and Dioceses who have a vocation as Youth Evangelists and would greatly flourish with some affirmation, specific training and releasing further into their call, but are overlooked as being simply ‘youth-workers’. The Church of England’s Director of Evangelism and Discipleship, Dave Male, claims that the Church has neglected the role of evangelists with young people. He drew on some ComRes research<sup>57</sup> which found that three-quarters of practising Christians had come to faith before the age of eighteen, and proposed that ‘we need to do more work on the role, work and methods of the evangelist for young people’.<sup>58</sup>

The final observation I will make under the theme of discernment/journey is to note an opportunity for some further research. I started to notice as I was coming to the end of my interviews that some of the evangelists who were most sure of their calling, or most confident in their vocation, were the ones who had come to faith as adults and had a ‘dramatic’ or sudden transformation upon meeting Jesus. This was true of Evangelists A, D, I and J, and to a certain extent, F. As this was something that emerged quite late on in my research, I did not ask the right questions that would have enabled me to further understand this, and I am reluctant to draw specific conclusions in this area from the responses I do have because I did not ask

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<sup>57</sup> ‘Church of England Mapping Survey « Savanta ComRes’ <<https://comresglobal.com/polls/church-of-england-mapping-survey/>> [accessed 8 May 2021].

<sup>58</sup> Snow, *Anglican Evangelists* p. 26.



when and how they first came to faith. However, some of them volunteered that chapter of their story because it related to their discernment of their vocation, and those people came to faith as adults. So, a future research question is – Is a conversion to Christian faith as an adult more likely to result in a calling to evangelistic ministry? Moreover, is this increased further if the conversion experience was sudden or dramatic, with a bigger transformation story to tell?

### **5.3 Evangelist**

In *Anglican Evangelists*, Dave Male writes, 'We do also need to be brave and ask whether the use of the title 'evangelist' is still the best and clearest term in our present situation'.<sup>59</sup> In my interviews with Church Army evangelists who have recently trained/are still in training, I was curious to discover their views on the title 'evangelist' and how important that label was in how they saw themselves and their calling. What emerged from their responses to questions five, six and eleven, was a general consensus that labels and titles are not important in terms of them sharing the gospel and seeking to tell people about Jesus. They are responding to a call from God to be outward looking witnesses to Christ as their first desire, not to inhabit a particular title or occupy a specific office within the Church. Male writes, 'for them this is their way of life, their normal way of being'.<sup>60</sup> However, some of them showed stronger connections to the institutional nature of their vocation, and as I wrote in chapter 4.3, for a number of evangelists receiving the recognition and affirmation of the institution gave them the confidence to see themselves as Evangelists and to use the title 'evangelist'. This was particularly true for Evangelists C and E.

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<sup>59</sup> Snow, *Anglican Evangelists* p. 27.

<sup>60</sup> Snow, *Anglican Evangelists* p. 25.

When it came to defining what is distinctive about the vocation of the evangelist, I had expected the evangelists' responses to broadly agree with the definitions I included in chapter 2.4 which represented the range of descriptions of the evangelist's particular gifting and role from within the Anglican church – and this was largely what I found. They spoke of sharing the gospel, reaching the unchurched, building new communities, using words alongside action, explaining the faith, loving and caring for people. However, I had not expected so many of the evangelists I interviewed to talk about the evangelist's role within the church, to encourage and lead their churches in mission and evangelism. Six of the ten explicitly mentioned it, and three of the others alluded to it within their other answers. This aspect of their gift can be seen in Ephesians 4, and is echoed in the definitions found in *Good News People*<sup>61</sup> and *Anglican Evangelists*,<sup>62</sup> and elsewhere. Yet in Church Army's vocations booklet the only mention of this is contained within the 'A' of Church Army's 'DARE' strategy<sup>63</sup>, which is to do with Advocating for evangelism: 'We are passionate about encouraging the wider Church to become more actively involved in evangelism'.<sup>64</sup> I propose that there is more that can be done to encourage and nurture this aspect of evangelists' vocation, especially as most of the ones I spoke with recognize it as an important element of their calling. There is a balance to be struck here, once which illustrates the sometimes-thin line walked by the evangelist, between serving the church and proclaiming the gospel in the world. This is not a new dilemma either; Church Army's Ian Maher responded to *Good News People* in 2000 by accusing it of 'domesticating' the evangelist's ministry,

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<sup>61</sup> Church of England, House of Bishops, and Working Party, *Good News People* p. 48.

<sup>62</sup> Snow, *Anglican Evangelists* p. 5.

<sup>63</sup> 'Church Army'

<[https://churcharmy.org/Groups/290813/Church\\_Army/web/Who\\_we\\_are/Our\\_vision\\_values/Our\\_vision\\_values.aspx](https://churcharmy.org/Groups/290813/Church_Army/web/Who_we_are/Our_vision_values/Our_vision_values.aspx)> [accessed 8 May 2021].

<sup>64</sup> 'Dare to Step Out? - Church Army Vocations Booklet', p. 7.

'locating it primarily within the orbit of the church community, limiting it within the traditional model of church...'.<sup>65</sup> Maher argues that evangelists are needed among the unchurch and de-churched, pioneering new models of church too.

Despite acknowledging that a significant part of their vocation is to be working with the church to equip others for evangelism, a number of the evangelists I interviewed, spoke of tensions and difficulties in their relationships with churches or other ministries with the church. Words were used like 'squashed,' 'misunderstood,' 'a threat,' 'not well affirmed,' 'inadequately recognised,' 'not valued.' Indeed, two of them identified that part of the very calling of the evangelist is to be lonely, to struggle, to be prepared for rejection by the world and perhaps misunderstood by the church. This saddened me, but also strengthened my resolve to support and equip evangelists as they train with Church Army, so that they can either avoid this situation or be prepared to manage it when it arrives.

*Good News People* addresses the caricature or stereotype of the evangelist, describing someone 'loud and insensitive, overintense, humourless and manipulative...the pushy salesman...difficult and uncooperative – lone rangers...'<sup>66</sup> Along similar lines, Greg Downes paints a picture of the 'shadow side' of the evangelist: 'the unaccountable maverick who sits loose to the church, shies away from accountability and has a superficial prayer life'.<sup>67</sup> Some of the evangelists I interviewed sought to address some of the stereotypes in their descriptions of their role. They said either that they used to agree with some of these stereotypes, or that other people thought these things of them, and they were proof that they were wrong: - characteristics like being 'gobby,' 'extroverted,' or 'thick-skinned.' Or ways of

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<sup>65</sup> Jeans and others, *Affirming* pp. 19–20.

<sup>66</sup> Church of England, House of Bishops, and Working Party, *Good News People* p. 48.

<sup>67</sup> Snow, *Anglican Evangelists* p. 110.

working like ‘people shouting on street corners,’ ‘going out with a loudspeaker and posters,’ and that ‘their job was to fill churches’. The fact that half of the evangelists I spoke with felt the need to mention what they are not, backs up the notion that evangelists are a misunderstood breed (as claimed by Evangelist D), and that in the church there is at best confusion and at worse derision about their vocation and role. In fact, this confusion can be felt by the evangelists themselves, with some of them even partway through their training with Church Army and still reluctant to call themselves evangelists, as they do not identify with the prevailing stereotype.

Is the perception that evangelists are extroverts/should be extroverted based in reality? Even though I did not ask any questions about temperament/personality types in my interviews, one of my evangelists described themselves as an introvert, and another said that evangelists can be shy, or introverts. Yet renowned evangelist J John (in conversation with Greg Downes) proposed that, ‘although there may be introverted evangelists who are only really at home behind a pulpit, in general to be an evangelist is to be an extrovert, a ‘people person’ – someone who identifies with others’.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, Anglican missiologists Booker and Ireland advised that when looking for local evangelists amongst church congregations, they will be the ‘natural extroverts, conversationalists and bridge-builders’.<sup>69</sup> From my conversation with Evangelist C, an introverted evangelist (he understands himself as having an introvert preference by the Myers Briggs Type Indicator), he certainly is not ‘only at home behind a pulpit,’ and is very much a people person. I disagree with J John on this – I have met some introverted evangelists who have led many people to faith in Christ, and not from the pulpit. Also, I would suggest that J John misunderstands the

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<sup>68</sup> Snow, *Anglican Evangelists* p. 103.

<sup>69</sup> Mike Booker and Mark Ireland, *Evangelism -- Which Way Now?: An Evaluation of Alpha, Emmaus, Cell Church and Other Contemporary Strategies for Evangelism* (London: Church House, 2003), p. 71.

nature of the extrovert as described by Myers Briggs – the extroversion/introversion preference is not concerned with being a people person or not, but with where one draws energy from. Thus, an introvert can be a people person,<sup>70</sup> but will need more time away from the crowds to recharge. I did not gather enough data to form any conclusions about the distinctive temperament of the evangelist, if indeed there is one; this would be an interesting area for further research.

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<sup>70</sup> Isabel Briggs Myers and Peter B. Myers, *Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Type* (Palo Alto, Calif: Davies-Black, 1995), p. 54.

## 6. Conclusions

There was so much rich data from my interviews that I could not explore it all in this report. To summarise from the previous three chapters, I have selected what I have found to be the main conclusions, and they are as follows:

I found that my evangelists could be divided into two different categories: firstly, those who viewed their vocation as simply who they were, they could not help but be evangelist; it was how God had made them. They would have shared Jesus anywhere and everywhere regardless of whether or not they had the title of evangelist, and would have been just as satisfied living out their evangelistic vocation in the secular workplace as in the church. They had followed God's call into licensed ministry, and mostly had found encouragement, affirmation and belonging in joining Church Army; but this was secondary to their call to proclaim the gospel to the unreached. Secondly those who saw their vocation through an institutional lens, and who spoke of their discernment journey in terms of the recognition of the Church or Church Army. These tended to be the ones who had had a longer journey of discernment, who had sensed a call to some kind of ministry before finding their fit with Church Army, sometimes after they had considered ordination first. If I were to do further research in this area, I would be interested to discover if there is a spectrum of evangelistic vocation consisting of these two categories with points in between, with some evangelists closer to the church and their ministries being in close orbit with the church, and some with looser ties to the church who are ministering more 'out there'. Do we currently expect all evangelists to be able to function well at both ends of the spectrum, and if they are called to different things should we recognise and affirm that within the umbrella vocation of evangelist? This has implications for training evangelists. Heywood's latest book *Reimagining*

*Ministerial Formation* proposes that the emerging paradigm for training clergy recognises that ordained ministry is varied and diverse and so training cannot be one-size-fits-all.<sup>71</sup> I think that the same can be applied to the training of evangelists.

Evangelists feel a sense of calling to motivate and release the rest of the Church in evangelism. As much as I knew that Paul's letter to the Ephesians describes the gifting as being for the building up of the body, I had not expected so many evangelists to acknowledge this as being a real and tangible part of their vocation. The quality of relationship between evangelist and church varied greatly, with some seeing it as leading or being an example, and others speaking of being an irritant voice, or challenging where the church is comfortable – but the call to work with the church was still there.

There is confusion around the term 'evangelist,' with different evangelists choosing that label at different stages along their journey, and some making it all the way to their commissioning with Church Army and still 'not seeing themselves as evangelists' (Evangelist C). One of two things needs to happen here: either the word needs to be reclaimed or 're-endowed'<sup>72</sup> with a clearer meaning. Or, as Male suggests, we need to find a different term altogether. I would strongly urge for the former, agreeing with the writers of *Good News People* that it 'needs to be rescued from caricature and honoured'.<sup>73</sup>

Evangelists recognise other evangelists, and they know how they would encourage them to grow in their vocation. Therefore, evangelists should be encouraged and released to raise up others, and should be involved at every stage of the discernment process.

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<sup>71</sup> Heywood, *Reimagining* p. 15.

<sup>72</sup> Snow, *Anglican Evangelists* p. 27.

<sup>73</sup> Church of England, House of Bishops, and Working Party, *Good News People* p. 44.

## 7. Recommendations

Throughout this piece I have highlighted ideas which emerged as areas for possible further research. I will conclude by drawing together some recommendations for next steps with regards to understanding, recognising, and activating the vocation of the evangelist. The final few have come directly from the evangelists I interviewed, and I have included them because I was deeply moved by them and I wanted to allow them to speak for themselves in this report.

1. At a local church level, we should be heeding the recommendations of *Kingdom Calling* and improving the way we speak about vocation, encouraging every believer to discern God's call for their life. Building on this - raising the profile of a specific call to evangelism and including the whole church in the discernment journey of others, encouraging them to affirm each other's vocations whether they are social, relational, or ministerial in focus. We should be hearing the voice of nomination of the local church in recommending evangelists to train for licensed ministry with Church Army.
2. At all levels of the church, we need to be aware of the stereotyped image of evangelists that we have. They are not always loners, but they can be. They are not all mavericks, but they can be. They are not all extroverts, but some are. Some will run ahead; others will focus on equipping the church to bring them along with them. There is variety amongst evangelists, and Church Army could offer some insight to the national church as to the spectrum and diversity of evangelistic vocations.
3. Church Army should be aware that our evangelists do feel a sense of call to advocate for evangelism and enable evangelism in their contexts (the 'A' and



'E' of Church Army's DARE strategy<sup>74</sup>). Training could be offered to further equip them in these areas, so that as well as training them to do pioneering mission and evangelism, we are training them to train their churches, and empowering them to raise up other evangelists.

4. Evangelist E warned that the gift of the evangelist was needed within the church, and that the Church of England would be *"in trouble if it doesn't acknowledge it"*. We should heed her warning.
5. Evangelist J spoke eloquently and passionately about how he has observed that evangelists have not been *"vocationally valued"* by the church, and that is why more people have not explored their evangelistic vocation. He longs to see them honoured by the Church as much as the pastor and teacher gifts are. A step towards equal value/honour for the evangelist's gift would be to pay them alongside the pastor and teacher.

I have explored themes of vocation and discernment in connection with the recognition and training of evangelists within the Anglican church. In those I interviewed I found passion, enthusiasm, depth of understanding and a strong sense of call. It has been such a pleasure and an honour to spend time with these ten evangelists. I will close with a reminder of the ultimate goal of all evangelistic endeavour, as shared with me by Evangelist H:

*"The evangelist is valuable, necessary, needed, wonderful. **Seeing people respond to the beauty of Jesus in the good news** is just the most marvellous thing. A precious thing we should continue to value and treasure."*

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<sup>74</sup> 'Church Army'.

<[https://churcharmy.org/Groups/290813/Church\\_Army/web/Who\\_we\\_are/Our\\_vision\\_values/Our\\_vision\\_values.aspx](https://churcharmy.org/Groups/290813/Church_Army/web/Who_we_are/Our_vision_values/Our_vision_values.aspx)> [accessed 8 May 2021]

My prayer is that as local churches and as a national church we are able to identify and release evangelists into their vocation, so they can continue to lead people to respond to Jesus and can bring the rest of the church along with them.

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# Appendix 1

## Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Region of UK
4. Ministry Context – Urban/suburban/rural – what about when you discerned a calling?
5. Please tell me about what you understand by the Vocation or Calling to be an Evangelist.
6. What is distinctive about that vocation?
7. When and how did you first realise your vocation?
8. Was there anyone else involved in that process? Who? Did someone else recognise/affirm your vocation before you did?
9. Did you do any “testing” of your calling? How?
10. Tell me about growing into your calling – research, study, talking with others etc.
11. What would you do for someone in your context in whom you saw the same calling?

## Appendix 2



Yorkshire Theological Education Partnership

### Research Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. In order to help you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. You may wish to discuss it with others. For any further information or questions about my research, please contact me on: xxxxxxxx or xxxxxxx

#### About the Research

As part of my Masters in Theology, Ministry & Mission with St Hild College (part of YTEP) I am undertaking a piece of research for a Dissertation. The title of this Dissertation is:

“The Evangelist’s Vocation, and their recognition and activation within the local church.”

If we can better understand and articulate the distinctive calling of the evangelist, then we can improve our ability to identify them in our churches, and foster environments which enable their formation.

I am interested to hear from Church Army Evangelists/Evangelists-in-Training, about how and when you first discerned your vocation as an Evangelist. What do you feel is distinctive about your calling to Evangelism? Did anyone else recognise/affirm your vocation along the way? What do you think could be done to encourage those with an evangelistic vocation?

#### Taking Part

I am approaching a random selection (10 people) of those who have begun training with Church Army in the last five years.

If you are willing to take part, I will arrange with you to interview you via Zoom – this will take one hour, and with your permission I will record the interview. This recording is to enable me to write up your answers afterwards, and it will not be shown to anyone else.

You are free to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you do wish to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. It is usually not practical to withdraw after the research project has been written up. If you take part you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you will be given a copy of it to keep.

Even though I am a Church Army employee, this is an independent, external piece of research which is being undertaken with Church Army’s permission. You are under

no pressure to take part, and whether you do or not will have no bearing on your training or employment with Church Army.

## **Benefits**

Upon completion of the research, I will summarise my findings in a short report for Church Army's management group, which I hope may benefit the discernment process for future Evangelists.

## **Confidentiality and Data**

Recordings of interviews will be stored under password protection, and will be destroyed when the research has been written up and completed. During the research they will only be accessible by me, and only under exceptional circumstances will recordings need to be seen by my Supervisor, and internal/external examiners in marking the Project.

From the start of the research I will change your name and refer to you under a pseudonym throughout the write-up, so you wont be identifiable. If you mention a specific church or Diocese in the interview I will anonymise this information in the write-up too.

For this research I will be adhering to the YTEP Research Ethics Policy which can be found here: <https://ytep.commonawards.org/mod/folder/view.php?id=12306> or you can ask me for a copy.

Should you wish to ask any questions about the research, you can contact me on

[XXXXXXX](#) or xxxxxx, or my supervisor Dr Anne Dyer on xxxxx.

Thank you for considering taking part.

## Appendix 3



## Yorkshire Theological Education

### Research Ethics Consent Form

**Participant identification code:** .....

**Title of project:** *The Evangelist's Vocation, and their recognition and activation within the local church*

**Student's name:** Beth Burras

**Student's contact details:** xxxxxxxxxx

(For use if the participant wishes to withdraw consent)

**Supervisor's name:** Anne Dyer

#### ***Please read and sign below:***

- I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet about the above-named project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time prior to the research project being written up, without giving a reason.
- I agree to the interview being recorded on Zoom.
- I agree to take part in this project.

Participant's name: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Student's name: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

***Participants will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form. The original signed consent form will be kept by the student.***