

Archdeacon, Duncan Green says...

“ When I first took up the post was England's Olympic and Paralympic Executive Coordinator, (overseeing the Church of England's involvement in the London 2012 games and head of multi-faith chaplaincy services during the games) I Wondered round East London asking myself ‘what am I supposed to be doing?’

I re-read the job description - Sustain excitement for 6 years!!!! Not likely I thought. Wherever I turned no one else was believing, no one else was interested. After such initial excitement I now felt abandoned by people and God. I told God exactly what I thought about it all!

I Didn't have faith for it all but God did have a plan!

I felt I'd failed. But after yet another down beat meeting about the Olympics I chatted with a communications person who said we had to get to people at the grass roots level. I told him I thought the Church of England could be a good agent for that to happen through.

This was the beginning of something really fruitful – nine faith communities coming together over five years, valuing and respecting each other's beliefs and making sure that the people of faith working at the different Olympic sites had their needs met. This included considerations about dietary needs, uniform policies, security policies and so on.

It was at this time I was asked to take on the role of overseeing all the chaplaincies for the games.

God has worked! He knew what he was about when I wasn't so sure.

I was given £200,000 and a free hand. I had the privilege of overseeing one hundred and sixty three multi-faith chaplains.

Working in the real world on a day-to-day basis was such an eye opener for me. I thought I knew how the world worked -

I didn't! Back in the secular world, for most of the people I met, the church totally irrelevant. I had been used to a market town church with four hundred people. The church was in the middle of community life there. But that is not the case often.

Most people, for instance, had never heard what Easter was about. At Easter I bought six hundred Hot Cross buns and left them in all the kitchens with a note saying ‘Happy Easter’ and briefly explaining what Christians believe. Someone sent an email asking what it was about, another said they'd been to church for the first time that Easter and another said they felt it gave them permission for the first time to talk about their faith.

When I took on this post I was glad to be spreading the good news not looking after the crumbling church - managing its decline. Rather than finding a Church dying on its feet I have found a church with a vision.

Where do you want your church to be 2020?

The Capital Vision 2020 is about building and equipping the church to grow in its vision of being **confident, creative and compassionate**.

The vision particulars? –

- To create 100,000 ambassadors
(people like Trevor can commission people to be ambassadors as they are confirmed – we

are all ambassadors of Christ).

- To plant / grow another one hundred churches.
- The capital vision for 2020 wants to see our churches growing **Confidence, Creativity and Compassion.**

Confidence:

We need to grow in confidence in what we believe and in sharing that belief, which will give us a clear and perfect vision – 2020 vision if you like! Jesus asked Peter, ‘who do people say that I am?’/ ‘ who do you say that I am?’ We need to be able to confidently answer those questions.

Creative:

We need to grow in creative approaches to sharing our faith daily. One church I know of decided to ditch its Sunday service for a BBQ one Sunday. It was so well attended that it went on all day, with the organisers having to make several trips to the shops to buy more burgers!

People won't just walk off the street into our churches.

I once stopped off at a Quay on a boating trip and found it was packed with thousands. I remarked that if I had a church it would need to be here in the middle of everything. The next thing, we come across a group of elderly people. They weren't shouting embarrassing slogans or singing hymns – they were serving teas and coffees, supporting people, chatting, offering a prayer board for people to use if they needed to. They were elderly and knew their church was going to die out unless they changed. They stopped meeting in the church on a Sunday morning and got where the people were. When they did meet on Wednesdays instead, their numbers began to grow.

Compassion:

We need to reach out in compassion, loving as Christ does. If Jesus walked in and asked ‘what do you do for the people around you?’ how would we answer?

The church is very good at excelling in being in a different place from everyone else. We need to ask ourselves, ‘what does it mean to be church today?’ We need to be prepared to change how we do things that represent being church so that they are meaningful to the people we want to reach out to.

I brought one of the Olympic torches with me today. I have one final question for you - How do you know who the torchbearer is?

Might sound like a daft question – you'll say it's obvious – the one holding the torch. You'd be right.

So then here comes the real question: How do people know you're a Christian?

Be a torchbearer for your faith by working on growing in your confidence, your creativity and your compassion.

Amen.

