

## **A Draft Framework for Continuous Christian Development**

### **Why a framework for Christian development (testimony)?**

My manager at work is a good man. He perceives that I am too. One day he asked me “What is the difference between you and me?” I thought about this and answered “I believe in God”.

A big difference you might think, but for me, practically, no difference at all, except that I spend a certain amount of my time in prayer and reading and probably give away a bit more of my income. I think there should be more difference: a Christian is more than a good person who believes in God. To be a Christian is to be a disciple or follower of Jesus of Nazareth, the anointed one of God (the Christ), a first century social reformer, healer, teacher and Priest. I believe in Jesus, now I want to follow him.

Working with my wife, I trawled the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church (of which we're also members) for a guide of how to grow and develop into disciples. We found a lot of energy and effort going on in both Churches to develop training courses and provide development experiences for Christians. We also found a strong desire to grow effective disciples to serve the purposes of God in the world<sup>1</sup>. However, we also found two big gaps between the good work that was going on and the achievement of discipleship: first, and perhaps less importantly, we don't communicate what's going on so very few people have the opportunity to engage with it; second and more importantly, as a Church we don't have a clear idea of what it really means to be a disciple or a narrative of how people grow from being “good people who believe in God” into being those disciples.

Jesus' disciples didn't appear fully formed and their development as disciples was not complete at the point of their response to Jesus' call. The Gospels tell us a story of how Jesus took ordinary people like you and me and grew them through teaching and practical experiences into people who, following his death and resurrection, would preach a life-and-world changing Gospel and perform a miraculous ministry across the then known world. The Gospels are a narrative of how effective disciples were formed in first century Palestine.

This framework is an attempt to provide a narrative of how we might go about forming ourselves into effective disciples in twenty-first century Britain. It is not complete or finished or good enough, it is provisional and is offered for thought and prayer and, hopefully, to be developed through forums such as this into a tool that each one of us can use to become more effective disciples of Jesus Christ.

### **The framework**

The framework is presented overleaf. We can provide more detailed description of its construction and the thinking behind each of the boxes for those wishing to have more explanation.

Alistair and Liz Wasey

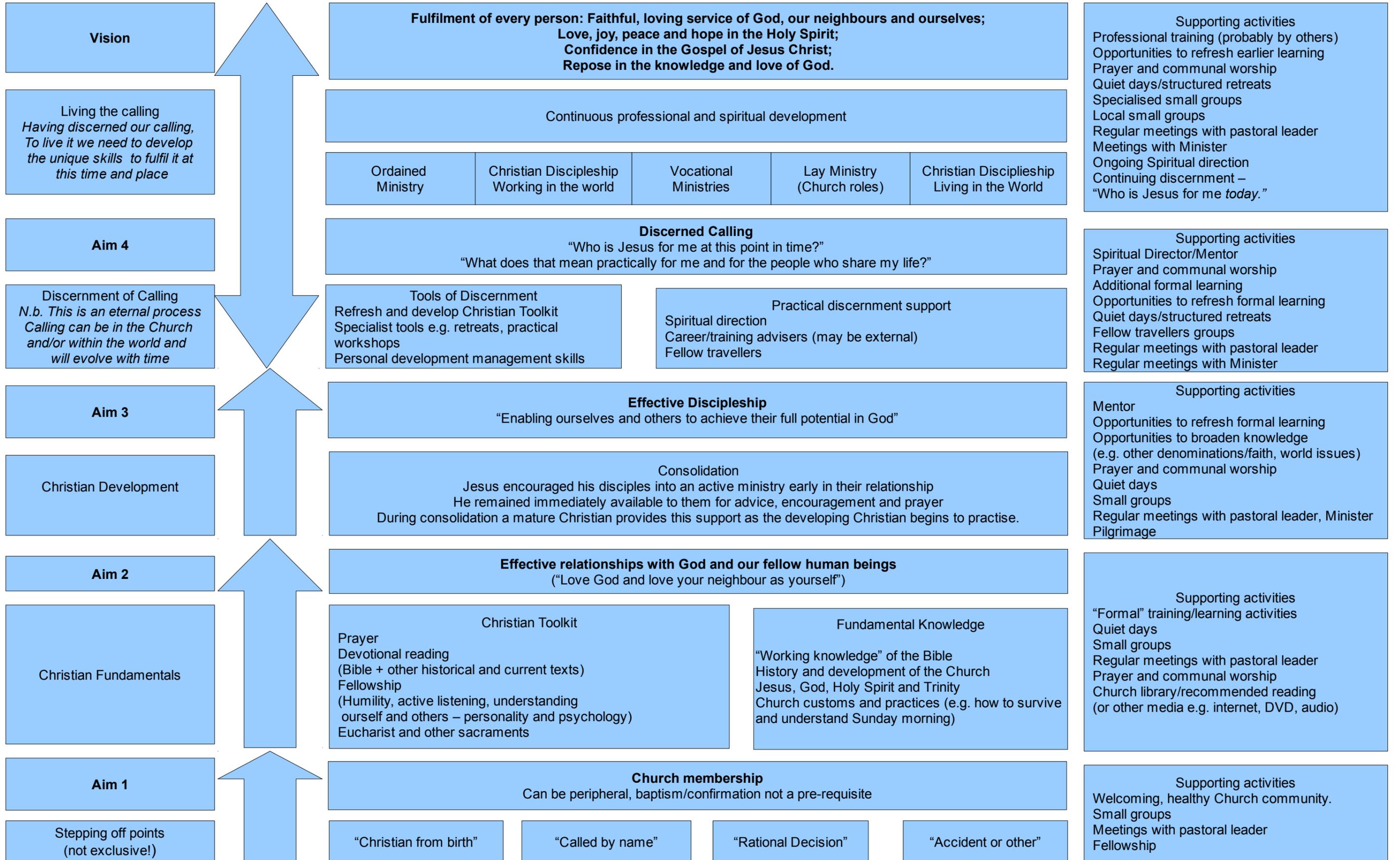
[alistair.wasey@googlemail.com](mailto:alistair.wasey@googlemail.com)

---

<sup>1</sup> A note here: A brief review of the last two thousand years of Church history shows that the purposes of the Church and the purposes of God cannot be reliably assumed to align. For us, the development of disciples has to be absolutely God-focussed.

# Vision of a Framework for Continuing Christian Development

## An attempt to model the Christian journey through learning and development experiences



## **A note on how the framework might be used**

In developing this version of the framework it has become clear that almost everything that is needed to provide the learning and development experiences already exists. The framework is intended to provide a narrative that ties together a great deal of work and effort that has already been completed in the Church.

The “fundamental knowledge” and “Christian toolkit” elements are likely to be covered already, at least in part, by existing courses and study groups run locally by Churches. In addition there are excellent resources available that merely need identifying and “signposting”, for example some recent BBC output such as Diarmaid MacCulloch's “History of the Church” are likely to be universally accessible and useful resources that can be used either in groups or individually.

The “consolidation” phase requires only a very small number of experienced Christians to act as mentors and/or pastoral and spiritual leaders and can be drawn either from within an existing Church or begged, borrowed or loaned from a neighbouring Church.

The “discernment of calling” phase naturally lends itself to calling on more experienced spiritual directors and other “Diocesan level” resources (potentially with some additional growth to consider secular ministries alongside more conventional Christian ministries primarily in a Church context). What is particularly important at this stage is to give the disciple the skills to be able to plan and manage their own development into whatever role(s) God is calling them, drawing on appropriate resources in order to do so. Note that the areas of calling identified are extremely broad and, indeed, overlapping.

Beyond the discernment of calling phase, the majority of resources required are likely to be outside the Church itself. For example, if a disciple is called to a ministry as a Christian Doctor, we've probably done most of what needs doing to achieve the “Christian” bit (we just need to continue to provide, prayer, practical and spiritual support to maintain their life of discipleship), but the disciple will need to access professional training and development resources in order to fulfil their calling.

With time, an individual's calling is likely to change and to evolve. A Christian who is living one calling, for example in the work place, may be called to marriage, parenthood, a Church role or a new calling within retirement.