

Ministry for a Christian presence in every community

Executive summary

This is a vision for ministry in the Church of England which has emerged from a conversation between the Ministry Council, the House and College of Bishops and the Archbishops' Council.

The whole people of God, by baptism, share in bearing Christian presence through worship, witness and service, being the Body of Christ in every and any place and context.

In the Church of England, some are called to particular ministries, ordained and lay, to represent and enable the ministry of the whole church. Ministry is continually renewed by the Spirit, responding to the needs of each generation. Signs of renewal are seen where ministry enables the Church to be outward facing and where it is relational, missional, collaborative, adaptive and diverse.

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Ministry Council has worked with the House and College of Bishops and Archbishops' Council to shape the following understanding of the ministry the Council exists to serve in order to frame the Council's work going forward.

We are called to participate in and be transfigured by the dynamic being of the Triune God. Through God's work of creation, Jesus' incarnation and the gift of the Spirit we know God as *relating* and *sending* to realise God's Kingdom. This relating and sending is God's mission into which the Church is called to be wholeheartedly, as witness and agent. Ministers serve God's mission by enabling the Church's participation, through the energising power of the Spirit.

The Church of England longs to express God's relating and sending in the world, together with our ecumenical partners, through Christian presence borne by the whole people of God, wherever they are, gathered and dispersed. We recognise God by the Spirit calling the Body of Christ into being in many contexts, both familiar and utterly new, through congregations and networks, groups and individuals, through witness and evangelism, mission and community engagement.

The challenge in responding to God's call is to open our eyes, our hearts and our wills to the gifts of ministry that God is pouring on his people, and to receive, release and nurture those gifts.

1. The Ministry of the whole People of God

The whole people of God, by our baptism, share in bearing Christian presence through worship, witness and service, being the Body of Christ in every and any place and context.

As we read in I Peter 2: 9:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

The foundational calling of the whole people of God is underlined by the opening paragraphs of the introduction to every ordination service, starting with the words from I Peter:

God calls his people to follow Christ, and forms us into a royal priesthood, a holy nation, to declare the wonderful deeds of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

The Church is the Body of Christ, the people of God and the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. In baptism the whole Church is summoned to witness to God's love and to work for the coming of his kingdom.

2. The Church's Public Ministers

It is from the Body, where everyone is called by God to worship, witness and service, that some are called to particular ministries to build up the Body and to represent and enable the ministry of the whole Church. This pattern is rooted in Scripture and expressed in the liturgies of ordination.

At the heart of the ministry of the **bishop** we see the praise of God flowing out through the world in God's mission of transformation, as we hear in the Introduction to the Ordination of Bishops:

Bishops are ordained to be shepherds of Christ's flock and guardians of the faith of the apostles, proclaiming the gospel of God's kingdom and leading his people in mission. Obedient to the call of Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, they are to gather God's people and celebrate with them the sacraments of the new covenant.

The Introduction continues:

Thus formed into a single communion of faith and love, the Church in each place and time is united with the Church in every place and time.

In expressing this aspect of their ministry of unity, bishops bear the responsibility collectively and individually for the consistency and authenticity of all ministries exercised in the name of the Church, and thus directly, or through others, for the discernment, formation and sustenance of all ministers.

Deacons and priests are then called to build up the Body of Christ through harnessing in themselves and those with whom they serve the gifts to exercise the ministries given in Ephesians 4: 11, to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

Through ministries of word and sacrament they gather, equip and send out the Body for witness and service in the world.

As we hear in the Ordinal:

To serve this royal priesthood, God has given a variety of ministries. Deacons are ordained so that the people of God may be better equipped to make Christ known.

Priests are ordained to lead God's people in the offering of praise and the proclamation of the gospel. They share with the Bishop in the oversight of the Church, delighting in its beauty and rejoicing in its well-being.

Reflecting the dynamic in the ministry of bishops, from which these ministries derive, the focus is gathering, equipping and sending out from acts of worship and prayer into acts of mission and evangelism. Exercising leadership in worship is central to the ordained minister's formational role in building up the body.

Worship is also the source and resource for the ordained minister's leadership in mission, exercising a public and representative role for the church and expressing God's work of transformation in the world.

Lay ministers exercise these gifts in particular ways to equip the saints for ministry in their communities and contexts. They are authorised by the bishop or others acting on the bishop's behalf. This may involve licensing, authorising or commissioning depending upon the ministry. The range of lay ministries is constantly developing in response to God's gift and call, and includes among others Reader and Licensed Lay Ministers, Church Wardens, youth and family workers, evangelists, pioneers, community workers and administrators.

Each lay ministry will involve discernment, equipping and continued support, and it is for bishops to ensure that this is undertaken in ways appropriate for the form of ministry.

The Church's licensed, authorised and commissioned ministers, ordained and lay, national and local, are called and equipped to build up the Body of Christ to witness to God's love and work for the coming of his kingdom. They are all called to be disciple-making disciples.

Ordained and lay ministers teach and equip lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life in ways that show the difference the Gospel makes. They recognise that all are baptised into Christ, complementary in gifts and vocation, mutually accountable in discipleship, and equal partners in mission.

As we read in Ephesians 4: 11-12:

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.

3. Characteristics of Public Ministers Today

Renewing our recognition of and confidence in the primacy of God's activity is the basis for reimagining ministry oriented and animated by the call of the Church to mission, and not merely to preservation. We see signs of renewal where ministry enables the Church to be outward facing, proclaiming the Gospel, making disciples and strengthening the whole people of God for witness and service.

This reimagining and reorientation requires continued culture change. It belongs to the whole people of God as they '*Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. (Mark 16:15)*, and is embodied and fostered by ordained and lay ministers and all the baptised working together.

Made new in the image of the relating and sending Triune God, we find the gift and call of God's mission, and so of our ministry drawn into that same dynamic.

Ministry is relational, with God, the church and the world

Ministers, lay and ordained, are **relational**, loving God and living in deepening relationship with Jesus Christ. They grow in Christ-like maturity, prayerfulness, wisdom and compassion, cultivating a relational church culture oriented towards growth towards the full stature of Christ.

Ministers are members of communities of Christian practice (parishes, chaplaincies, fresh expressions, theological education institutions, religious communities, families, schools and colleges) that build up holy habits for all who share in the life of the community.

Ministers are engaged in the life of the world, relating to communities, organisations, and institutions as well as individuals, working with their Christian communities as well as with people of peace of other faiths and none, for the transformation of society and the revealing of God's kingdom.

Formation for all Christians is a life-long task in relation to God and one another, and ministers are called to grow in wisdom and be shaped by experience and study, self-giving and sacrifice, grace and diligence, self-discipline and prayer.

Ministry is missional, called to proclaim the gospel afresh in every generation

Ministers are **missional**, enabling the saints to be called out and sent as those with a message to live and proclaim publicly, equipping the church to venture boldly into the forgotten corners of the world, committed to the evangelisation and transformation of society. Ministers will equip the Church to be called, gathered, centred and sent, sharing in the activity of God, enabling the whole church to serve the mission of God.

Ministers grow in confidence in faith, rooted in Scripture and Anglican tradition, in the reality of God's presence, and in reading the signs of the times. They are alert to their context and to their own formation, immersed in the practices of theological thinking and reflection.

Ministry is collaborative, given to build up the body of Christ

Ministers are alert to discerning the presence of God in their lives and enabling individuals and their communities to discern God's presence and activity, collaborating with others in building up the body and sharing in God's work in the world. They will encourage the growth of the church in the extent and strength of witness, forming disciples and evangelists.

Ministry is diverse and adaptive, as one body fosters many ministries

Ministers are formed in Christ-like character, according to their calling and context. In the dynamic circumstances of our time, **diverse** forms of ministry will continue to develop, as will approaches to initial and continuing discernment and formation.

Ministers are **adaptive** and encourage their Christian community to be adaptive, discerning God's call in the needs of their context, and creative and courageous in response. They are always be mindful that the task of ministry is to serve God's mission, and not themselves.

The responsibility for the discernment, formation, deployment and support of these will be held locally by the bishop through those with whom the bishop shares this ministry, or collectively by the House of Bishops, according to the form of ministry. Processes adopted by the House of Bishops are required for quality assurance in discernment and formation for ordained and licensed lay ministries. Diocesan assurance is required for those that are more local in character, with best practice shared across dioceses for these ministries.

4. The Roles and Responsibilities of Ministry Council

Ministry Council serves the House of Bishops and Archbishops' Council by guiding and supporting the church as we respond to God's gift and call through discerning, equipping, sending and supporting those in ministry.

The Council is guided by this framework as we engage in:

- Assessing, analysing, and communicating the scale and need of the diverse range of ministries needed to serve the people of England
- Enabling and ensuring smooth processes to engage the best candidates for that range of ministries
- Overseeing and ensuring training, formation and development appropriate for the ministries undertaken
- Strengthening a culture and practice of appropriate lifelong learning throughout the church.

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