

Re-shaping Ministry : A toolbox of parish possibilities

There is an increasing need for a re-shaping of our current models of church and in some places this may need to be a radical re-shaping. Context is always going to be important and it is unlikely that a 'one size fits all' solution exists for every parish or benefice. It is also unlikely that any Parish, Benefice or Ministry Unit would not benefit from some re-shaping to aid their mission and ministry.

There is wisdom in our diocese and beyond and this toolbox offers a number of suggestions that have worked elsewhere. Here is a list to prompt such thinking. Parishes, Benefices and Ministry Units are encouraged to reflect on which might be relevant to your context and how they may contribute to a re-shaped approach to ministry.

1. **Larger Collaborative Units.**

A group of parishes/benefices might choose to work together to share in ministry and resources. This could build on the model of 'Group Ministry' but ensure it is more purposeful than many Groups have become over time; or it might be that the Ministry Unit is the natural vehicle for this.

2. **Simplifying Parochial Structures.**

Changes in structures can save personnel resources and time; and also encourage greater collaborative ministry. For instance:

- **Joint PCCs** – two or more parishes are run by one PCC, usually sharing the parish officers
- **Merging Parishes** - creating one larger parish, with only one PCC and officers

3. **Hub Churches / Minster Model.**

A deanery (or part of a deanery) might decide that strategically it is better to focus ministry resources on one, or more, locations and from there to resource others. This can have the advantage of providing a more supportive and collaborative environment for its Ministers.

4. **Festival Churches.**

The identification of places where the church building remains important but it is no longer reasonable to expect regular Services. The buildings remain available for Services at the main Festivals in the year and for the Occasional Offices. Often this coincides with local communities contributing to the care of the building.

5. **Closure of Church Buildings.**

There may be some places where now is the time to acknowledge that for various reasons it is better to close the Church.

6. **Focal Ministry.**

The identification of individuals who will be the focus for ministry in a particular church, taking this off the Incumbent; it could include SSM Clergy, Readers, PTO clergy, Wardens or other Lay Ministers. They all relate directly to the Incumbent who leads the Team of Focal Ministers.

7. **Shared Deanery Roles.**

There might be value in the sharing of roles across a deanery / group of churches. This could be done by a volunteer or might involve funding a post. Such posts might reduce the parochial administrative load or provide particular expertise, eg Children's / Youth worker, Funeral Co-Ordinator/Administrator, Grant Finder etc?

8. **Online Ministry.**

This could include:

- Replacing current Services with pre-recorded / streamed Services
- The preacher being pre-recorded and used in multiple locations

9. **Reaching Younger Adults.**

There are various ways in which parishes could make changes to their structures and approach to ministry to help them 'to grow younger':

- Establish a definite strategy for connecting with younger adults and bringing them into existing Services
- Recognise that the current forms of worship will not attract younger adults and seek to create New Worshipping Communities; possibly led by lay people and using funding from the Multiply Growth Fund if a part time leader is employed
- In conversation with the deanery & neighbouring parishes, look to replace an Incumbent's post with a Multiply Minister to enable a very focused ministry to younger adults.
- See www.multiplyreach.org.

10. **Mustard Seed Values and Learning.**

Recognising the joys and challenges of mission in places where life is tough, and the growth that can come from small beginnings.

- Spotting local people in our churches who have the potential to grow through Stepping Up as effective witnesses and leaders in mission.
- Identifying places where there is opportunity to develop worshipping communities as places of hospitality and support, where pathways of discipleship build communities of local people who are followers of Jesus.
- See www.mseed.org.