

# Church - what we are and what we could be...

A guide for exploration

June 2022

[www.bathandwells.org.uk/enabling-ministries](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/enabling-ministries)



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## The Enabling Ministries materials—making use of them

The resources in this pack are designed to help deaneries, churches and groups reflect on their context, faith, and gifts in order to identify their calling and ministries, both individually and as a church. They sit alongside a pack of starter questions to help get the conversation going.

This *Enabling Ministries* work is being done across the diocese so that our Christian presence in every community brings life to all. It aims to help

- release the gifts of all God’s people,
- discover and develop shared local ministry

Choose the sections in this pack that are of use to you: there is no set order or obligation to work through them all. These cards have been produced in response to a request from deanery leaders— to weave in with what you do locally, not to duplicate or replace it. The cards are colour coded according to their focus to help find the areas relevant to you.

Our faith

Gifts and service

Context and community

Calling and ministries

General information

Listening to God and each other

Further resources and tools

# Contents

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- What do we have to do, and when?

## Context and community

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- Connecting to our communities

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- Are we flourishing?
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- Getting support and keeping in touch

### Church - what we are and what we could be...

As a diocese we have already done a lot of reflecting on what it means to be Church. Over the next few years, we shall continue to put that thinking, praying, listening and planning into practice. We are building on what is already good among us and developing new ideas and ways of organising our life together in response to some of the challenges and opportunities that we see.

We want God's Church to grow and God's people to flourish and we believe that this can best be done by lay and ordained, paid and unpaid sharing together in a wide variety of ministries that work in their context and draw on their gifts. *Shared local ministry*, which is explored later in these cards, draws directly on the image of the Church as the Body of Christ and we believe that it is an approach that will help release gifts and share the ministerial load. Over the next few years we need to develop this approach, finding what it means for us, and ensuring that we create the right structures of discernment and accountability. Some will always prefer the status quo but in reality the status quo has been a burden, (both lay and ordained) and a restriction to others.

Over time, this work of enabling ministries will help us to work better together, listening to God, learning from our experiences, and building on what is good, so that we can face the future with hope.

I trust that you will find these resources useful. I commend them to you as something to integrate into the work you are doing locally, and please help us to continue to improve them by giving feedback.

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## What do we have to do, and when?

From September 2021, deaneries across the diocese were asked to begin identifying the shape of future ministry in their area

- In our context, based on our faith and with the gifts we have, what is God calling us to be and do?
- What lay ministries are, or could be, emerging in our areas?
- How should we best distribute paid clergy posts across our area?

The clergy post decisions have to be made at deanery, archdeaconry and diocesan level but the other questions are for every parish and community across the diocese. That is what these materials are designed to help with.

The emergence of new ministries is not going to happen overnight but will be our focus for the next one to five years.

DMPGs and Deanery Chapters were asked to begin this work by the end of 2021 so that in 2022 parishes and Deanery Synods are ready to play their part. We know that in some places, this work is already underway, sometimes for many years; for others it will be new.`

Autumn 2021

**28 September**  
Introduction and discussion of materials and to Area and Lay Deans

Deaneries discuss materials in DMPG and Chapter, and feed back by **31 December**

2022

Enabling Ministries conversations taking place in benefices and deaneries across the diocese as part of encouraging new ministries to develop alongside work on deployment of stipendiary posts. Support available throughout

**June** survey of benefices

Deaneries review deanery mission plans in light of progress on Enabling Ministries and deployment plans

# How do we connect to our communities?



## Connecting with our communities

As Church we are called to be a Christian presence in both geographical communities (of place) and also to communities of interest (e.g. uniformed organisations, schools, online groups).

Christian presence already exists in our communities through lay and ordained people, paid and unpaid - Christians responding to God's call to live out their faith wherever they are. That is almost like a 'God thread' running through the community (see illustration on the reverse).

Thinking of the communities we belong to, sometimes we imagine that a worshipping community can only happen in a church building, but a worshipping community can be formed anywhere. We can also live out the Anglican Five Marks of Mission throughout our communities in a variety of ways - teaching, tending, transforming, treasuring and telling in partnership with others in our communities. (See the [How does our faith shape our church?](#) section for the Five Marks of Mission).

You may find [Growing Good](#) a useful resource in this work—to consider your presence in your community.

## For reflection

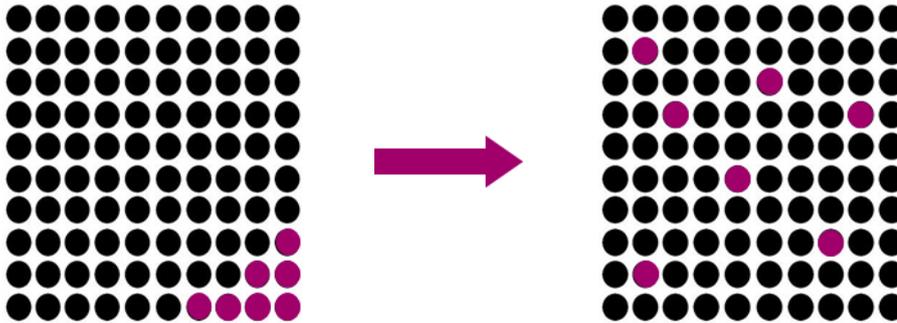
What does our Christian presence look like now, and what might it look like in the future?

You could explore this in a number of ways

- Draw a representation of your own area or use a local map to pinpoint your connections.
- List any communities of interest and things to which your community links that are outside of your geographical area (e.g. schools)
- What do you learn from your own lists or drawings and from comparing with each other's?
- Where is the Church's Christian presence active at the moment and what opportunities might there be to extend it?

## Sharing our faith in the wider community

For many years we worked with the idea that if we made services in church attractive enough (better coffee, better music, better welcome, better toilets...), people with no church background would come “back to church” in their droves. We expected people to just turn up to a place that can be intimidating for a whole range of reasons, to find out what it’s all about.



The pink dots above represent Christians. On the left you can see that when we are gathered, we are in contact with fewer people. We have more impact on the rest of our communities when we are out in the world. Jesus uses the words “come” and “go” a great deal in the Gospels. We come together as Christians in order to strengthen and support each other in our faith, ready to go out and live it.

## For reflection

Use the sketch and list that you have created from [Connecting to our Communities](#) and mark or note the places or groups of people with whom you are in contact during an average week or month

- How are you connecting to those places or people?
- What can you learn from those places or people?
- How might you work in partnership with them?
- What support or help do you need to do that?

## What next...

Are there groups, places or people with whom you have little or no contact?

How might you connect better with them?

If you would like some help exploring how to connect to your wider community, contact Charlie Peer [charlie.peer@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:charlie.peer@bathwells.anglican.org) or Julia Hill [julia.hill@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:julia.hill@bathwells.anglican.org).

## How does our faith shape our church?

The statements below are core to this work of exploration

God is present in the world

God calls all people - to shine as lights in the world, sharing the Good News of Christ

The church does not exist for itself but to serve the world

God consistently calls us from where we are to a new place or state of being

Anglican Five Marks of Mission - we join in with God's work by:

- Living the good news of Christ - through all we do, say and are
- Encouraging and teaching new believers
- Responding lovingly to those in need
- Transforming injustice and working for peace and reconciliation
- Safeguarding God's creation.

## For reflection

First reflect individually, then in pairs or a whole group

- Which of the statements resonate most positively?
- Do any disturb?
- Which of the Five Marks of Mission do you/your church do best?

And in practice what does this mean for us:

- How are we already serving God's world, beyond our offering of regular worship?
- Is there anything we would like to explore doing more or doing better?

## Resources to help us deepen the connections between our faith and our life

Sometimes we are so used to reading the words of others in prayers, hymns and the Bible, that it can be intimidating to speak about what we believe. It can feel as though we aren't qualified to speak, but often speaking with others helps us become clearer about what we really do believe. And it helps us learn from their faith too.

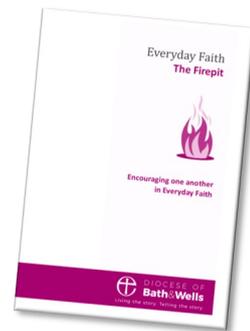


There is a variety of Everyday Faith resources to help explore what faith means in our lives and what God might be calling us to do. There are some initial suggestions below:

**Growing with God** has questions based on the word 'called' to use for personal reflection or as part of a conversation.

**The Firepit** leaflet offers groups a simple structure to reflect together on living out our faith. It is suitable for young people as well as adults.

The **Encouraging One Another in Everyday Faith** leaflet works particularly well for small groups of 3 to 4, especially for people who are not completely new to faith. It includes the full wording of the Five Marks of Mission.



Many Christians find it helpful to have a Spiritual Director, Accompanier or Soul Friend to meet with and reflect on God, life and faith. More information can be found at [www.bathandwells.org.uk/spiritual-direction](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/spiritual-direction).

Many churches run small groups to help explore faith. Exploring Faith is a new course on offer across the diocese. Visit [www.bathandwells.org.uk/exploring-faith](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/exploring-faith) for more information.

## Exploring calling - are we all called or just some people?

Sometimes, even in church, it can feel as if God only calls 'special people'. But God calls us all, because God created us, knows us and loves us. We are all called to live lives that are true to our faith and what it means to be a Christian.

God also calls us at times in our life to particular roles - which sounds tidy but is often pretty messy. Often those calls are something we take up for a season only. Sometimes they are for the rest of our lives.

### How do we know if God is calling us?

- We need help to discern those callings - to check in with others that we really are being called to something particular, rather than it just being our ego/alter ego thinking it would be good.
- Sometimes others will see our calling before we do.
- Sometimes we start a role because there is a need and then later realise that God's call has been in it.
- In trying to work out who or where God might be calling us to be and do, it is often really helpful just to try things out - see what it feels like from the inside.

Any particular calling we may have exists within our overall call to live as Christians in God's world, a calling that is recognised at our baptism.





The wonderful variety of callings that exist is a bit like a garden. Some plants, like trees, last a lifetime; some are beautiful but brief; some return each season; some are planted deliberately; some are seeded by wind or birds; some grow in any soil and some need very particular ground to flourish.

For a lot of people their job or vocation is their calling. Sometimes those are callings that continue for the rest of their lives - being ordained, becoming a parent, becoming a Reader or being called to teach...

Christian calling is always practised within community, serving the world. God is everywhere and calls people to be everywhere, not just in the 'churchy' places and not just for individual satisfaction.

Central to calling is what it does within us even more than what it does to others. Responding to God's call brings life and growth to us, even when what we are doing is painful or difficult. A response to God's call is a response to a call to be fully ourselves, fully alive, alongside others, in God's beautiful and varied creation.



## For reflection

- What is your favourite hymn, song or Bible passage?  
→ What does that have to say about what it is to live a Christian life?
- What resonates with or challenges you in what you've read above?
- Who do you know whose life reflects the life of Christ in some way?

The February 2022 Archdeaconry Days focused on God calls - everyone, everywhere.

See [www.bathandwells.org.uk/god-calls-everyone-everywhere](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/god-calls-everyone-everywhere) for videos and resources.

## Serving God and our communities

As covered on [Exploring calling - are we all called or just some people?](#), God calls us all, everyone has a gift to share. Alongside that universal but personal call, some people feel called to particular ministries - within and beyond the church. Across the diocese, there are already people living out ministry as a focus for, and service to, their community. Ordained and Reader ministry are some of the more established models of ministry. We are also blessed with pioneers and chaplains across the diocese, Lay Worship and Lay Pastoral Assistants, Pupil Chaplains, Churchwardens - the list goes on!

Some of these ministries are based more on worship and congregation, some are more about presence in the wider community. [Shared local ministry](#) includes formally named ministries and informal ministries - they all count but have different levels of accountability. It's about finding what mixture works in your context.

### What is Ministry?

There is much scope for discussion about the meaning of ministry and its New Testament roots.

All people are created by God and called to be involved in God's mission and ministry. Christians are reminded in Paul's letter to the Colossians, 'whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Col: 3.17).

We are all called by baptism to shine as lights in the world - that may not be a formal named ministry, but it is a call.

Some particular named ministries are commissioned and accountable; they are public ministries that represent God and the church. These ministries carry a specific responsibility for others.

In the development of shared local ministry we are talking about ministries that provide a focal point for each community. What they involve will depend on the context in which they operate and the gifts of people locally. They will come with oversight to give support and accountability so that all those who share in ministry can flourish.

## For reflection and next steps

- Think individually and then as a group - what ministries are associated with your church?
  - You might want to write them up on post-its or large paper and step back and see what that tells you about your church and where your energy is focused. Some roles may well feel different to different people. For example - some Churchwardens or Treasurers see their role as a ministry, others don't.
- Which roles are missing from the list of ministries? Are there any groups or places in your community that would benefit from a shared local ministry? See [Connecting to our Communities](#) for ideas to help reflect on your Christian presence in your community.
- Do you know what your gifts are? Take a look at the leaflets 'Exploring our Gifts' and 'How can I contribute?'. Clergy and Lay Leaders can perhaps offer to reflect with people using these, or similar, resources. Alternatively, you can get in touch with the Vocations team for support [vocations@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:vocations@bathwells.anglican.org)



## Shared local ministry

Shared local ministry is the model of ministry that we are encouraging in every church and parish across the diocese: people exercising specific ministries which reflect their gifts and vocation. Working together, they will share the ministry in that community, and be focal points for a genuinely local Christian presence.

Our model of church has sometimes been based on having a vicar and expecting them to do, or lead on, most things; including the things that don't need to be done by a priest. The way in which benefices are configured often puts a strain on everyone, as well as taking energy away from the local. Shared local ministry aims to release and enable both clergy and laity, so that together we can find a more joyful and sustainable model.

Shared local ministry will take a unique shape in each place, fitting the context of the community. In some parishes there will be a large team, in others fewer - perhaps even one person. The combination of ministry roles will be different in every place. This approach is about finding the shape of ministry that is life-giving to the church and to those who serve in these roles.

### Oversight ministry

A crucial element of shared local ministry is that it is also shared with an oversight minister, who in most places will be the incumbent parish priest. People in local ministry roles are accountable to the oversight minister, who provides leadership and works together with them to minister in the community. The role of the clergy as spiritual leaders is central to this model, fulfilling the ordination charge "to discern and foster the gifts of all God's people" and growing the shared ministry which will give life to the local church.



## Some existing examples of local ministries in Bath and Wells

### Administrator across benefices

Administrative support releases others to exercise their ministries and provides connection across an area, including with the wider community.

### Reader in charge of group of parishes

A Reader can offer spiritual leadership across a number of parishes, enabling other people to play their part in leading worship and connecting to community.

### Community Chaplains

Someone operating as a chaplain in local shops or schools, hedgerows (really!), sports clubs etc.

### Youth Minister

Working with children and young people, in one parish, across a benefice or deanery. Enabling the ministries of others, including young people.

### Churchwarden

Known across the community as part of the church and recognised as having a ministry to that community.

These people share their ministries with others and are accountable to someone with oversight. You can hear what ministry means to people from around the diocese by viewing the [Enabling Ministries playlist on our YouTube channel](#).

## For reflection

- Who are the people who already share in ministries in our context?
- How is it working?
- What can we learn from that?
- What else might be possible?

## Dwelling in the Word - a guide

Dwelling in the Word is a simple but profound way of listening to God and one another through Scripture. It allows everyone to have a chance to speak about what they notice in a Bible passage. Making this part of your practice as a church or group can help you listen more attentively to one another and give confidence that God speaks to everyone. See over for a prayer and passage that we are using Dwelling in the Word across the diocese in 2022 as one option.

- Take a moment to become still and then say a prayer to start (e.g. see over)
- Whoever is leading lets people know: you will hear the passage twice and all you need to do is listen and see where your attention is drawn - to a word or phrase that seems particularly meaningful, to something that surprises you, to something that challenges you etc. It doesn't need to be something impressive!
- Hear the passage (see reverse or your choice), read slowly once. Pause. Hear it again - ideally using another voice that contrasts with the first - e.g. a different age or gender, lay or ordained etc.
- Get into pairs. Take it in turns to listen to what struck the other person. Don't interrupt, correct or improve on what they say - just listen. Some people like to make a note as you will be reporting back.
- After the time in pairs, either form fours or go back into the whole group (depending on size of group). Each person then reports on what their partner said. Resist the temptation to comment!
- You can simply finish with a pause or prayer after people have fed back, or see if there are any themes in what people are noticing in the passage.

## A Prayer for Dwelling in the Word

Loving God,  
Though our destination is not yet clear,  
May we trust in Your graceful promises;  
Though we are uncertain of ourselves,  
May we be rooted in Your loving regard;  
Though our attention is inclined to wander,  
May we hear the things You are saying;  
Though we often neglect Your influence,  
May we be convicted of Your power to  
change,  
In Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen.

## Philippians 4:4-13

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup> Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

<sup>10</sup> I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. <sup>11</sup> Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Dwelling in the Word is a spiritual practice from Partnership for Missional Church.

[www.bathandwells.org.uk/dwelling-in-the-word](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/dwelling-in-the-word)

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## Seeking God's Way Together - a guide

We cannot be church as individuals. So, deciding questions about how we are as church and how we might be is best done together. We are the Body of Christ and bodies work best when all the parts are working together.

Below is an outline of a structure for collective thinking and deciding. It is a spiritual practice. The essence is to come together, to listen to God, to each other, share our experience and knowledge, and then prayerfully decide a way forwards. It is quite different from leaving a decision to the vicar, or to the loudest person in the room.

### A basic outline of Seeking God's Way Together

- Start with prayer and [Dwelling in the Word](#) to help us focus on God and each other
- Agree the question to focus on e.g. What gives our church life? What should we focus on?
- Pool everyone's thoughts (but not discussing them at this stage)
  - What information or thinking do we have already that will help us answer this question? Where is God in all this?
- Have an open conversation.
- Reflect together on what we've heard.
- Agree how we will now move forwards in terms of action.

A facilitator's guide and framework can be found at [www.bathandwells.org.uk/enabling-ministries](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/enabling-ministries). You may have someone locally who could facilitate. If not, contact the [Deanery and Parish Support Team](#) and we will be happy to help.

## A Prayer for Seeking God's Way Together

Loving God,  
Though our destination is not yet clear,  
May we trust in Your graceful promises;  
Though we are uncertain of ourselves,  
May we be rooted in Your loving regard;  
Though our attention is inclined to wander,  
May we hear the things You are saying;  
Though we often neglect Your influence,  
May we be convicted of Your power to change,  
In Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen.

## Philippians 1:27, 2: 5-11

<sup>1:27</sup> Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.

<sup>2:5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, <sup>8</sup> he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Seeking God's Way Together and Dwelling in the Word are spiritual practices from Partnership for Missional Church which we are using as part of our diocesan practices. Julia Hill can connect you to more information and support in using these practices [julia.hill@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:julia.hill@bathwells.anglican.org).

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## Are we flourishing?

The whole point of this work of enabling ministries is to help us flourish - to have life in all it's fullness. You might find these common factors of flourishing churches useful as a way of reflecting on the strengths of your church community and areas you might like to address:

A clear mission and purpose and clergy and congregations who are intentional about growth



Understand its context, actively engage with it and those who might not currently go to church



Be welcoming and build on-going relationships with people



Actively engage children and young people



Nurture disciples (encouraging people to explore and deepen their faith and live it out in their daily lives)



Have clergy and lay leaders who innovate, envision and motivate people



Have lay people as well as ordained clergy active in leadership and other roles



Be willing to self-reflect, change and adapt according to its context



## What next?

### Starter questions

As well as this Exploration Guide, there is a pack of questions cards to help churches and groups get started on exploring their context and beliefs together. The cards are also an easy way of seeing what gives people energy. They don't have 'right' answers. The question cards could be used with a PCC, in a sermon slot, home group, deanery synod, DMPG etc. They cover personal faith, faith together and faith in the world.

For a set of cards, and suggestions of how they might be used, contact Julia Hill, [julia.hill@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:julia.hill@bathwells.anglican.org) or download from the website.

### An accompanied process

Many groups will be happy just to use the materials in this pack, or the starter questions, themselves. These materials work best by facilitation. Facilitation and support are also available from Diocesan Support Services, so get in touch if you would like any help.

If you would like to use these, and additional materials, in an accompanied process, please contact Julia Hill.

What are the three things you most value about your church?

5

How do you think the wider community would describe the local church?

3

## Getting support and keeping in touch

This work is being done together across the diocese. We will all be learning and adapting as we go along, because although this is based on age-old principles, some of the ways of approaching it are new.

If you are happy just to start exploring, then use these cards and the [supporting resources on the website](#).

If you have any feedback, suggestions or requests for help, including wanting to explore the accompanied process, then you may find the following useful:

- [www.bathandwells.org.uk/enabling-ministries](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/enabling-ministries) for copies of this document, further information and supporting resources
- Charlie Peer for overall questions [charlie.peer@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:charlie.peer@bathwells.anglican.org) or 01749 685201
- Julia Hill for requests for facilitation and support [julia.hill@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:julia.hill@bathwells.anglican.org) or 01749 685114
- Deanery Accompaniers for help with accessing the right people for support with your ideas [www.bathandwells.org.uk/deanery-accompaniers](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/deanery-accompaniers)
- Diocesan Support Services 01749 670777 can connect you to staff for other support and expertise.

We are here to support you, with existing resources, by developing new ones and by sharing the stories you have to tell, so please get in touch!

### More of the thinking

- For more of the national Church of England thinking around lay ministries, see '[A Vision for Lay Ministries](#)', a paper for General Synod
- For some reflections on calling and the meaning of ministry, see '[Kingdom Calling: the vocation, ministry and discipleship of the whole people of God](#)' from the Church of England Faith and Order Commission.