**RURAL STRAND**



**MISSION & MINISTRY LEADERSHIP TEAMS**

# Document Control

## Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set the framework for the development of Mission and Ministry Leadership Teams across the rural areas of the diocese of Newcastle. It sets out the practical and theological principles for the establishment and nurture of Mission and Ministry Leadership Teams.

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## Document History

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## Document Review

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# Summary

The diocesan strategy includes a strand for the re-imagination of the rural church within a five-year period and the setting up of Mission and Ministry Leadership Teams coupled with the simplification of pastoral structures will be key in creating a new identity and shape of church.

There are many opportunities for the rural church to grow not least because of an active legacy of partnership working between lay and ordained in the service of local communities that already exists.

Challenges and threats to achieving our goals exist in traditional community structures that will require significant enabling to grow a wider perspective on mission and ministry than they have at present.

Key objectives set the direction of the rural strand’s work based around the setting up of Mission and Ministry Leadership Teams across the rural church and then networking them for support and development. The flourishing of both lay and ordained within the new and effective structures is a key outcome as is the realisation of a greater number of people exercising their gifts and skills in ministry.

A Mission and Ministry Leadership Team is rooted in the theological principle of the ‘royal priesthood’ within which both lay and ordained serve the church and the world by virtue of baptism. Another key principle is that of shared leadership as lay and ordained in partnership realise God’s hope of the church.

In practical terms a Mission and Ministry Leadership Team is rooted in the authority of the PCC or PCCs within a group of parishes which will establish the guiding framework for each Team, even when the Team is operative across a cluster of parishes which includes more than one benefice.

We have considered key risks, dependencies and assumptions to help guide us in the implementation of Mission and Ministry Leadership Teams.

# Background

## Context

The rural church in the diocese of Newcastle – all of rural Northumberland and small parts of Cumbria and County Durham – faces a significant challenge from its geography and its relatively small dispersed population. This challenge is compounded by others: the continuing necessary reduction of the availability of stipendiary clergy; the financial difficulty being faced by the reduction in numbers giving regularly; and by an aging demographic in the more remote areas of the diocese which is leading to a lower capacity amongst laity for participation in the church than has been experienced hitherto in recent decades.

Such challenges are in some places being experienced painfully and there is a growing honesty around a dawning realisation that the cost of maintaining old models of ministry and collaboration is not proving sustainable. The establishment of new style Mission and Ministry Teams we believe will enable the rural church to embrace a different and positive future.

In this context, the Rural Strand of *Growing Church Bringing Hope* aims to re-imagine rural ministry, and particularly to create mission and ministry teams amidst the growth of new and simplified pastoral structures which will be responsive to local need. We need to make better use of a variety of models and kinds of ministers - both lay and ordained - as may be appropriate in any particular setting, and also be resilient, enabling a sustainable, positive church presence in every rural community. In order to achieve this, we need to build structures that promote a collegiate continuing learning approach, from each other and from those whom we encounter in communities and in wider society.

The goals for the rural strand of the diocesan strategy are that in five years’ time the rural church will be:

* Worshipping locally and with openness to new patterns of worship, new styles of worship and fresh types of congregation;
* Confident and engaged with developing the church’s life and mission (this will include training for lay and ordained, the development of discipleship, the nurture of lay worship leaders and the growth of clergy able to focus on delivering the vision;
* Regarded by other institutions, communities and individuals as a significant partner in the development of local communities and society;
* Valued – by itself and others – as a sacred space that holds and shares the Christian story and its heritage in Northumbria and beyond.

A church that has embraced a holistic and varied understanding and practice of growth: in numbers of people who value, respect and engage with their parish church; in numbers of those who are positively impacted by the church; and in openness to how church growth might happen.

## Opportunities

As mission and ministry leadership teams are established throughout the rural areas of the diocese we envisage that there will be a range of key opportunities for the local church:

* To reimagine the ministry of the rural church through experimenting with new models of ministry and new configurations of ministry teams to enhance the growth of the church;
* To build on the legacy of partnership working within the former Local Ministry Scheme and harness the latent energy that exists in a wide network of lay and ordained committed to collaborative approaches to mission and ministry across the rural areas of the diocese;
* To explore how we might bring together the vision and skills of both lay and ordained ministers to better serve God’s mission in the world;
* To create a mutually supportive and developmental network of Mission and Ministry Leadership Teams across the rural areas of the diocese;
* To identify the gifts and skills of lay and ordained, including new gifts and skills that we have not recognised before, both those lying latent and also fresh categories that we have not recognised before.

## Challenges/threats

In aiming for and realising these opportunities we recognise that there are some challenges and threats to what we want to achieve:

* Given previous experience some parishes will fail to adopt a benefice wide perspective and therefore they will be limited in the way that they are unable to give and receive ministry across traditional parish and other rural boundaries;
* In some parts of Northumberland the demographic is aging quickly and one consequence of this is that there may well be fewer volunteers available to engage actively in the church’s ministry;
* We recognise that for some parishes and benefices maintaining a church building that does not easily serve the mission of God in the local community is a burden; unless the local church is able to discern the unique contribution its building(s) make to the benefice and/or deanery then unnecessary energy will be absorbed and this will threaten the capacity of the local church to grow;
* Unless parishes, benefices and deaneries develop a positive approach towards structural simplification then there is a danger that capacity for growth will not be released;
* Our geography is a challenge in itself; travelling time in our rural areas is significant and needs to be allowed for in deployment models.

# Objectives

As we seize the opportunities in front of us for change and respond to the challenges so we will work towards the following objectives:

* To enable the creation of effective mission and ministry leadership teams in every rural area in the diocese which are built around core theological principles (section 6) but which are diverse is in appearance according to their settings;
* To explore the effectiveness and the impact of rural models of ministry and team working by careful monitoring and evaluation and sharing of good practice;
* To develop team structures and ways of working that are robust enough to withstand change in key personnel over time, especially the departure and arrival of parish priests;
* To release more energy and therefore people for participation in the rural church’s ministry;
* To animate the network of mission and ministry leadership teams across the diocese by creating opportunities for reflection by creating peer groups for learning and development.

# Outcomes

We are expecting to observe the following outcomes as we fulfil our objectives:

* The flourishing of both lay and ordained as they work in partnership together;
* A greater number of people within the church exercising their God-given gifts and skills;
* Local communities looking towards the church as a resource for community resilience and development;
* The rural church growing in its impact within the communities it seeks to serve and the number of groups and institutions, including individuals, who are influenced by church life increasing;
* Openness to numerical growth becomes part of a new mind-set within the life of the rural church which is leading to measurable growth in numbers;
* The rural church growing in its uptake of discipleship courses and other opportunities for learning;
* New forms of mission and ministry emerging including forms of church that are appropriate for new rural groupings, geographical and networked, that we are not yet reaching.

# Values

The rural strand of the diocesan strategy is committed to ‘values-based’ leadership, believing that the leadership which is God’s gift to the church aims to live out and embody all that we value as Christians who take community in its many positive forms seriously. Naming our values enables accountability but also helps motivate and inspire us. The ‘world’ is looking for values rather than vision – what is authentic resonates in contemporary culture whereas overarching visions can disempower and demotivate. An example is found in the difficulty that many now have with the concept of ‘servant leadership’. It’s not that servant leadership is wrong in itself but that values-based ideas and practices such as ‘friendship’ capture the heart more readily as a model of collaborative working. Values are high on impact as they become embodied and give us purpose.

In being faithful to, confident in and committed to sharing the transforming nature of the gospel we have discerned to importance of:

* Being attentive to local communities and generous in response to them;
* Respecting the past in order to re-imagine the future;
* Being courageous in reimaging the church that is coming into being.

These are the key practical values that a Mission and Ministry Leadership team will seek to live out both as it develops but also as it grows and renews itself.

# Description

The key theological principle for Mission and Ministry Leadership Teams is that the gift of ministry emerges out of the biblical concept of the royal priesthood, the people of God who together are shaped by and energised by the high priesthood of Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Within the royal priesthood of God’s people we understand each and every person by virtue of baptism to have received the range of gifts within them to play a full part in the ministry of the church which is the body of Christ.

Within the church and under God’s grace and guidance we act to enable the release of the latent God-given potential within each of us. This means that we have the opportunity of being set aside for particular ministries that represent Christ to his church and the church to world. Key to the life of the body of Christ is the holding together of the variety of models or shapes of ministry that each individual offers.

Within this understanding the Mission and Ministry Leadership Team derives its theology and practice from the concept of shared leadership. God’s gift of leadership is to the whole church and lay and ordained alike share in the gracious gift together but in many and different ways – as bishops, priests and deacons, as those with licence or permission to officiate, as lay or ordained, as commissioned or authorised.

The leadership of God’s church is complete and being exercised only when each and everyone – that is the royal priesthood – plays their part and contributes to the release of the leadership gift that belongs to us all. As this happens we make provision for particular ministries both informal and formal and as we do this every ministry contributes to the shared leadership that belongs to all.

A Mission and Ministry Leadership Team has a mandate from a PCC or group of PCCs working together in a benefice, Group or Team. The Mission and Ministry Leadership Team owes its existence and authority (shared with and ultimately the Diocesan Bishop’s), from its incumbent and PCC or PCCs. It’s critical that the relationship between Mission and Ministry Leadership Team and PCC is transparent and subject to regular review. A Mission and Ministry Leadership Team should report regularly to its PCC or PCCs. It is the PCC (or PCCs) that sets the guiding framework for the operation of the Mission and Ministry Leadership Team and gives a resource for building relationships across the benefice or groups of parishes.

Typically, a Mission and Ministry Leadership Team would consist of those who are there by right of office (the incumbent and associate clergy together with licenced lay ministers). They would be accompanied by those who are selected locally by an agreed method. Not all local leaders, lay or ordained would expect to be on a MMLT at any one time.

The role of the Mission and Ministry Leadership Team would include, subject to the authority granted by the PCC or PCCs:

* Discerning with the incumbent the gifts and skills of all who are part of the people of God locally;
* Encouraging the growth of vocations to both lay and ordained ministries
* Lead the parish/benefice(s) in mission and ministry so that each locality plays a key part in contributing to the future of the rural church
* Modelling collaborative working including the partnership between lay and ordained persons in serving the mission of God in the world
* Planning and delivering church growth by helping the PCC create energy for mission and ministry
* Enabling the whole people of God to pray for the local church to fulfil its vocation to become a *growing church* that is *bringing hope*
* Establishing and maintaining ways of working that promote collaborative working practices both within existing teams and more broadly within the parish/benefice(s)

Models of ministry that we would expect to see grow within parishes and benefices would include:

* Ordained self-supporting Ministers who are called out of the local church or who have been deployed;
* Focal leaders – either lay ordained who exercise a focused leadership either in a geographical area or around a church building or in a dispersed community of interest. The focal leader is the point of first contact or call, the named representative of the local church in a particular place who carries a key administrative function;
* Community Missioners – employed laity who exercise a community-wide ministry making links with the local church (learning from the Impact Strand)
* Churchwardens – as Bishop’s Officers, but seen as exercising an effective and valuable ministry both within their parishes and across their benefices and in particular holding together the tension between gathered and dispersed church by caring deeply for their local communities;
* Readers – either those who are recruited and grown locally or those who might be deployed into a new setting for ministry;
* Readers who are stipendiary and who share with colleagues as part of bishop’s deployed workforce;
* Commissioned ministers – those laity who receive their commission locally and which is renewed regularly for specific pieces of work;
* Authorised ministers – those laity who are diocesan trained and who are publicly authorised to a locality, whose authorisation is transferable across the diocese and who bring with them a special ministry (for example worship leading, pastoral care, evangelism, youth or children’s worker);
* Laity who choose to exercise a lay ministry with its own identity and whose authentic contribution is recognised locally;
* Retired and other clergy with permission to officiate and who have elected to live out an agreed commitment to ministry locally;

In some parishes or benefices all recognised ministers will be part of the Mission and Ministry Leadership Team. In others, perhaps those which larger numbers of recognised ministers, there will be a Mission and Ministry Leadership Team which fulfils the roles describe above and a wider mission and ministry team that will include all involved in ministry. Structuring the collaborative environment will be the responsibility of the PCC or PCCs.

The role of the incumbent is key to operation of each Mission and Ministry Leadership Team. Together with the PCC or PCCs they are responsible for leading the process to establish the team and in leadership set the tone of collaborative working by their example.

It may well be appropriate for a Mission and Ministry Leadership Team to be operative over more than one benefice and therefore over what might be known as a cluster of parishes. It is expected that the establishment of a Mission and Ministry Leadership Team would precede any simplification of pastoral structures which might in the medium to longer term be deemed necessary.

Each Mission and Ministry Leadership Team will have a mentor who is trained and resourced to be an independent reference point available to both Mission and Ministry Leadership Teams themselves and their team leaders. Mentors will be recruited, trained and resourced by the rural strand’s guiding coalition and be skilled in the establishment of new teams, guiding their development and enabling regular review.

# Risks/Dependencies/Assumptions

## Key Risks

There are some risks identified in achieving our goals for mission and ministry teams:

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| **Description** | **Importance** | **Mitigation** |
| We are not able to recruit able team leaders in the rural setting (the challenge of recruiting stipendiary clergy generally into the north east, plus the effect of asking for particular skills). | Med | Mitigated by high quality recruiting materials (parish profiles, role descriptions). |
| We do not implement a training development programme for clergy team leaders. | Med | Mitigated by good planning from the rural strand’s theological education and training group and close partnership working with the CMD officer. |
| We do not have enough resource to deliver targeted support to MMLTs as they are set up and MMLTs are therefore set up in unsustainable ways. | High | Mitigated by appointment of a rural strand mission adviser. |
| We are unable to recruit an effective team of mentors for the number of MMLTs across the rural areas of the diocese. | High | Mitigated by early recruitment and (possible) appointment of a rural strand mission adviser. |
| PCCs do not buy into the diocesan vision, the need for structural simplification and the creation of new forms of ministry teams. | High | Mitigated by the adoption of effective change management models, a bespoke communications strategy, episcopal leadership and the forthcoming deanery consultation process. |

## Key Dependencies

The success is dependent on a number of factors:

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| **Dependency Description** | **Importance** | **Comments** |
| This approach to creating mission and ministry teams is dependent upon the foundational document we are in the process of producing, ‘Restructuring the Rural Church’. Creation of new forms of team go together with the creation of new and simplified structures within the rural church and lead to more energy being released to promote growth in all its form. | Med | Ensure production of this document early in 2019 as the consultation on this document proceeds. |
| There is a dependency on monitoring and evaluation procedures being firmly in place as the first mission and ministry team is developed. | High | Make the case for deploying and funding an external evaluator alongside the identification of two new case studies. |
| The creation and resourcing of a buildings strategy for the rural church. | Med | Significant funding application to the HLF Inspiring Idea fund submitted in January 2019. |

## Key Assumptions

We are making some key assumptions about our context within the overall diocesan strategy *growing church bringing hope*:

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| **Assumption Description** | **Importance** | **Comments** |
| That there will be a coherent approach to social justice emerge during 2019 that will continue to support the community engagement of our parishes and benefices. | Med |  |
| That there will be funding available for support the development work that is emerging across 25 change arenas, in the shape of a rural mission adviser who would take responsibility for the establishment, growth and development of Mission and Ministry Leadership Teams. | High |  |

# Key Supporting Documents

1. Mission and Ministry Team Handbook.
2. Resource Sheets: Praying Together, Learning Together, Notes on Note-Taking, A Reflection Journal, Getting the balance right: being an organisation and a community, Getting the balance right: maintenance and mission, Changing Culture, Reviewing Mission and Ministry Leadership Team.
3. Focal Ministers/Leaders Foundational paper