

Responses to Questions about Local/Focal and Oversight Ministry asked by Members of Diocesan Synod Saturday, 18 May 2024

Group 1

Discussed what has been happening at Bodmin, where oversight and focal ministry has been taking place. They asked what was happening elsewhere that they could be inspired by, the potential of what could be. They observed/queried that this style of ministry is dependent on human nature, so there may be a focal minister who is favoured in one place but not in another, with the resulting falling out and difficulties.

Response: Oversight Ministry with Local Leaders/Focal Ministers is now operational in a number of benefices across the diocese including St Agnes, the Lann Pydar benefice, the Callington Cluster (although they are currently recruiting a new Oversight Minister), Mounts Bay benefice, Stratton deanery - in some, but not all parishes.

It is very important that those appointed/commissioned as Local Leaders/Focal Ministers are nominated and supported by their PCC and their Incumbent; often they already hold a key leadership role within the parish (e.g. Churchwarden, Reader/LLM or Local Worship Leader) and commissioning them as the Local Leader is simply a public act of recognition.

Group 2

How can we involve our small church ministry to meet the needs of our small communities?

This is a very good question, and it would be good to include this issue in the Small Church Consultation Exercise, being led by +Graham. In many cases, the 'Local Leader' is already obvious as the person who in effect does lead the church with the support of the Incumbent. Offering them the opportunity to attend Sens Kernewek and gain a deeper understanding of local leadership in the church may support them in what they are already doing.

How can we speed up the process of oversight and local ministry being 'the thing'?

Prayer, and chatting to people in the parishes so that they understand what is being proposed (rather than what they fear is being proposed!). The Diocese of Manchester has developed a booklet to support these discussions and we hope to be able to benefit from their work.

Does the National Church have plan to roll out training of Oversight ministers?

Not at the moment, which is why we are partnering with CPAS who have developed the course which we are piloting.

Group 3

Observed that there had been a lot of advice given about leading churches, not so much about mission beyond the Church walls. If this pattern of ministry does not work, then what might be next and how do we actually grow the church through all of this?

Sens Kernewek has a clear focus. We talk about what it means to lead a local Christian community in looking outwards to the wider community. The text of the commissioning service is clear: "*Local Lay Leaders are called to lead collaboratively in an individual church, under the oversight of their Incumbent. Proclaiming the good news of the loving kindness of God in Christ, they lead the faithful in mission and service within their specific local community. They are signs of God at work.*"

And the initial evidence (both locally and nationally) is that churches with Local Leaders (Focal Ministers) do in fact grow.

Group 4

They were encouraged by Revd Jeff Risbridger's words, and see lots of potential with team working. They also recognised that there is a lot of tiredness in the areas discussed, and a lack of volunteers.

How do we encourage *all* clergy and lay ministers to buy into the vision of teamwork?

Another very good question, which I'm not sure I can answer as clearly as I'd like. The Ministry Team deliver training for lay and ordained ministers and there is always a focus on working in teams, however, there will always be some people for whom team working presents a real challenge - and this for a variety of reasons. We do need our Theological Education Institutes (TEIs) to include significant input on how to work effectively in

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teams, and the evidence suggests that this doesn't always happen.

Group 5

Encouraged by the idea of community of communities.

How, in that structure, do we encourage churches to work together when they may have very different aims, traditions and focuses?

I think the key thing here is for all churches to learn to value each other and the rich tapestry of traditions that exist within the Church of England generally and the diocese of Truro specifically. It would be very boring if every church looked the same as every other. Just as people we are all different, made in God's image but with a wonderful uniqueness, so our churches offer that same wonderful kaleidoscope of worship and service. Perhaps we could start by moving away from competition and towards collaboration. That would be a very positive first step.

Group 6

Encouraged to hear where it *is* working and grateful for Revd Jeff Risbridger's honesty. Concerned about identifying those leaders in their own area where it is not particularly obvious who they may be.

Prayer, discernment and noticing who God is calling within the congregation - and being ready to be surprised and possibly even having our assumptions challenged!

How do we minister in the gap between where we are now and where we are hoping to be, bearing in mind that it could take years to get to that point? It takes a long time for people to accept change and for people to come forward. How do we minister in that gap now and what is available to help us change those cultures?

It has been exciting and interesting to see the people that God is calling into these roles. Often they are the person that everyone looks to, but sometimes they are someone who has recently arrived, but is already getting involved, bringing fresh ideas and energy. More prayer!

Group 7

They were interested in the inverted triangle model.

Worried about situations where there can be an abuse of power and where people want things their way.

All Local Leaders/Focal Ministers are required to have a Working Agreement in place with their Incumbent/Oversight Minister - before they are commissioned. The Working Agreement lays out clearly the details of their role, what they are committing to doing and how, and also just as importantly who they are to work with, and what is not their responsibility. It does require good relationships between the Oversight Minister and each Local Leader, and between the Local Leaders as well. And there is a need for clear lines of accountability.

How long do you think it will take before this new structure is embedded, and will it then be changed again?

The Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal has a 5 - 10 year horizon.

Group 8

Encouraged by the joy of things working well, and the positivity set against prevailing negativity.

Worried about how well it would work when the person is not ordained.

Could we hear from a local Focal Minister who is not ordained about the local day-to-day challenges and successes, as we have just heard from priests today?

The contributions from two Members of Synod who are themselves Local Leaders provided an insight into how this works.

We speak of Sens Kernewek as a learning and discerning course. And it is interesting to note that in each of the three Cohorts of Sens Kernewek to date, one or more of the participants has discerned a call to ordained ministry which they are now exploring with the DDO and her team. This is a very encouraging development, and we thank God for his call upon their lives and their willingness to follow it.

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Group 9

Encouraged by this being part of culture change.

Where do we see people out on the edges and margins?

When we first envisioned Sens Kernewek we saw it as a way of supporting the flourishing of small local churches, by equipping people to act at Local Leaders. However a few participants have very much been drawn to the edges and the margins; they are leading fresh expressions of church under the oversight of their Incumbent. Once such example of this is the leader of Night Church in Penzance who was a member of Cohort 3 of Sens Kernewek.

Where is there space for Oversight Ministry and Focal Ministry to be pioneering and doing new things?

One of the benefits of the Local/Focal Ministry model is that it can free up the Oversight Minister (Incumbent) to use their skills and gifting in developing pioneering work, because the care and leadership of the local traditional church is being provided by their Local Leader.

The AMD Programme for Oversight Ministers includes a morning's input introducing the concept of 'Pioneering Parishes'.

Group 10

The challenge with the structure is moving into care and maintenance. There are economic reasons for establishing this model. The Oversight Ministry diagram includes the image of a wagon representing Pioneer ministry, but not all deaneries have that as part of their plan. Unless we have someone engaged in renewal, we will not build with material impact.

We do not see Sens Kernewek Local Leaders as simply providing care to ever decreasing numbers in traditional churches. Rather, as described above, the role of the Local Leader/Focal Minister is to work with their congregation, supporting those who come to church to look outwards to their wider community, and to engage with the wider community in identifying how the church might best play a role in supporting the community. In many places this is building on all the wonderful work that is already on-going.

From Zoom

Interested to hear about Oversight Ministry and Focal Ministry. Concerned about how un-ordained people are going to be recruited and who they will be responsible to, not just to the Oversight minister, who will be considered as their equal. They accept work in teams but are concerned that the plans are uncertain and unformed.

We have created model Role Descriptions and Working agreements for Local Leaders which makes accountability lines clear. There are expectations that Oversight Ministers will meet with their Local Leaders on a regular basis and the Ministry Team also offer to facilitate Reflective Practice Groups for each SK Cohort on completion of the initial 14 sessions of training.

Encouraged about inverted triangle, a helpful image, and the sense of local ownership. Questions about sacramental provision and what this looks like from an ecumenical point of view.

These issues need to be discussed and worked out at a local level depending on the context. We do not want to provide a "one size fits all" model as each one will need to be context specific.

Will this pattern of ministry be in place for some time? Will the goal posts be changed a bit further down the road?

As noted in the response to Question 7, the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal has a 5 - 10 year horizon.

Responses provided by Sally Piper Head of Ministry