

# Ministry Team Update

Truro Diocesan Synod

September 2025

## Part 1 The Ministry Team's Role within the Diocesan Plan (10 minutes)

The Ministry Team exists “to encourage, enable and equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

The Ministry Team serve the Diocese of Truro by:

- Training and supporting clergy and lay ministers.
- Encouraging vocations and discernment.
- Walking with people in ministry through times of joy and struggle.
- Helping embed the **Oversight-Local model of ministry**, a key strand of the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal.

Embedding the Oversight-Local pattern of ministry is a diocesan strategic priority. This model seeks to enable incumbent status stipendiary priests to lead communities of communities, discern and empower gifted local leaders, and root ministry in prayer, mission, and collaboration. In this model, the majority of church communities are led by Local Leaders (both lay and ordained), with stipendiary priests in oversight roles, leading, enabling and ministering to groups of churches, communities and missional activities of different kinds.

## Part 2 Update on Clergy Recruitment 2024-2025 (15 minutes)

Across the Church of England, ordained vocations are in decline. With fewer priests, we are working hard to maintain a healthy level of clergy presence. Our aim is to sustain around 60 incumbent priests over the next 24-36 months.

We are focusing on three key areas:

### 1. *External Recruitment*

- In the past 18 months, **14 clergy have joined us from outside the Diocese of Truro**
- Clergy Recruitment Days,<sup>1</sup> social media (#ministercornwall), national media presence

### 2. *Internal Recruitment*

- Since 2020, 45 curates have trained here; 26 were stipendiary.
- Just under half have stayed in Cornwall.
- We are offering in mentoring, placements, and early career planning

### 3. *Retention*

- Around 50 clergy have left in the past 5 years — some because of retirement, others because of conflict, dissatisfaction, or geography.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://trurodiocese.org.uk/2025/07/clergy-recruitment-day/>

- We are strengthening pastoral supervision, wellbeing support, and clarity around Oversight-Local ministry so that clergy can flourish.

Accompanied Ministerial Development (AMD) in Oversight Ministry is a critical and significant investment in supporting and training clergy.

### Part 3 Patterns of Ministry - Oversight-Local Model (30 minutes)

The Oversight-Local model is our vision for a sustainable and fruitful future.

- **Oversight Ministers** (stipendiary priests) lead a *community of communities*.
- **Local Leaders** (lay or ordained) take responsibility for ministry in a specific church or place.

**'Faithful in Philleigh'**<sup>2</sup> *In the small rural parish of Philleigh, Local Leader Kay Robinson stepped into ministry, enlivening worship, nurturing connections, and bringing fresh life to a faithful congregation. This is what Oversight-Local looks like in practice: local people, called and equipped, working with the oversight of clergy*

#### Why this matters

National and local evidence shows that Oversight-Local is a model which brings growth:<sup>3</sup>

- In 2023-24, overall attendance across the diocese fell by 4.7%.
- But in churches with Local Leaders, attendance **grew by 4.5%**.
- This is an early but encouraging sign that the model works.

As the number of churches with a commissioned Local Leader in the diocese increases, it will be important to continue monitoring progress, capturing learning and sharing stories.

#### Where we are now

The Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal set the following targets for the end of 2025.

##### A) Local Leaders

To reach our target of a Local Leader in 85% of churches, we will need to discern, train and commission closer to **40 each year** for duration of the diocesan plan.<sup>4</sup>

- Goal by 2025: 105 Lay Local Leaders trained and commissioned.
- Current reality: 44 have completed training, 22 commissioned.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://trurodiocese.org.uk/2023/08/faithful-in-philleigh/>

<sup>3</sup> This comes from research conducted by Bob Jackson and Bev Botting through the Focal Ministry Network. The result obtained in Truro is very similar to that for 29 rural churches in St Davids in 2016, for 22 varied churches across England in 2018 and for 44 mainly urban churches in Sheffield and Manchester in 2024. It is part of a consistent pattern.

<sup>4</sup> Many incumbent clergy act as Local Leader for a church, as well as a number of Self Supporting Ordained Ministers (SSOMs) and Permission to Officiate (PtO) clergy. To reach the goal of a lay or ordained Local Leader in 85% of churches (about 250), and taking into account attrition, we would need to discern, train, commission and support close to 275 people over of the remaining duration of the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal. This is approximately 40 lay Local Leaders each year.

**‘Taking the Journey and Relying on God to Show the Way’<sup>5</sup>** *Sheri Sturgess was commissioned as a Local Leader for the Benefice of Liskeard and St Keyne in July, yet she will be the first to say she didn’t plan this path. She described her journey as trusting God’s leading every step of the way, now stepping into leadership with both humility and hope.*

Not everyone who begins training goes on to commissioning (currently 50%). This likely depends on several factors, including:

- Discernment, encouragement and selection of candidates by Oversight Ministers
- Quality of training and formation during Sens Kernewek
- Effective follow up, facilitation of a working agreement and continuing formation and development after Sens Kernewek
- Personal circumstances, including family commitments and health
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#### **B) Oversight Ministers**

- Goal by 2025: invest in the development of 36 clergy trained through AMD Oversight Ministry

- Current Reality: 28 clergy have completed and a further 13 clergy are in the process (41 clergy in total). Currently 16 posts in the Diocese of Truro have ‘Oversight’ in the title and description, with more operating with an Oversight-Local Model.

#### **How we are responding**

- Continuing to train Oversight Ministers through the AMD programme.
- A new diocesan-wide strategy to inspire and call Local Leaders.
- Clearer role descriptions, better follow-up, and more story-sharing.

**‘Networking and Learning at Upcoming Leaders Event’<sup>6</sup>** *“Local Leader, Mary Cooper Brown says of a recent diocesan training day: ‘The learning days are a good opportunity to meet people from across the diocese ... meeting those you don’t know and learning from them.’ These gatherings aren’t just about training, they’re about connection, encouragement, and sharing the joys and challenges of local ministry.*

#### **Three Things to Takeaway**

1. Oversight-Local is key to fruitful and sustainable churches.
2. We need many more Local Leaders, lay and ordained, to step forward.
3. This is a work of culture change: it will take clarity, support, and a shared vision.

**What we ask of Synod:** Pray, encourage, and advocate. Help us identify and support new Local Leaders in your communities, and tell us what will make this easier.

<sup>5</sup> <https://trurodiocese.org.uk/2025/07/taking-the-journey-and-relying-on-god-to-show-the-way/>

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