

**Ben** is Authorised for Lay Ministry in his church as a Worship Leader. He undertook an Explore More course and a 16 week Worship Leader course organised by the deanery and then the PCCs in the Benefice agreed he should be authorised. A ministry agreement was drawn up and he was commissioned in a Benefice service. There are other people Authorised for Lay Ministry in his Benefice, as well as Readers. Ben and his incumbent review his ministry agreement annually and every year during Lent he goes on a Deanery retreat for clergy, Readers and lay ministers. Read his full story here.

**Chloe** visits people in her Benefice pastorally and coordinates a team of eight other pastoral visitors. The team get together six times a year for support and prayer. They access training when they need to, such as safeguarding training and some training in visiting people with mental health issues. None of the team are authorised, nobody in Chloe's Benefice is authorised – it's just not part of the church culture, although the PCCs did approve the ministry when it was first initiated. There are no 'labels' or role names but people are encouraged to give something a go if they feel called to. Read her full story here.

**Nadia** is an employed Youth Worker and runs a Sunday evening Youth Group with six other leaders. They are authorised by their parish as a team to run the Youth Group. They have not received any formal training for this because they have many years of experience in children and youth ministry. The team is overseen by Nadia who, among other things, makes sure their DBS checks and Safeguarding training is up to date, and once a year they review their vision in line with their parish vision and their joint ministry agreement. There are other teams authorised in their church, but nobody is authorised individually. Read their full story here.

**Martin** is a lay chaplain in his local Church of England Secondary School. He has a volunteer agreement drawn up with his Vicar and the school's Principal and he meets with both twice a year to review his role and ministry. He didn't have any formal church training as much of his professional training was relevant, and he is part of the Diocesan School Chaplains' network and often there is some resource sharing or training input at those meetings. Although they don't use the word 'authorisation' in his church, Martin's role was commissioned at the end of a service and this was an important way of formalising it and offering support and accountability. Read his full story here.

## **Martin's story**

### ***CALLING, GIFTING AND DIRECTION***

Zeb is a voluntary lay chaplain in his local Church of England Secondary School. He started out leading Collective Worship every now and again and got to know the Principal who invited him to take on more responsibilities. Zeb spoke with David, his vicar and whose parish the school is in, to talk about possibly taking on more responsibilities at the school. David said it would be fantastic if Zeb became the Chaplain at the school as it was something David didn't feel he had the gifts for. David suggested they draw up a volunteer agreement to make sure that the ministry Zeb was undertaking was properly agreed by Zeb, David and the school.

### ***TRAINING***

Zeb didn't need to do any formal training but he has signed up to the School Chaplains' network at the Diocese and goes along to their meetings. He finds it very useful to meet other chaplains working in similar contexts and often there is some resource sharing or training input.

### ***SUPPORT AND REVIEW***

After a few months David suggested the church could have a time of prayer for Zeb at the end of a service as a way of commissioning him as the Chaplain and supporting him as the church family. Zeb's ministry is accountable both to David and the School's Principal and he meets with both of them regularly to catch up. Together they review his volunteer agreement once a year.

## **ZEB'S CHURCH CULTURE**

Although they don't use the word 'authorisation' in this church, a commissioning of Zeb's new role was still important as a way of formalising it and offering support and accountability. This is a church culture where role names are a helpful way for the congregation to recognise ministry and yet the roles don't necessarily fit into a system recognisable beyond the church itself.

### **Chloe's story**

#### **CALLING, GIFTING AND DIRECTION**

Chloe is a regular church-goer at St Barnabas' Church. Three years ago she got to know a young single mum called Sarah who was very lonely. Chloe started visiting Sarah; they'd chat and often Chloe was a shoulder for Sarah to cry on. A few people at church commented how good Chloe was at visiting people and caring about them and Chloe herself felt visiting Sarah was really life-giving. She had a chat with her vicar, Tim, who said she was gifted in 'pastoral ministry' and that he'd like to explore this with her some more. After a few meetings, Tim and Chloe put together something for the notice sheet letting people know that pastoral visiting was available in the Benefice.

#### **SUPPORT AND REVIEW**

Over the years other people volunteered and now there's a team of eight who visit different people in the Benefice. Chloe still visits Sarah, but now also visits other people, too. About six times a year Chloe gets all the pastoral visitors together and they talk about their ministry, pray together, and once a year they review their vision and how it fits into the Benefice mission plan. Sometimes Tim comes to these meetings just to check in with them all and once a year he reviews each of their ministry and checks they're happy to continue for another year. Chloe acts as a kind of coordinator for the team and makes sure their DBS checks and safeguarding training are up to date and that there is a listening ear available if anyone needs to offload anything.

#### **TRAINING**

The last time they met they discussed how tricky it can be when visiting people with mental health issues as none of them have expertise in this area. Tim said the Diocesan team can offer bespoke training for things like this and that he'd get in touch with Diocesan House and see what could be organised. It turned out others in the Deanery were interested in attending a similar training and so a Saturday morning session was organised which Chloe and her team attended. She felt it was a much needed boost in their confidence in engaging with people who have mental health issues, and it was really interesting to meet people from other local churches doing similar ministry.

## **CHLOE'S CHURCH CULTURE**

None of the Pastoral Visitors on Chloe's team are 'authorised' – people in this Benefice wouldn't know what 'authorisation' meant, but the PCCs each approved the team's ministry when it was first initiated three years ago and agreed that Chloe should coordinate it. In Chloe's Benefice ministry is discerned collaboratively in line with the vision of the church, and if training is needed it is provided; lay ministry is equipped, affirmed and celebrated but there are no 'labels' or role names. The culture is very permission-giving and people are encouraged to explore different ministries.

### **Ben's Story**

#### **CALLING, GIFTING AND DIRECTION**

Ben goes to All Saints church and recently has increasingly felt like God was asking him to take a more active role in the services there. A few people mentioned they thought he'd be good at giving talks at the all age worship service and he prayed about this and felt God was nudging him to do something about it, especially as his church is part of a large benefice with a real need for lay worship leaders. Ben asked Linda, a Reader at his church, if she'd meet up for a chat. Linda advised

Ben to go on an Explore More course at Diocesan House to help him explore his vocation. The Explore More course really gave Ben the space he needed to listen to God and also to find out more about different kinds of lay ministry. He spoke to his vicar about his calling to worship leading and his vicar said that he thought it would be good for Ben to first do some training, so he understood more about liturgy and other elements of leading services. He said that once Ben had done some training then he'd talk with the PCC about potentially authorising Ben as a lay worship leader.

### ***TRAINING***

Ben found out that there was a 16-week course for lay worship leaders that was being run by local clergy in the deanery with resource materials from Sheffield diocese later that year. After chatting to his vicar he signed up to it. At the start of the course Ben and his vicar put together a 'training agreement' which was like a contract stating how the parish would support him through his training. During his training Ben was able to have a go at leading services at church which really helped him apply the theory he was learning. At the end of the course the PCC agreed that Ben should be Authorised for Lay Ministry (ALM) he and his vicar turned the training agreement into a 'ministry agreement' which stated the kinds of things Ben would be doing in his ministry. Ben was commissioned in a special Benefice service where other lay ministers were re-commissioned and affirmed.

### ***SUPPORT AND REVIEW***

Ben meets with his incumbent once a year to review his ministry agreement and he is re-commissioned every three years with a revised ministry agreement. A few times a year he asks somebody different in the congregation for feedback when he has led a service to try and help him develop as a worship leader. Every year during Lent he goes on a Deanery retreat for clergy, Readers and ALMs.

### ***BEN'S CHURCH CULTURE***

Authorisation is important in this church culture because it helps congregations to recognise ministry and offers them a way to celebrate lay ministers. It also enables church leaders to locally and formally recognise ministry. Here, ministry is discerned collaboratively and with the need of the church in mind. The culture is one of quite carefully understood roles and people are encouraged to consider a calling to those roles and undertaking training relevant to it.

## **Nadia and her Team's story**

### ***CALLING, GIFTING AND DIRECTION***

Nadia is an employed Children and Youth Minister at St Mary's church where she has started a Youth Group every Sunday evening. She has been working on building up a team of volunteers to help her run the Youth Group and now has six committed people who are all passionate and capable. Most of them have already been involved in the St Mary's children's ministry for a number of years and felt that joining Nadia in the Youth Group Team is part of an important step forward for their church and it's ministry with young people.

### ***TRAINING***

Nadia looked into the training available but because the group were so experienced and had been working together for a number of years that kind of training wouldn't be the best for a group of really busy people who worked full time during the week. Nadia did organise for someone to come and lead a session on Spiritual Styles in the context of Youth Ministry. This encouraged them in how they thought about their own prayer and discipleship, and they were excited to try it out with their Youth Group.

### ***SUPPORT AND REVIEW***

The vicar at St Mary's observed that the Team were doing brilliant things but because it was outside of the usual Sunday service it wasn't really recognised as ministry by the congregation. Also although they were a very effective team they lacked a little in confidence and often asked his permission to do things when they didn't need to. At the next PCC meeting he proposed that they hold a commissioning service for the team, led by the Youth Group, where the team would be Authorised for Lay Ministry as a team. The PCC agreed and all seven of them were commissioned as a team.

Nadia oversees the team and they have a joint agreement about their ministry which they review annually. They are now much more confident and feel they have the authority to make decisions about the youth group within the team without needing to go to the vicar for everything. The vicar line-manages Nadia and so he is still kept in the loop about the Youth Group.

### ***NADIA'S CHURCH CULTURE***

Authorisation is important in this context to help recognise ministry and affirm people, but instead of individuals commissioned for ministry this is a church where team-ministries work better. As well as a Youth Ministry team there is also a worship leader team which has been authorised. These teams are accountable to one another as well as having a line of accountability to the vicar, and their ministry and calling has been discerned together rather than independently. Their ministry is contextual and fits into the mission plan of the church but does not necessarily fit into recognisable roles outside of St Mary's.