

Diocese of Bristol

**Parish Development Pack for**

**The Church's Ministry of Healing**

**(written and produced by the Bishop's Advisory Group on  
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# Gifts of Ministry Teams

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# 1 Purpose

*The purposes of this Gifts of Ministry Teams section are:*

*First, to outline the role of lay members of a ministry team in the pastoral and healing ministry of the local church,*

*Second, to provide a practical set of suggestions on how to set up, train and authorise lay members of a ministry team to work with clergy by sharing in pastoral care and assisting in the healing ministry of the local church.*

The 2000 Report states:

*'One human factor more than any other which determines whether the healing ministry has a high profile in a parish is the interest and commitment to this ministry of the parish priest. When a priest who is publicly involved in this ministry moves, he or she will take their enthusiasm with them while the priest filling the vacancy may not carry on the ministry publicly, allowing it to decline.'* (page 37)

If this is true of the Church's ministry of healing generally, it will also be true of lay participation in such ministry. If the clergy do not see positive outcomes from sharing pastoral care in general, and healing ministry in particular, with trained and authorised lay people in their congregations the laity will be excluded. Clergy need to see the potential benefits of a lay ministry team, and they need to be willing to share their own expertise and experience with others to train, support and encourage those

who are called by God to share in such ministry. The 2000 Report recommends:

*'... clergy should be trained to recruit and select suitable team members, in order to carry out their ministry as part of normal everyday life in their parishes and to organise appropriate training for them;'* (page 340)

The 2000 Report recognises clear benefits in formal lay participation in local ministry:

*'Some, but not all, dioceses have pastoral assistants. In this report we use this term to describe all lay persons who, after selection and training, exercise a pastoral care role in a parish under the direction of the incumbent ... There are ... good reasons for considering how they might be used more effectively. Since much of their work involves visiting people ... pastoral assistants are well informed about and in touch with those coping with a wide range of difficulties, including ill-health, bereavement and depression.'* (page 39)

Nor is this a recent insight. The 1958 Archbishop's Commission Report "The Church's Ministry of Healing" affirmed that when Christians visit the sick in the name of the Church they have a spiritual ministry, a ministry of prayer, forgiveness, reconciliation, healing of spirit, and preparation for eternity.

The 1988 Lambeth Conference Statement on the Healing Ministry affirms that pastoral care in the context of the Church's ministry is for "all the baptised" to be involved in.

## 2 Principles

People who exercise a ministry as members of a 'ministry team' in the ways described and recommended in the Development Pack can be understood in much the same way as members of the 'mission teams' described in the diocesan strategy. Here, however, issues relating to recruitment, training, responsibilities and supervision relate specifically and only to the Advisory Group's understanding of their role in the Church's ministry of healing.

A ministry team, properly recruited, trained, authorised and supervised can work closely with the Incumbent (and other clergy) and give many new dimensions to the pastoral care and healing ministry available to the local church.

A ministry team can enhance the ministry and mission of the local church to the wider community because it is likely to have connections throughout the community.

A ministry team is a way of recognising, affirming and validating the ministry of lay people whose gifts and ministries are seen to be of value in the life of the local church.

A ministry team is just one way of recognising lay ministry. Readers, sidespersons, welcomers, bereavement visitors, etc. all have a role (without needing to seek membership of such a team) alongside members of the sort of ministry team described below.

Establishing a ministry team can enable a more consistent standard of training which other lay people can share in if they wish, and the congregation and community will benefit from.

Such teams can provide support and pastoral care for each other and other carers in the local church so that carers are cared for too.

Serving others in the work of a local ministry team can be an important step in discovering and developing gifts and exploring vocations in the Church.

### 3 The Role of a Ministry Team

In every congregation informal caring and prayer are part of the on-going fellowship lay Christians share, and we can give thanks for such love in action. However, the lay ministry envisaged in this section is additional to such acts, and is to be done in the name of the local church and by people who are its authorised representatives.

There are two areas of lay ministry we seek to address: pastoral care and lay involvement in healing ministry.

Lay members of a ministry team would share this work with, and be supervised by, the Incumbent and would be expected to comply with the policies, guidelines, and requirements adopted by the Diocese of Bristol for the exercise of the Church's ministry of healing, and also any local policies, guidelines and requirements adopted by their own Incumbent and PCC.

In order to offer the best possible ministry we need to understand and accept that Christians who minister **in the name of the local church** must be properly trained and authorised. Sadly there have been instances of trust being abused in the life of churches, so for the sake of those we seek to care for (and also for the good name of the Christian Church) we need to set limits. Thus the training offered to potential lay members of ministry teams will need to make clear the content of such policies, guidelines, etc. It will need to be understood by all that serious breaches of such guidelines, policies, etc. may result in a PCC withdrawing an individual's authorisation.

### 3.1 Pastoral Care

A common effect of prolonged suffering is a feeling of marginalisation, losing touch with 'normal' life. Our materialistic society does not easily tolerate chronic illness, disability, depression, grief, or the processes of dying. People who struggle with such conditions are often among the marginalised of our society.

Christians have always known God to be present in the margins as well as in the main stream of life. We know that people can and do find God in new ways when suffering strips away our superficial pre-occupations. A clear Biblical illustration of this is found in the story of Job. He suffered greatly, and demanded an explanation until, at last, God met him in the very margins of life into which he had been driven. Our suffering can become a place of encounter with the living God also. Lay pastoral carers can go into those margins in the name of Christ and his Church taking their own faith, love and prayer to those who feel alone in their needs.

The 2000 Report affirms the following definition of pastoral care:

*'Pastoral care is a fabric of interwoven activities and responses directed towards individuals, relationships, groups, and communities, undertaken from within the overall context of the faith community. The pastoral care of others is a duty that belongs to every Christian. It is one in which we foster the well-being of all people, individually and corporately. It is not simply, or even mainly, about repairing or resolving things when they have gone wrong; it is also about sharing in community, feasting in fellowship, exchanging mutual support. It is about recognising, welcoming, affirming, encouraging and rejoicing with others and receiving this recognising, welcoming, affirming and encouragement from them ... The activities involved may*



many years offered training in Christian listening. Listening carefully and prayerfully is an invaluable skill for all carers. It needs to be remembered, however, that 'Christian listening' should not be allowed to blur into some form of covert 'counselling' that has not been sought or agreed.

- **Prayer**

We go out, we listen, and we pray, but we do need to have clear goals in the prayer we seek to share. It is important always to pray before ending each visit. At first it might well be the visitor who says the prayer before leaving. Later, the aim would be to encourage more sharing in prayer so that all begin to pray their own needs with us, but this is a goal, not a requirement. Such love and encouragement would continue with people in the hope that they may develop a self-sustaining life of prayer that will lead them ever deeper into Christ. All the riches of the Christian traditions of prayer, meditation and contemplation will have a place here. The 'laying on of hands' and the sacraments clearly have much to offer also in this spiritual journey.

- **God's Love**

Our spiritual ministry, in all its aspects, is a ministry of love expressed from within the community of the local church, drawing others into the love of God in Jesus Christ, but our first priority is to love people for Christ's sake, not to convert them. If they respond with growing faith in Christ we can celebrate



expression of the Church's ministry of healing. Lay members of a ministry team can participate in prayer with the laying on of hands during liturgical worship (e.g. Sunday Eucharists, and Services of Healing). The laying on of hands can also be a part of the day to day pastoral ministry of the local church. Members of a ministry team who visit the sick or housebound can offer to pray before they leave at every visit and sometimes, when it is judged appropriate, they can hold a person's hand as they pray. Sometimes they might go with one or two others to pray and lay hands on an infirm parishioner. The laying on of hands (used appropriately and sensitively) can be a valued part of pastoral ministry in the regular points of contact between Christians: in church, at home, in meetings for prayer, during visits. It is a tangible expression of the love and fellowship we share as brothers and sisters in Christ.

- **Pastoral visiting**

Lay members of a ministry team, as authorised representatives, can broaden the pastoral care of the local church to its own members and to others in the community. With effective and responsible sharing of information, requests and referrals, lay members of a ministry team can respond to many 'routine' pastoral needs.

- **Listening**

Listening skills are a foundation of effective pastoral ministry, and therefore of healing ministry. All

members of a ministry team should have some training in this, such as that readily available through the Acorn Christian Foundation Christian Listeners training programme. There are always church members and others needing a listening ear. It is a valuable resource to have trained and authorised church members able to respond to such needs whenever possible.

- **Praying with people**

Members of a ministry team exercise their ministry in the name of the local church. It needs very clearly to be seen as, first and foremost, a spiritual ministry. All team members should be ready, willing and able to pray with the people they minister to, visit and care for. Any training provided for team members should assist and encourage this fundamental expression of our Christian faith.

- **Praying for people**

Members of a ministry team will not have an answer to every question, or a ready response to every need. Often when we leave church or end a visit all we can do is hold people in our hearts and bring them into the presence of God in our prayer. Praying for others in our own private prayer, and in times of prayer shared with others will also be a part of the pastoral and healing ministry of the local church. Indeed many churches already have a prayer group of some kind that does this.

Clearly a degree of training and supervision will be needed to support and encourage lay members as they develop their own gifts in the work of the ministry team to which they are called. But we should not lose sight of the humanity, love and faith we each bring to this work.

To begin with, as the team and its ministry develops, ordained and lay members of the team will need the inner confidence and peace to listen to each other, as well as to the concerns of all those they minister to without habitually discussing their own. They will need to be able to describe something of their own journey of faith and be ready to pray for and with others. They will need to know something of the traditions of Christian prayer and be willing to introduce others to those ways of prayer. They will need sufficient awareness to recognise needs that go beyond their own competence, and know how to seek advice, and/or an appropriate referral. All the members of such a ministry team will, from the beginning, need to be well supported, encouraged, and supervised by the Incumbent.

## 4 Setting up a Ministry Team

All members of a lay ministry team will need to be selected, trained and authorised. This is not to create a 'spiritual elite' since Christian love and prayer are not the preserve of elites. Nevertheless, clearly agreed goals for all authorised persons will ensure proper care for those who seek help, and will encourage the development of the gifts in ministry team itself. They will also protect the good name of the local church.

### 4.1 Recruitment

The 2000 Report offers guidance on the setting up of a lay 'healing team' (see Appendix 3, page 369). recommendations here are a development of the advice to be found there.

The 2000 Report envisages certain personal qualities that will be needed in those 'wishing to join a healing team':

- patience, with themselves, other team members and those seeking healing; maturity and self-awareness to help absorb the disappointments and hurts which can sometimes come through endeavouring to help others;

- humility; acknowledgement that healing comes from Jesus Christ, not the individual.
- acceptance of one's personal limitations and willingness to refer those in need to specialist help, where necessary;
- compassion and empathy, in order to help discern the needs of others and the most appropriate and helpful way of ministering to them;
- the ability to listen, or learn how to listen, for listening is a great part of this ministry - listening to God and to other members of the team as well as to the one who is seeking help;
- reliability and trustworthiness; a willingness to work collaboratively in order to fulfill God's will.
- Individuals who feel called to be a part of a ministry team should be willing to pray and learn, they need to be willing to grow in spiritual maturity.
- People involved in the healing ministry should be sufficiently self-aware to recognise their own spiritual, mental, emotional and physical needs for healing. A prayer life which acknowledges and is open to the healing love of Jesus Christ is essential, as is a willingness to recognise and seek healing for oneself,

in order to be available as a channel of his grace.

- Individuals seeking to be involved in this ministry need the support of others, through prayer and Christian fellowship, and willingness to support prayerfully the other team members. They also need to be willing to try to love and serve each other in Jesus Christ. In fact this is a matter for the whole congregation, since the team will be serving the church community in caring and ministry. There is need for mutual love and prayer throughout.
- The selection of such a team is a matter of discerning God's will. The Lord may be calling some who have not previously considered the possibility. The Lord may not be calling some who are desperate to be part of such a group.
- Potential team members need to have the necessary time, attention and energy available to give to this work. It may not be the right time, for example, to seek to include even a strong Christian in such a team if they are in the midst of very stressful and/or unstable personal circumstances.
- Potential team members need to be well known and regularly worshipping members of the local church, enjoying the trust and confidence of the clergy, PCC and congregation.

- Clergy will need to recommend and train those who recognise and accept such a call, and the PCC will need to approve them. (The Lord may be calling someone who has the gifts and good will of the people though the Incumbent personally would rather not include them, but it is the Lord's ministry and His call, not ours. All will need the gentleness, and humility of the Holy Spirit to pray and to accept the understanding of God's call that emerges. However, we should not normally expect the Lord to call an individual to this work if they do not have the good will and support of the congregation in general and the Incumbent in particular, otherwise both they and the ministry they seek to share in might suffer. Where there is disagreement, clear reasons need to be identified and given for the decisions that are made.)

It is likely that this process of prayer and discernment will take some time (weeks, even months, rather than days - experience indicates that haste is not helpful), but eventually a potential group will begin to emerge.

## 4.2 Training

The 2000 Report recommends:

- *the Ministry Division (of the Church of England, nationally) should develop and provide national training resources to help ensure an appropriate standard of*

*training for laity involved in the healing ministry and a common understanding of good practice; (Appendix 2, page 342)*

- *the Ministry Division should develop and provide national guidelines on the selection criteria, minimum acceptable training requirements and, where necessary, the accreditation of laity for healing ministry teams; (Appendix 2, page 342)*
- *training materials should be developed for clergy and laity involved in the healing ministry, including written material, tapes and in particular videos on training and good practice, taking into account the different approaches to this ministry according to churchmanship ... (Appendix 2, page 346)*

Clearly the 2000 Report is calling for a considerable investment of resources at a national level to develop guidance and training materials for use with clergy and laity at a local level. We must all wait and see if any of this happens.

In the mean time, depending on churchmanship, the Guild of St. Raphael, the Guild of Health, Acorn Christian Foundation, and The Harnhill Centre all provide advice and/or resources (see Development Pack Introduction for suggested contacts)

The Parish Development Pack section: Resources for Learning gives two complete training programme outlines - The Bradford Diocese Foundation Course: Healing Option is reproduced in the Development Pack with permission. "Seeking Wholeness Together" was used as a parish Lent course in Bristol Diocese in the year 2000. They should be

read through and carefully compared so that the material is used which best meets locals need. The material in both courses can be adapted in any way necessary to assist in the training of local ministry team members.

The Advisory Group is also aware of the Acorn Christian Foundation Course: "Growing a Healing Ministry" which is available for purchase, and the Grove Pastoral Series booklet, P44: "Forward in Healing". The Harnhill Centre for Christian Healing and other similar centres offer training courses from time to time, but these can be expensive.

**The Bishop's Advisory Group recommends that all ordained and lay members of a ministry team should, as a MINIMUM REQUIREMENT:**

- *complete a basic introduction to the theology of Christian healing and wholeness (such as one of the courses referred to above), if they have not already done so;*
- *complete a basic course in Christian Listening as developed by the Acorn Christian Foundation (or similar listening skills training), if they have not already done so;*
- *have their own copy of the Handbook published in conjunction with the 2000 Report. They should have taken time together to consider, in the light of their own local situation, the section "Developing the Healing Ministry in the Parish". They should together have considered, understood, and agreed the section "Good Practice in the Healing Ministry" ;*

- *understand the local arrangements for referrals and the confidentiality of information and records where they are needed;*
- *be familiar with and accept the provisions and requirements of their own parish's Child Protection Policy;*
- *be familiar with and accept the provisions and requirements of the diocesan guidelines on deliverance ministry;*
- *have a clear understanding, agreed with the Incumbent and others in the Ministry Team, of their own role in the pastoral care and healing ministry of their local church;*
- *accept the pastoral authority of the Bishop and the Incumbent in matters relating to the work of the ministry team, accept the principle and practice of supervision (by the Incumbent) of the work of the ministry team, and accept the authority of the PCC relating to authorisation of lay members of the ministry team;*

It will be the responsibility of the stipendiary clergy to update the ministry team on additions and changes to national, diocesan and local policies and guidelines on any matters relating to the work of the ministry team.

Confidentiality, is a major issue in the 2000 Report, indeed it recommends that "*a Church-wide policy should be agreed and communicated on confidentiality and openness of records; this policy should be developed in co-operation with other institutions and professional bodies involved in health care;*" (page 333). Until this is made available we advise that the guidance in the Handbook should be **carefully followed**. A simple rule of thumb is to treat personal information in the same way as personal property. You wouldn't share around, or give away, someone else's personal property without their knowledge and consent, so don't share around, or give away their personal information without their knowledge and consent.

Each ministry team will need to meet together regularly (though not necessarily frequently) for mutual support, prayer and encouragement. These meetings will need to give opportunities to:

- review the joys and burdens of ministry;
- provide support and prayer for members;
- do further training together;
- review the past and plan for the future together.

From time to time it may be appropriate to share an evening of prayer and meditation, or even a quiet-day together.

Members of ministry teams will, from time to time, minister to people who are already receiving professional health care provision. They will need to respect the boundaries between disciplines. (The 2000 Report: *'The healing ministry should be carried out in a collaborative and co-operative manner, with health care professionals and others*

*involved in providing care whose particular contributions to the care of parishioners deserves to be recognised and respected. Page 272)* Reference should be made to the Incumbent if a team member is in any doubt.

### **4.3 Authorisation**

If the congregation know that team members are properly trained and authorised they will have more confidence in them. If team members are properly authorised they know they have the confidence of the Incumbent and church members in the ministry they seek to exercise.

Locally, it will be the responsibility of the Incumbent to discern the call of God and the adequacy of training for members of a ministry team.

When the Incumbent is satisfied that potential new team members are ready they should be recommended to the PCC for approval and authorisation. This should be put to the PCC as a formal resolution and minuted in accordance with normal practice.

A new ministry team (or new members joining an existing ministry team) can, after authorisation by the PCC, be presented to the congregation and commissioned with a prayer in the main Sunday Service so that as many people as possible see who they are, and understand the authority by which they will minister.

(If at any stage the Incumbent has clear reason to question the conduct of a team member because of a breach of current guidelines or policies, that team member should be challenged and asked to comply. If the misconduct persists, and if after careful consideration it is established that the team member's conduct is unacceptable

and is likely to recur, the Archdeacon should be advised and the Incumbent and PCC should consider whether to offer further training or revoke the team member's authorisation.)

The Incumbent will need annually to review with each member of the ministry team (ordained and lay) their role in the team. The PCC should be given the opportunity to reaffirm the membership of the ministry team annually.

## 5 Lay Participation in Healing Ministry

### 5.1 Opportunities

It is vital that the Incumbent and members of the ministry team agree on the role the team and its members (especially lay members) will have in the life and ministry of each congregation. If this is not clear right from the start there is a risk of mis-trust and even damaging conflict.

The Incumbent and team should be willing to listen to the vision and thinking of each team member, and indeed others in the congregation who have vision to share. Plans should not be 'imposed from above', but developed collaboratively by the team and with the knowledge and goodwill of the whole church community.

It is best to begin with a limited set of achievable goals. The vision and scope of the ministry will grow as members gain experience and confidence.

Some opportunities may be in the following areas:

- **Going Out**
  - Informal Networks - Team members will be able to visit within their own network of contacts within the congregation and the community. Team members caring for and praying with their own

acquaintances in the congregation is a good first step to building trust and confidence.

Informal Referrals - Sometimes an acquaintance will ask a team member to see a friend. If it is a 'cold contact' (little or no previous connection with the church) the team member should not be expected to follow the request up alone unless they are happy to do so.

Formal Referrals - Sometimes requests come to the attention of clergy or other team members that they are not able to respond to, or that they judge can be better served by the ministry of others. Team members can help each other in whatever way seems appropriate.

- **Listening**

All the Time! - Much of our ministry will be listening: listening to God, listening to others, listening to the Spirit in our own hearts. So while this is listed as a separate opportunity it will of course be a feature of all our interactions with those we seek to serve.

A 'Listening Post' - Some churches have what they call a 'Listening Post', a place in church where one or two members of the ministry team wait after each service. If any member of the congregation feels the need of a listening ear and/or

prayer they can go and ask without any formality and receive immediate support.

- **Praying with**

An essential part of our ministry will be the willingness to pray with people, whether in church or at home, taking them and their needs into the loving presence of God. Such a willingness to pray is often deeply valued by those we seek to help.

- **Praying for**

People will sometimes ask us to pray for a third party known to them. They may even ask us to lay hands on them (and possibly even anoint them) on behalf of the third party. The 2000 Report is cautious about such ministry: *'Care needs to be taken ... when prayers for proxy healing are requested ... opinions differ as to the appropriateness and use of this practice. This issue should be discussed with the PCC and healing team members, to form a locally acceptable view and to ensure that the privacy and dignity of those being prayed for is protected.'* (Page 270). However, an Introductory Note in the Common Worship Pastoral Services (page 12) gives a different emphasis: *"Those who come for prayer with Laying on of Hands and/or Anointing should make careful preparation. They may receive the Laying on of Hands on behalf of others who are not present as well as for themselves."* Clearly this will need to be discussed locally to arrive at a shared understanding of how to respond to such requests.

Members of the ministry team will want to pray privately for those they minister to, and when they meet as a team, and when they meet with others for prayer, but confidentiality needs to be respected.

- **Sunday Services**

If the laying on of hands and/or anointing is offered at Sunday Services, members of the ministry team can share in this and follow people up later if appropriate.

- **Healing Services**

Members of the ministry team can help with the presentation of worship and the times of prayer, they can share in the healing ministry that is offered, and they can follow people up later if appropriate.

- **Bereavement Follow-up**

The local church may wish to develop a bereavement follow-up scheme. It should be noted however that the 2000 Report is very clear about the specific needs of bereaved people and the importance of understanding the 'Grief Journey' (page 160 - 165). Specific training should be given in this if bereavement support is to be offered through the ministry team.

- **Good Neighbours**

Occasional referrals - Some parishes seek to offer Good Neighbour schemes to provide contacts with the wider community. These do produce requests for pastoral care and for prayer.

## 5.2 Referrals

One Team member should act as the reference person for all ministry team referrals. This may be an ordained member, but it need not be.

Requests will, of course, come to any and all team members but all should normally be notified to the reference person to avoid duplication of visits, or people being missed altogether.

Clear written referral details will need to be used when necessary. Standard referral forms may be preferred rather than scraps of paper, and these can be designed and printed locally on any modern computer system. A minimum of personal information should be put in writing and passed between team members. A name address and phone number plus the comment "Please speak to ..... before making contact" will often meet the need. No information of a private and confidential nature should normally be written on referral forms.

## 5.3 Mutual Support

Sharing in the work of a ministry team is often a joy, but it can also be very challenging and exhausting. Team members deserve the love, encouragement, prayer, and support of their fellow team members, and all their brothers and sisters in Christ.

In giving of themselves to others, team members should not be left out of the pastoral care and healing ministry of the Church, always giving never receiving. Team members will love each other well by being quietly aware of each other's needs, by praying with and for each other, and by giving each other a 'Time Out' from ministry when one is needed.

## 6 For Further Consideration

The Development Pack sections: *Gifts of Prayer, Gifts of the Sacraments, Gifts of Healing Services* should be considered as directions for development of the ministry offered at healing services, and also in the healing ministry of the local church.

The 2000 Report can be read and relevant sections considered in order to give a broad understanding of the Church's ministry of healing in the Church of England today.

The Handbook that accompanies the 2000 Report should be read and its guidelines adopted.

The 2000 Report stresses the need to clarify the various forms of ministry available today. We have considered pastoral care, and sharing in healing ministry. Other areas of ministry considered in the Report are:

Counselling (page 112)

Christian Counselling (page 117)

Prayer Ministry (page 120)

Spiritual Direction (page 121)

Reconciliation (page 122)

Each of these areas of ministry requires careful consideration. The 2000 Report points out that there is widespread confusion over the definition of such ministries. We need to

be more rigorous over the terms we use and the ministry we think we are qualified to offer. We should not speak of our ministry in such a way that implies we are qualified to offer help we are not competent to give. Furthermore, clergy and laity should only offer specialised help under the heading of 'counselling' if they are properly trained to do so and accredited to a recognised group or association. A ministry team may decide, in due course, to develop the breadth of ministry it can offer by members seeking to train in any or all of the above fields.

The 2000 Report emphasises the value of ecumenical co-operation in healing ministry. If there are other congregations seeking to express God's love in prayer for healing and wholeness there may well be potential for developing an ecumenical ministry.