

## Ministry Models video - transcript

There's little doubt that we are going to look back on 2020 and 2021 as a turning point in our history. There has been great loss and unimaginable suffering in our world and in our nation and every one of us has been affected in one way or another.

Yet this has also been a time of serious thinking about the future. It's as if someone has pressed the reset button and we are now faced with all sorts of new opportunities as we start again - what sort of world, what sort of society, and what sort of church do we want for the future?

During the second half of 2020 we gathered stories from people all across the diocese. We wanted to hear about people's experiences of faith during lockdown. And these stories have generated insights about our hopes for the future – insights most often expressed as questions rather than certainties.

So is faith personal, something I express in my own home, or is it something I express collectively with others in church – or is it both? Is it my responsibility to do the things which enable my faith to grow, or is that the responsibility of my priest? Can anyone exercise ministry in the church, or is this something which only those who have been ordained can do?



We've started to wrestle with these questions at Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod, and last autumn Bishop Guli and I issued a call to prayer and led a study day entitled 'an adventure of the imagination'.

I believe that now is the moment for us to imagine a new way of expressing our faith – one that is true to the traditions of the past but also responsive to changes in society and to all we have learnt through lockdown. This is a bold adventure of faith – a journey where we don't know for sure where we are going – but we step out confidently, secure in the knowledge that God is walking with us, God is guiding our steps and ultimately, God is our destination.

We've already started to take the first, tentative steps on this journey. Even before lockdown, we had started to explore new forms of church called fresh expressions of Church, seeking to reach those who are very unlikely ever to come near more traditional forms of church. Then during lockdown, many churches experimented with online worship,

online small groups for fellowship and learning, and online Alpha courses introducing people to the Christian faith for the first time. We want to continue these explorations in the months and years to come.

We also want to explore new approaches to ministry, starting with the basic foundation that within the body of Christ, the Church, everyone has something to give, and everyone has something they need to receive. So increasingly, those who are ordained will not exercise ministry alone but will oversee others within a team, with each person bringing a different gift. Clergy will have to focus more on this ministry of oversight, and local churches will have to learn how to grow and develop the people within their congregations so that there can be more local leadership.

So our adventure of the imagination involves lots more people involved in lots more ministry, both ordained and lay, but potentially with quite different roles, different relationships between them and different structures supporting them.

At the moment, we're exploring three particular models of ministry. We've not decided which of the three is best and we've not worked out all the details for each of the models. But we want to start conversations with you, exploring each one in more detail before Diocesan Synod has to make a final decision in October of 2021.



The first model is what we are calling **Minster Churches**, generally larger churches in centres of population which would support smaller churches in the surrounding area, taking something of the administrative burden off those churches and allowing them to be

much more creative in serving their own communities.

This would be a return to the sort of arrangement that existed in this country many, many years ago, but with a modern twist. So, our Resourcing Churches and our Intercultural Worshipping Communities are all larger churches which have received extra resources – people, money and support – in order that they can grow new churches and grow the diversity of our churches. And our Cathedral also does something similar – the team of Cathedral clergy and lay ministers act a resource for other churches around the diocese.

So in this model, teams of clergy and associate ministers would be based in Minster Churches and sent out to support ministry in other congregations. Parish churches would still be responsible for ministry in their parish and we would still look to grow fresh

expressions of Church and develop our links with local schools and other partner organisations. But much of this would be done by volunteers supported by stipendiary clergy and possibly paid administrative staff. So this is one possible new model of ministry intended to help us grow in depth and numbers of disciples and to better serve our communities.



The second model is what we are calling **Mission Areas** – groups of churches clustering together across a particular geographical area, smaller than a deanery but larger than most of our current benefices. One idea is that these areas could be defined by school

catchment areas so that the primary focus of ministry becomes our service to children and young people in schools.

This approach to ministry has already been adopted by some other dioceses. Indeed, the whole of the Church in Wales has been reorganised in this way. So there is much we can learn from others about the opportunities and challenges of this approach. And some of our smaller deaneries have already started to work in this way – Launde Deanery would be an example where they have not only utilised the amazing resource of Launde Abbey but also developed some innovative work with local schools.

Again, it is important to stress that within this model, parish churches would retain responsibility for mission and ministry in their parish. But they would be supported by a team of clergy and associate ministers working across the whole mission area. And this model could include school chaplains or youth workers working closely with school staff and governors. This could offer a really exciting way of growing faith among children and young people.

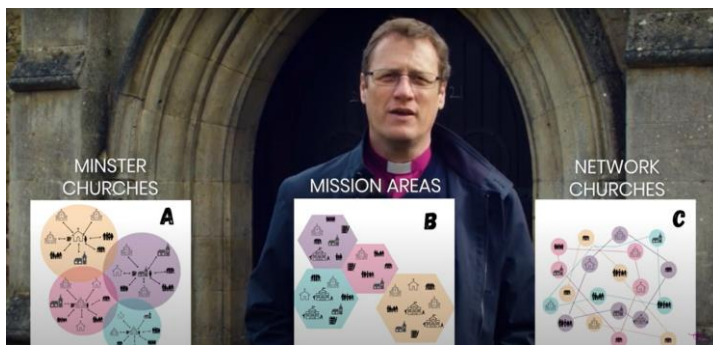


The third model is what we are calling **Network Churches** – this is where groups of churches are linked together around a particular focus of work rather than a geographical area. This could be churches which have a strong focus on church planting or

intercultural mission or youth work or environmental work or rural chaplaincy or interfaith work – there are all sorts of possibilities, but the emphasis is on serving those who are not yet part of our churches.

As with the other models, there are already some good examples in this diocese and around the country. In Cumbria, there is a network youth church which covers the whole county and has about one thousand 12- to 19-year-olds. We already have our own networks of churches involved in church planting and intercultural mission and we have seen the advantages in terms of mutual support and training.

But it's important to stress that these network churches would not be based around church tradition or style of worship – the focus is outwards, serving others and reaching those who are unlikely to ever walk through the doors of our churches. Yet, as with the other models, parishes would still have their own local autonomy, and they would be part of team served by clergy and lay ministers who may live in different locations across the network.



So three models of ministry – Minister Churches, Mission Areas and Network Churches. We believe all three offer exciting possibilities for growing the numbers of disciples of Jesus Christ, growing the depth of our discipleship and growing in loving service of our

communities.

The journey from where we are now to any of these new models won't be easy, but we've already shown through lockdown that churches have an amazing ability to adapt to new ways of doing things.

So please help us hear what God is saying to the church at this significant moment in our history. And help us think through all the practicalities of how we do this – we want to care for people well, knowing that many of us are feeling fragile as we emerge from this pandemic. But we also need your help to grasp the opportunities which are opening before us. So please join us as we seek to be Shaped by God Together.