



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Manchester

CHURCH
FOR A
DIFFERENT
WORLD

Explore



FOCAL LEADERSHIP

DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER



**A resource for
churches**



Images from the first focal leadership commissioning service in Bury and Rossendale Deanery.

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Reflection

The following theological reflection is taken from a recent paper on focal ministry.

'He himself granted that some are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.' (Ephesians 4:11-13. NRSV)

The Church exists as **universal and local** – a real expression of the body of Christ in the local congregation as part of the wider church. In the Church of England, this is expressed through the mission communities, through parishes, chaplaincies and other expressions, which together make present the life of Christ in a diocese, incarnationally in their particular places.

In the Church of England, we are already seeing increasing variety in church worship, structure and leadership (both ordained and lay). Being both rooted and reactive, these are local expressions of the Church's commitment to place, to community and its **mission to serve and reach all locally with the good news of God's love in Christ.**

The model of ministry we have inherited in shared memory of *'one parish, one church, one Vicar'* has been key to the Church of England's distinctive approach to mission and ministry. **This is no longer sustainable in its 'remembered' form** and this presents us with both challenge and opportunity. Most parishes already share, or will soon share, their incumbent with at least one other, changing something of the shape of that presence and ministry whilst affirming its nature.

Pastorally, most would agree that congregations benefit from the continuity and presence of a key church leader. Complex patterns of congregational attendance, combined with incumbents leading multiple churches, make the role of a **person who 'holds the continuity'** crucial. This identifiable leader, who is in touch with pastoral need and can identify resources and new mission opportunities, has been linked with Church growth potential in research and on the ground.

The inspiration for **focal ministry is grounded firmly in our remembered tradition**, in a desire for growth and mission in local churches, and is a key part of our vision for mission communities. Recognising the variety of peripatetic ministries seen in the New Testament and early church, focal ministry is a complimentary, settled pastoral ministry rooted in a specific community affirming

the local and wider church in leadership and structure. The role is grounded in both our tradition and in our future together.

Focal ministry is bold and different. It is not simply a matter of, *filling the clergy gaps* - it is a courageous response to the call to be 'Church for a Different World'. With contextual variance, the focal leader (clerical or lay) will embody the local, faithful and committed presence of Church and will endeavour to ensure that the voice of each local church is heard and valued, contributing to the vision and mission of the wider Church being lived out locally, alongside others doing the same in each mission community.

Focal Ministry Policy Paper, September 2022



Introduction

Focal leaders are local, contextual leaders with a focus on mission and discipleship, drawing others alongside the work of the church, both inside and out in the local community.

Churches with focal leaders:

- **are more likely** to grow.
- develop **more active disciples**, living out their faith where they are.
- have **more people involved** in doing what needs to be done in church, enabling belonging and participation.
- **have more resources** to be missionally focused.
- **work more naturally** alongside others doing the same across the mission community.

Explore contains suggestions for discussion that you can use in a small group as you and your church consider focal ministry in your context.

If you would like someone to help your group through the Explore process, please get in touch via the details on the back page.



Practicalities

Explore is for anyone wanting to explore focal ministry in their church. You are encouraged to do this in a small group, best representing a mixture of roles from your context.

This booklet aims to:

- bring people together in a discussion to **consider how focal leadership might benefit your church** and community.
- **help you consider who your focal leader could be**, what they might do and to work towards thinking about a role.

At the end you will have a clearer picture of focal leadership and how this might work in your church. How much your group gets out of the discussions will be determined by how open and honest the conversations are!

It is recommended that you begin each session with **worship** together. Use whatever format is usual for your context, or adapt the suggestions provided, sharing leadership of this wherever possible.

The gathering time at the beginning of conversation one and conversation three is designed around discussion, over refreshments. You are encouraged to think about where you meet to encourage a relaxed discussion time, although how you do this is up to you.

Explore gives you space to discuss together (in conversations one and three) and to reflect apart (in conversation two). There are times when you can pause to reflect, adjust, or change direction as suits you best.

Conversation one: **Discern the shape** that focal leadership might take in your context.

Conversation two: **Help identify** a focal leader or confirm your focal leader-designate.

Conversation three: **Move forward** with thinking about a role and responsibilities.

Conversation expectations

Whether you know those in your group well, a little or not at all, you are encouraged to bear in mind the following to make the most of your time together.

Pray, individually and together. You are encouraged to begin each conversation with worship and to pray for each other and for your church community along the way.

Listen to God, and to each other. Each group member is encouraged to listen and expect to be listened to.

Reflect, allow time to process and think - don't rush! Take your time, remembering that not everyone's journey, will be the same.

Be open, to new perspectives and points of view.

Be productive, the three conversations are designed to leave you in a practical place to move forward with your shape for focal ministry. There are options so that you can move forward in whatever way is appropriate to you.

Be disciplined, try to keep to time. You may like to allocate about 90 minutes for conversations one and three. If more time is needed, allocate more – but keep your focus.

A note about facilitation

Explore is a resource that can be adapted to suit you.

Your group may decide to work through as the material suggests or make choices about what to include, and this is OK.

Get in touch with the focal ministry officer (via the contact details on the back page) if you would like someone to talk to about running Explore or help in making this discussion the best that it can be in your context.



Conversation one

Engaging with church

Discern the shape that focal leadership might take in your context. You are encouraged to consider the unique character and shape of your church, including:

- What do you do well and who does what?
- Where is mission done and how?
- What is your relationship with the wider community, what might growth in numbers and discipleship look like for you?

Pre-work

Consider these questions before the conversation to enable you to do some thinking ahead of time:

- How would I describe the unique character of my church?
- Do people in your community feel the same?



Worship

As you gather, spend some time offering the discussion time to God. Include a Bible reading if you wish.

In prayer, give thanks for your church - for all those who worship there or come into your building(s) each week, as well as for those who live locally. Ask God to guide your time together and to invite him to journey alongside you.

Use the suggestions or other prayers usually used in your context.

Words to begin:

Let everything be said and done in the name of The Lord Jesus,

giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ.

Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

let us sing to God with thankful hearts.

Open our lips, Lord:

and we shall praise your name. *c.f. Colossians*

*3.16,17**

As part of your worship, you may like to use the prayer for our diocese on the back page of this booklet.

Our church: thinking about what we do

Use your gathering time to compare your responses to the questions you had considered in the pre-work. You could do this in conversation, or make a written record to refer back to later.

As a reminder, the pre-work asked you to consider:

- What do you do well and who does what?
- Where is mission done and how?
- What is your relationship with your community, what might growth in numbers and discipleship look like?

You might find it helpful to consider the following:

- Who is it that is involved in doing these things?
- Which of the identified activities contributes most to growth? (Both in discipleship and in numbers)

Or think about the bigger picture of your church and its relationship to your community:

- Do we have a unique history or special place in our community?
- What is special about us as a worshipping community?
- How does the church fit in with what's going on in our local community?
- What is God calling our church to be in this place?

1. Our church: thinking about growth

Churches with focal leaders are more likely to grow in numbers, discipleship, faithfulness and church involvement, due to focus and leadership capacity.

- What kind of growth do you hope for in your church?
- Are you able to see this kind of growth in your conversation so far?



2. Beginning focal leadership

Focal leaders are people who are commissioned by the Bishop to be involved in local church leadership. There will be people in your church already involved in this kind of role but they may not see themselves as leaders.

Consider which of the following statements about aspects of focal leadership are the most important for you. Feel free to amend or add additional statements.

Focal leaders:

- **hold the continuity** in church life
- are a **'go-to person'** and 'a public face of church in the community'
- work in **growing the church** in mission and ministry
- **draw others alongside** what they do, building teams
- draw others **into discipleship**

Choose the statement/s that best fit your context. Remember these are examples and focal leaders may not do them all – you can adjust as you wish.

Take a couple of minutes of quiet thinking time.

Consider the opinions of your group and where you agree or disagree.

If you have come to an agreement regarding what best describes focal leadership in your church:

- Take your chosen statement(s) and write it on a piece of paper that the whole group can see.

If you haven't agreed on a statement consider what you need to help you move forward at this point.

- Reflecting on the question guides in the next section may help. Discuss and notice what might make things clearer for you.

Moving forward: The next stage of this conversation will allow you to add detail to your thinking about the shape of focal leadership in your church.



3. Focal leadership in our church

Whatever their role in your church, a focal leader will **draw others alongside** and **draw others into faith**.

Using the questions below (alongside any others that seem appropriate just for you) begin to explore the role of the focal leader in your context.

- What kind of person might our focal leader be?
- Is there someone doing some of these things already?
- What might they need to begin this role?
- What kind of skills might be needed?

Add any other roles or responsibilities which seem appropriate to your situation, and your discussion so far.

4. Taking stock

Recall the highlights of the conversation so far for you.

What insights have you gained in your discussion so far?

Do you need anything else to help you?

5. Conclusion

The shape of your discussion so far is unique to your group as all churches are different. You may have discussed all of the conversation areas or a few.

Make a note of where you are at this point and the information that you feel should be recorded as a summary of your discussion.

Ensure each of the group has a copy of this summary as it forms the foundation of conversation two which happens individually.

Conversation two is designed to allow each participant space to reflect on focal ministry from the perspective of their own role in church life.

6. Closing worship

Close the conversation with worship in a way that is usual for you – maybe with a short prayer and/or some quiet as you give thanks for your time together.



Conversation two

Taking time to reflect

Thinking about focal leadership from the **perspective of our own role** and responsibilities in church.

You are invited to reflect individually and to clarify your own thinking about focal leadership from the perspective of your own church role.

Your personal response may be different to those in your group, and that is fine! By the end of conversation two you will have highlighted any areas that you would like to adjust and places where you would like further clarification.

At this stage:

- You will be invited to reflect on your own response to the discussion summary from conversation one.
- You will consider focal leadership in your church from the perspective of your role. Your unique focus will add to and broaden the conversation, so do not worry about your thoughts being different.
- You will have space to clarify what you might need to help you move forward.

Spend some quiet time reflecting on your role(s) at church and/ or in the community.

What brings you **joy** and what brings **challenge**?

Bring to mind the people who are alongside you in your role and pray for them.

*Father,
I pray for those who work alongside me in church life,
I give thanks for their faithfulness.
I pray for the tasks of the church and her needs, for all
that is done and all that we wish we could do.
As we move to proclaim in word and deed the risen Lord
Jesus, keep us mindful of your leading
And bravery to follow the direction of your Spirit.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.*

1. Reflecting on conversation one

You are encouraged to spend as much time as you need reflecting on the discussion summary from conversation one. The questions below can be used as a guide, but feel free to reflect in your own way.

You might find it helpful to refer back to the agreed group conclusions or summary of your discussion.

- What did you value most about the conversation?
- Do you feel you would like to add anything?
- What encourages you about the opportunities of focal leadership in your church and community?
- Where might this kind of leadership encourage the mission of your church?
- Do you have any concerns, what might you need to help you move forward with these?



Focal leadership and my role

You are invited to reflect further, particularly from the perspective of your role in church, whatever that might be.

Consider:

- How do I feel about what was discussed, with reference to my particular responsibility?
- What stands out for you as the opportunity of focal leadership in your church and its mission in the community?

Continue to think about these, referencing the focal ministry statement selected by the group.

What would you like to affirm about this statement and do you now need to add, subtract or clarify anything?



2. Resources to continue the conversation

The following statements help to define the role of a focal leader within the context of your local area and mission community.

- As part of being a 'church for a different world', focal leaders will be an everyday presence and focus of ministry within their church and community.
- They have a heart for living the good news within church and where they live. They will have an infectious faith which they take with them into the local community, making links with church and local life.
- Focal ministry is a key part of our vision for mission communities.
- Focal leaders share the vision of the mission community in their church and represent the vision of their church in the mission community.

How do these elements of the role sit alongside your role and responsibility?

3. Moving forward

Focal leadership is a new way of working, building on our remembered tradition to release missional agency and new energy into our churches. Focal leaders will have skills in common, but their focus and role will differ to suit their context.

What might this release of energy mean for mission in your area?

4. Taking stock

Draw your session to a close by summarising your thoughts:

- What would you like to feedback on when the group next meets?
- What is on your mind about your current role?
- How would you like to communicate your thoughts to the rest of the group?
- Do you have any concerns about sharing these with the group? How might these be addressed?

5. Closing worship

As you draw your thinking to a close, give thanks for the positives and ask for wisdom for whatever concerns you.

Pray for your group as they prepare for Conversation Three, asking God to be with them.

*Jesus, Lord of time,
hold us in your eternity.*

*Jesus, image of God,
travel with us the life of faith.*

*Jesus, friend of sinners,
heal the brokenness of our world.*

*Jesus, Lord of tomorrow,
draw us into your future. Amen.*



Conversation three

Moving forward

In conversation three you are invited to discuss your personal reflections made during conversation two. You will be asked to:

- draw your thoughts together as a group
- consider the details of the role and person who might become your focal leader
- identify your next steps.

Worship

As you gather, spend some time offering the conversation to God. Include a Bible reading if you wish.

Give thanks for your church, for those who worship in your building(s) and for your local community, and ask God to guide your time together and invite him to journey alongside.

1. Drawing things together

Use this time to compare your responses from conversation two. Begin by referring back to the statement and conclusion from the end of conversation one and the summary of your own thinking in conversation two.

Even if your group's thinking has been similar, there may be some differences due to the varied roles held by group members which will contribute to the broader picture. Consider:

- what do your varied roles and responsibilities add to the conversation?
- are there gaps where more information or discussion is needed?
- are there new insights you need to consider?



2. Your focal leader

The remainder of this conversation allows you to think more specifically about the characteristics of your focal leader and their role.

- Consider what the broad categories that follow might mean in your context and adjust if you need to.

For example, *A focal leader is 'a life-long learner' or 'enthusiastic about helping others grow as disciples'.*

What might this mean in the context of your church?

A focal leader is someone who:

- is faithful in public worship and private prayer.
- is passionate about living out their faith in church life and in their local community.
- is an encourager, a listener and a disciple.
- is deeply committed to their church community and to the mission it shares within the mission community.
- is flexible, open and approachable, a trusted and respected member of the church community.
- is a lifelong learner.

They might:

- be an everyday face of the church in the community.
- hold the continuity from Sunday to Sunday.
- notice and use the skills of others, to build on what God is doing.
- encourage and enable others to participate.
- be enthusiastic about helping others grow as disciples.
- acknowledge the need for welcome, love and care.
- share the vision of the mission community in their church and represent the vision of their church in the mission community.

3. Adding definition

A focal leader will also share the unique character of your church with your mission community and represent the vision of the mission community back into your church.

Are there particular aspects of focal leadership or qualities and responsibilities of a potential focal leader that stand out for you?

Given the statement above, what might this also mean for your church, as part of your mission community?

4. Finishing your discussion

You may have a clear idea of where your group needs to go next, or where you might need more time. Whatever your conclusions, take time to ensure that everyone agrees on the action to take next.

The conversations in this booklet are structured to enable discussion of foundational elements of focal ministry and to enable you to think together about what focal leadership might look like for you, rather than present a fixed shape.

This might mean you are ready to move forward with focal leadership with a clearer vision.

You might now like to:

- **revisit** part of the discussion or bring others in to do this
- **move forward** to put together a role for your focal leader
- contact the **focal ministry officer** for more support or to move forward
- **move away** from your original choice of candidate and begin to think of another
- take a **break**
- move on with the **discernment process** with a particular person.

5. Conclusion

As you come to the end of this stage in your thinking about focal ministry, spend a moment in quiet as a group to revisit this process.

It might feel helpful to agree that the discussion and proposed action can be revisited at any time and consider how this might be done.

This process ends with worship. Use what is usual for you or the suggestions below.

6. Closing worship

As your time together draws to a close, ask each member of the group to share one of the following:

- something I have really enjoyed...
- something I have been challenged by...
- something that gives me hope...
- something I am thankful for...

After these have been shared, keep a moment of quiet where group members can be thankful in prayer for the learning and the journey together.

7. Looking ahead

Focal leadership is **contextual** and depends greatly on your unique situation – your church, what your mission needs are and your local context.

This booklet has not given you answers, but has allowed you the opportunity to discover and explore elements relevant to your own context. Hopefully, you have been able to identify insights unique to your church and mission community.

Focal leadership also has **fixed elements**. In moving forward these elements are grounded in safe practice and procedure.

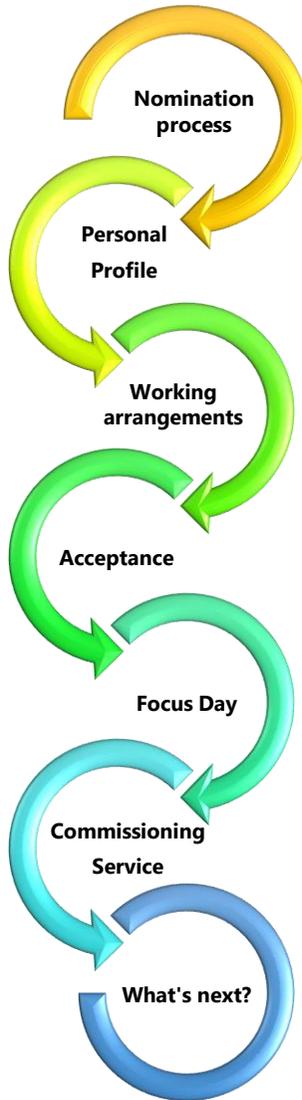


Appointing a focal leader

- Firstly, please complete a nomination form. These are available from your local ministry officer.
- There is space to discuss any training needs and support networks.
- Focal leaders must comply with safeguarding procedures and attend an induction focus day.
- Focal leaders will be offered support and opportunities to develop, grow and thrive over their three years in role.
- There will be appropriate catch-up meetings with the designated oversight person, to support and review process.
- A celebratory commissioning service will be arranged with other local focal leaders.

The nomination process for those who hold a Bishop's Licence is different. In this instance please get in touch with the focal ministry officer, or have a conversation with your mission community leader or area dean.

The focal ministry process



Nomination form

Completed by the PCC and focal leader designate.

Personal profile

To be completed by the focal leader. This helps us gather some information and ascertain how we can help the focal leader. This also helps us ensure that safeguarding requirements are met.

Working agreement form

To be completed by the focal leader and the oversight minister. This might be the incumbent, other minister or mission community leader, and will be the person responsible for the review process.



Focus day

Once accepted, a focus day will be held to prepare the focal leader for being commissioned.

Commissioning service

This will be a local service and usually be held within your mission community. Focal leaders will be commissioned for their new role in the presence of the church, mission community, family and friends. It's a celebration!

What's next?

There will be ongoing support and review in place for both ministers and focal leaders.



Contact details

To proceed with nominating your focal leader, contact:

Michele Evans, Learning and Development
Administrator

micheleevans@manchester.anglican.org

07741 577642

If you need more information, further support, or guidance on your next steps, contact:

Beverley Angier, Focal Ministry Officer

beverleyangier@manchester.anglican.org

07423 711298

St John's House 155-163 The Rock, Bury, BL9 0ND

More information is available on our website:

www.manchester.anglican.org/faithlife/nurturing/focal-leadership-/

Acknowledgements

This resource has been put together by the focal ministry officer with worship resources taken from:

* [A Gathering and Greeting | The Church of England](#)



Our Diocesan Prayer of Thanksgiving and Hope

Living and Loving God,
as your pilgrim people in Manchester Diocese
we thank you for the great commission
with which you have entrusted us:
to love and serve, and to bring
our parishes, schools, chaplaincies,
and all our communities
into new life in Jesus Christ.

Through your abundant love
lead us into your Kingdom
and grant us the trust to follow you;
meet our weariness, our griefs and fears
with your tender and comforting Spirit
that we may greet the promise
of each new day with joy and trust.

Teach us to pray in faith, hope and love,
that we may go out into your world
confident in your wondrous mission
and full of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Amen.