

Church - what we are and what we could be...

A guide for exploration

January 2022

www.bathandwells.org.uk/enabling-ministries



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Living the story. Telling the story.

Finding your way around these materials

The resources in this pack are designed to help deaneries, churches and groups reflect on their context, faith, and gifts in order to identify their calling and ministries, both individually and as a church. Some ministries will be existing ones, some might be beginning to grow naturally, some might need actively encouraging. Much of this work is already underway so just choose the sections that are of use in your context —there is no set order or obligation to work through them all.

The cards are colour coded according to their focus to help find the areas relevant to you.

As well as those areas, you will find general information, including an introduction from Bishop Ruth. There are also some additional resources and tools, and two spiritual practices (Dwelling in the Word and Seeking God's Way Together) to help us listen to God and to one another and prayerfully move forwards together.

Our faith

Gifts and service

Context and community

Calling and ministries

General information

Listening to God and each other

Further resources and tools

Contents

Each card in the pack is colour coded according to the blocks on the left. On the right are the list of cards relevant to each topic or particular leaflets available on the website.

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- Message from Bishop Ruth
- What do we have to do, and when?

Context and community

- How do we connect to our communities?
- Connecting to our communities

Our faith

- How does our faith shape our church?
- Sharing our faith in the wider community

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- How might we use our gifts to serve God and our communities?

Calling and ministries

- Exploring calling - are we all called or just some people?
- Focal Ministry - a flexible model for living out calling

Listening to God and each other

- Dwelling in the Word - to help listen to God and each other
- Seeking God's Way Together - to help us make decisions prayerfully together

Further resources and tools

- Starter questions to help open up conversations
- An accompanied process
- Getting support and keeping in touch
- Flourishing churches - key features

What does it mean to be a Christian and God's Church in the 21st century?

As a diocese we have already done a lot of reflection on what it means to be Church. Over the next few years, we shall continue to put that thinking, praying, listening and planning into practice. We will be building on what is already good among us and developing new ideas and ways of organising our life together. We want to discern God's ministries in our lives in a way that honours his calling to us, brings us together and enables us to share the incredible story of his love.

There are many lay people who yearn for a more visionary Church and want to offer their gifts and callings, yet the present structures often prevent this from happening. And there are some who have roles which can feel burdensome. Similarly, there are clergy who feel that much of what they are doing is not what God originally called them to be or do. So, what can we do about this?

You may or may not have come across the term *focal ministry*. Explained later in these cards, a focal ministry model has been shown to help church communities to grow and flourish. It gives us an adaptable structure to work within, one which allows local ministries to be nurtured and grown. Will it be a quick fix? No - because we need to understand it, work with it, and adopt it as our own. But, over time, it will enable us to work together, listening to God, learning from our experiences, and building on what is good, so that we can face the future with hope.

I trust that you will find these resources useful. I commend them to you and please help us to continue to improve them by giving feedback.

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What do we have to do, and when?

From September 2021, deaneries across the diocese are going to be asked to begin identifying the shape of future ministry in their area

- In our context, based on our faith and with the gifts we have, what is God calling us to be and do?
- What lay ministries are, or could be, emerging in our areas?
- How should we best distribute paid clergy posts across our area?

The clergy post decisions have to be made at deanery, archdeaconry and diocesan level but the other questions are for every parish and community across the diocese. That is what these materials are designed to help with.

The emergence of new ministries is not going to happen overnight but will be our focus for the next three to five years.

DMPGs and Deanery Chapters are asked to begin this work by the end of 2021 so that in 2022 parishes and Deanery Synods are ready to play their part. We know that in some places, this work is already underway, sometimes for many years; for others it will be new.`

Autumn 2021

28 September
Introduction and discussion of materials and to Area and Lay Deans

Deaneries discuss materials in DMPG and Chapter, and feed back by
31 December

2022

January
Materials to benefices (PCCs)

Benefices discuss materials. Feedback by **30 June**.
Support available throughout

Deaneries review deanery mission plans in light of progress on Enabling Ministries and deployment plans

How do we connect to our communities?



Connecting to our communities

As Church we are called to be a Christian presence in both geographical communities (of place) and also to communities of interest (e.g. uniformed organisations, schools, online groups).

Christian presence already exists in our communities through lay and ordained people, paid and unpaid - Christians responding to God's call to live out their faith wherever they are. That is almost like a 'God thread' running through the community (see illustration on the reverse). Christians try to be on the thread; others may be a bit further away but they connect to it through relationships with people on the thread.

Thinking of the communities we belong to, sometimes we imagine that a worshipping community can only happen in a church building, but a worshipping community can be formed anywhere. We can also live out the Anglican Five Marks of Mission throughout our communities in a variety of ways - teaching, tending, transforming, treasuring and telling. (See the [How does our faith shape our church?](#) section for the Five Marks of Mission).

For reflection

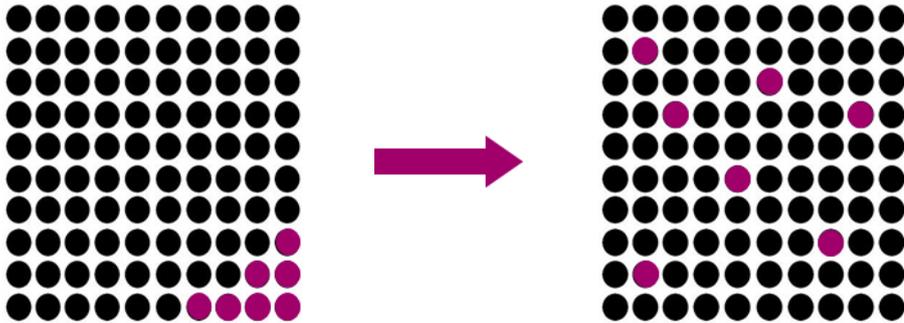
What does our Christian presence look like now, and what might it look like in the future?

You could explore this in a number of ways

- Draw a representation of your own area or use a local map to pinpoint your connections.
- List any communities of interest and things to which your community links that are outside of your geographical area (e.g. schools)
- What do you learn from your own lists or drawings and from comparing with each other's?
- Where is the Church's Christian presence active at the moment and what opportunities might there be to extend it?

Sharing our faith in the wider community

For many years we worked with the idea that if we made services in church attractive enough (better coffee, better music, better welcome...), people with no church background would come “back to church” in their droves. We expected people to just turn up to a place that can be intimidating for a whole range of reasons, to find out what it’s all about.



The pink dots above represent Christians. On the left you can see that when we are gathered, we are in contact with fewer people. We have more impact on the rest of our communities when we are out in the world. Jesus uses the words “come” and “go” a great deal in the Gospels. We come together as Christians in order to strengthen and support each other in our faith, ready to go out and live it.

For reflection

Use the sketch and list that you have created from [Connecting to our Communities](#) and mark or note the places or groups of people with whom you are in contact during an average week or month

- How are you connecting to those places or people?
- How might you work in partnership with them?
- What support or help do you need to do that?

What next...

Are there groups, places or people with whom you have little or no contact?

How might you connect better with them?

If you would like some help exploring how to connect to your wider community, contact Charlie Peer charlie.peer@bathwells.anglican.org.

How does our faith shape our church?

The statements below are core to this work of exploration

God is present in the world

God calls all people - to shine as lights in the world, sharing the Good News of Christ

The church does not exist for itself but to serve the world

God consistently calls us from where we are to a new place or state of being

Anglican Five Marks of Mission - we join in with God's work by:

- Living the good news of Christ - through all we do, say and are
- Encouraging and teaching new believers
- Responding lovingly to those in need
- Transforming injustice and working for peace and reconciliation
- Safeguarding God's creation.

For reflection

First reflect individually, then in pairs or a whole group

- Which of the statements resonate most positively?
- Do any disturb?
- Which of the Five Marks of Mission do you/your church do best?

And in practice what does this mean for us:

- How are we already serving God's world, beyond our offering of regular worship?
- Is there anything we would like to explore doing more or doing better?

Resources to help us deepen the connections between our faith and our life

Sometimes we are so used to reading the words of others in prayers, hymns and the Bible, that it can be intimidating to speak about what we believe. It can feel as though we aren't qualified to speak, but often speaking with others helps us become clearer about what we really do believe. And it helps us learn from their faith too.

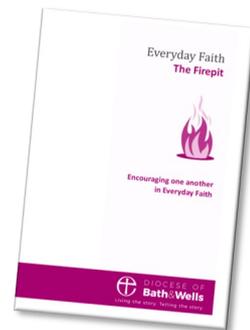


There is a variety of Everyday Faith resources to help explore what faith means in our lives and what God might be calling us to do. The leaflet 'This is me' offers a fuller summary of resources to try however there are some initial suggestions below:

Growing with God has questions based on the word 'called' to use for personal reflection or as part of a conversation.

The Firepit leaflet offers groups a simple structure to reflect together on living out our faith. It is suitable for young people as well as adults.

The **Encouraging One Another in Everyday Faith** leaflet works particularly well for small groups of 3 to 4, especially for people who are not completely new to faith. It includes the full wording of the Five Marks of Mission.



Many Christians find it helpful to have a Spiritual Director, Accompanier or Soul Friend to meet with and reflect on God, life and faith. More information can be found at www.bathandwells.org.uk/spiritual-direction.

Many churches run small groups to help explore faith. Exploring Faith is a new course on offer across the diocese. Visit www.bathandwells.org.uk/exploring-faith for more information.

Exploring calling - are we all called or just some people?

Sometimes, even in church, it can feel as if God only calls 'special people'. But God calls us all, because God created us, knows us and loves us. We are all called to live lives that are true to our faith and what it means to be a Christian.

God also calls us at times in our life to particular roles - which sounds tidy but is often pretty messy. Often those calls are something we take up for a season only. Sometimes they are for the rest of our lives.

How do we know if God is calling us?

- We need help to discern those callings - to check in with others that we really are being called to something particular, rather than it just being our ego/alter ego thinking it would be good.
- Sometimes others will see our calling before we do.
- Sometimes we start a role because there is a need and then later realise that God's call has been in it.
- In trying to work out who or where God might be calling us to be and do, it is often really helpful just to try things out - see what it feels like from the inside.

Any particular calling we may have exists within our overall call to live as Christians in God's world, a calling that is recognised at our baptism.





The wonderful variety of callings that exist is a bit like a garden. Some plants, like trees, last a lifetime; some are beautiful but brief; some return each season; some are planted deliberately; some are seeded by wind or birds; some grow in any soil and some need very particular ground to flourish.

For a lot of people their job or vocation is their calling. Sometimes those are callings that continue for the rest of their lives - being ordained, becoming a parent, becoming a Reader or being called to teach...

Christian calling is always practised within community, serving the world. God is everywhere and calls people to be everywhere, not just in the 'churchy' places and not just for individual satisfaction.

Central to calling is what it does within us even more than what it does to others. Responding to God's call brings life and growth to us, even when what we are doing is painful or difficult. A response to God's call is a response to a call to be fully ourselves, fully alive, alongside others, in God's beautiful and varied creation.



For reflection

- What is your favourite hymn, song or Bible passage?
→ What does that have to say about what it is to live a Christian life?
- What resonates with or challenges you in what you've read above?
- Who do you know whose life reflects the life of Christ in some way?

The February 2022 Archdeaconry Days will focus on God calls - everyone, everywhere. See www.bathandwells.org.uk/god-calls-everyone-everywhere for more details.

How might we use our gifts to serve God and our communities?

As covered on [Exploring calling - are we all called or just some people?](#), God calls us all. Alongside that universal but personal call, some people feel called to particular ministries - both within and beyond the church. Across the diocese, there are already people living out ministry as a focus for and service to their community. Ordained and Reader ministry are some of the more established models of ministry. We are also blessed with pioneers and chaplains across the diocese, Lay Worship and Lay Pastoral Assistants, Pupil Chaplains, Churchwardens - the list goes on!

Some of these ministries are based more on worship and congregation, some are more about presence in the wider community - there is no 'perfect model' and one size certainly doesn't fit all. There are some examples of existing ministries that have a 'focal' feel to them on [Focal ministry - what and why?](#)

What is Ministry?

There is much scope for discussion about the meaning of ministry and its New Testament roots.

All people are created by God and called to be involved in God's mission and ministry. Christians are reminded in Paul's letter to the Colossians, 'whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Col: 3.17).

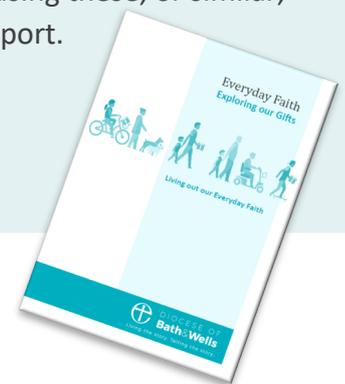
We are all called by baptism to shine as lights in the world - that may not be a formal named ministry, but it is a call.

Some particular named ministries are commissioned and accountable; they are public ministries that represent God and the church. These ministries carry a specific responsibility for others.

In the work around focal ministries, we are talking about ministries that provide a focal point for a group or place. What they involve will depend on the context in which they operate and the gifts of the focal minister. They will come with oversight to give support and accountability so that both the focal minister and those they serve can flourish.

For reflection and next steps

- Think individually and then as a group - what are the ministries associated with your church?
 - You might then want to write them up on post-its or large paper and step back and see what that tells you about your church and where your energy is focused. Some roles may well feel different to different people. For example - some Churchwardens or Treasurers see their role as a ministry, others don't.
- Which roles are missing from the list of ministries? Are there any groups or places in your community that would benefit from a focal ministry? See [Connecting to our Communities](#) for ideas to help reflect on your Christian presence in your community.
- Do you know what your gifts are? Take a look at the leaflets 'Exploring our Gifts' and 'How can I contribute?'. Clergy and Lay Leaders can perhaps offer to reflect with people using these, or similar, resources. Alternatively, you can get in touch with the Vocations team for support.



Focal ministry - what and why?

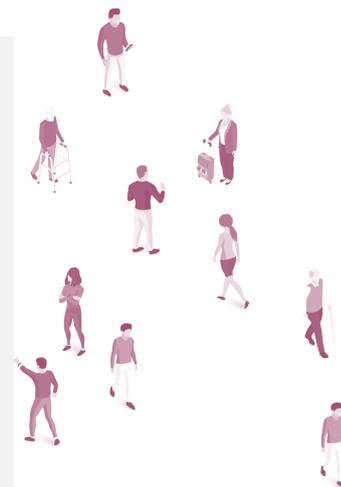
Our model of church has sometimes been based on having a vicar and expecting them to do, or lead on, most things; including the things that don't need to be done by a priest. The days of 'one vicar, one parish' are increasingly gone and the current way in which multi-parish benefices are configured often puts a strain on everyone - clergy and laity. This was apparent before Covid-19, and is even clearer now with additional financial pressures and many people feeling really weary.

The role of the clergy as spiritual leaders is still central. The desire is to release them from the unreasonably broad burdens that many are carrying, alongside better enabling the varied gifts of the laity, so that together we can find a more joyful and sustainable model. It's already hard to find people to take on onerous roles like Churchwardens, so this approach needs a combination of seeing what gives people energy and enabling that, alongside trying to make some of the onerous roles easier and more life-giving.

Focal ministry is the model with which we are going to be working:

Focal ministers are local church leaders. They are 'go to' people for a particular group, congregation or community. The detailed nature of their role will vary from place and place according to the context.

Focal ministers are supported by an oversight minister who carries the overall leadership role and the responsibility for a number of focal ministries that could be lay or ordained, paid and unpaid, geographically focused or focused on non-geographical communities. In some places this will look very similar to the current incumbent role.



Some existing local examples of focal ministries

Administrator across benefices

Administrative support releases others to exercise their ministries and provides connection across an area, including with the wider community.

Reader in charge of group of parishes

A Reader can offer spiritual leadership across a number of parishes, enabling other people to play their part in leading worship and connecting to community.

Community Chaplains

Someone operating as a chaplain in local shops or schools, hedgerows (really!), sports clubs etc.

Youth Minister

Working with children and young people, in one parish, across a benefice or deanery. Enabling the ministries of others, including the young people.

Churchwarden

Known across the community as part of the church and informally recognised as having a focal ministry to that community.

Each of these 'focal ministers' has someone to whom they look for support and accountability.

For reflection

- Who are already the 'go to' people operating in our context? (see Focal Ministry description on the front)
- How is it working?
- What can we learn from that?

Dwelling in the Word - a guide

Dwelling in the Word is a simple but profound way of listening to God and one another through Scripture. It allows everyone to have a chance to speak about what they notice in a Bible passage. Making this part of your practice as a church or group can help you listen more attentively to one another and give confidence that God speaks to everyone. See over for a prayer and passage that we are using Dwelling in the Word across the diocese in 2022 as one option.

- Take a moment to become still and then say a prayer to start (e.g. see over)
- Whoever is leading lets people know: you will hear the passage twice and all you need to do is listen and see where your attention is drawn - to a word or phrase that seems particularly meaningful, to something that surprises you, to something that challenges you etc. It doesn't need to be something impressive!
- Hear the passage (see reverse or your choice), read slowly once. Pause. Hear it again - ideally using another voice that contrasts with the first - e.g. a different age or gender, lay or ordained etc.
- Get into pairs. Take it in turns to listen to what struck the other person. Don't interrupt, correct or improve on what they say - just listen. Some people like to make a note as you will be reporting back.
- After the time in pairs, either form fours or go back into the whole group (depending on size of group). Each person then reports on what their partner said. Resist the temptation to comment!
- You can simply finish with a pause or prayer after people have fed back, or see if there are any themes in what people are noticing in the passage.

A Prayer for Dwelling in the Word

Loving God,
Though our destination is not yet clear,
May we trust in Your graceful promises;
Though we are uncertain of ourselves,
May we be rooted in Your loving regard;
Though our attention is inclined to wander,
May we hear the things You are saying;
Though we often neglect Your influence,
May we be convicted of Your power to
change,
In Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Philippians 4:4-13

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

¹⁰ I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. ¹² I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Dwelling in the Word is a spiritual practice from Partnership for Missional Church.

www.bathandwells.org.uk/dwelling-in-the-word

Seeking God's Way Together - a guide

We cannot be church as individuals. So, deciding questions about how we are as church and how we might be is best done together. We are the Body of Christ and bodies work best when all the parts are working together.

Below is an outline of a structure for collective thinking and deciding. Some may know it as Corporate Spiritual Discernment. The essence is to come together, to listen to God, each other, our experience and our knowledge and then prayerfully decide a way forwards. It is quite different from leaving a decision just to the vicar or the loudest person in the room. Nor is this about pooling ignorance or voting for the least bad option!

A basic outline of Seeking God's Way Together

A full outline and explanation of this approach can be found at www.bathandwells.org.uk/enabling-ministries. For someone to help with facilitation, contact Charlie Peer.

- Start with prayer and Dwelling in the Word to help us focus on God and each other
- What is the question we are asking ourselves? E.g. What gives our church life? What should we focus on?
- Pool our thoughts (but not discussing them at this stage)
 - What information or thinking do we have already that will help us answer this question? Where is God in all this?
- Reflect on what we've heard so far - it will help to have made notes and for someone to reflect back
- Prayerfully discuss what we have heard and what that seems to be saying to us.
- Prayerfully decide our collective answer to the question - a next step.

A Prayer for Seeking God's Way Together

Loving God,
Though our destination is not yet clear,
May we trust in Your graceful promises;
Though we are uncertain of ourselves,
May we be rooted in Your loving regard;
Though our attention is inclined to wander,
May we hear the things You are saying;
Though we often neglect Your influence,
May we be convicted of Your power to change,
In Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Philippians 1:27, 2: 5-11

^{1:27} Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.

^{2:5} Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**PARTNERSHIP FOR
MISSIONAL CHURCH**

CHURCH
MISSION
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Working
with

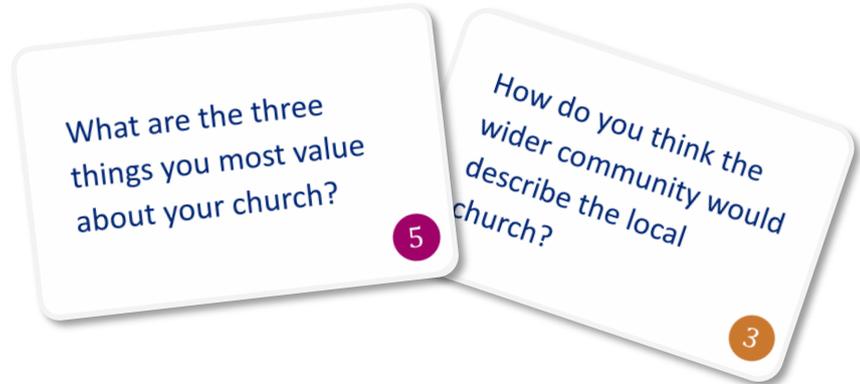
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Seeking God's Way Together and Dwelling in the Word are spiritual practices from Partnership for Missional Church which we are using as part of our diocesan practices. Charlie Peer can connect you to more information and support in using these practices charlie.peer@bathwells.anglican.org.

Starter questions

There are questions cards to help churches and groups explore their context and beliefs together. The cards are also an easy way of seeing what gives people energy. They don't have 'right' answers. The question cards could be used with a PCC, in a sermon slot, home group, deanery synod, DMPG etc. They cover personal faith, faith together and faith in the world.

For a set of cards, and suggestions of how they might be used, contact Charlie Peer, charlie.peer@bathwells.anglican.org or download from the website.



An accompanied process

Many groups will be happy to use the materials in this pack themselves but facilitation and support are also available from Diocesan Support Services. If you would like to use these, and additional materials, in an accompanied process, please contact Charlie Peer.

Flourishing churches - key features

Flourishing churches tend to have some common factors. You might find these useful as a way of reflecting on the strengths of your church community and areas you might like to address:

A clear mission and purpose and clergy and congregations who are intentional about growth



Understand its context, actively engage with it and those who might not currently go to church



Be welcoming and build on-going relationships with people



Actively engage children and young people



Nurture disciples (encouraging people to explore and deepen their faith and live it out in their daily lives)



Have clergy and lay leaders who innovate, envision and motivate people



Have lay people as well as ordained clergy active in leadership and other roles



Be willing to self-reflect, change and adapt according to its context



Getting support and keeping in touch

This work is being done together across the diocese. We will all be learning and adapting as we go along, because although this is based on age-old principles, some of the ways of approaching it are new.

If you are happy just to start exploring, then use these cards and the supporting resources on the website.

If you have any feedback, suggestions or requests for help, including wanting to explore the accompanied process, then contact Charlie Peer.

- www.bathandwells.org.uk/enabling-ministries for copies of this document, further information and supporting resources
- Charlie Peer for overall questions and requests for support charlie.peer@bathwells.anglican.org
01749 685201
- Deanery Accompaniers for help with accessing the right people for support with your ideas
www.bathandwells.org.uk/deanery-accompaniers
- Diocesan Support Services 01749 670777 can connect you to other staff for other support and expertise.

We are here to support you, with existing resources and by sharing or developing new ones, so please ask!

More of the thinking

- For more of the national Church of England thinking around lay ministries, see 'A Vision for Lay Ministries', a paper for General Synod
- For some reflections on calling and the meaning of ministry, see 'Kingdom Calling: the vocation, ministry and discipleship of the whole people of God' from the Church of England Faith and Order Commission.