

CALLED TO MINISTRY

The Discernment Process
in the
Diocese of Willochra
2006



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INTRODUCTION

Ministering Communities in Mission

Each congregation will be a self-sustaining unit of the Church where the Sacraments are celebrated and the Word proclaimed, where each member's gifts are recognized and their ministries encouraged, and where the love and care within the congregation spread out to the community beyond so that Christ's love will be experienced and known by all.

Ministering communities

- ⇒ Are intentional communities structured to enable the whole people of God to collaborate in the work of ministry and mission.
- ⇒ Ministry is the responsibility of the whole community. This is called total ministry or collaborative ministry.
- ⇒ The necessary ministries are discerned and authorized in the local church community. Some people may be called to be ordained as Local Deacons and Local Priests.
- ⇒ The Bishop and others like the Ministry District Priests and Ministry Development Officer offer oversight, resources and encouragement.
- ⇒ A ministering community needs always to be learning. There will be continuing education and formation in theology and ministry

To discern

- ⇒ Is to spend time listening to God and to each other
- ⇒ Is to co-operate with God in discovering the future for your congregation
- ⇒ Is to discover the gifts with which God has so richly blessed each of you
- ⇒ Is to understand that together you have **sufficient** gifts to be the Body of Christ
- ⇒ Is to be called to take responsibility for the ministry to which you are called
- ⇒ Is to set out on an journey with God, confident in his provision, and sharing in his mission
- ⇒ Is to be wakeful and watchful, surprised and frightened, joyful and satisfied



The Process of Discernment

To undertake a discernment process, the members of the congregation commit themselves to do these things:

- ⇒ Be open to the calling of God for themselves and each other
- ⇒ Read the Bible, pray and reflect over several weeks
- ⇒ Meet together to discern the vision and the ministry needs of the congregation
- ⇒ Name those whom they believed are called to ministries
- ⇒ Form teams for particular ministries
- ⇒ Support and encourage those called to ministry

To engage in this process, the congregation may ask one of its leaders to facilitate the various steps, or it may be appropriate to invite the Ministry District Priest or the Ministry Development Officer to be the facilitator.

The process has five steps which may be done over a few weeks but it may take many months. Each congregation works at its own pace.

Discernment may be seen as an action/reflection process for continuing church growth and development. A congregation's reflection on its ministry and discernment of ministries and ministers never cease.

STEP 1

Examine your history

Have people prepare several short anecdotes from the church's history and present them to the congregation during a worship service or some other time. Think of interesting ways to raise awareness of changing times and changing styles of ministry with topics like

- ⇒ How our church began
- ⇒ What was it like in the 50s?
- ⇒ I remember when...
- ⇒ Recent times and new arrivals
- ⇒ A time line
- ⇒ Who we are today

Encourage each other to acknowledge the faithfulness of people through the decades, times of struggle and hurt, thriving times, the presence of God through the years. See if there are recurring themes, a central Bible story, or a concept that sums up your church. Celebrate your church's story.

Examine your district

Look at ABS statistics, council information or other socio-economic and cultural information about your locality.

Are things changing or static?

Who are the people who live in your town and district?

Does the population of the Church represent the sub-groups of the town or are you all from the same types of families?



Focus on 1 Thessalonians 1.1-4

Read the passage and meditate upon it , substituting your congregation's name where appropriate. Draw this to people's attention in the pew sheet, on walls, or in services.

[From Paul, Silas and Timothy

To the people of the Church in Thessalonica, who belong to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be yours.]

We always thank God for you all and mention you in our prayers. For we remember before our God and Father how you put your faith into practice, how your love made you work so hard, and how your hope in our Lord Jesus Christ is firm. Our brothers and sisters we know that God loves you and has chosen you to be his own.

Pray for your Church

Loving God,

You speak to us and nourish us through the life of this Church community.

We thank you for its history of faithfulness;
we are sorry for the times we have fallen short of who we are called to be,

and we praise you for your continued love for us.

Open our hearts and minds to your call,
encourage and strengthen us for enthusiasm in the service of Jesus our Lord. Amen

STEP 2

Ministry recognition

Invite people from the congregation to speak of their ministry and the opportunities they have for ministry. Make sure there are some in-church ministries like organist, reader, op-shop service, pastoral assistant and some ministries of everyday life such as parent, carer, work-place ministries, down at the bowling club.

Encourage people to think of the ministries they are already involved in in the Church and the community.

Invite people to speak of their hobbies and their working life if they are employed. Ask the retired and presently unemployed to speak of the work they used to do and the skills and experience they have.

Find some way to acknowledge, display, and honour the gifted community you are.



Focus on Romans 12. 4-8

Read it together, and each day in the coming week or regularly in the coming weeks and meditate on it.

We have many parts in the one body, and all these parts have different functions. In the same way, though we are many we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined with each other, as different parts of the body. So we are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us. If our gift is to speak God's message, we should do it according to the faith that we have; if it is to serve, we should serve; if it is to teach, we should teach; if it is to encourage others, we should do so. Whoever shares with others should do it generously; whoever has authority should work hard; whoever shows kindness to others should do it cheerfully.

Pray for the Church's ministry

Loving God,

You speak to us and nourish us through this Church community,

In the name of Jesus we ask that men and women and young people among us will respond to your call to service and leadership in the Church.

We pray that you will open our minds and hearts to your call.

Amen

STEP 3

Prepare a vision statement for the Church.

This may take you weeks to finalise. Keep working on the sub-headings till there is general agreement from the congregation. There is no right list or wrong list of values and beliefs. While there may be similarities, no two congregations will produce the same statement. It is important to find ways to involve the whole congregation. Finally, you might like to get a sub-title or metaphor which summarises your congregation's vision. Surround your work with prayer.

You need agreement on:

Purpose: the fundamental reason why you exist

Image: your image of how you would like to be seen in the community

Bedrock beliefs: the principles you turn to for strength

Operating values: how people will behave

Goals: the focus of your energies at the moment

When there is general agreement, then the vision needs to be reinforced at every opportunity in sermons, pew-sheets, bulletins, meetings.

Thriving congregations have a sense of purpose; effective ministry is achieved if every member of the Church shares the vision.

St Just's, Somewhere

SAMPLE

Purpose: We exist to encourage the spiritual growth of all who seek wholeness and to serve those in need in Somewhere and district.

Image: We see ourselves as a caring, accepting community whose lives are dedicated to service in the name of Jesus Christ. People will know us by our love.

Operating values:

Being generous in all we do

Valuing each human being as made in God's image

Supporting the ministry of every member of the Church

Valuing lifelong learning and spiritual growth

Being open to new ideas and persistent in initiatives

Bedrock beliefs:

We believe that Jesus is our Lord and that he has called us to be the Body of Christ in Somewhere so that through His Spirit of love working in us we may give glory to the Father.

Goals for this year

To provide opportunities for spiritual growth through

- ⇒ Helping every committee and group to become a community where faith is shared and care is shown
- ⇒ To provide additional worship services to meet community needs e.g healing services, and to bring friends and relatives to them
- ⇒ To develop a local Anglicare project which serves the needs of the aged in Somewhere and provides us with opportunities for love and service
- ⇒ Through the liturgy planning group to plan services in a professional manner
- ⇒ To help those people not yet involved in ministry to identify their gifts and calling

Growing in Love

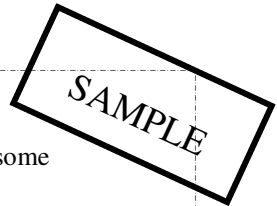
STEP 4

Discerning teams for ministry

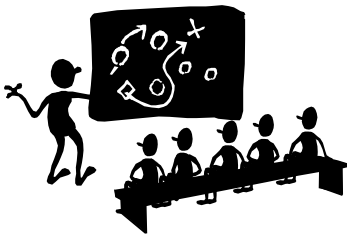
- ⇒ There will already be people involved in ministry in your congregation. It will be helpful to review any outcome from Step 2 and to acknowledge present ministries like Pastoral Assistants, worship team, MU leadership, children's ministers, welcomers etc. and the gifts of the congregation.
- ⇒ Review the vision statement and discuss how these things might happen, who might be involved. Define a list of ministries needed to achieve your goals, acknowledging existing ministries. Where do things need to change? What new ministers need to be called? What gifts are needed? What support will they need? People may need to take this list away with them for further prayer and consideration.

1. Liturgy planning group needs to have two additional members, some instruction from the District Priest about intercessions, and some new music resources.
2. Special liturgy group needs to be formed to plan the new monthly healing service of Evening Prayer.
3. Leader and committee to investigate possible Anglicare project in conjunction with the Senior Citizens'.
4. A small committee (perhaps 3) to read up about turning committees into communities and faith-sharing in the congregation and educate us about how to do this. The same group is invited to keep the matter of 'every member ministry' before us.
5. Additional people to be readers and intercessors.
6. A new leader for the pastoral care group required.
7. Children's ministry team needs someone to help with . . .

ETC



- ⇒ Select people to be leaders. The congregation need to understand that a leader gives leadership in ministry but is not the sole person responsible for that area of ministry. So, the pastoral care leader may co-ordinate the term responsible for hospital and home visiting and crisis care but will not do it all herself, the worship group leader might co-ordinate the roster of worship leaders but may not lead all services herself. Some people say things like, “We don’t need a leader because we all do it”, but when no one is responsible for leadership often nothing happens or no development takes place.
- ⇒ Make sure everyone understands the function and expectations of leaders. This is a different way of working from the Parish Council model. The Ministry Teams will be responsible to the Vestry (that is the congregation) or Church Council (which itself is a Team). They do not have to seek approval for all their activities, although they will always maintain clear communication with the congregation and co-operate and liaise with other teams. If the direction and goals of the congregation are clear and good relationships are maintained, then ministry teams can ‘soar like eagles’.
- ⇒ The Vestry or Church Council will have a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer and there will be Church wardens. Having these roles does not exclude them from other ministries.



STEP 5

Discernment of Local Clergy

If a congregation feels ready to call some people to ordained ministry, they need to give some consideration to discussing the ministries of deacon and priest.

⇒ Examine the Exhortations in the Ordination Services in *A Prayer Book for Australia*

Discuss the role of local ordained clergy in your congregation, remembering that the local priest and/or deacon is only one minister among many ministers in the ministering community.

⇒ What qualities do you think are important for those who are called to ordained ministry?

To whom would you turn for help in going deeper in your spiritual life?

Who especially contributes to this congregation as it seeks to come closer to God?

Who do you think lets their sense of the holy carry over into all aspects of life?

In whom do you sense a connectedness with God?

Who loves other unconditionally?

Who has compassion for those in need?

Who would you like to pray for you?

Who do you think is a good ambassador for Christ in your town?

⇒ During the weeks ahead, keep these discussions in mind. Remember that a person or persons discerned by your congregation will undergo formation and will grow into their Ordination, just as each of us grows in our Baptism and discipleship.



⇒ The congregation needs to pray for discernment

Heavenly Father,
in Baptism you called us to be a royal priesthood.
For your greater glory
and for the service of your people,
help us to discern those whom you call into ordained
ministry in this congregation.
Give those whom you call the generosity to respond
and persevered.
We seek this through Christ our Lord. Amen

The calling service

During a weekly service, people place in the offertory plate the name or names of the person or people they think are called to ordained ministry to serve in their local congregation. The papers are gathered and placed in an envelope to be sent to the Bishop who will continue the process.

This is not an election. There is to be no lobbying. There is to be no discussion about people.

It is a prayerful process.

⇒

People called to local ordained ministry

- ⇒ Are discerned by others in the Church as having a priestly character
- ⇒ Have been called by their congregation
- ⇒ Develop or already have a personal sense of call
- ⇒ Are interviewed by the Bishop and Examining Chaplain to test that sense of call
- ⇒ Are invited to the South Australian Ministry Advisory Conference for the wider Church to acknowledge that call
- ⇒ Are ordained and licensed for local ministry (they cannot minister in other congregations)
- ⇒ Grow in understanding of their ministry through a post-ordination program and continuing education
- ⇒ Grow in ministry with the support of their local congregation and District Priest
- ⇒ Do not receive a stipend
- ⇒ Do not have the same role as a Parish Priest.

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