

Discerning Ministries

A guide for exploration

A vision for local ministries
that bring joy
to those who serve:
supporting each other
and their communities.

www.bathandwells.org.uk/discerningministries



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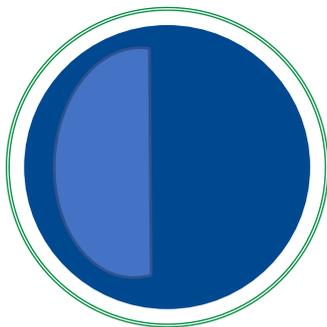
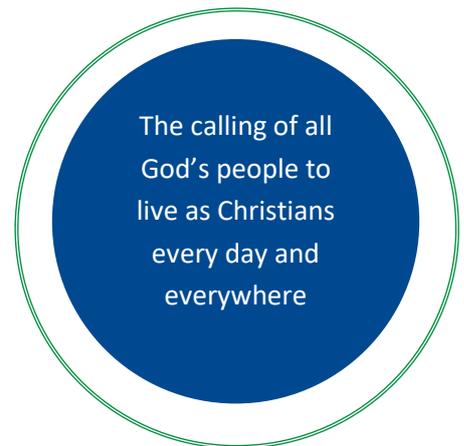
Living the story. Telling the story.

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God calls...everyone – but not all to be the same...

God calls us all because God created us, knows, loves us and wants us and the world around us to flourish. That calling is to be fully the people God created us to be and to love God and to love our neighbour - to live as Christians in all that we are, say and do. That is the everyday core of our everyone, every day, every minute calling - to be God's people. In this way I may have a particular role or job, but as a Christian, my aim is to do it for God and God's world not just as something to do.



God calls us at particular points 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 and then lay down again.

- We need help to discern those callings – to check in with others that we really are being called to a particular role, 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

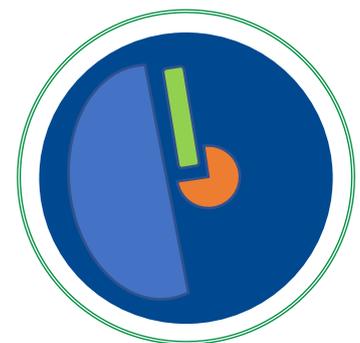
realise that God's call has been in it.

- In trying to work out who 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.

Those particular callings existing within our overall call to live as Christians in God's world.

Some people feel called to roles that last for their whole lives – being ordained as a priest or becoming a Reader.

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 to 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. The glory of God is a person fully alive, whether that is in a named role or to simple live consciously as a Christian.

For Reflection:

What is your favourite hymn, song or Bible passage?

What does that show about how you understand God's call to you?

What resonates with or challenges you in the thoughts about calling on this page?

How would you label or re-draw the diagram/s above?

What is church?

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, but the desire is to release them from the unreasonably broad burdens that many are carrying, alongside releasing the varied gifts of the laity so that together we can find a more joyful and sustainable model. So what is focal ministry...

Focal ministers are local church leaders, usually ministering as part of a small team.

They are the 'go to' people for a particular 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 legal 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

In some places, a model very like this is already operating. In some cases there will be the need for specific recognition or formalising of particular roles.

The focal ministries in any area will match that context, in terms of the gifts, skills and needs of the community. Imaginative use of focal ministries should serve both to enable the ministries of all God's people as a Christian presence in their communities and, alongside that, release ordained ministry into its calling to spiritual leadership.

For Reflection:

Where are there already focal ministries operating in our context?

How is it working?

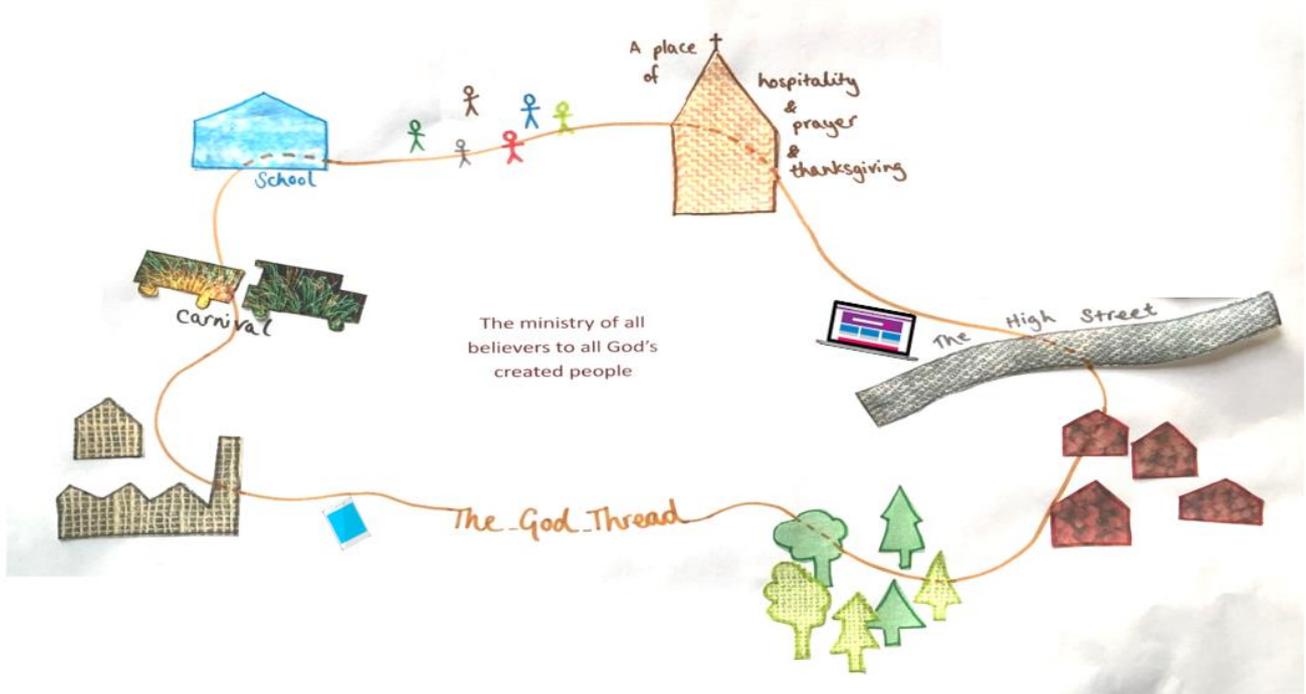
What are the gifts, needs and skills of our community? – see *'What do we believe and what does that mean for what we do'* for more tools to help explore this.

What do we think the church is for?

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 - by 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. Some people who identify themselves as Christians are on the thread, others may be a bit further away but they connect to it via the relationships to 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 our Five Marks of Mission throughout our communities in a whole variety of ways—proclaiming the Good News, nurturing new believers, responding to the needs of others, transforming unjust structure of society and trying to safeguard creation.



For Reflection:

What does a Christian presence look like where we are now, and what might it look like?

You could explore this in a number of ways e.g.

- Draw similar sketches or another representation of your own area, and then compare them with other people's.
- List any communities of interest and things that your community links to that are outside of your geographical area (e.g. schools)
- What do you learn from your own 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?

What do we believe and what does that mean for what we do?

The statements below were core to the work of the deployment group:

God is present in the world

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

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

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

For Reflection:

First reflect individually, then in pairs or a whole group

- Which statement/s resonate most positively?
- Do any disturb?

And in practice what does this mean for us:

- How many ways can we name in which we live out our faith —formal and informal; paid and unpaid; short term and long term?
- How are we already serving God's world, beyond our offering of church worship?

What next...

- 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 indeed similar, resources
- The **Celebration of Lay Ministries**, with Bishop Ruth, is on **9 October 2021 at Bath Abbey** at 2pm. Before and after the service there will be stalls to help people explore some of the ministries that people can exercise as part of their faith – lay and ordained; church-based and community based. Some of these ministries might be, or become, the focus for Christian presence in a community.
- The theme of the 2022 Archdeaconry 'Days' will be **God calls—Everyone, Everywhere!** Starting with a service on 6 February, with input Monday 7 to Friday 11 February and a gathering on Saturday 12 February. More information to follow .

From calling to ministry

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 and with Lay Worship and Lay Pastoral Assistants (naming?).

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. Below are some examples of ministries that have a ‘focal’ feel to them:

What is Ministry?

All people are created by God and called to be involved in God’s mission and ministry.

Ministry is balance of what you do and **your sense of God’s purpose** in doing it. We talk about ‘ministering to the sick’: a nurse with no faith can be a brilliant nurse. Another nurse may be doing exactly the same things but feel a sense of calling to that role and so is doing it as a ministry.

Colossians reminds Christians, ‘**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 ministry.

Administrator across benefices

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

Under the authority of their line manager.

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.

Under the authority of the Oversight Minister.

Community Chaplains

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

Responsible to the local incumbent and/or the institution they operate in.

A 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.

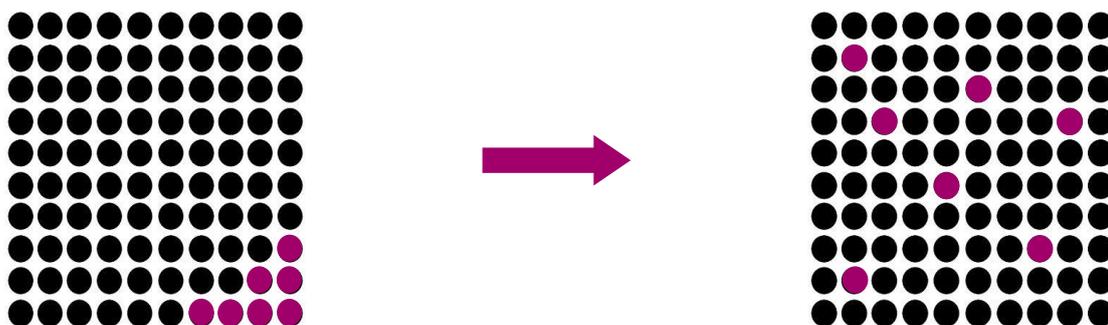
Under the authority of a deanery youth worker, incumbent or Oversight Minister

Churchwarden

Known across the community as part of the church and informally recognised as having a focal ministry to that community *under the oversight of the incumbent or Oversight Minister*

Shine as lights in the world:

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 what it’s all about.



The pink dots represent Christians. Jesus uses the words “come” and “go” a great deal in the Gospels. It’s no use coming unless you go, and it’s no use going unless you come. We have more impact on the rest of our communities when we are out in the world. 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 #11—and star or note the places or groups of people you are in contact with during an average week or month

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

What next:

Are there groups that you have little or no contact with?

How might you connect better with them?

What next and where do we find support?

- www.bathandwells.org.uk/discerningministries for slides and information to accompany this booklet.
- Charlie Peer for overall questions and requests for help: charlie.peer@bathwells.anglican.org, 01749 685201
- Deanery Accompaniers for help with accessing the right people for support with your ideas - [insert web page with a list of accompaniers – up to date!](#)
- Julia Hill, Discipleship Team Leader julia.hill@bathwells.anglican.org
- David Maggs, Mission Team Leader david.maggs@bathwells.anglican.org
- Jane Chamberlain, Head of Ministry for Mission jane.chamberlain@bathwells.anglican.org
- Sue Rose, Vocations Team Leader sue.rose@bathwells.anglican.org
- Tina Hodgett, Pioneering and Evangelism tina.hodgett@bathwells.anglican.org
- Diocesan Office 01749 670777 will also be able to connect you to other staff.

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