

# Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission

## A New Vision for Our Church

in the Anglican Diocese of  
Newcastle

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## *Preface*

Ministry and mission are constantly before the Anglican Church of Australia as the Church strives to be a Church that engages with its very wide settings of community.

We recognize that the Church today must be a missional Church. We are living in a very changed Australia from that of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Those times were the peak times of church attendance. Ever since, there has been a steady decline in church attendance.

As well, there have been major population shifts throughout Australia since the 1960s. This Diocese of Newcastle has witnessed very significant changes in infrastructure, in population growth, in the nature of the population and in the ways that communities have been reshaped.

As the Anglican Church has come to grips with such substantial and continuing change, it has read the New Testament with fresh eyes. This has been a very enlightening exercise.

The Church has become aware of the kind of ministry it must practise in order to be faithful to its origins. This ministry involves all the faithful baptized. This realization has come starkly to the Church for a variety of reasons, but particularly from careful study of 'the body' passages in the New Testament – Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 (1).

The insights of these scriptures allied with the demand that the church be an evangelizing missional church has required the church to appreciate more publicly and clearly the massive human resource for ministry and mission that it under-utilized for many decades, if not centuries.

I mean the laity – the faithful baptized.

This recognition has been patchy. Some parishes have practised such intentional baptismal ecclesiology for years and years. Others are starting to respond. Some have resisted.

The intention of these studies is to provide a simple overview of a vision that has energized many Anglican dioceses throughout the Anglican Communion, and in Australia. Dioceses like Willochra, Bunbury, Tasmania, Bathurst, have sought to implement this vision. Particular regions in the major metropolitan dioceses of Brisbane and Perth have sought to practise this Vision too.

The Vision has several names. Some speak of Total Ministry, others of Mutual Ministry.

In Australia it has been agreed that we will refer to the Vision as Ministering Communities in Mission.

I hope that the Diocese of Newcastle will embrace this Vision enthusiastically and intentionally.

This Diocese is providing much support and training through the work of the Ministry Development Officer and through the training programmes of the School of Ministry with its Bishop's Certificate and Diploma in Theology for Ministry.

Welcome to the studies. I hope that your experience will be energizing for 'the work of ministry'<sup>(2)</sup>.

**+Brian Newcastle**

**January 2007**

(1) See Romans 12: 3-8; 1 Corinthians 12: 4-30; Ephesians 4: 7, 11-13.

(2) See Ephesians 4: 12.

# *Suggestions for Group Study*

Each session lasts a maximum of two hours.

- 1 Read the session material at home. Try to read the material leisurely and in one sitting.
- 2 Mark any part of the reading material which:
  - Excites you . . . . . !
  - Disturbs you . . . . . \*
  - Puzzles you . . . . . ?
- 3 When the group gathers the leader:
  - a) Lights a candle - a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit, the One who illuminates our minds.
  - b) Settles the group into a reflective, peaceful silence - so that each person can become aware of being part of this learning process.
  - c) Leads in a prayer, thanking God for the gifts of faith, of our minds, and of ministry, and seeking and trusting God's anonymous guidance. (5 minutes)

*The discussion questions are at the end of each study*



### *The Ministry of the Laity*

Welcome to this series of explorations. These five sessions for small groups are intended to unite parishes in understanding the development of ministry, and to look to the future of ministry.

The purpose of these sessions is to gain a mutual understanding that:

- God has gifted everyone in each congregation for ministry
- the Church's mission is to continue Christ's mission
- every congregation can minister and fulfil its mission
- our Diocesan Vision is that we *Become Ministering Communities in Mission*.

This will be an exciting experience for all of us. It will enable the Bishop and clergy to work closely with parishioners to enhance the mission of the Anglican Church.

#### **Who are ministers?**

Whenever we speak of ministry we often think of people in clerical collars — those who have been ordained to the 'sacred ministry'. We hear the phrase holy orders and that immediately gives the impression of a bishop, a priest or a deacon.

For a very long time ministry has been thought of as the work of clergy. This has been a historical consequence because of the "clericalisation" of the Church. Much power has been given to clergy over the centuries and the organisation and administration of the Church has largely been a clerical domain.



*Ministry has  
been thought of  
as the work of  
clergy*

However, when you read the New Testament, and particularly the letters in the New Testament, you get the sense that a wide variety of people practised ministry. It was the method of St Paul as an apostle in moving around to select a sympathetic audience to whom to preach the Gospel and then to stay for some time in building up those who responded to his preaching.

When small churches were secured in faith, Paul left these people and moved to another area for further preaching and ministry development.

Paul organised those left behind to take responsibility for their own life as a Church. Those who were older, the elders, became the natural leaders because in that time there was the view that age embodied wisdom.

These churches were like extended families and met normally in houses or near Jewish synagogues.

The Orthodox Jews became suspicious of and antagonistic towards the Christians. Eventually these churches moved away from synagogue worship into the kind of worship found in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. So St Paul wrote, as in I Corinthians chapters 10 and 11, to give instructions how to celebrate the Eucharist in a Christian community.

### **New Testament words describing ministers**

Terms for ministry developed in the early Church are terms taken from the context of **service**. These words were originally from a non-religious context. In the New Testament letters these words still held their original secular meanings.

However, we read these words from our experience of the long life of the Church. The words are stamped now with a meaning derived from Christian experience. We

need to get back to their first secular usage to uncover the meaning that was first intended.

The words used are: *deacon* — originally a waiter or servant; *shepherd*; *subordinate*; *apostle*; *minister*, derived from the Latin word **minus** meaning less. *Minister* refers to a cup bearer, under-official, legal assistant or mediator.

Each of these words denotes someone of inferior social status whose prime task was to carry out someone else's intentions.

The terms for ministry in the New Testament have a servant dimension to them. They reflect someone who is available to do the will of another who has authority over them.

The term minister thus means someone who is *servicing* God's people to enable them to carry out God's will.

## **Problems from the growth of the early Church**

When you read the New Testament, and particularly the Acts of the Apostles, you get an impression that the growth of the Church is spontaneous, uncoordinated and disorganised.

The Gospel was highly infectious and spread fairly rapidly in all sorts of directions.

Thus different practices emerge especially about Christian initiation. However, as the Church began to settle and as it expanded, coordination became necessary. One of the first needs was to have verifiable teaching about the life, ministry and words of Jesus.



*Terms for ministry in the New Testament have a servant dimension*



*Minister: some-one who serves God's people.*



**DON'T  
FORGET**

*A text was  
required to  
preserve the  
teaching*

So a text was required, because the memories of those who were directly associated with Jesus were fading, and Jesus' associates were beginning to disappear for one reason or another.

We realise from the writing of St Paul that some of his letters were circular. They passed from one small church to another to encourage, to deal with particular issues of Christian behaviour, and to ensure that the life of the Christians reflected their new status with God given through their baptism.



**THINK  
ABOUT  
THIS**

*God was  
doing  
something  
new*

St Paul obviously had a far different emphasis from that of St Peter and St James. So the churches began to take on different shades of theological thought leading to a collision which the first council of Church leaders resolved at Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts chapter 15.

So the origin of the Church was bumpy. The development of its organised life required scrutiny from the apostles. There was a need to appreciate that God was doing new things.

The developing Christian tradition posed the question of how close Christian thought and practice had to stay to Jewish tradition.

## **Church order through Orders**



*A threefold  
order of  
ministry  
emerged:  
deacon, priest  
and bishop*

These tensions inevitably demanded order. Initially, a form of ministry began to develop although the actual form is quite fluid in the New Testament churches. However, eventually a threefold order of ministry evolved:

1. **The deacon:** initially the deacon was someone who was a spokesperson or messenger on an assignment from God or from Christ.

2. **The priest:** (or presbyter) became the one who was responsible for ordering the life of the local Christian community and for presiding at the Eucharist.

3. **The bishop:** (or overseer) had responsibility for keeping the integrity of Christian congregations, maintaining the faith, guarding these congregations and carrying on the ministry of evangelism begun by the apostles.

So the ministry developed as a way of regulating or giving order to the life of the Church. Then came the decision on what books were to be used for interpreting the life of the Christian congregation. Finally, a series of Councils settled other questions of belief and order and developed creeds that themselves became litmus tests of right Christian belief.

When the Emperor Constantine became a Christian, and with him the whole of the Roman Empire, the highly organised, enthusiastic and effective Christian Church filled the waning administrative system of the Roman Empire. It is about this time that the idea of orders from the Latin **ordo** (meaning a class) developed.

### **The Church becomes controlled by the Clergy**

This was the beginning of a clear differentiation within the whole people of God—those who are ordained and those who are lay people. This separation brought distinct privileges to those in orders who became the leaders of Christian communities. This had long-term consequences that affected the Church until about the 1960s.

Pope Gregory XVI (1831—46) expressed the most blatant form of this differentiation:

No one can deny that the Church is an unequal society in which God destined some to be governors and others to be servants. The



*Separation of  
clergy and laity  
brought  
privileges to*

latter are the laity; the former are clergy.

(Vincent Donovan, *The Church in the Midst of Creation*, p105.)

Many of us experienced the Church earlier in our lives as something almost entirely controlled by the clergy. Clergy led worship and in the 1950s and 1960s lay people were quite uninvolved in the celebration of the Eucharist.

The use of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* and the Authorised Version of the Bible with its Elizabethan English made it difficult for ordinary Australians to understand the liturgy, the Scriptures, and to be knowledgeable in discussion with clergy.

### **Changes in the understanding of ministry**

However, in the early 1970s significant changes began to emerge in the understanding of ministry. This was especially so in some of the small rural dioceses in the eastern states of Australia. An understanding emerged that all members of the Church were the People of God and that all members of the Church were, according to St Peter, **a royal priesthood** with great responsibilities for exercising ministry.

Ministry had become confined to the clergy. For too long clergy taught lay people to be ‘ministered to’ rather than ‘to minister’. The process had to be turned around. One of the key factors in the turning around of this process was the economic constraints placed upon the Church in the 1970s, particularly in the rural sector.

These eastern-state rural dioceses undertook a programme of stewardship. Teams of lay people visited parishioners. These quarterly visits ultimately served to establish lay ministry as a normal part of Anglican

Church life.

Out of a determination to exercise good stewardship some of the small rural dioceses began to realise that they had locked into cold storage the most significant asset that the Church has, its people.

Hence, there was a recovery of a biblical understanding of ministry. Ministry is the means of offering the gifts of each person in service to others within the Church and within the world. That is a consequence of the discipleship given through baptism. It was an awareness that every member of each congregation is gifted for ministry by birth and by baptism.

### **A Vision of ministry**

Consequently, there was an attempt to help congregations become in a self-conscious way a ministering community rather than a community gathered around a minister. There was a recognition that in each congregation there will be sufficient ministry gifts within its membership and that each congregation could also have the possibility of raising up within itself persons for the office of deacon and priest who were essential for the total life and mission of the Church in the local community, and leaders who would coordinate the variety of ministries that are called forth from the congregation.

This understanding of ministry recognises that there is one ministry within the Church, the ministry of Jesus Christ.

### **The ministry of Jesus Christ**

There are a variety of elements within the New Testament describing the ministry of Jesus Christ. One key feature of the ministry of Jesus is that he was a human being.



*All members of the Church are responsible for exercising ministry*



**THINK ABOUT THIS**

*Jesus was a human being - and identified with humanity*



**DON'T  
FORGET**

*The ministry  
of Jesus  
Christ is the  
basis for all  
Christian  
ministry*

We can take great heart from his identifying with humanity, his revealing of God's love, his giving of God's presence and reality, his suffering with humanity and his being raised to life after his death as a guarantee of the truthfulness of his life.

Jesus' life was also a life of service in meeting the needs of those who were longing for wholeness for their lives. It included the ministry of caring and guiding people. It included sending out others to share the presence of God and to declare the presence of God. The ministry of Jesus Christ is the basis for all Christian ministry.

### **The ministry of the local Church**



**THINK  
ABOUT  
THIS**

*Each member  
of the Church  
is given gifts*

God calls the Church to ensure that this ministry of Jesus Christ is available in a concrete, explicit and recognisable form in each local community. The effectiveness of this ministry depends upon every member of the Church offering the gifts that they received through birth and through baptism, in service for both the life and mission of the Church.

Chapter 4 of the letter to the Ephesians lists the gifts of the Church and recognises that each member of the Church is given grace as part of the huge generosity of God. The task of those with gifts is "to equip the saints to do the work of ministry, to build up the Body of Christ".

So Jesus calls each of us to serve his people and his world. That has long been the theory of the Church, but not always its practice.

Unfortunately, our practice has been to think of ministry as something done to and for us rather than as something done by us.

Ministry is a recognition that the Church is not an end in itself. The Church has a responsibility, a task given by God, not to be a privileged group of people made secure by God, but to be a sign, a sample of what God is offering to the whole of the creation. There is a very active task for the Church to model, to embody, to respond in the life-giving ways that Jesus Christ did, as a sign of God's loving compassionate commitment to this world.

This means that each of us has a task, each of us has a gift, each of us has a responsibility to live the life of service in our ministry.

This demands a huge change both in our own thinking, in the practice that we undertake in the Church, and in the responsibility that we will accept. No longer are we to think of ourselves as passive consumers of religious experience but rather as those whom God has stirred to share his love and care in the sensitive self-effacing way that Jesus Christ did.

Now all of this originates from our baptism, the sacramental form of Christian believing.

## **Holy Baptism**

Baptism is the way in which we are given gifts and grace as we are incorporated into the Body of Christ. We understand that :

Baptism is a gift and command of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Church. It is a pledge and sign of God's love poured out in Christ. This love frees each baptised person to receive the benefits and to follow the pattern of Christ's sacrificial death and Easter victory. In this love, the Church is built up as a fellowship of believers, committed to share with all the world the new way of life Christ has opened to us. (2) (*Holy Baptism* 1990, p7)



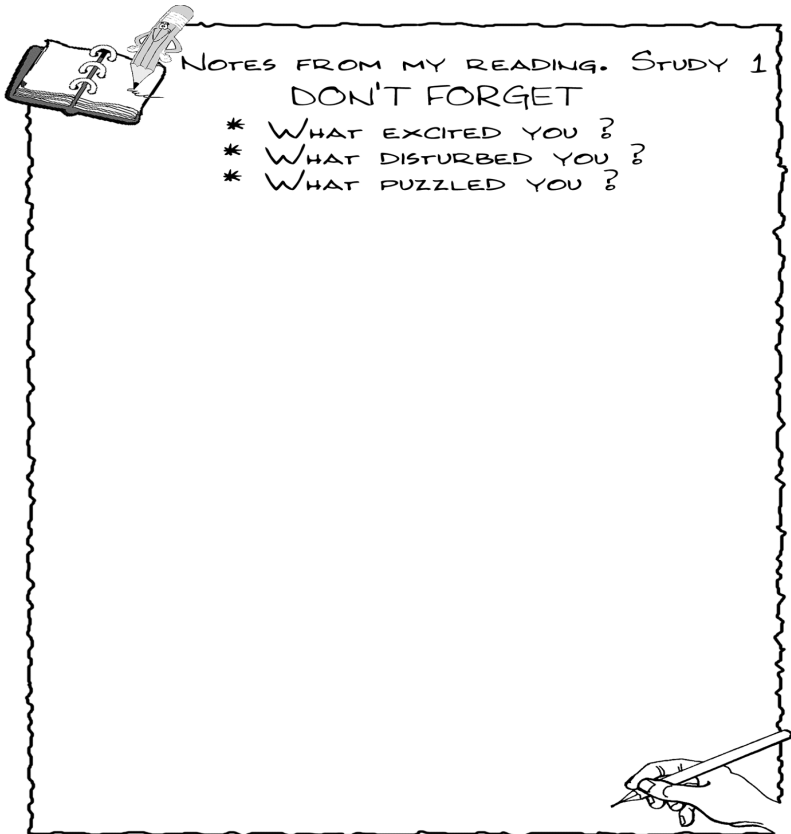
*Each of us has a task, a gift, a responsibility, to live the life of service in our ministry*



*Each Christian can be a sign of Christ's life, with the power to attract others to Christian discipleship*

This change in understanding is substantial. It is a return to the New Testament origins of ministry. It is a recognition of the huge resources that God has given to each person and each local Christian community. It is an appreciation of the wonder that each Christian can be a sign of Christ's life, with the power to attract others to Christian discipleship.

If we were to take seriously this understanding of a congregation as *a ministering community* [rather than] *a community dependent on a minister*, we could change from just working to survive as a Church, to being communities that release their potential as reservoirs of faith, love and care.





5 Recall this paragraph in **The Thanksgiving** in the Eucharist on page 133 of A Prayer Book for Australia: **"For he is the true high priest, who has freed us from our sins and made us a royal priesthood to serve you, our God and Father."**

a) What are some ministries you share with the ordained priest?

b) What is the work of the "royal priesthood"? (The Scripture reference is I Peter 2:9.)

c) How do you presently undertake this work?

6 Take three minutes to recall a time when someone ministered to you (not the clergy) from your Church.

a) Reflect on the helpfulness of this ministry, and how it was offered to you.

b) As members of the group wish, each shares with the group what is comfortable for them of this incident.

c) What **picture of ministry** forms from these stories?  
[50 minutes]

7 Develop, as the closing prayer, a small litany of thanksgiving from this big picture of ministry.

For example: For those who are patient—  
**thanks be to God**, etc. [5 minutes]



## *The Ministry of the Church*

**S**o far we have discovered that ministry is serving, and that all baptised people, not only clergy, are ministers. Now we shall explore how we minister together.

### **Christian identity**

Christians receive their identity by their baptism into our Lord Jesus Christ.

At Antioch Christians were first given their name, possibly because their lives were so gracious. The graciousness of their lives reflected the Church's belief that in Jesus was focused the fullness of God. His life was a life of constant graciousness.

The ministry of Jesus sets the pattern for all ministry undertaken by the Church, within the Church, and to the Church. His ministry was chiefly one of reconciliation - drawing close to one another those who were separated.

Jesus enabled all humankind to experience the closeness of God and God's desperate longing for the welfare of each human being. His ministry was one of celebration, of enjoyment of being human, and of the richness of friendship.

The Gospels give cameos of a wide variety of instances of the enrichment that Jesus brought to human beings. Jesus, particularly in the Gospel of Mark, is one who embraces in God's love those whom society has



**DON'T  
FORGET**

*Jesus'  
ministry was  
chiefly one of  
reconciliation*



**THINK  
ABOUT  
THIS**

*Jesus embraces  
those whom  
society discards*

discarded and who live on the margins of ordinary human existence.

The richness of Jesus' ministry can inspire us each Sunday as we reflect on it, piece by piece, as the Gospel for the year unfolds.

Growing appreciation of his ministry is almost inexhaustible, given the new insights and the new motivations which arise from it in the life of the Church.



**DON'T  
FORGET**

*The local  
Church is to  
be a sample of  
the Kingdom  
of God*

### **The task of the local Church**

The local Church, wherever it is and whatever its size, is to be a sample of the Kingdom of God, and of what it is like for God to rule in human affairs. The epitome of this rule is the life of Jesus. His was a trustful, non-anxious, enthusiastic, enjoying of life which disclosed the justice, the compassion and the searching love of God for his whole creation.

So the local Church is a sample of what it is for God to rule in human affairs. This is not a tyrannical kind of rule. As people offer themselves to this rule they discover (in the words of one of the collects of the Book of Common Prayer) that “such service brings perfect freedom”.



*Jesus was a  
celebrating  
person, one  
who enjoyed  
being human*

The values that motivated the life of Jesus are to become the values of the local Church, as must his lifestyle become ours.

Jesus was a celebrating person, one who enjoyed being human, who delighted in the constancy and faithfulness of God, who recognised that love is the way to respond to all the ambiguities, frustrations and sense of shame that can stigmatise human beings.

We acknowledge, unfortunately, that churches regularly fail to live up to the pattern of ministry given by Jesus. Nevertheless, there are a surprising number of instances where people glimpse “what the Kingdom of God is all about” through the faithfulness and ministry of local Christians and local congregations.

Therefore, it is important for us to recognise that a principal way the mission of Jesus Christ and the disclosure of God's love and compassion are shown in this broken world, is through the life and ministry of the local Church. This requires us to be much more responsible, intentional and faithful in undertaking and performing the ministries that are ours.

### **The ministry of the Church**

Ministry belongs to each member of the church. Speaking about “ministry” in this way is to recapture the thrust of the argument in chapter 4 of the letter to the Ephesians. All members of the church are called to “the work of ministry”, i.e. to build up the church, (Ephesians 4 : 12).

Membership is given sacramentally in the Anglican Church through the initiation of baptism and confirmation. These sacraments are celebrated on the prerequisites of confession of faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance (which is the heart-felt desire to live life from God’s point of view).

It is these initiatory sacraments which provide the foundations of order in the church. We receive membership through baptism and confirmation. Then, as members, we are called to enable the basic function of the church: to live out the rule of God as disclosed in Jesus.

However, in order for this mission to be purposeful,



**THINK  
ABOUT  
THIS**

*Churches fail  
to live up to  
the pattern of  
ministry given  
by Jesus*



**DON'T  
FORGET**

*We receive  
membership  
of the Church  
through  
baptism and  
confirmation*



*The laity is the primary order of ministry*

appropriate and resourced from within the membership of the church, some members are called to take up roles which reflect focused aspects of the church's ministry as a whole. Thus, some people are called to be ordained. These orders of ministry within the church were established to offer a support role to the people of God. In other words, to play a **secondary** role in order to serve or assist the whole church, which is the **primary** order of ministry.



*The ministry that enables the Church to be the Church focuses on three particular orders*

The orders of **deacon, priest, bishop**, then, do not exist independent of that foundational ministry given through baptism. Rather, each of these is a concentration of the fundamental role of being faithful as Christians. Each has the calling of reflecting through their distinctive roles what is true for the church as a whole.

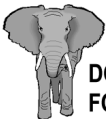
**The deacon** is someone who signifies being totally available to do the will of God. The deacon is a sign of a person under authority, and is someone who demonstrates by their very presence and action that there is a huge task to be undertaken.



*There is a justice or advocacy component to the deacon's work*

The origin of the office of the deacon (Acts of the Apostles 6:1-6) helps us understand the deacon's function. There is a justice or advocacy component to the deacon's work.

Thus in the Eucharist the deacon draws us into penitence, and into service, and reads the Gospel that is the life blood of the Church.



*The priest is the one who gathers the community*

**The priest** is the one who gathers the community, who enables the community to celebrate its life in worship so that it grows in deeper awareness and self understanding. The priest ensures that the congregation exercises its giftedness in obedience to the mission that Jesus has given to the Church.

**The bishop** is the one who represents the wider Church, who comes as the chief evangelist, calling local churches into further obedience to the Gospel, and into responsible relationships, within the context of the local community and the wider Church.

The bishop acts as a guardian, a stimulant, as one who has a wider overview, and who connects local Christian communities so that they do not become immune to the promptings of God's Spirit because of their isolation.

The bishop prods the Church to face the social, moral, and theological issues of the day.

### **The life of the Church**

Very early in the life of the Church (in Acts chapter 2) the marks of a Christian community were clearly visible. The early Christians gathered to celebrate the Eucharist, to be a community, to reflect on the Scriptures, to reflect on their tradition, and to pray.

Because of the pressures of living in our community and because of the intensity of a secular culture, it is very easy for us to lose something of this Vision of being the Church. We can be infected by values that become ultimately harmful to our Christian lives.

### **The importance of the Eucharist**

The Eucharist is a form of healing for our lives as we are exposed to the complete self-giving of the life of Christ, and to the intimacy God offers to us. God comes in the Eucharist to be alongside us, to enhance us and to work with us to overcome every obstacle that might separate us from Him.

The Eucharist really does form us—it is a celebration of the significance and the climax of the life of Jesus.



**DON'T  
FORGET**

*The bishop  
represents the  
wider Church*



*The Eucharist  
is a form of  
healing*

In that celebration we become increasingly identified with the self-giving life of God and so become more available and more effective in our local community as witnesses of God's love.

It is also imperative that each congregation offers small groups for people to join so that they can be nurtured and matured through prayer, study and reflection on Holy Scripture, and be encouraged by the sharing of experiences of discipleship.

Churches that have grown beyond some of the natural limiting thresholds of 50 members, or 150 members, have moved to become larger congregations through deliberately ensuring that the very necessary experiences of intimacy and support were provided in such small groups.

This sort of deliberate networking also provides useful points of contact and induction for the newcomer to a parish: “open doors” which can draw others deeper into the faith community.

Each church should have processes for welcoming newcomers into the congregation and some structure for incorporating new folk into that congregation.



*Leadership  
roles, along  
with many  
other roles,  
are part of the  
web of  
ministries that  
make up an  
effective  
church*

Naturally, leaders are required to ensure that welcoming and incorporation are handled as well as possible. Such people are leaders who have a vital ministry on behalf of the congregation. These roles, and there are many other roles of ministry, are part of the web of ministries that make up an effective church

*Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission* is a vision that celebrates this network of ministries, and provides a means of training and equipping such ministers.

## Developing more effective local Churches

Anglican congregations will need resources to become more outward-looking and more intentional in their ministry and mission. We have already noted the need for regular formation within the Eucharist. The grace of Eucharistic worship helps congregations to display Christian integrity in Australia's ambiguous culture. Such congruence between words and actions makes local congregation signs of the Kingdom of God.

The most energising resource is that of vision—what kind of church we want to be, or we have to be. The changed cultural and demographic circumstances start to shape the vision as much as does our rediscovery of the form of early Christian congregations.

The stories of congregations in other places in the Anglican Communion responding to similar issues as we face do give heart and courage to us. Such stories form part of Session 4.

The energy for self-evaluation and for new directions comes from a vision which is embraced by as many as possible within any organisation.

The first and major component of the Vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission* is that the congregation has to be, in a self-aware way, committed to the understanding that through baptism *everyone is a minister*. This means that each baptised Anglican is called to serve the world in the style lived out by Jesus.

Anglicans are called to active discipleship influencing their environments for Christ. Anglicans are not to understand themselves just as consumers of religious experience. All Christian experience is to enrich the vocations of people in their everyday lives.



*The most energising resource is that of vision*

*'Becoming Ministering Communities' was endorsed by the Synod of the Diocese of Perth in October 1994*

The congregation is the key to the quality of the Church's mission and ministry. This Vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission* shows the importance of the congregation, and notes its centrality to the overall mission of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

### **The uniqueness of each congregation**

Each congregation is, of course, unique. The kind of community life at the centre of each parish varies considerably. This variation is to be expected, given that the context affects the way we live.

The appreciation of context is essential in being a church. Each congregation has to design from its own experience the way to be the church where it is situated. Thus, some parish communities will emphasise social welfare ministry.



*The appreciation  
of context is  
essential in  
being a  
Church*

This ministry will be their primary way of connecting with their locality. In other places ministry to children and young parents will feature prominently. In other congregations it will be helping people in mid-life deal with their gnawing sense of loss. All ministry and mission is contextual.

There are some suburbs which still have a village identity. Most, however, are more like dormitories – people sleep in their homes but find their sense of community through interest groups, often away from their places of residence. In such places the church has to work hard at offering an attracting form of community. This effort may need to focus on the style of worship or social life that the church offers.

In almost any diocese there are strong charismatic churches, strong evangelical churches, and strong anglo-catholic churches. Hopefully, we will be able to

continue to develop strong youth networks emerging from those churches meeting in our school chapels. Each local context calls for us to respond as a church community in creative and appropriate ways. Yet each one of us is also affected by one common theme as a result of urbanisation.

The 1998 Lambeth Conference of Bishops noted in the Report, *Called to live and proclaim the Good News*, that :

one characteristic of urbanisation is the loss of community. People secure themselves from outsiders by their housing arrangements. Residential areas are simply dormitories. Life is lived at the workplace or in recreational areas. People have become “displaced” persons who are essentially rootless; their places of living are marginal to their places of meaning.

The Lambeth bishops emphasised the centrality of the local congregation. The Report continued, the Good News is first encountered in Christian congregations who celebrate their humanity within the story of Jesus Christ, communities which offer understanding, love, support, and acceptance. Such congregations address through thoughtful action the issues that erode possibilities of human fulfilment.

The Good News becomes visible as congregations respond through the richness of the Gospel tradition to identified local issues of human community so that people can believe there is a future for them. (2)

### **Different sized congregations**

Congregations differ in size and shape. In the immediate future this variety will become more visible.



*The congregation is the key to the quality of the Church's mission and ministry*

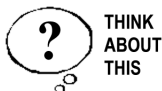


*A team of local leaders works with the congregation to help it fulfil its mission and ministry*



*The centrality of the local congregation*

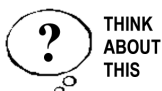
In some places the size of the congregation will increase to beyond 300 adults worshipping each Sunday. Such a church will have a large ministry team, made up of paid and unpaid staff, ordained and non-ordained personnel.



***Regional parishes***

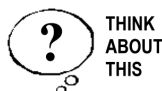
This church might be termed a regional parish. Its size will enable it to offer a wide variety of ministries and very developed services of worship. Such a church will be likely to be a hub for youth ministry and children's ministry. The capacity to be professional in its offerings of programmes will further enhance its capacity to grow in membership.

We can expect to see parishes of this size in this Diocese. However, those congregations who can become such regional parishes will need to work intentionally at structuring themselves for such developments. The recent conferences on growing a church have provided us with many Australian-based insights for this work.



***Congregations of 150 adults each Sunday***

Other congregations will look to operate a congregation based on 150 adults each Sunday—a decision made intentionally and with the development of close community in mind. Again, much work will need to be done to ensure the provision of programmes that will maintain and develop a congregation like this. These congregations will require well-equipped leaders who can function alongside the stipendiary priest. Such a ministry team would best include clergy ordained for local ministry and lay ministers who co-ordinate vital ministries within that church.



***Congregations of 50 adult members***

Still other congregations will have about 50 adult members. These churches will need to be served by part-time stipendiary clergy, and by teams of local leaders, including clergy ordained for local ministry and lay ministers leading the mission and ministry of those congregations.

Specially discerned and commissioned small teams who will choose to live within the new areas may plant new area congregations. Again, the Vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission* allows for the development of leadership roles for this new missionary situation. Our vision allows for developments in all situations, and for many kinds of local requirements.



*New area  
mission teams*

### **Ministry to, from, in, and with the Church**

There is ministry **to** the Church. The congregation needs ministry to it if it is to give out effective ministry. The priest and deacon, and from a wider context, the bishop, offer this.

There is ministry **from** the Church. The principle ministers of this are the congregation. Our localities will not be affected by the Gospel to any significant degree if the congregations do not exercise their necessary ministries within their work, recreation, care and service.

There is ministry **in** the Church. This largely occurs within the web of relationships developed in the congregation. This does need some co-ordination, otherwise aspects of care and nurture will not happen. This ministry will be one of the focuses of those lay leaders who are discerned to be, for example, the lay minister responsible in the ministry team for Christian education or mutual care.

These lay ministers, and other identified ministry leaders, form a team who work **with** the congregation to help them fulfil its mission and ministry. Such teams are led by the stipendiary parish priest. It appears that this will be so for the next decade. Beyond that time it would be foolish to predict the shape of the Church in either its rural or urban setting.



*Ministry is to,  
from, in and  
with the  
Church*

However, there will be a few parishes where full-time stipendiary priests will not be able to be maintained. In such cases the ministry team, which may include both lay leaders and clergy ordained for local ministry, and the congregation will have vital and increased roles in ministry and mission, complementing and mutually enriching the ministry offered.

This vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission* is a developed form of similar initiatives occurring elsewhere in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States of America.

### **The Church as a ministering community**

In the Diocese of Nevada in the United States the process of turning the thinking of congregations around to this vision was slow but effective.

The Bishop of the Diocese of Nevada at that time said:

It was a struggle like everything else to develop the model of total ministry. It took a long time to reorient people, to help them to understand what they were hearing when they for years and years had been trained with a passive, receptive model of ministry.

But when congregations did take seriously the proposal and grabbed hold of it and saw themselves as having significant ministries they blossomed.

They came to new life because they have stopped struggling with trying to meet the bills from month to month and their total concentration was no longer on survival. They began to rejoice in their own life and their ministry and they began to look at their local community.

## The Story of the Diocese of Nevada

The Diocese of Nevada in the United States is the Diocese in the Anglican Communion that has done the most work on Total Ministry—what we have termed, *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission*.

Bishop Wes Frensdorff was the bishop who in the 1970s began leading Nevada into the acceptance and practice of Total Ministry. Frensdorff's successor, Stewart Zabriskie, has helped the diocese to evolve Total Ministry even further, and made it the very fabric of the life of the Diocese of Nevada.

Stewart Zabriskie visited Perth in 1996 at the invitation of Bishop Farran when he was a Regional Bishop in that Diocese. This visit began a relationship which led to the cross-fertilization of ideas between Nevada and some dioceses in Australia. Indeed, Bishop Farran addressed the October 1998 Convention (Synod) of Nevada on the practice of *Becoming Ministering Communities* in the Diocese of Perth.

Nevada is a sparse state with small, isolated rural communities, the site for the nuclear testing programme, and the gambling cities of Reno and Las Vegas. The Bishop lives in Las Vegas, a city the size of Perth.

Many of the parishes in Las Vegas are Total Ministry parishes. This means that there are no stipendiary clergy, only teams of local priests and deacons.

Bishop Farran has had first-hand experience of these parishes on two separate visits. He found there is energy and vital creativity in these congregations. One example is Grace in the Desert Church, a new area congregation of 150 members staffed by local priests and deacons. This new parish has grown rapidly and is about to launch a building programme. The congregation presently meets in a community facility.



***Our Vision of  
“Becoming  
ministering  
Communities  
in Mission”  
has taken  
inspiration  
from this  
successful  
model of  
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but it goes  
further to  
provide a more  
complete  
image of the  
Church***

Our Vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission* has taken inspiration from this successful model of Church development, but it goes further to provide a more complete image of the church. This is an image which stresses equal emphasis on lay and ordained leadership.

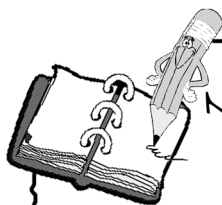
The similarities between this method of ministry and that of the New Testament are clear.

The visible presence of local established Christians will enhance the integrity of the Christian community—those whom the congregation and wider Church through the bishop and the diocesan authorities called forth to perform the crucial functions of leadership.

The Diocese of Newcastle, through the Bishop and Diocesan Ministry Development Officer will provide resources, training and support for such leaders. In Session Four this Vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission* is explained more fully.

At this stage, the intention is to reflect on the value of having such a form of ministry to enable the mission of the Church in local communities.

This is a return to the biblical understanding of ministry: *the offering of each person's gifts, in service to others within the Church and in the world, that comes through discipleship because of baptism.*



NOTES FROM MY READING. STUDY 2

DON'T FORGET

- \* WHAT EXCITED YOU ?
- \* WHAT DISTURBED YOU ?
- \* WHAT PUZZLED YOU ?



# *Group Discussion*

The leader asks for issues from the reading material which:

- need to be affirmed . . . . . !
- need to be explained . . . . . \*
- need to be clarified . . . . . ?

and notes them for the group to work on later.

- 1 The group imagines the implication of these for the Church:
  - a) What benefits might be given?
  - b) What changes would have to be put in place?  
[30 minutes]

- 
- 2 The leader asks the group to share their thoughts on :
    - a) "The local Church, wherever it is and whatever its size, is to be a sample of the Kingdom of God, of what it is like for God to rule in human affairs." (Study 2)
    - b) What statement does your local Church make to the community about how God rules in human affairs?
    - c) What might your community be like **if** the Church were not there? What does the Church contribute to the life of the community that no other group does?  
[30 minutes]

- d) "The Eucharist really does form us..."  
(Study 2)

Think of how you have changed because of regularly sharing in the Eucharist. Please share this with the group.

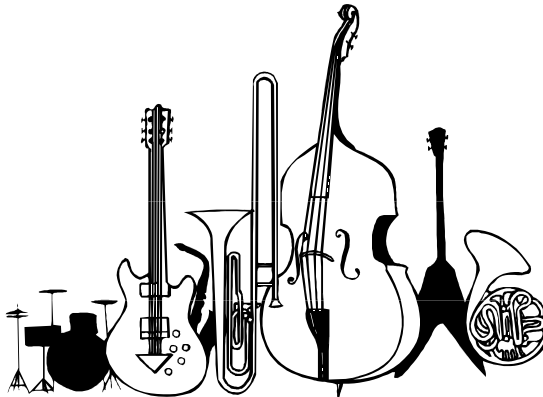
Is there a general direction of change from the instances given by the group members? [30 minutes]

- e) Now for a little stock-taking.

Reflect on how your Church spends its time. Nominate its activities, and the amount of time spent on each activity.

What picture emerges? Is it a fund-raising organisation or a ministering community? [20 minutes]

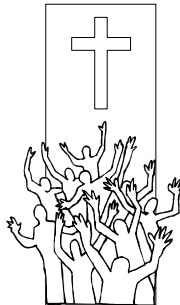
- f) Close this session reading these verses from a hymn by the Reverend Elizabeth Smith found on the next page:



Rejoice! for God has called us  
from darkness into light,  
a people of thanksgiving,  
a people of delight.  
For we are Christ's own body,  
made up of many parts,  
united in one Spirit  
poured into many hearts.

The ministry of loving  
is given to us all,  
the call to prayer and service  
is every Christian's call,  
and every man and woman  
who ever was baptised  
brings gifts the Church has need of  
to witness to the Christ.

So some have gifts of healing,  
some dream, some plan, some teach,  
some make the stranger welcome,  
some reconcile, some preach.  
While all these priestly people  
must serve God faithfully,  
some are ordained to mirror  
and shape our ministry.





## *The Mission of the Church*

Last session we discovered that the ministry of the Church is a sample of the Kingdom of God. Ministry which enables the Church to be the Church is focused on three particular orders—deacon, priest and bishop. Now we shall explore what the mission of the Church is. This is the primary work of the foundational order, the laity.

### **The emphasis of the ministry of Jesus**

According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus began his ministry with a sermon in Nazareth, his home town. In Chapter four at verse 16, St Luke says:

**“When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath Day as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,**

**‘The spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release  
to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free  
to proclaim the year of the  
Lord's favour.’**

**And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then Jesus began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'”**



*Jesus' ministry  
was about  
release and  
liberation*

Jesus, according to Luke, modelled his ministry on the year of the Jubilee as depicted in the prophet Isaiah. This was a celebration of release and liberation.

It is significant to compare what Jesus quoted with the actual text in Isaiah Chapter 61. Jesus desisted from including in his quotation, which described his ministry, that he was to proclaim "the day of vengeance of our God."

Within the Gospel traditions, particularly in the first three Gospels, Jesus sees his primary task as one of freeing people, as beginning a huge liberation movement based on God's longing for his creation and his people.



*Jesus' primary  
task is one of  
freeing*

The actual quotation from Isaiah talks about a new beginning, new opportunities coming out of the shackles of the past and of the offering of a new future. Those who were captives were not criminals, but the victims of the difficult economic situation of that time.

The huge level of taxation imposed both by Jewish religious authorities and the Roman Empire resulted in many small farmers having to sell their families into slavery to survive. This was outrageous for the Jew because Jewish law strictly forbade slavery.



*Jesus  
associated  
with the  
'Ochlos' - the  
socially  
inferior*

However, in the marginal country of Galilee, it was common to sell families into slavery, just to survive.

In Mark's Gospel in particular, Jesus deliberately associates with what Mark calls the *Ochlos*, a word Mark introduces into the New Testament to describe people who were constantly socially inferior.

The *Ochlos*, the continuously disadvantaged, were the rural people of the North in Galilee.

I can see similarities between the marginal kind of life that those people lived (and the fulfilment that they found in the proclamation of Jesus) and the increasing anxieties of the rural and urban communities in Australia.

As I have moved around as the Bishop of both a rural and urban regions in the Diocese of Perth, and now as the Diocesan Bishop of Newcastle I have seen people working extraordinarily hard, facing uncertainty. On farms, many are trying to reclaim soil from degradation, through systematic and thoughtful land care programmes. Many in mortgage belts are struggling to keep their home in the face of unemployment and yet others are struggling merely to survive on pensions and benefits. These people are always at the mercy of forces beyond their control, either in the international market, in the domestic political scene, or in nature itself.

### **The Church and the ministry of Jesus**

A popular teaching has shrunk Jesus to the offer of a private, individual, personal salvation (insurance policy) for which people regularly pay their premiums by their attendance at worship.

The sad consequence of such a shrinking of the Gospel proclamation is that the Church has become very introspective, and disconnected from the wider community.

Some Church members work at developing the quality of their spiritual lives just as other people exercise in gyms. Some Church members simply want assurance that they will be in heaven, and so belong to the Church to ensure that.

The result of all of this is that the Church has neglected the missionary task which Jesus has given it—of being a kind of Springtime of the Kingdom of God.



**DON'T  
FORGET**

*There are similarities between the disadvantaged people of Galilee and many in Australia*



**THINK  
ABOUT  
THIS**

*The Church has become very introspective, and disconnected from the wider community*



*Jesus responded to those in desperate need and to the forces that made them desperate*

Jesus' ever-present compassion dominated his ministry. He responded not only to those who were in desperate need but also to the forces that made people desperate. The Church now has the task not only of speaking *about* sinners but also, indicating *how* people are sinned against. The Church must be involved in the public issues of every community.

### **Implications of the Gospel**

There have always been political consequences to the Gospel proclamation.

You cannot have a message about liberation, fulfilment, harmony, unity with God, care of the world, a high ethical approach to life, without there being consequences flowing out into social life and into the way in which the community is organised.



*People get hurt because of the Church's inaction*

Of course, this does not mean that the Church is to be a tyrant pushing other people around and insisting that they live the life that the Church lives. However, it needs to be aware that the Church is not an end in itself. Christian life is not about our own personal survival forever, but about being a sign of how this is God's world and how God is present in the world.

God is ahead of us trying to draw us in , to attract us into the fulfilment of the creation that God longs for.



*The ministry of Jesus is the ministry of the whole Church*

Whenever the Church fails to be obedient to this attraction that we see so clearly in Jesus Christ, other people get hurt because of our inaction.

The ministry of Jesus is the ministry of the whole Church. We are in a gigantic liberation movement, chiefly from death and all that disables people within the creation.

## Changes in Australian culture

The Church that we have inherited has identified itself very much with the national culture. We easily understand this, given the situation in England—our origin—where Church and State were two sides of the one coin.

The great changes in our culture have happened since the 1950s.

We recognise that we can no longer function as if the majority of people within Australia belong to the Anglican Church, or recognise the Church as having significance for their lives.

The latest data from the National Church Life survey clearly detail, the contraction of the mainline Churches. The results of the Survey show that the Churches are now in a *missionary* situation in Australia.

The task of the Church now is to commend to people who know nothing of Christian faith and who have no experience of Church life, the reality of God as disclosed to us in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the strategy of Jesus' ministry outlined in that sermon at Nazareth has to become the strategy of each local Church.

We have to move away from a time of simply maintaining the Church. We once thought that the local community would support everything that the Church did. The community itself even helped people become Christians.

Now we are in a situation where we have to proclaim and model what Christian faith is all about to people who have had no prior experience of Christian faith or who have had detrimental experiences of it.



*The Church is now in a missionary situation in Australia*



**DON'T FORGET**

*The task of the Church now is to communicate the reality of God*



**THINK ABOUT THIS**

*We have to move from maintenance to mission mode*

## Changes in how the Church will minister

This Vision of Ministering Communities in Mission brings with it a significant change in self-understanding for all practising Anglicans. The change is understanding what being a member of the Church involves. This change is vitally expressed in the New Testament.



*The whole Church is responsible for the work of ministry*

The nature of the role of each member of the Church is most explicit in the Letter to the Ephesians. In chapter four of this letter it is clear that all the members of the church in Ephesus, the people to whom this letter is addressed, were responsible for the work of ministry, the building up of the body of Christ (the Church).



*We must pay attention to the issues in our society*

The actual text is very clear. The text declares that each member of the Church has been given a gift by the Ascended Christ. The Ascended Christ has gifted the Church with particular ministries such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."

This "work of ministry" belongs to all the members of the Church. It is not confined to the clergy.

This will require us to pay attention to the issues of our society, and to become more reflective on the Gospels. We have to marry needs and resources in creative ways which respond to our community.

Now the understanding that "the work of ministry" is the responsibility of each member of the Church who has been gifted by the Ascended Christ for this role is not presently generally appreciated or practised. Thankfully, there are parishes and congregations where this New Testament principle of ministry has been practised.

However, few dioceses in the Anglican Church of Australia have intentionally adopted this Vision as the practice of the whole diocese. Pockets of congregations have structured their ministry and mission according to these baptismal principles.

The hope is that the Diocese of Newcastle will embrace this Vision and practise these principles of ministry that are termed “a baptismal ecclesiology”. This term means that the very way of living as the Church, the DNA of the Church, is given through baptism. Baptism authorizes each baptized person for “the work of ministry”.

The gifting for this “work of ministry” comes both through baptism and through the unfolding of the baptized person’s natural abilities. The combination of sources gives the distinctive character of the gifting for ‘the work of ministry’.

### **The principles of a baptismal ecclesiology**

The Church is the community of the faithful baptized discerning their gifting for “the work of ministry” and being supported and enabled to undertake such ministry devotedly and faithfully by others. These other ministers (usually ordained) have particular gifts that are recognized and authorized by the Bishop to be practised in a variety of locations.

A further principle that has become important to this Vision of being the Church is to understand and honour the culture of the location of ministry. This has not always been the case.

For instance, the culture of suburban parishes differs markedly from that of rural parishes. These rural parishes are very different from parishes on the Central Coast.



**DON'T  
FORGET**

*In Baptism we  
are gifted for  
service*



**THINK  
ABOUT  
THIS**

*Ministry will  
be shaped by  
the culture in  
which the  
local church is  
located.*

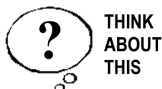


***Our Parishes  
have very rich  
human  
resources***

A necessary task is for each parish to understand its setting for ministry and mission. We must be careful that we do not assume that we know the cultures in which we are set. It is very possible that substantial changes have taken place in our locations and we may not be aware of them.

For instance, some towns in the Upper Hunter are changing because of the impact from mining. A new social mix is developing. Another culture is blending with a long established rural culture. This new culture brings issues as well as possibilities. A task for appropriate ministry practice is to recognize what is happening and to respond as required.

### **The position of our parishes**



***The Church  
has lost touch  
with modern***

There is incredible faithfulness and connectedness in our parishes. There is a huge amount of faithful living of the Christian life. There is enormous life experience. There are vast networks of relationships that stretch far and wide throughout the community.

In other words, our parishes have very rich human resources within them. If we are to be faithful to the apostolic teaching and practice, now is the time to recognize this rich human resource and to direct this giftedness towards the Church's mission and ministry.

The giftedness for mission and ministry of many Anglicans is under-utilized. This limits the outreach of the Church. Such limits impact upon the potential membership of congregations.

The last detailed analysis of the research undertaken by the National Church Life Survey indicated that attendances at worship in the Diocese of Newcastle from 1991-2001 had fallen by 16%.

Yet the population of the Diocese had significantly increased in that same decade. And we face further population increases in the growth corridors on the Central Coast, around Maitland, and in the Manning.

We must arrest this decline. There are several factors contributing to this decline. Some of these factors are internal to the Church and we can deal with these. Others are larger and external such as the cultural changes that have occurred in Australia. What is required now from us is an imaginative practice of ministry that:

- ✦ harnesses the giftedness of the faithful baptized,
- ✦ that returns to the New Testament understanding of the ministry of the whole congregation,
- ✦ that appreciates the local context of ministry and mission, and that engages with the local community in ministries that reflect the ministry priorities of Jesus.

### **Change while you can change**

Change requires energy. The best time to change is while there is still capacity to do the changing and to manage the change.

Of course, as living beings we are always changing. Our most natural inclination is, however, to resist change. We are by nature conservative. We opt for what is the present situation and arrangement.

But throughout our life journey we negotiate many demanding changes. If we did not, we could not live mature lives. All this is true of all organizations. It is certainly true of the Church. Church history details the flux of change.

What we hold on to as tradition may in fact only be a hundred years old – a thin slice of the Church's long history!

It is salutary to recall that churches that are named in the Book of Revelation no longer exist. These churches have disappeared. It is possible for churches to disappear.

However, it also possible for churches to be vigorous, effective,

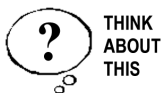


*The main source of evangelism is through friendship*

servicing their communities, alive with the Gospel, and energetic in their practice of ministry and mission.

The Vision of Ministering Communities in Mission with the support and training systems that the Diocese of Newcastle is developing is a way of changing the Church for vital mission and connection with local communities.

- ✦ The Vision does inspire people.
- ✦ The Vision honours the New Testament understanding of the Church.
- ✦ The Vision releases the giftedness of the whole congregation.
- ✦ The Vision enables stipendiary clergy to exercise their special extensive training more appropriately as ministry to the Church (like that of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers).



*We are a Church that is*

*...thoughtful*

*...non-authoritarian*

*...questioning*

### **The Church as a missionary Church**

Research about how churches grow shows that the main source of evangelism is through *friendship*. People join churches because friends, workmates or companions attract them into congregations.

We Australians are very good at putting ourselves down. We fail to recognise how significant we can be to other people as models of being human.

The human resources in each church are its most important and attractive resource.

The people who are in our congregations are attractive, caring human beings.

In my own spiritual journey I recall significant individuals who helped to secure my Christian faith and relationship and who thus had a profound influence on

me. It may be highly surprising to some of them to know the effect of their lives upon me.

I guess that could be true of you as you name people who have really influenced you as a Christian.

*...colourful*

### **Anglican evangelism**

We Anglicans do have an opportunity of offering people in the community an expression of Christian faith that is unique.

We are a thoughtful Church. We are a Church that asks people to love God with their minds and that allows people to make up their own minds.

*...wrestling  
with issues*

We are not an authoritarian Church. We do not tell people what they have to do. We encourage them to be mature and to make their own decisions.

We are also a Church that is not afraid to face questions. We are a Church that comes to the fundamentals of our faith recognising that we need to understand others from their context of origin. We must apply questions in a creative, thoughtful way to our own society.

*...celebrating*

We are a colourful Church. We embrace the creation, recognising that the senses are very significant in any relationship, but especially in our relationship with God. After all, Jesus was a person who enjoyed the senses.



**DON'T  
FORGET**

We are also a wrestling Church. We wrestle with the issues before us. There are significant moral issues about which the Anglican Church has spoken - the poverty of Australians, the need to care for our young unemployed, AIDS education, MABO, etc.

*In baptism we  
are gifted for  
service*

We are also a celebrating Church. We embrace being human. We see our humanity as primarily good. We

recognise that the creation is a gift from God.

These are all dimensions of possible evangelism. They ought to fashion the kind of life we offer as local Anglican Churches.

### The effect of Baptism

In the new Holy Baptism Service, in the Great Thanksgiving, the president says these words:

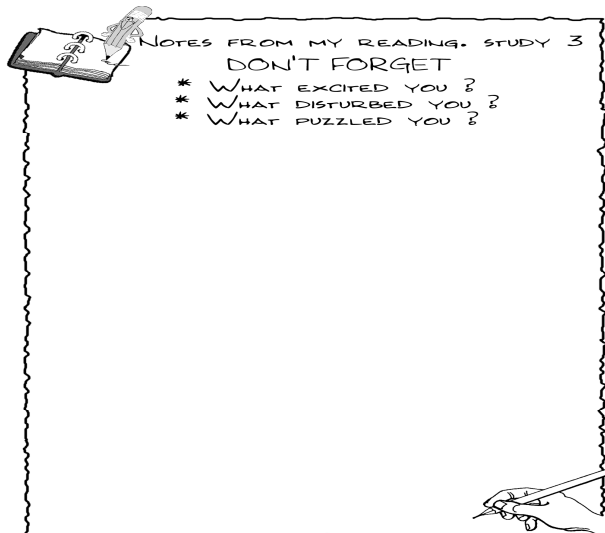
In baptism you have united us to Christ and brought us out of darkness into light. You pour your Spirit upon us, filling us with your gifts, and calling us to serve you as a royal priesthood.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Send us out in the power of your Spirit  
To live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.

May we say **Amen** to that prayer.

May our lives reflect holiness to those whom we contact. May all that we do bring the loving compassion and embracing freedom that God bestows upon us all through Jesus Christ.



We are motivated and equipped in order to demonstrate, to be an example of, the Kingdom of God.

That is why after we have received Holy Communion we say together:

## *Group Discussion*

The leader asks for issues from the reading material which:

- need to be affirmed . . . . . !
- need to be explained . . . . . \*
- need to be clarified . . . . . ?

and notes them for the group to work on later.

1 The group imagines the implication of these for their Church:

- a) What benefits might be given.
- b) What changes would have to be put in place.

[30 minutes]

2 a) The group brain-storms the freedoms the Church can give to people and what could be the consequences of serving a liberating God.

- b) Does this Church have a vision of its ministry? The group teases out the vision, and reflects on how the vision is practised.

[20 minutes]

c) Discuss the claim that "our society is now a mission field".

- d) What is your "mission field"? [10 minutes]

- e) Each member of the group shares what they value most about being an Anglican Christian.
- f) What features of Anglicanism could your Church more effectively use in attracting people to the Christian faith? *(20 minutes)*

- g) The new Baptism service, reflecting the New Testament, declares that God has filled us with his gifts.

Think of your gifts for ministry. Name two gifts and share them with the group.

What gifts do you perceive in each other which have not yet been named?

How could you use these gifts as "we live and work to God's praise and glory?" *(30 minutes)*

- h) The group develops a litany of thanksgiving, rehearsing all the gifts that you have identified.

For example, For the gift of listening carefully,  
**thanks be to God.**



End with the group  
praying the prayer of self-offering  
from the Eucharist.  
(APBA; page 144)



## *Becoming a Ministering Community*

In the last session we revisited our mission as the Church—to be a sign and sample of the rule of God as expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. This mission includes the task of making and nurturing disciples.

Now we explore what it is to adopt this Vision and to live from it.

An elderly lady of eighty greeted the preacher after the service. She appeared a little distressed. She thanked the preacher for the sermon, and articulated that what she had heard had changed her understanding of the church. “All my life”, she lamented, “I have thought that the church was about fellowship. I now realise from what you preached this morning, that the church is about mission.”

That was a significant piece of learning for a woman who wished she had come to it much earlier. High-rise units surrounded her church now. Once, when she was a young woman the church had been in the midst of family homes. Now the congregation was made up of a small number of people, mostly her age. The congregation had declined because its reason for being was focused on itself, and not on the given task of mission.

The identity of the Church is derived from the disclosure of God’s identity in and through Jesus Christ.



*Christians  
are to model  
their lives  
on Jesus’  
life of service*



**DON'T  
FORGET**

*To “be  
Church” is to  
be at mission*



**THINK  
ABOUT  
THIS**

*“Ecclesia”  
means called  
out and called  
together; so  
Christians  
perceive  
themselves  
summoned  
and chosen  
by God*

## **Lambeth 1998: The Church at Mission**

The bishops at the 1998 Lambeth Conference who worked on the section report, *Called to live and proclaim the Good News*, began their report with these words:

Mission is God’s way of loving and saving the world. God calls his creatures to a future greater than they could ever make for themselves. From the beginning of the Biblical record, the voice of God is active, provoking human beings to move, change, and recognise who they are and what – by God’s help – they can become. The very name of the church, *Ecclesia*, means a community that has been summoned, not one that chooses to bring itself into being. *Ecclesia* is a word whose roots are in the secular world of the Greek and Roman Empires. Within the Roman Empire, *ecclesia* meant “a group of free citizens gathered to deliberate” and those who were to seek the welfare of their neighbours.

It was a political and social concept. The early Christians, with the authority of Jesus Christ as their inspiration, believed themselves to be “free citizens” of a new order, an emerging, coming Kingdom. *Ecclesia* also, means called out and called together; so Christians perceive themselves summoned and chosen by God. This ought to affect our worship, our evangelism, and our response to the social, political and economic realities.”

Further on the bishops gave even greater emphasis to the practice of mission. They wrote, “we believe in a God who is completely engaged in mission and whose very life is a movement outwards, giving and sharing divine life and joy. One of the most distinctive things about Chris-

tian faith is that we believe in a God who has undertaken a mission from all eternity.

### **The Church as a Church of Mission**

If God is a God of mission, the Church has to be a Church of mission.

This recognition can come late in life, as with the eighty-year-old woman in an inner urban parish. Sometimes it has come too late in history for some congregations.

The awareness of being a church of mission has immediate consequences for individual and corporate Christian identity.

The individual Christian is someone through whom God is carrying out the Divine mission. Each Christian becomes a living sample of God's self-giving. This highlights our witness to Christ through our behaviour and life-style. As individual Christians, our mission is lived out in our day-to-day encounters with others.

The German philosopher Nietzsche once caustically observed that "he would believe in the Saviour if His disciples looked a little more saved."

The imperative of mission also shapes the corporate identity of the Church. The local congregation must be a place where the good news of Jesus is proclaimed and lived.

### **The Local Congregation as the Place of Mission**

Again the Lambeth Bishops of 1998 focused on the local congregation as the place of mission. They have sought to encourage congregations by writing,:



*If God is a  
God of  
mission, the  
Church has to  
be a Church of  
mission*



*The local  
congregation  
must be a  
place where  
the good news  
of Jesus is  
proclaimed  
and lived*

the first Christians marked their commitment by locating in the community as well as being community. They were called out of the world but not removed from it...redemptively immersed in and aware of the agony and pain that characterise a fallen world, but not moulded by it...they practised benevolence, sharing their goods with the needy, breaking bread together, and undertaking their daily tasks with joy and patience, striving not to be anxious about tomorrow.



***Th Church  
with a totally  
inward focus  
ceases to live  
out its  
mission  
imperative***

It was the discipline of the common courtesy and gracious behaviour that marked them out as people having something worth embracing, so that “day by day the Lord added to their company” (Acts 2:42-47). The Spirit of God, who gives gifts to God’s people to offer in the service of God and each other, has called the Church to such a life since she is the agent for reaching the world with the life and love of God.

In some instances financial pressures have impacted upon the life of congregations to turn their thinking inwards, upon themselves. Whenever this has been prolonged the congregation has become isolated from its local community context, living simply for its own survival. The church with this focus ceases to live out its mission imperative.

As long ago as the 1960s at a world Anglican Conference in Toronto in Canada a mission statement emerged, somewhat negative in form, but clear in its warning.

The statement was based on a verse from the letter to the Romans: “the church that lives to itself will die to itself.” Mission is the oxygen of the Church’s life. Insufficient mission leads to a crippled church.

This emphasis on mission and not simply living as a worship club means that everyone in the church, congregations, leaders, deacons, priests, bishops need to learn how to be missionaries in our own backyards!



## The Shape of a Congregation Practising Mission

A congregation practising mission will be a community that:

- has a concern for those who are **not** present in worship as much as for those who are present
- has a good sense of its **context** of ministry – the kind of people in the area, the needs of the people
- seeks to honour the context of its ministry through making its worship culturally relevant to the community. The music that is used will resonate with the local people as much as the style of the services
- understands the Gospel as “good news” and not as a pep talk!
- identifies the primary link between the Gospel and the needs of the local community
- will give substance to the Gospel by the kind of care given within the locality
- will ensure that the focus of the congregation’s life is directed away from itself and into the broader community.

*Mission  
Congregations...*

*...look for those  
not at worship*

*...know and  
honour their  
context*

*...promote the  
Gospel*

*...care for their  
locality*

*...are outward  
looking*

Any congregation, regardless of size, can follow this missionary calling.

This focus on a Church oriented to mission is quite a cultural change for Anglicans. We have identified ourselves as ‘the quiet achievers’ in our communities, unwilling to be loud about the Gospel. This attitude of pastoral presence has been shaped by spiritual practices that have been personal, private and generally intro-



THINK  
ABOUT  
THIS

*A cultural  
change*

spective. Indeed, the spirituality is monastic in influence, if not in shape.

The pedigree indicates that the origin of such spiritual practices is in another period of history with its own world-view and understanding of the mission of the Church. Such a past world-view and mission practice may be inappropriate now.

### **A Spirituality for Mission**

With that caution, spiritual practices are vital for the sustaining of any practice of mission. The amount of energy that must be used by congregations in being outwardly focused is very high, and demanding upon all participants. Such energy will need replenishing. God's sustaining Spirit found in prayer and worship is the resource for this replenishment. Spiritual health is the means of maintaining faithful Christian action and community. Therefore, a spirituality to sustain mission is urgent for the Church.



THINK  
ABOUT  
THIS

*A spirituality  
which sustains  
mission*

Mission spirituality comes out of the central message of Jesus: **“The Kingdom of God is drawing near”**. Jesus understood Himself to be the embodiment of the Kingdom of God, the rule of God, the full presence of God.

The Kingdom of God in and through Jesus delivered struggling, suffering people from despair and meaninglessness into a new community of hope and a new affirmation of their value to God, and to each other.

The Church is to identify the presence of the rule of God as it breaks into human contexts. It is our calling to align ourselves wherever God's will is percolating, and to support its presence. Usually God, as Jesus did, works at the edges—those contexts where people feel discarded, or beaten-up by life, or rejected.

Living at these edges is demanding and costly. Thus the need for an invigorating spirituality that sustains and empowers those who live under God's rule in such places. A spirituality offering healing and hope.

### **The Vision of the Kingdom of God**

Vision gives inspiration and energy for such living, such mission. The most articulated vision of the Kingdom of God has been given by Bishop John Taylor, who was for many years the secretary for the Church Missionary Society in the United Kingdom, and later bishop of Winchester. His writing is inspirational.

Below is a piece from Taylor contributed to a World Council of Churches Conference resource on Mission and Evangelism. It gives a vision both of the Kingdom of God and the necessity for worship.

After you have read this piece, think of your own ministry and the ways in which you are nourished spiritually for it. Think more widely of your congregation and the needs for spiritual nurture it requires. Such reflection will give you insights into the kind of spirituality that you need for mission.

Worship is central to the life-style of the Kingdom of God because the certainty that the Kingdom is on its way is derived from an intense awareness of the reality and nearness of God. This was the case with Jesus, and it must be the case with those who follow him. It is through worship that we constantly renew, by the activity of the Holy Spirit, our Abba-relationship with the God of Jesus Christ. By recovering this sense of God's closeness to our life in this world, we renew the connection, the ladder, between his true nature and the situations in which our lives and struggles take place.



*The Church is to identify the presence of the rule of God as it breaks into human contexts*



*Vision gives inspiration and energy for such living, such mission*



*Worship is central to the life-style of the Kingdom of God*

Moses was an activist. This is why he had to get out of Egypt. The plight of his people in slavery preyed on his mind. But instead of plotting and scheming like an exiled revolutionary, he was overtaken by an experience of the absolute priority of God. He heard the voice of the Lord say: 'I have seen the misery, "I have heard the outcry, I have taken heed of the sufferings, and have come down to rescue."

Real worship takes place when the people who see and care are active on behalf of the needy and **recognize** that God sees more and cares more and is more active than they can ever be. They wait in silence before him, knowing their dependence and letting him fill their vision. Then, having fully realized that it is God's action that is righting the wrong, rather than men's, they may hear him say: "Come now, I will send you to Pharaoh."

Christians who respond to the needs of the world with immediate and unbroken activity become spent, nervy, and undisciplined. Christians who cling to God without ever having seen, heard, or cared for the cry of the world grow childish and fussy.

True worship is that which, in responsible awareness of the struggle of righteousness in the world, turns back to God as the supreme source of confidence and meaning."

The Kingdom on its Way, World Council of Churches, 1980, pp3-4.

### **Praying for the Kingdom**

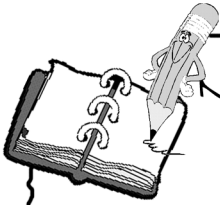
The praying for the coming of God's Kingdom is central to a disciple's praying. Your Kingdom come!

could be prayed more urgently, and with greater sensitivity for those who suffer in our communities. It is this kind of God-focused urgency that best keeps us alert to our responsibilities and privileges in mission.

The Vision of Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission has within it and as its basis this openness to the presence of the Kingdom of God in our localities. It does have some practical and structural consequences.

In the next study session we will develop these concrete aspects of the Vision.

*Wonderful  
things  
happen  
to us  
when we  
live expectantly  
believe confidently  
pray  
affirmatively*



NOTES FROM MY READING. STUDY 4

## DON'T FORGET

- \* WHAT EXCITED YOU ?
- \* WHAT DISTURBED YOU ?
- \* WHAT PUZZLED YOU ?



# *Group Discussion*

The leader asks for issues from the reading material which:

- need to be affirmed. . . . . !
- need to be explained. . . . . \*
- need to be clarified. . . . . ?

and notes them for the group to work on.

- 1 The group imagines the implication of these for their Church:
  - a) What benefits might be given.
  - b) What changes would have to be put in place.

[30 minutes]

- 
- 2 What are your responses to Bishop Ian Taylor's piece?

- 3 Share with the group
- 

- a) What composite picture emerges of responding to the presence of the kingdom of God?
- b) What does this composite picture suggest about your congregation's mission?

[60 minutes]

- 4 What do you need to keep this Kingdom of God perspective at the forefront of your life as a disciple?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5 What spiritual practices would help this focus?

[25 minutes]

End by slowly praying the Lord's Prayer together





## *Being a Ministering Community*

The previous sessions have developed the Vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission*. We have reflected on our strengths and on the areas we can develop in the areas of ministry and mission.

This session seeks to describe the shape of the Vision – how the Vision might work out in the various contexts found in our Diocese.

An important caveat is that this Vision seeks to honour both the imperatives of the Gospel and the context in which a congregation is set. It is not a blueprint. It is what it claims to be—a vision. This means that it must be applied sensitively within a variety of situations. The Vision is primarily about theological insights and principles.

### **Congregations with a Central Organising Purpose**

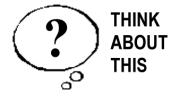
We do know that congregations that are effective do have a central organising purpose to them. We know too that leadership in such congregations is dispersed, and operative at all levels of the congregation's life.

Further, we know that such leadership is equipped, skilled and resourced so that pastoral care is practised throughout the congregation.

Given this knowledge, and given the centrality of the calling to be a missionary church in our own backyards, we need a flexible structure that supports and sustains



*The shape of  
our vision*



*The vision is  
about  
theological  
insights and  
principles*



**DON'T  
FORGET**

*Leadership is  
equipped,  
skilled and  
resourced so  
that pastoral  
care is  
practised  
through the  
congregation*

the Vision. A structure which ensures that every member of the church is in ministry. A commitment to being ministering communities, not communities dependent on just one minister!



*What leadership requirements does your congregation have?*

## **The Variety of Leadership Needs in Each Congregation**

Each congregation should discern what leadership requirements it has. This process will begin by asking questions about what God is calling the congregation to be and to do. Once the decision has been made, and key leadership roles have been defined, a process of prayerfully discerning who has appropriate gifts to lead ministry will need to take place. Throughout this process the Diocesan Ministry Development Officer is available to congregations to act as a facilitator. It needs to be stated clearly how the variety of roles will mesh together to build up the church for its overall work of mission and ministry.



*The active practice of mission will require leaders who can enable the effective practice of mission and ministry by all members of the congregation*

The roles of leadership that are discerned may vary somewhat, especially when comparing large and small congregations. However, there will be common themes in most parish communities, such as the role of the Lay Minister to coordinate ministry relating to mutual care, the lay minister for Christian formation and discipleship, the lay minister to coordinate community connections with those outside of the Church, and deacons and priests ordained for local ministry. In some congregations there will need to be a coordinator of children's ministry, in others a coordinator of hospitality, in others a coordinator of youth ministry. The list will reflect the leadership needs of particular congregations.

The movement into a more active practice of mission and the release into awareness of each person's gifts for ministry will require leaders who can enable the

effective practice of mission and ministry by all members of the congregation

### **The Need to Shift our Awareness to total Ministry**

The primary focus of the Vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission* is to continue the shift of awareness in congregations towards total ministry.

A commitment from each member to their own roles in ministry and mission will be required. This is a movement from chronic dependence to healthy interdependence, a characteristic of any body, but especially of “the Body of Christ”.

This vision for leadership development is to have in each congregation a core of theologically skilled leaders. This replaces the solo practitioner tradition of just one trained person, the stipendiary priest, so prevalent in Anglican parishes.

The stipendiary priest will be a very important resource person in each congregation that develops a Ministry Team, and the Diocese is providing opportunities for additional training and skilling for priests in these roles. It means in many cases a change in leadership style and practice. But it is a more effective use of the training that our stipendiary clergy have received.

This core group of theologically formed and skill trained leaders will be in place to develop the practice of mission and ministry in congregations. They are not to subsume ministry practice to themselves, becoming a larger version of a solo practitioner. The Vision is about the outflowing of ministry from every member of the congregation. Thus leaders in the Ministry Team (both lay and ordained) lead through the enabling of others in ministry.



*The vision for leadership development is to have in each congregation a core of theologically skilled leaders*



*Attention must be paid to getting everyone on board, including newcomers to the congregation*

This will mean that the Vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission* will need to be talked about constantly. The Vision is one of transformational change, affecting deeply the values and practices of the congregation. In order for the Vision to be grounded in the congregation's memory, attention must be paid to getting everyone on board the Vision, including, in a continuous form, newcomers to the congregation.

### **Stories of effective ministry changes**

One of the forerunners in the process of returning the Church to a missionary understanding of its life was Bishop Harris of the Diocese of Alaska.

Bishop Harris spoke at a major conference of dioceses in the Pacific in Hawaii in 1983:

The majority of parishes and congregations are still serviced by a single, overworked, priest, who, in the absence of a remote and inaccessible bishop, a dearth of fellow-priests, a non-existent diaconate and a passive laity, attempts to carry alone the entire ministerial function of the congregation. Yet received traditions and inherited structures militate against reform.

Bishop Harris went on:

It is only within a framework of a renewed and diversified ministry consisting of an accessible bishop, fellow priests, a restored diaconate and a trained and active body of laity who have been "equipped for ministry" that the priesthood can be restored to its proper function and relationship to the Church.

The Diocese of Nevada is in the remote desert region of the United States. Their Bishop began to ordain local men and women as priests and deacons.

The successor of the Bishop who established this ministry process in the Diocese of Nevada was Bishop Stewart Zabriskie.

He wrote to me in 1993:

Here in Nevada, the idea of total ministry is that every baptised person is a minister. The image of a body of people gathered around a minister is changed to that of a ministering community, of which the clergy are a part.

With the exception of a very few parishes that have full-time paid rectors, parish leadership is shared among the whole parish; and we hope that the focus of the parish's life is more towards mission than towards busy-work in the parish itself. When clergy are called by their parish to serve in an ordained capacity, it is understood that the parish does not abrogate the responsibility of the laity to be ministers and to use the gifts given to them as members of the Body of Christ.

It's really quite simple, and it works. I find that the Vestry of a parish (which in some of our smallest places is the whole parish!) takes seriously its responsibility for organising the parish's ministry; assuring that services are held and necessary things be done in the Church, and also dealing with the outreach of the parish into the community—if only as a clearing house for recognising how much is done by parishioners as ministers in the community."



**DON'T  
FORGET**

*It's really  
quite simple,  
and it works*



*We are called  
to offer our  
gifts in service*

Bishop George Hearn, formerly of the Diocese of Rockhampton in Central Queensland, said this at a conference in Merredin, WA in March 1995:

The Church is called to be a ministering community, not a community gathered around a minister. If we accept this understanding of Total Ministry, we recognise that each member of the Church has been gifted by God in birth and baptism, and that each of us has been called to offer these gifts in service for both the life and mission of the Church.

Bishop Hearn described how in some parishes he has commissioned a ministry team which has oversight of the functions of ministry:

In smaller rural parishes at present without a priest this team includes:

- several distinctive deacons who have oversight of parish worship and a parish care project;
- team members who co-ordinate and have responsibility for the ministries of pastoral care, Christian education in the parishes and Religious Education in the schools, the church wardens who attend to parish administration, publicity and promotion, fellowship and community life and welcoming.



*The ministry  
of each  
baptised  
Christian is a  
response to  
our Lord's  
command*

Ministry teams there vary from as small as three up to forty-nine.

## Ministry in the New Testament

These ministry processes undertaken by such diverse and remote and demanding dioceses of the Anglican Communion are explicit in the New Testament.

The ministry of each baptised Christian is a response to our Lord's clear command to model our lives on his own life of service:

**Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.**

(Matthew 20:26b-28)

As our ministries derive from Christ's ministry, so we seek to model our lives on his, giving our lives in the ministry of service just as he did.

The Church has always understood ministry as a gift from God, to each member of Christ's Body.

**Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gifts each of you has received. (1 Peter 4:10)**

Though each Christian receives the gift of ministry, in no way are all our ministries exactly the same.

St Paul tells the Ephesians about Christ's gifts:

**The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry for the building up of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12)**

Paul uses the same analogy of the body in 1 Corinthians 12 and in Romans 12:

**For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith: ministry, in ministering: the teacher, in teaching: the exhorter, in exhortation: the giver, in generosity: the leader, in diligence: the compassionate, in cheerfulness.**  
(Romans 12:4-8)



***The Church  
coordinated  
ministry***

As the churches which Paul founded became viable and self sufficient, forms of leadership developed which enabled these churches to sustain themselves despite all of the difficulties that surrounded them, including eventual violent persecution.

*The point was that no one person could do the ministry for everybody. The Church coordinated ministry so that they could offer all the gifts or aspects of ministry to the wider community. So the church fulfilled its commission to proclaim the life of the Kingdom of God and to witness faithfully to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

### **What kind of ministry?**

The question facing each congregation in the Diocese of Newcastle is whether that kind of coordination, that kind of ministry is happening.

The Dutch theologian Edward Schillebeeckx published a helpful study in 1981. It was on leadership in the history of the Church. The Roman Catholic Church is even more enslaved to tradition than is the Anglican Communion, yet he called for radical change with these words:



...the constant in the Church's ministry is always to be found in specific, historically changing forms... at a particular point in history, moreover, certain forms of Church order called into being by earlier situations in the Church and society, come up against their limitation...

*Congregations  
build on  
their  
strengths*

A Church order which has grown up through history can in fact hinder and obstruct precisely what in earlier times it was intended to ensure... the building up of a Christian community. (Ministry, Schillebeeckx, Crossroads 1981 p75)

### **Insights from the Mission Field**

The work of the Reverend Rolland Allen has been rediscovered by several dioceses within the Anglican Communion. In 1983 a Pacific Rim conference was held in Hawaii called by the then Bishop of Hawaii, the Right Reverend Ed Browning, and called "**Setting Free the Ministry of the People of God**" to pursue the thinking of Rolland Allen.

Rolland Allen's basic doctrines are:

- a. A Christian community which has come into being as the result of the preaching of the Gospel should be given the Bible, Creed, Ministry and Sacraments.



*The vision of  
our  
churches is  
developing  
leadership  
resources*

- b. It is then responsible with the bishop for recognising the spiritual gifts and needs in its membership and for calling into its service priests or presbyters to preside at the Eucharist and to be responsible for the word and for pastoral care.
- c. It is also required to share the message and the life with its neighbouring communities not yet evangelised.
- d. The Holy Spirit working on the human endowment of the community's leaders are sufficient for its life. Don't train "too much"! Don't import from outside!
- e. A Christian community that cannot do these things is not yet a Church. It is a mission field.
- f. The bishop and his staff (cf. Timothy, Titus, etc.) are crucial.

This thinking will challenge us to evaluate the life, mission and ministry of our church in relation to Roland Allen's insights



*Training for  
locally  
identified  
leaders to  
enable them to  
develop  
ministry  
resources  
in their  
congregation*

**And so...**

The history of the Church is exciting and depressing at the same time. Heroic figures inspire us; the knowledge of lost opportunities can deplete us. This Vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission* is radical in that it returns us to our roots in ministry practice. The Vision is practical – it addresses our needs both now and for the future. The Vision returns a holistic practice of ministry to the church, and thus to you.

Please pray through this Vision. If you become convinced that the Vision is right for your congregation then talk about it openly, and help move towards a decision to adopt the Vision as your congregational practice.

The Diocesan Bishop will seek to be as supportive as possible of local initiatives that are aligned with the coming Kingdom of God and which do the work of ministry for the equipping of the saints (the congregations).

*In Summary*

***Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission.***

This Vision (of local teams of ministers who minister to the Church) will energise local communities and will substantiate Christian witness in those communities and from those communities.

Those who become leaders as priests, deacons, and coordinators of education, pastoral care and in other areas in local congregations will know intimately the life of the local community. They will not begin as strangers. They will have a rich reservoir of knowledge which can only enhance the ministry offered from those congregations.

**How this Vision could develop**

A vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission* cannot be imposed.

It begins in small ways. We are developing a practice embodying this Vision in response to the needs of congregations and to those gripped by this Vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission*. We will undertake the Vision in sensitivity to the leading of



***This Vision of  
Becoming  
Ministering  
Communities  
in Mission is  
radical in that  
it returns us  
to our roots***



*Leaders will  
have a rich  
reservoir of  
knowledge  
which can  
only enhance  
the ministry  
offered*

the Holy Spirit.

More than anyone else the Holy Spirit knows the needs of Christ's Church.

This Vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission* has begun in a similar way to the ministry of Jesus—in response to needs detected through the guidance of the Spirit.

This Vision of *Becoming Ministering Communities in Mission* has arisen from consultation within the Diocese. It has looked at how the Church in others parts of the Anglican Communion is dealing with the very issues that we are facing.

*This change is being suggested before the time to change is too late.*

While we still have strength, and capacity to manage change, that is the time when change for the better must be introduced. Otherwise, we will become the victim of circumstances—circumstances that will make decisions for us.

What you now have to do is to think carefully about your own and your parish's situation, and what would be appropriate for you.

This will help us to build on our strengths and continue our Lord's work in this part of his Kingdom.

### **Thanks**

Thank you for sharing in these sessions. I trust that they have been exciting for you, that they have raised issues for you, that the understanding of ministry that is so essential for our Church is one with which you will continue to work.

May I ask you to make daily this prayer for your church,  
and for all the churches in the Diocese:

O God, our Father,  
As you sent your Son,  
send us into your world  
with your compelling love.  
Help us by your Spirit,  
to share your Gospel  
of love and forgiveness,  
of justice and peace,  
of compassion and care.  
Revive your Church and  
save your people,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.



*What you now  
have to do is to  
think carefully  
about your  
own and your  
parish's  
situation, and  
what would be  
appropriate*

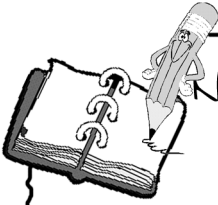
May God lead you, guide you and sustain you as you  
move from being a community gathered around a  
minister to *becoming a ministering community in  
Mission* built from local leaders.

Such a local Church will be an active sign for the  
Kingdom of God in your community!



**DON'T  
FORGET**

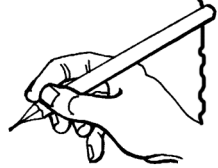
*May we move  
from being a  
community  
gathered  
around a  
minister to  
becoming a  
ministering  
community*



NOTES FROM MY READING. STUDY 5

## DON'T FORGET

- \* WHAT EXCITED YOU ?
- \* WHAT DISTURBED YOU ?
- \* WHAT PUZZLED YOU ?



# *Group Discussion*

The leader asks for issues from the reading material which:

- need to be affirmed . . . . . !
- need to be explained . . . . . \*
- need to be clarified . . . . . ?

and notes them for the group to work on later.

1 The group imagines the implication of these for their Church:

- a) What benefits might be given
- b) What changes would have to be put in place

---

2 a) What leadership requirements do you think your congregation has?

b) What ministries could be developed from the congregation to connect with the local community?

[30 minutes]

- 3 a) What, if any, likenesses do you detect between your own ministry setting and the stories of ministry practice in this session?
- b) What personal changes do you need to make to become part of a ministering community? Share with the group.

[30 minutes]

- 
- 4 a) How could the congregation be helped to adjust the role of the stipendary priest when this vision is practiced?
- b) What changes need to be negotiated in the congregation's present expectations of the stipendary priest?
- c) Look at Appendix A.

If you are committed to following through this vision of renewal and ministry in our region, make a decision to work through the process in Appendix A during the Great 50 Days of Easter. Make your plans for this together.

[25 minutes]

Pray together the Litany for the Holy Spirit on page 196 of *A Prayer Book for Australia*.

**Join hands and pray the Grace.**

