

Lightening the Load

Organisation

Models of Ministry



1 Focal Ministry

Focal ministry is a model where one (usually) stipendiary minister exercises oversight of a number of other focal ministers who each take responsibility for one (or possibly two) parishes and congregations. Focal ministers may be an ordained priest, or Lay Reader or experienced lay people who have been trained and authorised.

The stipendiary priest is the incumbent of all the parishes in the benefice, but they delegate responsibility for a particular parish to a local focal minister. They support and oversee the focal ministers, offering training as necessary. They also take responsibility for the overall strategy of the multi-parish benefice/Mission Community and co-ordinate joint mission and ministry across the benefice. A single shared governance body such as a Mission Community forum/council is essential. This can replace or be in addition to the individual PCCs.

The focal minister is responsible for the pastoral care and worship in their parish, and they would probably chair the PCC. They would be present at the Sunday services in their parish almost every week, often leading or co-leading. They would not normally rush from church to church on a Sunday, but be a consistent presence in their own church. They would come to be seen as the “go to” person in the parish for pastoral care, funerals and possibly baptisms and weddings. Some parishes may not want to name someone as their focal minister, and an individual may not want to wear that badge, even though in practice they are doing all that a focal minister does. This more informal approach would be equally valid. It may also be that having a pair of people fulfilling this role is better than one person on their own – after all, Jesus did send his disciples out in pairs.

The ideal is to have one or two focal ministers for each parish, but realistically that may not always be possible. In a multi-parish benefice of 8 parishes, 4 may have focal ministers, and the incumbent would need to take responsibility for the others. Focal ministry may be possible for a season in a parish, but then the focal minister retires from that role and there is no-one to replace them. But the principle and the long-term aim of this model is to have a focal minister in each and every parish in the benefice.



Photo by Michelle Tresemer on Unsplash



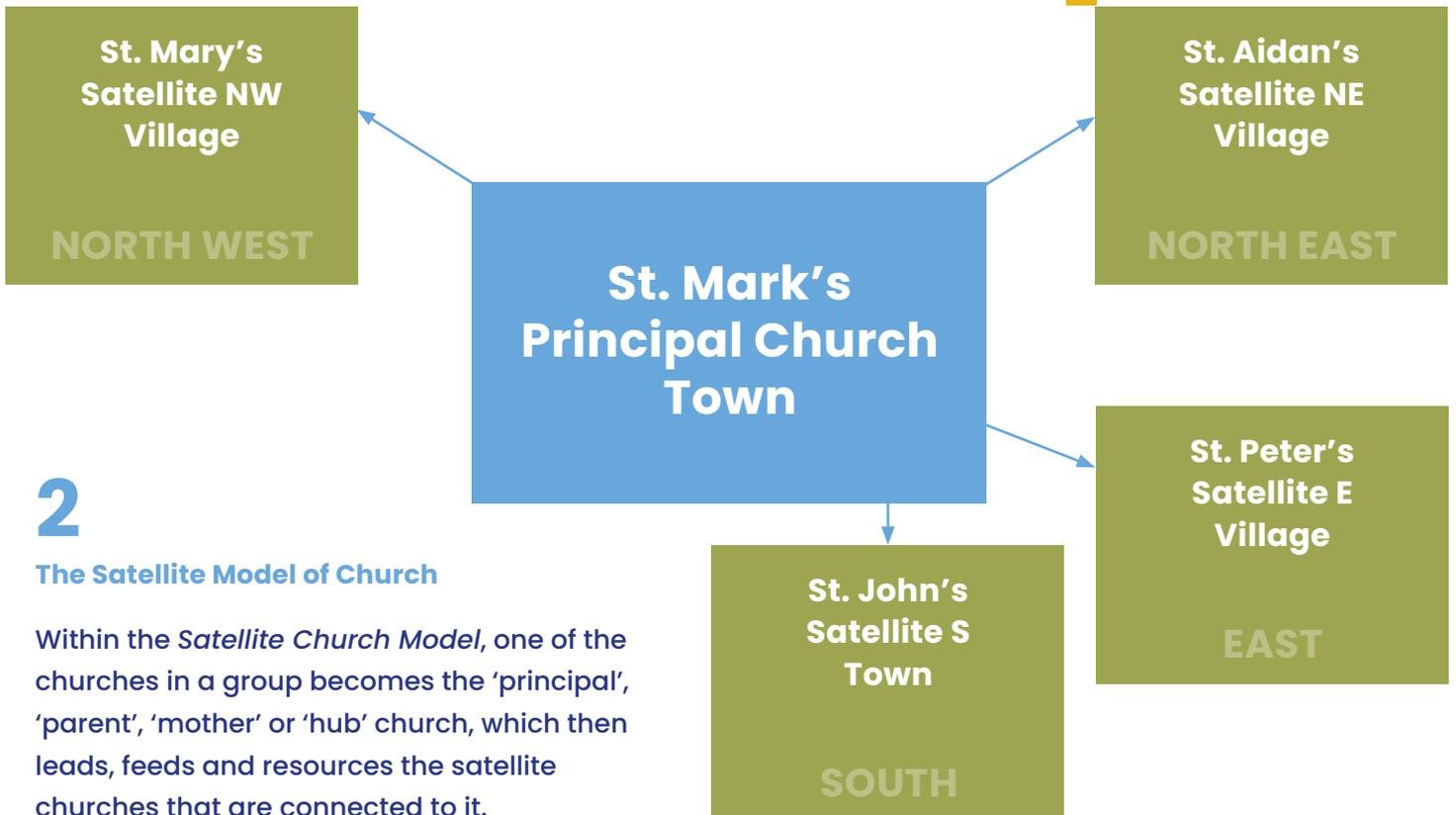
Bob Jackson, a church growth consultant, has written a book entitled “What makes churches grow?” He is an advocate of focal ministers:

“The truth is that, for its own health and growth, every church community needs its own designated leader, a focal point for the worshipping, community and ministry life of the church. Such a focal leader should be an ever present integral part of the church community, not an occasional visitor to it. The job of church leadership in the 21st century is hard enough. It is much better for the health and growth of leaders, whether paid or unpaid, ordained or not, to ask them to attempt to lead one church at once....”

“It is not the job of the focal minister to imitate an old-fashioned vicar, doing the ministry to and on behalf of the congregation. The cure of souls is not to be vested in the focal minister but in the whole local church community. The role of the focal minister is to lead the mission of the church and galvanize the ministry of all....”

“We are beginning to see that de facto ministry leadership arrangements can transform small churches. Small to medium churches led by part-time focal ministers may be getting the best of both worlds – their own dedicated leader around whom they can coalesce and develop, but not a full-time fully professionalised leader expected to do most of the ministry. So they are getting an ever-present leader plus the ministry of all believers.”

Extracts from What makes churches grow?
by Bob Jackson (Church House Publishing, 2015)



2

The Satellite Model of Church

Within the *Satellite Church Model*, one of the churches in a group becomes the ‘principal’, ‘parent’, ‘mother’ or ‘hub’ church, which then leads, feeds and resources the satellite churches that are connected to it.

The Model

In this model of ministry, one of the churches in the group of churches (e.g. mission community), is identified as the Principal Church. In the model this Principal Church becomes:

- The primary (but not sole) place of ministry for the principal clergy person
- The central location for consistent daily ministry (if you cannot access ministry or help at one of the satellite churches, you can have confidence you can access it at the principal church)
- The central hub for training and discipleship for the whole team
- The resources centre for the whole team
- The usual place for joint worship services

This model can have the advantages of:

- Maximising the skills and abilities in leadership, preaching, teaching, and equipping of the key clergy person
- Developing a sense of unity and 'common brand' among diverse congregations of Christians (e.g. 'St. Marks in the Watersmeet Mission Community')
- Providing a trained 'pastor' or 'shepherd' in each satellite church location, so that the congregation feels cared for and nurtured, while still being pastorally overseen by the key clergy person
- Reducing administrative time and costs
- Allowing an increased number of laity to develop their gifts and serve in ministry
- Providing a stronger financial base for the ministry of the group
- Developing and proving missional initiatives in the Principal, before trialling them in the satellite churches



St Brannock's Church, Braunton, Devon © Dietmar Reibich



The Role of the Principal Clergy Person

Recognising that the principal clergy person cannot be all things to all people, the role of the Incumbent is targeted by the Mission Community or Joint Council toward:

- Leading Eucharistic services each week, at the Principal Church and in at least one of the satellite churches. This may involve mid-week services, as well as Sunday services
- Leading the team in developing a life of prayer and personal devotion
- Preaching
- Teaching
- Strategic leadership across the team, particularly in the area of mission
- Pastorally overseeing the work of what would be termed, 'satellite church pastors'.
- Conducting occasional offices
- Leading the assistant clergy members on the team

The Development of Satellite Church 'Pastors'

Central to the success of this model is the provision of dedicated 'pastors' at each of the satellite church locations. While this person needs to be trained, they do not need to be ordained. The likely training package for satellite 'pastors' might include:

- Foundational Christian theology
- Growing in personal and public prayer
- Effective preaching
- Creative teaching
- How to lead a small group
- Developing conflict resolution skills
- Providing pastoral guidance and support
- Effective team building skills



All Saints Church, Huntsham, Devon © Boddah



3 A Local Shared Ministry model from the Diocese of Auckland in New Zealand

For many years the Anglican Church in New Zealand has been facing similar challenge to us, particularly small congregations unable to afford their own paid priest. But what they have done is use it as an opportunity to discover a new way of encouraging their local church life.

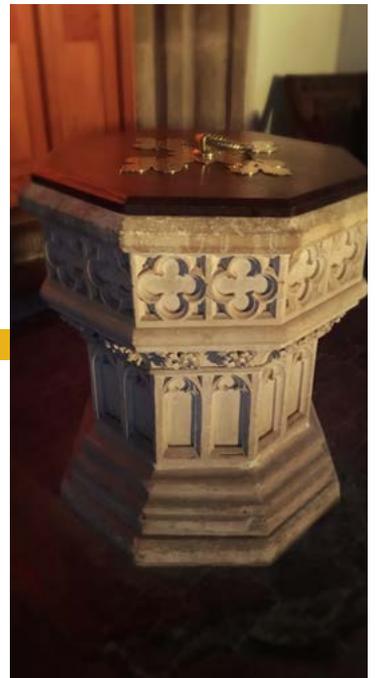
They have taken as their inspiration the writings of Roland Allen, based around his study of St Paul's way of setting up churches, which he centres round the claim, *'that every congregation has within its own membership sufficient gifts for its life and ministry'*.

Local Shared Ministry is...

- a way of being, a culture, rooted in the New Testament (1 Cor 12:11, Eph 4:7-11);
- a growing and evolving way of being church which affirms the gifts of all the baptised, so that everyone can be involved according to their gifts, time and energy;
- a 'ministering' community rather than a community dependent on a minister;
- a way of structuring ministry so that the local church is responsible for establishing priorities for mission and ministry.

What this looks like in practice...

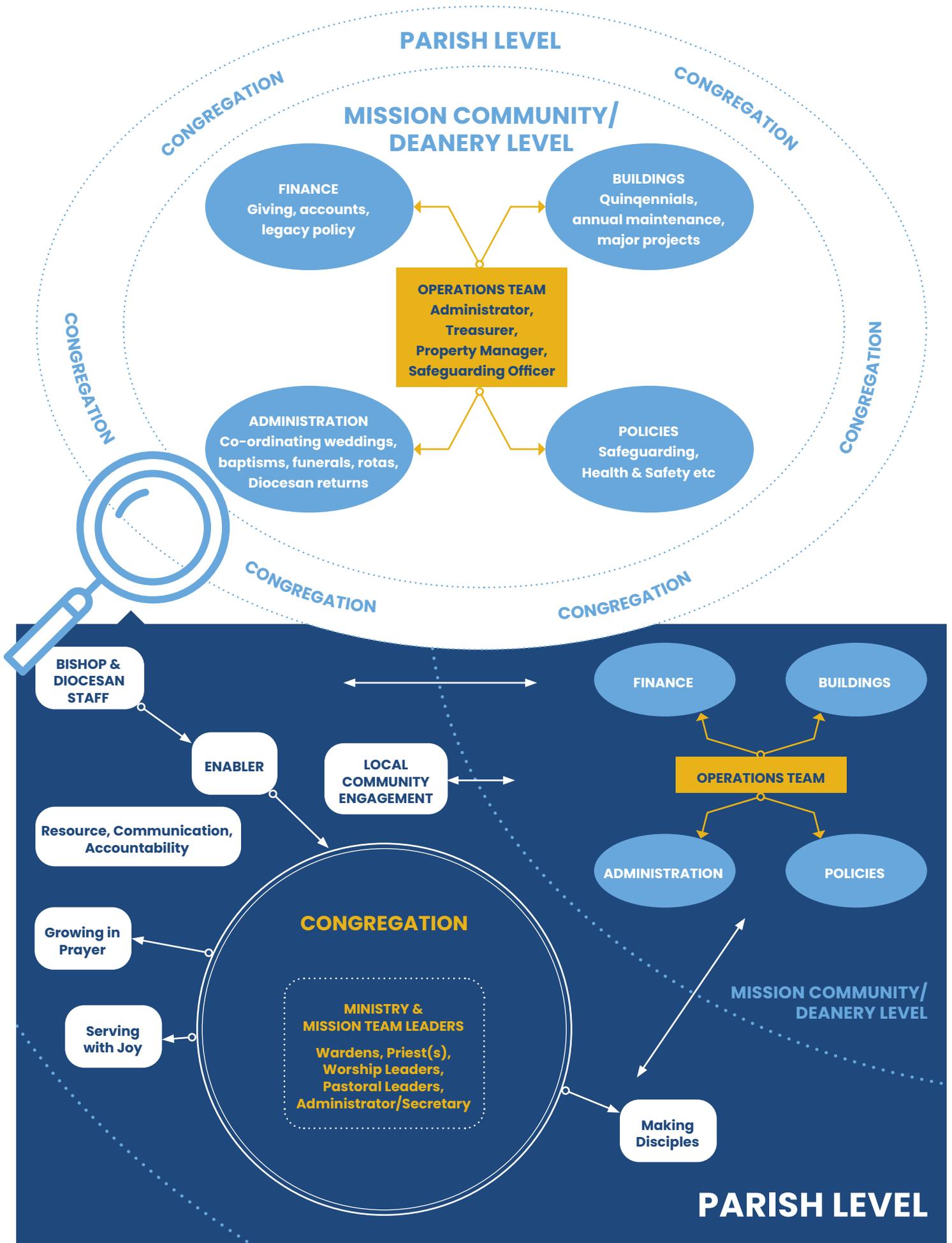
- It is led by a Local Ministry Team (usually made up of the people who are doing the ministry anyway) which is licensed by the Bishop.
- Every member is seen to have a part to play according to their gifts. Everyone is seen as commissioned by their baptism. The Church identifies one or more people within each local congregation to be ordained and take Communion services etc. Those who preside at Communion are not necessarily expected to be the preachers or pastors, but one member of the Team.
- The paid theologically trained person no longer does frontline work, but is there to resource the local church members and give back up and training.
- Administration is taken off the Local Ministry Team as far as possible, and done centrally with a number of churches.
- There is a tried and tested process of help given to the local community while they explore this different way of doing things.
- It is a highly flexible scheme to suit local circumstances, encourages innovation, and is deeply rooted in the life and character of the local community. It suggests that we need to relearn what has been in the bible all along!



The diagram on the following page has been put together by Revd Simon Franklin to illustrate what this model might look like in the UK.

For more information visit:

www.auckanglican.org.nz/what-we-do/local-shared-ministry



4 Mutual Ministry in the Diocese of Northern Michigan

The diocese of Northern Michigan covers a larger geographic area than the Exeter Diocese, and the congregations of the churches are numerically bigger, but they are of a similar number, with a similar number of stipendiary clergy. They have developed a model which they call "Mutual Ministry".

See:

upeciscopal.org/mutual-ministry/

The key features are:

- All ministry is Christ's; every baptised person is an active participant therein, each according to gift. The main area for ministry is in the midst of daily life. As Bishop Curry (of royal wedding fame) says: "If you're breathing, you're called."
- Stipendiary ministers are involved with sacramental and pastoral ministry but primarily act as supporting missionaries, enablers and teachers.
- God has given each community all the gifts they need to minister in their place.
- A desire to move from Clericalism and even from Team Ministry to Mutual Ministry, as this diagram illustrates:



Who are the Ministers? 3 models:

CLERICALISM

The priest is "THE Minister".
All others are passive consumers of ministry.

TEAM MINISTRY

The priest is the primary Minister, but s/he receives assistance from a select few (hand-picked) lay-persons who serve as a ministering team. All others are passive consumers of ministry.

MUTUAL MINISTRY

All ministry is Christ's; every baptised person is an active participant therein, each according to gift. The main arena for ministry is in the midst of daily life.

What this looks like in practice....

- Working with a supporting missionary, individuals are identified for the needed ministries, called forth, trained locally and then licensed or ordained (depending upon role) as part of the ministering community. They form the Ministry Support Team.
- The Ministry Support Team is commissioned at a liturgy during which the ministry of all the baptised is affirmed and those who will serve on the Team are duly ordained and licensed.
- The roles of people in the Mission Support Team are diaconal, apostolic or priestly:
 - **Diaconal:** people who focus on pastoral care and issues of peace and justice and local and international concerns.
 - **Apostolic:** People who focus on stewardship/education (including children's and youth work/ ecumenism/mission).
 - **Priestly:** people who lead worship, preach, preside at the Eucharist.

