

Lightening the Load

Organisation



Resource list

for this session,
you will need:

- flip chart
- post it notes
- A4 paper for each table
- marker pens
- biros
- copies of resource sheets
- Action plan resource sheet
- laptop, projector and speakers (if possible)
- downloaded video or Wifi access
- 2:44 cards
- refreshments (nice biscuits!)

Before you begin:

As people arrive, have hot drinks and nice biscuits available. Encourage everyone to sit with people who attend a different church in your Mission Community.

On each table, provide copies of **Organisation resource sheet 1**

Opening Prayer

Read together these words from Matthew 11 and root the conversations to come in prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, you called all who are weary and burdened to come to you, to take your yoke upon them and to learn from you, for you are gentle and humble in heart. Your yoke is easy and your burden is light, and you promise rest for our souls (from Matthew 11: 28-30).

In our coming to you, we pray for your wisdom and discernment in knowing what of your work we should pick up, and what loads we need to lay down to walk easily and lightly in your service.

This we ask in the name of the Son, the power of the Spirit and the loving, merciful goodness of our heavenly Father. Amen.

A reflection

If you are able, watch together the video
“*There must be a better way*”

If you don't have the ability to do this, an overview of the reflection is given on **Organisation resource sheet 2**. Read this slowly together. (you may wish to give everyone a copy of this reflection)

Exercise 1: (30 minutes)

On sheets of flip chart paper, write the following 5 questions and display around the room (either on individual tables, or on the wall)

<p>1.</p> <p>What aspects of your current model of Church are burdensome and no longer sustainable?</p>	<p>2.</p> <p>What might your Mission Community need for mission and evangelism in your communities over the next 5-10 years?</p>	<p>3.</p> <p>What part might new forms of worship and outreach play in your Mission Community? 5-10 years?</p>	<p>4.</p> <p>What concerns do you have about the prospect of making changes in your Mission Community?</p>	<p>5.</p> <p>Have you seen a model that works elsewhere?</p>
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To do the exercise:

Part 1: Give each person post-it notes and a pen.

Ask them to consider the questions and write their answers on post-its. Attach these to the relevant question. They don't need to give their name. Give the group 15 minutes to complete this part of the exercise.

Part 2: Divide your group into 5 smaller groups (if you only have a small group to start with, create less smaller groups and give them more than one question to look at)

Give each group a question sheet and the attached post-its.

Are there common themes emerging?

Allow the groups 10 mins (max) to discuss and then ask each to feedback briefly the common themes that they have seen (overview, rather than detail of answers)

Governance

If you have already done the session **Expectations**, you may have already begun to think about your model of governance across the Mission Community.

It may be that the traditional model of one parish, one PCC is still the best way of functioning for your Mission Community. But there are alternatives that you may find helpful in lightening the load of governance.

Exercise 2: (15 minutes)

In your small groups, consider the options on **Organisation resource sheet 3**.

As you discuss each one, make a note of the pros and cons of such a model of governance.

Plan an outreach event: (20 minutes)

Use the 2:44 cards to plan an outreach event

This is a game and not to be taken too seriously!

Every resource in **Lightening the Load** uses this game in a slightly different way.

It's a chance to have a bit of fun together, but also to apply your learning from the session. You will hopefully also find that it reveals something about working together to Lighten the Load.

For this session:

Place all the cards on a table face down.

Each group should send one person to choose 4 cards.

The groups then have 10 minutes to plan an outreach event that features 3 of the resources chosen.

When you have an outline plan for your event, negotiate a swap with another group for your unused resource, to enhance your event.

Briefly feedback the plan for your celebration.

Models of Ministry

In the document **Organisation: Models of Ministry** you will find a range of alternative models of church. All of them have been/are being tried and tested. None of them may fit your situation perfectly – one size never fits all. But they may give you ideas about how you can change the over-stretched into something more fit for purpose, less bureaucratic, more missional. We are not advocating one model over the other, and it may be that you come up with a combination of different models tailored to your particular situation. It is entirely up to you.

Of course, a model is not a magic wand. The challenges of rural ministry will not melt away, just as the installation of a toilet and kitchen will not necessarily fill a church. But structures like buildings can be made more fit for mission and ministry in the 21st century. There may be ways of doing things differently out there which you can inhabit more easily, enabling you to be more Mary 3 than Martha, and more apostles in God's mission than curators of buildings.

Each of the various models in the Models of Ministry document address leadership, worship, mission, discipleship and pastoral care. The models are not mutually exclusive, and you may want to pick and mix. Be creative, be blown by the Spirit!

It is worth noting some common themes that run through all of them:

- The concept that God has given us all we need to undertake mission and ministry in this place. We serve him with what we currently have rather than waiting for more to come.
- Key people (often lay people) rooted in their local community and church who can take a leading role in mission and ministry. They are the ones who are a regular presence in church on Sundays, often leading the worship, offering pastoral care and acting as the 'go to' people in their communities for church matters.
- Centralised benefice administration wherever possible to save time, effort and money, and to avoid each parish re-inventing wheels.
- Shared identity across a benefice/Mission Community, but with local distinctiveness in each parish.
- Regular worship/reflection in each community, so that "the aroma of Christ" is present everywhere.

Exercise 3: (30 minutes)

Allocate one of the following aspects of ministry to each group:

This will be their focus as they discuss each Model of Ministry.

Leadership

Worship

Discipleship

Mission

Pastoral Care

Each group should work through each of the different models set out in the document **Organisation: Models of Ministry**. Use the grid on **Organisation resource sheet 4** to note down aspects of it that you might like to adopt, those that definitely would not work for you and those which you might explore further as a Mission Community. This exercise is not making any

irreversible decisions. It's just to give you the opportunity to talk openly about what could be different and how it might free up your energy and resources.

Once you have worked through each of the models look as a group at all the areas you listed in your Yes column. What might your own unique model start to look like?

Feedback: (10 minutes)

Invite each group to give very brief feedback on their thoughts.

Action plan: (5 minutes)

As a group, decide how you plan to take this conversation forward, along with any other action points.

Use **Resource sheet: Action plan** to agree and record these, along with an outline of timescale, and the people responsible for leading on each action point.

A closing thought and prayer

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13.8). The Good News of his life, death and resurrection, the Gospel of salvation and hope remains unchanged and undimmed. But the structures we adopt to share that Gospel are constantly evolving. PCCs for instance have only existed for a century. In changing times, what structures do we need to keep and what do we need to change?

O God of the journey, lift us up, press us against your cheek. Let your great love hold us and create a deep trust in us. Then set us down, God of the journey; take our hands in yours, and guide us ever so gently across the new territory of our lives; through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.



pray



grow



serve
with joy

Organisation resource sheet 2

There has to be a better way

There is so much to celebrate about rural ministry, and so much that it has to offer to urban/suburban/gathered models of church.

Small can be beautiful. Nonetheless small and spread out is also challenging. In multiparish rural benefices/Mission Communities, there isn't the critical mass of a suburban congregation, and there are many more buildings to look after.

The traditional model of one church, one parish, one priest has long gone, and our attempts simply to spread the clergy thinner and thinner are not working. Laity are getting more and more stretched as well, as older and smaller congregations mean there are fewer people to fill the traditional roles of churchwarden and PCC officers. Our model of church in rural areas has been creaking at the seams for some considerable time.

The Coronavirus crisis forced us to pause and become a different sort of church for a while. We prayed in a different way from our homes, we tried to minister to our neighbours as best we could, we gathered by phone or internet across parish boundaries. There was pain in seeing our church buildings closed, not receiving Communion or not being able to gather together in person. At the same time, there was a fresh realisation that the Church is the people not the buildings and the joyous surprise that more people joined us for worship over the internet than we ever had in church on a Sunday. There was the opportunity to become more Mary than Martha for a while: we had the time to reflect on personal priorities and the chance to think about what the Church might look like beyond lockdown.

This session encourages you to reflect further on the future. In particular it asks you to consider whether a different multi-parish model of church might strengthen and enable your future mission by relieving you of some of the burdens which weigh heavy upon you in your benefice/Mission Community.

Thinking outside the box – Options for Governance

Mission Community Councils

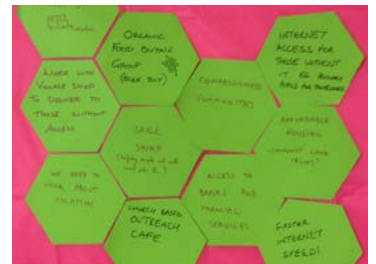
Forming a Mission Community Council is the simplest and most informal way to make changes to the governance of your Mission Community. You can do it immediately with no need for application forms or legal changes. It's just an informal agreement so it's the ideal way to try out working together as you can adapt it until it works for you, or stop it at any time. Ideally it should have representatives from every PCC, but sometimes you may find that two or three parishes work more naturally together so you could start with that with other parishes joining at a later date.

Each PCC still legally has to meet regularly, however this can be simplified so that the majority of the discussion is at Mission Community level and PCC's can then have a much shorter meeting just to agree the recommendations of the Mission Community Council. This can be as simple as each PCC moving into breakout groups at the end of a Mission Community meeting, or by a short follow up PCC meeting using an online platform such as Zoom.

Joint Councils

Joint Councils are a more formalised approach to working together as a Mission Community and require legal changes which diocesan staff would support you through. There are two types of Joint Council.

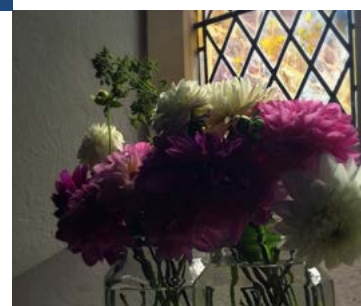
1. Each PCC delegates all powers to the Joint Council. The PCC then goes into abeyance and does not meet regularly. Its only legal requirement is to hold the APCM to perform its legal functions, elect officers and representatives to the Joint Council and to agree to continue as part of the Joint Council for the coming year.
2. Each PCC delegates specific areas to the Joint Council but retains others (for example, mission and worship planning may be delegated but care of the building retained). In this case each PCC will still need to meet regularly but meeting should be shorter.



Organisation resource sheet 3 – cont



Photo by Annie Spratt on Unsplash



Pastoral Reorganisation

Pastoral reorganisation is when two or more parishes are dissolved and a new single parish boundary is created. It is a legal change and requires wider public consultation. Usually one building in the new parish boundary retains parish church status with the other building(s) becoming a chapel of ease. There is a single PCC with responsibility for the care of souls in the geographical area and the repair and maintenance of all buildings. If you have a number of PCC's struggling to have enough people to be quorate it could be worth considering pastoral reorganisation as well as a Joint Council so that the responsibilities can be shared by the whole Mission Community.

Organisation resource sheet 4

Models of Ministry

Area of Ministry:	Yes we'd like to try	No this won't help us	Maybe needs further thought
Model:			

Area of Ministry:	Yes we'd like to try	No this won't help us	Maybe needs further thought
Model:			