

**Collaborative Ministry
in the Diocese of Coventry
1998 – 2008**

A Review

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“As a sign and tool of the coming kingdom of God
the church has an end not in itself
but in the future of a humanity
that is reconciled to God
and united by common praise of God in his kingdom”
(Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol 3, p45)

Introduction

This report looks at the development of Ministry Leadership Teams in the diocese of Coventry between 1998 and 2008. In the first part (paragraphs 1-31), I set the Coventry scheme in context by exploring the impact of certain theological developments on the practical questions of ministry, especially in an Anglican setting, in the last decades of the twentieth century. I then turn, in the second part (paras 32-70), to the way in which MLTs have developed and are now perceived within the diocese and parishes. This part includes valuable material drawn from a survey undertaken in recent weeks. In Part Three (paras 71-78) I summarise the recommendations I wish to offer for consideration by the diocese as part of its thinking for the future development of MLTs. I have also added three appendices offering further thoughts on a number of issues that have arisen and a selection of books for suggested further reading.

Part One - Contexts

1. There have always been lay ministries in the church. Originally there were only lay ministries in the church. Fundamentally there can be only lay ministries in the church. That is to say, all acts of service for, by or in the church grow from the response of the whole people of God (the **laos**) to the mission of God in the world. It is through their many and varied ministries of love and service that Christian people are called to bear witness in the wider world to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We do this as part of our hope for, in Pannenberg's words, *a human future reconciled to God*.
2. These varied ministries are, in truth, one ministry: a ministry in which reconciliation, witness and praise combine to make a Christian life. Paul makes this clear in his correspondence with the Corinthian gatherings in the early 50s CE, where already issues of status have begun to emerge. For Paul the many ministries of Christian witness are supported by the many charisms of service which in themselves depend on the varied gifts of the spirit bestowed by the grace of God. But all are one in the way they reveal and repeat the life that Jesus lived. And in his later letter to the gathering at Philippi Paul reinforces this view of ministry by linking it to an understanding of Christ as the one who deliberately and consciously gives up any sense of status in order to serve the needs of others. Ministry is exercised in the image of Christ who did not think equality with God something to be snatched.
3. By the end of the first century CE other ways of distinguishing the varieties of Christian ministry had begun to emerge alongside answers to questions about

authority within the Christian community. Ministry came increasingly to be defined as, and limited to, the work of a smaller group within the whole people of God whose task it was to bear witness, to teach and to exercise authority, on the boundaries of church and world, as visible signs of love and grace but also as mediators between God, God's chosen people and God's world.

4. Despite the growing power of these orders of bishop and priest there are many examples where we see authority for decision-making being shared with lay people, especially in the appointment of leaders.
5. From this time on the historical record tends to focus on the doings of these visible leaders, the bishops and priests. But the witness of the rest, though increasingly invisible, is not forgotten. Indeed we have many strong hints that the growth of the church in the second and third centuries is not least due to the many acts of silent witness, love and praise by which Christian people cared for their neighbours. This largely unwritten history is nevertheless the real story of God's continuing mission to the world: a story of hope for a new humanity reconciled to God.
6. This report is not a place even to begin to sketch the twists and turns of the relationship between ordained and lay in the subsequent history of the church, although an alternative laity-centred account is waiting to be written.
7. Until 1894 the Anglican parish had had a range of responsibilities for civil as well as church life through the "vestry". In 1919, PCCs were established to encourage continued lay involvement in Anglican church life, though often in practice doing little more than "helping the vicar". Nationally, lay participation in Anglican affairs through the Church Assembly was largely in the control of one family – the Cecils – and was conservative in outlook, both with a small and a large "C". Alongside, this, however, the 1930s saw a number of developments towards more social awareness through the development of the Student Christian Movement (SCM) and the influence of William Temple. It is to the 1930s that we can look for many of the ambiguities of subsequent Anglicanism, not least in the relationship of clergy and laity.
8. By the years after the end of World War II, then, a number of factors had combined to make the relationship between clergy and laity a most pressing concern for theology and for church life. These included:
 - A new historical understanding of biblical texts and church history that began to reinterpret the past along the lines just sketched out.
 - A suspicion about the role of ideology and the quest for power in human affairs along with an enhanced awareness that the church was also implicated in these very human traits.
 - A more critical, participative democratic order in many aspects of life along with a greater distrust of traditional elites

- The subsequent decline in authority of those groups which had come to exercise power in society from the eighteenth century on: doctors, lawyers, clergy; as well as the more traditional holders of authority: landowners and bishops.
 - Colonialism gave way to various forms of (local) national autonomy.
 - An increasingly normative use of rights language in moral and political theory and practice was an attempt to protect the status of individuals and minorities.
 - Nearly universal education in America and Europe gave wider access to knowledge.
9. Between 1945 and 1970, then, a series of cultural shifts brought about a desire among many articulate “lay” people to share in church government, in ministry and in theological exploration without wish also to join the ranks of the professionalized clergy. In theological terms a combination of all these factors (and no doubt others) led to a radical revisioning of church authority and ministry, and indeed an exploration of what the church is as well as what it is for. In the Church of England, the growth of the *Parish and People* movement and of synodical forms of government are mark these changes.
10. This whistlestop tour provides the context for two key documents for the reassertion of lay ministry and lay authority in the churches: the report *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council, approved by a vote of 2151 for and 5 against in 1964, and the report *Baptism, Eucharist Ministry* of the Lima Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1982.
11. The Second Vatican Council envisaged a crucial witnessing role belonging properly to the whole people of God, out of which particular ministries emerge. However what is given with one hand is apparently quickly taken away by the other. In *Lumen Gentium* II:10 we read: “The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rule the priestly people.” In what remains an assymetrical relationship whereby power fundamentally continues to rest with the bishop and priest, the priesthood of the faithful laity is essentially passive. Lay people are the seedbed for the ordained, they receive (but do not give) teaching and sacraments. In the continuing hierarchy they stay at the bottom of the heap.
12. This is in stark contrast to the ecclesiology embraced at Lima in 1982. Here it is the community of Christians that receives “diverse and complementary gifts,” all members of the community are called to discover the gifts they have received, which they are then to use. “The term ordained ministry refers to persons... whom the church appoints for service by ordination” (M5 and M7).
13. Two issues stand out starkly here:
- The question of power, its exercise and its checks and balances remains fundamentally unaddressed

- The different underlying theories of ordination – does it confer an ontological change on the holder of the office or are the ordained essentially exercising an agreed function within the whole community – remain unresolved.
14. These contrasting, if not contradictory, approaches to ecclesiology, and therefore to the nature and practice of ministry, are the real context within which lay ministry and lay authority grew, and was encouraged to grow, in the 1980s and 1990s. To the extent to which the deeper questions of the exercise of power in the church and the nature of ordained ministry were never really answered the growth of lay ministry and issues of lay authority remain in practice problematic.
 15. Theory and practice in Anglicanism reflects that ambivalence. Most English Anglican dioceses in the 1990s developed options for authorized lay ministries in pastoral care, evangelism and the leading of worship over and above the traditional lay roles of Reader, churchwarden and organist (for example). The role of the PCC in relation to that of the incumbent minister of a parish had already been enshrined in the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure, 1956, where section 2 gives the minister and PCC a “duty” to consult together and to “co-operat[e]... in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical”: duties that have been interpreted in widely different ways.
 16. It may come to be seen that one of the greatest missed opportunities of the 1980s was the lack of attention paid to John Tiller’s report, *A Strategy for the Church’s Ministry* (1983). As well as providing a detailed account of the development of the ministerial task in post-war Britain he also provided a potential blueprint for development, with particular emphasis on collaborative forms of local ministry and local governance. Tiller is especially strong on the way in which ordained and other licensed ministries fit into the life and witness of the “pilgrim people of God” as a whole: “The clergy would continue to be involved in as much parochial ministry as at present. The essential difference is that instead of forming the ‘bottleneck’ through which all ministry must flow they would become partners in an enterprise involving the contribution of each member. In making their own contribution the priests and deacons would have the opportunity to do what the rest of the laity are encouraged to do now, that is to use their gifts to glorify God according to their ability and not to attempt tasks for which they are completely unfitted” (para 291, page 162). Revisiting the Tiller report at diocesan, deanery and local church level would still provide many valuable lessons and insights for future strategy, policy and practice.
 17. We should remember, too, that growing financial pressures across the Church of England in the late 1980s and early 1990s were reinforcing already existing serious doubts about the possibility of holding full-time stipendiary ministry to the levels first reached in the 1860s and maintained throughout the 1950s and 1960s – even if enough people could be found to fill existing posts.

18. The theological and the practical came together in the development of diocesan schemes to develop various forms of local ministry of which those growing out of the work of Robin Greenwood, first in Chelmsford and then in Gloucester, were perhaps the most fully worked out and influential.
19. For Greenwood and his colleagues there was from the start an important distinction to be made between “local ministry” and “ministry leadership teams” (See, R Greenwood, *The Ministry Team Handbook*, 2000, p. xi for this distinction)
20. Local ministry “refers to the ways in which, increasingly all Christians, because of their commitment to Christ expressed in baptism, are sharing in the ministry that serves God’s purposes through the whole church, in many differing ways.” This might include, for example, a group of people, ordained and lay, sharing responsibility for bereavement care, for baptism preparation and follow-up, for youth work, and so on.
21. Ministry Leadership Teams, on the other hand, “consist of those in ordained and licensed ministry and others who, together and in diversity, lead, encourage and build up the work of the whole Body of Christ.” This group would, therefore be responsible for:
 - identifying needs,
 - establishing strategies in the light of those perceived needs
 - encouraging others to exercise a ministry to meet those needs,
 - ensuring appropriate training,
 - having an eye to the quality of ministerial work being done,
 - being concerned for the well-being of those exercising ministry,
 - being aware of changes and trends that might affect strategy and delivery of ministry.
22. Throughout the 1990s a number of approaches to ministry began to emerge with close family resemblances to Greenwood’s model. These included:
 - Local Collaborative Ministry – a Scottish Episcopal Church initiative
 - Local Shared Ministry – the approach of the Church in New Zealand
 - Mutual Ministry – famously associated with the diocese of Northern Michigan but also spreading to other dioceses in the United States and other denominations in North America.
23. These different models have a number of factors in common:
 - They all begin from a relational model influenced by Trinitarian theology. In this model, the establishing of relationship is at the heart of the gospel and the basis for all other ministry. The work of John Zizioulas and Jürgen

Moltmann is central here, and in the UK especially, the Trinitarian theology of Colin Gunton.

- They therefore valorise collaboration as a way of expressing in human and ministry terms the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity.
- This commitment to collaboration works at both the strategic and the practical levels. Local ministry is collaborative in that it seeks out and encourages the use of diverse gifts. Ministry Leadership Teams are collaborative in that discernment and decision-making become shared responsibilities.

24. But the link between collaboration and a relational model of Trinity tends to be asserted rather than tested. Indeed, although Moltmann, for example, powerfully explores the historical working out of the Trinitarian relations, it is noticeable that when he does so he comes to reaffirm the power of the cross and the proclamation of the kingdom of God. In other words, trinitarian reflection and longing for communion is grounded in incarnational practice. The theology of collaborative ministry is unfortunately not always so grounded but can easily begin to float on a cloud of “relationship”.

25. By the turn of the millennium it was possible to identify a spectrum of possibilities for the practice of ministry:

- **Directive Ministry:** there is one ministry – that of the ordained – and all others are passive recipients of that ministry
- **Delegated Ministry:** while the priest is the primary minister, he or she will receive some assistance from a few lay people (usually selected by the priest) who will help in the practice of ministry. All others are passive recipients
- **Team Ministry:** the priest remains the primary minister but is supported by a team of others, who may not (all) have been selected by her/him. Together they may delegate work to others or they may do it themselves, but they will look to the priest for the primary strategic decisions.
- **Shared Leadership:** the team consists of priest(s) and others with no assumed hierarchy although there may be agreement about the responsibilities of one or more. The team may delegate ministry tasks to one of its own number or to others while focussing on strategy.

26. But there were other changes afoot. If the 1960s had raised the spectre of “secularisation”, social scientists in 1980s had recognised the reality of, in Callum Brown’s phrase, “the death of Christian Britain”. In other words it could no longer be assumed that the Christian message would be heard or understood; Christians could no longer anticipate playing a key role in the development of a moral consensus in contemporary society.

27. In response to this the 1990s saw a reaffirmation of the importance of mission. Mission was no longer something to be done overseas, it needed to happen at

home as well. The Decade of Evangelism was an attempt to effect just such a reorientation. Whatever the value of that initiative may have been, some others that have grown from it: Mission-Shaped Church and Fresh Expressions, for example, have started to draw together the tasks of ministry and mission and the work of Steven Croft has begun to offer alternative models for ministry

28. But mission itself remains a problematic issue: is it primarily about in-gathering or about reaching-out? Is it about church growth or about service to the community? Again this links to the primary orientation of collaborative ministry, indeed of ministry as a whole.
29. Paul Lakeland, in one of his powerful explorations of the role of the laity in the Roman Catholic church has written: “ we can...see that the most helpful way of distinguishing callings in the church is not the traditional one of ‘clergy’ and ‘laity,’ since it cannot absorb the category of lay ecclesial ministry. Rather the best distinction is between ministry in the church and ministry to the world. Taken together, these two observations elevate the role of what we have traditionally known as the laity, just as they put ‘ordained’ ministry in its place as one vocation among others.” (*Catholicism at the Crossroads*, 2007, p43f)
30. We can, then, add a further model to the spectrum of (23) above:
 - **Mutual Ministry:** the participation of every baptised person, according to gift, in a ministry which is properly Christ’s: reaching out into the world in the midst of daily life. The chief role of the ordained minister is to support this primary ministry of the baptised to the world.
31. In our consideration of the spectrum of ministry models we need to add a further dimension: is ministry primarily oriented into the church or into the world? Or to put it another way, how far is an MLT, where one exists, there to support “ministry in the church” and how far to encourage “ministry to the world”?

Part Two - Patterns in Ministry

32. When in 1994 the diocese of Coventry began to discuss likely future patterns for ministry, the issues we have just outlined formed the broader background and context. The more immediate context is, of course, the nature of the diocese: urban and suburban parishes firmly located in manufacturing but facing an uncertain future; rural parishes at the end of a period of steep decline in the agricultural economy with populations made up of the more or less active retired and families looking to the urban centres for employment, shopping, leisure activities and maybe education as well. The 1990s saw the beginning of an adjusting of the church's ministry within the diocese to meet these changing economic and demographic patterns.
33. In March 1997 the report of the *Patterns of Ministry* Working Party recognised that "all Christians are called to engage in ministry in all aspects of their daily lives and are authorised for their ministry by their baptism/confirmation" (2.1.f) and that "the Church has a responsibility to give men and women the confidence to exercise this ministry" (2.1.g)
34. *Patterns of Ministry* goes on to assert that "No one should minister independently or in isolation" (3) and recommends that "as a matter of urgency", "the whole diocese should work towards Ministry Leadership Teams being established under the authority of the Bishop in every parish (or cluster of parishes) and embracing every area of non-parochial ministry in the diocese" (4.1)
35. The first comment to be made on this recommendation is that, ten years on, this aspiration has not been met. Although there are a significant number of MLTs in existence, in a range of parochial settings, by no means every parish finds its ministry supported by an MLT and no "non-parochial ministry" appears to work with this model.
36. It could be that the 1997 aspiration was too great, but it could also be that there remained, in practice, some doubt about the value of MLTs, and no overwhelming desire on the part of diocesan decision-makers to embrace this vision, resource it and encourage it as the **primary model** for ensuring ministry delivery. There is some evidence, outlined below, that this may be the case.
37. Between the official recognition of the MLT scheme in 1998 and the present day some 34 MLTs have come into existence covering 48 separate parishes from a diocesan total of 233 (21%). These are spread across the range of parochial types in the diocese: urban, suburban, rural; single parishes, groups, multi-parish benefices.
38. ***In 1998 the diocese of Coventry adopted the MLT model as its policy for the development of ministry. I recommend that if the diocese wishes indeed to reaffirm the MLT model as its primary model for ensuring ministry delivery, this***

will need to be communicated afresh across the diocese, with positive encouragement and resourcing to enable more parishes to develop the model.

39. **Patterns of Ministry** (4.2) affirms that “the precise nature of Ministry Leadership Teams will vary depending on the context within which that ministry is being exercised. Ten years on, in May 2007, notes prepared for the Diocesan Ministry Handbook develop that theologically: “...the principle of incarnation within the trinity itself, manifested in the sending of the Son, implies an adaptive character in the triune life. *Internally* within the trinity there is a relationship of collaboration or collegiality, but *externally* in relation to the world, the persons act individually in the procession of the Son and the Spirit from the Father. This allows for a variety of styles of ministry, depending on the context. The corollary of this position for the church is that at different times and in different places there is a legitimate plurality of adaptive forms, rather than a single way of being church...”
40. The relationship between diocesan policy and parish practice then is this:
- There is a policy affirming the value of MLT as the primary model for ensuring ministry delivery across the diocese
 - The diocese outlines (5) core principles for an MLT
 - Parishes are encouraged to use the MLT model within those core principles, but in the light of their own perceived resources and needs
 - The diocese provides a mentoring and learning programme for parishes developing an MLT
 - Diocese and parish share in the review process for the MLT
41. The five core principles (also characterised as “non-negotiable features”) of an MLT in the diocese of Coventry are:
- The commitment of the whole local church to collaborative ministry
 - A team that has been called out, not merely representative, and is committed together long term
 - Responsibility devolved to it by the PCC for developing a strategic, mission-focussed, sustainable, collaborative pattern of ministry
 - Commitment by the MLT to learning and training through a diocesan appointed mentor and learning programme
 - Commissioning by the Diocesan Bishop
42. We will now look more deeply at each of these principles through the responses to the questionnaire. I am grateful to all respondents for the time spent in answering my questions.
43. **“The commitment of the whole local church to collaborative ministry”** Many respondents acknowledged that in practice the development of the MLT seemed to have impinged very little on the churchgoers of the parish, although

in others there was some recognition and impact:

- *“suspicion at first, gradual acceptance, appreciation after about 3 years”*
- *“growing slowly – most people have never really understood what it was for or why we had it”*
- *“most people are still unaware of the MLT – but probably no more so than they are of the PCC!”*
- *“we have given the church community a sense of purpose and direction, but it’s early days yet because, for the first year, the MLT was heavily involved with the training programme with little time or space to impact the church”*
- *“most are unaware of its existence even though all is publicised”*
- *“having an MLT and action teams has provided a focal point for ideas and growth.. has also made Church Council meetings more efficient [and] provided a structured way for people to be involved in the areas where they have a passion and/or talent”*
- *“is giving focus, energy, direction”*
- *“there is little awareness of the MLT”*
- *“Irrelevant”*
- *“struggling to communicate effectively with ordinary church members”*

44. **“A team that has been called out, not merely representative, and is committed together long term.”** From the responses to the questionnaire, most MLTs appear to be very stable in their membership and to be developing trust and commitment out of which work can grow:

- *“they are supportive and encouraging of each other...developing a closer working relationship...challenge each other in their discipleship”*
- *“slowly growing together – but often struggling... encouraging each other, getting to know each other, learning from each other”*
- *“frustration”*
- *“a great increase of maturity and understanding”*
- *“members really energised by participating”*
- *“we’ve formed a strong fellowship which extends beyond MLT business”*
- *“lifechanging”*
- *“still significant confusion over role despite printed agreed job descriptions. Members want to help but seem to lack confidence. ‘Clergy know best’ – is the unconscious position of MLT members and wider congregation.”*
- *“generated enormous trust and mutual support: brought out talents”*

45. Some observations:

- By embracing a collaborative model of ministry MLTs are pioneering a way of being church which will take some time to percolate through to other

members of a congregation, or to a PCC (for example), or indeed to other licensed ministers such as Readers or the ordained clergy

- There is always a danger that MLTs will become a “church within a church”, gaining the trust and loyalty and support from one another and finding in that a sufficient expression of Christian communion. How to avoid that temptation will be an important issue, especially for the more “successful” MLTs.
- Linked to this is the concern that MLTs may at times find the joy of meeting together overshadows the tasks to which they are called; energised themselves, they may not energise others.

46. **“Responsibility devolved to it by the PCC for developing a strategic, mission-focussed, sustainable, collaborative pattern of ministry”** An MLT is seen as essentially a task-oriented group, related to, but different from, the PCC. The questionnaire asked what links the MLT has with other parish officers and the PCC:

- *“Most are members of PCC, some are churchwardens”*
- *“MLT members elected to PCC... replacements sought from within PCC”*
- *“Reports to PCC”*
- *We publish our minutes for the three PCCs”*
- *“The MLT reports at every PCC and seeks necessary ratifications”*
- *“All the MLT are on the PCC... any decisions which require action are taken by the whole PCC”*
- *“Some are on the PCC...MLT always give a report at PCC meetings”*
- *“We provide a report to each Church Council”*
- *“We report to PCC after each of our meetings. We occasionally have meetings open to PCC members for their input/ideas”*
- *“annual shared meeting”*
- *“we lack recognition in the church... it is in tension with the PCC”*

47. The structural relationship between an MLT and the PCC is important. Even if the people involved may be the same, the tasks of each body are quite different. We could characterise this as a difference between management and leadership. As the organisational theorist Charles Handy has put it, “Management is about systems, leadership is about people.” The legal as well as practical roles of the PCC often focus – and not inappropriately – on finance, fabric and short-term policy. This in practice has tended to squeeze out those longer-term, and often difficult issues of strategy and the nurture of gifts. To devolve responsibility for exploring those issues to another group can be valuable. However the terms of that devolution need to be spelled out clearly: where do decisions need to come back to the PCC? How will the PCC and its issues be incorporated into the strategy for mission, sustainability and ministry which is the MLTs brief?

48. ***I recommend that, where a parish decides to adopt the MLT model for ensuring ministry delivery, a clear working agreement is drawn up in the PCC making a clear demarcation of responsibilities, establishing reporting processes and decision-making procedures.***
49. Closely related to this is the question of the relationship between an MLT and the incumbent minister of the parish. Many respondents to the questionnaire, and in one-to-one conversation, raised concerns about the vulnerability of MLTs to changes of clergy. In some cases clergy did not appear sympathetic to the model, or to its local manifestation. In others, it was felt that changes to the ethos and the practice of an MLT were brought about by clergy insensitively and without consultation. In others again, there was some evident tension between the understanding of the model by clergy and by (some) other members of the MLT. Of course, there may be strong arguments for change, which should not be ignored, but the management of change does not always in the past appear to have been well handled.
50. Some of these issues are more properly dealt with below under training and mentoring, but there is also something here about the importance placed on the existence, role and ethos of an MLT when advertising and interviewing for a new incumbent, or when combining parishes into new benefices, groups or teams.
51. ***I recommend that the diocese examines its advertising, interviewing and selection procedures for new posts, or when undertaking pastoral reorganisation, to ensure the needs of the MLT for support and growth are met.***
52. ***I recommend that clergy, churchwardens, members of PCCs and members of MLTs be encouraged to explore through a training programme, the management of change and how to overcome resistance to change.***
53. What do respondents think are the chief responsibilities of MLTs?
- *“To get OLMs, we needed an MLT... It did not have any specific responsibilities at all, but met to train and to pray for the parish. With hindsight the absence of any practical responsibilities was a real mistake and caused a lot of difficulties*
 - *“Collaborative leadership, planning, purpose and vision”*
 - *“Vision, sharing wisdom on a range of various practical, mission and pastoral matters”*
 - *“(1) Giving direction...(2) Developing people”*
 - *“Varies with each member....to be the visionaries for the church and support for the vicar (who spends countless hours supporting them)”*
 - *“a think tank developing models for moving forward”*
 - *“giving pastoral oversight, nurturing and mentoring individuals”*
 - *“opted to concentrate only on those aspects of ministry which related to church growth”*

- *“seeking to discern our church’s role in God’s mission”*
 - *“prioritising ministry activities”*
 - *“to enable ministry and mission in the parishes....to assist the ordained ministers in overseeing the group and to support an OLM in training”*
 - *“developing vision, overseeing ministry areas, sharing in leadership and pastoral care”*
54. As would be anticipated, the perceived responsibilities of MLTs are very varied but some respondents noted a real tension between practical leadership and consultative leadership: how far does the MLT actually do the tasks it identifies, how far does it delegate those tasks (where possible) to others? Without clarity of purpose, however, without a shared understanding of the tasks of ministry in a particular place and without a clearly articulated (and reviewed, and assessed, and developed) statement of intent, initiatives are easily blown off course or simply not achieved.
55. A general observation: although many respondents recognise the role of MLTs in stimulating the mission of the church, none spoke of close links with other community groups, or noted any significant of the MLT on the wider community. Maybe that was all taken for granted; or maybe there is more work to be done on linking the MLT with the reaching-out work of the church.
56. ***I recommend that MLTs are helped and encouraged to develop the working agreement with a PCC (recommendation 2) into a clear statement of intent linked to a limited number of goals, which are communicated to the whole congregation, and more widely where appropriate, and which forms the basis for activity. These should be reviewed and developed annually.***
57. The fourth core principle of an MLT has been characterised as: **“Commitment by an MLT to learning and training through a diocesan appointed mentor and learning programme”** It was around these areas that respondents flagged up some real and serious issues. First we look at mentoring:
- *“we were given a mentor who certainly at the start attended most meeting. [Later] the mentor attended some meetings, but gradually we were left to our own devices”*
 - *“[we had an] excellent mentor – who seemed as lost in the process as the rest of the MLT...but...who was part of the good relationships within the team”*
 - *“we need a mentor...”*
 - *“we have benefited from having a mentor who has now moved on.*
 - *“We all feel that finding a new mentor would really help us to ‘earth’ the training in the reality of team and parish life”*
 - *“Did the diocesan training scheme mostly with the first mentor. The MLT were very kind but it was mostly a waste of time... he didn’t understand the older members at all”*

- *“The perception of what mentors understood mentoring to be varied a great deal and was never really bottomed out. The essential mentors meetings were good but no substitute for evaluating, monitoring mentors and how they worked. This was never adequately resourced...”*
 - *“it’s useful to have a mentor to give external insights. But the role needs skills and insights – how many people actually have those skills?”*
 - *“[as a mentor] I was left to do this role pretty much on my own.”*
58. The mentor was given a key role within the Coventry diocese approach. MLTs valued the idea of a mentor. Sadly the reality for most parish and mentor respondents was that it is a role whose development has not been properly resourced over the first ten years of the scheme. Individual relationships between MLTs and their mentors have been largely positive, but there was a strong sense that the role needed to be better resourced and more coherently embedded into the long-term life of MLTs if any real value was to accrue.
59. ***I recommend that the diocese takes steps to review the selection, training, support and use of mentors and provides adequate resources to enable this role to be fulfilled.***
60. The training offered to MLTs has also come in for a good deal of criticism in the questionnaire responses. Some answers to the questions “What training did the MLT receive at the beginning?” and “In retrospect how useful was this?” included:
- *“Extensive [at the beginning] – but I feel with hindsight, largely irrelevant”*
 - *“Usefulness was probably mixed, but it did give us a period of teambuilding...”*
 - *“Not very [useful]”*
 - *“Very helpful at the start but became too abstract as the team gelled and wanted to get on with the job”*
 - *“No [initial training]”*
 - *“Original members remember virtually no training. In retrospect, next to useless... a great opportunity missed by diocesan incompetence and lack of clarity”*
 - *“No [initial training]. We were caught in a diocesan changeover...”*
 - *“The training seemed a bit haphazard and sometimes a bit unrelated to the previous meeting...”*
 - *“Some of it was useful... but mostly it was a time when the team felt frustrated at not being able to get to grips with things”*
 - *“Some of the training seemed simplistic compared with the calibre of the membership”*
 - *“Some minimal input from the diocese. Bits of it were helpful”*
61. In general it would be fair to say that, for most respondents, the diocese has been perceived not to have met its responsibility to resource appropriate and

useful training either to enable an MLT to begin nor to support its ongoing life and development. The shining exception to this was the almost universal praise for the CPAS Leadership course, *Growing Leaders*, which was found to be valuable in its insights and well delivered. Comments included:

- *“The first year was quite intensive, but we found it extremely valuable”*
- *“excellent!!!”*
- *“Extremely useful – gave us concepts to work with, guidance, encouragement...”*
- *“Excellent – we bonded as a team, had ongoing input/support, received teaching/nudging/inspiration about things that we were and are grappling with – timely”*

Apart from this input, most respondents felt they had been thrust back on their own resources and initiative to find training for the MLT of which they were a part.

62. It may not be helpful to look at the historical reasons for these perceptions of a lack of training. But it is important to address some key principles:

- In setting up the scheme the diocese deliberately and wisely opted for a “learning on the job” model rather than a heavily “front-loaded” approach. This is appropriate in a social setting that values practical learning, but it does mean that the available resources need to be well-crafted not only to deliver properly targeted initial training but also be imaginatively responsive to developing needs.
- It has been acknowledged that the initial training materials were intended to be temporary, “to get things started” with a more robust and rigorous course to be developed later. Unfortunately resources and circumstances meant that this did not happen and so neither teams nor mentors have had quality training materials to deliver and build on – with the exception of the CPAS course *Growing Leaders*.
- In the light of core principle 4 the diocesan resources available to meet the training needs of MLTs ought to be realistic, and even generous. After all, if it is indeed diocesan policy to see MLTs as the primary model for ensuring the delivery of ministry, then the funding of their set up and developmental needs should be high priority in the diocesan budget.
- If it has to be acknowledged that budgetary pressures mean that diocesan resources cannot be made available to meet all the training needs of MLTs, then at least MLTs should be encouraged to “buy in” those needs, if necessary from an agreed list of available resources. This would mean that a diocesan training team would take on a significant “commissioning” and “informing” role.

- But “buy-in” is the operative word here. It may not be easy for many MLTs to meet the costs of even minimal training needs. Thought should be given to ways in which the local costs of MLT training can be subsidized either from a central training budget, or even by setting these costs off against the diocesan quota for that parish.
63. ***I recommend that the diocese, as a matter of urgency, looks at the initial and on-going training needs of MLTs and makes decisions about how a rigorous and robust programme can be resourced financially and made available to parishes.***
64. The last of the five core principles is that MLTs are to be **commissioned by the diocesan bishop**. This implies a set of mutual responsibilities and accountabilities. We have already raised some questions about the way in which the diocese fulfils its responsibilities for the setting up and ongoing life of MLTs. It is important also to affirm that MLTs are not only locally-based but also appropriately under episcopal oversight. Commissioning is indeed one way in which this oversight is expressed. But review is another. A number of respondents expressed uncertainty about how an MLT was reviewed and recommissioned. There are diocesan procedures but how well are these adhered to, and what are the implications of review for the ongoing life, training needs and resources of an MLT?
65. Perhaps the act of commissioning is not sufficient as an expression of the mutual responsibility for ministry between diocese and parish, bishop and MLT (and, of course, others). Perhaps just as churchwardens receive an annual visitation from the archdeacon and clergy and readers have formal times to celebrate their ministry with the bishop, so the same might be developed for MLTs – a diocesan event to celebrate, support and renew this key approach to ministry. And just as MLTs may be asked to report annually to the PCC (see recommendation in para 54 above) so an annual return of their statement of intent and brief report on activity would be of value in diocesan planning as well as a sign of mutual accountability.
66. ***I recommend that thought be given to lock MLTs into the life of the diocese and show episcopal care and oversight by, for example, an annual diocesan event and a process of reporting.***
67. Some other more general but important responses came out of the questionnaire which I present here:
- In answer to the question “Do you think your MLT has a future?”: “Yes, but would welcome guidance/ideas on how to develop”
 - “the main factor of the MLT approach over against the vicar-in-majesty model is that there is enormous potential for energy being wasted on establishing/healing relationships before ministry gets a creative chance.

This MLT spent over a year just talking and not doing much, which was an expensive but valuable investment. It wasn't actually wasted time..."

- *"A protocol needs to be devised in case of pastoral breakdown within a MLT. Perhaps all MLT members should have their post reaffirmed by the [PCC] every three years, without however going down the route of an elected MLT membership. It helps to have a stable MLT with staying power"*
- *"The team approach gives much more creativity in every area of church life. It gives mutual support for the members. The vicar has a talented team of loving, creative individuals to work with. It encourages the congregation to see that 'ordinary people' can take on leadership and have gifts in this area. It gives the whole church much more sense of purpose and belonging because the team is modelling this."*
- *"Our suspicion is that MLT was an enthusiasm of people who have left the diocese and that whilst the theory is approved by successors it is, in practice, being left to fade away"*

68. In summary, the responses to the questionnaires are broadly positive about the MLT initiative as it is developing in parishes across the diocese. Respondents point to a growth in commitment, vision and creativity as well as a deepening of faith and a focus on practical ministry. This suggests that the model works (at least for a significant number of the 21% of parishes in the diocese that are using it) and has enough flexibility to meet the different needs of a range of parochial settings and at different times in a parish's life.

69. There is however, an almost universally less positive response to the perceptions in MLTs and others about the way in which the diocese is fulfilling its responsibilities for developing the programme and resourcing and supporting existing MLT schemes through mentoring, and especially training.

70. My own perception is that, while there is undoubted enthusiasm for the MLT model at every level of diocesan life, there are some hidden, therefore unresolved, tensions:

- There is a strongly articulated commitment to collaborative ministry as the future model. But there is still a set of issues about the relationship between these collaborative models and perceptions of the role of ordained clergy. Is ordination primarily a function of the church's need for ministry, or does it confer some real ontological change upon the ordained, and so somehow "set apart" ordained ministry from other forms? This issue exercises the church much more widely than the diocese of Coventry or even the Anglican communion, but it is one that has to be tried and tested in the everyday life of parish and community.
- Linked to this is the question of "leadership". It is fascinating to observe that many dioceses are establishing "leadership" programmes, but these are almost always directed only at ordained clergy – and often set up in

ways that prevent even ministers in secular employment from participating. But if the MLT is the preferred model, then leadership programmes should surely not be making a distinction between ordained and lay, let alone different categories of “ordained” or licensed ministers. It is also worth remembering that many members of MLTs are themselves skilled leaders in other settings.

- “Collaborative leadership” is, of course, only one model of leadership, and a recent training programme for leaders in other walks of life identified at the present time 28 different models of leadership development! “Collaborative leadership” is slow to develop, vulnerable to changes of personnel and depends on trusting relationships. It takes time and patience to grow. This should be a key role for mentors who themselves need to be skilled in understanding and nurturing leadership development.
- Finally the provision of suitable training at every stage of the life of an MLT is crucial. This, to repeat, is the area where there is most dissatisfaction expressed by respondents.

Part Three

In this report I have placed the policy and practice statements of the diocese of Coventry about Ministry Leadership Teams alongside the perceptions of MLT members and others about the working out of that policy in parish life.

In highlighting some areas for development, I want nevertheless to recognise the generally very positive role that MLTs are perceived to have in those parishes of the diocese where the model has been embraced.

MLTs are fragile and need nurture, especially in the initial stages of their life. But they are the future. Both the diocese and individual parishes face challenges in planting, protecting them and provoking them into new growth. But MLTs are without doubt a necessary part of discovering the next stage of that new humanity to which we are called, in which reconciliation and praise become signs of the kingdom which is not yet but for which we live in hope.

A summary of recommendations is attached

**Paul Wignall
Golden Apple Associates**

2 March 2008

A Review of Ministry Leadership Teams in the Diocese of Coventry

Summary of Recommendations

71. If the diocese wishes to affirm the MLT model as its primary model for ensuring ministry delivery, this will need to be communicated afresh across the diocese, with positive encouragement and resourcing to enable more parishes to develop the model.
72. I recommend that, where a parish decides to adopt the MLT model for ensuring ministry delivery, a clear working agreement is drawn up in the PCC making a clear demarcation of responsibilities, establishing reporting processes and decision-making procedures
73. I recommend that the diocese examines its advertising, interviewing and selection procedures for new posts, or when undertaking pastoral reorganisation, to ensure the needs of the MLT for support and growth are met.
74. I recommend that clergy, churchwardens, members of PCCs and members of MLTs be encouraged to explore through a training programme, the management of change and how to overcome resistance to change.
75. I recommend that MLTs are helped and encouraged to develop the working agreement with a PCC (recommendation 2) into a clear statement of intent linked to a limited number of goals, which are communicated to the whole congregation, and more widely where appropriate, and which forms the basis for activity. These should be reviewed and developed annually in consultation the PCC and presented to the APCM
76. I recommend that the diocese takes steps to review the selection, training, support and use of mentors and provides adequate resources to enable this role to be fulfilled.
77. I recommend that the diocese, as a matter of urgency, looks at the initial and on-going training needs of MLTs and makes decisions about how a rigorous and robust programme can be resourced financially and made available to parishes.
78. I recommend that thought be given to lock MLTs into the life of the diocese and show episcopal care and oversight by, for example, an annual diocesan event and a process of reporting.

Appendix A

Shared Leadership and Decision Making

Leadership can be defined as “the way in which a group of people come to achieve a goal by linking their own endeavours to the aims and values of the organisation of which they are a part.” Good leaders encourage:

- an awareness of the strengths and gaps in individuals and the team,
- a learning agenda that builds on the strengths while reducing the gaps,
- personal responsibility to participate in the life and tasks of the team,
- optimism that individuals can change and grow and that aims can be met,
- an innovative spirit in a constantly changing environment,
- emotional resonance within a team which includes for all members high levels of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, and a range of social skills including empathy and rapport.

In a nutshell, leaders have, and encourage in others, a capacity for resonance: they “are stepping up, charting paths through unfamiliar territory, and inspiring people in their organisations, institutions and communities. They are finding new opportunities within today’s challenges, creating hope in the face of fear and despair. These leaders are moving people – powerfully, passionately and purposefully. And they do so while managing the inevitable sacrifices inherent in their roles. They give of themselves in the service of the cause, but they also care for themselves, engaging in renewal to ensure they can sustain resonance over time...resonant leaders are in tune with those around them...” (Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee, *Resonant Leadership* (2005) pp2,4).

For many theorists and practitioners in leadership development, the great model is Sir Ernest Shackleton’s expedition to Antarctica, 1914-1916. In terms of its aims the expedition failed, but Shackleton’s success in bringing the whole of the party to safety despite major disasters was the result not only of his personally inspired leadership on the ground, but also his skill in setting up and nurturing the team. In their book *Shackleton’s Way* (2003), Margot Morrell and Stephanie Capparell identify at least eight lessons we can learn from Shackleton:

- have a clear set of personal values
- turn bad experiences into valuable lessons
- put together an outstanding crew
- create a spirit of camaraderie
- get the best from each individual
- lead strongly and effectively in a crisis
- form sub-teams for tough assignments
- keep the big picture in view and take responsibility for getting there

We might understand how an individual can do this; we may even have been fortunate enough to work with such a leader. It is harder to grasp how shared leadership could reach these levels of commitment, inspiration and results. But if we look at each of those eight points with imagination we can see how, in practice, they can all become part of a team's responsibility for itself, as well as a model for the way in which a leadership team offers insight, inspiration, identity and challenge to the wider group it is tasked with leading.

A ministry leadership team needs to spend time on its own values and the connection between those, the aims, values and strategy of the diocese and the wider church, the personal faith and values of its individual members, and of course be constantly testing those out in the light of a growing understanding of our witness to the gospel.

Seeing itself as a place for learning, it needs to be able to learn from the bad experiences, mistakes and failures as well as its successes. It needs a membership that takes its commitment seriously, both to the task in hand and also to learning the skills that may be required of each individual. A team has to spend time being and doing things together – but without becoming a church within a church; keeping always the task of being responsible for leading the ministry of the local church at the centre. The team as a whole must be willing to step up in a crisis and offer strong leadership, keeping the big picture in view while always being willing to be flexible and adaptable in ways of achieving the goal. And the team must be able to delegate responsibilities either to sub-groups of itself, or to others – seeing delegation not simply as “handing out tasks” but as part of the growth in confidence and skill or others. However delegation without coaching or mentoring, without paying attention to the needs of those to whom tasks are delegated, is of little long-term value.

Shared leadership of this kind takes time and care, and there may be occasions when time just doesn't seem to be available. It is true that there may be moments of crisis when an individual has to “step up” and take responsibility. But these are much more few and far between than those who want to hold to what we have called directive ministry (para 25), or a command-and-control model of leadership like to suggest. Indeed, sometimes we suspect such leaders turn dramas into crises to justify embracing the model.

Shared leadership needs to create a structure which is adaptive, resilient and sustainable so that it is in a position to respond to the unexpected. We can call this agility – the subject of Appendix B.

Appendix B

Agility and Collaborative Leadership

The concept of agility developed in the 1990s in companies involved in creating software for IT solutions. I present this first as a secular model, then as a model for working with voluntary teams, and then suggest some links with shared ministry and Ministry Leadership Teams

Briefly, agility is the capacity of a team or an organisation to respond quickly and flexibly to new challenges in service provision and in policy and strategy. Deriving originally from software development, agility has been described by the think-tank **Demos** as:

- fast decision making
- flexible resource allocation
- an ability to identify emerging trends
- appropriate risk taking
- flexible policy making
- a balance between short term responsiveness and long term management of uncertainty
- an ability to shape the external environment to maximise opportunities and minimise risks, and
- a shared values base

Like any organism, an organisation survives and thrives through the cycle of:

- Scanning (gathering information)
- Responding (meeting new challenges) and
- Shaping (changing the world around)

Agility requires and valorises the development of good relationships and therefore implies some key cultural shifts in the way we view organizations or teams and the people who work in them:

- from organisations to networks
(webmaking)
- from hierarchies to collaborative enterprises
(teammaking)
- from the management of structures to the leadership of human teams
(peoplemaking)
- from an assumption that we react to circumstances to an assertion that humans create outcomes through a responsive engagement with environment and circumstances **(luckmaking)**

More recently agility has been shown to be effective as a model for voluntary groups. An article published in the *Agile Chronicles* blog in February 2008 by Mike Cottmeyer

outlines nine factors for helping people take responsibility for the work they do:

- have a compelling vision
- provide opportunities to get involved
- give simple guidance
- get out of the way
- follow-up
- give accountability for results
- make it okay to make mistakes
- give praise
- have fun

As Cottmeyer sums up “At the end of the day we all want empowered, motivated, and self-directed volunteers that are working towards our common goals. If that doesn’t sound like the people in your organization, take responsibility. Look first at how you are leading your organisation and if you are doing everything you can to create opportunity and empower your team.”

There is much more to be said about the theory and practice of agility, but as a model for empowering individuals to give of their best and to participate in the whole life, aims and values of the team, and then for moving quickly and effectively from insight to result it seems to offer a model from which Ministry Leadership Teams can learn.

This is not least because agility works with a direct link between strategy and outcome: strategy without a practical way of putting in to practice is of little value, and practice without the capacity for reflection, development and change is counter-productive. By expressing a powerful vision, making each individual team member accountable for their part in achieving that vision, giving people confidence to innovate, take initiatives and even to make mistakes, MLTs can become light-touch strategists and enablers of others, able to adapt and respond to change and sustain their tasks over time.

Appendix C

The Working Agreement

In recommendation para 73 I suggest that there should be a working agreement drawn up by which the PCC delegates certain of its responsibilities for developing (and delivering?) strategies for ministry and mission to the Ministry Leadership Team. What needs to be considered in drawing up such an agreement?

First of all, we would argue that an MLT should be established only after careful consideration and discernment by the PCC, with the active agreement of the whole congregation. This process of discernment will probably identify some clear areas within which the MLT will be asked to operate: minimally within the diocesan guidelines (core principle 3): “responsibility...for developing a strategic, mission-focussed, sustainable, collaborative pattern of ministry but other issues (for example ecumenical or wider community links) may also be seen as important

Parameters

- What vision does the PCC have for the MLT?
- Are there any short-, medium- or long-term strategies the PCC wants the MLT to consider?
- How will the PCC launch the MLT within the parish?

Membership

How will the MLT be constituted?

- as a sub-group of the PCC,
- from within existing ministries (ordained, licensed and lay)
- from the wider congregation
- from the wider community

How will members be selected?

- by asking for volunteers (not recommended!)
- by the vicar alone (again not recommended)
- by PCC discernment
- by PCC discernment followed by an interview?
- eventually by the MLT

For how long should MLT members serve?

- 1,3,5 years?
- With or without a probationary period?
- Should there be a staggered arrangement for leaving to allow continuity? (one-third each year over a three-year cycle, for example?)
- Can members of an MLT be automatically re-elected, re-invited?

- Does the PCC agree membership or is this the prerogative of the MLT?

Does there need to be a protocol for breakdown of relationship?

Who will chair the MLT?

- A parish officer (including the vicar) ex officio?
- By election from within the MLT?
- By regular rotation?

Reporting procedures

How (often) should the MLT report to the PCC?

- Annually?
- Twice a year?
- At every PCC meeting?

How (often) should the MLT report to the congregation?

- Annually (APCM)
- Annually (separate event)
- As a part of its reporting to the PCC through a dedicated newsletter or noticeboard?
- On the parish website?

Demarcation of decision-making

The PCC will need to ensure the level of decision-making that is to be devolved to the MLT: it may well wish to agree the broad shape of strategy and the proposed aims and goals to take the strategy forward.

This may change as the MLT develops its role in a parish.

Budget

The PCC will need to agree how expenditure (and income) of the MLT is accounted for. This may be done by agreeing a realistic set annual budget for an agreed set of budget heads. It may also agree a maximum sum the MLT can spend in any one transaction before coming to the PCC for approval.

The PCC Treasurer will no doubt have views on how expenditure and income is to be accounted and these need to be clear.

The PCC remains the appropriate body to manage the finances of the parish, and this should essentially include the work of the MLT. Separate financial arrangements should be discouraged

Review

The PCC should actively review the proposals of the MLT at least annually. This should lead to a mutually agreed strategic plan, a mutually agreed developmental plan (training etc) for the MLT, and an agreed budget.

There should also be a date set (three years?) for a full review of the work of the MLT after which its ongoing work should be affirmed (or not).

The diocese may wish to have arrangements in place to deal with any likely breakdown in relationship between MLT and PCC at this or any other point.

Appendix D

Some Further Reading

- J Adair and J Nelson (ed) **Creative Church Leadership** (2004, Canterbury Press) A collection of essays from various perspectives
- G A Arbuckle **Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership** (1993, Geoffrey Chapman) *Collaborative leadership and the value of dissent in decision making.*
- J Astley **Ordinary Theology** (2002, Ashgate). How Christians with little formal theological education can still do theology. Essential reading for learning churches
- P Avis **A Ministry Shaped by Mission** (2005, T & T Clark) *a theology of Christian ministry from an ecumenical perspective*
- A Bowden and M West **Dynamic Local Ministry** (2000, Continuum) *A detailed study with good use of the New Zealand experience*
- R Boyatzis and A McKee **Resonant Leadership** (2005, Harvard Business School Press) *One of the most significant studies of the qualities of great leaders*
- House of Bishops **Eucharistic Presidency** (1997, Church House Publishing) *The most considered statement about ordination and the laity in recent official Anglican literature*
- S Croft **Ministry in Three Dimensions** (1999, Darton, Longman, Todd) *A study of leadership in the local church, biblically based*
- Transforming Communities** (2002, Darton, Longman, Todd) *A working strategy for developing new models of the local church*
- R Gill **Beyond Decline** (1988, SCM Press) *A careful analysis of deployment of clergy and church growth*
- Strategic Church Leadership** (1996, SPCK, with Derek Burke) *A useful comparative study of how to think and act strategically*
- The 'Empty' Church Revisited** (2003, Ashgate) *A powerful critique. Do we simply have too many church buildings?*
- R Greenwood **Transforming Priesthood** (1994, SPCK) *How collaboration can be effective for ministry and mission*
- The Ministry Team Handbook** (2000, SPCK). *A practical resource book by a significant theorist and practitioner*

- Local Ministry: story, process and meaning** (2006, SPCK, with Caroline Pascoe) *A collection of essays including useful studies of local ministry schemes across the world.*
- H Küng **Reforming the Church Today** (1990, T & T Clark) *Essays by the radical commentator on Vatican II, see especially ch 8: "A Theological Case for Shared Decision-Making by the Laity"*
- P Lakeland **The Liberation of the Laity** (2004, Continuum) *A powerful study from the perspective of US Roman Catholicism including a detailed account of developments in thinking about the laity since the 1930s*
- Catholicism at the Crossroads: How the Laity can Save the Church** (2007, Continuum) *The title says it all. A resource book for thinking about the role of lay people in the church today by a theologian much influenced by liberation theology*
- A Morisy **Beyond the Good Samaritan** (1997, Mowbray) *An ecumenical study of importance of the church's role in the community*
- Journeying Out** (2004, Continuum) *Communities need churches as much as churches need communities: a powerful alternative mission strategy*
- M Morrell and S Capparell **Shackleton's Way** (2003, Nicholas Brealey) *Lessons for leadership from the great Antarctic explorer*
- J Reader **Local Theology** (1994, SPCK) *How to think theologically and collaboratively about the role of the church in the local community*
- R R Ruether **Women-Church** (1985, Harper and Row) *A powerful feminist critique.*
- J Tiller **A Strategy for the Church's Ministry** (1983, CIO) *Long out of print, but beg, borrow, or... and read it from cover to cover – at least twice.*
- W C Wright **Relational Leadership** (2000, Paternoster Press) *Looking at leadership theory and practice through New Testament eyes.*

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