



Ordained Local Ministry in the Church of England

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Foreword

How do churches get from where they are to where their current context requires them to be? Experience suggests that change in the church is almost always incremental. Seldom does significant reformation happen in one bound – it happens step by step.

One major trajectory of change across the Anglican Communion in recent years has been the move from an almost exclusive dependence on a paid priest in every community to largely local, lay and voluntary resourcing and responsibility for ministry and mission. Along with Non-Stipendiary Ministry, Local Non-Stipendiary Ministry, Distinctive Diaconate and the expansion of Reader Ministry, authorized lay ministries and Communion by Extension, we can identify Ordained Local Ministry as a key landmark on this journey. As this important symposium indicates, Ordained Local Ministry has never been seen as an end in itself but always as part of a bigger picture. It is part of a major programme to recover the ministry of the People of God as a whole, which many believe to have been normative in the Apostolic Church, but sadly lost in subsequent centuries.

The development of Ordained Local Ministry has not been without its critics. How can ordination be geographically limited? Aren't we just clericalizing the laity to keep the sacramental show on the road? Isn't there a degree of dumbing down going on here with the currency of ministerial priesthood being progressively devalued? By no means least, the spectre of lay presidency at the bottom of this particular slippery slope has loomed large in the ecclesiological imagination. Oh, and isn't it really about getting ministry on the cheap in a church strapped for cash?

Of course, it is not difficult to counter these concerns. After all, it is not ordained status which is localized but the exercise of ordained ministry. No change there as ministry has typically been subject to local licensing arrangements. Furthermore, if the trajectory has been towards empowering the ministry of the whole people of God, then lay gifting is not so much being clericalized as being liberated. As for dumbing down, there is reliable evidence to show that the rigour and effectiveness of training provision for local ministry, and the contextuality of this formation, has enriched the church in all sorts of ways. Finally, it may well be true that Anglicans only do what is right when they can no longer afford to do what is wrong, in

which case, any economic drivers behind Ordained Local Ministry may be positively providential!

But if Ordained Local Ministry is a staging-post on a journey, then that raises questions about whether and when it might have run its course; or, if it does have a permanent place in our vocational repertoire, how might it evolve in the future?

These are questions deserving to be taken seriously by those experienced in the field who have the theological, pastoral and sociological skills to tell the story of Ordained Local Ministry and weigh its implications. The following chapters offer an informed and timely assessment as a contribution towards ongoing debates about future patterns of ministry – and as a tribute to those pioneers who, by God’s grace, captured a vision and had the courage and commitment to pursue it wherever it might lead.

John Saxbee

Contributors

Andrew Bowden was an ACORA Commissioner and is the author of *Ministry in the Countryside* (Mowbray), and, with Canon Michael West, of *Dynamic Local Ministry* (Continuum). He helped to set up and run the Local Ministry Scheme in the Diocese of Gloucester; he has studied LM experiments in New Zealand, and was a member of the working party which produced the report *Stranger in the Wings*.

David Bowers read Theology at Manchester University and trained for ministry at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. He was ordained in 1984 and has worked in the Manchester and Gloucester Dioceses. From 1998 to 2008, he was Associate Diocesan Director of Ordinands for the Gloucester Diocese and worked closely with the development of OLM there. He is currently vicar of the Churnside Benefice, near Cirencester.

Leslie J. Francis is Professor of Religions and Education at the University of Warwick and Canon Theologian at Bangor Cathedral. He also holds visiting professorships at York St John's University and Glyndŵr University, and research associateships at Boston University (USA) and Pretoria University (South Africa). His recent books include *Faith and Psychology* (2005), *British Methodism Today* (2006), *Gone for Good?* (2007), *Preaching with All Our Soul* (2008), and *The Mind of the Anglican Clergy* (2009).

Graham James has been Bishop of Norwich since 1999, and Chair of the Ministry Division of the Church of England since January 2006. In his earlier career, he was Senior Selection Secretary of ACCM (Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry) in the 1980s, a Diocesan Director of Ordinands in the 1990s, as well as a bishop seeking to nurture the vocations of OLMs.

Elizabeth Jordan until recently ran the Local Ministry Department in Lichfield Diocese. Her published research on 'The Place of OLM in the Church of England' identified this indigenous ministry as essential for the churches' mission. Her doctoral work is on the changes to lay perception of priesthood occasioned by OLM. Elizabeth is now the Lay Education and Training Adviser in the Chelmsford Diocese.

Kathy Lawrence is the Senior Local Ministry Officer for Gloucester Diocese and has been heavily involved in the training and formation of OLMs for several years. Her doctoral research seeks to explore the vocational formation and identity of lay members of Anglican congregations.

Tim Morris retired in 2008 after serving in the Scottish Episcopal Church in a range of stipendiary posts and as Dean of the Diocese of Edinburgh. He coordinated the introduction of Local Ministry in Scotland and convened the SEC Local Collaborative Ministry Committee. From 2008 to 2010, he was Ministry Developer in Pembina Hills in the Diocese of Rupert's Land in Canada. He now lives in Berwickshire in Scotland.

John Saxbee, born in Bristol, read Theology there before training for the ordained ministry at Durham and being awarded a PhD for a thesis on Kierkegaard. He held parochial posts in the Diocese of Exeter, and was then appointed as Director of Training for that Diocese just at the time when new patterns of ministry, including NSM and OLM, were being explored and developed. He became Bishop and Archdeacon of Ludlow in the Hereford Diocese and then Bishop of Lincoln – both dioceses noted for their adventurous approach to ministerial provision, especially in rural communities. He retired in 2011.

Oliver Simon was until recently the OLM Adviser in the Diocese of Coventry and OLM Pathway Tutor at the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham. His doctoral thesis examined Ordained Local Ministry from a grounded empirical perspective. Following a spell as Director of Studies in the Diocese of Mauritius, he is now Bishop of Antsiranana in northern Madagascar in the Anglican Province of the Indian Ocean.

Introduction

All mainstream churches have come to recognize that a new context needs new forms of ministry. Ordained ministry in the Church of England is rapidly changing. Soon, the majority of clergy are likely to be self-supporting and, especially in rural areas, female. This book examines the theology and practice of Ordained Local Ministers (OLMs): clergy specifically called out by their local congregation and ordained to minister in collaboration with the people of God in that locality. But what issues of theology and ecclesiology does Ordained Local Ministry raise?

In England, OLMs are ordained within the context of a formal Local Ministry Scheme approved by the House of Bishops. They are members of a Local Ministry Team that is also called out by the local congregation. OLMs are part of the rediscovery of the theology of 'All Member Ministry' or 'Collaborative Ministry' not just in England but throughout the Anglican Communion.¹

Half the dioceses in England, and in many other provinces in the Anglican Communion, including Australasia, Scotland and North America, have established formal schemes to help this sort of ministry function at the grass-roots level. Some dioceses believe that the process has helped revitalize parishes and has raised the spiritual temperature of congregations. Other dioceses have called for a halt because they believe their schemes have somehow gone wrong or have not 'delivered'.

The time has come for a calm assessment of available evidence on this experiment into which the Church of England has poured considerable time, effort and money. Does it have ongoing value, or is it just one more bright idea that has flourished for a season and has now had its day?

This collection of essays from different authors will result in a variety of perspectives. The contributors themselves have had diverse experiences: diocesan officers, parish priests, a professional researcher and two bishops. One might, indeed, have expected a measure of disagreement among these stakeholders as more than twenty years of activity and reflection is collated, but the commonality of experience and conviction that we find is, from our perspective, encouraging.

It is to be expected that readers of this book will find that some parts match their interests more closely than others. The first three chapters locate Ordained Local Ministry within ecclesiological, historical and theological frameworks, responding to the need for rigorous thinking about the ideological basis of Ordained Local Ministry. In Chapter 1, Oliver Simon sets it within the context of Anglican ecclesiology; in Chapter 2, Andrew Bowden explores the theology of the Local Ministry movement, out of which Ordained Local Ministry has emerged; and in Chapter 3, Oliver Simon charts its genealogy.

Chapters 4 and 5 are stories of Ordained Local Ministry in Scotland and Northern Michigan, by Tim Morris and David Bowers respectively, which are very different in their historical background and present structure. Yet both narratives reveal comparable themes of experiment, retrenchment and rebirth. Neither story is as yet finished nor are the approaches that they take necessarily applicable to the situation in England: they offer perspectives which further illuminate the context in which Ordained Local Ministry operates here.

Following Chapter 5, a series of stories are presented, which intersperse Chapters 6–10. These stories are culled from local collaborative ministries in Scotland and from OLMs in the Gloucester diocese with an introduction and reflection from Kathy Lawrence, the senior Local Ministry officer in the diocese.

Chapters 6–9 are reflections on research and experience. In Chapter 6, Leslie Francis reviews empirical research on Ordained Local Ministry and describes a new comparative study between dioceses which have and have not adopted Ordained Local Ministry. In Chapter 7, Leslie Francis identifies interesting differences in the psychological profiles of OLMs and stipendiary priests, which seem to corroborate the work of Elizabeth Jordan (2008). In Chapter 8, Elizabeth Jordan uses her empirical research to investigate the character of ministerial formation in OLMs, which is found to be related to their congregations. The second part of this chapter enquires whether it is possible to encourage ordained ministry in such a way as to complement lay ministry and discipleship, rather than threaten them. Looking to the future, in Chapter 9, Elizabeth Jordan surveys some of the recent changes in theological education and ministerial development and asks what their impact will be on Ordained Local Ministry and OLMs.

In Chapter 10, Andrew Bowden tells the story of Ordained Local Ministry in one diocese, Gloucester. This chapter brings together many of the themes which have emerged in this book: theology and practice, experiment and inertia, the significant influence of the diocesan bishop. Graham James, as a diocesan bishop and chair of the Church of England's Ministry Division, offers us a personal episcopal perspective in Chapter 11, informed by his involvement in the development of the national church's thinking on Ordained Local Ministry over the period which this book reviews. The final

chapter draws out (in a way that is intended to be prophetic) some of the wisdom which emerges from this study.

The editors, themselves contributors, are grateful to those who have shared in and supported this project. Andrew Bowden brought it into being; Leslie Francis contributed his considerable experience in nurturing publications; Elizabeth Jordan and Oliver Simon were the foot soldiers. Bishop John Saxbee enthusiastically contributed the Preface. Caroline Chartres commissioned our work and Nicola Rusk has guided it into print. To our contributors and publisher grateful thanks. Our role has been to try to tell a story which we have observed closely but of which we are not the subject; it is to the several hundred women and men who are that this book is dedicated, to OLMs everywhere, with appreciation.

Note

- 1 Terminology varies: ‘mutual ministry’, ‘total ministry’, ‘local collaborative ministry’; for a survey, see Greenwood and Pascoe (2006).

1

The ecclesiological foundations of OLM

Oliver Simon

Introduction

Even when it is claimed that Anglican ecclesiology should be ‘special to itself’ (Sykes 1995: xii), there is nothing exclusive about it. The discussion that follows reflects the breadth of the influences which contribute to an understanding of Anglican ecclesiology, sources which privilege its sense of continuity but which recognize a continuous engagement with contemporary cultural realities. Fredrica Thompsett comments,

starting with an understanding of the Church as a people called into relationship with God and each other, Anglican ecclesiology presents a Church that is grounded in society, provisional, inclusive and responsive. (Thompsett 1988: 253)

This chapter investigates three significant features of such a grounded Anglican ecclesiology which inform an explication of Ordained Local Ministry: first, its sense that the church is, above all, relational; second, that it is local; third, that ministry is no longer a clerical prerogative – that a ‘seismic’ shift (Collins 2006) has taken place in the perception of ministry in the past half century.

The biblical metaphors which have frequently been co-opted in Anglican writing to model this ecclesiology are, ‘The Body of Christ’ and ‘The People of God’. The former expresses mutuality and collaboration; the latter, with roots in the Old Testament, speaks of journeying together. Neither prescribes

organization or addresses in executive terms the relationship between the church's contingent and ontological natures. But they help to fashion a theoretical account of ecclesial reality which, in England, has become more relaxed and more participative. So a former Bishop of Durham, Michael Turnbull, writes,

We are a people called to reflect God's nature in the world. And his nature is not hierarchical and distant but relational and inclusive. That becomes a model of being the Church. (Turnbull 2001: 214)

Relational ecclesiology

While Vatican II came to relational ecclesiology in the 1960s through consideration of the nature of the church as communion (Doyle 2000), Anglicans have tended to appropriate it mystically. A recovered sensibility of the work of the Holy Spirit, liturgically, through the charismatic movement and in theological writing, has clearly been a significant driver. According to one Anglican statement, the ministries of the people of God have a mutuality which

animate[s] [my emphasis] each other, each focusing the activity of God – the work of the Holy Spirit – in each other; each therefore 'brings the other to be' in the way in which God's mission in the world requires. (cited in Heywood 2011: 185)

St Paul anticipated such an ecclesiology: 'my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong¹ to another, to him that has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God' (Rom. 7.4). 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (1 Cor. 11.26). Fellowship (*koinonia*) is linked to proclamation, God's mission (*missio dei*), and are inseparable.

An understanding of church premised on the experience of divine spirit-mediated love, on the reality of relationships and on formative liturgical acts privileges an anticipatory experience of the fullness of God, the realization in the present of what is anticipated eschatologically. This is the basis of Robin Greenwood's argument (Greenwood 1994) that Anglican ecclesiology is trinitarian, that the community of the mutual indwelling of the persons of the Trinity is, in Colin Gunton's phrase, 'echoed' in the life of the church (Gunton 1997).

The Church called into existence by the triune God, however faintly, may be said to have the potential in Christ and through the Spirit, to model or

be a sign of that *communion* which is the being of Godself and the shape of his desire for the ultimate ordering of the entire Creation. (Greenwood 1994: 87)

This is most potent when the people of God assemble as The Body of Christ in worship to remember and to be ‘re-membered’.

Re-membering

Re-membering in the Pauline sense of proclamation is a way of speaking of the formative, regenerative character of relational ecclesial life. Re-membering is a process of reconstruction which has its fundamental basis in the liturgy, in what the people of God do together. The church exists both to remember and be re-membered through the death and resurrection of Jesus who enjoined his disciples: ‘do this in remembrance of me’ (Lk. 22.19, cf. 1 Cor. 11.24–5). The Eucharist therefore plays a paradigmatic if not exclusive role in the development of Anglican relational ecclesiology.

William Cavanaugh, a Roman Catholic, writes that the Eucharist is ‘the imagination of the church’. In the Eucharist, we are united sacrificially ‘to God in holy fellowship by reference to our eternal end’ (Cavanaugh 1998: 229). Echoing St Augustine, ‘One of the peculiarities of the Eucharist feast is that we become the body of Christ by consuming it’² and in consequence, Cavanaugh goes on, ‘we then become food for the world, to be broken, given away, and consumed’ (Cavanaugh 1998: 231, 232). Accordingly, the church finds its identity within the re-membering; its *raison d’être* being to be present, as Christ, to the world, ‘ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven’, in the words of a well-known nineteenth-century Anglican hymn.³ For this reason, if for no other, the Anglican Church is irreducibly realized in the coming together for worship of the people of God in any one place at any one time.

The hyphen in re-membering is significant in drawing attention to the dynamic character of this ecclesiology. *An-amnesia*, the technical liturgical term for re-membering, might be translated as ‘recovering consciousness and a sense of vocation’. John Paul Lederach writes:

Social amnesia may be useful for political pragmatism, but it is a recipe for weak communities incapable of true identity and correspondingly genuine relationships. The land of forgetfulness creates communities without vocation. The challenge of linking memory and vision lies primarily with the vocation of the moral imagination which can only be exercised in the place that lies between the local and the public, between personal biography and the shaping of responsive social structures. (Lederach 2005: 62)

The notion of the liturgy as an event which links both memory and vision, an ‘event . . . moving you from one condition to another. . . of its essence a transition’ (Williams R. 2009), is a powerful engine for ecclesiology. The ordering of the liturgy and its ministry is thus a significant theme in the development of Anglican ecclesiology. First we need to stay with the notion of church as realized wherever bread is broken and wine is shared. Locality, in an ecclesial sense, is the place of epiphany, where humanity meets divinity and where moral imagination is nourished.

Locality

Locality, in its substantive form as territory or ‘turf’, is far from straightforward. Timothy Jenkins says:

There are local ways of doing things and of thinking, ways of organising continuity and coping with misfortune which, while they are not unique to any particular locality, are tied in the actors’ perceptions to the experience of that locality. In this way ‘local particularity’ is irreducible, because these ways of life create a sense of identity which relates to a particular place: certain aspects of life are mapped out on the ground and cannot be separated from it. (Jenkins 1999: 77)

Social mobility and immediate global communication have diminished the status of locality. But limits on economic growth and issues of sustainability are factors in the re-evaluation of local as a significant sociological category, a process which has been translated in political discourse in the United Kingdom as ‘localism’.

Locality in Anglican ecclesiology

‘Local’ is a key word in the history of Anglican ecclesiology. Even before the Church of England was established in the sixteenth century, *ecclesia Anglicana* – the church in England – bore witness to christianity embedded within a geographically framed cultural and historical milieu. The Church of England’s website declares that the church has ‘a Christian presence in every community’. ‘Its network of parishes cover the country, bringing a vital Christian dimension to the nation.’⁴ Notwithstanding evident strains on the parish system, it has been consistently reaffirmed. At the heart of this way of configuring Christian presence, and indeed partly responsible for the particular configuration of parish boundaries historically, has been the presence of a ‘parson’, a representative figure who embodies both the immanent and the divine. The conjunction of parson (with the wherewithal

to support him and his household) and parish has been a feature of Anglican ecclesiology since the early middle ages and is culturally deeply resilient.⁵

Notwithstanding such cultural resilience, there has for some time been concern about the viability of the parish system. According to Michael Turnbull, it is collapsing because of low morale, ageing, declining congregations and the alienation of young people; and because such congregations are not financially viable. Turnbull called for an emphasis on ‘the value of *locality* but recognize[d] that for most people this is not the *parish* as we have known it’; and that we should ‘look to establishing locality ministries’, by which he meant clergy and lay teams. Turnbull carefully did not wish to abandon the geographical features of ecclesial organization but rather to change ‘present perceptions of what a parish is’ (Turnbull 2001: 213).

Others have set the parish system, and hence Anglican ecclesiology, more explicitly within a broader cultural canvas of late modernity or postmodernism. Mission has become the key ecclesial strategy (Heywood 2011). The shift in institutional thinking from a pastoral conception of the church in which territory had a central role to a missionary understanding in which locality is regarded more ambivalently has been bench marked by the report *Mission-Shaped Church (M-SC)*, published in 2004, which has greatly influenced the Anglican ecclesial debate. *M-SC* called for ‘a new inculturation of the gospel within our society’ (AC 2004: xii). It argued for ‘fresh expressions of church’ that are culturally sensitive.

M-SC serves to illustrate the persistence of locality within Anglican ecclesiology albeit in a less prescriptive way. It does not undermine whatever is understood by ‘parish’ but rather speaks of a ‘mixed economy’. Indeed, it has become clear that the parish ‘is still able to connect with a large proportion of the population’ (Croft 2006: 76). This would also be the position taken by some of those who have offered critiques of *M-SC* (Davison and Milbank (2010), for example). Left to itself, the Church of England might well be compelled for material reasons to withdraw from its commitment to being ‘a Christian presence in every community’ were it not for the significance of a wider resilient ‘tribal’ constituency⁶ which is supportive of a Christian (Anglican) presence in buildings and worship. So we can still say that locality in the sense of a visible presence is a key principle of Anglican ecclesiology, maintained by a coalition of interests.

Representational ministry

Ordained ministerial agency is an integral part of Anglican ecclesiology. However, in this section, we address the shift in understanding about the nature of the church’s ministry, which has taken place since the middle of the twentieth century, the ‘revolution in traditional thinking’ as John Tiller termed it (Tiller 1983: 65).

The ministry of the people of God

The ecumenical 4th World Conference on Faith and Order in 1963 noticed the change since its last discussion in 1937. The new consensus was summed up in the assertion that, ‘All baptized Christians are called to respond to, and participate in the ministry of Christ directed towards the world’ (WCC 1964: 67). This formulation owed much to the work of Ernst Käsemann who had argued in an essay, ‘Ministry and Community in the New Testament’ in 1948, that the gifts of the Spirit, of which St Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12–14, were appropriated in the early second century by the emergence of office holders, *episkopoi*, *presbyteroi* and *diakonoi*. Such leadership offered stability by assuming authority but emasculated ministerial potential for the church as a whole. Käsemann pointed however to the subversive influence of those who, added to the church through baptism, brought new and varied spiritual gifts, *charismata*. This led him to propose that ‘all the baptized are “officebearers”’ (Käsemann 1964: 78, 80).

Vatican II took a more restrained position, devoting a chapter of *Lumen Gentium* to the lay apostolate, which, without using the word ‘ministry’, it too linked to baptism.

Through their baptism and confirmation, all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself. Moreover, through the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, there is communicated and nourished that charity towards God and man which is the soul of the entire apostolate. Now, the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can she become the salt of the earth. Thus every layman, by virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church herself, ‘according to the measure of Christ’s bestowal’. (Eph. 4.7) (LG IV.33)

The ecumenical Lima Report, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) in 1982, said,

The word *ministry* in its broadest sense denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a local community, or as the universal Church. Ministry or ministries can denote the particular institutional forms which this service may take. (WCC 1982: 21)

So confident had some people become about the conjunction of baptism with ministry that an Anglican report in 1993 could speak of the responsibility of each Christian ‘to work prayerfully to fulfil their ministry, obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit’ as an ‘imperative’ (ABM 1993: 4). But by