

Enabling the Ministry of the Lay Majority

Summary

In December 2019 the Diocese of Blackburn committed to a renewed framework for the ministry of the lay majority in the diocese. Alongside parish officers such as Church Wardens, this framework envisages four distinct but complementary forms of lay ministry:

- Informal
- Authorised Lay Ministry (ALM)
- Licensed Lay Ministry (LLM)
- Church Army Evangelists (CA)

Theological Basis

The framework is based on a theology of the Church as the body of Christ in which every part has a role to play within the life of the body. The Church has a long history of the clergy or the clergy plus a small number of Wardens, Readers etc doing ministry on behalf of the wider worshipping community. This neglect and rejection of the God-given gifts of the majority is a sin to be repented of and the change of mindset associated with that repentance is an essential component in our pursuit of healthy churches transforming communities.

Moreover, making the changes envisioned within this proposal also represents the key step in our Diocese towards making the two shifts in culture and practice identified in the 2017 Setting God's People Free report:

1. Until, together, ordained and lay, *we form and equip lay people* to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life in ways that demonstrate the Gospel we will never set God's people free to evangelise the nation.
2. Until laity and clergy are convinced, based on their baptismal mutuality, that they are *equal in worth and status, complementary in gifting and vocation*, mutually accountable in discipleship, and equal partners in mission, we will never form Christian communities that can evangelise the nation.

GS2056 Setting God's People Free

Implementation

The new framework will be implemented during 2020. Two consultation dates have been arranged for current Readers and other changes required to support this key strategy are already in development.

The Lay Majority Ministry Framework

Informal Lay Ministry

This is the kind of specific ministry (e.g. pastoral care) that members of our churches exercise with minimal training. Any training required is focused on confidence and competence and can be delivered locally by their parish, a diocesan programme or a parachurch organisation. Training will typically last no more than six evenings or two weekends and is unassessed.

Authorised Lay Minister (ALM)

ALM is new to us but similar schemes exist in various forms in other dioceses. In common with informal ministry, our ALMs will be focused on a specific area of ministry (e.g. children's ministry) but ALMs will have a higher level of formation, training and be recognised at a diocesan level. To enter training, ALM candidates will need the support of their incumbent and PCC, and the main ALM training pathway will be split into a **core formation module** and a ministry sector **elective module**.

The **core formation module** will be a new bespoke 8-10 session course to enable trainee ALMs to grow in faith and holiness as disciples of Jesus Christ. This will be twinned with **elective modules** based around the current informal lay ministry training programme and so would be typically six-week short courses. The trainee ALMs would share these courses with those utilising them as a basis for informal lay ministry. In addition to the existing courses new toddler, children, youth and mission enabler elective modules will be developed. Alongside the core and elective modules, trainee ALMs will be assigned a **formation mentor** to help them develop during training.

New ALMs will be commissioned for three years in a commissioning service in the Cathedral each year and there will also be a short welcome liturgy when they return to their parishes. At the end of each three year period, the ALM will need the support of their incumbent and PCC to be commissioned for a further three years. In the absence of being recommissioned, the ALM's role would lapse as they will not be an office holder.

Licensed Lay Ministers (LLM)

LLMs is the new name for Readers and is a national recognised lay ministry in which the individuals are both licensed and office holders. This renaming has already been implemented in many dioceses and is part of a wider national movement to refresh a long established and valuable lay ministry (transformingministry.co.uk). At the heart of this refreshing is a refocusing of LLM ministry on three strands: **teaching the faith, leading in church and society, and enabling mission**. To aid this refocusing, all LLMs seeking to be relicensed in 2020 will be required to document a new ministry agreement with their incumbent shaped around these three strands. For relicensing they will also need a new DBS and to complete appropriate safeguarding training.

Potential LLMs will continue to explore their vocation through our diocesan discernment processes and train with ordinands on the All Saints programme. We are also committed to renewing our LLM CME offering.

Church Army Evangelists (CAE)

CAE is the other nationally recognised lay ministry. Our M:Power training programme is already producing potential Church Army vocations and CAEs are likely to play a significant part in the future of our diocese, especially in connecting with those on the margins and in the development of new congregations. Potential CAEs will continue to discern their vocation through our diocesan processes combined with the Church Army central processes, and train centrally with Church Army.