



MINISTRY REVIEW¹ PRINCIPLES FOR USE IN THE ANGLICAN DIOCESES OF THE SOUTH CENTRAL REGIONAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIP²

¹ Although the national Church uses the phrase *Ministry Review*, our dioceses use a variety of terms and for the purposes of this paper, we have decided to use the simpler from *Ministry Review*.

² Juli Wills writes: I think it's an excellent document. I particularly like some elements of the Affirmation and Accountability section and Learning from the Workplace. I think it would make the whole thing too complex to try to add a Methodist element to it. Not least because we are in the process of developing the new Connexional model . . . it's difficult to clarify where we are in the process at present . . . it would be simpler if we were to forego any attempts at inclusivity from our part at this point in time.' Paul Holmes (URC) agrees with and says ' . . . the URC are working on a similar paper and it would complicate matters to try & make 'one fit all'. We are trying to get our eleven Synods to agree on a format, which is hard enough. The role of 'reviewer & reviewee' are more or less the same as the URC paper . . . there is on our appraisal form an opportunity for the minister to share any relevant outcomes with the local church which we hope will lead to greater understanding between minister & church.'

1. Affirmation and Accountability

The two key principles behind Ministry Review are affirmation and accountability.

‘There is fundamentally a two-way bargain: clergy desperately need more affirmation . . . the other side . . . is the need to be open to much greater accountability. . .’ (The Society of Mary and Martha, 2002, Introduction)

Primarily, we want to encourage and affirm clergy as persons, priests or ministers but also to provide appropriate challenges and a proper holding to account. Review is founded on the assumption that we are accountable to God for the ministry entrusted to us, to the Bishop for our licence in the diocese or church, and to one another as fellow members of the Body of Christ. For this reason, it is expected that *all* those who hold a licence or authorisation for public ministry will engage in this process and this has been the practice in many dioceses for some years.

The Ordinal is permeated by the concept of accountability: to the bishop, the Church, clergy colleagues, the people of God and, finally and most importantly, to Jesus Christ. There should be no doubt in the mind of any ordained person that they are to be held to account for the weighty responsibilities laid upon them. But it is also implicit that they need the help and affirmation of others in order to survive and flourish. Affirmation of clergy is crucial for their well-being but if we neglect a proper sense of accountability, we do an injustice not only to those same clergy but to the communities in which they serve.

2. Common Tenure

For Anglicans, all clergy on Common Tenure are required to participate in Ministry Review and every diocesan bishop is required to ensure that this process happens regularly and efficiently. Schemes exist under the bishop’s authority, though the administration may be delegated. We expect that all diocesan bishops will want to reap the benefits of the collective wisdom of their senior teams and to share the process and delivery.

3. Local Diversity

It is clear that diocesan bishops will have their own particular style and level of engagement with this process and that local history and circumstances will affect the way in which Ministry Review is carried out. This may bring a richness to the national picture and allow for the most beneficial method and process. On the other hand, it may lead to a lack of parity and confusion when clergy move from one part of the country to another. It is expected that bishops and dioceses will work within any national guidelines set down.

4. Belonging to the SCRTP

However, notwithstanding local diversity and difference between the partner Churches, there are some principles which might be adopted by all the Partners in the South Central RTP in order to ensure a sense of cohesion, fairness and consistency. Belonging to the RTP by being a Partner (Bishops and Church Leaders) or a Member requires mutual accountability (apart from national accountability) and is itself an extension of the principle of accountability and affirmation set out in paragraph 1.

5. The Purpose of Ministry Review

Although *Common Tenure* has given impetus to Anglican dioceses to be more rigorous in delivering Ministry Review, this is not the primary reason for welcoming it. Even without the encouragement of legislation, we maintain that Ministry Review is a good thing in its own right and that we want to work hard to make it a positive and valuable experience for all concerned.

We want to encourage clergy in their ministerial development and to help them to be the best ministers they can be for God, for the Church and for the communities which they serve.

There are some foundational documents which are implicitly assumed to underpin the whole process and to which reference may be made:

- the Ordinal,
- the national Guidelines on Ministerial Development Review
- the 9 criteria for recommendation for training for ministry with all its accompanying Learning Outcomes
- the *Statement of Particulars*
- the *Role Description*
- (see links at www.churchofengland.org)
- Diocesan vision or mission statements

6. The Process

The process will vary in specifics from place to place. In some dioceses, the Bishops prefer to conduct all Reviews; some also include Archdeacons as Reviewers; some use a large team of senior ordained staff and some use a combination of lay and ordained. Some include a peer process as part of the scheme on a rolling basis (one year – peer; one year – bishop). What is common is that the process will involve

- a consideration of the previous Review and its identified outcomes
- self reflective practice
- assisted listening and learning
- the completion of written forms by self and others
- a face to face meeting
- a written summary of the outcomes to be produced within 14 days (and preferably much sooner)

- a mechanism for enacting what is agreed and, in particular
- a link with the CMD and training needs of the person
- a consideration of the Role Description (for those on *Common Tenure*).

Review is not spiritual direction, counselling, confession or *explicit* vocational guidance. Each of these has a place and Review may lead to further conversations with other people as need arises.

The ideal process will entail the individual minister taking responsibility for his or her own review, learning and development; but the guidance of the reviewer will be invaluable in reflecting on the comments made in order to plan for the future. Ministers are not passively “being reviewed” but actively reviewing their own ministry in the company of one who may have some responsibility for oversight.

7. The Reviewer

The role of the reviewer is to

- provide an appropriate, safe and secure space for the Review interview to happen by setting and keeping to boundaries³
- affirm and hold to account
- listen, encourage, support and challenge
- represent the Bishop and the wider church as the background against which the Review happens
- facilitate the Review by offering questions and reflections out of the information and evidence offered
- assist the person in coming to some realistic conclusions about priorities, plans and potential
- ensure that the Summary of Outcomes form is completed and returned to the appropriate officer
- ensure that it is clear who will take any agreed action following the review

8. The Reviewee

The role of the reviewee is to:

- ensure that all paperwork is completed conscientiously and on time
- engage fully with the process
- ensure that the Summary of Outcomes form is completed in cooperation with the reviewer
- be prepared to act on the outcomes agreed
- listen carefully to what is being said

³ We suggest that the content of the Review interview remains confidential unless otherwise agreed but that the written Summary form, which must be agreed and signed by both people, is available to those who have legitimate interest.

9. Learning from Scripture⁴

The phrase Ministry Review does not appear directly in Scripture but when we explore the depths of the narratives we find that there are many texts which speak into different issues surrounding the process of Review. We will highlight only a few, all of which could be explored at greater depth. We hope that this process will instigate further work by individuals and groups on other texts from scripture.

The Hebrew Scriptures

The story of Eli and Samuel (1 Sam 1 – 3) speaks of the complex nature of vocation and the events and relationships which surround it, reminds us of the significance of the institutions of the Church and the need for obedience and sacrifice – on the part of Samuel but also Eli and Hannah. Similarly, the relationship between Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17 – 19) tells of a different call experience, the need for proper adoption and relinquishment of roles and the importance of obedience and trust. This particular episode also demonstrates the debilitating effect of isolation, depression, stress and burnout which is familiar to many clergy, and the place of the prophetic within ministry.

The role of the bold, prophetic person, Nathan, in David's life (2 Samuel 7 and 12) supports our desire for proper accountability structures but this parable also shows the potentially disastrous and hidden frailty of the human condition, from which clergy are not immune. And yet David recovers and continues to answer Yahweh's call.

When we read Gideon's call story (Judges 6 – 8) we have yet more evidence about the complexity of vocation and the need for obedience in the face of a seemingly impossible task; and in Solomon's prayer to Yahweh at the beginning of his reign (1 Kings 3. 4 – 15), we are reminded of the importance of reflection at the beginning of a new phase of leadership and the centrality of listening with a 'hearing heart' with all its ensuing pastoral resonances. Most importantly, we learn of the attraction of and need for wisdom and the place of the religious institution, prayer and worship as a framework for ministry.

But it is Moses' experience which is particularly paradigmatic. His vocation begins in Exodus 3 with the command to deliver the people Israel from bondage in Egypt. It is a long-term process which has to be worked out in the light of the realities of daily living and reassessed as circumstances change. Somewhat reluctantly, Moses took 'his wife and his sons, put them on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt' (Exod 4.20), a response which was to be costly and life-long. Hard work, the apparent lack of success and the passing of years can lead a priest to call into question the authenticity or value of the vocation. Moses can offer a model of a leader who encountered obstacles, doubts and difficulties but who was able to adapt to changing contexts.

⁴ Sections 9 and 10 are a précis from Hazel Whitehead's doctoral thesis *A Biblical and Theological Rationale for Ministry Review* and are copyright.

His vocation is embedded firmly in the Midianite tradition and so when Jethro – a foreigner - appears as the central figure in Exodus 18, we are not surprised. In the wilderness – a significant place - Jethro realises that Moses is overwhelmed by his work. Jethro admonishes him and encourages him to delegate, leaving himself to make more important decisions. There is a choice. Moses can risk exhaustion or share the work. He listens and acts accordingly.

Jethro, a man of practical wisdom articulates the primary purpose of Moses' ministry. 'You should represent the people before God . . . teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they should do.' (18.19 – 20) These are the priorities. This will ensure that Moses fulfils his vocation to be a prophetic leader, a role which has become unfocussed. The challenge for him is to discern what *not* to do. Jethro's skill is not only in solving the presenting problem which is likely to lead to burnout but to set that solution into a missiological framework.

Jethro also offers a particular model for Reviewers. He observes and listens, and then asks pertinent questions. He does not prevaricate, consult with others or ask Moses' opinion but makes indicative statements. At times this direct approach may be what some clergy need.

Within this drama, the reader is in no doubt about the humanity of the players. The engaging, familial details (vv 8 – 9) may appear to be incidental but are significant in that they present Moses as a human being with a family. Even Moses, the man called to lead the people out of Egypt, has a domestic life and this has to be taken into account.

The New Testament

In every gospel disciples are called (Mark 1. 16 – 20, Matt 4. 18 – 20, Luke 5 and John 1.35ff), must make sacrifices, take up their cross (Mark 8. 34 – 38, Matt 10.33, 38 and 39, Luke 9.23 – 27 and John 12. 23 – 26) and be willing to endure suffering; and for them all the call to discipleship means also a call to active service.

Disciples are expected to be obedient to Christ and through that obedience they will share Christ's important work of calling others to faith and be able to discern and respond to the particular nature of their part in the *missio dei*.

There are various ways of measuring success - doing God's will, being committed, bearing fruit or loving the neighbour. Which mission task is more important? Is the world a threatening place to be avoided or a place where God is already at work?

More specifically, Paul's relationships with Barnabas and Timothy remind us of the importance of mutually supportive relationships between colleagues and friends, the human frailty of such relationships and the need for flexible, collaborative ministry. Although it is simplistic to compare the roles of deacons, priests and bishops as described in 1 Timothy 1 as though the institutions of the 1st and 21st centuries were identical, the principles of order

and governance, and the presence of accountability and discipline are transferable. The questions emerging here are about the dynamic between colleagues working in collaboration, the concept of strong leadership and delegation, accountability to high standards and church order and the management of its authorised ministers.

The Letter to the Hebrews provides us with yet another dimension which focuses on the whole community and asks us to consider how faith might be revitalised and vocation reinterpreted in the individual priest and the community, the importance of faithful rootedness in worship and prayer, the nature of mutual responsibility for support and accountability within the whole community, obedience to the leadership and the inevitability of persecution and harassment.

The seven letters in Revelation 2 – 3 tell us that vocation was an all-embracing issue, and that any meaningful response must be whole-hearted and will require courage against adversity in whatever form it comes. Clergy are unlikely to be martyred or imprisoned for their faith but they are tested in a variety of more subtle ways. Firstly, the pluralistic, secular and materialistic world which they inhabit means that it requires courage to take a stand for the gospel. A preacher who challenges wealth may find him or herself in a difficult place.

Even if persecution is not an issue, temptation may be. Clergy and their congregations are still prone to the seductions identified in the Letters and the pressure of dealing with endless pastoral and managerial issues can precipitate unusual behaviours. Continual vigilance and self-examination is required to ensure that they 'keep the faith' and do not succumb to assimilation, sexual immorality, the idolisation of wealth or property. Alternatively, there may be no sense of personal persecution or temptation but a sense of irrelevance and ennui, and experience suggests this is prevalent in those in their mid-50s. A rediscovery of vocation may be helped by remembering what has gone before as the Churches in Ephesus and Sardis are encouraged to do. (2.5 and 3.3)

At Review, all these issues can be raised if an atmosphere of mutual respect has been cultivated. It is here that they may surface for the first time. The affirmation of the priest's success in continuing to be faithful, and a holding to account where he or she has failed are both legitimate activities if we are to use the Letters to the Churches as evidence.

The seminal imperative for clergy and their churches is found at the end of each of the Letters. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' (3.6) In any generation, listening to the voice of God is essential for the proper exercise of vocation. A priest or congregation who wishes to be obedient must learn how to listen.

10. Learning from the Tradition

If we turn our attention to the Tradition of the Church, we find a similar thread of affirmation and accountability permeating the life of conscientious Christians. There are various examples of this. Mission Partners have always had to return on furlough – not only for rest – but to give account of the work they are doing and why they need further funding; the Bishops' Visitations (even if they have been delegated to Archdeacons or Rural/Area Deans) were designed to hold clergy to account; the training incumbent/curate relationship is based on affirmation and accountability; and the Ordinal, our foundational text, is shot through with promises made by deacons and priests that they are prepared to deliver ministry and to be accountable.

Let us give two specific examples from different parts of the Tradition whilst recognising that there are many others which we could use.

The Order of St Benedict (as one among many Religious Orders) is based on the *Rule of Four Fathers* and sets out the ideal way of living in community where members live lives of obedience, stability and transformation. Priestly members were *especially* accountable and were to expect no preferential treatment. Brothers were accountable to the Abbot but also to one another for the efficient and godly working of the community's life of worship, prayer and service.

In the 17th century, Richard Baxter was a paradigm of Protestant fervour and zeal. He is well known for his founding of the *Worcestershire Association of Clergy* in Kidderminster which aimed to bring together – in a not altogether voluntary way – clergy of all denominations. His purpose was to ensure unity and discipline, the inculcation of high moral standards and a culture of obedience in an age where clergy were often more guilty than their parishioners of improper attitudes and behaviour. His idea of holding them to account and challenging them regularly (about their own lives but also on the content of their preaching and evangelism) provides a helpful – if somewhat dictatorial – model.

11. Learning from the workplace

People in most walks of life are subject to regular review of their work. Ministry Review is intended to bring the benefits which others receive in the workplace by using the best practice which is found there. Those who come into ordained ministry from other walks of life are well versed in such processes and welcome them. However, in the context of ministry there is an added dimension and a different perspective as it is conducted on the basis of a sense of vocation and a common life in Christ, whose ministry we share. Therefore, it is not concerned solely with productivity and outward success, though it does provide a means of evaluating and increasing our capacities as ministers. It is rooted in reflection and prayer so that we can grow through the process of Review in spiritual and vocational respects as well as in practical and professional ability.

12. Moving

Clergy who move to other dioceses may expect that their Ministry Review records will be seen by appropriate officers in the receiving diocese as well as remaining on the blue file.

13. Evaluating the Process

As one of the reasons for Ministry Review is to improve and develop the ministry of clergy, it is important to find ways of measuring whether this is an effective way of doing that. Those being reviewed need to have confidence and trust in both the process and the outcomes and an opportunity to express that. It is also important to mirror the individual review process of affirmation and accountability by reflecting on the effectiveness of the scheme operated. It is recommended that dioceses consider the best way to assess outcomes for the whole process within their own context. We suggest that dioceses should

- invite all participants to complete some kind of evaluation form at the end of their Review
- review the responses made on those forms and, in the light of them
- review and the process, content and delivery of the scheme annually
- provide training and review for the reviewers

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