



MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

PRINCIPLES FOR USE IN THE ANGLICAN DIOCESES OF THE SOUTH CENTRAL REGIONAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

1. Affirmation and Accountability

The two key principles behind MDR 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, disciples and priests, mindful that ministry can be stressful and demanding; but we also have a responsibility to provide appropriate challenges and to hold clergy to account. MDR is founded on the assumption that we are accountable to God for the ministry entrusted to us, to the Bishop for our licence to minister, 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 many 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. Implicit is the admission that they need the help and affirmation of others in order to flourish. Affirmation and accountability are both crucial for the well-being of clergy and, therefore, for the well-being of the communities in which they serve.

2. Clergy Terms and Conditions of Service: Common Tenure

All clergy on Full Common Tenure are required to participate in MDR 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 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 MDR is conducted. This may bring a richness to the national picture and allow for the most beneficial method and process for each context. 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.

4. Belonging to the SCRTP

Notwithstanding local diversity and difference between dioceses and their Bishops, we believe that 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 MDR

Although *Common Tenure* has resulted in stronger encouragement to Anglican dioceses to be rigorous in delivering MDR and has set out some clear guidelines, this is not the primary reason for welcoming it. Even without the encouragement of legislation, we maintain that MDR is a helpful thing in its own right and we want to work hard to make it a positive and valuable experience for all concerned. In this way, we hope to develop clergy, support them and enable them to have a broad and bird's eye view of their own ministry and how that ministry is perceived by others.

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 Learning Outcomes for IME phase one which might also be useful headings for discussion beyond a curacy

- the *Statement of Particulars*
- the *Role Description*
- (see links at www.churchofengland.org)
- Diocesan strategic vision or mission statements

6. The Process

The process will vary 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 MDR and its identified outcomes and objectives
- 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*).
- A check that safeguarding training is up to date

Review is not spiritual direction, counselling, confession or explicit vocational guidance. It is not a disciplinary process but a normal, healthy process. Review might 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. Nevertheless, it

would be odd not to listen and take note of comments made by those writing written reviews as part of the process.

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 boundaries¹
- 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

¹ 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 Scripture²

The phrase MDR does not appear *per se* in Scripture but when we delve more deeply, we find that there are many texts which speak into different issues surrounding the process of Review. We will highlight only a few as an aid to reflection.

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, and reminds us of the significance of the institutions of the Church and the need for obedience and sacrifice – not only on the part of Samuel but also on the part of Eli and Hannah.

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) shows a desire for proper accountability structures but this story 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 find yet more evidence about the complexity of vocation and the need for obedience in the face of a seemingly impossible task. 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.

² Sections 9 and 10 are a précis from Hazel Whitehead's doctoral thesis *A Biblical and Theological Rationale for Ministry Review* and are copyright.

But it is Moses' experience which is particularly insightful. 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.

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 clouded. His challenge 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 missional framework.

Jethro also invites reflection 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 God's mission.

There are various ways of measuring success - doing God's will, being committed, being faithful, 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? The clergy person needs to be weighing up these things as s/he reviews ministry.

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 still relevant. 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 in this country but they are tested in a variety of 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, cynicism, the idolisation of wealth or property.

Or there may be a sense of lack of focus, irrelevance and ennui. 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, or they may be long-standing issues which have been revisited time and time again with no resolution. The affirmation of the priest's success in continuing to be faithful, and a holding to account where he or she has failed or shown limitations 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 to the best of their ability 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. 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. Priestly members were *especially* accountable and were to expect no preferential treatment.

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.

Contemporary Church and para-Church organisations set great store by 'accountability partners' and acceptance of the organisation's *modus operandi* and way of life.

11. Learning from the Workplace

People in most walks of life are subject to regular review of their work. Often, this comprises a detailed appraisal leading to sanctions, rewards, pay rises and promotion. MDR is intended to bring the benefits which others receive in the workplace by using the best practice which is found there – whilst also acknowledging that a life of service in the Church is different. Those who come into ordained ministry from other walks of life are well versed in such processes and welcome them.

In the context of ministry there is a different perspective as it includes 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 the capacity and fruitfulness of the minister. It is rooted necessarily in reflection and prayer so that we can grow through the process of Review in spiritual and vocational as well as in practical and professional areas.

12. Moving

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

13. Evaluating the Process

As one of the reasons for MDR 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 so. Those being reviewed need to have confidence and trust in both the process and the outcomes and an opportunity to express their views. It is also important to mirror the individual review process of affirmation and accountability by reflecting on the effectiveness of the scheme and its reviewers. 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 annually the responses made on those forms and, in the light of them review the process, content and delivery of the scheme

- provide on-going training and review for the reviewers

Finally, we need to remind ourselves again and again that MDR is about affirmation and accountability and is designed to inculcate good practice, to affirm and to hold to account for the sake, not only of the individual priest, but of the mission and ministry of God's Church.

SCRTP/CMD Task Group
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