



**Towards a Theology of
Ongoing Ministerial Development**

*This leaflet has been jointly produced by the Partner Churches
of the SCRTP and agreed by the Management Board*

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Membership of the SCRTP CMD Project Group

Introduction

About this paper

1.1 This paper has been produced by those with a lead responsibility for ongoing ministerial development within the South Central Regional Training Partnership (SCRTP). In the Church of England this is usually designated as CMD (Continuing Ministerial Development) or as CME (Continuing Ministerial Education). In the Methodist Church it is designated as CDiM (Continuing Development in Ministry). In the United Reformed Church it is designated as EM3 (Education for Ministry Phase 3). In this paper the phrase ongoing ministerial development will be used throughout.

The purpose of ongoing ministerial development

1.2 The purpose of ongoing ministerial development is to continue the development of the Church's licensed and commissioned ministers so that they in turn can continue stimulating and enabling the whole Church to participate more fully in God's mission. It is a means by which the Church exercises grateful stewardship of the talents which have been entrusted to it as well as honouring and fostering the vocations of those who serve in its name. It is on this basis that we encourage partner churches of the SCRTP to invest responsibly and individual ministers to participate proactively in all aspects of ongoing ministerial development.

The expansion of ongoing ministerial development

1.3 Ongoing ministerial development at the moment is a rapidly expanding area. Within our ministerial lifetime it has grown from small informal beginnings into a significant national expectation. For example, in the Church of England 'post ordination training' was for many years a modest offering, dependent on the understanding and intention of each Diocese. It was almost always minimally resourced. In more recent years the Church as a whole has started to catch the vision for lifelong learning and development and to understand the benefits both for individuals and for organisations. At national level and across ecumenical boundaries there has been some cautious growing of a shared expectation of what should be invested and what should be provided. The pattern has varied from one partner church to another but in general what we have seen is a growth in 'buffet table' provision (where ministers choose from a range of things on offer) plus an increasing focus on development at points of transition in ministry. At the same time ministers themselves have been steadily taking on board the idea that ongoing ministerial development is valuable and is something for which time should be allocated.

The legal background

1.4 In the wake of interventions from the Department of Trade and Industry the Church is now entering a third phase. We are moving into a culture of much greater mutual accountability between licensed ministers and the institutions which deploy them. From 2011 ordained ministers under common tenure in the Church of England will acquire many of the rights of employed people. Some things which previously operated informally will now become requirements, including a much more robust process of appointment, regular access to Ministry Review and appropriate provision not just for initial training and formation but for ongoing training and formation throughout active ministry. Similar changes are set to follow in both the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. These increased expectations will directly affect the ordained but will also impact on the culture of ongoing ministerial development for all licensed and commissioned ministers.

1.5 In the midst of these changes some are expressing concern at what they perceive as the growing predominance of a secular HR mindset. The impetus for these changes has come not from within the Church but out of the sphere of employment legislation. Are we in danger of importing ideas which cannot adequately address the context of ministry? Are we superimposing models of accountability which sit uneasily with our understanding of vocation, discipleship and service? Is there more to ongoing ministerial development than a necessary commitment to professional good practice? As practitioners we believe the Church wants the work we do to be rooted in and inspired by sound theological principles. What kind of theology of ongoing ministerial development should we be articulating?

Insights from Clergy Terms of Service

1.6 Professor Anthony Thistleton offers some helpful insights in his critique of the Church of England document *Review of Clergy Terms of Service: Report on the first phase of the work*. Thistleton explores such aspects as the role of human agency in divine action. The notion of God as 'employer'

does not imply logical exclusion of the role of human agents. 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 is considered and Thistleton concludes that this passage should not be used to determine the relationship between the Church and the law in 21st century England but was a specific condemnation by Paul of the secular courts of his time.

1.7 The relationship between biblical covenant and modern contract is also discussed. In scripture the faithfulness and dependability of God are described in terms of covenant and while there are clear differences between this and the modern understanding of contract yet in many ways the two share similar features. Key among these are the formulation of a defined relationship, the recognition and acceptance of constraints on both sides, the intention to offer protection to the more vulnerable and the fostering of that sense of confidence that derives from knowing where we stand. As Thistleton asserts, the freedom imparted to us by divine grace is not undermined by our acceptance of a legal framework for our common life; but rather the structures of the Church provide the means by which divine grace is corporately received and experienced.

1.8 Finally Thistleton points to the current culture of individualism as the source of some of our misunderstandings. St Paul among others rejects the idea of apostleship as an individual calling but always sets it in the context of co-workers. *Clergy Terms of Service* requires us to pay greater attention to the corporate aspects of our life together than we have previously done and in fact is helping us to recapture a necessary dimension of our thinking.

1.9 In conclusion *Clergy Terms of Service* contains much that is entirely consistent with ministerial life and is likely to enrich our understanding and practice. However discernment is needed as we continue to tease out the implications of this new legislation for the Church and its ministers.

Ongoing ministerial development and human being

Human beings made in God's image

2.1 As human beings we believe of ourselves and of one another that we are made in the image and likeness of God. We take this to mean that God's own image was the original template for our human nature which continues to vouchsafe glimpses and intimations of that image. Our vocation as human beings is to endeavour to grow daily more into God's likeness and so strive towards the renewing of the divine image in us.

Humanity, discipleship and ministry

2.2 This primary vocation to become more truly the human beings we were created to be precedes all other vocations. We believe that no other vocation can be truly realised unless this primary vocation has first been taken seriously. We must learn to be human before we can aspire to be disciples just as we must learn to inhabit our discipleship before we can take on the mantle of ministry. The tending of our bodies as temples of the holy spirit, the nurture of our minds and the fostering and upbuilding of significant relationships in our lives are just as important as the care of our souls. Our life in the world, in families, friendship groups and communities, is equally as significant as the life of service within the church to which we believe ourselves called.

A Benedictine ethos

2.3 For this reason we believe that ongoing ministerial development should be 'Benedictine' in ethos, embracing the development of the whole person in his or her ministerial context rather than focusing on 'training' in any narrow sense. Ongoing ministerial development is about far more than equipping ourselves for a ministerial role. St Benedict commended an equal emphasis on worship, study, work and recreation. The Rule of St Benedict organises the monastic day into regular periods of communal and private prayer, sleep, spiritual reading and manual labour – 'that in all things God may be glorified' (Rule 57.9). St Benedict believed and taught that a life balanced in such a way would produce the kind of spiritual groundedness upon which human flourishing and ministerial effectiveness both depend.

2.4 In the same way ongoing ministerial development should seek to promote and enable a healthy balance between 'life' and 'work' and should honour the diverse aspects of both these. Equal attention should be paid to the spiritual, cerebral and skilful aspects of development. To model and commend

this vision an ongoing ministerial development programme might include surprising elements such as a day's walking or a visit to an art gallery alongside more obviously 'spiritual' elements such as preaching or understanding key aspects of Christian doctrine and more obviously 'skilful' elements such as working with volunteers or chairing a meeting well. The success of ongoing ministerial development will ultimately be evidenced by enhanced wellbeing and the inclusion of 'wellbeing type' events in an ongoing ministerial development programme can have both practical and symbolic value.

A culture of development

2.5 There remains the question of which aspects of this generous and comprehensive vision can realistically be funded by our institutions. It is the responsibility of the Church to make provision for key elements of ministerial formation. However it would not be possible for a typical ongoing ministerial development budget to provide for all the continuing developmental needs of every individual. The priority for the Church must be to promote a healthy culture of development and life long learning. As well as clearly indicating any corporate expectations a well designed and effective programme of ongoing ministerial development should point up the main themes and areas which are important for ministerial development and offer some ways of engaging with them. However it should also advise and encourage those involved in ministry to look beyond the Church for developmental opportunities and to be imaginative in taking advantage of them.

Ongoing ministerial development and the Body of Christ

Members of the Body of Christ

3.1 We recognise that ongoing ministerial development cannot simply be about the development of individual human beings. Our vocation is not merely to become believers ourselves but to allow ourselves to be incorporated through baptism into the Body of Christ, the Church. As members of the Body we share a responsibility for the flourishing of the whole Body. This includes the flourishing of the institutional Church since the church is the Body in its institutional as well as its sacramental aspects.

The concept of 'order'

3.2 The concept of 'order' is important for our understanding of ongoing ministerial development. We inhabit an 'ordered' church in which each Christian has a specific and honoured place in the context of the whole. The prefaces to the Ordinal delineate the ministries properly belonging to deacons, priests and bishops with their respective emphases on service, sacramental presence and oversight. In a similar way the licensing service for a lay minister outlines the shape and focus of the ministry to be undertaken while liturgies of initiation proclaim the vocation to mission and ministry of all the baptised. In each case a covenant promise is required of the individual that he or she is willing to dedicate him or herself to the particular form of ministry so described.

3.3 Ongoing ministerial development is offered in the context of this sense of 'order' and rightly serves the specific calling of individuals. For this reason it will always be multifaceted, combining a wide range of elements. Although in the past it was mainly seen as something for the ordained we now understand it as something which should certainly be available to anyone who has been licensed or commissioned for ministry in the name of the Church. As an aspiration we would also wish to see the Church better engaged with the challenge of making worthwhile provision for the continuing development of every disciple.

Stewardship of God's gifts

3.4 Stewardship is a key concept which underpins our understanding of the ethos and purpose of ongoing ministerial development. We believe that God has gifted each of us uniquely with specific talents. These talents are not given primarily for our own enjoyment and advancement but are for the building up of the Body. Thus we very frequently find that the talents we possess are incomplete of themselves and are used to best effect in conjunction with the talents of others. The responsibility for the appropriate nurturing of talents and their wise use in the service of God's kingdom rests with the whole Church and is not simply a charge on individuals. For this reason we believe it is right for partner churches to make appropriate provision for resourcing ongoing ministerial development as an expression of our stewardship of that which has been entrusted to us. We do this not out of a sense of obligation but in loving response to a gracious and generous God.

Ongoing ministerial development and the exercise of ministry

'Affirmation and Accountability'

4.1 The exercise of Christian ministry in the name of the Church is a privilege which brings joy and fulfilment to many people. However, 'Affirmation and Accountability', the 2002 report of the Society of Mary and Martha, helped the Church to focus also on the nature and extent of clergy stress and lack of wellbeing. Not that clergy are alone in experiencing work related pressures; in some ways indeed they are sheltered and privileged. But the report acknowledged 'the very particular projections of both individuals and communities' which clergy have to face. It also acknowledged that, compared to many other professionals, clergy are 'perhaps uniquely under-resourced' in terms of support and development. Underdevelopment was flagged up as an issue at all stages of ministry.

4.2 The Church has sought and is seeking to address this. It does so not just as a response to the requirements of new legislation but with a renewed awareness of the duty of care we owe to those we authorise for public ministry as well as an improved understanding of the benefits of ongoing professional development for all concerned. There is a growing acknowledgement that lack of wellbeing among ministers is not just a matter for individuals to address for themselves but something which has systemic causes and requires systemic solutions. Joined up thinking between the Church at national and local level, collaboration between all those involved in the different stages of ministerial formation, adequate investment in resources and visible modelling of good practice by senior people are all required if we wish to bring about the changes we have endorsed.

Equipping God's people for service

4.3 All of us live with a hopefully creative tension between the persons we are with our unique blend of gifts and skills and the demands and expectations of the ministerial roles we occupy. It is an aspect of maturity to recognise that these tensions cannot always be resolved. Ongoing ministerial development is not just about offering opportunities for personal development to individuals. It has as its primary purpose the aim of equipping God's people for service. We expect of ourselves and one another that we will endeavour to make and keep ourselves 'fit for purpose'. This means that we may spend less time engaged in learning and training we particularly enjoy and more time engaged in learning and training which is specifically formative or even remedial for us.

Ministry Review

4.4 With the introduction of Common Tenure a review of ministry at least every two years will become a requirement for ministers in the Church of England. The Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church are moving in the same direction. In the Church of England all Diocesan schemes must comply with national guidelines which make clear that the main purpose of Ministry Review is developmental. Ministry Review is a primary means of scoping developmental needs, identifying ways in which such needs can be met and reviewing the effectiveness of what has been undertaken. Participating in Ministry Review ought to be a priority for all licensed ministers and enabling Ministry Review with adequate administrative resources and proper training and support for reviewers ought to be a priority for all partner churches.

The vocational journey

4.5 It is important to recognise that vocations are never static but are always growing and changing. Ongoing ministerial development should take account of this and should provide opportunities for ministers to reflect on their vocational journey and its possible trajectory into the future. The word 'formation' has many helpful resonances whereas words such as education, training or even learning are perceived as having a narrower frame of reference. The concept of formation has the advantage of suggesting a process that involves both personal formation and the formation of the person for the role. Formation implies a willingness to work with God to help ministers become what God wants them to be. This may be such a gradual process that we only notice progress retrospectively.

A prophetic dimension

4.6 In recent years the demands of ministry have changed significantly and are continuing to change at a rapid pace. Those who entered licensed ministry even a decade ago will have found that the expectations upon them have shifted significantly in that time and not always in ways that are easy to welcome. Those entering ministry now are hopefully being made aware through the training and formation they receive of the need to remain open about possible forms of service and likely patterns of deployment. We cannot know with any certainty what the Church of the future will look like or what

kind of ministers it will require. For that reason ongoing ministerial development also has a prophetic dimension. It does not simply equip us for the here and now but also has a part to play in preparing us to inhabit what is to come. It is one of the means by which attitudes of openness, trust, hope, optimism, flexibility and entrepreneurialism can be fostered and transmitted.

Continuing Ministerial Development Statement of Expectations

The purpose of CMD is to strengthen and deepen a lifelong learning culture within each diocese. Good practice in both provision and participation are ultimately evidenced in spiritual and numerical growth with the Church's ministers more fully engaged in God's mission themselves, in the variety of roles they have been licensed to as public representative ministers, and better able to stimulate and enable the whole Church to respond to its call.

CMD focuses not just on learning and training but takes seriously the flourishing of the whole person in their ministerial context. It cannot seek to meet all the individual needs of everyone but aims to create a normative environment in which developmental learning is recognized as a hallmark of professional good practice as well as a central aspect of discipleship. It is also a means by which we exercise grateful stewardship of the talents which God has entrusted to us, both as individuals and as the Church.

Good CMD provision is characterized by:

- a well articulated theology of CMD accompanied by a clear statement of expectation
- a responsiveness to national vision setting and policy
- a prophetic focus on the needs of the Church of the future as well as the immediate needs of the Church of today

- visible modeling of good practice by key people including senior staff
- appointment of qualified post holders
- allocation of financial resources in accordance to articulated priorities
- collaboration between Dioceses and ecumenical partners regionally
- shared delivery with other Diocesan departments

- articulation with IME 1 - 7
- alignment with Clergy Terms of Service and Ministerial Development Review
- particular attention to transition points in ministry

- integration of the needs of the individual with the strategic objectives of the Diocese and the priorities of the wider Church
- inclusion of all those exercising ministry in the name of the Church with attention given to their differing needs
- ready access to information and to personal advice and support
- provision of enjoyable, supportive and inspirational learning events

- regular review of provision

Good CMD participation is characterised by:

- honouring of vocation to “be diligent in prayer, in reading Holy Scripture, and in all studies that will deepen your faith”
- for full time ministers taking personal responsibility in setting aside at least 5 days for CMD and the best part of a week for retreat each year and encouraging and enabling others to do the same
- positive engagement with ongoing developmental learning at all stages of ministry
- regular participation in Ministerial Development Review
- proactively planning one’s own learning especially in response to Ministerial Development Review
- using Ministerial Development Review to assess and apply learning undertaken
- keeping abreast of changing legal and public responsibilities
- planning ahead for longer periods of developmental leave
- balancing individual inclinations and enthusiasms with the needs and demands of the present role
- willingness to share knowledge and skills in order to resource the learning of others

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SO 743-5 CPD (Standing Orders 743 – 745 of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church)

The Rule of St Benedict

Affirmation and Accountability: practical suggestions for preventing clergy stress, sickness and ill-health retirement

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