

A Guide to Focal Ministry



Welcome from Bishops Pete and Sophie

All Christians are called to be part of God’s mission in the world: using their God-given gifts in serving that mission, shining as Lights for Christ. Focal Ministry is a key part of our response to that calling and challenge in our diocese. It involves releasing and equipping local leadership in our churches and local communities, growing and developing the ministry of God’s church at a time when fewer stipendiary (paid) clergy will be available.

With the challenges we face, the contribution of every baptised person is essential. As you read on in this Guide, we pray that you will find a greater understanding of what is involved and what your own part in this calling might be in the years ahead.

With every blessing



+ Pete Sheffield



S. R. Jelley

“The Diocese of Sheffield is called to grow a sustainable network of Christ-like, lively and diverse Christian communities in every place which are effective in making disciples and in seeking to transform our society and God’s world.” Diocesan Vision



RENEWED



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Focal Ministry

Focal Ministers are a visible presence and agent of the gospel. They are authorised by the bishop, supported by the diocese, and rooted to provide a focus and regular presence in a particular congregation or community. They usually work as part of a team with other Focal Ministers. This Focal Ministry Team shares with the Oversight Minister, Church Wardens, PCC, and other recognised ministers, in the leadership of ministry and mission within a parish, as part of, and in collaboration with, the wider Mission Area.

This basic model, along with the core qualities, will be true for all Focal Ministers. However, Focal Ministry itself is not one-size-fits-all. The shape Focal Ministry takes, and Focal Ministers themselves will be different in each place; reflecting both the local context and needs, and the gifts, skills and callings of the Focal Ministers. Some Focal Ministers may already hold the office of Reader, Churchwarden, or be another lay minister, others may be ordained; some may be the obvious 'face of the community', others may be responding to a new call to ministry. All may be nominated to the role of Focal Minister.

Where there is a team of Focal Ministers one of them will usually be designated as the Co-ordinating Focal Minister. This role may rotate around the group, or not, depending on circumstances. The Co-ordinating Focal Minister will usually act as the main point of contact with the Oversight Minister and be part of the Mission Area Leadership Team.

The shape Focal Ministry takes therefore, will be different in each context.

However, as expanded upon below in the Core Qualities of Focal Ministers, all Focal Ministers will be:

- A believer in God as described in the creeds and teachings of the Anglican Church
- Baptised and confirmed
- Someone who as a baptised believer and disciple receives, walks in and reflects the Light of Christ in their daily lives
- Someone who is prepared to be a lifelong learner in areas of faith and ministry
- A recognised face of the church in their congregation and/or community

The core purpose and role shared by all Focal Ministers, usually as part of a team, is:

- To work with their Oversight Minister, PCC and Church Wardens to help lead the mission, ministry and growth of their church
- To work with and be supported by others in their Mission Area and deanery
- To support the wider diocesan vision and strategy
- To be a public face of the church, recognised as people of faith and integrity
- To be a focal point of contact both for the congregation and wider community
- To share in enabling the nurture and formation of disciples, encouraging all to receive, walk in and reflect the Light of Christ in their daily lives
- To help grow and develop others in their vocation and ministry
- To take responsibility and leadership of a particular area of mission and ministry as outlined in their Ministry Agreement
- If applicable, to act as a Coordinating Focal Minister

Beyond this, the specific role of a Focal Minister will vary greatly depending on gifts, needs and contexts.

Some may take a lead in Mission, others Worship, others Pastoral Work, others new areas that come out of the time of prayer and exploration.

It is hoped that our Focal Ministers will be wonderfully diverse, reflecting those in the congregations and communities that they serve. One of the benefits of seeing 'someone like me' in a public role is that it encourages others to explore their own discipleship and vocation.

It is our prayer that as Focal Ministers and Oversight Ministers are liberated into the fullness of their life in Christ, they will liberate others into the same, encouraging them and building their confidence and skills.

Mission Areas

Every deanery is composed of a number of Mission Areas, each with at least one Oversight Minister. Focal Ministers work with the Oversight Minister(s) in their Mission Area. Together, they seek to serve, encourage and support the whole people of God for the whole mission of God, enabling all the baptised to enter into the fullness of their baptismal calling to shine as a light for Christ in the world to the glory of God the Father.

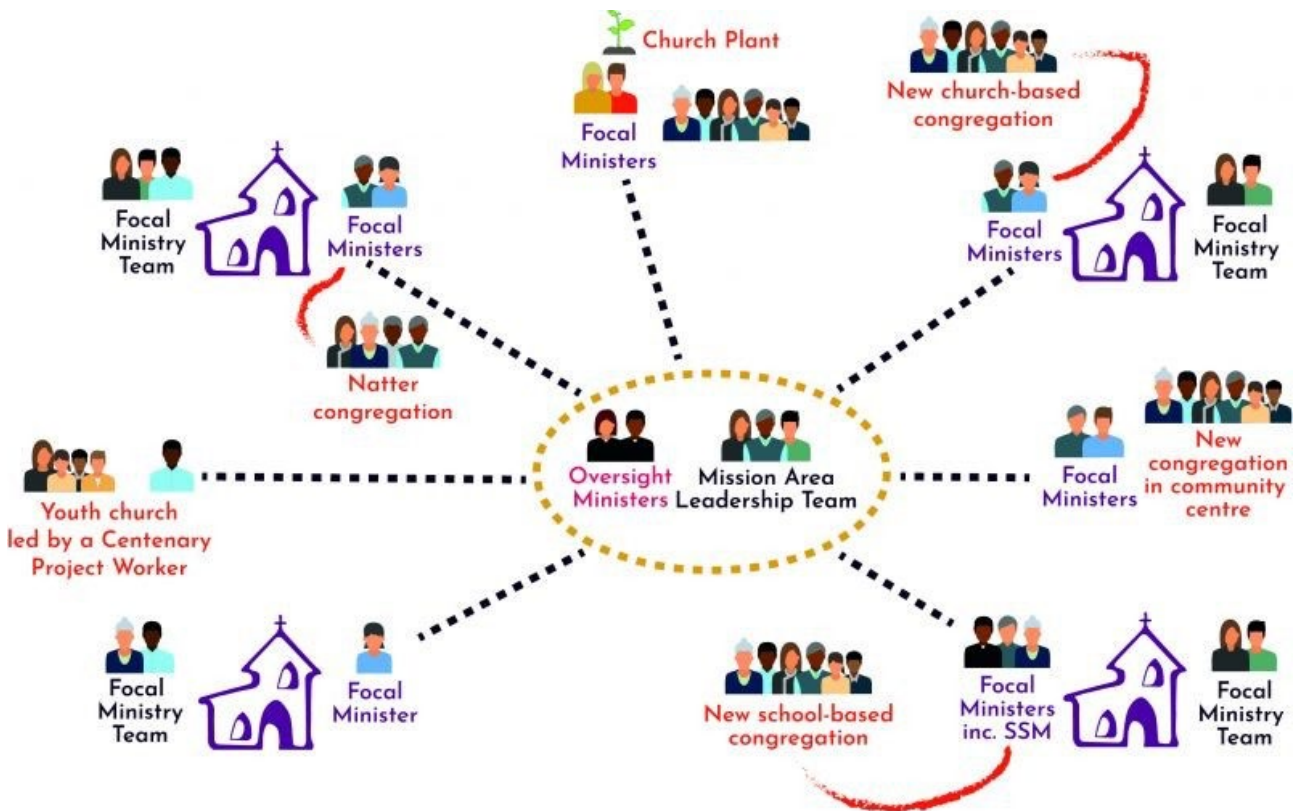
The hope is that, where appropriate, every parish will have a team of authorised Focal Ministers, which includes a Co-ordinating Focal Minister as the key contact person. Occasionally, smaller churches may have only one designated Focal Minister. Using their own gifts, and with the support of their Oversight Minister, Focal Ministers help to develop the gifts of the whole congregation, and help the local church grow in its ministry and mission.

Each Mission Area will have a Mission Area Leadership Team made up of the Oversight Minister(s), Co-ordinating Focal Ministers and other key leaders. This team is responsible for enabling the whole people of God to engage with the whole mission of God across the Mission Area.

This diagram is a simple model of a Mission Area with one Oversight Minister.



This diagram summarises how this new model of ministry might look in a Mission Area with two Oversight Ministers.



Oversight Ministers

The calling of the ordained is not to do all the work of ministry, but to enable and nurture the ministry and mission of the whole people of God to be Lights for Christ. In supporting and supervising Focal Ministry teams, Oversight Ministers are fulfilling that calling, as they seek to develop and release the gifts of others, lay and ordained. As stated in the ordinal, their priestly ministry is to enable all the baptised to enter into the full dignity of their baptism, 'that we all may grow into the fullness of Christ and be a living sacrifice acceptable to God'. Through this ministry, every disciple finds their particular calling in service and witness to their local communities, as part of a network of worshipping congregations in their Mission Area. The role of an Oversight Minister is to work collaboratively with others in four interrelated ways:

1. To oversee mission and ministry in the Mission Area, managing change and providing vision, direction and leadership, with a focus on specific parishes
2. To grow a healthy church, watching over the well-being of the whole people of God and equipping them for the whole mission of God
3. To ensure mission and ministry in the Mission Area reflects the Christian faith as understood in the Church of England
4. To keep watch over the leaders in the Mission Area

There are three particular roles for the Oversight Minister in relation to Focal Ministry:

- To help Parishes to build Focal Ministry Teams

This will include discerning when a Parish is ready to begin to implement Focal Ministry and then determining how the model will be realized in this context.

- To help identify potential Focal Ministers

In consultation with others, the Oversight Minister will seek to nurture vocations to Focal Ministry, guiding and helping them through the discernment process.

- To support Focal Ministers and Focal Ministry Teams as they exercise the ministries God has called them to.

The Oversight Minister will be a first port-of-call for Focal Ministers. They will meet regularly with them for support, learning and equipping in their ministry. Working together, the Oversight Ministers, Focal Ministers and other church ministers will help discern the vision and set the direction for the mission and ministry of the church.

At the heart of their work will be growing outward-facing Christian communities, which demonstrate the love of God and His Kingdom. If a Parish does not have an Oversight Minister then the Parochial Church Council (PCC), in consultation with the Associate Archdeacon (see below), should identify an Accompanying Minister: someone with suitable experience who can support and guide them, and any potential Focal Ministers, through the transition to the new model of ministry until an Oversight Minister is appointed.

Additional Resources for this transition

As part of the move to this new model of ministry, each paired Deanery will benefit from the support of a stipendiary Associate Archdeacon Transition Enabler, whose role is to help everyone involved move to this way of working. There will also be support from a paid Buildings and Operations Officer and a Director of Focal Ministry. These roles are financed by strategic funding from the Church Commissioners for a five-year period.

Sacramental Provision

The Oversight Minister(s) with the support of other clergy colleagues will provide the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. There will be at least one Eucharistic service each Sunday in the Mission Area.

Stages in the Focal Ministry Process



Stages in the Focal Ministry Process

Stage	Description	Who is involved
1 Exploration	The PCC and leadership within the parish decide if now is the time to explore Focal Ministry. Help may be sought in this from the Associate Archdeacons, Parish Support Team and Director of Focal Ministry	PCC Oversight Minister Associate Archdeacon Potential Focal Ministers may also be involved
2 Local Discernment	Potential Focal Ministers are identified, encouraged to consider the core characteristics and role of a Focal Minister. These have plenty of scope for creativity and diversity. The potential Focal Minister explores their calling with family and friends, and decides whether they are willing to be nominated.	PCC Potential Focal Minister Oversight Minister or Accompanying Minister Other local leaders may be involved
3 Nomination	PCCs formally nominate their potential Focal Ministers and submit the nomination form to the Director of Focal Ministry. Following this any learning 'gaps' that might need to be addressed before commencing are discussed and if necessary, individual learning plans put in place.	PCC Potential Focal Minister Oversight Minister Director of Focal Ministry
4 Discernment conversation	Potential Focal Ministers will meet with a small group of people representing the wider church to complete the discernment process. This is not an interview, but rather, a prayerful and careful discernment of the way forward. The outcome of this may be 'yes', 'not yet' or suggesting a different ministry.	The Candidate(s) Oversight Minister Deanery Representative/s Diocesan Representative/s

Stage	Description	Who is involved
<p style="text-align: center;">5 Getting Ready</p>	<p>Focal Ministers, Oversight Ministers and PCC representatives work through the induction programme, Getting Ready, to prepare together for this new way of working. The Focal Minister and Oversight Minister will complete a Ministry Agreement.</p>	<p>PCC Focal Ministers Oversight Minister Church Wardens Director of Focal Ministry</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">6 Authorisation and Commissioning</p>	<p>On completion Focal Ministers will receive a certificate of authorisation from the Bishop and be commissioned in their local church.</p>	<p>Oversight Minister Focal Minister Congregation Diocesan Representative/s</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">7 Commencing Focal Ministry</p>	<p>As Focal Ministers settle into authorised ministry they will take part in ongoing learning and equipping to support their development. This will usually include the four session Building Foundations programme, depending on prior experience.</p>	<p>New Focal Minister Oversight Minister Director of Focal Ministry</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">8 Ongoing Focal Ministry</p>	<p>All those in ministry are expected to be life-long learners. The bespoke Keeping Growing programme, working on 'just in time, just enough, just for you' principles, will support them with this, as will their Learning Mentor and Oversight Minister. There will be an initial six month probationary review followed by annual reviews locally to check how things are going, and then every three years a formal review with a Warden to discuss renewal of authorisation and commissioning.</p>	<p>Focal Minister Oversight Minister Director of Focal Ministry Learning Mentor</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">9 Review and Renew</p>	<p>Focal Ministers are expected to reflect on their ministry and take part in ongoing learning and equipping which will be reviewed regularly with their Oversight Minister, with support from others.</p>	<p>Focal Minister Oversight Minister The Focal Ministry Team Others</p>

Exploration and Local Discernment

PCCs and Oversight Ministers explore what Focal Ministry might mean and look like in their context. If the Parish does not have an Oversight Minister then the PCC should consult with the Associate Archdeacon Transition Enabler to identify an Accompanying Minister who can support them and potential Focal Ministry candidates through the process. The presentation Exploring Focal Ministry might be helpful. When exploring Focal Ministry the following should be considered:

- The gifts of the people already there
- The needs of the parish
- The vision for the parish
- How does the parish relate to the wider Mission Area?
- How this relates to the Mission Action Plan
- How many Focal Ministers might be needed?
- The roles of other Lay Ministers in your parish and Mission Area and how these will complement the Focal Ministers' roles
- The working relationships between Focal Ministers, PCC, Wardens, other ministers and Oversight Minister(s)

Although there will often be potential Focal Ministers who come to mind, it is best to try and answer these questions without thinking about particular individuals. This is something that is much easier said than done! During these discussions it may be that some potential Focal Ministers emerge, either as a part of the conversation, or as people think “so and so would be just right for that role”.

Where particular individuals do come to mind make a note – it may be that God is calling them to that role, but it is important not to rush to any conclusions before you and they have had chance to carefully explore Focal Ministry. God may not be calling them into this role. Similarly, God may be calling others who do not come immediately to mind, so try to think creatively and broadly.

Perhaps the most important things to consider when looking for potential Focal Ministers are their character and the qualities they exhibit in their lives. To help with this process we have identified Core Aspects and Qualities of Focal Ministry.

It is very important to be clear that Focal Ministers do not need to be the finished article! No one person has all the skills and gifts needed, nor are they expected to. What Focal Ministers do need is the character and the openness necessary continually to develop and grow in the role. They show certain core qualities which underpin their life and ministry, and these are evident in the way they go about their role in practice.

The Focal Ministry Tree



The Focal Ministry tree diagram depicts the core aspects of the role of the Focal Minister and how God's life flows through it.

The roots provide a secure anchor, through which nourishment is drawn up into the whole life of the tree. One of these roots is the Focal Minister's Relationship with God, taking care of their personal faith and ensuring they nurture their faith. The other root is their Self-Care, including a healthy self-confidence resting on God. This involves being aware of their own needs and those of the people closest to them and attending to those needs.

This nourishment from the roots flow into the trunk, where it feeds Growth, Development and Learning, and Leadership and Focal Ministry. Discipleship is a lifelong journey; Focal Ministers understand the importance of lifelong learning, tapping into things that help them flourish as they grow, learning from and with others. All of this shapes the Focal Minister as a leader.

This leads in turn to the development of the canopy: effective Nurturing of a Healthy Church Locally and Being Part of the Diocese. With their team and Oversight Minister(s), Focal Ministers oversee the life of their church or congregation. Each Focal Minister has particular gifts which they use in areas of ministry within their church. Their role is part of a network of ministry across the diocese, all working to implement the diocesan vision and strategy. Focal Ministers are aware that their congregation is a significant part of the wider diocese, within the national and worldwide Anglican Church. They are at home with that bigger picture and enthusiastic about their part in it.

Core Qualities of Focal Ministers

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Theme	Qualities	Seen in
Personal Faith	Growing and joyful relationship with God Motivated by love of God Living as a light for Christ in everyday life Confidence found in Christ	A desire to reflect the love of God and live as a Light for Christ
Nurturing Faith	Commitment to all the key beliefs of the church as expressed in the scriptures and the creeds Nourished and sustained by prayer, scripture and sacrament Sharing in the fellowship of the church	Care for spiritual life in ministry, through prayer, worship and bible study; private and corporate Habits, tools, practices and supportive relationships to draw on, to nourish and sustain personal and spiritual life

SELF-CARE

Theme	Qualities	Seen in
Healthy Self-Confidence	Personal identity on Christ Shaped by spiritual disciplines e.g. prayer, self-awareness and self-acceptance	Recognising and working with strengths, limitations and personal capacity Receiving and handling positive and negative feedback appropriately
Taking Care of Yourself	Aware of personal needs Care for self Balance of work and rest Realistic understanding of the time and energy required by the role as outlined in the Ministry Agreement	Personal boundaries and mechanisms to balance competing demands Looking after key personal relationships and taking time off Strategies for managing stress Exercising ministry within a balanced and healthy lifestyle

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Theme	Qualities	Seen in
Discipline	Open to being transformed by God Committed to growing in discipleship	Living as a Light for Christ in all aspects of life
Lifelong Learning	Openness and commitment to growth and development	Self-understanding as a learner Willingness to participate in regular ongoing ministerial development Identifying and accessing appropriate learning opportunities Reflective practice
Learning from and with others	Openness to learning from and with others	Appropriate engagement with others

LEADERSHIP AND FOCAL MINISTRY

Theme	Qualities	Seen in
The Focal Minister as a leader	A disciple of Jesus who lives out their baptismal calling to be a Light for Christ Models leadership on the example of Christ	Recognised by others as a disciple of Jesus, having faith and integrity Recognised as someone who is stable and trustworthy Healthy, accountable relationships, with appropriate boundaries and confidentiality Practical understanding of the use, and abuse, of power and the role of policies and procedures, especially Safeguarding Role model to those within and outside the church Of good standing in their community
Collaborative leadership	Committed to collaborative leadership	Shared leadership and effective team working Supportive of colleagues
Vision	Has a realistic and practical sense of vision for the church or congregation, which resonates with others Capacity to develop as a reflective practitioner in shaping vision and practice	Development and implementation of that vision with others Ongoing reflection on practice

NURTURING A HEALTHY CHURCH LOCALLY

Theme	Qualities	Seen in
The whole life of the Church	Desires to see the whole life of the church flourish	Ongoing reflection, encouragement and nurture of the whole life of the church Fostering healthy relationships
Enabling others to live as Lights for Christ	Desires to encourage and facilitate the gifts of others in sustaining the life and ministry of the church	Encouraging of others in their journey of faith Supporting, developing and facilitating the ministry of teams and individuals within the life of the church
Mission in the local context	Committed to God's mission as outlined in the 5 marks of mission	Enabling the church in outreach to the local context, in ways which are appropriate to the local context
Personal gifts	Aware of personal gifts and ministry, and where they are called to serve in the life of the church	Using personal gifts and ministry within a particular area of the life of the church

BEING PART OF THE DIOCESE

Theme	Qualities	Seen in
Diocesan vision and strategy	Values the vision and strategy of Sheffield Diocese	Ongoing reflection on the life of the church in relation to the diocesan vision and strategy
Roles across the Mission Area and diocese	Values the role of Focal Minister and its place in the life of the diocese Values and works with all other roles and ministries in the life of the diocese	Healthy, mutually supportive relationships within the Mission Area and diocese
Managing the Church	Committed to ministry within the structures of the diocese; following diocesan guidelines, practices and policies	Ministry within diocesan boundaries, legal and safeguarding Accessing information and support
Being Anglican	A respect for and commitment to the Church of England, its faith, breadth and diversity	A deepening understanding of Christian faith and practices within the Church of England

What if we can't identify Potential Focal Ministers?

In some contexts, especially where there are no recognised lay ministries being exercised in the life of the local church, an initial response may be to think that we don't have any potential Focal Ministers. The following list of bullet points suggests some things to consider:

- As a group work through the Exploring Focal Ministry presentation
- Ask your Associate Archdeacon Transition Enabler for assistance
- Check your expectations of the role – Focal Ministers are not called to be mini vicars and do not have to do everything
- Find out about the Focal Ministers in similar churches, who are they? What they are doing?
- Consider using Lights for Christ and Discipleship Courses to grow people into the roles and introduce the Lights for Christ personal rule of life material
- Contact the Focal Ministry Team for help
- Consult others, Parish Support Team, Warden of Focal Ministry, or Associate Archdeacon Transition Enabler
- Can you ask for help from others in the Mission Area or Deanery

If you do consider “importing” a Focal Minister this should be done through a process of consultation and testing, perhaps with the help of the Warden of Focal Ministry or the Associate Archdeacon Transition Enabler. Focal Ministers will not be imposed upon a church

Nomination

Following exploration, the PCC formally agrees to nominate the potential Focal Ministers, records this in the minutes, completes the Nomination Form (Appendix 1) and sends this to the Director of Focal Ministry.

A date is then arranged for a Discernment Conversation.

An important part of the discernment process for Focal Ministers is for them to ask what experiences and knowledge and skills they bring with them. Potential Focal Ministers are asked to do a simple exercise to identify prior learning and experience. They are then asked to consider what further equipping may help them in their new ministry. They are asked to record these by completing the Focal Ministry Learning Profile. (Appendix 2)

Prior to the Discernment Conversation potential Focal Ministers and Oversight Ministers will meet together to reflect on the gifts and callings within the new team, and begin to discuss the kinds of roles and responsibilities each may take on. This will be an evolving process and does not need to be set in stone.

Discernment Conversation

Once all of the paperwork has been received and checked, Focal Ministry candidates will be invited to a Diocesan Discernment Conversation.

What are its aims?

- To discern together the vocation and potential ministry of the candidate
- To make sure that the potential Focal Ministers are comfortable with what they are being asked to do
- To clarify, if necessary, any concerns raised in references or other application papers
- To discuss support and learning needs
- To discern together whether the potential Focal Minister should proceed to the next step, be given some foundational support or equipping via Groundwork before doing so, or consider a different direction in their vocation

Who attends this meeting? It may be a combination of any of the following:

- Potential Focal Minister
- The Warden of Focal Ministers (Chair)
- Oversight Minister
- Deanery Representative
- Diocesan Representative

Because Focal Ministry is an authorised public ministry in the Diocese, we will need to do a DBS check and any recommendation is provisional on this, and the completion of necessary safeguarding training.

Getting Ready

The Oversight Minister will consult with the potential Focal Ministers and others in order to set up some dates and a venue for the induction process which is known as Getting Ready. If Focal Ministry is new to the parish the PCC will be asked to identify a small number of representatives to take part in Getting Ready. This will work best if some of them, but not necessarily all, are from the PCC. There will be three sessions. Some information will be provided online which Focal Ministers and PCCs can look at independently and/or with their Oversight Minister.

Getting Ready helps ensure all the building blocks are in place for the start of Focal Ministry. During this stage the Focal Minister(s) and their Oversight Minister will complete a Ministry Agreement. This will help everyone to be clear about how they will work together and any expectations about how much time Focal Ministers will spend carrying out their roles. It should also include provision for legitimate expenses to be claimed. Full details can be found in the Guide to Good Practice.

Authorisation and Commissioning

Focal Ministers will receive a Certificate of Authorisation from the Bishop subject to the outcome of their DBS and completion of the necessary safeguarding training. (Currently Basic and Foundations before authorisation, and Leadership within six months of authorisation.) The Oversight Minister will arrange a service of commissioning, normally in the context where the Focal Minister will exercise their ministry. This will include prayer, worship and presentation of the Bishop's Certificate of Authorisation, alongside commissioning by the whole community to celebrate and mark their formal beginning in Focal Ministry.

Focal Ministers will be authorised for an initial three-year period. After that time, Focal Ministers have a review with the Warden of Focal Ministers, with the potential for re-authorisation for further three-year periods.

Commencing Focal Ministry

The early stages of a new ministry are a time of rapid growth and learning 'on the job'. Therefore, there is particular provision during this time, for learning support and equipping for newly authorised Focal Ministers, through Building Foundations. This series of four sessions, which you can access flexibly over twelve to eighteen months, offers helpful content to support you at this stage of ministry. It also provides support to help you process what is happening in your ministry, to develop your skills of reflection and discerning next steps. It gives you the chance to meet with, learn from and develop supportive relationships with others. Most Focal Ministers will take part in Building Foundations. Should you benefit from different provision, this will be agreed following discernment.

Ongoing Focal Ministry

Beyond this, you will move into Keeping Growing. This is a bespoke programme, drawn from a range of opportunities and agreed with your Oversight Minister. There is a minimum expectation to make sure you are taking care of your personal growth and development - see the 'Guide to Lifelong Learning for Focal Ministers' for more detail. The aim is to have enough to stimulate and feed your growth, but not too much to become burdensome.

Review and Renew

The Oversight Minister, Focal Minister and others in the Focal Ministry Team and Mission Area will be settling into a pattern of working together. As with all new things, there will be changes as they learn to work together. The Oversight Minister will meet with the Focal Minister both as a part of a team but also in one-to-one sessions to provide support.

All Focal Ministry will include a 6-month probationary period, which will provide an opportunity to reflect on how things have been going. This is a review with your Oversight Minister, which will provide an opportunity for you both to reflect on how things have been going. This review may conclude that everything is fine perhaps with a few changes. It may

be that the probationary period is extended and, in a few cases, it may be decided that Focal Ministry is not for you.

Together you will ask:

- What has been going well?
- Have there been any problems?
- What have we learned together about Focal Ministry and the way it works in our parish?
- Have any new opportunities emerged?
- Are there things that we now realise we should not be trying to do, or that we should do differently?
- Do we need to make any changes to the Role Description or Working Agreement?
- This is a point where it is OK for you to say Focal Ministry is not working out for you
- It also will be a point where your OM can raise any significant issues and concerns they might have

Possible Outcomes are:

- Everything is developing well, your role as a Focal Minister is confirmed
- Some small changes are needed, but once these are agreed and put in place your role as a Focal Minister is confirmed
- Major changes are required, your probationary period may be extended for an agreed length of time
- Significant issues are identified and a conversation with the Warden of Focal Ministry is needed to find an appropriate way forward
- The Focal Minister decides that Focal Ministry is not for them and it is agreed that they will step down
- The Director of Focal Ministers, on behalf of the Diocese, may identify significant issues that will have to be explored, and may lead to a suspension or withdrawal of authorisation

Following this, Focal Ministers are expected to take part in ongoing learning and equipping, including ensuring their safeguarding training is up to date, which will be reviewed annually with their Oversight Minister.

Notes

For more information, contact the Director of Focal Ministry



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