

## Vocations and Training

The process in the parish encourages the identification of people who may be called to individually licensed or authorized ministries: Readers, Pastoral Ministers, Evangelists, or Ordained Local Ministers. It is likely that such candidates will emerge especially from among the membership of Core Groups. When this happens (particularly through the Vocations Discernment process which concludes the first year of the three-year programme) the candidates for such ministries will be 'channelled' into the appropriate diocesan training course. At this point it will be helpful for such people to remain as Core Group members, but care will need to be taken that they are not over-committed to other activities beyond the regular Core meetings.

## Beyond the Three Years

When the Basic Parish Programme of the Wakefield Ministry Scheme is over, the Core Group does not cease to exist. By then it should be established within the lifeblood of the church's regular shared ministry. It will therefore continue to meet periodically to monitor developments, consider fresh initiatives review and plan. This means there need to be measures in place for keeping it 'fresh'. The PCC should review the membership of the Core Group annually, and it should be possible regularly for new people to be brought into it, and existing members on occasion to feel able to step down. The Core Group must not become an elitist 'closed shop', nor must membership be an irreversible 'life sentence'! With good and trustful relationships, the process of people moving in and out of the Core Group should be natural and trouble-free.

December 2007



# Wakefield Ministry Scheme

BRINGING TOGETHER THE WORLD'S WORSHIP THROUGHOUT

## INFORMATION ABOUT CORE GROUPS

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## What is a Core Group?

Core Group is the term which has been established within the Wakefield Ministry Scheme to denote the group of about six to ten people at the heart of the process of shared ministry development in the parish. In many diocesan local ministry schemes they are called the 'Local Ministry Team'. In Wakefield the term Core Group is meant to imply not so much that this is the small group of people who 'do the ministry', as that they are at the centre, or core, of the whole congregation who are a 'ministering community'. The 'core' is not the whole apple nor the most important part of the apple, but is at the centre of it and is also where the seeds of fresh growth are found!

## What is the Core Group's role?

In every case the Core Group will work to foster the shared ministry of the whole congregation by taking the lead in ensuring that the Wakefield Ministry Scheme process runs effectively in the Church. This role could be described as that of 'Ministry Support Group', supporting, encouraging and developing the ministry of the whole church. In different parish contexts, other roles alongside this may tend to be emphasised:

- In a small congregation of maybe no more than twenty people, the Core Group may effectively be a 'Local Ministry Team', comprising most of the people who share the day to day ministry of the church.
- In a much larger congregation of, say, over one hundred people, the Core Group may be a 'Ministry Co-ordinating Group', working with the incumbent to oversee and focus the whole collaborative ministry life of the church around a common vision.

## What is the role of the Diocesan Helper?

Every Core Group has a Diocesan Helper assigned to it when the parish begins its participation in the Scheme. This may be one of the WMS Staff, or a lay person from another parish. They have skills in listening, coming alongside a group, helping them to understand their own development and tease out implications and conclusions from their discussions. The Helper has a two-way role:

- to accompany the Core through the Scheme as an outside element, adding a broader perspective, helping the Group sometimes to 'see the wood for the trees' and on occasion offering advice or suggesting resources;
- to liaise between the parish and the diocese by representing the Ministry Scheme staff. Helpers will also meet periodically with WMS personnel to compare notes and thus help to maintain a common thread across the range of different types of parish.

The Helper will normally attend Core Group meetings in the early stages and will take a leading role in the coverage of the material necessary to get the Scheme started. As things progress he or she will negotiate how often it is necessary to be there. Where there is not felt to be a need for substantial ongoing help after the first year or so, the Helper's regular involvement may end by mutual agreement. Instead, the parish will then be put in touch with a WMS Area Representative from whom further help and support will be available as required, both during and beyond the three year Programme.

- Through the bulk of the three year programme: the Core Group will need to meet at least twice a term for reviewing progress, planning ahead and developing initiatives.

(b) Central Diocesan events

- In Years 1 and 3 of the Scheme: Saturdays, one in September and one in May
- In Year 2: three Saturdays spread through the autumn and early part of the New Year

(Some Saturdays may be replaced by evening sessions.)

- Each year: one part-day or evening Spirituality session in November and a choice of Worship & Spirituality events in June

(c) Training Units for the Core Group: selected from a menu of options and designed especially to foster team-working and help the group to develop its understanding and experience of shared ministry and leadership in the Church of England context - typically one unit of 4-6 sessions undertaken each year.

(d) Involvement as needed in one Parish Educational course and one Practical Project each year

Looking beyond the end of the three year Parish Programme, Core Groups should expect to continue to meet about monthly, to plan, review and oversee the Shared Ministry life of the parish.

Some Core Groups may freely **choose** to meet more often, for example to pray together, but this is up to them to work out. Ministry Scheme commitments must be carefully negotiated: no-one can be expected to be at everything.

- ♦ In some cases the Core Group may be chiefly a 'Think Tank' to generate new ideas and promote new initiatives.

In all cases the Core Group must be accountable to the PCC and report regularly to it, in the same way as a sub-Committee or any parish organisation would do.

### How is the Core Group formed?

In the Wakefield Ministry Scheme the view has been taken that because parishes differ in culture, leadership traditions, churchmanship and so on, no one way of forming the Core Group should be imposed on all. There are various possible ways:

- At the most **formal** end, an electoral process, with the whole congregation or electoral roll membership involved in voting - some dioceses lay down precise rules for this but in Wakefield on the whole this has not been encouraged.
- At the most **informal** end, a completely open process in which Wakefield Ministry Scheme meetings in the early stages are simply announced in church and over a period of time those who have turned up regularly become the Core Group.
- In most cases something in between takes place: a process of consultation, usually initiated by the incumbent among the PCC and possibly the wider congregation, leading to the formulation of a list of potential Core Group members.

There are two main ways in which this can happen:

- an **incumbent**-led process in which, having consulted, the incumbent approaches people individually to invite them to be part of the Core Group; or

- a PCC-led process in which consultation leads to a list of names which the PCC consider and then decide about jointly.

### Who should be in the Core Group?

Whichever way it happens, it is important for a Core Group to have certain features to its make-up:

- Usually there will be a substantial overlap with PCC membership - perhaps at least 50% of Core Group members should be PCC members, to avoid the risk of polarization. However, in some cases a PCC may deliberately choose to set up a Core Group involving mainly people who are not from its own members but will be accountable to it. It is vital to avoid establishing a Core Group as an alternative 'power-base', especially where the PCC is viewed as more conservative or traditionalist and the Core Group more progressive or radical.
- There should be people there who provide a link into the key networks and activities of the church's life and ministry
- If at all possible, there ought to be a reasonable spread of age, gender, background etc. so as to represent the congregation as a whole
- They need to be people who are willing to be 'team players' - this does not mean they must all think the same but the 'maverick' radical and the 'entrenched' traditionalist may not fit well!

### What about the vicar?

In a single parish situation with a resident incumbent it would seem common sense for the incumbent to be part of the Core Group. Nevertheless in the interests of collaborative ministry development it would be good if the group were able to meet without the incumbent always having to be present.

There will be instances such as a daughter church or multi-parish situation where the Ministry Scheme is running in a church which does not have its own full time or resident incumbent. In these cases, it is less likely that the incumbent will need to be an actual **member** of the Core, though he or she will of course always be free to attend meetings when possible or necessary.

### How much time commitment is required?

Especially in the early stages of the Ministry Scheme process, Core Group members need to have a significant level of availability, to be able to 'gel' together as a team and get the Scheme up and running in the parish. Later on, meetings as part of the Basic WMS Programme become less frequent, but the Core Group will assume more of a role in the regular planning and oversight of shared ministry in the church.

A typical commitment would look like this:

- (a) Core meetings to operate the Basic Parish Programme
  - At the beginning: three or four meetings, at least monthly but preferably more often, to get the whole process started (i.e. ideally within the first term)