

such as those in the example. But the groups inter-relate by networking rather than through the central body. Power and authority are much more dispersed and genuinely shared. The Co-ordinating Group would chiefly be responsible for 'holding the vision' and overseeing the progress of the church's agreed strategies for implementing it. On the diagram the PCC does not appear because it might evolve in one of two ways. It might assume its own specific legally enshrined role as a parish business meeting dealing with certain areas and simply receiving reports of other activities periodically. In this case the PCC is effectively one of the groups doing the networking, and could appear as another 'bubble'. Alternatively a slimmed-down PCC actually becomes the Co-ordinating Group and that is its primary role. In some ways this would be the ideal arrangement in a really mature collaborative ministry church.

August 2006

Wakefield Ministry Scheme

COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY

Help for Clergy and Lay
Leaders

5. Stages and Structures

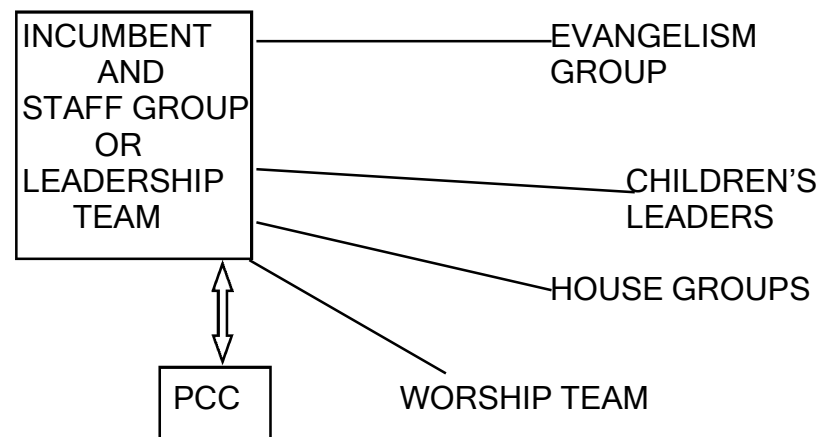
GR D5

This paper provides some material to help you locate your church on the scale of development of a collaborative approach to ministry. This means that leadership, decision-making and responsibility are all shared in the working out of a commonly held vision for the church. In this understanding, 'shared ministry' is a more general term which could be used to mean anything from 'people doing jobs because the vicar asked them to', to a more fully collaborative approach. 'Delegation' has a specific reference to the process of the person in authority handing over an area of work to another person or persons. It is one vital part of collaborative ministry but not the whole of it, since a church could have a great deal of delegated ministry with little or no collaboration at the level of leadership.

Stages towards collaborative ministry

1. 'We all try to help the Vicar'

This could be the starting point. A church recognises that the Vicar can't do it all! Few churches nowadays would presume that he or she should or could...but ask people why they are doing the jobs they do in the church and you might uncover a considerable residue of this way of thinking. Do people see it as 'our ministry'? The lady who arranges the flowers is unlikely to think she is doing it merely because the Vicar hasn't the time: she will almost certainly see herself as offering a particular skill which she has, and others (including the Vicar) haven't. Similarly the organist; but what about someone who visits the sick, or even the Reader who leads a non-eucharistic service when the Vicar's taking the service at one of the other churches in the benefice? Do they see what they are doing essentially as 'helping out'? If they do, there is evidence of work to be done on getting across the concept of collaborative ministry.

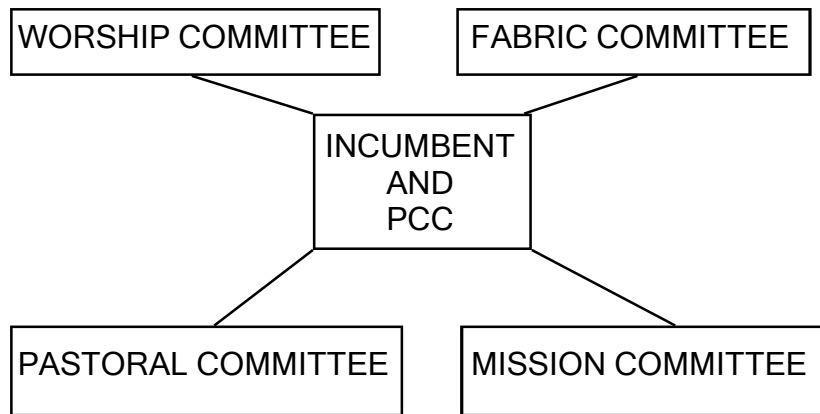


the overseeing body for all the collaborative ministry developments represented in the diverse groups. The PCC will probably be significantly larger than the Staff Group or Leadership Team. The term 'Staff Group' implies the clergy plus those in licensed or formally authorised lay ministries (Readers, Lay Pastoral Ministers; some include churchwardens). A 'Leadership Team' will be wider (for example a Local Ministry Team or Core Group in the Wakefield Ministry Scheme), but will still be unlikely to comprise more than ten people. Churches into stages 3 or 4 of collaborative ministry will probably find this a more flexible and creative model than the preceding one, which will draw a much larger number of people into active ministry, decision-making and fresh thinking.

4. *The Organic Model*

This would be the model to correspond most closely to the fifth stage of collaborative ministry, 'letting the flowers bloom'. A church could consider introducing it at stage 4. At the centre, the Ministry Co-ordinating Group could be quite small, as long as its members between them had access to each of the areas of work covered by the various groups

2. *The PCC and Sub-Committees Model*



This is just an example, but in general where this model is in operation there are unlikely to be more than four or five sub-committees as a committee structure is quite bureaucratic and will probably not draw in a lot of people who are not already on the PCC. Churches at stages 2 or 3 of shared ministry may well operate in this way. The authority and power-base are still quite centralised, though less hierarchical than in the first model. This time there is an equivalence between vicar and PCC, but the status of the committees means that their freedom to take responsibility and initiative is quite limited.

3. *Staff / Leadership Team and Working Groups Model*

In this model the working groups are no longer constituted strictly as committees of the PCC. The examples shown are meant to suggest a diversity of types of group. The PCC sets up and authorises the Staff Group or Leadership Team, which then becomes

2. Certain jobs are allocated to people who receive training and recognition

This is probably where the majority of churches are. People are accustomed to having (for example) an organist, Sunday School teachers and assistants at the Communion, knowing exactly who is and is not authorised to carry out these roles, and expecting them to have received some form of training. In some churches the people with particular training for a licensed ministry, and the elected officers of the church, may meet with the incumbent as a form of 'staff team'. Having visibly appointed and trained people in certain jobs can be a step on the way to collaborative ministry if these people meet in some sort of leadership capacity. But it can also be rather patchy.

3. Some areas are structured and planned for within the church's ongoing life

This takes things a step further. The focus shifts from identifying selected specially authorised *people* towards beginning to think of the *mission* or purpose of the church as inspiring the way things are done. Take worship as an example. Previously the church said 'we have worship which is planned by the Vicar according to what has been agreed by the PCC, and serviced by the duly trained and appointed organist and choir, helped by people who volunteer to read lessons and so on'. All of this was 'shared ministry' in a sense. But the church now says, 'we need a regular group of people working together to see the picture whole and plan for the worship of the church, season by season, according to an agreed vision and strategy'. Many churches bring different areas of their life under arrangements of this kind a step at a time.

4. A comprehensive pattern of working groups networking with each other

In a small church there may not be much difference between this and the previous stage. But once things reach a certain size and complexity (theorists put the threshold for change at anywhere between 70 and 150 regular worshippers in the church, but around 100 will do as a broad guide), collaborative ministry really requires a devolved pattern of roles and responsibilities covering the whole of the church's life. The word 'committees' can carry negative connotations of bureaucracy, but 'working groups' responsible to the PCC but not bound by that body's 'business' culture can be very creative. The vicar, of course, cannot be in charge of all the groups, indeed may not chair any of them, and most will not require his or her presence in order to function.

5. 'Letting the flowers bloom'

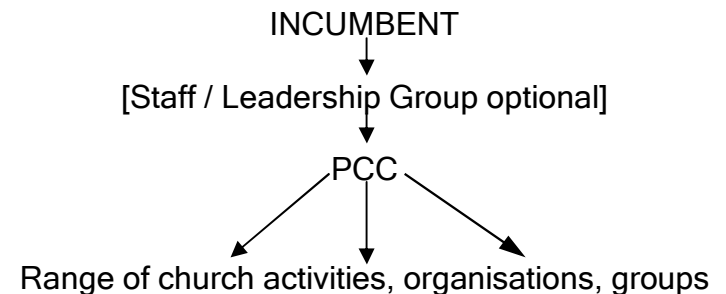
A fifth stage is added here because the potential in collaborative ministry is such that even a comprehensive network of working groups need not be the last word! Where the level of trust and Christian maturity are high, and a collaborative approach to ministry has been practised and developed over a lengthy period, there can be enough creative energy and spiritual discernment around to allow fresh initiatives to arise as needed along with the fresh structures to carry them. Permanently convened working groups become less numerous, and instead short-term task groups, 'think tanks' and pioneering units can form for as long as required around some new ministry or mission task.

A slimmed-down leadership group will keep tabs on developments and oversee progress, but authority and responsibility lie in very large measure with the groups and networks carrying their initiative forward.

Collaborative Structures

As the above stages towards collaborative ministry are traversed by a church, so the structures need to change to enable each stage to function effectively. Here are four types of structure which can be explored by churches seeking to discover what is right from them at each stage of development.

1. *The Traditional Model*



The flow of power and authority runs clearly from 'the top': the clergy. The PCC formally makes the decisions. Everything else then just happens in accordance with what has been decided. There may be groups which meet to plan and organise their area of work, but little sense of everyone participating in a common purpose or working to an agreed strategy. This model may be just about adequate for stages 1 and 2 of shared ministry.