Strategic for Lay Ministry
Towards More Intentional Discipleship

Executive Summary

St Albans Diocesan Strategy for Lay Ministry should contribute to the vision of Living God’s Love and its three strands, so that spiritual and numerical growth are promoted.

Strategy is not about aspirations and slogans, but about the practical ways to overcome obstacles and issues. In this case, the chief issue is that many lay people are not motivated and enabled to contribute to Living God’s Love to their full potential.

The strategy comprises four elements: (1) helping lay people to grow as disciples as they become more confident in their faith, (2) enabling lay people to discern God’s calling to service, (3) providing opportunities for lay people to contribute and (4) establishing means by which the diocese and lay people can be better connected.

While there are various options for taking forward each of these elements, a final decision about the practicalities of the strategy cannot be made until the resourcing question has been addressed.

1 Introduction

1.1 This Strategy for Lay Ministry is the result of a thorough year-long process of consultation and discussion across the Diocese of St Albans. Sections 2 to 5 of this document set out this background in some detail. Section 6 presents the strategy itself. Section 7 make some proposals and recommendations. However, before going further it is important to clarify the use of the terms “strategy” and “lay ministry”.

1.2 The word “strategy” has become both overused and misunderstood. Businesses may have a “marketing strategy”, an “IT strategy” or a “strategy for growth”. However, these so-called strategies often amount to little more than a rousing but imprecise aspiration, backed up by a catchy strapline. A leading software company claims that it is “enabling
the information age” while a manufacturer aspires to produce “the best built cars in the world”. These are slogans, not strategies.

1.3 A strategy answers the question: “how?” In particular it does so in the context of a tough problem, a critical threat or a serious obstacle. One doesn’t usually need a strategy for getting home from holiday unless, for example, an Icelandic volcano has just grounded every flight. Moreover, a strategy is not simply a collection of random ideas, however good they might be. A strategy needs to be coherent and consistent so that each aspect contributes in a co-ordinated fashion towards answering the “how?” question. As Richard Rumelt puts it:

   Unlike a [...] goal, a strategy is a coherent set of analyses, concepts, policies, arguments, and actions that respond to a high-stakes challenge.\(^2\)

1.4 This paper aims to set out the St Albans diocesan Strategy for Lay Ministry. Inasmuch as it is a strategy, the focus is not on the diocesan views and opinions on lay ministry (although these will be outlined). The goals of this paper are: (1) to establish what the obstacles are to effective lay ministry, and (2) to set out a reasoned approach for addressing them.

1.5 The terminology “lay ministry” needs some consideration as to its use and meaning. The term “lay ministry” can be seen to exclude those who don’t have a recognised role within the Church (for example, Reader, churchwarden or organist), but who live out their Christian lives as disciples of Christ in the world. However, the term “lay discipleship” can be seen to undervalue those with such recognised roles. While care needs to be taken that the “ministry” / “discipleship” debate doesn’t become distracting, it is recognised that all baptised lay people are disciples. Indeed, the recent General Synod paper addressing issues parallel to those covered here, uses the term “discipleship” rather than “ministry”.

1.6 The title “Strategy for Lay Ministry” should be read as inclusive rather than as exclusive.

2 Background

2.1 Before coming to the Strategy for Lay Ministry itself, it is important to establish the context in which this strategy is being produced. Any strategy needs to dovetail with the other priorities of the Diocese, with the vision of Living God’s Love and with the previous commitments made by the Diocesan Synod.

2.2 Living God’s Love is the vision of the parishes, church schools and chaplaincies across Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Luton and Barnet. This Vision is grounded in our love of God and love for neighbour flowing from God’s love for us. Its three priorities are “going deeper into God”, “transforming communities” and “making new disciples”. Using

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1 http://www.namedevelopment.com/list-of-taglines.html
2 Richard Rumelt; Good Strategy, Bad Strategy; Profile Books; London, UK; 2012; p. 6.
3 https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2144200/gs%201977%20-%20developing%20discipleship.pdf
Mission Action Planning we are developing confident and outward looking mission and evangelism, leading to spiritual and numerical growth.

2.3 The Diocese set out its **2020 Vision for Ordained and Authorised Ministry**\(^4\) in 2012. That paper concerned the need to review our present provision of ordained and licensed lay ministers. However, it also noted that

“although it is not the focus of this paper, we will seek to develop lay discipleship and to continue the important development of lay ministry in its broadest sense.”

The Synod supported the aims set out in this paper in June 2012 for a comprehensive, sustainable long-term vision of providing ministry and mission to implement *Living God’s Love*.

2.4 The Synod further considered **A Strategy for Ordained and Authorised Ministry: 2020** in March 2013, building on the earlier 2020 Vision paper. It set out the values, aims and objectives undergirding our vision as being: (1) a growing Christian presence in every community; (2) a preferential option for the poor; and (3) resourcing and cascading church growth. It specifically noted *inter alia* the responsibility we all share for increasing the number of vocations to authorised ministry, both lay and ordained.

2.5 The 2020 Vision paper also set out some important background reaffirming a number of fundamental convictions about mission and ministry. The mission and ministry of all Christians, lay and ordained, are necessary and vital to the life of the Church and to its work in the world. All baptised believers are called to a life of discipleship. Furthermore, Confirmation is a key rite of passage – especially for young people in the Church – which is often seen as a gateway to discipleship and service. Such discipleship and service includes witnessing to the truth of the Gospel (Acts 1:8), sharing in the work of making disciples (Mt. 28:19) and developing the gifts of each believer. Within the priestly ministry of all baptised people, God calls all to exercise their spiritual gifts and some individuals to particular ministries (Eph. 4:11-12 and 1 Cor. 12:4-11). All are co-workers for the kingdom of God and the tasks of ministry are distributed throughout the entire Church.

2.6 The Bishop’s Council first received a paper on Strategy for Lay Ministry at its meeting in January 2014 and expressed its support for further work to be undertaken, including an on-line survey. This substantial survey into the attitudes of lay people was conducted during January and February 2014. The results of this survey (which are discussed in paragraph 4 below and which were given early consideration by the Synod in March 2014) have informed our discussion of lay ministry and the merits of developing a more detailed diocesan strategy.

2.7 General Synod, in its February 2015 group of sessions, discussed the paper *Developing Discipleship* (GS 1977).\(^5\) Many of the findings of GS 1977 have been incorporated into this document.

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\(^4\) Living God’s Love: 2020 Vision for Ordained and Authorised Ministry (DS/12/03)

\(^5\) [https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2144200/gs%201977%20-%20developing%20discipleship.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2144200/gs%201977%20-%20developing%20discipleship.pdf)
3  Context

3.1 Any strategy does not arise in a vacuum, but develops as a response to particular issues, problems, threats or obstacles which in turn spring from the wider context. The wider context for the diocesan Strategy for Lay Ministry immediately presents two crucial factors:

(a) the continuing national decline in the numbers of stipendiary clergy and the corresponding challenge for ordained and lay people to work more collaboratively; and

(b) the concern over the lack of children, young people and young adults in many of our churches.⁶

The Archbishops’ Council, in a recent report of its activities, noted that:

“The Council continues to work towards a vision of how the Church at national level can best support the work that is going on in dioceses to encourage the discipleship of the whole People of God, both lay and ordained. It [...] has agreed there should be a Synod debate on discipleship at a forthcoming group of sessions.”

3.2 All baptised people within the Church form the Body of Christ and therefore participate directly in the priesthood of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12 and 1 Peter 2:9). Only the way of participating is different. It is important that all people should be affirmed as having equal value, whether ordained or lay. This raises sensitive issues of the relationship between the clergy and laity. There is no place for any suggestion that only clergy exercise “real” ministry and any sense of “paternalism”. At the same time, the distinctive nature of priesthood needs to be affirmed.

3.3 A Strategy for Lay Ministry needs to build on all that is already being provided in terms of current patterns, structures and resources. While this is not the place to list them in detail, five elements are of particular note:

(a) Readers are lay people, called by God, trained and licensed by the Church to preach, teach, lead worship and assist in pastoral, evangelistic and liturgical work. This is a highly-valued ministry which contributes a great deal to diocesan life.

(b) Local Ministry Development Teams (LMDTs) are a response in the Diocese to the developing understanding of local ministry as being a shared or collaborative ministry between lay and ordained people.

(c) The Equipping God’s People (EGP) programme provides locally-delivered, relevant and practical training for all people, lay and ordained.

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⁶ The Church of England’s 2015 report From Anecdote to Evidence indicates that there is a correlation between not having young people in churches and numerical decline. See: www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk

⁷ General Synod: Report on the Archbishops’ Council’s activities (October 2014) (GS Misc 1091)
(d) The development of the Lay Leaders of Worship (LLWs) scheme which has recently been launched across the Diocese is a key practical development to enable worship to take place regularly in churches which have hitherto not been able to sustain a regular pattern of services.

(e) The substantial work to nurture children and young people as disciples of Christ is already undertaken largely by the laity, in our churches and in our schools. In particular, there are examples of long-standing work done within parishes by lay people who are employed as specialist children’s, families’ and youth workers.

4 Lay Ministry Survey and Other Data

4.1 The diocesan Lay Ministry Survey\(^8\) provides further important data about the context in which this strategy is being developed. The survey was conducted on-line, although a small number of paper responses were submitted (less than 2.5% of the total). In total, almost 1,400 responses were received and, of these, over 400 included (sometimes extensive) written comments. The results were presented to Diocesan Synod in March 2014.

4.2 The survey revealed some important findings which need to be taken into account in the development of a Strategy for Lay Ministry:

(a) Lay people are mostly very motivated by the thought of serving God.

(b) Most lay people regard themselves as having some kind of ministry.

(c) Lay people are more likely to see their ministry as happening in the home and workplace, than they are to see it as “keeping the services going” or “helping the vicar”. Many of the comments reflected what was seen as an over-emphasis on church life, for example:

“[These questions] all assume ‘ministry’ is something ‘churchy’ [...] The word ‘ministry’ – it is so precious and clubby and clergy-focused.”

“There is still too much emphasis on church activities. In my understanding the church is a shed where tools are kept and mended / sharpened; we go to church to fetch the kit and then should go out back to the rest of life / our communities (at home and work) to use the tools for the kingdom of God. But the church seems to want us to spend lots of time staying in the shed.”

“I would like to see more emphasis on ‘personal’ lay ministry, serving others in the wider community, workplace and outreach.”

(d) To some extent, most churches do encourage lay ministry.

\(^8\) This survey into lay ministry in the St Albans Diocese was conducted during January and February 2014 by The Revd Canon Dr Tim Bull, Director of Ministry, on behalf of the Bishop’s Council.
However, lay ministry can, and often does, happen without the vicar’s encouragement. While there were some positive comments about local parish priests, the relevance of encouragement was brought out in some of the written comments, for example:

“[…] my own vicar routinely fails to acknowledge let alone encourage [my ministry]”

“I believe one of the greatest sins of our church is that the vast talents of lay people for sharing the gospel are not encouraged or supported.”

Lay ministry is not seen as requiring diocesan permission. Indeed, there was some antipathy towards what was perceived as diocesan interference. For example:

“I feel that, to use a rather strong term, PCC members in particular are ‘exploited’ by higher church authorities, who seem to be burdening them more and more with extra tasks to cope with, e.g. MAP when they are already over-burdened with essential affairs.”

There is no one single, particular factor – for example busyness or a perceived lack of gifts – that prevents people from offering themselves for lay ministry.

However, a sense of calling is the thing above all others that is likely to lead a lay person into some kind of ministry.

There is great ignorance among the laity about training provided by the Diocese. Over 40% of respondents knew nothing about diocesan training.

The survey was considered by Synod in March 2014. Through debate and discussion in small groups the following initial themes emerged:

(a) The profile of lay ministry needs to be raised generally.

(b) Training provision is needed, primarily but not solely, for clergy in: (1) identifying gifts and encouraging the laity, and (2) in the area of collaborative working and ordained-lay relationships.

(c) Communication needs to be improved, especially relating to training opportunities.

(d) There needs to be greater episcopal affirmation, encouragement and “permission-giving” generally in the area of lay ministry.

In response to the Lay Ministry Survey and the discussion at Diocesan Synod the Council for Discipleship and Ministry (CfDM) and the Officers of the Ministry Department have given careful consideration as to how best to take forward these issues. In particular, they have made the following points:
(a) CfDM recognised that lay people are first and foremost followers of Jesus Christ, and so affirmed the need to focus on “intentional discipleship” – encouraging all people in their daily Christian living. Moreover, CfDM emphasised that we should not regard lay people simply as volunteers⁹ who are required for particular tasks.

(b) A Strategy for Lay Ministry should not be directed at the laity alone since it is in reality a strategy for the whole Church. If it is going to be effective, it will inevitably also require the cooperation of clergy, Diocesan Officers and the Bishop’s Staff. There needs to be some recognition of the fact that when we speak of “collaboration” the reality can sometimes not live up to the promise. The successful implementation of a Strategy for Lay Ministry may well promote – and be promoted by – a change in culture.

(c) It is also important that any strategy be developed within the existing structures of Diocesan Synod, Deanery Synods, the Bishop’s Council and the various boards and committees of the Diocese.

(d) Given the current financial constraints, it is vital that a Strategy for Lay Ministry does not become an undue financial burden. However, any strategy will require an investment of resources in terms of both money and hours, commensurate with the significance that the Diocese chooses to place on the strategy.

(e) Whatever is finally agreed as a Strategy for Lay Ministry should be based on wide consultation within and without the Diocese, and with the benefit of input from the National Church Institutions, other dioceses and theological study.

4.5 In addition to the Lay Ministry Survey, account should also be taken of the feedback given through Post It notes at the two Bishop’s Conferences in October and November 2014. While a great many diverse comments were collected, not all of which are relevant to the topic of this paper, a number of pertinent themes stood out.

(a) Many comments pointed to the need for intentional discipleship and spiritual growth among lay people. It was observed that there is a pressing need to “create ways to discover God in our lives”, to spend time “waiting on God” and to grow in “personal holiness”. Other responses suggested that Christian education and nurture was important. This might be achieved through existing courses (such as Alpha and Pilgrim), Bible study at different levels (not just the academic) and more involvement in house groups. Furthermore, it was noted that, while apologetics is important, we should learn to live with uncertainty and vulnerability, admitting that we don’t have all the answers.

(b) A number of remarks advocated the need for lay people to be “open and generous” with their gifts so that local churches don’t have “the same few people engaged in too many different projects”. It was also commented that there should be greater collaborative ministry between clergy and Readers. In particular, it was felt that those in authority should “delegate trust”.

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⁹ It is the case, however, that lay people are volunteers whose goodwill can be withdrawn. Thus, it is important to avoid any proposal which implies “imposition” or “control”.
(c) Many of the respondents highlighted the work that lay people do outside the church by virtue of their Christian discipleship. Among the examples given were ministry and service: as recognised workplace chaplains, as street pastors, by supporting food banks and through village care schemes. However, in this context, it was asked:

“How do we equip people in our parishes to be confident Christians in their everyday contexts – able to talk about their faith to those they meet? i.e. without requiring academic courses / qualifications?”

Again:

“Many regular congregation members do not have enough confidence to reach out to others – we need to find ways to encourage and equip them.”

(d) A large number of comments recommended that the Church do more to listen to community needs. Pertinent comments included:

“Church [needs] to share in the common goals of the particular community – and bring the love of Christ thereby.”

“[The Church should] listen to the local community to find the real needs rather than imposing solutions on non-existent issues.”

“We have forgotten what community is all about and have put too much focus on the church family.”

“Forget about ‘them and us’ – forget about ‘church speak’ – be alongside, listen to the needs and see what they can teach you.”

4.6 The final data to take into consideration is the work that is already being done by, and alongside, lay people. The first example comes from our St Albans diocese, while the second draws on the experience of the national church.

(a) In October 2014, The Revd Ruth Pyke, Children’s Work Advisor for St Albans Diocese, received an email from a parish in the Sharnbrook Deanery describing the work done by a group of lay people there.

We too are continually blown away at the number of kids that join us on Sundays. It is such a blessing and encouragement to us. Most recently, and at long last, we have had four teenagers come through for Confirmation, three of whom have been with us since they were quite young. This is a first for us [...] As to what has led to this growth? No magic answers or tricks of the trade, but a lot of dedication, prayer and love for kids by a fantastic team of [lay] people.

(b) To quote the paper Developing Discipleship (GS 1977):

Christian discipleship is expressed today in thousands of different ways and places: in food banks, schools and hospitals; through the creative arts and media; in homes, workplaces; through voluntary work with children, the elderly through
mutual care and support of young to old and vice versa, through Street Pastors, homeless projects, campaigning, credit unions, peace-making and political action, in the building of stable, loving families, in generous giving, in love for our neighbours, in hospitality, in care for the environment, in soup kitchens, advice centres and voluntary organisations.

5  The Challenging Issue that a Strategy for Lay Ministry Addresses

5.1 As set out at the start of this paper, a strategy is not simply an aspiration, a slogan or an opinion. It is a “coherent set of analyses, concepts, policies, arguments, and actions that respond to a high-stakes challenge.” Having set out the background to this strategy, it is now essential to be clear about the issue, or issues, to which a “Strategy for Lay Ministry” is the answer.

5.2 First, lay people need to be – and indeed many lay people want to be – more confident and equipped to play their part in contributing towards the vision of Living God’s Love. Lay people and clergy together should seek to encourage and support one another in going deeper into God, transforming communities and making new disciples – rather than lay people being seen as the objects of the clergy’s ministry. Without such collaborative, inter-dependent participation, lay people will make a far smaller contribution to spiritual and numerical growth. This is an especially pressing concern in the light of nationally declining clergy numbers. Moreover, clergy face an increasing workload (for example because of safeguarding issues). As a result, some areas of ministry are being neglected while others are not being given the attention they deserve. Examples include parish visiting and evangelism.

There will be less spiritual and numerical growth without the contributions of lay people.

5.3 Second, as the Lay Ministry Survey made clear, it is a sense of calling that is most likely to lead a lay person into some kind of specific ministry. The danger is that such a calling is not discerned and that the lay person’s gifts are not made available for the work of the kingdom of God. This situation is exacerbated by a number of factors such as clergy who only draw on their “favourites” for ministry. Lay people's gifts may go unused; sometimes because their calling has not been discerned.

5.4 Third, this strategy should serve not merely the Church but the kingdom of God. There is the potential for an unhealthy sense of alienation and distance forming between: (1) the work of the Church through the diocesan structures and (2) the ministry of lay people as disciples in the world, workplace, home and community. The Lay Ministry Survey revealed a number of pieces of evidence in support of this view:

(a) There were numerous comments that there’s too much emphasis on church activities and not enough on lay people’s ministry in the secular environment.

10 There is also anecdotal evidence for such a divide. For example, lay people in parishes are often heard to refer to the Diocese as “them” and not “us”.

(b) There was an acute lack of awareness regarding diocesan training provision.

(c) There was a perceived lack of need for any kind of diocesan permission in order for a lay person to participate in ministry.

(d) There were some comments which were decidedly hostile towards the Diocese as an organisation.

Because of this detachment the work of the Diocese may not receive the backing – not least financial backing – it needs.

5.5 Much of the work of community transformation is undertaken by lay people who are involved in local projects. Since such people often operate outside church structures, they therefore do not benefit from diocesan encouragement, support and training. While not wanting diocesan involvement to become prescriptive, there could be distinct benefits from enabling such people to gain from diocesan resources. To take just one example, training on “theology and justice” – which is currently only open to clergy and Readers – could be opened up to all.\(^\text{11}\)

5.6 Furthermore, the Post It note responses given at the Bishop’s Conferences point to the need to connect more effectively with the wider community; the very place where lay people spend the majority of their time.

There would be significant gains from establishing closer bonds between the discipleship and ministry of lay people outside formal church structures and the ministry of St Albans Diocese.

6  Strategy for Lay Ministry

6.1 Having identified the issues that a Strategy for Lay Ministry should overcome, it is now necessary to set out an answer to the question: “how?” Without further consultation, however, it is not possible to give the definitive answer since a number of practical points have yet to be clarified. In particular:

(a) Who are the stakeholders in such a strategy? It will be critical that lay people are co-creators of any strategy so that this strategy does not itself become a purely clerical document.

(b) Who will be responsible for delivering the strategy?

(c) What (additional) resources will be made available towards the implementation of the strategy?\(^\text{12}\)

\(^\text{11}\) Opening up events has been tried on occasion with, on the whole, slightly disappointing take up by lay people. This may well be due to a lack of effective communication.

\(^\text{12}\) This paper recommends that after a period of consultation, fully-costed proposals be brought before Diocesan Synod in 2016.
(d) What is the timescale for implementing the strategy?

(e) How will the Bishop’s Staff engage with, and promote, the strategy?

Nevertheless, it is possible to outline the four key elements of a diocesan Strategy for Lay Ministry, and to suggest some (but not all) of the possible ways in which these could be taken forward.

Confident

6.2 The first step in a Strategy for Lay Ministry is to increase the confidence of lay people as disciples of Jesus Christ. This confidence can manifest itself in any of a number of ways, including:

(a) Being confident that they are loved by God\(^\text{13}\) and saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

(b) Being confident in their identity as disciples of Jesus Christ so that they can live out that discipleship with greater intentionality.

(c) Being confident in their life of prayer, rooted in a relationship with God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and nourished through the reading of Scripture and participation in the Eucharist.

(d) Being confident in their understanding of the Christian faith, including a knowledge of the Bible and the essentials of Christian belief and doctrine.\(^\text{14}\)

(e) Being confident in the light of questions that are challenging to their faith.

(f) Being confident enough to ask questions themselves.

(g) Being confident enough to talk about their faith openly and honestly with people both inside and outside the church.

6.3 Such confidence would give lay people a greater ability to contribute towards the three strands of *Living God’s Love* and, therefore, to promote spiritual and numerical growth.

6.4 The paper *Developing Discipleship* (GS 1977) states:

> Many churches and dioceses include the goal of making disciples in their vision statements. But what does this mean beyond conversion to Christian faith? Where do we find a compelling vision for lay discipleship in the world?

\(^{13}\) *Living God’s Love* could also refer to the love of the Living God.

\(^{14}\) The paper *Developing Discipleship* (GS 1977) recommends that the Church of England revises its catechism as a way of teaching the faith.
A focus on growth in confidence would give greater substance to the *Living God’s Love* priority of “making new disciples”.

6.5 Confidence is applicable to those of all ages. Thus, it is important that this strand of the strategy be delivered in such a way\(^\text{15}\) as to grow the faith of children and young people so as to give them confidence in their discipleship. This is, first, a good thing in itself since children and young people are the church of *today* and need as much care and nurture as adults – and often more, given the pressures many of them face. However, inasmuch as they are the leaders of the future, the Diocese would be investing in those from which future ordained and lay leaders are drawn.

6.6 There are many ways in which such a component of the strategy could be delivered depending on the resources available. At one extreme, St Albans Diocese could simply signpost people to existing books and other training materials. It would then be the responsibility of individual people and congregations to ensure that such resources were used. No costs would be incurred other than that required to produce a promotional “flyer”.\(^\text{16}\) At the other extreme, St Albans Diocese might choose to employ someone with the particular brief of promoting confidence in lay people.

**Called**

6.7 The second step in the strategy, alongside a growing confidence, would be a focus on the calling of lay people.\(^\text{17}\) This would not necessarily be a calling into ordained ministry or Reader ministry – although it might be for some people. Rather, the purpose would be to help all lay people, including children and young people, to discern the role that they have to play as part of the body of Christ. While this element of calling should not be limited to particular time or group of people, it would clearly fit well with Confirmation as an admittance to discipleship and service.

6.8 It would be important that this calling is seen as widely as possible. The aim would not simply be to find additional people to fill the flower rota or intercessions rota. Instead, the focus would be on enabling all the people of God to use all their gifts in God’s service (in the wider context of their daily lives as well as in the local church\(^\text{18}\)), whether those gifts are in dance, software engineering or cookery. The Church needs people with many different attributes, whether they are analytical, artistic, bold, caring, decisive, firm, friendly, humorous, imaginative, methodical, original, relaxed, serious, talkative or wise.

6.9 Including such a component in the Strategy for Lay Ministry would reduce the likelihood that people’s gifts would be overlooked and go unnoticed.

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\(^{15}\) This could, for example, include resourcing those who work with children and young people, including their families.

\(^{16}\) There is a danger with such a radically simplistic approach, though, that what is produced is more bureaucracy rather than the growth than comes only through relationships.

\(^{17}\) The paper *Developing Discipleship* (GS 1977) contains the helpful reminder:

> All are called: the poor, the rich, the sinners, the sick, the disgraced and forgotten, the lost and weary, the unclean and the oppressed, women and men, the young and the old.

\(^{18}\) Again, the paper *Developing Discipleship* (GS 1977) contains the helpful reminder: “There are no part-time disciples.” Living out God’s calling doesn’t end once the Sunday service has concluded.
Again, depending on the resources available, there are many ways in which such a component of the strategy could be delivered. For example, some dioceses have written courses that can be used in local settings. A typical example is the SHAPE course from Carlisle Diocese. Running such a course would require the goodwill, time and energy of people in the parish, but would not be a burden on diocesan resources. Another suggestion might be that St Albans Diocese arranges regular events of its own around the deaneries.

**Contributing**

While there is merit in helping lay people to discern God’s calling, this will be of little benefit unless:

(a) people are equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge; and

(b) there are opportunities to contribute to the Church’s mission and ministry.

The first of these two points would require the ongoing provision of, and signposting to, appropriate courses and training which will build up people’s confidence and skills as active disciples.

The second of these points may mean something of a culture change as clergy become more willing to involve a wider range of lay people, using a more diverse set of gifts in fresh and original ways.

Such a culture change is arguably the hardest aspect of this Strategy for Lay Ministry. Take the example of a lay person with gifts in the performing arts. First, clergy will need to want to involve such a person in the ministry of the local church. Then they will also need to know how such a person might contribute. Overcoming this obstacle will need, at the very least: (1) training of the clergy themselves, (2) encouragement from the Bishop’s Staff, and (3) modelling of such contributions across the life of the whole Diocese.

Including such a component in the strategy would make it less likely that a person’s gifts would be unused.

The financial cost here would be negligible. The cost in terms of time and effort could be considerable since culture change is rarely easy to effect.

It is crucial that lay people see this strategy itself as liberating and releasing, rather than as an obstacle to their service of God and God’s kingdom.

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20 Such courses and training would probably be provided by diocesan staff, although outside agencies could also be used where they offer specific expertise.
21 Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is often through beginning to contribute to the life and ministry of the local church that a calling to licensed or ordained ministry is first discerned. Thus, this Strategy for Lay Ministry may also contribute to the diocesan Vocations Strategy.
The final piece of the Strategy for Lay Ministry would enable a greater sense of connectedness between: (1) lay people in their workplaces, homes and communities, (2) the world in which they minister and (3) the life of St Albans Diocese. There are three key dimensions to this “connectedness”.

(a) First, as the conference Post It notes make clear, lay people are often involved in vital, outward-looking ministry which is not formally part of diocesan structures. This element of the Strategy for Lay Ministry would entail devoting more energy, and maybe resources, into connecting with, and thereby supporting, this grassroots mission and ministry.

(b) Second, as the conference Post It notes also suggest, both Church and community would benefit from the Church taking more time to listen carefully and purposefully to the needs of local communities. Lay people are in an ideal situation to enable such connected listening to take place.

(c) Third, St Albans Diocese would benefit from having increased commitment from lay people.

This could be done in a number of different ways, some of which could work in parallel:

(a) Practical, relevant and appealing training and equipping could be offered to lay people to enable them to better fulfil their specific local Christian ministries.22

(b) A “listening exercise” could draw on the insights that lay people (of all ages and backgrounds) have regarding their communities, so as to guide the Church better in its work.

(c) A directory of active lay people could be compiled so that they could be contacted directly with information about diocesan life, including training opportunities.

(d) Social and electronic media could be used to establish an on-line community of Christians for mutual support and encouragement.23 Specific supportive links could be forged between those undertaking similar work. Examples might be lay people who are involved in care homes, lay people who teach RE (but are not necessarily in Church of England schools) or lay people who work in science.

(e) Through a simple rule of life, a commitment to prayer and (perhaps) an annual gathering, it might be possible to create a sense of connectedness and belonging.24

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22 Much excellent training is already provided through Equipping God’s People. However, as the Lay Ministry Survey made clear, around 40% of respondents were unaware of the existence of these resources.

23 This is an area in which children and young people lead the way.

24 As the paper Developing Discipleship (GS 1977) indicates, the monastic movement was a renewed call to discipleship. So this may or may not be achieved through the more ambitious model of establishing a diocesan “order” – called, perhaps, The Order of St Alban.
(f) In addition to regular conferences for clergy and Readers, there could be a regular (day) conference for lay people. Such an event would ideally include provision for children and young people so that all ages would be able to feel engaged and connected.

(g) Greater partnerships could be forged with organisations that already support Christians in the workplace.

6.20 Clearly the costs of these options vary greatly, as does the amount of work required in both setting them up and maintaining them.

Summary and Recommendations

7.1 If St Albans Diocese is serious about adopting a Strategy for Lay Ministry, then it needs to be clear about two things: (1) What obstacles and challenging issues is the strategy seeking to address? And (2) How – through what concepts, policies, arguments, and actions – might such a strategy overcome these obstacles and issues?

7.2 This paper has set out the background to the development of a Strategy for Lay Ministry and, drawing on the results of the Lay Ministry Survey, has set out the main issues that the strategy should address.

7.3 The proposed strategy itself should have four components – confident, called, contributing and connected. However, the details of how these might be delivered cannot be decided until the matter of resourcing has been resolved.

7.4 Successful implementation of the Strategy for Lay Ministry would contribute significantly to the realisation of Living God’s Love and to the spiritual and numerical growth of St Albans Diocese.

7.5 With these points in mind, the following recommendations are made:

(a) Addressed to the Diocesan Synod

That the Diocesan Synod takes note of this paper and encourages the ministry of lay people (of all ages) in all its forms.

(b) Addressed to the Bishop’s Staff, the Bishop’s Council and the Board of Finance

That consideration be given to the staffing and financial implications of implementing this strategy.
(c) **Addressed to the Rural Deans and Co Lay-Chairs**

That time is found on Deanery Synod agendas during the remainder of 2015 to address both the opportunities afforded, and the challenges raised, by a developing Strategy for Lay Ministry in the Diocese, and to report by 31st March 2016.²⁵

(d) **Addressed to the PCCs**

That all people together explore ways of promoting confidence, calling, contribution and connectedness.

(e) **Addressed to the CfDM and the Director of Ministry**

That a range of practical options for delivering this strategy be explored so that fully-costed proposals can be considered by Diocesan Synod in 2016, and that in the meantime the diocesan work in the area of collaborative ministry be reviewed.

²⁵ Among the outcomes of such discussion, it is hoped that parishes and deaneries would contribute ideas for ways in which the Diocese could promote confidence, calling, contribution and connectedness. CfDM and the Ministry Department will offer facilitators to attend deanery synods and lead discussion.