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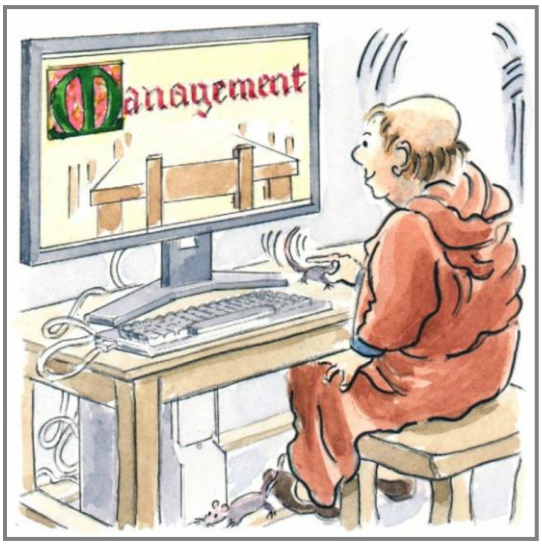

Every member on active service

How to mobilise your church

A43 Articles series: Management

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The dream that inspires this article is for every member of every church to be actively serving Christ in an appropriate way, using the gifts, enthusiasm and experience they possess for the benefit of all and to build up the body of Christ.

Some applications will be official posts in the church (teaching in a young people's group, acting as Church Secretary). Some will be unassuming service behind the scenes (visiting someone who is ill, making prayer for the church a daily priority). Other applications should be service outside the church walls in daily life at work (on a trade union committee), at a child's school (on the PTA), and in local communities (on an environmental group or in local politics).

Some people will be gift-rich but time-poor. Some will be hesitant and need great encouragement in a team setting. Some will be new Christians or new to your church. Others may be exhausted and deserve a ministry sabbatical. There needs to be a way of handling this topic that understands each person's current position.

The purpose of this article is to help any church set up the structure and the plan needed to make effective every-member ministry a central feature of church membership. Most churches teach the concept and encourage it, but relatively few invest enough in it to bring the dream to the reality it could have.

This is not a paper on how to define posts and support volunteers (see Training Notes TN31, *Affirming volunteers*, and DIY Workshop W4, *How to work with volunteers,* on this website) although there will be some overlap. It is more about structural means for establishing a church culture where everyone expects to be on active service. I have five recommendations.

1 Make someone responsible
2 Think different approaches
3 Ensure people fit roles
4 Develop training for all
5 Design an effective plan

This is no quick-fix article. It may need a complete change of attitude for some churches.

1: Make someone responsible

The first task is to give the idea of every-member ministry a validity in its own right and a clear visibility within church life. This is still not common practice – even if there has been progress in recent years. One key way to achieve this is to put someone in charge and give them official standing.

The general idea of someone responsible for any ministry is outlined in Training Notes TN90, *Put someone in charge.*

A champion

Areas of church life that have identity have a champion. This role involves leadership and benefits from being closely linked to an enthusiastic belief in the ministry concerned.

The broad area of worship services will normally be championed by the Minister. Small group membership may be championed by a member of the Ministry Team. The church's finances will be championed by a Treasurer. Safeguarding requires a specifically appointed Safeguarding Officer. In all these cases, it is clear who is responsible for that area of church life. There is someone in charge.

But in most churches the idea of practical service may be taught, there may be pleas for people to offer for specific roles, the Administrator may have all the rotas on a digital church management system, but there is usually no one person who regards this area as their one responsibility. The buck stops nowhere, or it arrives at the feet of an over-busy Minister.

The exceptions to this are in some larger churches when there is a staff member in charge of training, although often this role highlights a means (training) rather than the overall purpose (mobilisation). Some Operations Managers have this responsibility too, although it is easy for this to be drowned out by other, more pressing, responsibilities.

It is essential that this role is tightly linked to the work of the Minister and leadership team. It might well be that it is given to an existing leader – provided they fit the role and are freed of other responsibilities.

So although there are few case studies to fall back on, the first requirement is to appoint a ministry champion.

A specialist

A specialist is not necessarily an expert, but someone who can 'specialise', who can make this role their priority.

It is all very well to agree that volunteer mobilisation requires planning, surveys, training, supporting and moving people on to new roles, but all this takes time and energy. Is this article not suggesting one more task to add to a crowded church diary with exhausted workers?

But if you see practical service as an area of discipleship and if you believe it will never happen to its full potential without time investment, then you need to have a specialist, someone who has this one area of ministry to oversee. It is not an extra activity but a critical part of building up the body of Christ and the faith of each believer (Ephesians 4:12).

Churches invest in people to handle finance and in people to look after the church buildings, so is it not more important to invest in someone to look after the human resources, to care for and enable the church work-force?

It really ought not to be someone with other key responsibilities, and especially not the Minister unless it is a very small church and they see this as a short-term priority for them. This is a major responsibility.

The post does not have to be a paid one, and in most churches it will not be. In fact it makes sense for a champion of voluntary service to be a volunteer themselves. It needs someone with not only passion but time to see Christian disciples put to work and so growing in faith. This is not just an organisational role, but a discipleship one. It could be undertaken by a small team, but there still needs to be one person as the figurehead.

This is what is lacking in most churches. Without this, how can this dream of complete mobilisation become a reality, especially in a world where everyone has so many competing pressures on their time?

A clear role

Here is a sample job description for the role of Practical Service Champion (or Ministry Co-ordinator or Body Builder!). Find a name that works for your church.

Purpose

To champion service for Christ within and beyond our church as a means to discipleship growth, employing everyone's gifts, passions and experience to best effect.

To develop us into a church of active workers, and to act as the go-to person for all aspects of practical service.

Working with

- This is an unpaid role but one that reports directly to the Ministers and through them to the Trustees/PCC/Elders.
- To work alongside those responsible for each specific area of ministry, supporting them when vacancies arise.
- To liaise with the Church Administrator over the upkeep of the members' database.
- To handle the training budget in liaison with the Treasurer.
- Above all, to work alongside all church members, coming to understand everyone's availability and potential.

Responsibilities

- To encourage and enable every church member to find the area of service that best fits them and enables our church to function effectively, using appropriate tools that are available.
- By personal interview, courses/surveys and research to build up and then update an accurate database of all members' service, availability and potential.
- To provide appropriate support and review for all, and to facilitate a training programme so that everyone feels well-enabled as part of a team of workers.
- To seek out gifts that may not yet be obvious and to help people accept fresh challenges as a means of growth.
- To help newcomers be placed in starter roles and to see them develop into appropriate ministries.
- To seek a steady stream of church members moving on to wider ministries in the Church both in the UK and abroad.
- To develop a culture that ensures that service outside church structures is given due importance, sometimes even over service within.

The biblical foundation – in brief

The key concept is St Paul's idea of the body of Christ where "every supporting ligament grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work". Ephesians 4:16 (NIV). The same passage talks about leadership equipping Christ's people for works of service – or, it has been suggested, 'work in his service' – so the body of Christ may be built up (v12).

There are lists of gifts for such service in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28, Ephesians 4:11, 1 Peter 4:9-11 and, it can be argued, elsewhere. There is a listing of these gifts on page 10 of this paper.

The Old Testament includes concepts such as surveys of those who serve (eg. Numbers 4:1-49), the use of people's abilities (eg. Exodus 31:1-11), and the wisdom of sharing out work (Exodus 18:13-27). See also the book of Nehemiah.

Practical service within the church itself is highlighted in passages such as Acts 6:1-7 and in concepts of service in, for example, 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. The work of evangelism is highlighted in passages such as John 4:35-38.

In 1 Peter 2:9 Peter includes the Old Testament role of priest but applies it to all Christian people. The idea of service also runs through every concept of discipleship and church community.

The right person

Here is an outline idea for the kind of person profile that this post requires.

Christian character

Points that would be appropriate for any church leader – See Training Notes TN87, 'What to look for in your leaders'.

Qualifications

Set the bar at an appropriate level for your church.

Personal qualities

Someone who can show

- real empathy for people with an enthusiasm to see everyone serving in appropriate roles;

- an ability to motivate and develop others through training and personal example;
- high levels of self-awareness;
- an ability to spot and relate to people who are struggling, needing a break or in the wrong roles.

Gifting/skills/understanding

Someone who is

- a gifted organiser, able to handle a database;
- an excellent communicator, written and oral;
- a competent user of contemporary software to enable ministry;
- a facilitator of training;
- a pioneer who can develop this role from scratch.

Someone who has

- a good understanding of our ministries and procedures and what is involved in them;
- a real appreciation of biblical principles of service;
- experience of working with and supporting volunteers;
- an excellent appreciation of HR and safeguarding issues.

It can be argued that this is not so much a department of church life but church life itself. This role therefore needs to be seen as one that helps people grow in faith and so very much part of the leadership of the church.

The Pareto principle

This states that, for many events, about 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes. In this case, that about 80% of the work of the church will be carried out by 20% of the membership – unless you follow the ideas in this article!

There is also some truth in the idea that the best way to get a job done is to give it to a busy person. But the point of this article is to ensure no one is over-burdened with the work of the church and everyone plays their part.

This is the healthy picture painted in 1 Corinthians 12:7 and illustrated in lists such as Colossians 4:7-18 and Romans 16:1-23.

2: Think different approaches

Now that you have someone taking the responsibility for every-member ministry, and with enough visibility for everyone to know this is their role, you can consider the human resources you have and the areas of service that need to be staffed. But this is not quite as straightforward as some people might think.

Here are three separate approaches to mobilising the congregation.

Start with the roles to fill

This is where most churches begin. There is nothing wrong with this in itself but it is not the only way of going ahead.

If you start with the role then, whenever you have a vacancy you look for a replacement, either asking for volunteers or approaching possible people. This is a 'sits vac' approach. It keeps the same patterns intact.

It is of course a necessary approach for official office-holders. Your Treasurer resigns and you have to replace them. You might share the job round more than one person but you need a finance leader in some form. If the person running the flower-arranging rota leaves, you need someone else to step into their shoes. You don't question the role very much, you look for a replacement.

What about the unseen roles? Or those who plug gaps when they see them without others noticing this? These are not listed as roles to be filled and so when someone moves away the job may simply not get done.

So the danger of starting with the list of jobs is that you are seeking to maintain the same pattern as you have today, even if your congregation is now made up of quite different

people or has aged. You may well ignore other ways of running these ministries and, more likely, will assume these and only these are the ministries your church should have.

This then leads to a further danger of forcing unsuitable people into roles. You might end up with someone leading a children's group when that is not really their gift, but they are such a generous person that they see a need and offer to fill it. Everyone then gasps with delight.

This is the job-centred approach that most churches adopt by default. The aim is to keep the show on the road. It's straightforward to operate. And of course you just have to adopt this approach some of the time. It's not wrong, but on its own it can be dangerous.

Start with the people you have

What the replacement method does not do is to notice that within your congregation lie unused gifts. There's a brilliant photographer but the post of Church Photographer does not exist. Or you have a great drama writer, but no opportunities for them to use their talent.

So a second approach, less common in churches, is to start with the people you have and see what areas of ministry each one might thrive in. This is a completely different way of thinking the issue through. This time you start with the people and see what they can contribute rather than the jobs that need filling.

So you discover from each of your members where their enthusiasm, experience and gifts lie – more about this in the next section – and then seek to put those gifts to use. That could mean starting new ministries that do not currently exist, or rethinking the overall shape of service within the church. Of course it might also mean that some roles simply do not get filled and some areas of ministry come to an end.

This requires vision, the ability to see what is not currently in existence. It needs a great deal more work that just filling vacancies: individual interviews with each person and then assessing how and where they might serve. It means that your ministry list might change year by year which could be confusing.

But it leads to a group of workers who are thriving in ministry because what they are doing fits the people they are.

It will quickly become apparent that this is not, on its own, a sustainable approach. If you find you have no people interested in finance, you abandon the role of Treasurer, forget about claiming Gift Aid and the bills don't get paid. But you cannot do that! So this approach has many advantages but, again, cannot work on its own.

Start with the world outside

But so far this analysis has only considered ministry within the church itself. What if you follow the argument that Christian service is outside the church in the first place: at the school gate, in the family, in local groups and clubs, in the workplace?

Churches tend to give the impression that ministry is to enable the church to function, rather than to be a group of Christian disciples being salt and light in the world they inhabit during most of the week.

If the dream behind this article is to mobilise all Christians to be workers in the Kingdom, then for many their priority ministry should be out in the world, not propping up the structures of the church. There is an argument that everyone's primary area of service might well be in the world, with their church responsibilities as secondary.

So your Senior Steward or Church Warden or Children's Club Leader sees their primary sphere of service in their workplace or local community, bringing Christ into their mid-week world and supported by the church in this in prayer, encouragement and training.

The question is, would a church, with gaps to fill, be courageous enough to preach this gospel? It is a line that organisations such as the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) have been advocating for years. If approach 1 was job-centred, and approach 2 worker-centred, this approach 3 is mission-centred.

Once again, this idea cannot work on its own. If every church member followed this line, the church would either need to be run totally by paid staff or things just would not happen. So on its own it is not workable, and few churches indeed think along these lines. But it needs to be in the mix.

Three in one

What if you saw these three approaches all in use within one scheme of mobilisation? Churches default to the first, and a few would add the second, so it would need some firm pressure to even out the involvement so that all three were seen in about equal measure. They would need to be held in tension with each other, but perhaps this approach offers a holistic and realistic way of thinking about every-member ministry.

This is the approach that the church Trustees or PCC need to adopt – and then the champion/ specialist needs to focus on this trinity rather than on any one alone.

The data you need to hold

All these three ideas depend upon an effective databank of knowledge.

- The first requires a listing of all church ministries – with some idea of possible variations. It would be helpful to know which are non-negotiable and which do not have to be permanent.
- The second requires a detailed database of all church members with their gifts and passions plus past and present involvement. Some of these will not fit into existing church activity.
- The third requires an imaginative listing and then allocation of possible means of witness within society, be that family, neighbourhood or location of work-place (see page 8).

But in all cases the key to successful mobilisation of a congregation is an effective database showing not just gifts, experience and responsibilities but membership of groups and links plus external responsibilities. It is important that this is kept in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Many churches that are taking this subject seriously are now investing in church management system (CMS) software to help handle the information they need to hold and the rotas they need to produce.

It is the church database that should prove to be the most useful tool for any plan to mobilise members into ministry. You need some way of discovering the basic inputs for this database, so that is what Part 3, that follows, covers.

Younger people don't have the time!

This is an argument I often hear but I don't think it is totally true.

Younger people don't want to offer for voluntary service that is poorly managed and which has little vision. Many may not have the time to lead projects or initiate new ministries but most are prepared to be part of a dynamic team that is achieving something positive, provided they can see that they won't be sucked into something that it is impossible to escape from. It helps too to understand service in the context of discipleship, not as cheap labour.

So church ministry needs to be much better organised on a team concept compared with some years ago. See Training Notes TN100, *Why some offer, why some don't.*

3: Ensure people fit roles

What kind of roles should people play both within the church and outside? This section starts from the person, the second approach covered in the previous section. If you are going to adopt all three together, this is the best place to start.

Past mistakes

One of the reasons why so few churches have a wholehearted commitment to learning about their memberships is that leaders have seen it all go wrong in the past. Here is a typical approach common some years ago.

1 The need to fill vacancies and an understanding of the biblical principle of every-member ministry lead to a realisation that there needs to be an investigative exercise to discover church members' spiritual gifts.

2 So the church draws up a long list of possible ministries (stewarding, catering, leading groups, working in the crèche, and so on). They also list all the 'spiritual gifts' they can find listed in the New Testament.

3 Each person is then given a detailed form and asked which gifts they think they may have, and which areas of service they would like to consider for future ministry (whether continuing or changing).

4 These forms produce far more data than the church had bargained for, and some embarrassment when six people offer to help with secretarial services but no one is keen to lead a teens' group. Ten people think they have the gift of encouraging, but no one claims to have the gift of giving.

5 The task of analysing takes weeks and people quickly lose interest with some feeling frustrated that when they offered for a ministry, perhaps for the first time in their life, no one came to see them.

6 The whole scheme gets delayed further until much of it is forgotten about and things go back to how they were – except for a sense of failure and annoyance.

So you need to do better than this. In particular:

- You might appreciate that there is more to matching people to ministries than just 'gifting' alone. For example, what are people passionate about? Where do their experiences lie? What time can they offer? How spiritually mature are they?
- There is a danger in assuming people can assess themselves. Very often gifted people are unaware of that gift but it can be obvious to others who know them well.
- Rather than stating a gift and then being put to work, might a better approach not be to place someone in ministry and thereby discover their gifts?
- A church survey is going to produce too much data to process effectively – a more thoughtful approach is required. Otherwise the exercise could prove to be a total waste of time and effort.

A more holistic approach

Here are ten distinct lenses through which you might view the concept of matching people to roles. Rather than just seeking to identify a gift, you need to take other factors into account to find where people's strengths lie. People work better when they find roles that match who they are and play to their strengths. So consider the following overlapping factors.

1 **Knowledge base**

This is a matter of memory and experience. You may know a great deal about employment law, perhaps because you have had to learn it up as part of your normal work. You may know your Bible very well – being able to identify where verses come from, or what themes are covered in each epistle.

2 **Skill set**

If knowledge is about the head, skills are about the hands. So you may know how to use a particular accounting software package to its full potential. Or you know how to solve plumbing problems such as a leaking tap. Or you may be a fantastic cook. Skills are formed with experience and training, but also with natural aptitude.

3 **Natural talents**

These are softer skills which are more about how you are wired than how you have been trained. They are about who you are, how God has made you. Perhaps you are good at talking to strangers and putting them quickly at ease, when other people do not get the same results.

4 **Spiritual gifts**

Although these are similar to natural talents, there is a difference between, for example, someone who is a natural organiser and someone who has the spiritual gift of organisation. In the latter case the talent is somehow in complete line with God's work. Then there are of course spiritual gifts which are in addition to any natural talents. See page 10.

5 **Enthusiasm drive**

There is more to a good fit than just the above which are, in themselves, somewhat unemotional. What excites someone? What are they passionate about? What do they love doing? You get a good idea of people's passions from their hobbies, day-off activities, conversation topics and spontaneous behaviours.

6 **Human impact**

This is more than just people-skills although that is part of it. This is all about the impact you make on other people. Some people in a team are great at drawing out other members or uniting the whole team, even when not the leader. This is not a question of extroverts having it and introverts not. Anyone can influence others.

7 **Life experience**

This is closely associated to the idea of wisdom and discernment about which the book of Proverbs has much to teach. This is more than knowledge and more than skill because it enables your past experiences in life to shape your understanding of others and what may be happening to them.

Ideas for out-of-church service areas

Being witnesses

This is a key responsibility for every Christian, in the workplace, in their local community and in their family.

Workplace, etc.

Any form of workplace leadership/service
Trade Union involvement
Workplace committees
Charitable trusts
Board memberships of Christian charities

Local community

Projects / holiday clubs shared with other churches
Political parties
Environmental groups
Pressure groups
Magistrates and other legal roles
Hospices
Food banks
Local and national charities
Good Neighbour schemes
Street Pastors and similar roles
Police and other emergency services
School PTA or governors
Scouts/Guides, etc.
Youth clubs
After-school clubs

National Church

Synods and equivalent
Leading Christian holidays/camps
Organising national Christian events

To underline the importance of external service

- Have a large-scale map in church locating each member's location on a Monday morning: school, workplace, home, etc.
- Encourage small groups to pray for their members in mid-week involvement.
- Tell stories of work and other life outside church – see Part 5 item 5.
- Stress this form of ministry in preaching.
- Use materials from organisations such as LICC.
- Focus on people at work in church newsletters.

8 **Christian character**

This is not the same as personality: it relates to the depth of your discipleship, to the way the fruit of the Spirit is displayed in your life, to your behaviour when other Christians are not observing you. The New Testament epistles focus on developing character (as in the "becoming mature" of Ephesians 4:13) so that we are ever seeking to become like Jesus Christ.

9 **Availability**

Some roles are not filled because they require more time than the appropriate people can offer. Many younger people find that their availability changes on a regular basis. They can offer for a role that means three hours a week, but then children appear, their partner becomes ill, or a promotion at work leads to higher stress levels.

10 **Teamwork**

Your ability to work well with others so that you make a great team player, or your preference to be solo so you fit better at running something on your own.

What matters is matching these ten factors in any one person with the role that will enable them not only to fulfil it well but to grow in it and perhaps even to outgrow it and move on to something more demanding. This gets away from the clunky way of seeking to identify spiritual gifts and then fitting people to a role that fails to take enthusiasms, experiences or character into account. It also better enables people to grow in spiritual maturity through their service (1 Timothy 3:13).

Perhaps this seems too complex to operate. One way forward would be to create a person profile for each role based on these ten headings. Then you can match everyone you consider on these factors, even giving a score for each one.

If no one appears to match the needs of the role, you will need to consider what can be changed by training or which of the ten matter most and which are of lesser relevance to this post. Or you may decide to adapt the role so it becomes a better fit for one person. But seeking to train someone who is a poor fit for the role may not make much impact.

If you have people in roles where the fit is poor (common in church posts) you will need to take steps to move them over to something that is a better fit. The trouble is that they may not appreciate that the present fit is poor. See Training Notes TN36, *Square pegs in round*

holes. Or Training Notes TN24, *Church members can burn out too.*

Read Romans 12:1-8 (one of the lists of body gifts) but then go on to vv 9-21 which puts the operation of these gifts in a context of love and service of each other.

SHAPE and Network

There are approaches to matching people to roles that go some way towards fitting in many of these ten points. One is the SHAPE acronym, developed by Rick Warren at Saddleback Church in California. He describes this in brief outline in his 1995 book 'Purpose driven church' (ch 19) and then in more detail in his 2002 book 'Purpose driven life' (ch 30-32).

Amiel Osmaston, formerly Ministry Development Officer for the Diocese of Carlisle, has devised her own course, 'Your SHAPE for God's service', based on the same acronym but written in 2000. The course is available without copyright restriction (2013 version) at https://www.stpeterscollege.org.uk/your-shape This course has been used and adapted all over the world.

SHAPE stands for:

S Spiritual gifts (God's unique gifts to you)

H Heart's desire (what motivates and excites you)

A Abilities (your talents knowledge and skills)

P Personality (your character, qualities and strengths)

E Experiences (what you have gained through your life experiences).

The point is to ensure that a wider set of parameters is used than just spiritual gifts alone.

Another approach is the Network scheme devised by the Willow Creek Association. This seeks to assess gifts through

- Personal experience
- Character traits
- Ministry convictions
- Others' observations.

To check out the scheme, read 'Network – the participant's guide - Revised' by Bruce Bugbee and Don Cousins (from any bookshop).

In schemes such as these you need to run a course or to undertake some kind of survey. Don't forget that this can take a considerable amount of time and energy.

Key lessons for any survey or course

See any survey/course as of limited value

See this as a fairly limited part of any overall mobilisation plan, sowing not reaping, one means and not the overall purpose. A survey of some kind can be valuable, but it is only one part of the whole.

Ensure it has leadership support

The Minister and other leaders need to be enthusiastic about the survey or course so that it can be seen to be a central feature of church life and not an optional extra. Expect to find some resistance to any course or survey.

Run any survey with a team

There is a great deal of work involved in designing forms, communicating the need, planning the operation, carrying it out, analysing the results. The same applies to a course. This needs a small, committed team.

Don't rely on self-assessment alone

As part of any exercise, ask others to assess each person. People are often unaware of potential gifts and abilities they possess. Few people can interpret the combination of their gifts, passions, experiences, etc. in the way others can. See the following two points for how to do this.

Survey in your church's teams

Never try to undertake a survey of the whole church at the same time. Many have done this and ended up with far too much data to process and so the whole system has come to a halt. Start the process in a small way within committed teams that already exist and which should be used to being open with each other. Every-member ministry will need to be team-based in any case so this should be the right place in which to start.

Survey in your church's small groups

Continue with your small groups, one at a time over something like a year. It does not matter that there will be overlap with your teams. A church's small groups, like teams, offer the personal observation and knowledge of each other. Those not in groups will then need to be included in some way. Then run it one-to-one with newcomers as part of the induction process into church life.

Offer a personal approach

The whole point is personal knowledge of people and a personal approach to them is the key means to use. Impersonal survey forms that are not backed up with a personal invitation, support in the process and an interview afterwards have limited value. This takes time and energy to organise and run, but the results will be so much more useable.

Suggest areas of church service

The list will be different for each church, but you may find it helpful to categorise possibilities in the kind of structure suggested in Article A35, *Mapping your church.* Ensure you do not restrict these to what is currently in operation: list other possibilities too.

Keep it simple

Either use available material, like the UK version of the SHAPE course, or design something that is very simple to use. You may be keen on the idea; church members may have high resistance, especially to anything complicated.

Give people a chance to move on

If you are seeking to fill roles, allow options for people to move on from their present post to something new, or even for a break. Some may need practical encouragement in this, including those who many might judge no longer to fit their present ministry and those who might rise to a fresh challenge.

Aim to analyse quickly

The results need to be analysed and people contacted very quickly after they fill any form in or take part in any course. If not, people quickly become frustrated. Then get back to people one-to-one without delay.

Include service outside the church

Provide ideas for how church members can be serving God through becoming key parts of the local community or even of their families. Then you should not expect people with significant external responsibilities to be asked to fulfil major roles in the church structure too.

Remember three different approaches

Part 2 gave job-centred, person-centred and world-centred approaches. Work within all three throughout any such exercise or you will default to the first

A list of spiritual gifts

The difficulty in providing any definitive list is that these are terms drawn from several different passages which are themselves only examples. There is no one list of spiritual gifts. See box on page 3.

These are those listed as samples in Scripture to give an idea of what is intended. Those starred are regarded by many as gifts but are not in the five key lists.

Administration/governing
Apostleship
Discernment (of spirits)
Encouragement
Evangelism
Faith
Giving
Grace
Healing
Helping
Hospitality
Intercession*
Interpretation (of tongues)
Knowledge (words of)
Leadership
Marriage/celibacy*
Martyrdom*
Mercy
Miracles
Pastoring**
Prophecy
Service
Teaching/speaking
Tongues
Visions*
Wisdom (words of)

**Some link this with teaching as one gift in the Ephesians 4 list.

But to this list we might add crafts (listed in the OT), IT support, music, design, and so on.

Gifts are described in the Bible as gifts of God, gifts of Christ and gifts of the Spirit. They are given for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7) and are to be put to use with humility and in love.

4: Develop training for all

No school teacher arrives in the classroom on Day 1 without having been trained for the role. They have to know their subject inside out, to understand how children or adults learn, to appreciate different ways of putting information across, and to know how to handle unruly pupils. There are also issues of safeguarding, managing assistants and working in a staff team.

Your Minister probably spent two or three years either at a residential theological college or in a professional academic establishment while working part-time in a church.

Training is essential to doing a job well – and that applies to volunteers as much as to paid staff. It is not an attack on how people carry out their roles, but a means of helping people grow in their service.

This is the one area of this article that overlaps with a later article on working with volunteers in a church context (see Article A47, *15 principles of volunteering)*. It is included here because it so helps define the culture that enables everyone to be in active service.

Smaller churches will need to simplify what follows, picking from it a few ideas. The key point to grasp is not the areas of training so much as the need to make training the norm for all ministry.

Areas to train in

Anyone benefits from training in almost any discipline. Churches would benefit from training members in areas such as the following. Note that these lists do not include training for Christian living or witness.

Worship services:
- singing in a music group or choir
- reading the Bible out loud
- leading intercessions
- conducting an interview
- using dance/drama in worship
- flower arranging
- banner making
- welcoming and stewarding
- helping with craft for Messy Church
- handling sound desk and video display

Teaching and groups
- preaching from the Bible
- speaking in other contexts
- leading small groups
- teaching children's groups
- enabling teens' groups
- baptism preparation

Pastoral care
- bereavement visiting
- counselling
- prayer ministry
- marriage guidance
- home visiting
- hospital visiting
- running a healing ministry
- organising seniors' groups

Outreach
- door-to-door work
- running special missions
- personal evangelism
- witness in the workplace
- encouraging global mission

Leadership
- growing Christian character
- leading small groups
- leading church plants
- leading any team
- setting vision
- vocations for future leadership

Support ministries
- committee membership
- Church Secretary role
- office skills
- IT uses
- financial software
- charity accounting
- communication skills
- PR and media relations
- project management

One of the key ways to give the topic high profile is to make 'every-member training' the normal pattern. There are all kinds of ways to encourage volunteers in their ministry and these will be discussed in a later article, but one institutional means is to put training on the map so that it becomes the norm, not the exception.

Different forms of training available

Training can take many forms. Here are some examples to consider.

Introductory and induction training

Training can begin before a person is appointed to a role. For example, run a flower arranging evening open to all. This can attract a wide group of people happy to try something out – and creates an enjoyable occasion. From this you may well find fresh talent to encourage towards the flower arranging team. The same works for leading intercessions, reading out loud in church, prayer ministry and bereavement visiting among other examples.

Newcomers to any ministry need training as they start. This can be something very informal in someone's home for two or three newbies. You can cover the privilege of ministry, where to go for help, implications of being part of a team, and then specifics for the job they are doing. This is better than waiting for the first training session for all in that area of ministry which may be a year or more away.

On-the-job apprenticeship training

This can take a number of different forms, but all assume a progression from roles suitable for inexperienced workers becoming 'helpers' before moving on to being 'workers' and then to eventual leadership.

- The operation of an apprentices scheme so that those in ministries are expected to have one or more less experienced people working alongside them to observe and learn.
- The use of assessment sheets for newer workers, so that others can comment on their first steps in up-front speaking or team leadership or running a youth activity.
- Roles are identified suitable for less experienced helpers: so Christians with little evangelistic experience are asked to lead table groups on an Alpha course before moving on to a more up-front role.

External events or courses

Here the church plugs into external agencies running an event or course, or sometimes a distance learning module that offers more detailed training in a specific ministry. So the options might look like this.

- Young people's leaders attend a specialist residential every other year run by a national agency or denominational department.
- Speakers and preachers are expected to attend occasional residential events as part of their ministry.
- Pastoral carers are encouraged to opt for a distance learning module offered by a Bible or theological school.

Internal events or courses

In these cases the church either invites an external trainer in for an evening or Saturday or, more normally, lays on a training event with their own people leading it.

- Those who read the Scriptures to the congregation on Sundays invite in a visiting voice trainer every two or three years for a Saturday session. Each person takes part and is recorded, with the expert then showing how to improve.
- Small group leaders meet termly for training from the Minister and others, including having to lead a mocked-up session.
- The Trustees/PCC hold an annual session to improve the effectiveness of their meetings.

One-to-one / mentoring schemes and team training

This form of training is designed for each individual worker being helped by someone more experienced in this particular role, such as a line-manager even if that term is too formal for what actually happens.

It may involve feedback sheets (see also apprenticeship training above), assessment of lesson plans, help with particular skills, or gentle encouragement and helpful criticism. This can be very effectively carried out in a team setting by an expectation that team meetings include a training element.

- A church-wide mentoring scheme not only for discipleship but also for equipping for ministry.
- Working alongside someone more experienced – such as a teenager playing trumpet in a music group alongside a more experienced player who can help them.
- A bereavement team discuss cases they have been involved in with other members offering advice on how they might have approached it. This is a team approach.

Overview

What matters in all the above is for there to be an expectation that any role in church work includes a training element. Churches find that they need a freshness to revive flagging momentum and to give training a more attractive image.

A realistic training budget shows that the church means business when it comes to equipping its workers. Ministry heads can then put in bids for external courses (fees and travel costs), distance learning modules (fees and textbooks), or for bringing trainers in and paying their fee and expenses.

Most people are much more used to training in their workplace than they would have been a few years ago. All good training leads to enthusiasm and satisfaction in ministry – and should help everyone grow in their faith.

It is also important to note that some roles may have standards attached to them. The Church Treasurer needs some measure of financial accounting experience, music group members may need to be at a certain grade for their instrument, welcomers need to have gifts of starting a conversation well.

The larger the church, the more professional these ministries need to be. And of course anyone involved with children or vulnerable adults needs DBS clearance and the relevant training certificates..

For more on training, see Article A10, *An introduction to the art of training,* and the new DIY Workshops series on this website

5: Design an effective plan

If you have followed this article so far you now have four elements of an overall plan in place:

1 a specialist champion in post;
2 a broad understanding of what every-member ministry might mean;
3 means of ascertaining how to fit people to roles;
4 training as an essential aspect of this.

But these are just four elements of what needs to be an overall strategy which then becomes a workable plan. They have been highlighted because they are the key elements that churches may not have considered and others ignore. Now in this final part the aim is to fill in the gaps.

Every-member ministry can fail to happen because churches believe in it, teach it, pray about it, but have no coherent strategy to ensure it is worked out in practice. You will need to adapt these points, and the order in which they are given, to fit your church.

1 **Appoint your specialist champion** (as Part 1)

You may feel that this person will only come into view once you have completed some of the points that follow, but see it at the top of the list so that you do not promise much, then fail to find anyone and so everything falls down. It may be better to wait for this person, even if that means delaying your launch of everything else. Someone needs to be responsible for the whole area of this article.

2 **Emphasise the concept**

If every-member ministry is as important a part of discipleship as the Bible would make out, it needs to be part of your church's aim and ethos. Many pay lip service to the idea but fail to communicate this clearly enough. It needs to be embedded in the value-system for the church as part of an understanding of the meaning of discipleship.

In particular, the church's vision, the point you have faith to believe God could bring you to, needs to identify this key principle clearly within it. It is not a peripheral topic, an optional extra. The vision needs to include a church full of workers – in all kinds of ways both within and outside the church structures.

Let people get excited by the vision, and they will then want to be part of it.

3 **Provide teaching for all ages**

Your preachers need to buy in to this vision to ensure that the topic is properly taught within the teaching syllabus. Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ seek to serve him in all kinds of

ways, both within and outside the church family. Paul's vision for the church is of a whole body, growing and building itself up in love, as every part does its work (Ephesians 4:16). That verse is often quoted, but rarely is it put into proper church-wide use.

This also needs to form part of any small group syllabus and, in particular, be covered in your teaching syllabus for children and teens. All ages need to see that this is a topic that impacts everyone. Children can be involved in all kinds of family activities, teens may play a part on technical teams or in music groups. All can be encouraged to witness at school.

4 **Use all three approaches** (as Part 2)

If you now hassle everyone to offer to serve to support the church's structure in some way, which of course is good in itself, you are clearly touting for volunteer labourers to run the church, more than you are longing to see disciples growing in faith and good works.

You should see fitting people to roles as important (if not more important) than filling vacancies, and service in the world as of even greater importance still. This may mean:

- you expect some key church members to do little to support church-based ministries because they have such great opportunities to witness in their work or community activities;
- you close some existing activities down so that you can start new ones up, because you have people who would fit new things well;
- you take a more personal approach to finding people than asking for volunteers.

5 **Tell stories**

If much of practical service takes place outside church (witness at the school gate or through PTAs, involvement in local clubs and political parties, trade union service in the workplace, wider responsibilities in the community, etc.), Sunday should be a time for people to tell stories of how they have seen God at work in the week.

Why not then extend this to church-specific service too? The idea of Sunday worship including one story each week of how someone has found God to be at work in their practical tasks would encourage everyone, bring ownership of all the church activities, and challenge people to do more themselves.

Do include interviews and photographic displays as part of this.

6 **Get people praying**

Now that people are getting excited about the concept, focus on specific areas of service in church intercessions, in printed prayer diaries and in other means of supporting prayer. Don't give the impression that it is only the up-front leaders and speakers that the church prays for. Include every activity: flower arranging, office volunteers, those who give lifts to church, caterers – and of course those in external ministries in the local community.

Pray for a church of growing disciples – and one way they grow is in putting their faith on the line in practical service.

7 **Set up a discovery programme** (as Part 3)

The point here is not to overstretch yourself. Many churches conduct a survey of gifts (or even have a SHAPE course) and then are overwhelmed by the data collected and unable to follow through, to everyone's huge frustration.

Decide to set up a survey or courses over a one year period, team by team, small group by small group, rather than doing everyone at once. Or start with those keen to take part and then let others see the value and come in on the second or third time round.

8 **Show a training budget** (as Part 4)

Money usually speaks louder than words. If the church has a generous training budget each year, this is a sign that there is encouragement for everyone to develop in their service area. Couple that with a range of different training programmes, and everyone comes to see that all service requires training. Make 'every-member training' the norm.

9 **Make needs known**

There is a danger in advertising for people to offer for certain vacancies because you may get unsuitable applications (though measuring suitability is not as straightforward as might be thought in God's service). The overwhelming evidence is that the best people for the role need a personal approach rather than simply seeing a sits vac list in the church newsletter.

But there is another danger: of not letting people know that there are vacancies to fill in all kinds of areas of service. Making needs known does keep the need for service in people's minds. Consider notice-sheets/newsletters, newcomers' events, closing stages of enquiry courses, meetings with small group leaders, SHAPE and similar courses.

10 Close activities down

It would be a good idea to have this principle embedded into your vision to show you are not a church that justifies its existence by its busyness. Growing churches tend to do a few things and do them well (one of the pieces of great wisdom from Robert Warren's work on healthy churches some years ago) – which may mean painful decisions to cut out some of the existing activity list. See Training Note TN34, *Closing down a church activity,* for more on this.

But it also means that if some areas of ministry are essential, you may need to design a temporary solution if no one is quite right or available at present. Don't force people into roles that are not good fits. You will come to regret it.

11 Define teams

Service within the church should, wherever possible, be team-based. The traditional rota concept of solo service does not fit well with a discipleship approach.

But then pay special attention to the appointment of team leaders (such as Messy Church Leader, Small Groups Co-ordinator, Children's Groups Leader) and other leaders. You need to protect these roles from a view that anyone can offer and pay particular attention to the method of selection.

12 Draw in newcomers

A few churches pounce on people the moment they appear and ask them to do something. This can occasionally be a good idea but it can give quite the wrong impression. On the other hand many more churches feel too embarrassed to ask a newcomer to do anything in the first few weeks they appear on Sundays.

One approach would be to encourage them into an appropriate small group, even a short-term newcomers' small group, where the vision is shared and the need for everyone to be a worker. In smaller churches this will be on a one-by-one basis. You may need to differentiate between mature Christians moving church and those not yet sure of faith.

Another would be to use a newcomers' event as a means to lead to a personal interview with each person or family when membership and service can be openly discussed.

A third idea is to have a range of roles that newcomers can serve in for their first few months until it has become clearer where they may fit: serving coffee after church services, helping in project work-parties around the buildings and grounds, offering lifts to church..

The same applies to any church's occasional attenders. Simple practical service can be a key way of drawing them in.

13 Approach people personally

When aiming to find where people might fit, there needs to be an emphasis on one-to-one personal work. The ministry specialist needs to talk to each person so that the results of any course or survey become personal. Some people may need to be taken off roles they have occupied for years or for which they are not really suited: a difficult task (see Training Notes TN36 *Square pegs in round holes*). This will not always be straightforward!

By all means advertise vacancies (point 9 above), but it is a personal approach based on background information about each person, that is often the only way someone takes on a new role.

14 Support your volunteers

There are many ways of supporting volunteers, covered in outline in Training Notes TN31, *Affirming volunteers.* These must become part of any overall strategy but are not duplicated in this article.

There will be a more detailed approach to this whole area in a later article in this series. It is also important to understand 'why some offer and some don't', the title of Training Notes TN100.

Conclusion

This paper is concerned with what a church might do to enable the dream of every-member ministry turn into reality. It has not tried to cover the equally important area of supporting volunteers in ministry, as explained in the previous paragraph, although there is some overlap.

But is all this too complicated?

It is certainly not simple but the effort that is put in should result in an effective church workforce. You will need to take the concepts here and adapt them for your church. For smaller churches that will no doubt involve a considerable amount of simplification.

Mobilising people needs effort, time and skill. It also needs a church's leadership to believe in this as an essential aspect of discipleship. If this biblical principle is seen to work in practice, the impact on church health and, so, on outreach could be dramatic.

This article is available at https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Articles-index then A43. Sincere thanks to Ministers who read and commented on a draft. See also on this website DIY Workshop W4, *How to work with volunteers*, and Articles A10, *An introduction to the art of training,* A45, *How to lead a team at church,* and A47, *15 principles of volunteering,* plus Training Notes TN10, *What do Christians do between Sundays?,* TN31, *Affirming volunteers,* TN90, *Put someone in charge*, TN100, *Why some offer, why some don't,* TN139, *Church workers in teams*, and TN148, *Serving in a post-Covid church,* and other items referenced in the text.

John's resources are marked for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication, Administration. File A43 under Management (with a link to Planning).

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