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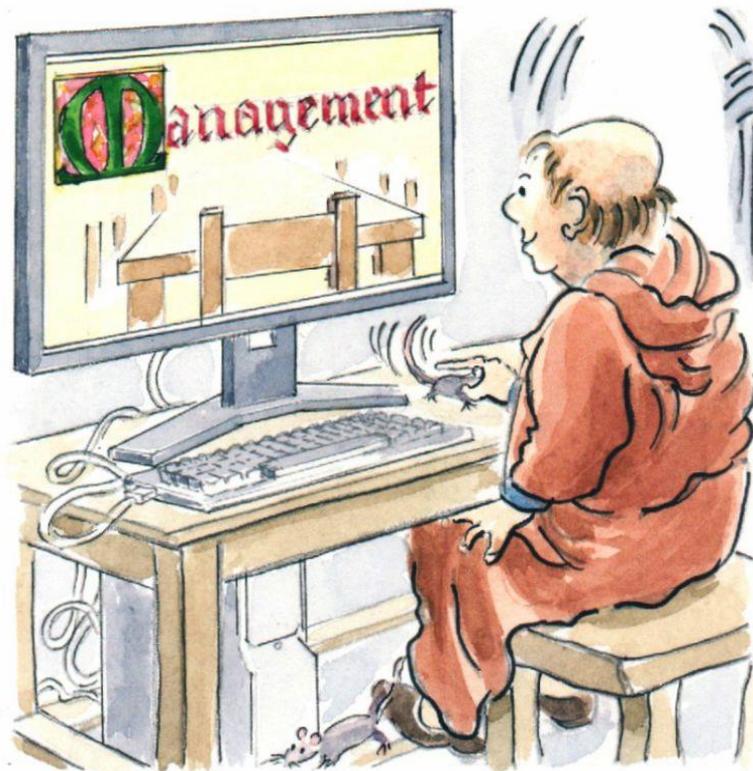
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The ministry of oversight

Managing volunteer leaders / Managing yourself



Diocese of Sheffield IME2 - 10th-12th January 2020

The Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield

If you prefer to work from a screen, you may access this set of notes as a pdf this weekend or later at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/News> and then the item for 10th January

1: Understanding people

WEAKNESS 1: We forget church members are human beings

Test yourself on volunteering *(impress your friends with some trivial knowledge!)*

- 1 What percentage of the population does regular voluntary work for an organisation, charity, church or club of any kind in any one year?
a: 9% b: 19% c: 29% d: 39% e: 49%
- 2 What proportion of volunteers have to be personally approached?
a: 10% b: 20% c: 30% d: 40% e: 50%
- 3 Which is the most common field for formal volunteering?
a: Children/youth b: Education c: Health/disability d: Religion e: Sport
- 4 Which one of the following is given as a reason for volunteering by under-25s more than any other age group?
a: the cause was important b: learn new skills c: time to spare
d: my family were involved
- 5 Which one of the following groups has a lower than average rate of volunteering?
a: those who work overtime b: those with children under 15
c: retired people d: those who commute at least 2 hours per day
- 6 Which one of the following types of work is favoured by men more than women?
a: fundraising b: visiting c: committee work d: organising events
- 7 Which one of the following applies more to women than to men?
a: offered without being asked b: wanted to meet people
c: linked to my interests d: felt I was good at it

SCORE (out of 7)

Sources: *Helping out – a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving* (Cabinet Office 2007). Also various versions of the National Survey of Volunteering (Institute for Volunteering Research).

Reasons why people offer their time and skills in daily life

Think widely: from formal volunteering (for a school, a sports club, a political society, a neighbourhood group, a charity, etc.) to informal (doing the shopping for a housebound neighbour, looking after someone else’s guinea pig when they are away, etc.).

Factors that prevent people from volunteering (keep off church for now!)

What could be keeping the percentage of volunteers lower than it might be?

Volunteers in our churches

The volunteering surveys distinguish between formal and informal volunteers.

Formal ‘volunteers’

Informal ‘volunteers’

.....

.....

Why church members offer ...

Look again at the first list we drew up above. Which of these apply to churches in general? What others might we add for a Christian context?

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... and why they don't

Back to the second list on page 2. Again, which of these apply to churches in general? What others might we add within a Christian context? Perhaps what people say to us.

Application

We could now look at any difference in emphasis for each of our lists above between the formal and informal roles in churches. And we might then apply all this specifically to any teams of volunteers we are personally responsible for or linked with in some way.

More importantly, we could ask which ones in the second list are excuses and which are genuine, and which ones relate back to the individual and which ones relate back to the church. It is all too easy for clergy and church staff to point the finger of blame in the wrong direction

On the issue of the people in the, perhaps, wrong jobs, see Training Notes TN36, *Square pegs in round holes*, in the Resources section of my website. For a fuller listing of the reasons we have looked at above, see Training Notes TN100, *Why some offer, why some don't*.

Paid staff

Many (especially larger) churches now employ youth workers, community workers, administrators, music directors, pastoral assistants and others. Is this a healthy approach? What are the dangers?

A good case can be made for paying staff in the following situations:

- when the post requires a full working week, or most of one;
- when the post requires set availability times;
- when the post requires a specialist;
- when the post requires a pioneering leader;
- when church members are time-poor;
- when leaders are diverted from their priorities.

But there are dangers;

- a denial of body ministry;
- confusions over roles;
- tensions between staff and volunteers;
- poor staff management;
- the cost;
- tradition.

For more detail on these points, see TN37, *To pay or not to pay*, in the Resources section of the website.

2: Mobilising disciples

WEAKNESS 2: We are too church-centred in our thinking

What are our motives?

Why do we want volunteers to work for the church? The normal approach might be termed **CHURCH** – we want people to serve God to get the church jobs done.

We need a choir member, a home group leader, a caterer, a treasurer – so we look for one to plug the gap. The show must go on. This starts with the job and finds the person.

But a second, less usual approach, might be termed **DISCIPLESHIP** – we want people to grow in their faith through putting it to the test.

Here we have Andrew, or Beryl, or Chris and we want to give them something that will help them grow as a Christian. This starts with the person and finds the job.

Of course, neither approach can work on its own. But what are their respective merits?

Advantages/disadvantages of the **CHURCH** approach

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Advantages/disadvantages of the **DISCIPLESHIP** approach

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So far we have assumed that Christians are to work in the Church. But how can we be salt and light in the world if we are all so busy inside the safety of the Church?

Hence a third idea: the **KINGDOM** approach. This starts with the Great Commission and faces the challenge.

Advantages/disadvantages of the **KINGDOM** approach

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Practical ideas to underline this third idea

Here are some ideas to help make the third, Kingdom, concept work in practice.

- Ensure that for every church member their primary responsibility is to witness to Christ outside the church: be it in their family (for some), their community, their school, their social clubs, their work-place.
- Emphasise that service as a youth leader, home group leader, PCC member etc. is all secondary to people's external witness responsibility.
- Display a large-scale map of your wide-area (not just the church locality) and mark on it where your members live, where they work, the schools/colleges they attend, their clubs and leisure activities. Study the networks you have as a result.
- If you have a missionary display, set up the equivalent for church members, perhaps highlighting different areas of service each month. Add pointers for prayer and issues these people have to face.
- Start a regular newsletter that, among other things, tells people-stories about your church members in their life outside church activity. Let people be known for their real self, not the persona they adopt within your church.
- Encourage your preachers to take the theme of work as worship on a regular basis.

For further thinking see Training Notes TN10, *What do Christians do between Sundays*, on the website. For detailed advice on the idea of a people-stories newsletter see Article A9, *A church members' newsletter*.

Recruitment

If we are following the CHURCH approach, we will start with the vacancy and ask for, literally, 'volunteers'. If this does not work we may select some likely candidates and go and talk to them one-to-one.

Dangers of this approach:

In spite of what is often assumed, busy people will offer today provided they believe in the cause and can see that the terms of service fit their lives (eg. short-term commitment, adequate support, etc.). We come back to this in the next session.

If we are following the DISCIPLESHIP approach, we will be building up a profile of each member of the congregation and looking for a suitable area of ministry that that person could fulfil. So we may carry out a gift-identification exercise of some kind.

Dangers of this approach:

Dangers of the Kingdom approach:

What could possibly go wrong?

On the next page we look at creating a better mobilisation system for a church, but for now consider the idea of the oversight of a group of focal ministers for a clutch of churches. **Try to see this in terms not just of solo-ministry but teamwork with everyone involved.**

What might happen which could cause problems in selection or ministry?

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Problem Possible solutions

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Problem Possible solutions

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Problem Possible solutions

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A better way: How to mobilise your church

1 **Appoint a champion for this – so someone feels the responsibility.**

Article A43 on the website, *Every member on active service – how to mobilise your church*, gives details of the kind of person you might select and a role definition.

2 **Get your thinking straight – as above.**

See what we have covered on the previous pages but, for each, consider the data you will need: for the first, ministries that you carry out; for the second, your members and information about them; for the third a listing of innovative ideas for witness.

3 **Seek good fits – instead of ‘gifts’ you might consider:**

- knowledge base
- skill set
- natural talents
- spiritual gifts
- enthusiasm drive
- human impact
- life experience
- Christian character
- availability
- teamwork.

Two available schemes are *SHAPE*.....

S: Spiritual gifts
H: Heart's desire
A: Abilities
P: Personality
E: Experience

.....and *Network*

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

4 **Develop training for all**

Induction, apprenticeship, external events/courses, internal events/courses, mentoring, team training

5 **Design an effective plan**

Article A43 suggests a 14-point plan if you are to see results.

The above five points follow the section headings in Article A43, *Every member on active service*, on the Articles page of my website. See also Training Notes TN24, *Church members can burn out too*. Or, for a light-hearted approach, TN55, *So, who should be in the dock?*

FINAL QUESTION TO PARTS 1 & 2: Is ‘volunteer’ the right word? If not, what is?

3: Supporting workers

WEAKNESS 3: We don't help church members offer

The information volunteers need

Before they can make an informed decision as to whether to offer, people need some basic information. Here are five areas churches should consider. Some of the information can be helpful as paperwork. But in these cases, keep it very simple and appropriate for your church.

Consider the following for tasks such as: children's group leader, member of the catering team, organiser of the church weekend away, lesson reader, bereavement visitor, treasurer.

1: What this area of service is all about

This is the equivalent of a job description. Covering no more than one side of A4 (if in print) it should answer these questions:

1	Why does the post exist?	The overall purpose
2	Who does the post-holder relate to?	Working relationships
3	What does he or she do?	Key responsibilities or tasks

This sheet of A4 or A5 should be

- clear – no jargon, no ambiguity, appropriate for Christian ministry
- current – checked regularly and updated as necessary
- agreed and owned – by both post-holder and the church leader

For more detailed advice, try Article A6, *Job descriptions*, in the Resources section of the website.

But it is also helpful to give some idea of direction and achievement within this task. This is an idea that is not normal practice in churches. A simple statement that:

- is usually fixed in time – typically six months or one year
- ties in with some kind of overall church vision or plan to give the big picture
- may list four or five aims to achieve in the given time
- includes aims related to any of task, relationships, personal development

2: What we expect of you

This should:

- show the kind of time commitment and length of service that will be needed – don't forget to include 'hidden extras' such as attendance at team meetings or training events
- list any desired gifting or experience (be careful) – and something of what it means to be part of a team
- list any point about Christian behaviour and/or biblical knowledge that is appropriate
- give an idea of any standard expected

It is helpful if the church can then say what the volunteer can expect of us We look at support in a few minutes.

Article A8 on the website, *Worker agreements*, may be helpful here.

3: The hand-over and information available

A sensible person will want to talk to the present post-holder to find out much more about what is involved, especially for more complicated tasks such as treasurer. This may be an initial talk before taking a decision of whether to volunteer, or a more detailed session later, or a period of co-working.

It may be especially helpful to have an information pack available, added to by each post-holder. Or full files (as with the organisation of a church weekend away). A listing of tasks by month of year may be helpful.

But beware the danger of imagining that the new post-holder has to carry out the task in the same way as his or her predecessor. And remember that someone who has been in post for some time may have turned a relatively straightforward task into a particularly complicated one by adding on extra parts. Clarify what the new post-holder is being asked to take over.

4: Team implications

It's all very well sorting out the task, but if the person is to be part of a team, what about the people-issues involved? If we take 'team' seriously, as this event is assuming, now is the time to consider what team will mean.

Consider the implications of a lone ranger taking over a children's group where the leaders of all the different age ranges work closely together to decide on syllabus, values, joint events, etc.

Or what if a new bereavement visitor fails to understand that the team work together and each needs to respect the particular gifts and experience of the others so that the right person is allocated to each bereaved person.

On the other hand, teams should be fun – and working in a team should be a great experience. This in itself can be a powerful encouragement to volunteer.

See also Training Notes TN41, *What makes a group a team*, in the Resources section of the website. Also TN79, *'One another' teams*, and Article A45, *How to lead a team at church*. But sometimes it is better to have just one person clearly responsible: see TN90, *Put someone in charge*.

5: Freedom and failure

Some churches expect everything to be run exactly as the leadership defines. Others allow each area of ministry considerable leeway in how they are worked out in practice. But somewhere there will be a key element that should hold everything together: the overall church vision and values for example.

So how much can the new post-holder use his or her initiative to devise new ways of doing the task?

A volunteer may well be frightened to offer because of the fear of failure. So what is the church's attitude to failure? Consider someone coming on to the lesson reading rota for the first time. What if the first lesson they read is inaudible? Or they trip up and fall flat on their face while coming to the front? Or they cannot find the page for Zephaniah?

For a light-hearted look at this theme, try TN55, *So, who should be in the dock?* on the website.

WEAKNESS 4: We fail to affirm people in their roles

The affirmation they deserve

Scoring scheme - use the boxes

- 5 Our present performance is excellent
- 4 We're pretty good
- 3 We're OK but need to improve
- 2 We really need to take action here
- 1 We do very little under this heading
- 0 We do virtually nothing

Training Notes TN31 on the website, *Affirming volunteers*, has more on each of the ten points on this page.

- 1 **Christian teaching and discipleship**
public preaching, one-to-one, reading ...
- 2 **Prayer**
from leaders, the team, prayer partners
- 3 **Due recognition**
not to pander to pride, but: commissioning, intercessions, certificates
- 4 **Re-envisioning and ongoing communication**
big picture context, updated information, efficient organisation
- 5 **Training**
induction, in-service, external – a church budget to show commitment
- 6 **Practical help and resources**
equipment, funds, baby-sitting, sabbaticals
- 7 **Encouragement by saying thank you**
regular recognition (not just at the annual meeting!), real interest, team parties
- 8 **Feedback and correction**
quick reviews through to appropriate appraisals – see next page
- 9 **Team support**
team get-togethers, sharing experiences, having fun doing the job together
- 10 **Short-term contracts**
move people on to new challenges to stretch faith and test gifting (but say goodbye)

Total out of 50 Points with low scores

What can we learn from the training of the twelve?

Try this for homework if we don't have time to cover it this weekend.

In what sense did Jesus operate a 'church'-centred approach?

In what sense did Jesus operate a discipleship-centred approach?

What skills did Jesus show in dealing with his 'volunteers' (and should these relate to us too)?

What was his attitude to them?

Resources on my website you might find helpful on this overall theme

(especially those in bold italic) <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources>

Articles

- A6 Job descriptions – *advice and examples for staff and volunteers*
- A10 An introduction to the art of training – *Help people learn*
- A43** ***Every member on active service – How to mobilise your church***
- A45** ***How to lead a team at church – Practical help for beginners***

Training Notes

- TN14 Setting up a Newcomers Team
- TN15 How not to delegate
- TN24 Church members can burn out too
- TN31** ***Affirming volunteers***
- TN36 Square pegs in round holes
- TN37 To pay or not to pay?
- TN49 What's going on under the water
- TN55 So, who should be in the dock?
- TN79 'One another' teams
- TN90** ***Put someone in charge***
- TN95 Exit interviews for everyone
- TN100** ***Why some offer, why some don't***
- TN112 Set my leaders free

You might also like to follow me on Twitter @johnntruscott.

So, with focal ministry in mind, that is our look at mobilising and managing volunteers. But that all assumes we can manage ourselves, so we now turn to that particular issue.

4: Managing yourself in life

The first need is for a clear context for your life and work

You cannot control your ministry and your life if you have no clear context in which you are working. First, others will control it for you. Secondly, you will have no criteria to enable you to plan the detail. Here are two possible approaches to determining a personal 'big picture'.

A typical planning process – but for your life

You may be used to ideas of purpose, values, vision, etc. for an organisation, but what about applying them first to you (and only secondly to your church(es))? Here is a jargon-proof set of questions (*with some explanation for those who cannot survive without the normal words!*).

- 1 **What do I long to see happen?**
The 'big picture' vision for my life
- 2* **Why am I here?**
The purpose question – but it is worth including negatives
- 3 **What am I aiming to do, and for whom?**
An alternative for Q2
- 4* **What is the distinctive way I go about things?**
This is a 'values' question
- 5 **What is my story so far?**
The need to 'remember', and the value of a personal 'time-line'
- 6* **What might God do through me?**
The main 'vision' question, but actually one of faith and prayer
- 7 **What are the main options open to me as I work towards this?**
This is an issue of making choices
- 8 **What resources do I have and need?**
Internal (eg. health, skills) and external (eg. people, finance)
- 9* **Where do I plan to get to this year?**
This is what I term 'aims' – steps towards the 'vision'
- 10 **What are the stepping-stones towards these points?**
Precise points by date or other measurable feature, what I term 'targets'
- 11 **Where may I get it wrong?**
A very Christian question to ask at this point
- 12* **Where have I got to?**
The issue of review

* These form the key sequence of purpose, values, vision, aims and review. See Article A4, *Twelve questions to help you plan*, in the Resources section of my website for an application for a church as opposed to you.

Which one or two (no more) of the above questions do you feel you most need to ask now? And why?

Using the Ordinal – for your ministry

Here is a second idea, this time for your ministry rather than for your whole life.

Your role is to lead God's people in the offering of praise and the proclamation of the gospel... You are to be a servant and a shepherd among the people to whom you are sent. You are to be a messenger, watchman and steward of the Lord.

Your responsibilities

1 **To proclaim the gospel**

You are to lead Christ's people in proclaiming the gospel, so that the good news of salvation may be heard in every place.....

2 **To baptise new disciples**

You are to baptise new disciples in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and to walk with them in the way of Christ, nurturing them in the faith.

3 **To teach the Scriptures**

You are to teach and to admonish, to feed and provide for God's family. With others you are to make clear the Scriptures, to preach the word in season and out of season....

4 **To lead in worship**

You are to preside at the Lord's table and, with others, to lead his people in worship, offering with them a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving....

5 **To minister to the world**

You are to resist evil, support the weak, defend the poor and intercede for all in need. You are to minister to the sick and prepare the dying for their death.

6 **To foster people's gifts**

Guided by the Spirit, you are to discern and foster the gifts of all God's people, that the whole Church may be built up in unity and faith.

7 **To stir up your own gift**

You are in, the strength of the Holy Spirit, continually to stir up the gift of God that is in you, to make Christ known among all whom you serve....

8 **To accept discipline**

You are to accept the discipline of this Church and respect authority duly exercised within it and, when necessary and with others, to minister such discipline yourself.

9 **To order your life**

You are to be diligent in prayer, in reading the Scriptures, and in all studies that will deepen your faith and fit you to bear witness to the truth of the gospel. You are to fashion your own life and that of your household according to the way of Christ....

Remember always with thanksgiving that you are entrusted with the privilege of leading Christ's own flock, bought by the shedding of his blood on the cross. It is to him that you will be accountable for your stewardship of his people.

You cannot bear the weight of this calling in your own strength, but only by the grace and power of God. Pray therefore that your love of people and your understanding of the Scriptures may grow daily. Pray earnestly for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

adapted freely from Common Worship Ordination Services © Archbishops' Council 2013

Taken from Training Notes TN78, *The role of a church leader*, in the Resources section of my website. See also TN87, *What to look for in your leaders*.

'Planning retreats'

You cannot do this kind of thinking on the job. Most of us need time away from all distractions. Hence the idea of a regular 'planning retreat'. The agenda is to REVIEW, PRAY and PLAN. So:

- A day or part-day away six times a year
- A termly 36-hour event
- An annual few days on your own

You may want to use

- A friend's house or a cottage somewhere in the country
- A retreat house of any kind
- Just going out for a long walk not too close to home.

If you work best in a team setting, you may want to adjust this idea and go away as a team or with one or two of those you know from your IME group. But the key points are that:

- This is neither 'a management session' nor a 'retreat' but a 'planning retreat'!
- It needs to go in the diary early on and not be bullied by more urgent needs.
- You need to go 'away' from your normal environment and from distractions.
- The longer the better – include at least one night away if that is possible.

For further thinking on this, read Training Notes TN54, *Creating space for a Planning Retreat*, on the website.

What decision could you take today that will eventually result in your having a planning retreat?

Resources on my website you might find helpful on this overall theme

<https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources>

Articles

- A4 Twelve questions to help you plan – *revised into a slightly different context on page 1 above*
A25 Working from home – boundaries, discipline and space
A27 Reliability in ministry – for administrators and leaders
A36/37 Sorting out your study – the space and the stuff in the room

Training Notes

- TN7 Ideas for how to make time for life
TN11 Keeping a time log
TN23 How to do 'To Do' lists – *see page 17 in these notes*
TN43 Did Jesus use an iPhone? – essential reading to back up today's material
TN54 Creating space for a Planning Retreat – *see this page!*
TN62 Know what distracts you
TN67 Stress and the Christian worker
TN70 Do's and don'ts for a new leader
TN78 The role of a church leader – *this is the background to page 14 in these notes*
TN84 How to say 'No' when you should – *see page 18 in these notes*
TN106 Talk about taking time 'off'
TN112 Set my leaders free!

You might also like to follow me on Twitter @johnntruscott.

5: Managing yourself in time

Only now are we ready for some practical ideas

A monthly calendar

The idea here is to plan your year month by month.

Think 'aims' – specific projects

Your role is at heart fairly static, but within that context you need specific priorities or aims for each period (say, each year). Most of these will be what you want to achieve by a given date.

If you have clear priorities in life or ministry, where do you need to get to by, say, this time next year? This is bringing the big picture planning down in scale.

Aims change year by year, unlike purpose. They can include ideas of activity, relationships, seasonal issues, personal discipleship. In a curacy you might have specific aims you wish to achieve by the time you move on. So a set of three year aims would be fine.

My curacy aims

Then add dated events throughout the year

You may have specific deadlines you need to meet at various points in the year. These might include

- Deadlines that are some way ahead: eg. special services or speaking engagements, booking your family holiday, planning your move from curacy.
- Regular activities not to be forgotten: eg. a bimonthly magazine article deadline.
- Monthly/weekly activity that needs to be fitted in: eg. sermon preparation, claiming expenses.

And so: a monthly calendar

This acts as a monthly reminder of out-of-the-ordinary activity. It does not give specific dates (we get to that in a minute) but lists what needs to be done that month.

This is the half-way stage between the big picture priorities for the year and the daily detailed activity. It links the two.

It is NOT putting exact dates on when you do stuff, but does show monthly deadlines by when you intend to have it done.

'To Do Diary' for your days

I keep coming across people whose 'To Do' lists are causing them extra stress and little practical help. They are misusing this simple tool. To make them work:

- 1 Differentiate tasks by how long you expect them to take**
Some jobs will take five minutes, others may take several hours. Putting them next to each other on one list is not very sensible.

- 2 Differentiate tasks by when you need to do them**
Nothing is more demoralising than having a 'To Do' list that never empties. So schedule when you will do things in a realistic way, and then complete your activities each day!

- 3 Differentiate tasks by how important they are**
Have some idea of what will have to drop off if you are too pressed and what must be done whatever happens. Also what could be done by others and what must be done by you.

And hence the idea of a diary rather than the back of an envelope. Here is a page layout that allows you follow all three of the above principles.

A4 or A5 DIARY PAGE Timed engagements (inc timed phone calls, etc.)
Major items of work
Quick tasks to remember
Personal tasks

... but how are you going to deal with 'interruptions'?

A system such as this (design one that fits you) helps you not to forget anything that you need to do, ensures you do it on schedule, and allows you to relax.

You fill it with daily issues that tell you of things to do, plus the monthly listing on the previous page that needs then to be fed into a daily diary of this kind.

Some clergy tell me that the idea works a treat, but they prefer to work it on a weekly diary basis rather than a daily basis. Fine – find what suits you best.

For further detail on this idea, see Training Notes TN23, *How to do 'To Do' lists*, on the website.

The art of saying 'No' with grace and without guilt

First of all, we need to understand something about expectations placed on us:

- 1: Our own
- 2: The diocese
- 3: Our colleagues
- 4: Our parish
- 5: Our church members
- 6: Our family and friends

Why you may find it so hard to say 'No'

Assess the request

- Listen carefully
- Ask questions
- Activate the pause button
- Give yourself time and space to pray and ponder
- Consult your 'team'
- Beware agreeing to something in the distant future
- Block off activity time in your diary
- Check out alternatives
- Check out the urgency
- Make suggestions for next time

Ask yourself questions of:

- Priority
- Promises
- Time taken
- Completion date
- Enjoyment
- Preventing others
- Hurting others
- Pressure
- Replacement
- Developments

And remember, it is better to say 'No' now than 'Yes' and fail to deliver.

For more on this theme, see Training Notes TN84, *How to say 'No' when you should*, on the website. For when you eventually move to your first living, you might find Training Notes TN70 helpful, *Do's and don'ts for a new leader*.

Keep a time log

You can try this for your work-time, or for life as a whole.

Suggestion: don't try the detailed kind which shows time in 15 minute blocks. Instead decide on about 10 key activities (based partly on your job description) and keep a record every hour or so to the nearest half-hour. This means that you disregard short interruptions. At the end of the day, show the total time on each activity, and total up at the end of each week. This takes minimal time, but provides helpful information. Here is how clergy might categorise their time. Choose categories that make sense for you.

- Prayer (other than private devotional time)
- Preparation/study (for preaching, or planning services OR show this under such activities)
- Reading/training of self (of a more general nature)
- Church services / teaching
- Baptisms, funerals (services, visiting, etc.)
- Pastoral and evangelistic work (visiting, counselling)
- Church activities (not included in the above)
- Training of others
- Leadership/planning (church council, other meetings, staff meetings, strategic thinking)
- External Christian responsibilities
- Any specialist areas of ministry
- Administration (perhaps break into 'self' and 'church building' if necessary)

For further advice on devising a simple time log, see Training Notes TN11, *Keeping a time log*, on the website.

Know and deal with your distractions

We are all easily distracted, especially from those long and difficult tasks such as a major writing project or sermon preparation. The reasons why this is particularly relevant for clergy:

- 1 Lack of **natural discipline and accountability** for those who work largely on their own or outside a normal management structure.
- 2 Little **effective support and encouragement** for much of Christian ministry.
- 3 High **expectations from different parties**, and criticism or conflict when not met.

What can you do for yourself and others to minimise these? Here are 20 distractions:

Working from home

Friends and family / pets / jobs to do / food and drink

Messages

Telephone / electronic messages / post / unplanned visitors

Seeing and listening

Radio, TV, computer / internet / books, magazines / others in your view

Administration

Key-holders / untidiness / business / delaying jobs

Worry

External nuisance / lack of peace / poor health / responsibility

For fuller details of this list and some positive ideas, read Training Notes TN62, *Know what distracts you*, on the website. And for a detailed exploration for home-workers, Article A25, *Working from home*.

6: Managing yourself at your desk

How to control your desk before it controls you

Four foundations

1 **Affirm your ATTITUDE**

Administration is one of God's creative gifts. It is a real and vital part of our total ministry - we cannot separate 'administration' from 'ministry'; both come from the same word. So let's be positive about desk-work!

2 **Reconsider your ROOM**

Make your study/office as helpful a place to work in as possible: consider furniture (especially chair), equipment to minimise frustration, décor, light and heat. If you use the room for several different purposes, be careful!

3 **Clear your CLUTTER**

We differ on tidiness, but clutter cuts everyone's effectiveness. Clear the room of all that is not necessary, clear the desk every night (or whenever you complete something).

4 **Maximise your MORALE**

We should seek to enjoy desk-work as much as we can. Things that affect *my* morale include the sight and sounds of nature, ticking lists of tasks done, a tidy study. Yours will be different.

Four principles of sorting

5 **SORTING is a vital process**

Pick it up, skim read it, and then decide exactly where it belongs now, so you can work on it when you are ready for it. Avoid the painful disease of reverse piles! If anything can be done in less than two minutes, though, do it. Be disciplined!

6 **BIN / DELETE more than you think you should**

If you rarely find that you have binned or deleted something you now need, you are not throwing enough away. If you are keeping too much, you will not be able to find what you need so easily - and you are back with clutter.

7 **Sort by NEXT ACTION not by the category of the item**

If it is a letter, a reply may not be possible until you have done some research: talked to a colleague, discussed it with a friend or your spouse if married. So what is the first or next thing you need to do with it?

8 **Every item has its own PLACE and ACTION TIME**

Once we place paper away from the desk, we may lose it. So as well as knowing WHERE it belongs, we need a system to determine WHEN we work at it. Sometimes the place we put it in may be enough; often we need a 'To Do Diary'.

Four principles of filing

9 **Your desk is a WORKING SURFACE, not a storage area**

Desks are for working at, not convenient horizontal surfaces for homeless pieces of paper. What proportion of wood is visible on yours?

10 **Think FIND not file**

Most of us think the wrong way round ...and also limit filing to A4 sheets of paper. So think widely for the choice of categorisation, stationery and labelling.

11 **Distinguish HOLDING (permanent and current) from FILING**

This is the idea of a 'working file' - something you expect to need this week. Some will be permanent, some specific projects. You may like to keep these horizontal.

12 **Distinguish STORAGE from FILING**

This is a key to filing success. We simply do not need the speed of access that filing offers for most things we actually file. So clear out the files and put a lot into store.

For a fuller explanation of all these points, read Articles A36 & A37, *Sorting out your study*, on the website. A36 deals with the room itself in much more detail than we have time for today. A37 broadly follows these notes but with a few extra points. In particular, it includes a section on filing categorisation which you may find helpful.

For fuller details on the grippingly exciting topic of filing, see Article A1, *Pass or file?*, though this is now partially superseded by A37. For dealing with clutter, try Training Notes TN57, *Clear your clutter!*

Time for life

Here are some statements about time management to consider when you have some, er, time. Ponder each one. Take your time to think about each carefully – there really is no hurry!

- 1 Time is the one commodity we all have in exactly equal measure. You cannot add one second to, or subtract one second from, the 86,400 we have each day.
- 2 But life is fragile and none of us has any idea how many more days we have available to us from this moment on. Several famous achievers died at an early age.
- 3 Time is a gift from God. It is a gift we can use, or one we can squander. Those who realise this most are probably those who have been close to death at some point.
- 4 'Time management' is therefore a meaningless idea. Time is fixed. It is our life or ourselves that we manage within the time that we have.
- 5 Some people have expectations as to what they should achieve that are simply not possible. These lead to feelings of guilt and despair. Jesus Christ said that he had finished the work that God had given him, yet thousands remained untaught, unhealed and unfed.
- 6 Once time has been wasted, it is impossible to replay the DVD. This is a subject more of personal discipline than slick techniques.
- 7 Any group will include those with a wide variety of approaches to life and ability to achieve. We are not necessarily wrong, just different (and, often, married to each other!).
- 8 Your own hyper-efficient life-style (if that could describe you) may depress other people who cannot keep up with you. Your very busyness may be a cause of great trouble to them.
- 9 Your own laid-back approach to time-keeping (if that could describe you) may cause others great difficulty (eg. when you miss a deadline they were depending on).
- 10 Scripture tells Christians to live life within the context of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in glory. That is the time context for our discipleship.

Matthew 6:27 (see No.1 in the list)

"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

John 17:4 (see No.5)

"I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do."

Galatians 5:22,23 (see No.6)

But the fruit of the Spirit is self-control.

2 Peter 3:10-13 (see No.10)

...Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ...

Practical ideas to help

OK - so let's admit that we all know that we *should* be giving priority time for ourselves, for our family and friends, and for God. But, if this is a problem, how do we do it? Here are some ideas. Several fit in the other two sections too. Not all of them will fit 'you'.

Yourself

- ✧ Ask someone (spouse, friend) to work at a plan with you and monitor performance
- ✧ Block out spaces in the diary before you fill it with other things
- ✧ Ensure you hold tightly to the Sabbath principle
- ✧ Add in boundaries at fixed points of the day
- ✧ Have a regular health check - just to be sure
- ✧ Check your sleep patterns and time in bed
- ✧ Add in a regular non-work activity with those who make no claim to be Christians
- ✧ Ensure you have regular physical exercise
- ✧ Give yourself the discipline of regular mental stimulation of any kind

Your family and friends

- ✧ Block out evenings and/or days off as engagements in the diary
- ✧ Treat other shorter blocks of time similarly
- ✧ Get away from the home on a regular basis
- ✧ Replace 'lost' time off in the diary at once
- ✧ Shut the study door when you are not working
- ✧ Go public (teaching) on the responsibilities as a parent/spouse/human being

Your spiritual growth

- ✧ Prepare a statement about the priority for this in your role description
- ✧ Have a daily time in a room or space other than your study or work area
- ✧ Have an annual retreat, either at a retreat house, or on your own in a hired cottage
- ✧ Receive teaching input through CDs or other means
- ✧ Get to another church's services whenever you can
- ✧ Appoint someone outside your situation to whom you are accountable
- ✧ Give yourself an annual review of your discipleship

For a summary of several of these points, try Training Notes TN7, *Ideas for how to make time for life*, on the website. And for some thoughts on how Jesus managed his ministry, try TN43, *Did Jesus use an iPhone?* See in particular TN106, *Talk about taking time 'off'*, for thinking on the Sabbath principle.

A book worth reading is Paul Swann's *Sustaining leadership* (BRF).

Action plan

To help you turn this weekend into practice. Consider:

As a result of this weekend, the main areas I wish to develop further are

And some specific ideas I would like to put into operation are

My plan for action to be completed by next weekend is

My aim for where I shall have got to by Easter 2020 is