



Ministry Areas

**What they are not...
And what they can be...**

Ministry Areas

Are not :-

- A new structure devised to manage decline in numbers of people or amounts of money available. It is not so much about a new structure, but a new culture.
- Simply an amalgamation of a group of parishes.
- A way of doing what we've done for years but calling it something different and with fewer clergy involved.
- Making big 'benefices' where all the churches in a particular group 'look the same' (diversity can be a major strength of ministry areas) .
- Imposing 'top down' leadership where all follow a new set of rules.
- Being designed to close churches.
- A way of taking your resources and centralising everything.

They are :-

- Communities of faithful and committed Christians seeking to use the vast variety of gifts, often currently unrecognized, that God has given to his people.
- A recognition that life has changed for everyone and that the church needs to respond to these changes in order to be attractive and faithful to God's call.
- Flexible networks of places where people (lay or ordained) have a chance to explore their gifts and are given the opportunity to use them, and where resources are honestly evaluated and made best use of.
- Groups of people working together (lay and ordained), sharing their talents and resources where they are best suited, supporting and encouraging one another, freeing up opportunities for specialist ministry, for example, with children and youth, the elderly, families, worship, evangelism, pastoral care, education, administration etc..

- Models of church grounded historically and theologically in the New Testament, recognising and affirming the ministry of all believers, lay or ordained, who share in the ministry of the Bishop. The role of the 'Leader' is to guide and encourage people to develop their personal discipleship and co-ordinate initiatives, whether old or new, which help the growth of the church, both spiritually and numerically. They are a way of helping churches thrive together rather than battle to survive alone, often seeing other churches as 'competition' rather than as family.
- A way to 're-root' churches in their local communities as they seek new ways of engaging with and serving the people.
- Importantly, Ministry Areas, rather than lessening the role of local churches, intend to help them become more prominent.
- An encouragement to all people to be creative in working together towards the common goal of a stronger and more effective church where disciples are welcomed, fed and nurtured.
- A way of streamlining some of the 'bureaucracy' of the church. A central Ministry Area Council will be the trustee group. This helps to recognise that some churches are struggling to get suitable people into the right positions and ensures that those on the Ministry Area Council are suitably trained for the responsibility they are undertaking. However, the Min Area Council will rely on support and input from individual church councils and people still taking active roles in each church. As previously intimated, Ministry Areas are about helping local churches to thrive not just survive.
- A call to be the 'Body of Christ' committed to helping transform lives and communities.

Key elements

- Prayer
- Worship
- Communication
- A real desire to work together, sharing resources with, and offering support for, one another
- Clear organisation in place and systems which are understood
- A recognition that churches are not "competing" with one another but are united as a family, seeking, often in different ways, to share the gospel in words and actions
- The opportunity for gifts to be identified, nurtured, and used
- One model doesn't necessarily suit all. It is important that people engage in the process of developing the Ministry Area to ensure that it is the right model for the particular area

Some benefits

Effectively working Ministry Areas will in some places be a culture change. Some benefits will inevitably take time but that isn't a reason to delay Ministry Areas from being formed.

- Sustainable Ministry Teams, recognising people's gifts and talents
- A chance to provide more 'expert' help and support for one another – some churches will have people who are particularly gifted in certain areas. These gifts can be shared – these might be in children's/ youth work, work with older people, social action projects, music, different experiences of spirituality, finance, buildings, grants, technology
- A bigger opportunity for 'representation' with organisations such as Councils with the 'bigger voice' more likely to be heard
- The recognition that no church is left 'alone' and all are supported, encouraged and prayed for by others regularly
- Increasing opportunities for fellowship, meeting together for prayer, worship, and social events
- The opportunity to develop more 'small groups' which allow people to meet together informally for bible study, prayer, reflection etc