

Shared and inspired leadership



SHARED AND INSPIRED LEADERSHIP

‘Leaders are not above others as much as ahead of others...discerning needs to be met, experimenting with new methods and approaches to familiar challenges...creating innovative structures, or finding new ways forward.’ Banks and Ledbetter

The most obvious model for Christian leadership is that of Jesus. Jesus’ leadership was servant-hearted (John 13.14-15), collaborative (Matt. 10.1-5), was marked by high accountability (e.g. John 13.23), with low control (e.g. Mark 9.38-41).

Christian leadership is distinctive because we follow the servant Jesus Christ. There is no one-size fits all style of

leadership.

However, leadership is, at its core, defined by influence. If a leader is someone who, particularly through healthy relationships, influences others, then all Christians – lay and ordained – are leaders as they seek to encourage others with the hope of the Gospel through their actions and/or words. People of all ages and abilities can be leaders. God often calls children and teenagers to important roles (Jeremiah 1.5-8, 1 Samuel 3.1-10, to name a few), and many scholars interpret Exodus 4.10 to mean that Moses had a speech impediment. As churches, our job is to model God’s Kingdom, where the skills of all are welcomed and valued.

FIVE KEY VALUES OF INSPIRED, SHARED LEADERSHIP

Passion

For Christian leadership a key characteristic is passion, and passion for God who reaches out to us to redeem and restore us through Jesus Christ. This means leadership should be rooted and nourished by spiritual disciplines. These will be different depending on theology or church tradition, nonetheless, the greatest resource leaders have at their disposal is the ability to offer to others what we have experienced and know of God. And it is this passion for the gospel that translates to perseverance and conviction.

Servanthood

The Apostle Paul said, ‘But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.’ (2 Corinthians 4.7)

The ministry of Christ was to serve. In the same way leaders in the Church are called to be ‘servants of the servants of Christ.’ The humility that is needed for Christian leadership is in no way synonymous with low self-esteem or a lack of belief. Our calling is in Christ, this is certain. Instead humility in leadership is a strong desire for others to grow rather than concern for our own self-glory. It is about coming to our own vocations as disciples and helping others realise theirs.

Leaders are not perfect but should be growing in God through Christ and by means of repentance. Leaders are also called to be vulnerable, and this is linked to humility and growth. For further thoughts on vulnerability in leadership see Brené Brown’s book, ‘Dare to Lead’. In her book Brown says, ‘Vulnerability is not winning or losing. It’s the courage to show up when you can’t control the outcome’. We cannot control others or indeed God, so vulnerability has a place in our thinking of leadership – I find this deeply encouraging that leadership does not therefore require me to have all the answers, but it does ask me to join in, even when I am fearful or unsure.

St Paul said this better in 1 Corinthians 2.1-5 ‘When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God’.

Cure of Souls

One of the unique things of the ministry of the Church of England is the concept of ‘cure of souls’. This understanding has a bearing on leadership in the church. It reminds us, especially when taken alongside the points above, that we exist to serve those who are not yet followers of Christ as well as care and build up those who are. The balance between these two points is fine and delicate – one aspect of leadership should not subjugate the other.

Some traditions see the cure of souls as being practically realised through effective pastoral care that reaches beyond the walls of our church buildings. Others regard ‘cure of souls’ as mission – serving the community regardless of their faith. Others will see it as sharing the Good News with others and being messengers of the Gospel to our community. As in all things, the ideal is to balance all three.

Listening

Good leaders will be good listeners – not just to people, but to situations, culture and contexts. More than this, good leaders, as already alluded to, will be good listeners of the Spirit: so prayer is again key.

Good leaders will often pray for the inspiration of the Spirit, and then listen to their context. They will bear in mind their cure of souls, and ask the question,



‘What will help here in our mission and ministry?’, and will listen for an answer. To hear the answer to that question takes a deeper listening than to ask the question, ‘What do we normally do?’

When leaders listen well to people, it doesn’t mean that they agree with the things those people are saying (all though, of course, they might). Good leaders will listen even to those who they might already know they will disagree with. In their listening, good leaders reach out to others and empower them.

Good listeners will be proactive in seeking out those who are normally ignored and making the time to listen to them – in this way they will follow the model of Christ. In Jesus’ day that group included, but was not limited to children. We should be good at listening to children, young people, minorities, people with disabilities, those who are quiet, and other groups who are traditionally ignored or marginalised.

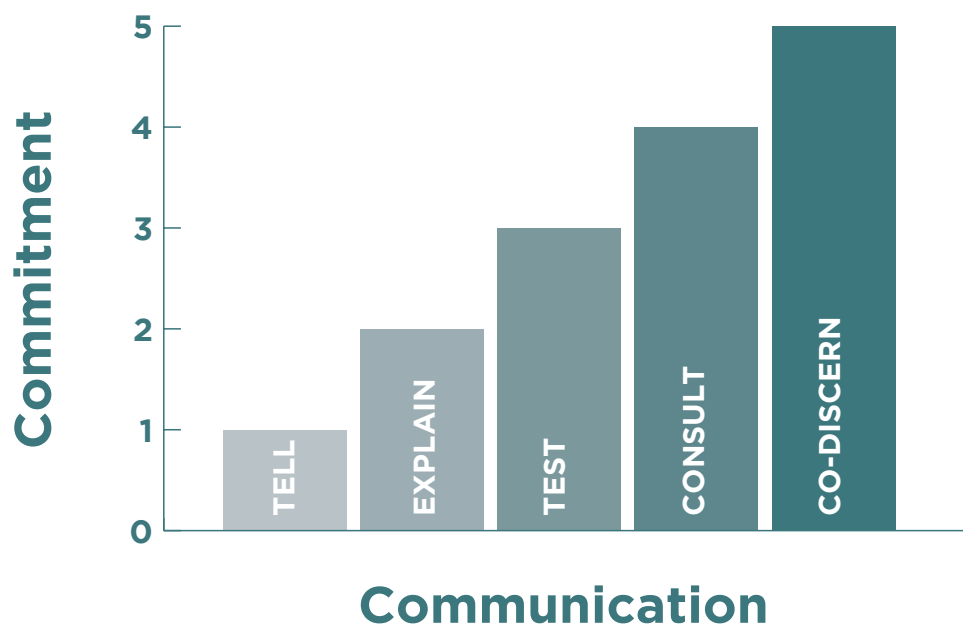
Discerning

‘If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.’ James 1.5

Good leaders will need wisdom and discernment and will certainly recognize that this ministry is best when it is shared with others.

The Church Representative rules means we have an elected PCC: this is a blessing. However, it may be that your wisdom and discernment is found outside of the PCC. Have a smaller leadership group with whom you discern and share ideas. Ensure this complements the role of the PCC without undermining it. (The following graph may help). Efforts should also be made to ensure the PCC is as representative as possible, in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, parents/not parents, etc. PCC members have to be over 16, but you could form a children’s commission – even if you have only a few children – who could report their concerns and ideas to the PCC a few times a year.

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF LEADERSHIP



The above diagram is a simple description of shared leadership demonstrated by communication (if you haven't already, you may want to read the booklet on good communication at this point).

The left axis describes the level of commitment – a five being high and a one being low. It is group five with whom you co-discern decisions; because their commitment is higher, therefore their level of leadership is higher.

With the next group (with a score of four), leadership is more about consultation: you share the possible decisions that have come out of the 'co-discern' leadership group. Perhaps with this leadership group you work out the most likely one or two options. This is, in a lot of contexts, the PCC.

With the next group (with a score of three) you test the one or two decisions: how is it received: enthusiastically, with anxiety, etc.? This group might, for example, be ministry leaders and key volunteers. The next group (with a score of two), probably the wider congregation, you explain the decision that has been made: you allow them to ask questions and comment. The least committed group (with a score of one, the 'crowd', or even 'community' in the communication document) are informed of the decision. This is still important to take both the time and effort to let them know what is going on. However, because they were not at all services/meetings, they have not had the chance to question or comment.

I wonder where the PCC of your church or benefices sits in this diagram? And is that where it should be?

Encouraging Leadership and Teamwork

It is hoped that our churches and benefices reach out to new people. It is therefore, important to always have in place structures that would allow new people to be involved in leadership. This is true of all levels of leadership: be it making sure it is always possible for new people to be involved in the hospitality of the church, or reading in the services, for example; all the way up to making sure that it is possible for new people to become Churchwardens. That doesn't mean that someone who joined your church six months ago, should, in theory, be able to be a churchwarden.

It does mean that it is often not healthy to have churchwardens who have served for years and years: are they preventing other, new leadership from taking up the role? Or is it that there is no culture or expectation in the church that there will be anyone other than the same group of people filling these roles? Has the leadership team shrunk too small, its creativity and agility lost? The "power of the rota" is one of the hidden gatekeepers of the church. Do people know how to volunteer for jobs? Are there opportunities to try new things? Are children and young people empowered to speak up and ask to volunteer?

As Alan Smith and Peter Shaw say in their book *The Reflective Leader* 'members of a flourishing team value and celebrate each other's perspectives. They are not daunted by conflict, but see constructive debate as an opportunity to work towards creative, well thought through conclusions'.

Leadership Training

Key to encouraging leadership will be leadership training – which empowers and enables.

This can be done ‘in-house’ or with diocesan lay leadership training.

We have materials for short training courses that you can run yourself in your parish/benefice/deanery. They can be downloaded from the website and include:

- Leading Intercessions in worship
- Pastoral Ministry
- Bereavement Visiting
- How to run a small group

There are different lay leadership training programmes run by the diocese, these include:

Lay Leader of Worship (LLW) Training

Worship is at the heart of our discipleship and our gathered activity together as church. Some people will have a sense of calling to lead others into God’s presence in worship. Simple training is provided for this and a rich variety of people are called to this ministry. For more information see: www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/lay-leaders-worship/

Foundations

There are a number of vital areas of ministry that the church is involved in, including teaching the faith, pastoral & community care, and mission & evangelism. Foundations is a one-year course designed to be able to fit around people’s busy lives, as the weekly content and discussion forum can be accessed and read at each person’s own convenience. It takes a deeper look at the Bible, Christian history & beliefs, and issues that affect groups and individuals in today’s world. For more information see: www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/foundations-lay-ministry-course/

CMS Pioneer Training

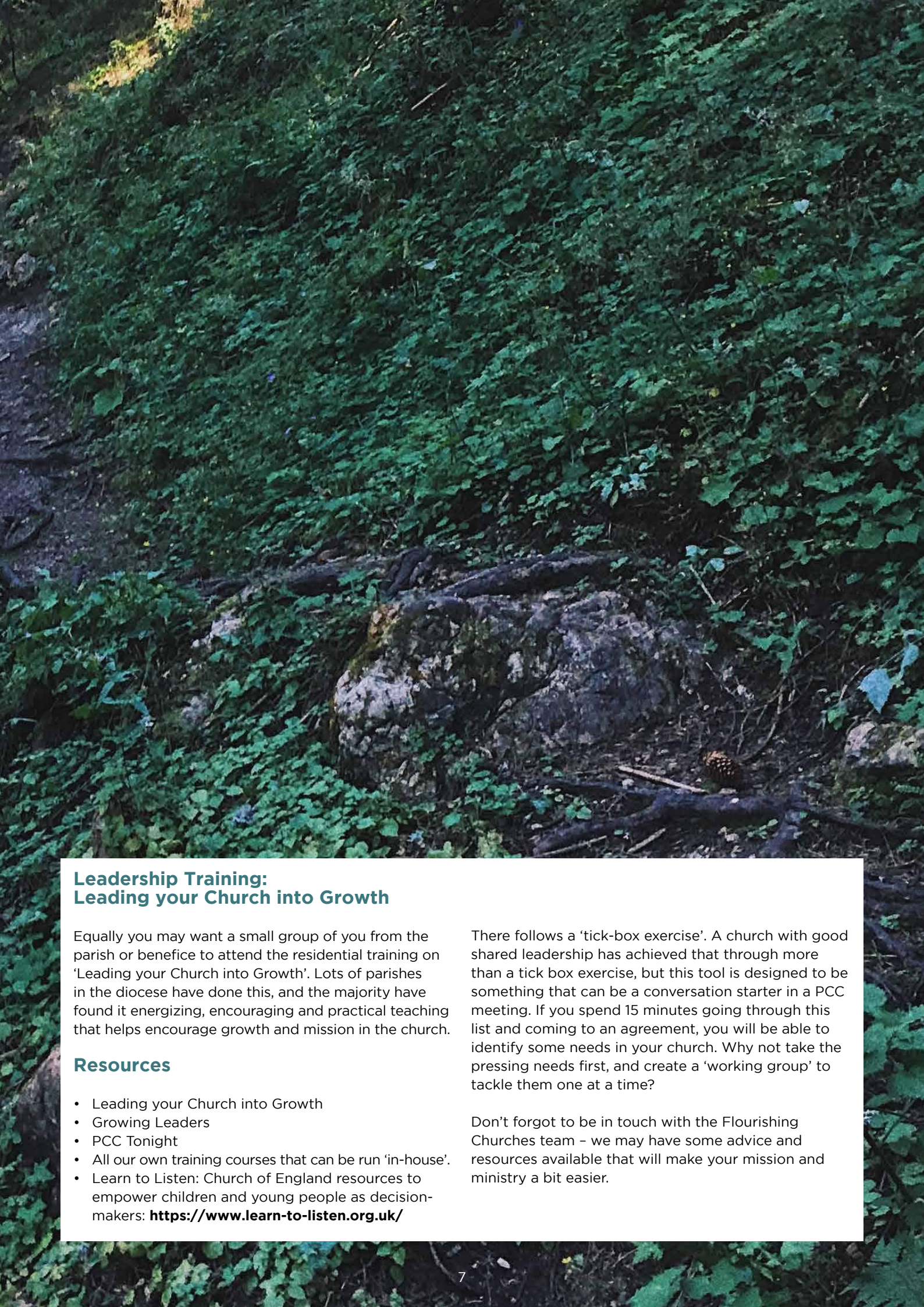
Pioneers are people called by God who are the first to see and creatively respond to the Holy Spirit’s initiatives with those outside the Church; gathering others around them as they seek to establish new worshipping communities. For more information see: www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/cms-pioneer-training/

Reader Training

Some people will have a sense of calling to a broad ministry involving leading worship, teaching the faith, pastoral care and mission. Those with this broad sense of calling to leadership in the church and community are encouraged to explore Reader ministry. This usually involves initially completing either Foundations or the CMS course (for those who wish to be Pioneer Readers – exercising Reader ministry in pioneering contexts), and then involves a further 2 years of training to provide in depth training in theology for ministry, in readiness for licencing as a Reader. For more information see: www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/readers-in-training/







Leadership Training: Leading your Church into Growth

Equally you may want a small group of you from the parish or benefice to attend the residential training on 'Leading your Church into Growth'. Lots of parishes in the diocese have done this, and the majority have found it energizing, encouraging and practical teaching that helps encourage growth and mission in the church.

Resources

- Leading your Church into Growth
- Growing Leaders
- PCC Tonight
- All our own training courses that can be run 'in-house'.
- Learn to Listen: Church of England resources to empower children and young people as decision-makers: <https://www.learn-to-listen.org.uk/>

There follows a 'tick-box exercise'. A church with good shared leadership has achieved that through more than a tick box exercise, but this tool is designed to be something that can be a conversation starter in a PCC meeting. If you spend 15 minutes going through this list and coming to an agreement, you will be able to identify some needs in your church. Why not take the pressing needs first, and create a 'working group' to tackle them one at a time?

Don't forget to be in touch with the Flourishing Churches team - we may have some advice and resources available that will make your mission and ministry a bit easier.

	AN URGENT NEED	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	GOOD	EXCELLENT
Encourage lay and ordained vocations to ministry.				
Review the average age of the leadership and membership of the PCC and devise a plan to ensure all age ranges are represented.				
Create a 'discernment group', or cockpit crew, or advisory group.				
Pray together as a leadership group.				
Discern when in the year, and on what topics, to have your 'in-house training'.				
Consider and plan how to encourage and thank your lay volunteer leaders in your church.				
Review communication in your church. For example, what is the vision? Who is it communicated to? How is it communicated?				
Review the passion of your leadership – your own and that of other leaders in your church. Do you need a retreat, training, or just some fun social time together?				
Ensure you spend time listening to the minorities and those who are not normally heard.				
Review systems and structures that may be barring new people – and especially children and youth – from being empowered as leaders.				