

MENTOR TRAINING IN THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH – A HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENTS

In the early stages of Local Collaborative Ministry's history in the Scottish Episcopal Church, it was quite feasible for the Provincial Officer and the 7 Diocesan Mission Co-ordinators to handle all the work thrown up by congregations travelling along the LCM pathway: regular visitations, the delivery of some educational sessions, the keeping of a watchful eye on progress, the answering of queries, and so on. As the number of charges involved in LCM began to grow in late 2004 from less than 20 to nearer 50, it became clear, however, that a new mechanism of oversight, support and accompaniment needed to be developed. Could a way be found of deploying cohorts of trained volunteers across the Province to accompany these charges?

Following discussion in the LCM Task Group, proposals for a Mentoring scheme were brought by the Convenor of the Task Group and the Provincial LCM Officer¹ to the Home Mission Committee in July 2005. The tasks to be undertaken by such trained accompaniers were listed as follows:

- working with the agreed development plan set in place by the charge and PLCMO
- implementing the development programme
- overseeing its delivery
- offering their own skills and gifts as required
- liaising with the Co-ordinator and Bishop in annually reviewing, revising and celebrating the plan.

It was also proposed that funding for this scheme as for all other LCM support should come from the Provincial Training for Mission budget.

The development was duly sanctioned - and its budget approved by the Committee and Board, of which more later. 16 people from across the Province, discerned by LCM personnel as having the gifts to do this type of work², were duly invited to attend an introductory training session 11-12 November 2005; the letter of invitation set out the ethos and remit of Mentors in the following way

A Mentor would:

- *be a theological reflector (in the widest sense of this description)*
- *be discerned as having the particular gifts of enabling and accompaniment, living in the tension between what could be and what is, self-awareness and humour.*
- *have an understanding of and commitment to baptismal ministry.*
- *be prepared to enter into a long-term relationship with a congregation by agreement*
- *be prepared to be in touch with the congregation roughly every 2 months*

Of the 16 invited, 11 attended and 8 subsequently agreed to continue 'on the books'; 3 of these were lay people, and the other 5 priests either currently in pastoral charge or else retired.

Two further trainings have since occurred, the details of which are set out in Appendix 1. The first point to make about these is that the very *format* of the trainings plays a crucial part in the development of the Mentors' skills. Participants play a full part in the leading of worship, the facilitation of dominance-free group sessions and the offering of their gifts and reflections throughout; all that Anne, Susan, and Tim - those responsible to the wider

¹ Both are members of the Home Mission Committee, a pendant committee of the Mission and Ministry Board

². Between 2003-2004, 80 people across the Province had been trained to be Base Group Facilitators at a Provincial Conference of over 400 hundred participants; the training sessions included skilling in the Pastoral Cycle, Contextual Bible Study, listening skills, liturgical leadership, group dynamics and learning styles. Their candidacy for this role has been vetted by their diocesan Bishop. 35 of these people had gone on to develop these skills in theological facilitation through a series of further, provincially-funded, trainings and were operating as Theological Facilitators in a variety of charges across the Province, helping congregations to deepen their discipleship for mission. It was largely – but not exclusively - from this pool that the Mentors were selected. Part of the genesis of the Mentor scheme arose from the Province's commitment to ongoing training of BGFs/Theological Facilitators and the realisation that a similar but distinct group of people needed to be discerned, trained and resourced for this work.

church for the scheme in their current respective roles of Provincial LCM Officer, Convenor of Theological Facilitator Training and LCM Task Group Convenor contribute is the initial setting-up of the schedule, simple housekeeping and subsequent assessment and reporting. Latterly the content of the programme has been crafted in response to requests made by participants at previous events; viz, for instance, the session on self-reflexive skills in Training 2 following a plea for peer support at the first training.

The second point to make is that we have been at pains throughout these sessions to draw on the wider wisdom of colleagues from other parts of the Anglican Communion, and of ecumenical friends. Thus the Rt Revd Don Phillips from the Diocese of Rupertsland, Canada, Revd Canon John Daniels, Ministry Officer in the Diocese of Bradford (England) and Revd Peter Neilson, New Charge Development Officer in the Church of Scotland (and now freelance consultant), have joined the gatherings and guided our deliberations. Peter, indeed, has an ongoing relationship with the scheme acting as External Consultant to the trainings. We value and are grateful for the guidance all have offered and are richer for it; their company reminds us that we are not alone in travelling down this path, but part of a bigger procession of pilgrims seeking new ways of being church. This has been underscored by holding all the trainings in an Ecumenical Residential Centre in central Scotland.

The sessions themselves, as Appendix 1 will make clear, have focussed on the following aspects:

- the **context** in which Mentors operate: a description of the state of Local Collaborative Ministry in the Province, and an outlining of the protocols and covenants that govern and impinge upon Mentors' work; and a wider, visionary consideration of 'changing church'
- the **role** of the Mentor: an outline of the kind of way in which it is envisaged Mentors operate, namely as 'companions' and 'accompaniers' rather than as directive policy-makers
- the **charisms** of the Mentor the gifts a Mentor might be expected to display and the ways in which s/he can build upon these God-given talents and hone her/his mentoring skills
- the **work** of the Mentor: clarification of the way in which they will be deployed and the type of input they might offer within the nominated charge
- the **support** of the Mentor: an outline of the Provincial/diocesan tools and resources available to Mentors – workbooks, support, training.
- the **accountability** of the Mentor the relationships in which the Mentor operates within diocesan and Provincial structures

This 'content' has been offered in a variety of ways: through more formal input (such as Don Phillips, Peter Neilson and John Daniels offered), by the participants sharing Case Studies of their experience in LCM charges, and by the use of such interactive techniques as Contextual Bible Study, Mutual Invitation and small group work. Worship has formed an integral and vital part of all the trainings so far, reminding us of the One in whose name and for whose Kingdom we do this work, and also helping to form us as a community. Evaluation has been done by means of iterative self-evaluation forms which are issued at the outset of every training session and which place the emphasis upon the *participants* taking responsibility for their own learning (see Appendix 2).

From these trainings has come some formalisation of the remit and role of a Mentor, but as with everything in the field of Local Ministry, this is not set in tablets of stone but rather is 'work in progress', developing as experience and need suggest.

Local Collaborative Ministry Mentors – a word of explanation

Who are they?

Mentors are people within the SEC, lay and ordained, who are selected and trained by members of the Provincial Local Collaborative Ministry Task Group (a work group established under the Provincial Home Mission Committee) to work with congregations or clusters of congregations as they move along the LCM continuum. They are folk who have been discerned to have the gifts of congregational accompaniment – encouragement, self-awareness, listening, discernment and an ability to live "in the tension between what could be and what is" - and the skills of group facilitation, as well as an understanding of and commitment to baptismal ministry and a knowledge of current developments in Local Collaborative Ministry across the Province and elsewhere.

What do they do?

A Mentor's brief is to work in defined LCM contexts in the area of their growth and development into LCM. This will involve "ministry development" in the widest sense of the term

- both congregational: what are we being called to be and to do ("corporate vocation")
- and individual: what, where and how are the ministries to be exercised, how are they to be discerned, resourced and overseen etc for engagement in the mission of God.

Mentors are in contact, whether in person or by electronic means, with the charge with whom they are contracted to work *on a regular basis* – the frequency of such contacts is detailed in the particular contract that a Vestry draws up with the congregation's Mentor so there is no hard and fast rule on this but once every two months would be the norm) – to oversee the Local Collaborative Ministry programme that has been drawn up by the Provincial LCM Officer (and diocesan Mission and Ministry Officers where appropriate) with the charge, its Vestry and any clergy. They would offer their own ministries and abilities to the congregation, perhaps including personal delivery of training resources, but they are not responsible for delivering *all* the educational input; rather they are able to point congregations in the direction of appropriate resources (people, courses, books, websites, exercises and tools etc). Their primary task is to be a 'critical friend', travelling alongside the charge as it works through the agreed programme of development, offering support, guidance and counsel as required.

It is expected that after every year's programme the PLCM Officer (and/or the diocesan equivalent) and the Bishop would visit the charge to conduct an annual Review and begin to chart the following year's programme, and that the Mentor be invited to that evaluation.

To whom are they accountable and who pays?

Mentors will be appointed to a congregation after consultation and by agreement with the Bishop, the Provincial LCM Officer, any appropriate Diocesan officers and the Vestry. They will be supervised by the Provincial LCM Officer and receive ongoing training through the Task Group; the cost of such professional development is paid for directly through provincial funds. Travel expenses to and from the congregation with which a Mentor works, however, would be refunded by congregations. It might also be appropriate for them to agree a fee for Mentor's work depending on individual circumstances. Contracts should be drawn up for a period of three years.

A further development in the scheme's formalization came with the drawing up of a contract between charge and Mentor detailing the length, cost and nature of the relationship. A specimen contract is detailed below; this gives only the bare bones, but additional details may be included according to the needs of the particular context. A copy of this, once signed, is lodged with the Provincial LCM Officer.

St Agatha's by the Gasworks, Anytown

Agreement between St Agatha's Vestry and Revd Mary Smith, LCM Mentor

As part of its journey along the LCM pathway, St Agatha's has agreed to accept the services of a trained Local Collaborative Ministry Mentor, name, for the next three years.

The Mentor has agreed to be in contact with the charge on no less than six occasions per year, including attendance at the Annual Review.

The Vestry has agreed to pay all costs incurred by the above listed contacts (telephone calls or travel costs)

Signed on Tuesday January 1st 2010

On behalf of St Agatha's

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Chair of the Vestry

By the Mentor

.....

LCM Mentor

The story continues

At the time of writing, Training 4 is about to happen. We are in the happy position of needing to discern more Mentors as increasing numbers of congregations reach the stage of requesting accompaniment. Thus at this next training we intend starting off a new tranche of Mentors – 6 in all – while continuing the formation of the existing pool. In the morning, the schedule followed by the two groups will differ, but old and new Mentors will come together at the close of the morning for a plenary session to share insights, and then move into an agape and a leisurely time round the table for sharing stories. In the afternoon, both groups will join for a session on self-supervision led by a skilled Ignatian spiritual director and counsellor, Ruth Holgate.

Learnings so far

The following points have proved to be important:

- **“follow the money”**. Getting the funding in place early on – and thus the wider church’s pledge of support – has been a crucial component of the process. Beginning in 2005, the Mentor scheme trainers have prepared and submitted an annual bid to the Home Mission Committee for a dedicated budget heading for this work. In the light of the increasing need and demand for Mentors it is anticipated an increased bid will need to be made for 2008 and the years following. Appendix 3 (not attached here) gives an illustration of the costs for planning and the internally and externally resourced dimension of the training.
- **“build teams”**. Mentors do an enormously important but quite lonely job, and, as ‘change agents’, one which brings with it many stresses. Experience has proved that they often need a significant amount of debriefing, especially after tough encounters. If this falls to the Local Collaborative Ministry Officer alone, then that person will find herself spending a great deal of time on the ‘phone listening supportively to these experiences. It is better if this task can be more widely shared, and so we are looking at ways of setting up regional self-help groupings of Mentors which can operate independently of the PLCMO between trainings. This is where the Dioceses have not ‘come good’ in relation to Diocesan officer gifts/ responsibilities (cf Journey of the Baptised)
- **“be rooted”**. Any new scheme has to have both freedom to experiment and a proper grounding in official structures. We are grateful for the support given over the past three years by the Mission and Ministry Board, the Home Mission Committee and the Bishops, allowing this fledgling scheme to find its particular place and contribution in our mission of the church.
- **“explain, explain and explain again”**. Mentors always work alongside an LCM congregation strictly by invitation, as well as local and diocesan agreement. We have found it necessary to repeat this principle constantly to avoid misunderstanding (at all levels of the church) and often unjustified criticism. Patience, courage and determination have been needed to stick to one’s guns as this scheme has been rolled out and so allow the new to unfold in God’s time and purposes.

Appendix 1 Outline of the Trainings

Training 1 11-12/11/05

Introduction to mentoring

Advance reading:

- LCM in the SEC story by Tim Morris
- Chapter 7 of Kevin Thew Forrester's *I Have Called You friends* with some questions by on "How can we make this happen?" and a paper by Charlie Piper paper on Ministry Development

Friday

7.45 Short Worship

8.15pm Contextual Bible Study Mark 10. 35-45 - question to enable "storytelling" on experience of LCM

9.15pm Closing Worship

Saturday

9.30am Opening Worship

9.45 Checking in

10.00 Ministry development – Don Phillips's major input session

- a. theology of Ministry Development?
- b. what are we about/trying to do?
- c. how do we relate to all the other facilitators /structures
- d. a holistic approach to Ministry Development

11.30 What we are bringing to the Table?

- a. What gifts/skills/experience will we need ?
- b. What skills and gifts do we have?
- c. Reflections on the reading
- d. Competencies

12.30 Eucharist

2.00 Don Phillips on "Waterfalls, whirlpools & rapids in Ministry Development".

2.45 The issues we need to work through

- a. what training and resources are needed ?
- b. where will they come from?
- c. support structures?
- d. how do we work through accountability?
- e. outcomes and evaluation issues?
- f. how can the members of the Mentor Group work on these ?
- g. further process and dates

Issues to emerge from this training

- accountability; to whom? Bishop and Local Collaborative Ministry Officer/Task Group
- need for regular peer support and ongoing training (budget already allows for 1 day and one 24-hour session in the coming year)
- need to gather together what's available and put it in such a form that Mentors may know what the options are for congregations
- need to firm up and make clear what might be required of someone in terms of time/how expenses paid

Training 2 22/4/06
Sharing our Stories

Advance reading

4 Case Studies written by Mentors

a	St Paul's, Kinlochleven, Diocese of Argyll and the Isles	Anne Tomlinson
b	St John's Johnstone/St Margaret's Renfrew , Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway	Shelley Marsh
c	St Congan's Turriff, Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney	Susan Macdonald
d	Christ Church Duns, Diocese of Edinburgh	Janet McKinnell

Saturday

10.15 Opening Worship

10.30 LCM Overview - where we are

10.45 "The questions we are faced with" - 4 case studies

a) rural

b) urban

c) small town in a potentially clustered setting

d) small town in a potentially linked setting

12.40 Reflection on case studies

12.55 Worship

1.45 "The materials we have"; a Mentor, Val Saunders, leading the group in a session on the *How of Ministry* taken from the LCM Workbook *Laying the Foundations; the theology of collaborative ministry*

2.45 Reflection on the use of the materials

3.15 Practical questions for the future

3.30 Closing Worship

Issues to emerge from this training

- what does 'local' mean in *Local Collaborative Ministry*? How do we help a context define itself culturally and geographically, and enable other people to understand the distinctiveness of that setting? Contexts c) and d) are clearly separate from the other 5/1 charges respectively which lie nearby geographically. This led on to the writing of a paper by the Task Group entitled *What is Local?*

Training 3 3-4/11/06
The disciples report back

Advance reading

Chapter 5 “Learning to write the living human document” from *Lifelong Learning: Theological Education and Supervision* by Frances Ward

Friday

- 7.15pm Introductions & worship
7.30 Checking-in
7.45 Storytime: Where we are & what we have been doing?
 - LCM Officer reports on recent structural developments in Provincial LCM
 - Mentors share stories of their recent experiences
 - Graham Taylor talks about his sabbatical visit to Diocese of North Michigan
9.00 Compline

Saturday

- 9.30 am Worship
9.45 Checking in
10.00 John Daniels’ input on “What does a mission-shaped church look like in the context of Local Ministry?”
13.00 Eucharist
12.45 pm Lunch
1.30 Reflections on practice, based on the prior reading. What habits help us to grow as Mentors?
3.00 Reflection by external consultant Peter Neilson
3.30 What next?

Issues to emerge from this training

- the need for all of us as Mentors to develop the practice of being reflexive and well as reflective, focussing upon our own actions, thoughts and feelings - and their effects.
- how do we support ‘fresh expressions of church’, especially those that grow up outside the normal church structures? Meshing of episcopal polity with new ways of being church.

TRAINING 4 30/6/07

Advance reading

'Local Collaborative Ministry in the Scottish Episcopal Church' Canon Tim Morris
The Ecclesiology of Local Collaborative Ministry: a summary of the foundational theology
Susan Macdonald, Tim Morris and Anne Tomlinson

Programme for new Mentors

The landscape: *What is the context in which we will be working?* an outline of the topography (description of the LCM continuum and the stage at which a congregation might be offered a Mentor; where LCM is 'at' now; map etc)

The task: *What are we being asked to do?* an outline of the role of Mentors (description of the birth of the Mentors' scheme and the task of Mentoring)

Getting in shape: *What does a Mentor look like?* an outline of the skills and charisms

From the cliff face: *What does s/he actually do?* a description of the type of work a Mentor does

Equipment: *How will we be equipped for this?* an outline of the tools and resources available for Mentors

Adrenalin Rush: *I'm enthused....and yet also a little anxious!* Plenary session to share excitement, anxieties and other questions

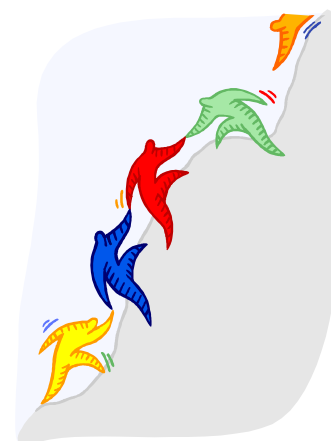
Programme for continuing Mentors

Storytime & case studies:

Opportunities to learn from three Mentors of their experiences in the last year

- "Examples of good practice"
- "When things went wrong and how I coped with them"
- "When things went well and how I coped with that"

Plenary reflection & shared learnings



Appendix 2 Sample Evaluation Form

EVALUATING OURSELVES

LCM MENTORS' TRAINING at SCH – 22 APRIL 2006

Once completed, please leave this in the box provided. It is up to you whether or not you wish to sign it. Thank you for your participation.

At the outset

- *What is your purpose in attending this event?*

- *What do you bring to this event?*

Before lunch

- *How well are you achieving what you came for?*

(If your answer to the latter question entails any changes with which the organisers can assist, please do make those wishes known to us over lunch).

Before leaving

- *Looking back at the day as a whole, how well did you achieve what you came for?*

- *What change on your part might have given you different results?*

- *To assist the planning of any future events, what alterations to the*
preparation (publicity/prior reading/worship etc)
setting (venue/timing/refreshments etc)
structure (methodology/programme/groups etc)
or any other aspect of the day might have given you different results?