

# FAQ 1

## Introduction to Total Ministry

### **1. What is Total Ministry?**

Total Ministry is a strategy for organizing the church so that ministry comes first – the ministry that all God’s people have been given gifts for, and are called to do. When parishes become communities where all the members are set free to use their gifts and to serve God and their neighbour in fulfilling ways, they are doing Total Ministry..

The philosophy of Total Ministry is taken straight from the New Testament and the church’s teaching about baptism. It can be boiled down to three main points:

- a) everyone has a ministry – to share God’s good news in our own unique way, through living a life of service in our own particular circumstances;
- b) Gifts Equal Ministries (the GEM principle) – the gifts people have are a sign of the ministries to which God is calling them; and, in reverse, when God calls a person or community to exercise some ministry, we believe God also gives the needed gifts;
- c) structures are there to support – parish and diocesan organizations are not an end in themselves; their criterion for success is how well they enable the people of God to discover and carry out their ministries.

In addition to this philosophy (none of which is new), Total Ministry as practised in the Diocese of Rupert’s Land proposes some new ways of organizing the church to better put these principles into effect. The most important one is the “parish

ministry support team”, a group of parishioners chosen by the parish to exercise responsibility for the vision of total ministry in the parish. These persons do not “do the ministry”; they are trained to enable the ministry of their neighbours—whether in leadership, educational, or administrative roles. In many cases this will also lead to a redefinition of the role of the incumbent, from being the lead caregiver and liturgist to being the coach and mentor for the support team and others taking on new ministries.

## **2. What does “total” refer to?**

Total Ministry is known by different names in other parts of the Church: baptismal ministry, collaborative ministry, mutual ministry, locally raised ministry. The use of the word “total” invites people to think about wholeness in three different ways:

a) the whole membership – is everyone being given the chance to find and do the ministry God is calling them to? people of every age, gender, and ability? churchy and down-to-earth people, talkative and quiet people, book-learners and graduates of the school of life?

b) the whole range of ministry – in the church, we can name worship leadership, Christian education, outreach work, pastoral care, evangelism, spiritual nurturing, and more, but it doesn’t stop there; the scientist searching out the mysteries of God’s creation, and the person nursing a chronically ill family member, are also doing ministry which the church can support;

c) the wholeness of the church – many members can be pursuing many ministries, but how are they all brought together so that each person can feel that they are representing the whole community? what is the shared vision of the ministry in which we all participate?

### **3. Aren't we already doing that?**

Many congregations find the description of the Total Ministry approach to be quite familiar. By choice or by necessity, they have moved the focus away from the clergy as “the ministers”, to a team-based or lay-ministry emphasis. These parishes can still benefit by adopting the Total Ministry strategy formally and intentionally.

Just defining your parish's approach as “Total Ministry” brings with it some benefits. Few churches which have experienced this wider sharing of responsibility really want to revert to being strictly clergy-centred: adopting Total Ministry as policy ensures that this feature becomes a permanent part of the parish landscape. Present and future leadership will be committed to working within the framework of enabling everyone's ministry. In addition, parishes adopting Total Ministry have access to diocesan support, through the Bishop's Task Force and through the Institute for Anglican Ministry at Saint John's College.

The procedure for developing Total Ministry also invites churches to relate their *ministry needs* to the *gifts of their members*, through the discernment process. The outcome should be a set of priorities which is both fulfilling and achievable, involves more members, and is less likely to cause burnout in key leadership positions.

### **4. Isn't this just for small churches?**

Total Ministry originated in parts of the church which were too sparsely populated to have success with the traditional “one priest, one parish” model. But larger churches have also discovered the importance of freeing up the gifts of their whole membership to take on new challenges in ministry.

Total Ministry exists outside our diocese in many different forms. Small churches, each with their own ministry support

team, have pooled their resources to hire professional seminary-trained resource staff. Elsewhere, teams work with a full-time incumbent, and in some places with a staff of several paid personnel. Churches of all sizes have seen benefits in numbers, budgeting, and deeper involvement of members.

Total Ministry is not, however, a way out of a money or numbers crisis on its own. It assumes that there is a commitment to something more than survival of the congregation – that there is a vision of God’s call to your parish to serve your community.

# FAQ 2

## Making the Decision

### **5. How do we become a Total Ministry parish?**

The Bishop's Task Force has set out some guidelines for parishes who wish to make a commitment to Total Ministry. There are four stages in the process:

a) *Preparatory*: information about Total Ministry is provided at vestry and/or other group meetings, and vestry completes a questionnaire providing the Task Force with information about the parish. Vestry works with the Task Force to present a vision to the whole congregation, leading to a decision, which is celebrated at worship.

b) *Discovery and Discernment*: an advisor appointed by the bishop works with the parish to identify ministry needs, and the gifts that are desirable in carrying out those ministries. Through this process, and with prayer, potential members of the ministry support team are named and invited to join a covenant group. The covenant group typically includes both some current leaders and people exploring new ways of serving; membership is not a "reward" for years of dedication.

c) *Education*: a schedule for team training is agreed with the Institute for Anglican Ministry. The curriculum is offered on site in the parish, with classes open to all parishioners. It includes 7 modules averaging 6-7 sessions each, and timing is flexible – modules can be taken as weekly courses, as weekend workshops, or in whatever pattern best suits the parish. Additional opportunities will be provided for people pursuing specialised ministries.

d) *Commissioning*: towards the end of the initial training period, and after evaluation and approval, the parish will be commissioned at a celebration of ministry, recognizing the new roles of team members as well as the involvement of all parishioners.

## **6. Is the diocese committed?**

On 23 June, 1998, the following resolution was passed at Diocesan Council: “THAT Council adopt in principle as an enabling policy of the Diocese of Rupert’s Land the document entitled *Total Ministry Position Statement*.” This resolution was subsequently endorsed in official legislation of the Diocese, when the work of Council was approved at Diocesan Synod, in October of 1998.

The *Position Statement* is a two-page outline of basic principles, and may be found in its entirety in the step-by-step guide for parishes wishing to embark formally on the journey towards Total Ministry. One clause should be quoted here: “We believe that the primary duty of parish leaders, both lay and ordained, is the enabling and encouraging of the ministries of the Baptized. To that end, we recommend that the ministry of an ‘Incumbent’ be understood as including the enabling of ministries, and we discourage the use of the word ‘Minister’ to apply to an ordained person in the employ of the church.”

The diocese is also committed financially, through its funding of the Institute for Anglican Ministry which will provide educational support for parish ministry teams.

## **7. Who pays for the programme?**

Initial expenses for Total Ministry are an investment of the diocese on behalf of all of us, in the work of the bishop’s Task Force, and in curriculum development at the Institute for Anglican Ministry in

Saint John's College. Both these groups are available for consultation to parishes interested in the programme.

Once a parish has made a commitment to Total Ministry, however, it will take on responsibility for local costs. Costs for the team training course will compare favourably to other substantial lay ministry curricula, and will involve honoraria and travel costs for instructors, along with printed materials. Investment in book purchases will remain with the parish in the form of an expanded library available to people engaged in their own ministries.

The other main cost relates to the incumbent or other professional resource person who will "coach" the parish during and after the training period. Parishes will continue to pay their own costs for professional ministry of this sort, whether full- or part-time. It is possible that, as in other dioceses, groups of congregations may share the cost of one professional "ministry developer".

## *For more information*

### *Bibliography*

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Zabriskie, Stewart C. *Total Ministry: Reclaiming the Ministry of All of God's People*. Bethesda, Maryland: Alban Institute.

### *Websites*

<http://maffin.net/june/totalmin/>

<http://www.motherflash.com/spirit/>

### *Contact addresses*

The Institute for Anglican Ministry  
St John's College  
92 Dysart Road  
Winnipeg  
R3T 2M5

Tel: (204) 474-8118  
E-mail: [lukei@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:lukei@cc.umanitoba.ca)

Bishop's Task Force on Total Ministry  
c/o Anglican Centre  
935 Nesbitt Bay  
Winnipeg  
R3T 1W6

Tel: (204) 453-6130  
E-mail: [diocese@escape.ca](mailto:diocese@escape.ca)



# FAQ 3

## Total Ministry in Practice

### **8. What does discernment mean?**

To discern is to see something clearly – in the context of Total Ministry, to see the gifts God has given and how they relate to a parish’s calling in ministry. Any process of discernment in the church involves some serious thinking, along with prayer, to discover God’s plan in our lives. Discernment for Total Ministry applies that prayer and thoughtfulness towards discovering what work needs to be carried out in your parish, and how the members of your parish are gifted for doing and supporting that work.

The details will vary from place to place: formally, the process may happen in a small group such as the vestry or at a parish conference, and it will usually be guided by a trusted person from outside the parish. The first step is to examine what ministry needs exist, and what qualities are desired in the persons who will be exercising those ministries. For example, your parish may need someone (or more than one) to lead worship, who is comfortable in a public role, is generally well prepared, and has a prayerful approach to leadership.

Once the needs and desired characteristics are established, the discernment group begins to consider who in the parish fits the description of the various ministries. It is at this stage that prayer can bring surprising results – helping the group to “see clearly” the giftedness of people whose calling has not previously been obvious. Likewise, someone who has served for a long time in a particular role may be discovered to have gifts which point in another direction.

When there is a consensus, individuals are asked if they are willing to take on the ministries for which they have been identified. Their prayerful response is also part of discernment, whether their answer is yes or no! In this way the process maintains two elements which have always been part of the way the church discerns a calling to ministry: the call is felt by the individual, but also confirmed by the wisdom and prayer of the church as a whole.

## **9. What does the team do?**

The primary goal of a parish ministry support team is to support ministry – not by one person or a small group, but by all members of the parish. The team continues the work of discernment, watching for new ministry needs and for the changing ways in which people can use their gifts.

Members of the team will take leadership responsibility for particular aspects of ministry, such as worship, outreach, pastoral care, Christian education, youth work, evangelism, spiritual nurture, or hospitality. Some may be ordained as deacons or priests, to be symbols and reminders of the priestly and diaconal ministry of all members of the community. Others will co-ordinate the work of several people ministering in the same area (such as Sunday School teachers, or pastoral visitors).

The team is accountable to the parish, to the diocese, and to one another. Good communication, including regular team meetings, is essential so that the different aspects of ministry can be integrated. Teams will also work along with stipendiary clergy, in some cases as incumbents and in others as part-time resource personnel. The workload for team members will not be greater than that presently experienced by lay ministry volunteers, and the Total Ministry approach has the advantage of ensuring that people are doing work which draws on their strengths.

The team also makes a commitment to continuing education in ministry, beyond the required curriculum for team and specialized training. Teams can take advantage of diocesan and other programming, and will also have many opportunities to learn through teaching – sharing their own skills and gifts with other parishioners.

## **10. Does the ministry team replace vestry?**

In a few parishes, the vestry system has been reformed to resemble something very like a Total Ministry team. Vestry members lead particular aspects of ministry, and see their role as enabling the development of gifts for ministry amongst all members. In these cases, the function of vestry has expanded far beyond the traditional concerns for administration, decision-making, and management of finances and property. Where the selection and appointment of vestry members also includes ways of discerning who has gifts for which ministries, it may be redundant to have both a vestry and a ministry team.

In most cases, however, vestry is better regarded as a particular ministry, enabling other ministries through its management functions and authenticating them through its decision-making powers. So the norm will be for vestries and ministry support teams to coexist, probably with some overlap of membership helping to ensure co-operation between the two. Some people, who have found vestry to be the only available outlet for their commitment to ministry, may well find that they fit better in the ministry team; and that may draw out other potential vestry members with the appropriate gifts of wisdom and capacity for reflection. In this situation, ministry teams will be expected to report to vestry.

## **11. Who will be in charge?**

Experience has shown that there is a problem with designating one person as “in charge” of a parish committed to Total Ministry. When that person is a non-resident priest, the designation perpetuates an unhealthy sense of dependency. When it is a locally identified person, he or she quickly becomes the local cleric with all the old expectations that go with that role, despite everyone’s efforts to the contrary.

As a result, Total Ministry structures need to operate within a model of shared or circular leadership. This idea is not unique to the church or even new: it reflects team approaches which have been operating in industry and other spheres of life for some time now. In this model no one person always chairs the meeting, or sets the agenda, or leads the service. Instead efforts are made to share these and other leadership functions, by setting up a rotation or by each person volunteering to take their turn.

Shared leadership will be a special challenge for parishes that continue to have a full-time stipendiary incumbent. While the incumbent takes on new roles as the mentor and trainer for the parish and team, attention will have to be given to sharing the traditional leadership functions which have gone with that position.

For parishes operating without an incumbent, there are other challenges. Their ministry support team, supported by diocesan resource personnel, will need to examine how all aspects of leadership are being carried out, including less obvious ones such as long-range planning and liaison with other levels of church administration.

# FAQ 4

## The Role of the Ordained

### **12. Will we still have our priest?**

The enthusiastic answer from parishes which have experienced Total Ministry is, “Yes, and maybe even more than one!” To begin with, every parish will continue to work with professional seminary-trained clergy, either full-time or in a shared arrangement with other congregations, while the ministry team is being developed. The diocese is committed to providing for priestly ministry in every parish. In the future, these “ministry developers” may also be lay people, but that will happen on the assumption that the parishes involved have discerned, identified, and sponsored for ordination, some of their own members as priests.

The discernment process recognizes that priesthood is one ministry amongst many exercised by the people of God, and that most parishes have a small number of people who are gifted for that ministry, but perhaps have never seen themselves in that light. You may know someone who fits that description. Total Ministry gives you the opportunity to tell them what gifts you see in them, and to encourage them to respond to the call to priesthood, as part of the ministry support team in your parish.

For many Anglicans, this is an unaccustomed way of looking at priesthood – separating out what it means to be a priest from the job definition which the church has, over time, worked out for paid clergy. Locally-raised priests will be priests in the church of God, just like ordained seminary graduates, but they will see their ministry in the context of the local community where they serve and where their gifts were first discerned. They will

receive specialized training for their work, just like other members of the ministry team, and they will share leadership with the other members. Their role will be to reflect the priestly ministry of the whole congregation ... and discovering just what that means will be a great opportunity for Total Ministry parishes.

### **13. Is it important to have deacons?**

Everything written in response to question 12 about priests also applies to deacons in the Total Ministry context. Ideally, each parish ministry support team will include one or more deacons, identified through local discernment, trained as team members and for their specialized ministry, and ordained for life. The main difference is that, until now, few Anglican parishes have had experience with the ministry of deacons who are not “transitional” (on their way to being ordained as priests). It is, however, a frequently heard claim in Total Ministry parishes that deacons are the key to the new vision of ministry which is being embraced.

The usual explanation of the deacon’s role is that of a servant ministry. Indeed, the Greek word from which “deacon” derives can be translated as *minister* or *servant*. The deacon is ordained to seek out and serve those who are most in need, following Christ’s example but also expecting to see the face of Christ in the weakest members of society. In worship, the deacon proclaims the gospel and assists at the communion table, a vivid illustration of how word and sacrament both express and nourish our daily experience of service. The deacon also dismisses the people at the end of the eucharist, charging them to carry the same intuition of God’s presence into their own encounters with their neighbours.

The tradition of the deacon as someone who ministers without taking on the mantle of power and authority is an important

image and example for Total Ministry. Equally important, though, are the other dimensions of diaconate which are being recovered by people promoting the role of deacons in the modern church. Deacons are now being seen also as *heralds* and *agents* of the reign of God. They represent to the church our calling to be God's ambassadors in the world beyond the church. Total Ministry faces the same temptation Christians have always had, to see the church as a closed circle, and ministry as mutual support within its boundaries. Deacons will remind us that the focus of ministry must always be directed outward.

#### **14. Don't you have to go to college to get ordained?**

The idea of having several community members ordained as deacons and priests may sound bewildering to someone who has only known college-trained priests, who came from somewhere else to serve in your parish, one or two at a time. For a long time the Anglican church has combined the sacramental quality of deacons and priests with the professional concept of a leader in ministry, and assumed that together these can only be located in a few highly educated individuals.

Locally-raised ordination attempts to re-establish the *sacramental* affirmation made in ordination, that priestly and diaconal (and, indeed, episcopal) ministry is the calling of the whole church; that deacons, priests and bishops are symbols and reminders to all of us of what God is calling us all to do. The people who best fill that symbolic role have certain unique gifts, and should be offered appropriate training to develop those gifts; but the training need not always separate them, and eventually remove them, from the community where their "reminding" role was developed and discerned.

As the patterns of ministry multiply and adjust to the changing realities of contemporary life, patterns of ordination training have become similarly diverse. Through Saint John's College,

the Diocese of Rupert's Land will provide Total Ministry ordinands with educational opportunities as close to their home context as possible, and in conformity with national "core expectations" for training. In addition, the diocese and its parishes will continue to need professional theologians and ministry developers with appropriate post-graduate credentials, and we must continue to foster vocations to these professions.



# FAQ 5

## The Impact of Total Ministry

### **15. Where do young people fit in?**

Total Ministry is inherently inclusive of all God's people – young and old, men and women, and all the other kinds of diversity that exist in the body of Christ. Everyone's gifts need to be mobilized in order to fulfill the total ministry of the church, and that certainly includes the gifts of children and youth.

As a result, it will be important not to overlook young members in the discernment process. Their gifts and ministries must be considered, along with their potential for leadership – whether in music ministry, the “cyber” church, outreach, or any other area. Children and teens also have their own different and valuable perspective on the gifts of adult members of the church, especially those with whom they interact directly.

All parishioners, young or old, can expect to grow in faith as they are confronted by questions about their own gifts and ministries as expressed in their daily life. Whether in school, in paid or volunteer work, or looking for employment, young members will look to a Total Ministry parish for support in putting their gifts to best use as they serve God. The message that each of us has unique gifts, and a calling from God to use them, may be especially important at a stage in life often associated with searching for a sense of purpose and identity.

## **16. Will Total Ministry help our church grow?**

Total Ministry is an alternative approach to thinking about and organizing the ministry of a parish. New patterns of ministry will not necessarily bring new members through the door, but they can serve the goals of a congregation more effectively, and those goals may well include growth in attendance, finances, and spiritual life. Elsewhere in the Anglican world, churches working with Total Ministry have experienced growth in all these areas, sometimes quite dramatically.

In those parishes, newcomers can expect to be welcomed in a variety of ways by different members of the congregation, not just the priest and perhaps one designated greeter. They are welcomed with respect for the ways in which they already serve God, and are offered support through prayer and learning opportunities, as well as the usual channels of pastoral care. While they are not pressured too soon to take on a “job” in the church, they feel included as part of the parish’s total ministry both in their daily life and in whatever congregational roles best fulfill their gifts.

A parish ministry support team needs to be especially sensitive to these issues when the population of the parish is very mobile. Rapid changes in membership bring with them a need to reassess what gifts are present in the parish, and what ministries are being undertaken. The valuable efforts of the past cannot be allowed to dictate the patterns of the future, nor should the gifts of new members be overlooked simply because they have not “paid their dues”.

## **17. What will we look like in five years?**

It really is impossible to predict the shape of the future for any given parish which chooses to implement Total Ministry. Responsibility for the future is placed squarely in the hands of

the parish itself, and leaders are encouraged not to “take charge” but to listen and discern God’s unfolding purpose. The one thing that can be said for sure is that your parish will feel more confident that God has a plan for you and that you are doing your best to respond to it.

Given that disclaimer, it may be helpful to visualize the impact of Total Ministry implementation on the fictional parish of St-Swithin’s-in-the-Plain. Coming back to visit in five years, I might not notice much difference at first. The Sunday service feels pretty much the same, though perhaps a little more crowded.

Gradually I notice that people are in different roles than they were on my last visit. The rector is sitting in a pew with her family; the man at the altar is someone who prayed with me after the service five years ago, one of two church members who were discerned for ordination to the priesthood. The preacher is a local school teacher who, it turns out, gives a sermon once a month.

The prayers are where it starts to get really interesting. They are led by a deacon, the head cashier at the nearby Safeway. There are prayers for the sick, but almost as many for people involved in healing – some home care workers, nurses, and a cancer researcher who live in the parish. Other prayers reveal a variety of ways in which members are bringing the love of God to bear on the life of their neighbourhood.

As we move into the offertory, two high school girls taking ballet classes present a dance of praise. I overhear an older couple saying, “I never expected to see dancing in this church.... I know, dear, aren’t they doing well!” Another couple comes up from the congregation with bread and wine, and stand with the priest at the altar, ready to help administer communion.

At the end of the service, announcements also offer some insight into the new St Swithin's. "Discernment forms" have to be turned in by next week – the ministry support team is ready for new members and the parish has been asked to name people with suitable gifts. People are asked to pray about the worship coordinator's position, an important role for which no names have yet been suggested.

At the back of the church I see a list of the eleven current members of the team. I recognize the name of the diaconal ministry coordinator as the person who is speaking at the cathedral tonight on "Taking the Church Into the Neighbourhood". Other team members were involved in the service, but so were several people whose names are not on the team list.

Coffee hour is quite different from five years ago. The place is abuzz, as plans are being made to get together during the week – apparently not for committee meetings, but something more like action groups. Almost everyone looks excited to be there, and I can't tell the "leaders" from the others on that score.

The people who sat next to me in church invite me to join a group going for brunch, "So we can get to know a little about our visitor." Over the meal, I hear more of the changes at St Swithin's. One family moved to a different church when the first team was put in place, but since then several new members have turned up and a couple will likely be on the new team. One of them explains that he was attracted to St Swithin's "because everyone there cares about their church so much. And it seems like each person has something to offer." From what I can see, I would have to agree.