

From Ministry Deliverer to Ministry Developer

By Richard Condo

Baptism into the body of Christ, the Church, is nothing less than a call to ministry. The Local Collaborative Ministry movement that has been emerging within the wider Church and in our own Diocese of Rupert's Land is a divine imperative that has been placed on the Church by the Holy Spirit of God – calling us to reclaim the fundamentals of Christian servant ministry.

Local Collaborative Ministry recognizes that all ministry is Christ's, and every baptized person is an active participant therein, each according to his or her gifts. The main arena for ministry is understood to be in the midst of daily life. Four guiding principles (though there may be more) help us to understand Local Collaborative Ministry:

Principle #1: Ministry is the trust of ALL the baptized, not the exclusive property of the ordained.

In the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, every Christian is imbued with the Holy Spirit, who brings into the person's life a number of spiritual gifts. These gifts are intended to be used in the Church's ministry and mission. Therefore, each baptized Christian is a Minister.

Principle #2: Over 90% of the Church's ministry takes place not when the people are gathered together in worship and fellowship, but rather when they are dispersed into the world.

Therefore, the purpose of the gathered community of Christians is to celebrate the sacred family meal of the baptized (i.e., the Holy Eucharist) and to equip the people of God to witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ when they leave the church building and enter their workplaces, homes, places of recreation, etc.

Principle #3: Church leadership is no longer hierarchical (i.e., "top down"), but rather COLLABORATIVE.

A congregation may have a "Ministry Support Team", made up of lay and clergy leaders who have been identified by the congregation as possessing those gifts that are necessary for helping to equip the rest of the parishioners for their ministries (see Ephesians 4: 11-12). While the congregation would continue to have a Vestry/Board/Council to handle administrative matters, the Ministry Support Team would be the group helping to direct the parish's ministry and mission.

Principle #4: The role and function of the Rector would change from being a Ministry "Deliverer" to being a Ministry "Developer".

The Rector ceases being the "CEO" and primary provider of ministry in the parish, and becomes a team member, devoting a major proportion of time to teaching, training and equipping people for their ministries in the world. What areas of their work would rectors need to (and be willing to) relinquish to others in the parish in order to devote a larger proportion of their time to equipping people for their ministries both as the gathered community of Christ and as the

dispersed Church in the world?

I believe that God is calling us to grow into a deeper experience of our giftedness for total baptismal ministry. Within our diocese, the Local Collaborative Ministry Development Team is available to assist parishes wishing to explore this opportunity.