

United Reformed Church  
Wessex Synod

## **Local Mission and Ministry Review**

An approach to evaluating and planning the work  
and ministry in local churches.

November 2009

# Local Mission and Ministry Review

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The “Pastorate Mission Profile with Minister’s Role Description” is a separate booklet.

## Foreword by Moderator of the Wessex Synod of the United Reformed Church

“The 2006 General Assembly agreed (resolution 16) “in principle to replace the existing scheme for Ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal with a more comprehensive review scheme which would eventually include all Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers” and would (amongst other things) “be based around an agreed role description for the Minister”, “retain the confidential accompanied self-appraisal discussion for the Minister” and would “include open discussions involving both the Minister and the pastorate or post”.

A great deal of work has followed the passing of that resolution, including a trial in one Synod with helpful feedback, in order to develop the scheme, and then plan for and commence the implementation process. Eventually, in December 2008, Mission Council approved the final scheme and resolved that it should be called ‘Local Mission and Ministry Review’.

A task group of the Wessex Synod’s Development and Support Committee has drawn together proposals for the implementation of the Local Mission and Ministry Review in this Synod. This document sets out those proposals in detail.

The purpose of the Local Mission and Ministry Review (LMMR) has been defined by the Ministries Committee as being, “to explore a Minister’s sense of vocation, the pastorate’s understanding(s) of mission in context, and the relationship between the two”. As such, LMMR has the potential to greatly increase our effectiveness in God’s service.

I commend it to you.



Adrian J. Bulley

## Introduction

The Wessex Synod as part of the wider United Reformed Church will be introducing this Local Mission and Ministry Review (LMMR) process over the next four years. The new Pastorate Mission Profile is a slightly extended version of the existing Pastorate Profile with a focus on the mission of the church and now also includes a Minister's Role Description.

In the past, ministers have been encouraged to participate in the Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal (MASA) as part of their own development but now it is being incorporated in the LMMR as part of the integrated process. This is now included in the "Terms of Settlement" under point (7).

This process is designed to bring together the MASA and the review of the local church's life and work and will be undertaken every four years with an internal 'Mutual Ministry Review' taking place in the second year of that four year cycle. This approach will also reduce the amount of work that is involved in preparing a Pastorate Mission Profile at the time of ministerial transition because it will have become a 'live' document.

The Area Synod Pastoral Committees (ASPC's) will initiate visits to churches (including vacant churches) for the LMMR and Synod Office will keep records of the visits and reviews undertaken. Initial and updated Pastorate Mission Profiles including the Minister's Role Descriptions will be filed in the Synod Office electronically.

## Phasing in of the Local Mission and Ministry Review Process to Local Churches

*(Please refer to the flowchart by the same title in order to follow the description below)*

### **1. For churches currently undergoing ministerial transition (i.e. in 'Vacancy'):**

An 'Initial Church Life Review' under the supervision of the Interim Moderator will be conducted for each vacant church in the Pastorate and the results of this are then incorporated in the newly designed 'Pastorate Mission Profile' including a description of the anticipated role of the incoming Minister within the context of each church's strategy for mission in its own context as well as for the Pastorate as a whole.

This document will be the one that is sent to ministers who might express an interest in the vacant Pastorate and against which the consequent call of a minister is based. If the call is accepted by the minister (s)he is ordained and/or inducted into the Pastorate and allowed a period of 6-9 months to settle in and gain the necessary insights to the life and work of the Pastorate.

At the end of this period the minister develops proposals for his/her role against the anticipated mission strategy of the individual churches and Pastorate as a whole. An Elders' Meeting is convened to finalise the Minister's Role Description in line with each individual church's Pastorate Mission Profile's strategy. (It needs to be remembered that the Development and Support Officers (DSO) are available as resources to facilitate this aspect if and as required).

A Church Meeting is held to endorse the review of the Minister's Role Description conclusions and a report confirming this is communicated to Synod via the relevant Area Synod Pastoral Committee (ASPC) and an electronic copy of the current Pastorate Mission Profile (including the revised Minister's Role Description) is sent to the Synod Office for records.

## **2. For churches currently with ministers:**

Churches/Pastorates with ministers are strongly encouraged to undertake a 'Church Life Review' at their earliest convenience in order to complete a new format 'Pastorate Mission Profile' including the Minister's Role Description (for every minister serving that Pastorate).

Thereafter a 'Major Church Life Review' is to be undertaken by the Minister and Elders every 4 years.

*(The Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal (MASA) **Appraisal Partner** may be present at one of the early Elders' meetings, and an **Outside Facilitator** to assist the church in its reflection throughout the process.)*

The relevant Area Synod Pastoral Committee (ASPC) initiates a Major Church Life Review by appointing a suitably trained Outside Facilitator (OF). An Elders' Meeting or an Away Day is organised and led by the Outside Facilitator in which the life of the church is reviewed in the context of its strategy for mission (which is described in the current Pastorate Mission Profile).

At approximately the same time the Appraisal Partner (AP) and minister undertake a Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal (MASA) using "Taking Stock" in which the appropriateness of the minister's role, as envisaged in the Pastorate Mission Profile, is considered against the emerging mission strategy of the church. *(This is a confidential process)*. The AP confirms with the OF that MASA has been undertaken. Minister contributes non-confidential relevant information for the Church Life Review using the final page of "Taking Stock".

A follow up Elders' meeting chaired by OF with minister present is held to continue and finalise the Church Life Review process and amend/redraft the Pastorate Mission Profile to which the Minister may bring proposals for a change in role description as needed.

A Church Meeting, chaired by the OF, is convened to discuss and endorse the Church Life Review and its conclusions and approves the updated Pastorate Mission Profile and minister's amended role description.

The OF will report to Synod (relevant ASPC) that the Church Life Review (including MASA) has been undertaken and completed and an electronic copy of the updated Pastorate Mission Profile including the revised Minister's Role Description is Synod Office for records.

The DSO then contacts the minister(s) to explore any development opportunities/possibilities that may have arisen from the MASA.

## **Envisaged Timetable for Introduction of the Local Mission and Ministry Review Process.**

### **2010**

- Newly vacant churches to complete the new Pastorate Mission Profile.
- Encourage other vacant Pastorates to transfer their current Pastoral Profile to the new version and add the envisaged Minister's Role Description.
- The DSO's are available to assist as and where needed.
- Encourage all Pastorates with ministers to engage in the process of completing the new Pastorate Mission Profile as it would be a great help to them to have some paperwork already in place before being asked to undertake a Major Church Life Review.
- During this time Outside Facilitators and Appraisal Partners to be recruited and trained ready for 2011.
- Also during this time Interim Moderators to be trained with regards the new Pastorate Mission Profile requirements.
- Area Synod Pastoral Committees to compile a list of Churches currently with Ministers to establish a programme for introducing the system from 2011 onwards.

### **2011**

- Formal Local Mission and Ministry Review Process starts with Area Synod Pastoral Committees contacting the first group of Pastorates and introduces the concerned Outside Facilitator and also requests the minister to undertake his/her MASA.
- All Pastorates with ministers who have not yet completed a new Pastorate Mission Profile are encouraged to undertake this if not approached by ASPC to do so.
- The DSO's are available assist as and where required.
- Ministers are encouraged to undertake a MASA even if not approached by ASPC to do so in terms of completing a Pastorate Mission Profile.

### **2012 -2014:**

- Subsequent groups of Pastorates will be approached to undertake LMMR's and the balance of ministers who have not yet undertaken MASA to do so.

### **2015 onwards:**

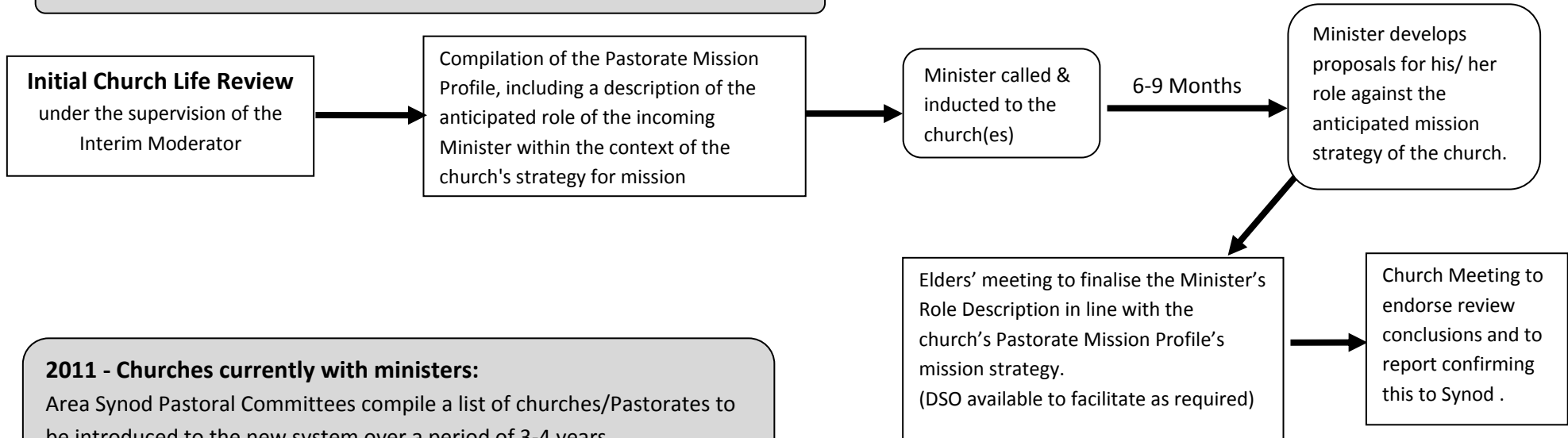
- The Process is up and running with regular LMMR's at all Pastorates in the Synod.

#### **Additionally to be noted:**

- In LEPs where the incumbent is a United Reformed Church minister they will be asked to undertake at least the interim 'Mutual Ministry Review' between the quinquennial Churches Together reviews and the minister will be required to undertake a MASA as well.
- In LEP's where incumbent is not a United Reformed Church minister it would not be a requirement for the minister to undertake a MASA and the church to engage in the interim Mutual Ministry Review.

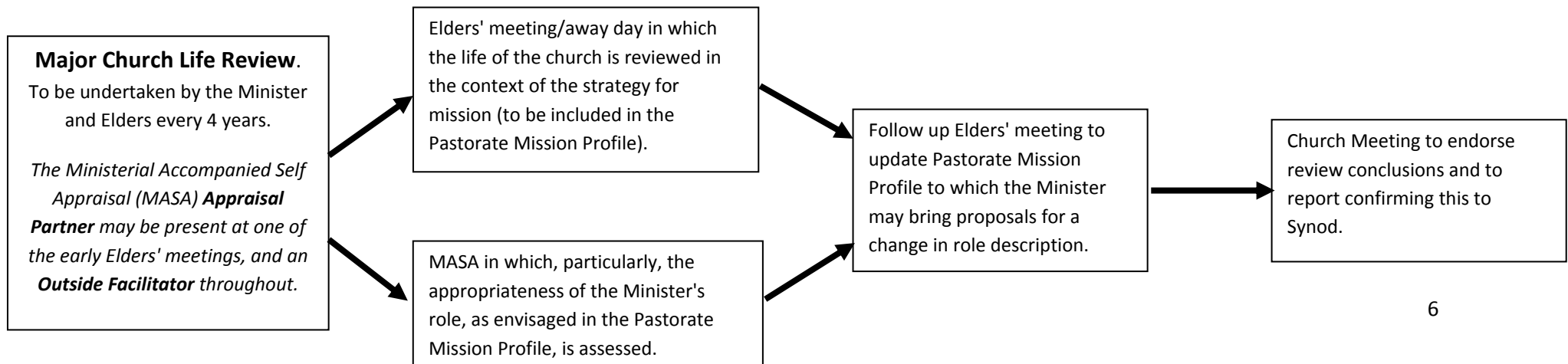
## Phasing in of the Local Mission and Ministry Review Process to Local Churches:

### 2010 - Churches currently undergoing ministerial transition (Vacancy)



### 2011 - Churches currently with ministers:

Area Synod Pastoral Committees compile a list of churches/Pastorates to be introduced to the new system over a period of 3-4 years.



## Guiding Principles for Ongoing Reviews

The church as a congregation is a community called to act as the body of Christ so that effectively we are all engaged one way or another in ministry in order to build up that body (Ephesians 4:15-16). All parts of the body are needed and each part depends on the other to carry out the work of the whole. For this reason we can talk about the 'Mutual Ministry' of the local church.

The work we do in churches has phases of planning, implementation and review and this cycle occurs regularly in the life of a congregation. Cycles have no beginning and no end. Review can ideally only take place when work has occurred and generally the work should be based on a plan and the plan will have emerged because someone (or a group) reviewed a situation and decided on a course of action.

### 1. Review Phase

**Find out what has been happening.** Organise or appoint a small group to undertake this work. This step requires collecting information based on people's observations. A reliable approach for the first review is to ask "What has gone well?" Beginning with an appreciative question counterbalances fault finding and still allows problem identification. There will be time later to identify adjustments that need to be made in future ministry. Other beginning questions include "What happened? What do you appreciate about the recent past?" You can also gather information about goals met (if they were established), unexpected events, finances, and the various church ministries' activities.

**Understand what happened.** In this step, you make sense out of the information gathered. What did you say you would do? How does that compare with what you see that actually happened? How do you explain what happened? How do you feel about what happened? Open, honest, and respectful conversations are an essential aspect of this step.

**Acknowledge contributors and situations.** Whom do you need to thank? Other people besides the clergy and the Elders are involved in mutual ministry of the church. Make sure they are thanked and do it publically if possible.

### 2. Planning Phase

**Making adjustments.** Based on what you observed and learned in the review, what do you need to change right away? What can you stop spending energy on—either because the program is complete, for example, or because you want different results?

**Prepare for the future you intend to create.** It is not enough just to dream. There must also be a collective intention to move toward a particular vision. What do you want to become as a community? To what do you aspire as witnesses to the Kingdom and as disciples in your context? This is an opportunity to come together around the mission of the church and find common ground in your future. It allows you to move forward together.

**Set goals.** Decide what work to undertake. Setting goals is nothing more than saying, "Of all the possible work of the kingdom, here's what we're taking for the next year or two—as informed by the review we just completed." Goals also include clear time frames. Be specific.

The goals must be established with clear understanding of what has worked and not worked in the past, what the current situation calls for, and what resources are available.

A good guide is to imagine the effort it will take to reach the goal and how much you are willing to stretch in pursuit of mission. If the result is overwhelming, back off a bit. If it seems fairly easy, without adventure, then attempt to move out a little farther. Above all the church's goals must be scaled to the resources and circumstances of the congregation. It is said that God will not ask anything of us that we are not able, with God's help, to achieve.

**Define roles.** Although emphasizing the mutuality of ministry, we must also be clear about who does what. Many visions have been lost and goals have been missed because no one was identified as responsible for implementation. In church communities, some people teach, some people feed the hungry, some people visit the sick, and some know how to manage finances. Of course, roles are most easily fulfilled when they match individual ministry gifts. Mutuality is maintained when we understand that all activities are interdependent, and individuals perform best when they work cooperatively.

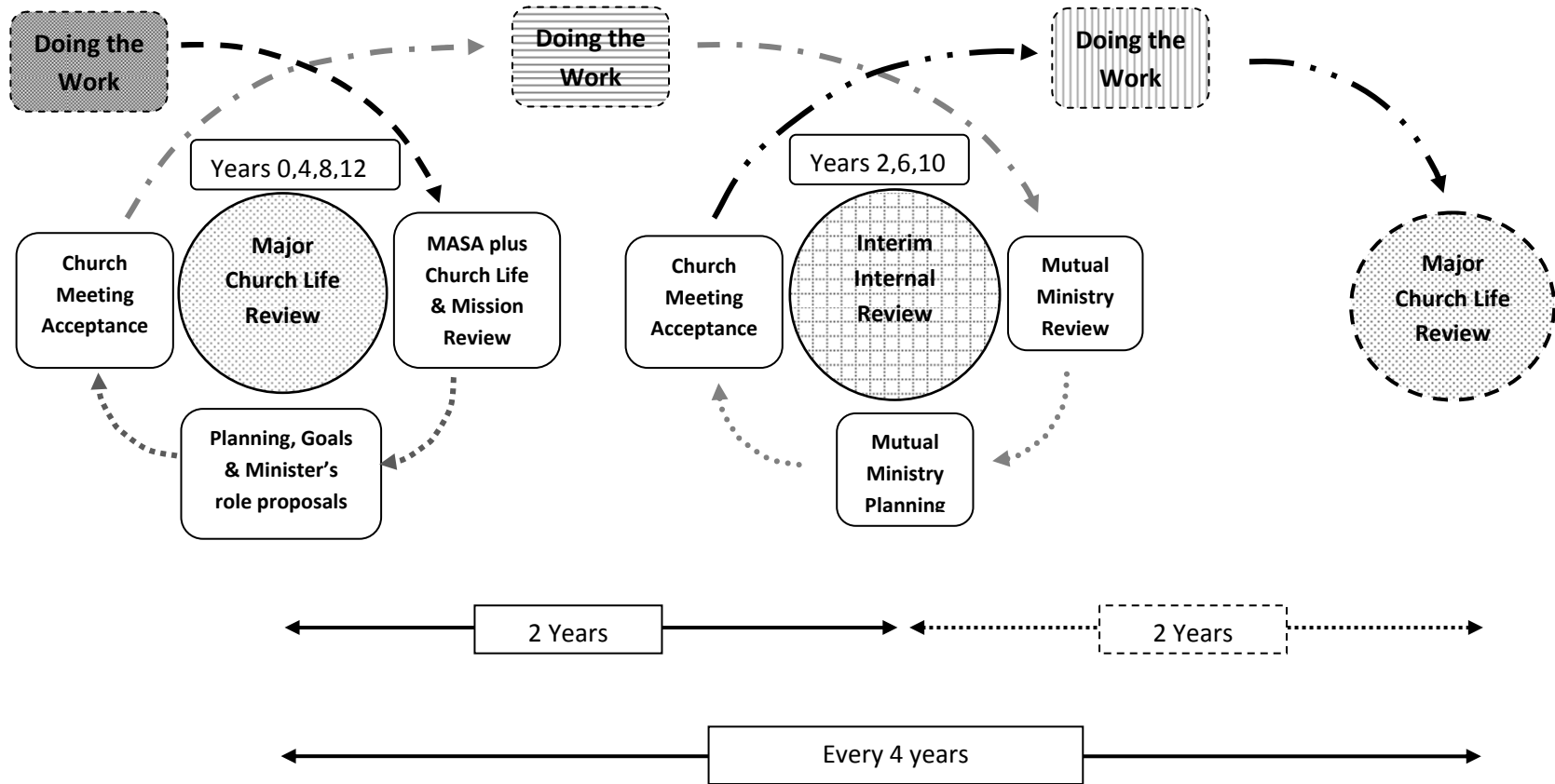
**3. Church Meeting Acceptance.** Communication is the key element! As vision, goals, and roles are developed, be sure to engage the congregation in understanding not only the words but also the meaning. This is best done through regular feedback and discussion, particularly at Church Meetings. If the Eldership has established a vision and set goals for the coming year, these need to be accepted, endorsed and owned the whole community. This step allows the whole church to embrace the plans and, if needed, make further adjustments and encourages wider participation and fuller support for those with defined responsibilities in achieving the goals.

#### **4. Implementation**

**Act.** Do it! Persist! Help each other! Do not work alone! When plans encounter the real world, life happens. Make adjustments from time to time without throwing out the whole plan. Rest and be nourished along the way. Allow the work to mature.

As you consider these broad steps, remember that Synod Resource Team have more information on planning, visioning, and implementation.

## Flowchart for Local Mission and Ministry Reviews (LMMR's)



**Note:**

MASA = Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal

## **Mutual Ministry Internal Review (Years 2,6,10 etc)**

This is an opportunity for the Minister and Elders to reflect on how things have been going with the church over the past two years. It is suggested that time is taken away from the normal Elders Meeting to do this, possibly at a Saturday away-day.

The starting point for this review is the Pastorate Mission Profile. The questions below have been formulated to help you get started.

The outcomes of the review should be shared with Church Meeting and major new decisions agreed. The Pastorate Mission Profile including the Minister's Role Description to be updated.

Please remember you can contact the Synod for resources, including support from the Development and Support Officers.

### Looking at Point 7 - Where are we going?

What have we achieved and why?

What haven't we achieved and why?

Minister – What is your best/most significant event in the past 2 years?

Elders – What is the church's best/most significant event in the past 2 years?

### Looking at Point 3 – What do we do?

Have there been any changes in patterns of worship etc in the past 2 years?

Why were these changes made?

Is the present pattern of worship [including the changes] still valid?

### Looking at Point 5 – What are our resources?

In what way has the church's resource base changed?

### Looking at Point 6 – What are the opportunities/potentials for mission and outreach?

What challenges do we now face locally?

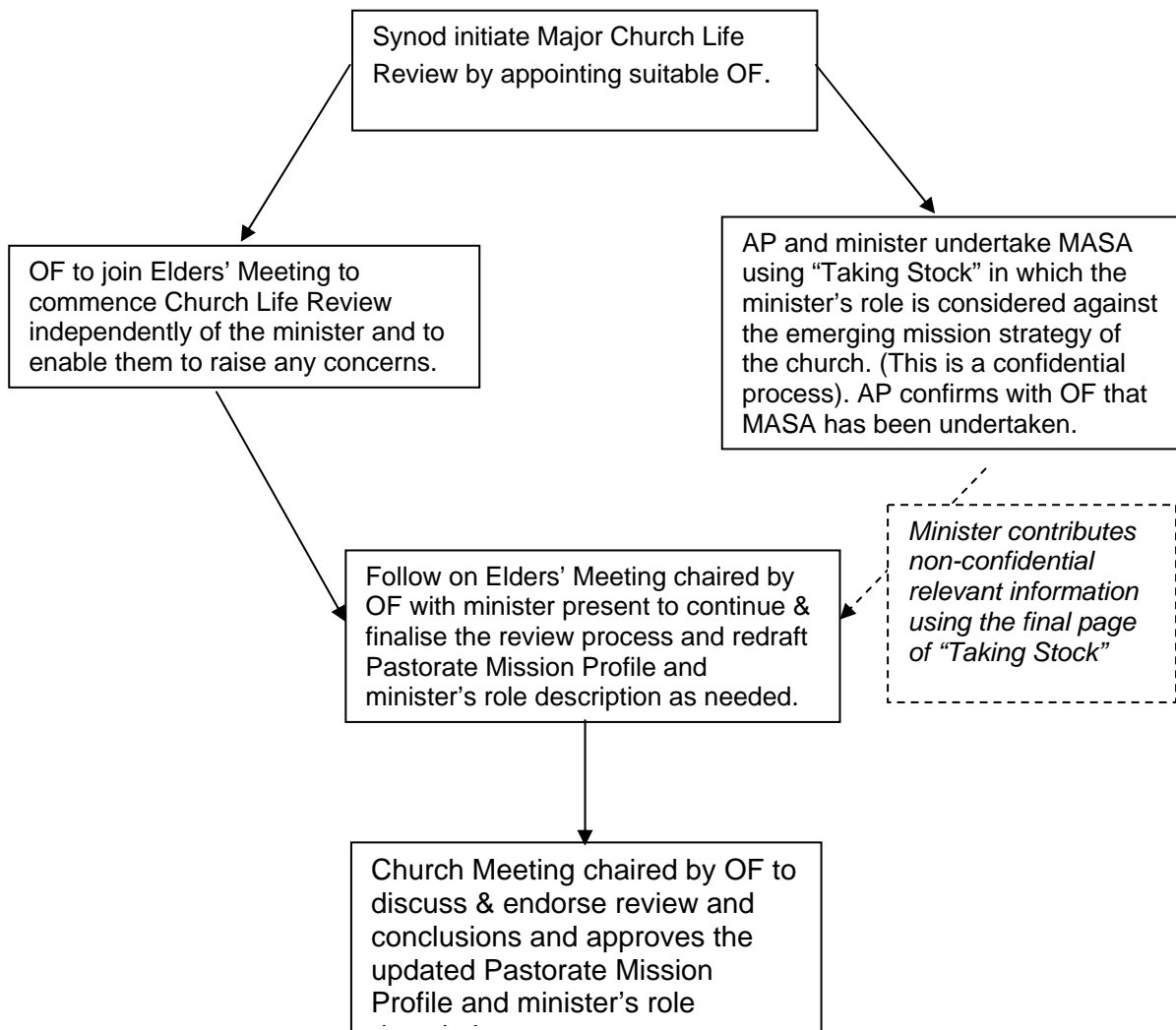
Based on the current situation, where do we see our main areas of work for the next 2 years and, broadly, how will these be achieved?

Minister - In what ways have you seen the minister's role description change in the past 2 years?

## Flowchart for Major Church Life Review (Years 4, 8 etc.)

The Church Life Review is a Synod led, rather than minister led process, placing emphasis on the importance of independence in the review process. The Synod will contact churches and ministers to initiate the Major Church Life Review.

Unlike the Interim Internal Review the process is now led throughout by an Outside Facilitator (OF) who will be appointed by the Synod. In Pastorates with more than one church ideally that OF would be the same person in order to retain a consistency of approach. The minister's Appraisal Partner (AP) will be chosen by the minister from a group of suitably trained people.



The OF will report to Synod (relevant ASPC) that the review (including MASA) has been undertaken and completed and an electronic copy of the updated Pastorate Mission Profile and the minister's role description is sent to the relevant Pastoral Committee.

DSO contacts the minister(s) to explore any development opportunities/possibilities.

## **Aspects to note for the Major Church Life Review (Years 4, 8, 12)**

### **Taking stock**

'Taking stock' as a template for Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal (MASA), fits into the above framework with singularly little need for modification. There are some slight changes to the wording, but none of major significance. The document has been radically condensed. In part this was motivated by a desire to reduce the physical size of the document which, at 21 pages, could be daunting. If the document is provided electronically, 'answers' can be simply interposed into the text so there is no continuing need for big spaces for input.

MASA remains confidential. It is for the Minister alone to bring his or her conclusions to the church or the Synod Training Officer.

### **Multi-church pastorates**

Many pastorates involve two or more churches, the groupings commonly being driven by finance or expediency rather than synergy. In this situation, the Appraisal Partner needs to keep a particular eye on the usage of the Minister's time in relation to the scoping of the churches.

Because the churches involved may have little in common other than their Minister, it is probably better to think in terms of an Outside Facilitator for each church rather than for the Pastorate as a whole.

In a multi-church pastorate, some Ministers might prefer to run their Church reviews sequentially, rather than concurrently, simply to spread the work load. It also seems sensible for the same Partner to accompany the Minister through each of these church reviews. However a sequential review of the Minister's churches will increase the time frame for the self-appraisal process and will also mean more meetings with the Minister. There is no ideal solution to this and it is best left for negotiation between the Minister and the Synod's administrator.

### **Group Ministries**

By a 'Group Ministry' is meant the situation where a number of churches (but possibly only one) is served by a number of Ministers. In most instances the churches will be independent and at 'year 0' it will be appropriate for each to produce its own Pastorate Mission Profile. However within this framework, the role of individual Ministers will need to be defined and probably the fraction of each Minister's time that should be spent in a particular sphere of activity.

If one considers the 2 or 4 yearly reviews, then the members of the Ministry team will need to agree between them who will lead the Church Life Review in a particular place, but all team members may need to be involved. It would not be appropriate for the Ministers to act as one another's AP's, nor would it be appropriate for any of the Ministers involved to have the same AP.

If there are changes in the team, then the church(es) will have needed to discuss in some depth the role of the new team member and the incoming Minister will have discussed and agreed his or her role before accepting a call. In effect this recreates a 'year 0' situation, and it seems most straightforward to allow this to set the timescales for future reviews. There is a danger in this situation of the process becoming unmanageably complex, and we perceive that a measure of flexibility will be vital.

## An Approach for Major Church Life Reviews (years 4,8,12)

### 1. Assessment with regards to the current life of the church, please discuss the following (in small groups of say 3-5 to allow everyone a chance of contributing):

- What makes you feel good about what your church is doing?
- What is especially going well in the church's life?
- What is being undertaken by your church under each of the "Five Marks of Mission?"
  1. Tell: - to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
  2. Teach: - to teach, baptise and nurture all Believers
  3. Tend: - to respond to human need by loving service
  4. Transform: - to seek to transform unjust structures of society
  5. Treasure: - to safeguard the integrity of creation, & renew the life of earth
- What are the main concerns about the church with regard to its work?  
*(What seem to be the main or continual items on the Church or Elders' Meeting agenda or aspects that people are regularly talking about or mentioning?)*
- In addition, what is on your mind?

*(Get some general feedback and put answers on a flipchart for the following discussions.)*

### 2. Looking at the purpose(s) of the Church:

- Given the responses (as above), what do people see as the purpose of the church?
  - what is its role in the community
  - why is this church here in this community (ie place) at this time?
- How reliable are your "pictures":- of the church – when was it last examined?  
of the community – when was it last assessed?
- How is the church used and by whom and when?

Draw up a table of user groups

How are they linked to and/or with the church?

What can be done to engage with them & foster links or perhaps look at working in partnership with them?

### 3. Looking to the future:-

Do you have a purpose/mission statement?

Do you have a vision statement of how it can take shape?

What are the goals/milestones to achieve this?

What does the plan of action/implementation look like?