
Being an Archdeacon: A Coaching Model

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Considering the importance of their role in the life of the Church of England and the Church in Wales, there is not much written about the role of archdeacons. In her recent article in the January 2019 issue of this Journal, Jane Steen focused on the legal aspect of the role of archdeacons, and reflected on how they play a key role in shaping the Church and its ministry, delighting in its beauty and rejoicing in its well-being. In this article, the recently retired training, development and support officer for archdeacons reflects on the nature of the role and, in the light of that, on the way in which it might best be carried out. Believing that process is at least as important as outcome, and that good processes lead to better outcomes, he argues that coaching provides a useful model to enable archdeacons to exercise their ministries most effectively and promote both the mission and the well-being of the Church. It is also, he argues, a better reflection of Anglican theology.

Keywords: Church of England, Church in Wales, coaching, ministry, archdeacon

INTRODUCTION

Archdeacons often bring skill, commitment and faithfulness to their role and, in so many different and sometimes difficult situations, they work creatively to bring new life and growth to individuals and congregations. In the past, they were seen mainly as authority figures to be avoided. Clergy wondered what they had done wrong if the archdeacon asked to come to see them and many clergy would only consult the archdeacon in the very last resort. That situation has substantially changed. Archdeacons are now often the key people in supporting and enabling mission in sector ministries and parishes, seeking to be alongside clergy and church officers, affirming all that is good, challenging with sensitivity when that is needed, and above all being people of encouragement and connection.

Conversations with archdeacons, coupled with reading and reflection, have led me to the view that the ministry of an archdeacon is often best exercised when it is offered alongside other ministries rather than in an authoritarian and top-down way. A useful model for an archdeacon's ministry is that of coaching. Because of the role, an archdeacon should not and cannot act as a coach in the professional sense of the term. But the tools and approaches of coaching are such that they provide a better model for the role than many others. It is a model which, I will argue, is theologically based and produces the best practical results.

This article therefore starts by reflecting on the role of archdeacon as it has developed over recent decades, before describing the practice of coaching as it

is normally understood and offered. It will explore how the model of coaching fits well with an archdeacon's responsibilities and ministry and then offer a theological basis and demonstrate its practical usefulness.

THE ROLE OF THE ARCHDEACON

The office of archdeacon has its origins in the early centuries of the Christian Church and he was, as the name suggests, the principal deacon. He assisted the bishop by looking after the finances, property and possessions of the church.¹ Archdeacons were first universally appointed in England by Archbishop Lanfranc towards the end of the eleventh century² and by the thirteenth century there were 40 archdeaconries spread across the 17 English dioceses.³ The office was kept at the Reformation by the Church of England. For over a thousand years, archdeacons were usually in deacon's orders only. This began to change towards the end of the middle ages but the requirement in the Church of England that they also be in priest's orders was not enacted until 1662.⁴ Until the twentieth century, the office of archdeacon was usually combined with a living, either a parish or cathedral canonry, as there was no separate stipend provision.⁵ It was only during the last century that it became usual for archdeacons' posts to be full time with their own stipend.

The role has often been described as being the eyes of the bishop, *oculus episcopi*. Anthony Trollope wrote, 'He is the bishop's eye, or should be so, and may not improbably become the bishop's hand.'⁶ Archdeacons were and still are tasked with ensuring good behaviour and the due observance of Church law. Canon C22 expresses it this way: 'And particularly he shall see that all such as hold any ecclesiastical office within the same perform their duties with diligence, and shall bring to the bishop's attention what calls for correction or merits praise.'⁷ The same Canon prescribes the archdeacon's responsibility to ensure that church buildings are kept in good order and that their furnishings are in good repair. This has long been seen as not simply a matter of attending to gutters and drainpipes, but 'being a good steward so that others are freed to be the worshipping, witnessing and ministering Church'.⁸

1 R Ravenscroft, 'The role of the archdeacon today', (1995) 3 Ecc LJ 379–392.

2 H Buckingham, *Oculus Episcopi: a handbook for new archdeacons* (published privately, 1997), p 16; F Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England 1042–1216* (third edition, London, 1972), p 123.

3 M Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century* (second edition, Oxford, 1962), p 445.

4 F Cross, *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London, 1957), p 79.

5 A Trollope, *Clergymen of the Church of England* (London, 2010; first published 1866), p 46.

6 *Ibid*, p 53.

7 The Canons of the Church of England, seventh edition, available at <<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/canons-church-england/canons-7th-edition>>, accessed 11 May 2019.

8 Ravenscroft, 'Role of the archdeacon', pp 387–388.

But these are not the sole roles of the archdeacon. Canon C22 also states that the archdeacon is to ‘assist the bishop in his pastoral care and office’, indicating that the care of clergy and church officers is the main thrust of the role. Archdeacon Ravenscroft echoes this view in his article when he stresses that the role is primarily pastoral rather than authoritarian, despite the checks and investigations that archdeacons have to make because of the statutes and measures which govern their work.⁹ Nonetheless, Ravenscroft then rather reverts to the stereotype when he ends his article by stating that ‘wearing his [*sic*] hard hat as he climbs with the architect to the top of the tower with a clip board in his hand he is recognisably still what he has always been, a steward of the bishop and his diocese’.¹⁰

Over the last 20 years the emphasis of the role has changed, as it has for all roles throughout the Church of England. Faced with an overall decline in attendance and a reducing number of clergy, there has been a renewed emphasis on mission. For many this was always implicit in much that was done, but it has now been made explicit to the extent that the word ‘mission’ occurs prominently in almost every publication, website and role description. In the mid 1950s, the majority of people in England identified themselves as ‘Church of England’, although most of those rarely attended church. That is no longer the case. This is illustrated by the fact that in 1950 672 children out of every 1,000 were baptised in the Church of England. By 2011 this had fallen to 120 in every 1,000, though part of the reason for this has been changing practice in some parishes.¹¹ Similarly, the numbers of people regularly attending Church of England worship show a steady decline. Currently, regular Sunday attendance hovers around a million people each week,¹² and while roughly a third of the population still identify as Anglican, that is much stronger the older people are and far less common the younger they are.¹³

In 2004, the report *Mission-Shaped Church* challenged the Church of England to become much more mission-focused as a response to this continuing decline, and to be more willing to explore fresh expressions of church and pioneer ministry as a way of reaching out to and engaging with those who had left the Church or had never had anything to do with it. These fresh expressions could include alternative worship communities, mid-week congregations, network churches and school-based churches.¹⁴ Many theologians such as John Hull responded critically, pointing out that the report was more about a church-shaped mission than a mission-shaped church and that mission was

9 Ibid, p 388.

10 Ibid, p 391.

11 G Davie, *Religion in Britain: a persistent paradox* (Chichester, 2015), p 50.

12 Ibid, p 52.

13 Ibid, pp 47, 52.

14 S Spencer, *Christian Mission* (London, 2007), p 5.

really about where God was working and joining in with that, not thinking that the initiative was that of the Church.¹⁵ The Church is to be a sign of the Kingdom and has an important role to play, but mission is about much more than church numbers or church growth. The *Missio Dei* has its roots in God creating the universe, is seen through the story of the people of Israel and the ministry of the prophets and finds its focal point in God's sending of the Son.¹⁶ The Kingdom of God is passionately concerned with responding to the needs of the poor, to injustice and to those with least (eg Luke 4:16–21).

Concerned by the lack of national support for archdeacons, the Archdeacons' Forum commissioned a report on the continuing ministerial development of archdeacons, which was published in 2011 under the title *Sustaining Leaders in Mission and Change*. While the report was written to make recommendations for the continuing ministerial development of archdeacons, it obviously could not achieve this task without first looking at the role and how it was understood and performed. It is not just the title of the report which reflected the new explicit emphasis on mission. The whole report sees archdeacons as key to the Church responding to God's call and work in mission. As they attend to the internal dynamics and running of the institution, archdeacons are the people who most often enable mission to happen.

The role is based on handling the tension between encouraging mission and creativity and ensuring that the order of the Church of England is maintained. Conflict is a regular feature of their work in their interpretive position between a range of different worlds and viewpoints. This means that developed people skills are essential. The role can be very busy and stressful. However, many Archdeacons use their statutory functions to encourage imaginative, mission based thinking amongst local clergy and churches.¹⁷

Crucial to the role is the ability of archdeacons to offer support and a listening ear, to be skilled in conflict transformation, to be team players in a variety of contexts and to be strategic leaders working in direct contact with clergy and laity in parishes and sectors.¹⁸ It can be an isolated role, and so mutual support from other archdeacons and an ability to keep a healthy work/life balance are both crucial for their wellbeing and for what they model to other clergy.¹⁹ One of the key recommendations of the report was the creation of the post for a part-

15 Ibid, p 6.

16 Ibid, pp 10–14.

17 Oxford Centre for Ecclesiology and Practical Theology, *Sustaining Leaders in Mission and Change: the continuing ministerial development of archdeacons in the Church of England* (Oxford, 2011), p 3.

18 Ibid, pp 15–17.

19 Ibid, p 15.

time national officer, which led to the role which I held from May 2014 until July 2019.²⁰

Published with the report was an article by Martyn Percy entitled ‘Archidiaconal ministry: a theological reflection’. This article is a penetrating and stimulating reflection on the archdeacon’s role. Percy sees archdeacons as occupying a crucial role in the life of the institution:

- They are Skilled Exegetes of the Church—discerning, reading and interpreting local situations for the diocese, and the diocese for the local context;
- They are therefore Connectors—this is an ‘in-between’ role—that is vital to the proper organic, systemic and communicative functioning of the body;
- They are Leaders and Managers—this is a role that requires a subtle blend of gifts and competencies, and a developed form of ‘ecclesial intelligence’.²¹

For Percy, the Church is an interpretive community at every level, and so there can be no one blueprint in every situation. ‘The church works more through guidance and the range of responses to such initiatives, than it does by instruction.’²² There are therefore inherent tensions in the body of the Church, between organisation and institution, ecclesiology and ministry, mission and maintenance, static and dynamic order, change and continuity; the archdeacon, because of his or her role, presides over these tensions. Sometimes there are problems which can be solved, but more often there are dilemmas which have to be lived with and, when handled well, can be creative and live-giving rather than destructive and deadly.²³ Percy observes that, while leading an organisation can be easy because it can be lean and easily directed, leading an institution is very different. Institutions embody shared values and purposes which may sometimes come into conflict. Being an archdeacon can be a costly and self-sacrificial vocation as archdeacons work and live with these dilemmas.²⁴ In all of this the archdeacon is ‘key in enabling ministers and their congregations to be present and alive to their calling to participate in the mission of God as seen from the perspective of both the local and that of the diocese’.²⁵ He concludes ‘Seemingly familiar, and often in receipt of projections and subject to caricature, it is arguably the most important role in the Church that is seldom understood.’²⁶

Sustaining Leaders in Mission and Change has been quite significant in articulating the way in which the ministry of archdeacons is now understood. Parts of

20 Ibid, p 34.

21 Ibid, p 35.

22 Ibid, p 17.

23 Ibid, p 37.

24 Ibid, p 38.

25 Ibid, p 42.

26 Ibid, p 46.

it have found their way into various resources produced by the Archdeacons' Forum and parts also appear in the role descriptions for vacant archdeacons' posts. A survey of 11 of those role descriptions produced during the past five years has been illuminating.²⁷ These 11 examples were chosen at random but cover rural and urban dioceses and different parts of the two provinces of Canterbury and York. An analysis reveals that, while much of the report is reflected in the role descriptions produced, not all bishops and senior clergy and laity have fully grasped the nature of the archdeacon's role, any more than they have taken on board the subsequent debate around being a mission-shaped church. What emerges is a mixed picture, sometimes with huge lists of the main responsibilities (one role description (A) lists 35 of these) and a person specification which is extensive and demanding (one (B) has 22 bullet points and some of those cover more than one ability or character).

Several trends, though, are clear. First, the role descriptions all start by outlining the role in reference to mission, and the place of the archdeacon in implementing the diocesan vision and strategy. So the archdeacon is responsible for 'holding the diocesan vision, shaped by the Archbishop's Council, and enabling its development and fulfilment in conjunction with all the parishes and people in their area of responsibility' (C). Their ministry is to be 'shaped by the missional intent of the diocesan strategy and they are key to its implementation' (D). Sometimes this is very church-focused, as perhaps is to be expected: 'direct, shape and enable the clergy and people to create flourishing churches at the heart of each community' (E). At other times, there is a full awareness that

mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but rather lies at the very heart of God the Holy Trinity. God sends his Son, the Father and Son send the Spirit; the Father, Son and Spirit send the church to fulfil God's plan of salvation for the world he loves.

The call is to be 'open to the transforming work of God's Spirit in our own lives and so become agents of Christ's transformation to the world around them' (F). The particular role of the archdeacon, working in the institution and having a responsibility for its order and the observance of its structures and laws, is very much seen as serving this mission. They are 'crucial for the good ordering of the diocese' and are 'to enable the structures of the church to serve its mission and for this to be resourced' (B, G). So while all role

27 The following role descriptions for archdeacons' posts were examined in producing this work: Birmingham 2018, Bristol 2019, Canterbury 2015, Carlisle 2016, Chelmsford 2015, Cornwall 2019, Exeter and Plymouth 2019 (two separate posts), Germany and northern Europe and the East 2014 (one post), Nottingham 2019, Richmond and Craven 2018 (one post) and Surrey 2017. The role descriptions have been anonymised and given letters to identify them.

descriptions list the legal responsibilities of the archdeacon, these are always set within the broader context of mission.

This view is echoed by Jane Steen in her recent article about archdeacons and the law. Surveying comprehensively the legal role of archdeacons, she sums the role up with a mission focus:

The diversity of their ministerial tasks place the archdeacons at a nexus in diocesan life, drawing connections between one part and another, bringing different people into different conversations and enabling the full participation of God's people in the life of God's Church. Theirs is a Janus-like task of 'looking before and after' to detect what should be done, and how to deal with what should have been done, for the mission of the church. The law is helpful in expressing this responsibility.²⁸

The second trend is the emphasis on certain abilities or gifts of character. The archdeacon needs to be someone who can work collaboratively and collegially, both with other members of the bishop's staff team and also with colleagues who are area deans, lay chairs of deanery synods or staff of the diocesan office (H, J, E). Those sought for these posts are expected to have a high degree of self-awareness and of emotional intelligence, and to be able to work effectively and productively with others (J). They are also expected to operate in a way which is encouraging and affirming and 'empowers others through an appropriate balance of support and challenge' (A). Words like 'encourage' and 'develop' occur frequently, and occasionally the word 'releasing' (K) or 'enhance' (C). These skills and attributes are to be used in the pastoral care of the clergy and their families, and of churchwardens and other church officers (F). Pastoral care has a significant place in almost all of these role descriptions (eg B, G, L).

Third, in all but one of the role descriptions examined (G), the archdeacon is expected to fulfil the role of a reviewer under the process of ministerial development review (MDR). Some form of regular review for clergy was introduced in most dioceses during the 1990s and became obligatory for all clergy on common tenure under the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure 2009.²⁹ The reviewers are sometimes bishops and archdeacons, sometimes other clergy and sometimes lay consultants. The purpose of the MDR is described in the Guidance as follows:

to look back and reflect on what has happened over the last year or two of ministry and, informed by that, to look forward to plan, anticipate and develop a clearer vision for what lies ahead. In looking back there is an

28 J Steen, 'Archdeacons and the law', (2019) 21 *Ecc LJ* 2–18 at 16–17.

29 Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009, p 12.

opportunity to acknowledge all there is to be thankful for and anything that is a matter for lament, and in looking forward to anticipate the changing demands of the role, identify future objectives and areas for potential development.³⁰

This process is based on the assumption that all office-holders are responsible for their ministry first to God as God has entrusted that to them, and then to the Church for the way that ministry is exercised.³¹ The aim of the MDR is to support, affirm and encourage clergy so that they may be ‘the best ministers they can be for God, for the Church and for the communities they serve’.³² The review is expected to be searching, but within a safe and confidential setting, and as part of the process to use careful preparation by both the cleric and the reviewer, self-reflective practice, assisted listening and learning, and a face-to-face meeting.³³ While it is not a coaching session, there are clearly many elements drawn from coaching in the process.

COACHING AS A MODEL FOR ARCHIDIACONAL MINISTRY

Coaching has become a much appreciated way of learning where two people—the coach and the coachee (for want of a better word)—work together over an agreed period of time to identify issues that the coachee would like to explore and areas where she or he would like to improve.³⁴ In his definition of coaching, Richard Fox cites Timothy Gallwey’s words ‘Coaching is unlocking a person’s potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.’ Fox emphasises that the focus in coaching is on the other person, assisting them to harness their potential, improve their performance and learn through reflection on their own experience.³⁵ It is an approach which can take place anywhere, in a four-minute conversation during a coffee break, during a 20-minute stroll between sessions or in a pre-planned meeting or phone conversation which lasts anywhere between 45 minutes and two hours.³⁶ It is usually a one-to-one and face-to-face relationship.³⁷ It is not about helping someone to fix their problems and certainly not about giving people answers.³⁸ It involves the use of careful listening skills,

30 Archbishops’ Council, *Ministerial Review Guidance* (London, 2010), p 2.

31 Ibid; South Central Regional Training Partnership, *Ministry Review: principles for use in the Anglican dioceses of the South Central Regional Training Partnership* (Salisbury, 2011), p 3.

32 South Central Regional Training Partnership, *Ministry Review*, p 5.

33 Ibid p 6.

34 B Lucas, *Discover Your Hidden Talents: the essential guide to lifelong learning* (Stafford, 2005), p 230.

35 R Fox, *Coaching Church Leaders* (Guildford, 2011), p 3.

36 Lucas, *Discover Your Hidden Talents*, p 230.

37 Fox, *Coaching Church Leaders*, p 8.

38 Ibid, p 10.

establishing a working relationship and rapport between the coach and the coachee, the ability to ask opening-up and exploratory questions at the right time and in the right way to assist better understanding,³⁹ and the ability to suggest a variety of approaches and tools which may be useful to the coachee as they seek to move forward.⁴⁰ Above all it is respectful of the person being coached, of their skills, experience and personality, and seeks to enable and empower them in any particular situation and in their own life and vocation.⁴¹ Provided the person being coached does not share anything which is against the law, or behave in an inappropriate way towards the coach, what passes between coach and coachee is confidential.

In the survey of role descriptions, only one of them explicitly mentions 'listening and coaching skills' (B), though another does include 'developing talent and mentoring leaders through particular challenges' (K). Despite this lack of explicit mention, listening and coaching lie behind much of what is written. This is clearly true when words like 'encourage', 'develop', 'affirm' and 'release' are used, and also in exercising pastoral care. It is obviously part of the skills needed to be a reviewer in MDR. Being alongside people, listening carefully, asking opening-up questions, helping them to explore options and suggesting possible ways ahead and processes to use, while leaving them to make their decision, is the best and most effective way to secure these aims. Such an approach is more likely to encourage clergy and church officers to engage with the vision and strategy of the diocese in a way which suits their particular context. Because their experience and situation is being listened to and taken seriously, because their viewpoint and particular skills are being valued and affirmed, they are more positive about engaging in their ministry and being open to God's mission in that place. It is a way of developing for clergy, church officers and archdeacons that reflective practice which Donald Schön has advocated to assist understanding and develop the skills to approach things from different angles and in different ways to find better ways ahead.⁴²

Some of the role descriptions analysed reflect this understanding (F, K, L) but others seem to betray a concern that parishes may not engage with the diocesan approach and there are strong hints of expecting the archdeacon to be a more forceful advocate for the diocesan strategy, and more directive in guiding clergy and church officers over to the diocesan point of view regardless of whether that would be suitable to a particular situation. While this anxiety is understandable, it is invariably counter-productive.

39 T Ling and L Bentley (eds), *Developing Faithful Ministers* (London, 2012), p 73.

40 Fox, *Coaching Church Leaders*, p 13.

41 *Ibid*, p 4.

42 D Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner* (Aldershot, 1991).

A coaching-style approach is equally valid in more difficult situations, such as when clerical behaviour has fallen short of what is reasonably to be expected and the archdeacon is following up a complaint which may or may not lead to action under the Clergy Discipline Measure. A confrontational approach invariably leads to both parties erecting defensive barriers behind which they become entrenched. A low-key approach can be more productive. Trying to get alongside someone, asking the right opening-up questions, helping them to express for themselves what they have done and what impact that has had on others, enables someone to see for himself or herself that their actions are unacceptable and have created serious problems. There may be a need in the conversation to articulate clearly what the cleric has done wrong and what the consequences of that may be. But approached in a coaching style, the encounter is more likely both to be effective and to enable a better outcome to the difficulties. Obviously, sometimes such an approach is not fruitful because the cleric concerned is too deeply entrenched in the position they have adopted. But the same style of approach even in these situations is likely to be more helpful to all parties.

This approach is undeniably more demanding of the archdeacon than just sending an email to tell someone off, or descending on them in a visit to do that verbally. However, part of the role is to recognise that every priest or lay officer is a disciple, responding in their ministry to God's call. Unlike in an employer–employee relationship, those in ministry are called to nurture and support the vocations of others. The Church is not an organisation like any other; it is an institution charged with proclaiming and living out the gospel. In this there needs to be a proper and appropriate care for all its members, even when there is a need to hold someone to account for their behaviour.

A THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

There is a clear theological undergirding to this approach, but it is an approach which can be contested depending on a person's ecclesiological viewpoint. Some see the Church as fundamentally a hierarchical institution, an appropriate description for a body ruled by priests and bishops. Under this view the clergy are the leaders of the Church and they, according to their order and office, set the direction of travel and the particular way that the life of the Church is to be worked out. There is some truth in this view. It is not to be lightly dismissed and there can be many different ways in which it is expressed both verbally and in practice. In the society in which we live, many see the Church of England as an institution headed by archbishops and bishops who have the control of the institution and therefore responsibility for its conduct.

But while the Church of England is led and governed by its bishops, and under their authority by the clergy, it is much more a body which works by collaboration and consensus. It is organic rather than hierarchical. Any changes

which the bishops wish to see nationally have to be debated and approved through the General Synod. The same is true to some extent at diocesan level. Even more importantly, for those changes to take effect, the hearts, minds and wills of the clergy and laity have to be won. Rather than being a top-down monolithic structure, the Church of England is a careful balance of authority and power, distributed through its various levels. Some see this as a weakness, others as a strength.⁴³

There are other important factors. The very poor record of the Church of England in relation to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults has forced the Church to become more centralised to ensure that procedures and processes are followed, that victims and survivors are treated with respect and dignity and that the appropriate authorities are informed at every stage. But the operation of the safeguarding agenda still relies on each diocese committing itself to implement it, and on each parish engaging seriously.⁴⁴ Similarly, the reduction in numbers of people attending Anglican worship has put pressure on each diocese to take steps to encourage church growth, especially on those dioceses which are struggling financially. There can be a natural temptation to seek to control things more from the centre to ensure that the policies to foster such growth are adopted. While each bishop is the focus of faith, unity and order in his or her diocese, and rightly has the role to lead it as chief pastor and overseer, she or he does not enjoy absolute power, but has to exercise her or his leadership in relationship with others. The risk in a controlling approach is that it can alienate the faithful and cause an unhelpful reaction.

An organic view of the Church values the particular roles of bishops, clergy, laypeople and even archdeacons, and sees them all as part of a whole, each role having its part to play in the wellbeing of the whole and in responding to God's call to serve God's mission. It rejects some of the previous models of the Church as City of God or Mother and Mistress⁴⁵ or as a religious department of the state⁴⁶ and focuses instead on the Church as the fellowship of all the baptised, the Body of Christ, all called and commissioned to serve God in God's world. Within the Church there are many different roles to be carried out and different tasks to be done for the good of the whole. But there is a fundamental equality: 'All are sent out on a mission; all are responsible for the unity of the community; all must be sanctified.'⁴⁷ This may be visually and symbolically demonstrated at every eucharist, where the bishop or priest presides (so expressing their role as

43 See C Podmore, 'The governance of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion', GS Misc 910 (2009).

44 Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, 'The Anglican Church case studies: 1. The Diocese of Chichester; 2. The response to allegations against Peter Ball: investigation report' (2019).

45 L Boff, *Church: charisma and power* (London, 1985), pp 2–5.

46 V de Waal, *What is the Church?* (London, 1969), pp 11–12.

47 Boff, *Church*, p 133.

leader) but many others have a role in the liturgy, as readers, preachers, servers, intercessors, musicians, welcomers, or offering laying on of hands for healing or the hospitality of refreshments afterwards. Whatever their roles, all celebrate the eucharist; it is the offering of all God's people, doing what Jesus commanded to be done to remember His life, death and resurrection, and proclaim His risen presence in the Church and world today.

This organic view has received much encouragement not only from the work of liberation theologians such as Leonardo Boff and Gustavo Gutierrez, but also from feminist and black theologians, all of whom in different ways challenge some of the inbuilt assumptions which owe more to culture than to theology and have reinforced the power of some against others. In their different ways, they all challenge the Church for being wedded to the status quo and supporting the existing authority structures rather than identifying with those who are marginalised and denied their full humanity. If the Church is to be truly the Church, all its members must be equally valued and respected, and the ministry of each must be affirmed. The Church exists for everyone, and especially for those who have least in the world and are pushed to the margins in any way.⁴⁸

Such an approach builds on many strands in the scriptures, and particularly on Paul's use of the human body as an analogy for the Church, in both Romans and 1 Corinthians.⁴⁹ Not only does he stress the value of all aspects of the body in these passages, seeing all as having a role in the life of the whole, but in 1 Corinthians he particularly focuses on the parts which might be undervalued.

On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. (1 Corinthians 12:22–26)

This analogy is also to be found in Ephesians 4:12–13, where the different gifts are

to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

48 G Gutierrez, 'The option for the poor arises from faith in Christ', (2009) 70 *Theological Studies* 317–326 at pp 319ff.

49 Romans 12:4–13 and 1 Corinthians 12:12–31.

In these letters, it is the gift and virtue of love which is to be both the guide and the goal. Without love, the other gifts are not worth much, argues Paul: ‘If I am without love, it will do me no good whatever’ (1 Corinthians 13:3) and ‘So the body grows until it has built itself up in love’ (Ephesians 4:16).

This analogy of the body is the foundation for collaborative and collegial ministry, which is when ministry is truly shared, the gifts and skills of others are recognised and all work together for the good of the whole. Some may exercise particular leadership and managerial roles in this, just as others have other roles. But whatever the role may be, it follows that any approach from one minister to another which denies someone’s gifts and skills, or treats that person as less important or in any way dispensable, not only fails to honour the body as a whole, but is also lacking in the love both which Christians are called to exercise and into which all Christians are to grow. Processes which are task-orientated and target-driven do not treat people with concern or respect.⁵⁰ The relationship between members of the Christian body is not a contract love but a covenant love. It is not based on an ‘if you do this, I will do that’ agreement; it is a commitment to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.⁵¹

Living this out can be a challenge in any organisation, but particularly in an institution where some roles may be more prized than others, and where there can be pressures from others and from within oneself to find a quick and effective remedy in a difficult situation. Yet if members of the body of Christ, including archdeacons, are to live truly as members of the body, then the way of love lived by Christ must be not only an example but a lived reality. Whatever the context, the situation or the problem, the concern must always be to live as Christians, to reflect the eternal life which Christ offers His followers in the Spirit, seeking to assist and encourage others as they walk in the way of Christ, that all members of the Church may grow ‘until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ’ (Ephesians 4:13). Coaching provides an approach, a style, which can express the concern to encourage, develop, affirm, release and enhance the ministries of others, and enable them to fulfil their callings and ministries. It is demanding; it can take time; it requires the risk of openness; but it is the most practical approach to ensure that there may be growth and engagement in mission. As Richard Peers has written: ‘For me paying attention to someone is almost a definition of love.’⁵²

50 H Cameron, J Reader, V Slater with C Rowland, *Theological Reflection for Human Flourishing* (London, 2012), p 63.

51 *Ibid* p 100.

52 R Peers, ‘Holiness and management’, *Quodcumque—Serious Christianity*, 16 August 2016, <<https://educationpriest.wordpress.com/2016/08/16/holiness-and-management/>>, accessed 21 June 2020.

CONCLUSION

It is the argument of this article that coaching provides a style and approach which is likely to be most effective in an archdeacon's ministry. It can most easily be used in one-to-one encounters with clergy or church officers, but it can also have a creative role in committee meetings, boards, councils and with Parochial Church Councils. It provides a means of true engagement with priests and church officers to discover their situation and what the real issues may be, and to explore the possible ways ahead. When lived and exercised appropriately and well, it can be very productive for all parties. It will leave the archdeacon much more aware of the person she or he is working with, and the context of that person's ministry. It is also much more likely to leave the person or people they are working with in a better place, with a clearer understanding of their role and the way ahead (even if that is not fully clear on every occasion), and also feeling valued and affirmed in what they do. It is more likely to bring to the surface different understandings of the same situation, or even different underlying views which are affecting the understanding adopted or approach taken, which can be crucial to finding the best way ahead.⁵³

It is essential, however, that any archdeacon adopting this approach does so with a good degree of self-awareness, and does not try consciously (or, if that is possible, subconsciously) to use this approach to get the result which the bishop, or others in authority, or the archdeacon himself or herself, most desires, for that would be to abuse the process and lead to a breakdown in trust. As Rowan Williams has pointed out in relation to theology, so too in Christian ministry, honesty and integrity are indispensable and they may lead us at times to admitting our failures, particularly in the abuse of power.⁵⁴ A genuine openness and respect for those who are also made in God's image and are called to serve is essential in building good relationships and fulfilling God's mission. A coaching style offers an excellent way in which archdeacons can be with those whom they work alongside and serve.

53 G Lynch, *Pastoral Care & Counselling* (London, 2002), p 9.

54 R Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford, 2000), p 8.