

1. Introduction

This document outlines the terms of reference for the Asterby Group Ministry Team within the benefice of the United Parish of the Asterby Group (the “Asterby Group”). This team is established to plan and support ministry within the Asterby Group of churches.

2. Vision & Mission

- **Vision:** To see God’s Kingdom Come and to see lives transformed by the love and power of Jesus Christ.
- **Mission:** To encourage and equip believers to serve our brothers and sisters in our communities: to meet their needs, share the Gospel with them, to disciple them, and create the environment for them to meet with God and experience his grace and peace.

3. Authority

The Ministry Team inherits its authority from the Asterby Group Parochial Church Council (PCC) and must submit its plans and outcomes to them regularly for consideration and approval. It cannot exceed the authority bestowed upon it by the PCC or as defined in these Terms of Reference.

4. The Meaning of Ministry and the Biblical Justification and Guidance for it

The Bible provides numerous justifications for Christian ministry, emphasising its importance as a response to God's love, a reflection of Christ's example, and a means of fulfilling God's purposes on earth. Well known Scripture supporting this appears below.

Matthew 28:19-20: The Great Commission. Jesus commands his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations," teaching them to obey everything he has commanded. This verse serves as the foundation for Christian ministry, emphasising the importance of sharing the Gospel and building the church.

Ephesians 4:11-13: Paul describes the various gifts and ministries given to the church by Christ, emphasising that these gifts are for the "equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ." This passage highlights the importance of using our gifts and talents to serve others and build up the church.

Galatians 5:13-14: Paul encourages believers to "serve one another in love," emphasising that love is the foundation of all Christian ministry. This verse reminds us that our ministry should be motivated by love for God and for others.

James 1:27: This verse defines "pure and undefiled religion" as caring for orphans and widows and keeping oneself unstained from the world. This passage highlights the importance of social justice and compassion in Christian ministry.

1 Peter 4:10: Peter encourages believers to use their gifts to "serve one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." This verse reminds us that our ministry is a stewardship, a responsibility to use the gifts God has given us to serve others.

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We define ministry as:

- **Leading worship** – liturgy, scripture, music, prayer – connecting with people to help them encounter God.
- **Preaching and teaching** – reflecting on God’s word and our world and providing thoughts to our congregations and communities that help them become and remain disciples of Jesus. It is noted that only ordained ministers can provide religious instruction through a sermon. Laity can preach a homily, a reflection, which stops short of instruction.
- **Leading prayer** – organising and providing opportunities for prayer and intercessions, privately or corporately, in church or other settings, e.g. prayer circles, prayer meetings.
- **Discipling** – helping each other become more like Jesus.
- **Ministering to the infirm** – gathering all of the above and taking to those who are ‘unwillingly absent’ from regular church services due to infirmity.
- **Pastoral care** – being available to those who need help, and supporting people during and after life events such as bereavements or illness.
- **Mission** – supporting local, national and international efforts to spread the word of God and the Gospels, plant and grow churches, and giving love and care to those who need it. This may be in person by gifting our time and skills, or enabling mission through other means such as financial and other gifts.
- **Evangelising** - preaching the Christian gospel with the intention of sharing the message and teachings of Jesus Christ.
- **Social Justice and Compassion** – advocacy and action to address issues of poverty, injustice and inequality.
- **Serving others** – this is distinct from pastoral care, and often arises across and within our communities regardless of their beliefs, e.g. creating a community centre, hosting community events such as coffee mornings or arts festivals.

This Ministry Team will invite the Oversight Minister to its proceedings, and will be guided by them, while recognising the limitations of their time and scope of the roles. Some aspects of ministry will be reserved for ordained priests as follows:

- **Leading the Eucharist.**
- **Administration of the sacraments** for births, marriages and deaths.

It is important to note that these are the key elements of ministry, but the specific ways in which they are carried out may vary from church to church according to local needs.

For the avoidance of doubt, this team will NOT undertake any of the administrative duties of Village Church Committees or the Parochial Church Council covering matters such as finance, building maintenance, regulatory compliance and so on.

5. Objectives

The Asterby Group Ministry Team will strive to:

- Assess the needs of our communities within the parishes of the churches in the Asterby Group, in relation to ministry as defined in section 4, and to plan to meet

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those needs to the best of our abilities within the means and resources we have and according to our efforts to discern God's will in this regard.

- Collaborate with ministry teams of other parishes to achieve the vision and mission as appropriate.

While we understand the increase in numbers coming to faith is a desirable aim for many churches, we will not set a specific target, but rather see this as a side-effect of our ministry and will celebrate whatever numbers yield from God's plans.

We also recognise that we often operate within the laws of small numbers and that our ambition may exceed our ability or capacity. In those cases we will prayerfully seek God's will on where to focus our efforts.

6. Responsibilities

The Asterby Group Ministry Team is responsible for:

- Planning and implementing ministry activities.
- Recruiting other ministry team volunteers and assisting them in being trained for ministry activities.
- Managing and utilising resources available to us.
- Communicating with church members about ministry opportunities.
- Evaluating how effective our ministry is with a view to continually improving what we do.
- Representing the Ministry Team to the VCCs and PCC and working alongside them.
- Building and maintaining relationships with community partners.
- Adhering to all regulatory and compliance obligations required of the PCC in matters such as safeguarding, finance and so on.

7. Membership

- The members of the Ministry Team automatically include:
 - The Incumbent or Oversight Minister for the parish.
 - Those who are designated lay ministers (Authorised Lay Ministers, Focal Ministers, Locally Recognised Ministers) for the Group or one of its churches.
- Membership is open to anyone who has a heart for any aspect of ministry as laid out in these terms of reference and wishes to gift relevant skills and time to furthering the aims of the Ministry Team. This may be by invitation or by application.
- The Team may ask one or more of its number to help coordinate the team's activities and ensure that the necessary administrative support is requested and received from the PCC and/or the South Wolds Partnership Administrator.
- The Team will designate at least one of its members to be its representative to the PCC.

8. Meetings

- **Frequency:** The Ministry Team will meet quarterly as a minimum.
- **Location:** Meetings will be held at team member's homes or group churches as appropriate. If venues outside of these is required, the PCC should be engaged to assist finding and funding venues.

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- **Decision-Making:** Consensus-based decisions will be sought. Where consensus cannot be reached the Team must decide by majority voting whether to seek input and arbitration from a third party (e.g. the Oversight Minister or a known ordained priest) or to set the issue aside. Decisions can be deferred to other means (e.g. later by email after due consideration by team members) to avoid having to postpone matters from one meeting to the next.

9. Communication

- **Internal Communication:** Internal communications between team members can either be by email or a messaging service such as Whatsapp. Whatsapp can be used for coordination and rapid communications, but decisions taken must be confirmed by email.
- **External Communication:** Communication to congregants, communities and other Church organisations (e.g. the Diocese) must be approved and only sent by the PCC unless explicit delegated authority for a specific topic has been pre-agreed at a PCC meeting in advance.

10. Reporting

- **Reporting Structure:** The Team reports to the PCC.
- **Reporting Frequency:** The Team will report to every PCC meeting.
- **Reporting Format:** Reports can be written or verbal.

11. Evaluation and Subsequent Actions

- The PCC may choose to assess the Ministry Team's actions and effectiveness at any time using any method it so chooses.
- The PCC will provide feedback to the Ministry Team on any assessment and will give the Team the opportunity to respond at a PCC meeting.

12. Amendments and Dissolution

These terms of reference may be amended from time to time by the PCC with input from the Ministry Team.

The PCC may decide to dissolve the Team at its discretion.

13. Approval

These terms of reference have been reviewed and approved at a PCC meeting on 21/01/2025 and are acknowledged by:

- George Ward, Acting Lay Chair

Date: 21 Jan 2025