

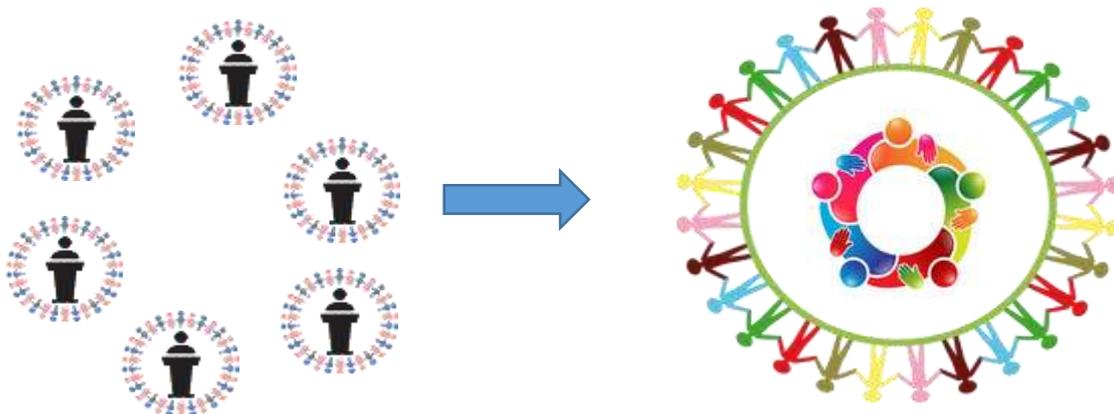
A Guide to Calling a minister the new way in South Suffolk Area Partnership

1. The first major thing that people need to recognise and also accept is:

This is a major change in how Ministry is viewed by both ministers and members. It is driven by lack of ministers and the finances to support them and those driving forces are not going to diminish. The C of E and Methodists have similar challenges, possibly greater ones. It may also be driven by the Spirit? So, things cannot be as in the past and what is being aimed for is a practical solution that is sustainable both in terms of finance and the health of ministers, and that produces a thriving United Reformed Church in South Suffolk in the years ahead.

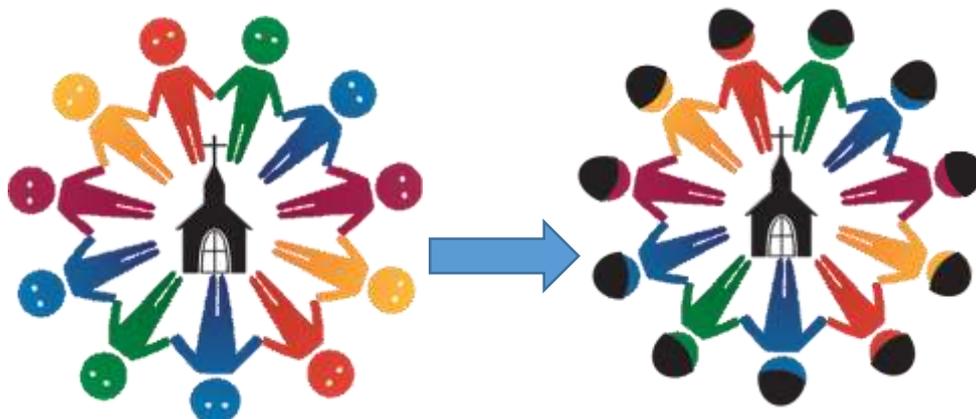
2. The key elements in the vision once it is fully established:

- Each minister will share his/her skills and expertise with other ministers across the whole of the Area Partnership (AP) rather than being responsible for a particular church, or group of churches. Instead, they will have a relationship with several churches. This pattern of relationships may change over time as needs change.
- The AP team of ministers will collectively identify the resources required to match the needs of the churches. These resources may come from elsewhere in the AP or even from outside it.



Each minister instead of coping on his/her own, will work as a team (5 at most).

Currently congregations face inwards; in the vision, they will need to turn outwards to work with and help their fellow churches. *You have a different view of the world when you face outwards!*



3. Once a proposal is agreed to, there are difficulties in producing a profile which include:

- What is being described is something that is flexible and will only become more concrete when the churches involved initially have determined not just what they want from ministry, but what they need from ministerial inputs to survive. *This seems ephemeral and difficult to grasp at the start and requires a fuller picture of the complete process and way of working than the options provide by themselves. The comparison sheet produced by Castle Hill, Felixstowe and St John's was a useful starting point for them to understand each other more.*
- Those needs, once identified, could be met not just through deployment, but by using other URC resources and perhaps the sharing of resources and individuals between churches. *This requires a sort of effort not previously considered, but will become a necessary step to ensure ministers are not taking on things that can now be done another way.*
- Once each church has gone through this process of determining those needs and developing an individual profile, they then can be combined into a set of needs that would appear in the profile for all the vacant churches. This would mean that at this point there would be something similar to that which a single church might have written into their profile in the past. *It is like putting bits of a jigsaw together. Each one is different but may have some similarity in colouring or image but this is not seen until you fit them together. It is more complicated in the case of LEPs, or if a new opportunity for a partnership appears – not that there are any currently, but it cannot be ruled out – for example, the Methodists are known to have similar issues and so might approach the URC.*
- The full vision across the SSAP would have to be achieved over time (a year or two/three/four) and also fit with the plan for the SSAP deployment of all the ministerial resources, stipendiary, non-stipendiary and lay. It would also have to bear in mind that the maximum number of stipendiary ministers is five and is possibly going to have to reduce to four within the next few years. *This raises problems about the profiles required from 'not yet vacant churches' especially when they do not know the dates of impending vacancy. Those not expecting vacancy may need to join in new relationships as the vision of completing the team ministry advances over the years.*
- Once the process is started, the incoming minister will need to be convinced before accepting the post that there is support for this new way of working from all churches in SSAP and beyond. *It means all current ministers and congregations need to have a realistic understanding of what we are embarking on and commit to supporting it as it develops. It is much easier to make the effort if you are facing immediate vacancy! The churches in vacancy, or who will be by the end of the year, need your help (please).*



4. The Call

- Once the call is agreed and if (a big if) a suitable 'multi-talented and skilled' candidate comes forward he/she will be considered by all the churches in the vacancy Call and they will make the decision; but all representatives of SSAP who may be affected later will also be involved, although not in the final choice.

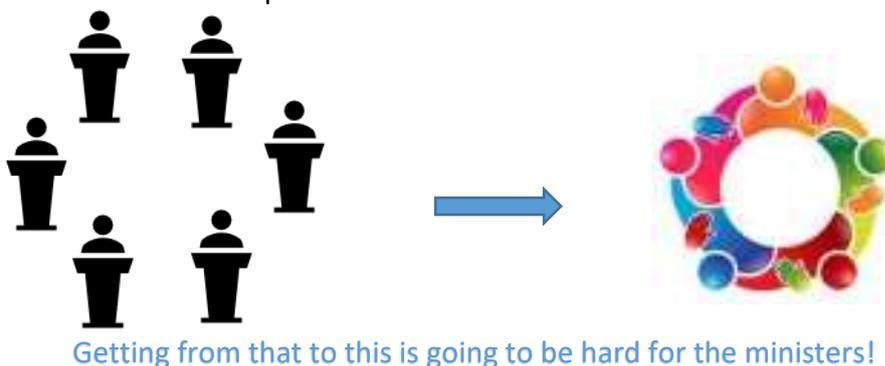


This requires coordination, guidance and the means to resolve differences of view. This is another new step to be established, but it is not dissimilar to the calling of a minister to a group of churches and there is some experience of that.

- If an appointment is made, a 'manse' will need to be made available. *That needs to be resolved but depends on timing.*
- A process of introduction to his/her 'relationship churches' and the rest of the SSAP needs to be made for the 'new' minister. *This is another set of new collaborations to challenge not only the now non-vacant churches but also colleagues and the 'appropriate' URC support.*

5. Team Development

- The development of the new team and its integration with the existing one is one of the more critical and difficult phases.



- We will need to develop new means of communications so that there is a way of all knowing the needs as they arise and how they are being met or how to help them be met. To avoid too much travel, this is likely, at least in part, to be electronic.

6. Start of a new era and new ways of doing things

- We will all certainly need Spiritual guidance, tolerance and perhaps to be more open to new ways of sharing our faith, skills and resources in the SSAP than we ever thought was possible.
Potential new members of the URC will never have known the current form of ministry, so that presents more opportunities than difficulties.