



Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham

Exploring a Vocation to Ordained Ministry

Vocation is the work of God in our lives.

In words of creation, God calls the Universe into being.

In words of love, God calls a people to be his own.

In words of forgiveness, God calls us back to himself
time and time again.

In Christ, God calls us to make our peace, our home with him.

Sometimes too, God calls to jolt us from complacency & comfort and teases us into
life and vitality.

It is God's nature to call, ours to respond, engage, question, struggle with and
welcome this Godly activity, this Vocation in our lives.

God calls in many ways and to many different tasks, but being frail humans we can
turn a deaf ear, misunderstand, get carried away with urgency or enthusiasm or
simply become muddled.

It's important, therefore, that we share with others what we sense God is nudging
us or pushing us (even tempting us) into and that we don't try and make sense of it
alone.

We are encouraged in the Scriptures not only to listen to and for God's Call, but
also to test it out within the church, in our everyday lives, in the company of others.

We may perceive a personal sense of calling, but the truth of it
always has to be discerned corporately.

This can be an exhilarating and humbling experience.

It may be hard to see ourselves as others see us;

it may be hard to recognise and own up to aspects of ourselves, which we don't like
or feel that we need to hide;

it may sometimes be hard to accept our good points
and our real strengths.

Discerning what new thing God is calling us to means that we have to be prepared
to let go of illusions and old securities.

It can be a very uncomfortable time indeed:

'One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose
sight of the shore for a very long time'

Andre Gide.

The Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham is an exciting place to be a Christian, and
to serve God. We have a thriving church community, with many growing

congregations. There are many opportunities to grow in faith and discipleship, to mature as members of the body of Christ, and to find ways of training and serving which are appropriate for each person.

God calls us in different ways and in different voices throughout all of our life. This leaflet briefly sets out the nuts and bolts in the stages of exploration of one particular vocation, to ordained ministry in the Church of England. The reason for beginning this exploration will be quite varied: you may have thought about it on and off for years; you may have had a moment of inspiration or revelation; someone else may have said it to you; you may have had a niggling, unsettling feeling that has to be 'scratched'! Don't worry if you don't feel like a 'traditional' candidate for ordination – the Church of England is opening up to all sorts of new ministries, and the church is learning to keep the best of the old and be open to the best of the new, too.

Listening and paying attention to God's call inevitably means that we are drawn deeper into the mystery of who God is; we are also drawn deeper into the mystery of who we are and the mystery of God's love for us. This process is unending; it is the hallmark of real, lively faith and discipleship.

If, within that relationship, someone feels drawn to explore a calling or desire to be ordained then there is a specific process for discerning and testing that out. It may lead to delight in greater discovery of God's purposes; it may lead to pain and sacrifice, as one comes to realise where those purposes might or might not be leading.

What we offer to those exploring a call to ordained ministry:

- Clear information about each stage of the process.
- Feedback and support from the DDO, Vocations Advisers and Mentors.
- Appropriate confidentiality. (There is a circle of confidentiality that initially involves the candidate, their clergy, the DDO and the Bishop. As the exploration proceeds, this will extend to include referees, interviewers and parish personnel. The DDO explains this at the relevant time).
- Invitations to vocations meetings, through which you can meet others who are on the same path.
- Up to date reading recommendations and information about resources and opportunities which may help.

What is required of those exploring a sense of calling to ordained ministry?

- that they understand the possible outcomes of the whole process and try to maintain an openness to all possibilities, not just that of ordination.
- that they understand that no guarantees can be given.
- understanding that this process can take months or years. Ordained people are the church's most visible representatives and is crucial to gain assurance of their calling and capability.
- that enquirers engage actively with the DDO and any other vocation adviser in exploring their faith and their self as a person.
- that they are willing to take responsibility for providing support and encouragement for themselves, beyond that offered by the Diocese.

HOW DOES IT ALL WORK?

There are three distinct stages of the process:

- The Exploration Stage
- The Discernment Stage
- The Training Stage

THE EXPLORATION STAGE

This should really begin with some initial contact and discussion between an enquirer and their Incumbent or Priest-in-Charge.

Guidance can be provided to clergy regarding the sort of questions to raise with an enquirer at an early stage and areas to be explored. The DDO is happy to answer any questions or give clarification to clergy at this stage. It is important that, even regarding an early or unformed vocation, the DDO is given a clear indication of clergy support when a referral is made.

After a Clergy referral, the DDO is happy to meet with an enquirer. Usually, at least two meetings are necessary before appropriate feedback can be given.

A first meeting would be to gather biographical details and information about church involvement and experience. The DDO will expect an enquirer to provide an account of their life journey up until that point before this meeting.

Further meetings (either with the DDO or Assistant DDO) would be primarily to ask questions to explore their understanding and awareness of:-

- priesthood and ministry
- the Church of England
- spirituality
- current moral & ethical current issues
- their self and their call/faith journey

There are a number of practical areas that may be highlighted for consideration at this stage, such as:

- Recommendations for reading
- A course of study
- Experience of leadership and other involvement in church life
- Impact on family and domestic issues
- Visiting other churches of different styles and tradition
- Development of spirituality
- Simply waiting on God for a period enabling focussed reflection on prayer
- Placement experience in other churches
- Meeting with other priests/ministers about their role and understanding of priesthood and ministry

The discernment stage is mainly based on the Selection Criteria. The exploration stage requires time and care so that tangible evidence can be provided for those who will play a part in the formal discernment of a call. In some cases, it may not be appropriate to move on to the discernment stage if there is insufficient evidence that this is the right route to follow. If so, the reasons will be given.

Candidates who have been divorced and have remarried (or who are married to someone who was previously divorced), where the former partner is still alive, need to apply for an Archbishop's faculty. The present marriage must have been in existence for at least three years to make this application, which will involve some careful conversations, initially with the DDO.

What is being looked for?

The Selection Criteria (outlined below) are firmly rooted in the Anglican tradition, and recognise that vocation depends not simply on personal faith but on the call of the Church and the grace of God.

- **Vocation**

Candidates should be able to speak of a growing sense of being called by God to ministry and mission, referring both to their own inner conviction and the extent to which others have confirmed it. Their sense of vocation should be obedient, realistic and informed. Candidates should also be able to demonstrate ways in which their vocation has had an impact on their life.

- **Ministry within the C of E**

Candidates should demonstrate an understanding of their own tradition within the Church of England, an awareness of the variety of traditions and practice that are encompassed within the Church of England and commitment to work within that variety. They should be able to speak of the distinctiveness of ministry within the Church of England and of what it means to be a deacon, priest or accredited lay minister. They should show a commitment to a ministry of Gospel proclamation through word and sacrament, pastoral care and social action.

- **Spirituality**

Candidates should show commitment to a spiritual discipline, involving individual and corporate prayer and worship, including a developing pattern of disciplined daily prayer, Bible study and regular receiving of Holy Communion. Their spiritual practice should be able to sustain and energise them in training and ministry. They should demonstrate a connection between their prayer life and daily living and show an understanding of God's activity in their life.

- **Personality and character**

Candidates should show an appropriate degree of self-awareness and self-acceptance, and sufficient maturity to sustain the demanding role of a minister. They should be able to face change and pressure in a flexible and balanced way. They should be people of integrity and be seen as such by others. They should demonstrate a desire and capacity for further self-development and growth.

- **Relationships**

Candidates should show an awareness of their strengths, weaknesses and vulnerabilities in order to demonstrate a capacity to build and develop healthy personal, pastoral and professional relationships, together with an awareness of the power dynamic inherent within such relationships. Candidates should show evidence of integrity in all aspects of their life and relationships; emotional, psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and more generally in matters of honesty. Candidates must submit to the disciplines in *Issues in Human Sexuality*. They should show an ability to listen to others and demonstrate a willingness to negotiate over disagreements.

- **Leadership and collaboration**

Candidates should demonstrate the ability to offer leadership in the Church community, and to some extent in the wider community, and to guide and shape the life of the Church community in its mission to the world. This includes a willingness and capacity to draw on and develop the abilities of others. Candidates should be witnesses to the servanthood of Christ and show evidence of providing an example of faith, love and discipleship which is inspiring to others.

- **Faith**

Candidates should show an understanding of the Christian faith and a desire to deepen their understanding of it. They should demonstrate a personal commitment to Christ and a desire and capacity to communicate the Gospel. Candidates should be able to make connections between faith and the complex demands of contemporary society.

- **Mission and Evangelism**

Candidates should demonstrate a wide and inclusive understanding of God's mission to the world that permeates their prayer, thinking and action. They should be able to articulate what it means to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom and be able to speak of Jesus Christ in a way that is attractive and appropriate. They should show an awareness of how changes in culture and society have an impact on the life of the Church. They should also show potential as leaders of mission and a commitment to enable others in mission and evangelism.

- **Quality of mind**

Candidates should have the necessary intellectual capacity and quality of mind to undertake satisfactorily a course of theological study and to cope with the intellectual demands of ministry. They should demonstrate a desire and commitment to engage in theological study and a willingness to embark upon lifelong ministerial and theological formation. Candidates should exhibit a readiness to reflect and enquire.

There are two **main** categories of sponsorship:

- (i) Ordained Ministry Priest
- (ii) Ordained Ministry Deacon (Distinctive)

There are also three main focuses that also have to be discerned within the process

(a) **Incumbent status (oversight ministry)** – someone who is recognised as having the potential to be an incumbent (team leader). Such candidates must be prepared to be deployed nationally.

(b) **Assistant ministry** – someone would be unlikely to exercise ministry at incumbent level but would rather be in a supportive ministry.

(c) **Ordained Pioneer Ministry** – someone who has the calling and aptitude to be pushing the boundaries of the ministry of the Church of England. Many such candidates will already be leading ‘fresh expressions of church’ – new church congregations, often meeting away from traditional buildings and attracting previously un-churched people into membership – and will often train ‘on the job’. They will need particular gifts in communication, and a depth of spirituality, theology and personal resources to sustain them in this demanding role.

THE DISCERNMENT STAGE

The discernment stage is that of interviewing and selection, where each person who is a candidate for the ordained ministry is called to give an account of themselves and 'the hope that is in them' to use St Peter's phrase. Following on from two or more meetings, the DDO will indicate appropriate timing for a Diocesan Advisory Panel. Such a Panel, convened on behalf of the Bishop, will give opportunity for an enquirer to be interviewed by a group of three advisers who are nominated by the Bishop, as well as leading a presentation and group discussion. Enquirers are requested to complete a detailed form and provide referee details and the DDO compiles the Sponsoring Papers which are provided to panel advisers before the day. References are taken up by the DDO and reported to advisers.

Selectors are not looking for a clerical stereotype, but for people who:

- are actively and honestly struggling with a sense of calling by God,
- who can communicate their beliefs simply in their own words,

- who can assume, after training, responsible positions of leadership within the church and who are not covering up their own need for recognition, love, absolution, spiritual or personal development, through pursuing a 'vocation'.

Sample Timetable for a Diocesan Advisory Panel in Southwell

9.15am	Arrivals
9.45am	Panel Advisers and Candidates meet together for introduction followed by worship in the Chapel.
10.25am	Coffee
10.35am - 12.35pm	Three Interview slots
12.35pm	Panel Advisers meet briefly together. Candidates are free to relax
1.00pm	Lunch (provided)
2.00pm	Group Exercise
3.00pm	Further Interview slots (dependent on number of candidates)
3.40pm	Tea (candidates leave)
4.00pm	Panel Adviser's meeting

The Advisers meet together to share their conclusions which are compiled into a report and sent on, with other papers, to the Bishop. The Bishop will consider the advice he is given and will write to the candidate. If the Advisers recommend that the candidate should progress further through the selection process, the Bishop meets the candidate before deciding whether to formally sponsor for a national Bishop's Advisory Panel.

The DDO is involved in preparing a candidate before the selection process, handles queries during it and meets to debrief a candidate after a Panel, but is not a part of any decisions that are reached by advisers at either diocesan or national level.

What happens at a national Bishop's Advisory Panel?

These conferences last 48 hours from Monday teatime to Wednesday teatime.

There are approximately 50 conferences a year in different parts of the country. In an atmosphere of worship & prayer there is testing by interview, writing and group work.

The panel includes:

- Participation in a community of discernment with a conference secretary from Ministry Division and up to 15 other candidates, in two groups each with 3

assessors. There will be shared meals and worship, and some time for relaxation.

- Three in depth interviews looking at vocation, personality and aptitude for training.
- A group presentation by each candidate of 5 minutes, on a subject of their choice followed by chairing a group discussion on the same topic.
- A 'personal inventory', in which you will be asked to offer immediate written responses in note form to questions linked to the criteria for selection
- A 'pastoral exercise', writing a letter in response to a challenging pastoral problem.

The Advisers and Panel Secretary stay on for a further 24 hours to write the reports & share their conclusions with each other. The final report is compiled before they leave and is then sent to the Bishop.

The candidates normally hear the result of a conference about a fortnight later by letter from the Bishop. There are three possible outcomes

- Recommended for training (within the focus of sponsorship)
- Conditionally recommended for training – the candidate is required to fulfil certain conditions either in relation to paperwork (e.g. CRB clearance), or a further medical or other report, or some other condition to enable them to fulfil one or more of the criteria for selection
- Not recommended for training. This is always a hard message to hear, and no matter how much assurance is given about still having a full part to play in the ministry of the church, it will take some time before it is possible to lay down the prospect of one role and be ready to take up another. It is important to recognise this possibility at each stage, and to be prepared for it.

THE TRAINING STAGE

A recommendation from a national Bishops' advisory panel to the Bishop is for training, not for ordination. Formal training is delivered in one of three ways.

- (i) **College training** – generally full-time at one of theological colleges situated in England, Scotland and Wales.
- (ii) **Course training** – on a regional course which requires attendance at weekly study sessions, residential weekends and an Easter School or summer school, as well as placements & significant study at home.
- (iii) **Mixed-Mode Training** – this has not yet been taken up as a pathway by the diocese. This combines blocks of training with 'ministry on the ground'.

As a general rule, candidates under 32 normally train for 3 years full-time at college (2 years if theology has been studied to degree level). Candidates over 32 can train for 2 years full-time at a college or 3 years part-time on a course.

Training focuses on three key areas, all of which are a part of an overall programme of priestly, or ministerial, formation:

- Knowledge: especially, but not solely, theology
- Skills: especially ministerial skills
- Values: spirituality and character

WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

Here are some suggestions for you to work on, if you think God is calling you to consider your calling:

- look at the reading list below; choose books that will stretch you in your thinking; could you manage to undertake some formal study (eg. Journey in Faith, St. John's Extension Studies, even GCSE's or 'A' levels if not previously done?)
- if you have not already done so, develop a regular pattern of prayer and Bible study; the criteria looks for a regular 'discipline' of spirituality
- widen your horizons - get to know and meet more people, think about what is going on in the world, get to know more about the Church of England, try attending a service with a different tradition from your own;
- speak to others about your feelings - but to those who can be honest with you. This does not necessarily mean your family and friends. They will be supportive, but can inadvertently put a lot of pressure on you by meaning well but encouraging you unrealistically;
- think carefully about the changes this will mean for your family; these could be to do with moving house, taking a large cut in income, losing their privacy, even feeling that they have lost part of you.
- look for real evidence in your life that God is equipping you for his service, do not just look for easy 'signs' or coincidences which you can hang your hopes on.
- don't drift - navigate!

VOCATION READING LIST

They should all be available locally, or from Church House Bookshop-www.chbookshop.co.uk

** Particular recommendations – being either a good introduction to the areas or well-respected publications*

Learning

Steve Croft & Roger Walton	Learning for Ministry – making the most of study and training	CHP
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Vocation

* John Adair	How to Find Your Vocation	Canterbury Press
Aveyard & Muir	Fit for the Purpose	St John's Ext. Sts. Wk Bk.
Stuart Buchanan	On Call	BRF
* Francis Dewar	Called or Collared	SPCK
Francis Dewar	Invitations: God's calling for Everyone	SPCK
* Charles Richardson	This is our Calling	SPCK

Anglicanism

Adrian Chatfield	Something in Common	St. John's Ext. Sts. Wk Bk.
* Mark Chapman	Anglicanism: A Very Short Introduction	OUP
Alistair Redfern	Being Anglican	DLT
Rowan Williams	Anglican Identities	DLT
Nick Spencer	Parochial Vision	Paternoster
Paul Avis	An Anglican Understanding of the Church	SPCK
Richard Giles	How to be an Anglican	Canterbury
Lambeth Commission	The Windsor Report 2004	www.anglicancommunion.org/windsor2004/

Priesthood & Ordination

* John Pritchard	The Life and Work of a Priest	SPCK
* Brown & Cocksworth	Being a Priest Today	Canterbury Press
* Steve Croft	Ministry in Three Dimensions	DLT
Robin Greenwood	Transforming Priesthood	SPCK
Malcolm Grundy	What They Don't Teach You at Theological College	Canterbury Press
George Guiver et al	The Fire & The Clay	SPCK
George Guiver	Priests in a People's Church	SPCK
Kenneth Mason	Priesthood and Society	Canterbury Press
* Michael Ramsey	The Christian Priest Today	SPCK
Alistair Redfern	Ministry & Priesthood	DLT
Steve Walton	A Call To Live	Triangle
Yvonne Warren	The Cracked Pot	Kevin Mayhew
Andrew Clitherow	Renewing Faith in Ordained Ministry	SPCK
Common Worship	www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/ordinal/deacons.html	
Ordinals	www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/ordinal/priests.html	

Spirituality

* Richard Foster	Streams of Living Water	Fount
Mark Oakley	The Collage of God	DLT
Ian Paul	Building Your Spiritual Life	Zondervan
Margaret Silf	Taste and See	DLT
David Staniciffe	God's Pattern	SPCK

The Emerging Church

* Steven Croft	The Future of the Parish System	CHP
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	Steven Croft	Transforming Communities	DLT
	John Drane	The McDonalidization of the Church	DLT
	Michael Moynagh	Changing World Changing Church	Monarch
	Pete Ward	Liquid Church	Paternoster
	John Thomson	Church on Edge?	DLT
	Mike Moynagh	Emergingchurch.intro	DLT
*	Bob Jackson	The Road to Growth	CHP
	Lynda Barley	Time to Listen	CHP
Mission & Evangelism			
*	C/E	Mission Shaped Church	CHP
	Sally Gaze	Mission Shaped and Rural	CHP
	Margaret Withers	Mission Shaped Children	CHP
	Paul Bayes etc.	Mission Shaped Parish	CHP
	Susan Hope	Mission Shaped Spirituality	CHP
	John Hull	Mission-Shaped Church: A Theol. Response	SCM Press
	Yvonne Richmond etc	Evangelism in a Spiritual Age	CHP
	Bob Jackson	Hope for the Church	CHP
	John Finney	Emerging Evangelism	DLT
	Ann Morisy	Journeying Out	Continuum
	Paul Avis	A Ministry Shaped by Mission	T & T Clark
	Martin Robinson & Dwight Smith	Invading Secular Space	Monarch
Leadership			
	John Adair	The Leadership of Jesus	Canterbury Press
*	Chris Edmondson	Fit to Lead	DLT
	Jonathan Gledhill	Leading a Local Church in the Age of the Spirit	SPCK
	Bill Hybels	Courageous Leadership	Zondervan
	James Lawrence	Growing Leaders	BRF
	Nelson & Adair	Creative Church Leadership	Canterbury Press / Modem
*	Henri Nouwen	In the Name of Jesus	DLT
	John Stott	Calling Christian Leaders	IVP
Biblical & General Theology			
	Richard Briggs	Reading the Bible Wisely	SPCK
	David Ford	Theology: A Very Short Introduction	OUP
Moral & Ethical			
	C/E Doctrine Comm.	Being Human	CHP
	Jeff Astley	Choosing Life - Moral Problems	DLT

Grove Books is a publisher of booklets and pamphlets on several themes related to the selection criteria. Please see www.grovebooks.co.uk for their listing of items which can be read before breakfast!

BRF = Bible Reading Fellowship OUP = Oxford University Press DLT – Darton Longman & Todd
CHP = Church House Publishing IVP = Inter-Varsity Press

Excerpts from the Ordination Services

Ordination of Deacons

Deacons are called to work with the Bishop and the priests with whom they serve as heralds of Christ's kingdom. They are to proclaim the gospel in word and deed, as agents of God's purposes of love. They are to serve the community in which they are set, bringing to the Church the needs and hopes of all the people. They are to work with their fellow members in searching out the poor and weak, the sick and lonely and those who are oppressed and powerless, reaching into the forgotten corners of the world, that the love of God may be made visible.

Deacons share in the pastoral ministry of the Church and in leading God's people in worship. They preach the word and bring the needs of the world before the Church in intercession. They accompany those searching for faith and bring them to baptism. They assist in administering the sacraments; they distribute communion and minister to the sick and housebound.

Deacons are to seek nourishment from the Scriptures; they are to study them with God's people, that the whole Church may be equipped to live out the gospel in the world. They are to be faithful in prayer, expectant and watchful for the signs of God's presence, as he reveals his kingdom among us.

Ordination of Priests

Priests are called to be servants and shepherds among the people to whom they are sent. With their Bishop and fellow ministers, they are to proclaim the word of the Lord and to watch for the signs of God's new creation. They are to be messengers, watchmen and stewards of the Lord; they are to teach and to admonish, to feed and provide for his family, to search for his children in the wilderness of this world's temptations, and to guide them through its confusions, that they may be saved through Christ for ever. Formed by the word, they are to call their hearers to repentance and to declare in Christ's name the absolution and forgiveness of their sins.

With all God's people, they are to tell the story of God's love. They are to baptize new disciples in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and to walk with them in the way of Christ, nurturing them in the faith. They are to unfold the Scriptures, to preach the word in season and out of season, and to declare the mighty acts of God. They are to preside at the Lord's table and lead his people in worship, offering with them a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. They are to bless the people in God's name. They are to resist evil, support the weak, defend the poor, and intercede for all in need. They are to minister to the sick and prepare the dying for their death. Guided by the Spirit, they are to discern and foster the gifts of all God's people, that the whole Church may be built up in unity and faith.

(Common Worship Ordination Services, 2005)

There was a sort of white light moment, at a service at the church we were at, an evening service on a Sunday....listening to someone preach and a sense of God saying: 'This is what I want you to do.' But then there was two years of going through the selection process in the Church of England. They don't just go: 'Oh yes, whoopee, do come in.' Quite the reverse. They asked a lot of hard questions, and the more they asked the more I thought about it and the less I wanted to do it. But I couldn't get away from that sense of call.'

Justin Welby, now Archbishop of Canterbury, in a 2011 interview with the BBC

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