

B8 VOCATIONS

Vocation or 'calling' is the way Christians live out their response to God's love in their daily life, work and relationships. For some this may include authorised Church ministry. The Diocese offers encouragement and support to help parishes and individuals explore and develop their vocation. It has a team of Vocations Advisers (lay and ordained), who are available to help individuals discern their calling, whether to discipleship within their community or workplace, or to formal ministry. A group-based Exploring Vocation course is also offered regularly. For more about these resources and how to access them, see the Diocesan website or consult any Ministry Officer.

Where someone's sense of vocation is to stipendiary or non-stipendiary ordained ministry they will normally meet a Vocations Adviser before they see the Diocesan Director of Ordinands (DDO). This provides an opportunity to talk things through before formal discernment and selection processes begin, and is part of the diocese's care of people through these processes.

After initial conversations with their parish priest, anyone interested in exploring a vocation to Accredited or Acknowledged Local Ministry (Reader, Ordained Local Minister, Lay Pastor, Local Evangelist, Children's Worker, Youth Worker) should talk with the Warden of Readers, the Acknowledged Ministries Officer, the Diocesan Director of Ordinands or a staff member from the Diocesan Ministry Course.

Discernment and selection for ordained ministry:

a. Stipendiary and non -stipendiary ministry

This is for those whose sense of vocation is wider than to their home parish.

Discernment consists of working with the DDO and two other people in the diocese who over a period explore the candidate's sense of vocation and advise the candidate whether they meet the national criteria for selection. This is shared with the bishop, who decides whether to sponsor the candidate for an Advisory Panel. The Panel is over three days and makes a recommendation to the bishop about the candidate's suitability for training. The bishops receive the advice of the Panel.

Training is either at residential colleges for stipendiary ministry, or on the regional, part-time course (Eastern Region Ministry Course) for either stipendiary or non-stipendiary ministry. Duration of training depends on which course is chosen, and on other factors such as age, theological background etc. It is not normally less than two years.

b. Ordained Local Ministry (OLM)

Where someone feels their ministry is to be a priest in their own benefice, vocation and discernment involve both the benefice and the individual.

Discernment begins in the benefice with an application to the bishop to explore the possibility of such ministry through the Diocesan Ministry Course (DMC). For the candidate to proceed, the benefice must make a declaration after interview that a candidate's ministry would be acceptable to the benefice if subsequently recommended for training at an Advisory Panel, and for ordination after training.

The candidate also works with the DDO and two other people in the diocese who advise the candidate and people in the benefice as to how the candidate meets the national criteria for selection. This is shared with the bishop, who decides whether to sponsor the candidate for an Advisory Panel. The panel is over three days and makes a recommendation to the bishop about the candidate's suitability for training. The bishops receive the advice of the Panel. Training is on the DMC.

c. Accredited and Acknowledged Ministries

For people who feel that they may be called to be a Reader, Lay Pastor, Local Evangelist, Children's Worker or Youth Worker, vocation and discernment involve both the benefice and the individual.

Discernment begins in the benefice with an application to the bishop to explore the possibility of such ministry through the DMC. For the candidate to proceed, the benefice must make a declaration after interview that a candidate's ministry would be acceptable to the benefice if subsequently recommended for training at an Advisory Panel, and for licensing or commissioning after training.

The decision to select a candidate to train for Reader ministry is made by the bishop in light of the advice of a Diocesan Lay Ministers Advisory Panel. The decision to select a candidate to train for Acknowledged Local Ministry is made by the church council of the benefice from which the person comes, in the light of advice from a Diocesan Lay Ministers Advisory Panel. Training is on the DMC.