



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**

What is Self-Supporting Ministry?

A self-supporting minister (SSM) is someone who is ordained a priest in the Church of England but is not paid a stipend. For many people this is because they already have a full-time job in another profession, or they choose to be more flexible in their lifestyle for example they may work shorter hours for the church than a full time minister might do.

Some SSMs are locally ordained priests (LOSSMs) having trained within the diocese to minister in a particular geographic area or within a particular community. Some SSMs are based within their place of work rather than a parish church, and in this case they may prefer the title 'minister in secular employment' (MSE), for example as honorary chaplains within their workplaces.

SSMs are flexible in the time they can give, some of them are deployable but most stay rooted within the communities in which they live. They are often 'front line' ministers with a foot in the secular world. They form approximately a third of the licensed clergy within this diocese, and nationally.

Being an SSM is both a privilege, and a joy. To be able to offer your skills, time and talents to the church is both a generous gift and a peculiar honour.

The pathway to ordained ministry

The pathway to ordained ministry is the same for all clergy, and involves a discernment process which usually begins within your own congregation.

You may feel you can offer more to God as part of your discipleship, or others may notice something about you which is different. If this is true for you, then speak to your vicar who can put you in touch with the Diocesan Director of Ordinands (DDO) who will talk you through the process in greater detail.

It can be a long and frustrating experience, and the study phase can feel quite a quick process by comparison, or a slower one depending on which training pathway is the best one for you. You will be expected to undertake some in depth study, but this will be tailored to your needs and abilities.

On completion of your training you will be ordained a Deacon and allocated to a parish, where you will be mentored while you complete your initial training period.

Once ordained a Priest, you will be expected to continue your 'initial ministerial education' (IME 2), and to agree a working agreement with your vicar or rector, identifying how many hours you can offer, how you will balance priesthood with your work and other commitments, as well as time for yourself.

A statement of particulars identifying your role within the parish in greater detail will also be negotiated, and both of these documents should be reviewed at regular intervals.

SSMs work in diverse ways, and usually as members of multi-disciplinary teams. Occasionally they are asked to take on diocesan roles or specific roles across parish boundaries according to the skills and gifts they can offer the wide church.

Jennie Ridley

God is a god of the unexpected. How could He take an insecure, shy young woman and transform her into his vessel of grace and leadership in his church? But that's what God has done as I have walked with him; opening my heart and life to his transforming love.

I was working within a local primary school as a Learning Support Assistant. Although serving my curacy within a local church, it was within the school context that remained my key focus of ministry for the next three years; supporting the pastoral needs of children, leading and enabling Collective Worship and working with staff and Governors to help the school understand and express its Christian foundation and ethos.

Following my curacy I felt God challenging me to leave behind a stable wage and trust God completely for all that I needed. The move has enabled me to become Padre to Sudbury 2470 Squadron Air Cadets, be alongside bereaved families supporting them through the painful process of letting go and living without loved ones, join the Porch Project team to be alongside youngsters within the pressures they face... and much more!

For me, the true joy of Self Supporting Ministry lies within its varied nature and opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus within the local community. You never know who you will meet each day – or what situations you will come across. For me it's about listening and meeting them in that place of need.

I do also enjoy meeting, serving and being part of the gathered church, but perhaps the greatest aspect of Self Supporting Ministry is the freedom to stand in that precious space between world and church, opening the door for each to meet with the other and find God's blessing.

Frequently asked questions

What does the DDO look for when assessing my call to the ordained ministry?

There are several areas considered including:

- Understanding of Anglican ministry
- Your spirituality
- Personality and character
- Your ability to make relationships,
- Leadership and collaborative team work expertise
- Personal faith
- Your zeal for mission and evangelism and something called 'quality of mind'.

More detail on these can be found on the Church of England's ministry Division web site: www.cofe-ministry.org.uk

Is there an age limit?

You are expected to be 21 years old before training starts, and younger than 70. Although there is strictly speaking no upper age limit, you should be able to demonstrate that you can offer five years ministry before the standard retirement age of 70. This is at the Bishops discretion.

I am divorced, does this preclude me from being ordained?

Divorce is not necessarily a barrier to ordination, although you might be asked some searching questions to probe into the reasons for the breakdown. The breakdown of a second relationship will usually bar you from ordination.

I count myself as a member of the LGBT community, is this a barrier?

No, as long as you live in accordance with the Bishops guidelines on Human Sexuality.

Do I have to pay for my training?

No. If the bishops panel accepts you for training, all formal training inputs will be free, but you will be expected to buy your own textbooks, as needed. However there is a very good library at St Edmundsbury Cathedral which can lend you a wide range of books for a very modest annual fee.

Will I be expected to serve a curacy which takes me away from my home church?

This depends on the learning pathway you and the DDO have agreed upon. Potential ordinands under 50 will normally go through nationally organised Bishops Advisory Panel, (BAP), and be expected to serve a three-year curacy as part of their training. Others will be locally trained and either serve a curacy in a nearby church of a different tradition to their own or be encouraged to undertake a number of placements, in order to encounter different styles of ministry and churchmanship within the Anglican Church.

I don't consider myself to be academic, but I do feel God is calling me to something, what should I do?

The Bishops and DDO meet with every candidate before they decide on the most appropriate training pathway. Not all of these are academic, but they will require you to spend at least 15-hours a week learning about the Christian faith and theology, often within a supportive learning community.

I come from a different church background. Can God be calling me to the Anglican ministry?

You must be a practising Anglican, involving at least regular Sunday worship in a Church of England church, and you must have been confirmed and baptised in the name of God father, son and Holy Spirit. Many priests came to faith in a different church tradition. This is not unusual.

What do I have to wear?

Anglican ministry is diverse and it is largely a matter of what is acceptable by local tradition. You will be expected to wear a dog collar when working for the church, and whatever is normal style in your local church for Sunday worship. Sending churches often help with the cost of these things.

Jagit

No day is the same. Today started with leading worship and presiding at a Holy Communion service, returning home to enjoy some quality family time. I have just started a night shift at work, keeping the lights on in the London power grid.

The first 30 years of my life were spent immersed in a very Sikh and very Indian world. In January 1997, I went through what could be described as a 'Damascus Rd' experience and became a follower of Christ. This was a wonderful and radical life transforming experience, but also very painful and costly in many ways. My journey began with being mentored by some great people of God, to whom I am eternally thankful. They kindly 'showed me the way' and set me on a path which started with knowing nothing of Jesus to gaining a Master's Degree in Theology and Pastoral Care, and now for the past 10 years serving as an Ordained Priest.

Serving with a great team I enjoy opportunities to lead worship, preach, pray, teach; serving the Church while managing my family and being committed to my professional work.

As a Priest who occupies the sacred and the secular worlds on a daily basis, I find it keeps my feet on the ground, rooted in the realities of the lives of people we serve.

I believe SSMS should be confident in their calling and be assured of the great value they add to the Church of England.

For more information

If you are interested in becoming a SSM please talk to your local vicar or an existing SSM in your deanery.



For general enquiries about new SSMs, their initial or ongoing training please contact:

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Registering an interest or further enquiries please contact:

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Growing in God

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