

The Revd Canon Sally Fogden

In 1994 I was working as Team Deacon in the Blackbourne Team Ministry having originally been made Self Supporting Deaconess in 1978 in. The Chevington Benefice (Now Suffolk Heights) and working as physiotherapist at Riverwalk Special School).

It was 1984 that Bishop John Dennis suggested that, if the Family agreed, I might consider going into full time ministry. So the Ixworth Benefice took the risk of having a woman minister! Later this became the Blackbourne Benefice with the merging of some Benefices. When it became legal I was made Deacon (Four of us in the Diocese by now).

I became Team Deacon and also a thing called Senior Deacon and Agricultural Chaplain.

Ordination to the Priesthood was the culmination of a long, long road with many setbacks as well as surprises. The day itself was wonderful and overwhelming as was the joy of next day being able to celebrate the Eucharist in each of the parishes for which I had responsibility.

Currently at 83 I am retired but happy to be able to help out as needed in this and Norwich Diocese (we live on the border) A huge privilege to be able to celebrate for small country parishes.

Having been there and been part of the long journey for women being ordained priest the greatest delight for me is that in these 30 years it has moved from being seen as something remarkable to a time when no one is surprised at all to have a woman incumbent or a Bishop! Thanks e to God.

The Revd Canon Barbara Bilston

In 1994 I was a Reader and had not felt called to ordination. However I was ordained deacon at Petertide 1997 and priest in 1998. I was always a self supporting minister, the day job formerly being as an academic in the Open University after an initial career in social work.

I was rural dean of Stowmarket for about 13 years, filling in as incumbent for any benefice during a vacancy and taking services in many parishes.

As a priest with permission to officiate I now take services both face to face and online.

I have represented the clergy on the diocesan safeguarding panel since it was set up, and was a volunteer safeguarding trainer. I am a member of the diocesan board of patronage and a ministry reviewer. I was a founder member of the mid-Suffolk Voluntary and Statutory partnership (VASP) for work on mental health, believing the churches to be a valuable resource in supporting vulnerable people in the community.

I believe women have brought a diverse range of transferable – and complementary - skills into the clergy.

The Revd Alison Miller

I am currently Team Vicar for the Lark Valley North Bury Team Benefice and Diocesan Adviser for Women in Ministry. I was ordained Deacon 2015 and Ordained Priest 2016, Durham Cathedral.

In 1994, I was an atheist scientist with slightly dodgy mental health heading to the University of Liverpool to study Chemistry and Pharmacology. God spoke love and compassion into the midst of atoms and equations and confusion. 30 years later I still get excited about Mass - just of a different kind.

It is a joy to feed people in the Eucharist and to be present for the key moments in the lives of those people and communities I have the privilege to serve. God's Church is diverse, and it is enriched by the ministry of both men and women.

On the day of my ordination it was a moment of clarity: yes, God has called the whole of me to this ministry, and yes, the weight and responsibility of it is terrifying...however I was aware of a joy and gratitude that I could respond freely and wholeheartedly to this call.

The Revd Canon Sharon Potter

I am now Rector of the Cockfield Benefice, serving nine villages in West Suffolk. Being a woman Priest encourages other women to think about ministry.

In 1994 I was working as a registered nurse at Ipswich Hospital, whilst serving as a Lay Elder at a church in Ipswich. 10 years later I found myself being ordained as a self-supporting minister having been trained on the Diocesan Ministry Course. I was deaconed in September 2004 and Priested in 2025 at St Edmundsbury Cathedral

On the day of my ordination I felt that this was the first step on a journey that would fulfil me and which had been denied to so many women before me.

The Revd Alix Taylor

I was ordained deacon July last year and - hopefully – priested this June. In March 1994 I was a chorister in a village church, aged just 13 years old with raging hormones and would have been gutted to know I would eventually become a priest and not married to one of the Guns 'n' Roses band members.

For 20 years I did not want to be ordained. I wanted my vocation to be anything other than ordination, and didn't really want a vocation that involved church at all! Yet my ordination day was when the Holy Spirit got hold of me, removed all my reluctance and shoved a rocket up me! The best day of my life (sorry kids).

So, here I am as Self Supporting Minister Curate in Beccles with a heart for sharing the transformational and relevant love of the gospel.

Archdeacon Sally Gaze

I was ordained as priest in 1997, having prepared to start training in theological college in 1994.

The women in my cohort of trainee ministers were the first to start training knowing that they would be able to be ordained priest. It felt like an immense privilege and still does. The picture shows me outside St Marys Broad was in the Diocese of Worcester where I served as curate.

I have been Archdeacon of Rural Mission in the Diocese since 2019, and the best part is the privilege of seeing people discover more of God's love.