



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
SUFFOLK

# Ordination

Use your gifts to serve God and others in the name of Christ





Ordained Ministers (deacons and priests) are called to represent the church in the wider world. They lead the church's mission and ministry through worship and prayer, preaching and teaching, community engagement and pastoral work.

Some ordained ministers are self-supporting and serve locally, and some are stipendiary. Some are parish-based, while others serve in schools, hospitals, prisons and elsewhere as chaplains in nurturing Christian discipleship in the church and wider world.

**Growing in God**

# Are you called to be a priest?

A priest is a parish representative for a particular church or group of churches, as a priest you will be charged with overseeing all church duties for the parish.

It can be a demanding and very rewarding role and the skills required are broad.

You will be a leader but also show an ability to collaborate and work in teams, you will have excellent interpersonal skills and an ability to practise pastoral care. You will be organised and efficient while also adaptable and flexible.

You will be committed to a spiritual discipline, which involves individual and corporate prayer and worship. You should be committed to a developing pattern of disciplined prayer, Bible study and the regular receiving of Holy Communion. You will also have the enthusiasm and energy to share faith with others and grow your parish. You will be able to show a wide and inclusive understanding of mission and understand the strategic issues and opportunities within contemporary culture.



# What qualities would a candidate possess?

Candidates will:

- show a lively faith which they naturally share with others
- they will be trusted and respected in their communities
- they will work collaboratively and not need to be possessive in the ministry they exercise
- they will have a life-giving disposition, enabling others in discipleship and ministry, and model a learning mindset.

## How long does it take?

Discernment may take between one to three years, while the length of your training will depend on the type of training you undertake and can be from one to three years.

On completion of your training you will be ordained a deacon by your bishop, and will begin a curacy in a parish. Your curacy is an opportunity to serve alongside an experienced priest, putting into practice everything you have learned. Curacies usually last for three years.



# Discernment

The pathway to ordination is the same for all clergy, and involves a discernment process which usually begins within your own congregation and conversations with your own priest or a member of their team.

The next step is taken within the diocese when the Diocesan Director of Ordinands takes time to meet with you and discuss your faith and your sense of calling in the light of criteria that have been agreed by the national church.

If your call seems to point clearly towards ordained ministry, you will become a member of the 'Fellowship of Vocations'. This is a monthly meeting of people from across the diocese who are exploring ordination. This part of the process is one of preparation and formation, and can therefore take a long time, perhaps from one to three years. The time spent in discerning your vocation can be a period of significant personal growth. You will be increasing in self-awareness, developing a disciplined prayer-life and building your knowledge.

The next step to ordination is to be interviewed by the national church selection board and attend a residential 'Bishops' Advisory Panel' (BAP), If you are successful a recommendation will be made to our Bishop that you can enter training for ordination.

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"I received a card from a friend encouraging me to go into ministry - this ignited a fire that burned for ten years before I acknowledged it! When I finally responded it felt right, like this is what I was supposed to be doing all along."

Laura Pope, trained at Westcott House, Cambridge.

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# Training

## Theological education institution

Once recommended, you can prepare for ordination at a theological education institution. There are numerous pathways available, the most common falling into residential (where you usually live in the college) and non-residential (where you train in a context based setting). You can find further information on theological colleges [here](#).

## Bishops' Auxillary Ordination Pathway

The Auxillary Ordination Pathway (AOP) is focused primarily on ordinands who are likely to serve as self-supporting assistant priests in the parish or benefice which sponsors them.

The primary context for the formation and development of candidates is their home benefice and local community with the guidance and care of their incumbent. The candidate and incumbent together draw up a training agreement that includes regular supervision meetings.

The core of the diocesan formation programme is a Thursday evening session once a fortnight with one or both bishops. This programme, shaped in normal times around the Eucharist, brings together all AOP students and includes learning and developing spiritual practices, building community among the ordinands, and a focus each week on an aspect of formation for ordination.

Further training is offered through the 'Mission Shaped Ministry' course which is intentionally non-academic, while fostering deep theological formation and the diocesan IME2 programme which includes theological study and sharing in monthly groups with a mentor.

# Self-Supporting Ministry

Self-Supporting Ministers (SSMs) may have a full or part-time job in another profession, some are only licensed to a particular benefice or deanery while others are deployable by the Bishop wherever their skills might be needed most.

For some of them this means that their parish is their place of work, for others it is where they live. Most work in teams for one particular community, or as a sector minister for one particular type of ministry.

They are trained to the same standard as any other clergy, and their main duties are broadly similar to stipendiary clergy.

Many of them cherish the ability to work out their calling within a secular work environment, or to use the freedom of a reduced parochial commitment to develop ministries in other ways.

All SSMs serve under the terms of a work agreement, which defines their responsibilities and time commitment.

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I was appointed to serve as a part-time SSM in my local Benefice of Woolpit and Drinkstone. I also work as a member of the St Nicholas Hospice Chaplaincy Team in Bury St Edmunds.

I have always enjoyed engaging with people and the local community and my appointment has enabled me to expand the privilege of serving others in a variety of church and secular settings together with learning more about myself and the love of God through Jesus Christ for all people.

Mike Birt – Self-Supporting Minister

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# For more information

Please visit our website pages for exploring your Christian calling available [here](#), where we also have a list of [key dates](#). Resources specific to this role are also available on the diocesan website.

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