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Exploring your call to **Ordained Ministry** in the **Diocese of Gloucester**

Things you may need to know

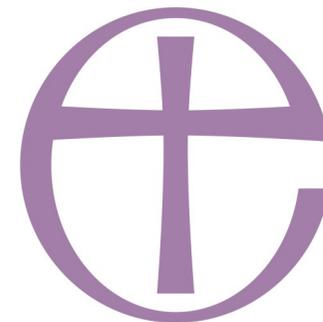


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THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Introduction

You are probably reading this document because you are wondering whether God and the Church are calling you to offer yourself for ordained ministry. You will be working with one of the DDO team who will guide you through the process. This document tries to bring together some of the things that you will need to consider during the process.

Ordained ministry is demanding, complex and costly. It is not a job with a particular skill set, it is a calling that, like every Christian disciple, asks us to offer all of ourselves. As a public ministry it has the added dimension of living out our vocation in full view and in service of the general public.

Therefore the process of discernment is very thorough, looking at every aspect of life whether you are offering only to help in Sunday services or are offering to be a full time Vicar or Chaplain. The aim is to make sure those who embark on training for ordained ministry have a clear call, with sufficient resilience, self-awareness, spiritual maturity and integrity to be good news in their communities.

Not every section in this document will relate to you. In the early stages we don't know enough about you to give you the specific information you might need so we have brought it all together in one document to give to everyone. Please discuss anything you are concerned about with your A/DDO. (DDO = Diocesan Director of Ordinands, ADDO = Associate, or Assistant DDO.

The Discernment Process

A DDO is often asked why the process takes so long. It's because it isn't a 'pass/fail' exam or job interview, it really is a discernment process. Discerning God's calling is a communal activity in which everyone needs to play their part humbly, compassionately and prayerfully.

One of the principles of discernment is that you can only discern what is within your power to choose. We cannot discern the end of the journey, but we can discern the next step we need to take. If you sense a possible call to ordination it is your responsibility to take steps to test that out.

You may go and see your vicar/chaplain, or read a book, or come to a

The offer of a title post remains conditional until the medical screening process has been completed. All information will be treated as confidential and will not be given to anyone else without the candidate's written permission. A form will be sent when the candidate is formally to 'serve your title' by an incumbent.

The Senior Medical Advisor may clear the candidate immediately however in some cases it may be necessary to request further information from the candidate's GP, medical specialists or in some cases request a psychiatric assessment. The Church of England Medical Procedures Booklet can be viewed at this link: https://www.churchofengland.org/media/825813/medical_procedures_booklet.pdf

Data Protection

The Diocese of Gloucester is fully compliant with Data Protection legislation and a candidate's papers are held under restricted access at all times.

The A/DDO will use the personal information which they hold about the candidate (supplied by the candidate, their referees and assessors) to discern their vocation to ordained ministry in the Church of England and, where appropriate, to enable them to be assessed by a Bishops' Advisory Panel and, if they are recommended for training, to assist in making arrangements for their training and financial support.

This information will be shared, as appropriate, with the diocesan bishop, sponsoring bishop, members and staff of the Bishops' Advisory Panel, and with any training institution to which they apply. Candidate's papers are basically kept as long as they are relevant to the process. After which they are shredded.

Medical Screening for Candidates for Ordained Ministry

Routine medical screenings are carried out for candidates for ordained ministry and happen at the point of an offer of a title post (curacy). The purpose of the medical screenings is for the Sponsoring Bishop and Ministry Division to ascertain if the candidate is able to carry out the work of a deacon or priest and to identify areas where the candidate may need support to be able to carry out their work.

The medical screening is undertaken by the Senior Medical Advisor who assesses the information provided by the candidate and advises the Sponsoring Bishop and the Ministry Division. The medical screening is required by both stipendiary and self-supporting ordinands.

A Health Questionnaire must be completed and returned directly by fax to Health Management Ltd on 0845 504 1066 or by post to The Clinical Services Team, Health Management Ltd, Ash House, The Broyle, Ringmer, East Sussex, BN8 5NN.

vocations day. As you explore, the people you talk to – clergy, vocations advisor, DDO, Bishop and many others all have their parts to play. At this stage no one in the diocese is asking the question 'will this person be ordained' as that decision comes further down the road.

For now the question we are discerning is 'is it the right time to test this vocation at a national Bishop's Advisory Panel'. The BAP advisor's question is 'do we recommend this person starts training which may lead to ordination'. The training institution's question is 'do we recommend that this person is ready to be ordained'.

And finally it comes back to the ordaining Bishop 'in the light of all that has gone before, is God and the church calling this person to be ordained'. As the Israelite slaves were led out of Egypt they could only take it one day at a time – following a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They were moving into the future God had for them, but only by learning what it meant to follow God, day by day. As John Climacus said in the seventh century 'what God wants is not a right end, but that we fall supple into his hands for him to use us'. So this process is a journey as we try to walk with you in learning to follow God, wondering together where he might lead you.

In our initial meetings we are trying to get an overview of the path God has brought you on, and wanting to answer all your questions about the process. It may be that early in our meetings it becomes apparent that there is more for you to do or experience before we can work towards a BAP. Many of these essentials are described in this leaflet. If all the foundations are in place then you will meet with your A/DDO about once a month, looking at one of the nine criteria that are used by the BAP advisors.

They are:
Vocation
Ministry in the Church of England
Spirituality
Personality and Character
Relationships
Faith
Leadership and Collaboration
Mission and Evangelism
Quality of Mind

Your DDO will give you a summary description of what we are looking for in each of the criteria. There is also a much more detailed and daunting document on the Church of England website which we can look at as we get nearer to a BAP. We are looking for two things in these criteria - potential and risk.

The potential is wondering if there is enough evidence in your experience, knowledge and skills that you have the potential to grow in all of these areas through training and in ministry. The risk is exploring those areas where you might be vulnerable to see whether ministry might put you or others at risk.

The criteria

Vocation

Vocation stands in a class of its own because it is fundamental to the whole discernment process. It also makes it one of the hardest to discern! We are looking for an unfolding story of God drawing you into ministry and your responses to that invitation. There will be internal promptings, encouragement and affirmation from others, and experiences of ministry that together look like a direction towards ordination. We will also be asking, is this vocation realistic, informed and obedient?

Ministry in the Church of England

This criterion is looking at the breadth of your awareness of and experience of the Church of England. If you are being called to a ministry of oversight you will need a broad understanding of the traditions and workings of the C of E, and have an attitude of compassion and collaboration towards those who worship and minister in traditions different from yours. To a lesser extent these are necessary for all ordained roles.

But the Church needs shepherds, not unquestioning sheep! So ordained clergy need to be able to love the church as it is at the same time as wanting the church to change with the times. You also need some understanding of the nature of ordained ministry, and of the priesthood or the diaconate. We can help you explore this with some reading or conversations with other clergy. Most candidates will also do a placement in a church of a different tradition which is often the highlight of the process.

The DBS check is processed by the DBS Administrator who normally contacts the candidate directly to set up a meeting to complete the application form and verify their ID. During busy periods the DBS check is initiated by the Diocesan Secretary and the candidate will fill in the CCPAS online application form, then meet with a Diocesan representative to complete ID verification.

Further information, including the list of accepted evidence of ID, can be found at <http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/about-us/safeguarding/dbs-forms-applications-and-changes-to-the-diocese-process/>

Upon completion of the candidate's DBS check, they will receive a letter and certificate to their home address. A copy of the DBS certificate should be given to the Diocesan Secretary for their file.

Additionally the following documents are required by the Ministry Division to satisfy C of E Safeguarding rules and must be produced as part of the supporting documents for the candidate's BAP and held on the candidate's file:

- ◆ Confidential declaration of Protection of Children, Young Adults and Vulnerable Adults
- ◆ Full CV including explanations of any gaps in employment and a brief description of any work with children or young people (where applicable)

Finance and debt

As a part of the process of discernment it is necessary to have an open discussion of financial issues with the candidate (and their spouse/partner where appropriate). Before attending a selection conference candidates are required to complete a *Statement of Financial Position* detailing their assets and liabilities.

Whilst debt cannot be a bar to ordination the issue to be determined in such circumstances is whether the debt is a) manageable and b) if the debt represents wider issues in relationship to the character of the candidate and their ability to manage their affairs. A person who is un-discharged bankrupt or who has entered into an arrangement or agreement with his/her creditors cannot be a member of a Parish Church Council.

The Bishop in this circumstance will consider deferring ordination until the bankruptcy or arrangement has been discharged. Where candidates reveal that they have debts that it is considered cannot be managed, they are advised to seek independent financial advice. Diocesan staff cannot legally fulfill this role.

Safeguarding and DBS Checking

The Ministry Division insist that no candidate may attend a BAP without evidence of a clear DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check. The DBS check must be completed by the 6 week deadline before the date of the BAP. If the DBS check has not been received by the 6 week deadline, the candidate's BAP will need to be re-allocated.

The DBS check is done via the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) and candidates are eligible to an enhanced DBS check to include Regulated Activity, which means the applicant has an Enhanced disclosure covering work with children, young people and vulnerable adults plus a check of the appropriate barred list/s.

Despite the Police having a 60 day target for completion of DBS checks, we strongly recommend candidates begin the DBS check process earlier to avoid reallocation of the BAP. The Diocese of Gloucester endeavours to obtain DBS clearance well in advance of the 6 week deadline and it may be that the DBS check is initiated as soon as the designated DDO/ADDO assesses that the candidate is likely to go BAP within the next 12 months.

Spirituality

Spirituality is how you connect with God. This will include your private prayer and bible reading, corporate worship, quiet days, retreats, spiritual direction or anything else that sustains your relationship with God. Contrary to expectation training and ministry often tests your pattern of prayer rather than supporting it, so this needs to be regular and resilient well before you start. A call to ministry emerges out of a call to discipleship, to following Christ, so your patterns of discipleship need to be well developed.

Personality and Character

Personality and character is about who you are, what has formed you and what is forming you. We will explore your life history, the impact of difficult life experiences, how you express your personality and how you 'inhabit your own skin.' Everyone has wounds from difficult experiences, and those in ministry have often been deeply wounded.

The important thing is that there has been time for healing and integrating these experiences so that they are no longer constantly tripping you up, but might even be a way you connect in ministry with others who have been wounded. You will see a counsellor as part of the process and they are experienced in giving us advice in this area. We will also explore your experience of stress and how you manage that.

Relationships

Ministry is about relationships. It is very important, then, that potential ministers can show that they can make relationships, sustain relationships, and foster community. It is also important that ministers have a strong support network around them – there can be times when ministry is lonely and we need to have people to turn to who we trust. We will also explore your experience of conflict and how you manage that.

Faith

Faith is about how your faith has developed over the years and how it has made an impact on your life and the choices you have made. It is about how you communicate your faith to others and the experience you have had of working with people whose faith is different to yours. We all have times of confidence and times of doubt, times of ease and times of struggle – what has your journey been like?

Leadership and Collaboration

This criterion explores any experience you have had of leadership. Younger candidates may have less leadership at work, but might explore examples at school, college or in the church. How does your style of leadership communicate to others, how do you empower others and how do you manage others? And to what extent do you work collaboratively?

Mission and Evangelism

'Mission' and 'evangelism' are often used quite loosely. What do you understand by these terms, the link between them and the difference between them? What is your experience of mission and evangelism. Are you aware of the Five Marks of Mission adopted by the Anglican Church, and how do you relate to them?

Quality of Mind

Are you a learner, and are you a teacher? What kind of a theological resource might you be in a future church or context? Are you able to take the best advantage of a course in ministerial training? And what is the evidence for this?

Meeting one of the 'DDO team'

The process is in three phases: exploring ministry, investigating ordination, and preparing for a Bishop's Advisory Panel.

Exploring Ministry

Exploring ministry is very open ended as you explore what this nudge from God might mean. This takes as long as it needs to take and involves your vicar, the vocations team, friends and anyone else you can talk freely with.

Investigating Ordination

If it becomes clear that the next step is to investigate ordination you will then meet with a DDO. They will take you through the criteria helping you to sift your life and experiences for the evidence of an emerging call. You would meet about once a month for nine months to a year. This is flexible according to your circumstances.

- ◆ Now that legislation has been passed to enable women to become bishops the Church of England is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience;
- ◆ Anyone who ministers within the Church of England must be prepared to acknowledge that the Church of England has reached a clear decision on the matter;
- ◆ Since it continues to share the historic episcopate with other Churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and those provinces of the Anglican Communion which continue to ordain only men as priests or bishops, the Church of England acknowledges that its own clear decision on ministry and gender is set within a broader process of discernment within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church of God;
- ◆ Since those within the Church of England who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion, the Church of England remains committed to enabling them to flourish within its life and structures; and
- ◆ Pastoral and sacramental provision for the minority within the Church of England will be made without specifying a limit of time and in a way that maintains the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church of England.

Under Criterion B (Ministry within the Church of England) candidates are required to confirm that they assent to all five of these *Principles* and, in the Sponsoring papers that their DDO is required to acknowledge they assent to these *Principles*.

Issues in Human Sexuality

The Church of England's teaching on human sexuality and relationships is summarised in the House of Bishops report *Issues in Human Sexuality* (1991). In 2003 a further study guide was produced in 2003, *Some Issues in Human Sexuality: A Guide to the Debate*, setting out a variety of views on homosexuality, bisexuality and transsexualism and seeking to promote informed reflection on them.

See <https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/uploads/documents/0715138685.pdf>

In the candidate's sponsoring papers selection the DDO is required to declare that they have discussed *Issues in Human Sexuality* with the candidate and that they are content to live within these guidelines. It is the teaching of the Church of England that sexual relationships are for expression within heterosexual marriage only. For an unmarried candidate to be in a sexual relationship would be considered a bar to ordination.

The Church of England does not recognise same sex marriage. To be in a Civil Partnership is not a bar to ordination but the candidate would be required to declare that the relationship is celibate.

The Five Guiding Principles

In July 2014 legislation was passed to enable women to be consecrated to the episcopate in the Church of England. This means that the Church of England is now fully committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender.

The Church of England also remains committed to ensuring that those who cannot receive the ministry of women priests or bishops are able to flourish. The House of Bishops has therefore agreed *Five Guiding Principles* as the basis for this mutual flourishing.

From January 2015, all candidates coming to a BAP are required to give their assent to all of the *Five Guiding Principles*. The House of Bishops confirm that the *Principles* need to be read 'one with the other and held in tension, rather than being applied selectively.' The *Five Guiding Principles* are:

Preparing for a Bishop's Advisory Panel

At some point in the process, often towards the end, we will ask you to see two Diocesan Assessors. These are lay and ordained people who don't know you in any other capacity who will interview you taking half of the criteria each. This gives you an opportunity to have a taste of what a BAP interview is like, and to receive feedback from two objective assessors. Their reports, which you will see, will guide us as to the right time for you to see the Bishop of Tewkesbury. The Bishop of Tewkesbury is the 'sponsoring bishop' and will meet you to decide whether The bishop will sponsor you to attend a BAP. If the bishop agrees to sponsor you, we then have several months to gather quite a lot of paperwork, to discuss what you will need to do at the BAP and to make sure you feel fully prepared.

Timing

If you meet once a month to look at one criterion at each meeting, this process will take about nine months. It is important not to be too attached to a timescale, however, as God's timing is not always ours. The important thing is to follow day by day and if things need to be slowed down or speeded up we can discuss how best to do that.

In order to start training in September, you need to attend a BAP before the end of the previous June. The BAP needs to be booked at least three months in advance once you have seen diocesan assessors and the bishop. So the process, without any reason to slow down and take more time, takes about a year. If you start in June or before you may be able to go to a BAP by the end of the following June, in order to train in the September.

Candidate Evenings

To help candidates prepare for a BAP we hold three evenings in the Spring and Autumn to have group discussion on three fundamental topics: Vocation, Mission and Priesthood. As much of our work is one to one it is important that candidates have an experience of group work and of hearing viewpoints from other people in other traditions. This will widen your understanding of those subjects as well as prepare you for group work on the BAP.

Counselling Assessment

At an early stage in the discernment process each candidate is referred to a trained counsellor who meets with them and then produces a short report which the DDO discusses with the candidate.

We do this because the role of the ordained minister is complex. They encounter relationships, expectations, and psychological processes which are complex and theological training is not designed to give you the clarity and boundaries you may need. Therefore it is essential that clergy (both incumbent and assistant clergy) have an emotional resilience and a depth of self-awareness that can help them navigate these complexities and enable them to find help when they need it.

The counsellor is therefore asked to explore with the candidate the criteria covered by 'Personality and Character' from the national guidelines. In particular, the national criteria say *'candidates should be sufficiently self-aware, mature and stable to show that they are able to sustain the demanding role of an ordained minister. They should be able to demonstrate how they have faced change and pressure in a balanced and flexible way and how they manage stress. Candidates should be seen to be people of integrity who can generate trust and display honesty. They should be able to speak of how they have coped with difficult life experiences, how they have reflected upon them and incorporated them within their life and understanding.'*

The counsellor's report is one of a variety of trained, wise voices we listen to, with the candidate, as part of the discernment process.

Placements

Nearly every candidate has a placement of some kind. The criterion Ministry in the Church of England is asking for an understanding of the breadth of tradition in the C of E, a desire for collaboration across tradition and an openness to difference.

Therefore we try to find a church that will give you an experience of difference, with a priest who will spend some time with you exploring ministry in their context. Most candidates find this the most rewarding part of the process. The placement is around 6-8 weeks, and you are asked to offer as much time to the placement as you are able to.

Canon C4 — where a candidate or their spouse has been previously married

Canon C4 of the Church of England reads as follows. 'Subject to paragraph 3A of this Canon (below) no person shall be admitted into holy orders who has remarried and, the other party to that marriage being alive, has a former spouse still living; or who is married to a person who has been previously married and whose former spouse is still living.'

Canon C4 3A The archbishop of the province, on an application made to him by the bishop of a diocese on behalf of a person who by reason of paragraph 3 of this Canon could not otherwise be admitted into holy orders, may grant a faculty for the removal of the impediment imposed by that paragraph to the admission of that person into holy orders, and any request made to a bishop for an application to be made on his behalf under this paragraph shall be made and considered, and any application made by the bishop to the archbishop shall be made and determined, in accordance with directions given from time to time by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York acting.'

This means that where a candidate or their present spouse has been previously married and divorced and their former spouse is still alive, the candidate will require a special faculty from the Archbishop before proceeding to selection. There is a careful process for this.

The candidate and their spouse will meet with one of the trained diocesan assessors who will present a report to the Diocesan Bishop, who, after meeting the candidate and their spouse, and supporting the application, will apply to the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is recognised this is a sensitive matter and the diocesan assessors are chosen for their pastoral sensitivity and discretion.