



# WHICH WAY?

## A GUIDE TO VOCATIONS DISCERNMENT

Exploring ministry in the  
Diocese of Winchester

**Revised July 2024**



## INTRODUCTION

What do we mean by “vocation?” It’s a word we hear in lots of places, frequently connected with education or career, and in the church, it is often synonymous with Ordained ministry, or the Religious Life (monks and nuns), but simply put; vocation means “calling”. To have a vocation to something means we are called or drawn towards it.

All Christians have been called by God towards him, so our Christian vocation began at our Baptism into the family of God and was reiterated at Confirmation, “God has called you by name and made you his own”. Our first vocation is always to be a disciple of Christ. All of us have their own unique part to play in the mission of God.

We are called into relationship; to be friends, family, spouses, parents. We are called to exercise our gifts; to teach or to create, to build, to administrate and to lead; to love, to care and to nurture. Our careers and the jobs we do are the ways in which we fulfil those callings, how we live out being a follower of Jesus in our day-to-day lives. Within the Church we all are called to serve together in a variety of ways, practically, prayerfully and in leadership. All these aspects of our life together are part of our calling in Christ.

Among these callings are the vocations to leadership in Licensed Lay Ministry, Ordained Ministry and to other lay ministries, Due to the nature of all these ministries and the need for selection and training, there are pathways and procedures that we must follow.



This booklet is for anyone who feels that God may be calling them to more within the leadership of the church, and for those who simply want to find out more about the ministries within this Diocese. It is also for those who support them, their clergy and others who are encouraging and mentoring them as they explore their vocations. If that's you, welcome! We hope that this resource helps you as God guides you on the path ahead, wherever that takes you.

The journey can be lengthy, and that is part of its purpose – it is “formational” in that it allows us to grow and be shaped by God into what he is calling us to be. Particularly for Ordination, be prepared to devote a substantial time (18 months to 2 years is quite normal) to the process, praying about your call, discussing it with others, preparing and reading quite extensively about the nature of ordained ministry. The processes are robust and reflect the responsibility of the calling and the role.

As you come to realise where God might or might not be leading, there may be delight, but equally, there may be pain and, initially, some disorientation if the outcome is not the one hoped for or expected.

Be assured that as you undertake this journey, those involved in the process will hold you in prayer, that God will lead you wherever it is he wants you to be.



**Rev'd Canon Angi Nutt**

*Vocations Adviser & Diocesan Director of Ordinands*



## Lay or Ordained? – What's the difference?

It is important to start with the fact that there isn't a hierarchy of vocation. Ordained ministries and Authorised and Licensed Lay Ministries are simply different ways in which we are called to exercise our vocation as baptised children of God.

Some people are called to exercise that vocation in their Monday to Saturday roles, as parents, teachers, bus drivers, accountants, doctors, administrators and so many other roles and jobs! They might also have volunteer roles working with their community or church.

Others are called to have specific roles within the church and within the leadership of church communities, responding to the needs they see, and the call God gives them. Lay ministry is not less important than ordained ministry, nor is it taken less seriously. Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs) are called to lead worship, to pastor people, to be part of the leadership of a church, to take funerals and look after the bereaved amongst many other local and contextual responsibilities. They can be people of any age, who feel their calling is to minister in this way, in any tradition of Church.

The route to Ordained and Licensed ministry is one which is not walked alone. These vocations are jointly discerned by the candidate and by the Church and so we work together throughout the process. This booklet focusses primarily on the journey to ordained ministry, not because it is more important but because it is more involved. There are contacts on the back page, please do get in touch with the team if you have specific questions about another ministry.



## **What we offer you as you explore:**

- Clear information about each stage of the process
- An expectation of appropriate confidentiality
- Group support and preparation
- Reading recommendations and information about resources and opportunities which may be of use

## **What the Diocese requires of those exploring a sense of calling to licensed ministry:**

- That you understand the possible outcomes of the process as a whole and maintain an openness to all possibilities.
- That you understand that no guarantees can be given.
- That you understand that the process can take months or years. Ordained ministers are the most visible face of the Church, and it is crucial to gain assurance of your calling, capability and readiness at each stage.
- That you engage actively with your LVA and your assigned (A)DDO to explore your faith and yourself as a person.
- That you are willing to take responsibility for arranging support and encouragement for yourself, beyond that which is offered by the Diocese. E.g. Small group attendance, meeting with a Spiritual Director etc.

## In the beginning

- If you sense that you might be experiencing a **call to Ordained ministry**, the initial contact and discussion should be with your Incumbent or Priest-in-Charge who will then make a referral to the DDO for you to explore your calling further. There is a Referral Form we ask them to fill in which is available from the DDO or the Diocesan website.
- For **Licensed Lay Ministry** enquiries, incumbents should refer the candidate to the DDO using the Referral Form. Candidates will be sent paperwork and information about the discernment process which is handled by the Head of Mission & Ministry (Amy Roche). LLM candidates can also see an LVA if they want more time to reflect on their vocation.

### **Age Policy**

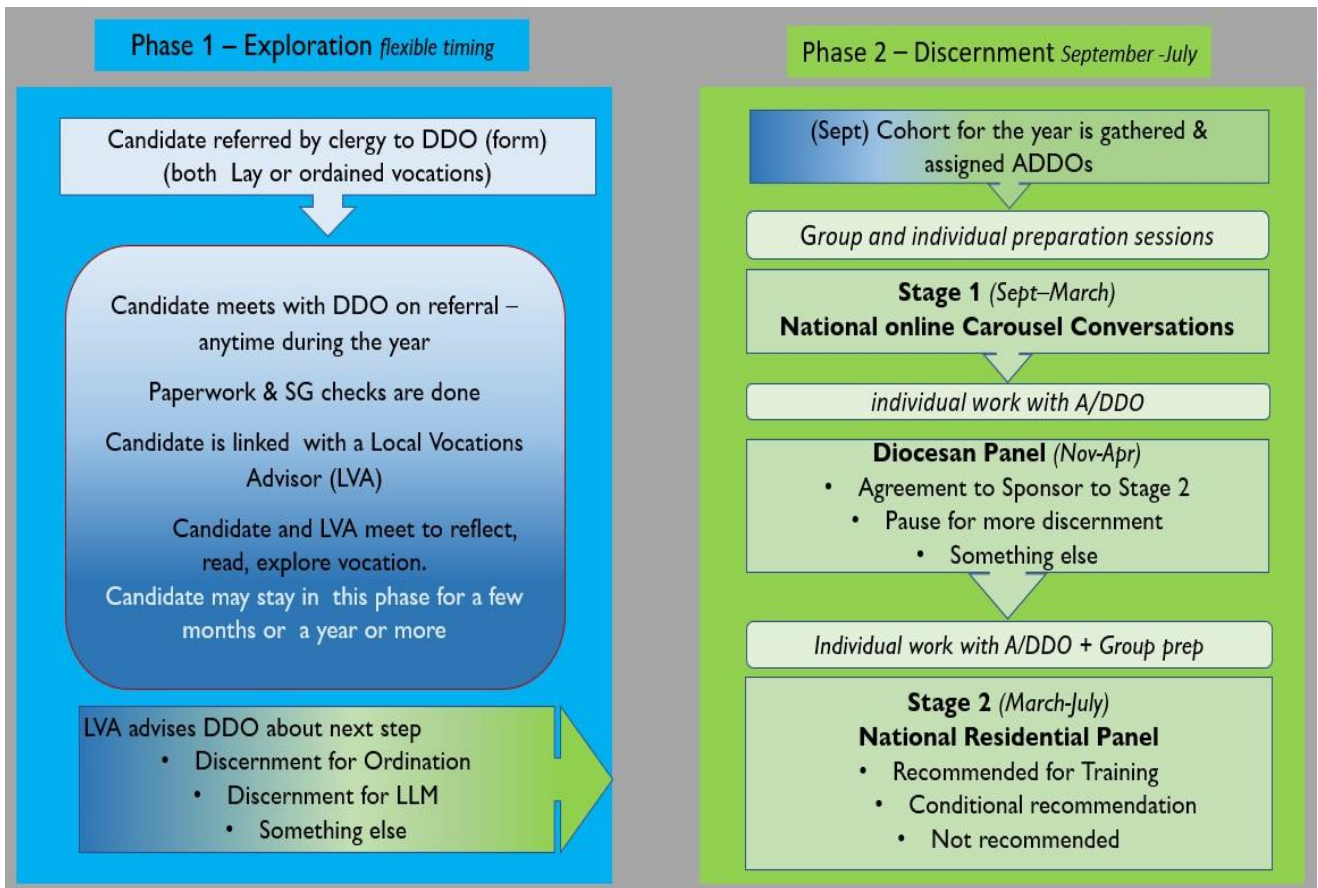
*It's good at this point to be aware of the age policy around ordination and lay ministry.*

- *For Stipendiary ministry a candidate must be aged 55 or under at the point of ordination.*
- *For Self-Supporting ministry and Licensed Lay Ministry, the age limit is 68 at the point of ordination or licensing. (revised March 2024)*

*These limits apply to the Stipendiary/Self Supporting Ministry designation and do not affect whether a candidate is sponsored as Primary (Incumbent status) or Assistant.*

*If you have questions about the age policy, please speak to the DDO; exceptionally exemptions are made on grounds of ministerial need and are entirely at the discretion of the Bishop. Candidates would still follow the full discernment and training pathway.*

The timing of a referral is important. A candidate needs to have had time to ponder their sense of call in their local setting, to talk with their church leaders and trusted friends, then, being referred to the DDO gives you an opportunity to talk through your sense of vocation with people outside of your parish and gives you a wider support network. It also enables some of the administration to be done promptly. **It does not commit you to anything or push you down a path you're not sure of, but nor does it guarantee a "fast track"**. This is your opportunity to explore what God is calling you to. Your LVA will be a great person to discuss over these initial thoughts and to shape the direction of your journey. Please keep in touch if your plans or thoughts change along the way. The graphic below shows how the Exploration and Discernment phases unfold, and gives you an idea of time scales.



## Phase 1 - Exploration

Once a clergy referral for discernment has been received by the DDO, the candidate is sent paperwork and Safeguarding procedures to complete. Once our administrator receives these completed documents, the candidate will be connected to a local vocations adviser (LVA). Your LVA will help you explore your calling by talking and praying things through with you.

Your LVA will begin to explore with you the Church of England's Qualities for Discernment and will encourage you in the development of your spirituality. Depending on your individual experience of church, you may be asked to visit different churches with different styles and traditions, and in some cases a placement experience might be set up.

Candidates should expect to do a significant amount of reading and research during this period.

**IF A CANDIDATE HAS BEEN DIVORCED AND REMARRIED AND THEIR EX-PARTNER IS STILL LIVING, THEY MUST LET THE DDO KNOW AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE AS THE C4 FACULTY PROCESS CAN TAKE SOME MONTHS.**

Phase 1 can be a few months or a year or more, but must be engaged with.

**Note that candidates referred in the summer term are not guaranteed to enter Phase 2 that September.** Currently, Discernment Phase (2) can only start in September. LVAs will advise the DDO on a candidate's readiness to move to Phase 2, in conversation with the candidate themselves.





## Phase 2 - Discernment

This phase runs from September to July, and its timing is largely governed by the national panels.

At the start of Phase 2, a candidate is allocated one of the DDO team who will be their go-to person during this process. The A/DDO will be the person who writes the candidates papers when they go to Stage 2. Candidates are also registered on the National Ministry Discernment website and invited to begin their Stage 1 form.

### Stage 1

You will be invited to a group preparation evening and asked to read three important documents: Issues in Human Sexuality\*, Promoting a Safer Church and the Five Guiding Principles. You may meet with your ADDO for the first time about now too. When the Stage 1 form is submitted you can book the date for your Stage 1 panel.

Stage 1 is the first part of the national discernment process and consists of online Carousel Conversations (also known as Stage 1 Panel). These are x6 15-minute conversations with national advisers, using creative prompts such as pictures, news stories, films or books to talk about priesthood and diaconate, the Church of England, pastoral care, engaging with the world, communicating faith and living as a disciple.

*\*At the time of writing (March 2023+), General Synod has agreed that this document will be replaced, but we have no information yet as to what that will look like.*



## Diocesan Panel

After a candidate has attended a Stage 1 Panel, we receive a short report. This does not make recommendations for training but helps us and the candidate to see which areas would be good to work on before proceeding to Diocesan Panel.

Between Stage 1 and Diocesan Panel you should expect to meet with your A/DDO at least twice. You will also begin work on the Discernment Form. The Discernment Form is based on the information that will be needed for Stage 2 and is the opportunity for the candidate to communicate their life journey and their vocational calling. References from the Incumbent, and someone **outside** of their church context are also usually requested at this point. This form is submitted to the DDO prior to Diocesan Panel.

Conversations with the A/DDO help prepare the candidate for Diocesan Panel and enable A/DDOs to write the sponsoring papers needed for Stage 2, but they also dig deep into the candidate's life experiences and background. This is not meant to be intrusive for its own sake, but to make sure that candidates for ordained ministry are reconciled with any difficult life experiences, have resilience and are emotionally and psychologically healthy in order to cope with the demands of ministry. Please be honest and open with your A/DDO and we will support you as much as possible.

Candidates are invited to Diocesan Panel roughly between November and April. Diocesan Panel consists of an afternoon with x2 30-minute interviews.

These two interviews focus on Ministerial and Personal Formation and mirror the later interviews at the Stage 2 national panel.



The primary purpose of the Diocesan Panel is for a recommendation to be made to the Sponsoring Bishop whether the candidate will be sponsored for Stage 2.

Possible outcomes include:

- Recommended to go on to Stage 2
- Not recommended to go on to Stage 2 **at this time** but recommended to undertake further preparation/study (specified) and attend a second Diocesan Panel after successful completion of the former.
- Not recommended to go on to Stage 2 but asked to consider other forms of licensed ministry (e.g. LLM)
- Not recommended to go on to Stage 2 but asked to continue serving God outside the orbit of licensed ministry.

This list of possible outcomes should not be understood as a “pass/fail” grading. This process is about discernment. Sometimes the right course is for someone to continue doing what they are currently doing, without making the transition to ordained ministry. Every candidate is asked to prayerfully commit themselves to the process and to trust that God will work through it.

The decision of the Panel is communicated by email to the candidate usually within a week of the interviews. Following this they will meet separately with the Sponsoring Bishop (which will have been arranged prior to the panel). Their A/DDO will reflect with them on the outcome and the feedback. Candidates and their supporting incumbents are asked to respect, accept and prayerfully reflect on the Panel’s decision, whether it be the outcome they had hoped for or otherwise.



## Stage 2

Prior to attending a Stage 2 panel, candidates will continue to meet with their A/DDO, update their Discernment Form and then use it to complete the submission of the Stage 2 Form via the Ministry Discernment System online. The A/DDO will also write sponsoring papers for the candidate which are added to this form. Referees are asked to submit their references via the online system, and all safeguarding requirements are checked.

It is likely that a date for Stage 2 will have been booked prior to attending Diocesan Panel, but candidates will be advised about this as they proceed.

Before attending a Stage 2 panel candidates must be confirmed in the C of E or other Episcopal church, and if a C4 is required this needs to have been received by the time papers are submitted. Any outstanding safeguarding training and checks must have been completed (including Overseas checks).

Stage 2 panel is a one night residential, with the option to be non-residential to accommodate caring or access needs. During the panel, candidates will have two in-depth interviews, each with two advisers. One interview will cover the Personal Formation qualities and the other Ministerial Formation. In addition, they will take part in a group exercise, and write a reflection on the process which will be submitted before they leave the panel.



The Panel Secretary will then send a report to the Bishop and DDO within 10 days of the panel, which will indicate Recommendation (to train for ordination) or Non- Recommendation. Candidates will usually be informed of the outcome via a phone call from the Bishop.

Candidates will meet with their A/DDO to go through their reports and, in the case of non-recommended candidates, be offered support and ongoing vocational conversations.

Recommended candidates will discuss their provisional training plans with their A/DDO who will obtain the Bishop's agreement before they can be confirmed. They will also meet with the Vocations Administrator to go through financial planning and grant projections. This may also include a group session on finance matters for ordinands. Training for ordained ministry does generally involve an element of financial sacrifice, for instance if training full-time it can mean giving up a job and salary and will probably entail learning to live on a modest budget. Finance questions and one's own financial circumstances need to be carefully thought through, but issues around finance should not prevent those with a genuine call to ministry from going into training.



# Training

## Training Options

We generally advise candidates to research and apply to colleges after their Diocesan Panel. Colleges are well used to issuing “conditional offers” contingent on Stage 2 results and it will not appear **presumptuous to approach a TEI (Theological Education Institution)** before going to Stage 2.

When a candidate is recommended by a national Stage 2 panel, they are recommended to their Diocesan Bishop for training, not for ordination. The discernment around whether a candidate proceeds to ordination following training is part of the TEI reporting procedures in and is undertaken between the TEI and the Bishop, with whom the decision ultimately lies. Formal training is delivered in one of three ways and follows the Durham Common Awards Programme.

**Full time residential training** – at an English TEI (Theological Education Institution), i.e. theological college, in the Anglican tradition. Those under 32 years of age would normally study for three years. Ordinands who are 32–39 may do 2 years training full-time residentially.

**Full time context-based training** – full-time training which combines blocks of training in a TEI (usually a day a week or a residential week 6 times a year, depending on the institution), with ‘ministry on the ground’ in a parish setting under the supervision of the incumbent.



**Part time regional training** – usually over three years on a local course. This is an option for all ordinands in all age bands but is always taken by those aged 55+ and by some in the 40-54 age band. It is for ordinands sponsored for both Primary (Incumbent) and Assistant leadership. PT Ordinands are expected to continue to financially support themselves during training.

**The majority of ordinands will follow a course which leads to a Diploma, or a BA depending on the length of training. Those with prior theological qualifications may study for a higher award with the agreement of the DDO and Bishop.**

**No final decision on training can be made without the agreement of the DDO and ultimately the Bishop. A Candidate's Stage 2 report may recommend a certain training pathway, advice the Bishop is usually likely to take.**



## A Very Short Introductory Reading List

All these books should all be available from local or online bookshops, or from Church House Bookshop: [www.chbookshop.co.uk](http://www.chbookshop.co.uk)

- *How to Find Your Vocation* John Adair (Canterbury Press)
- *Listening to your Life* Julia Mourant (Canterbury Press)
- *Called or Collared* Francis Dewar (SPCK)
- *This is our Calling* Charles Richardson (SPCK)
- *All Things Anglican: Who we are and what we believe*  
Marcus Throup (Canterbury Press)
- *When Jesus Calls* Marcus Throup (Canterbury Press)
- *Anglicanism: A Very Short Introduction* Mark Chapman  
(Oxford University Press)
- *The Life and Work of a Priest* John Pritchard (SPCK)
- *Being a Priest Today* R. Brown & C. Cocksworth (Canterbury Press)
- *Ministry in Three Dimension* Steve Croft (Dartman, Longman & Todd)
- *The Widening Circle* Graham Tomlin (SPCK)
- *Mission Shaped Church*, Church Of England (Church House Publishing)
- *Mission Shaped Parish* Paul Bayes et al. (Church House Publishing)
- *Fit to Lead* Chris Edmondson (Dartman, Longman & Todd)
- *In the Name of Jesus* Henri Nouwen (Dartman, Longman & Todd)
- *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* David Ford (Oxford University Press)

### Common Worship Ordinal (website links)

[www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/ordinal/deacons.html](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/ordinal/deacons.html)

[www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/ordinal/priests.html](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/ordinal/priests.html)





## Contacts

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### **Licensed Lay Ministry**

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### **Bishops Commission for Mission**

Contact: Greg Eland

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### **Bishops Permission to Preach**

Contact: Wendy Atkinson

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