

February 2024



The Church of England

Diocese of Ely

Vocations

*What kind of
ordained
ministry?*

*Discerning a call to
ordination*

Discerning a call to ordination does not necessarily mean that you feel a call to become a vicar. It might do, but ordained ministry can take many forms. And of course, your sense of vocation may change over your time. It is helpful to think about the following distinctions.

The order of ministry

Most people feel called to be a **priest**.

But you may feel a call to the **distinctive diaconate**. A distinctive deacon will be less involved in leading the worshipping life of the church, and instead be more focused on outreach and community engagement.

The [Common Worship Ordination Services](#) on The Church of England webpages give the best outline of what it is to be a priest or deacon.

The focus of ministry

Some people feel called to an incumbent focus. This is for those whose sense of vocation is to lead a church or to take up some other position of overall responsibility.

Others may wish to explore an assistant focus. This is for those who expect to assist in the ministry of a church community, sometimes - but not always - in their current context.

The potential specialism of ministry

Most people will have no specialism; they feel called to general parish ministry; but some people may have a sense that their vocation has a particular or special focus.

This might be to **pioneer ministry**. This ministry is about creating new worshipping communities and about community organising. Those exploring ordained pioneer ministry need to show they inhabit particular pioneering qualities. The curacy for those put forward for pioneer ministry will be shaped to reflect this focus.

Others may have a sense that they might serve the church at some point through teaching and learning and so be designated as a **potential theological educator**. Some may feel called to **chaplaincy work**. Some may feel called to be a **minister in secular employment**, principally living out their priestly vocation in their workplace.



The envisaged category of ministry

Some who are ordained go on to work as **stipendiary ministers**; others exercise their ministry as **self-supporting ordained ministers**. This category sits separately from the others. The discernment process is not like applying for a job, and it does not guarantee any stipendiary ministry in the future. Yet, it is helpful to know whether someone is hoping to exercise stipendiary ministry, or whether they expect to be self-supporting.

