



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of St Edmundsbury  
and Ipswich

# Auxiliary Ordination Pathway (AOP)

## Introduction

*The Diocesan Auxiliary Ordination Pathway is designed for those in whom the Church discerns a vocation to ordained ministry which they would exercise normally in their home or work locality, to build up the body of Christ and show and share their Christian faith where they live.*

The focus of the formation is developing awareness of God's presence and activity in the world, and cultivating habits/skills to enable others to develop such awareness.

To be ordained to serve among people whom you know, and who know you, is a particular calling and requires particular gifts.

**We believe that God is calling people to this expression of ordained ministry at this time to enable the Church to serve God's mission in every community and neighbourhood.**

# Some basics

## Who is AOP for?

AOP is focused primarily on ordinands who are likely to serve as self-supporting assistant priests in the parish or benefice which sponsors them. They have been identified by the PCC and incumbent as well as members of the congregations and local community, as potential candidates for ordination and have engaged in a Diocesan Discernment process. They will serve as part of a larger team led by an experienced priest. They might serve as local pastors in their home village or neighbourhood, and/or as priests exercising a sacramental ministry across their benefice or in their place of work.

## What qualities would a candidate possess?

Candidates will have been identified by their incumbent and local church, and recommended in writing by their incumbent with endorsement from the PCCs of their parish or benefice. They 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 will it take?

Initial formation and training will usually take one year prior to ordination to the diaconate, this year being understood as an ongoing discernment process. Not all candidates proceed to ordination and there is room for extending the formation period prior to ordination where deemed appropriate. Ordination is followed by ongoing formation throughout a curacy which aims to ensure they meet the formation criteria at end of curacy as for any other curate.

## What does the ordination formation programme include?

The principal agents in the formation process are the Bishops and the local Incumbent who serves as the candidate's training supervisor from the point the candidate is recommended for training.

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. As their training supervisor, the incumbent themselves receive support and training. The candidate and incumbent together draw up a training agreement that includes regular supervision meetings.

The core of the Diocesan formation programme is fortnightly Thursday evening sessions with one or both Bishops. This programme, shaped in normal times around the Eucharist, brings together all on the Auxiliary Ordination Pathway and includes learning and developing spiritual practices, building community among the ordinands, and a focus each week on an aspect of formation for ordination.

**“It’s really exciting, and the more I have read and been part of an excellent group of like-minded people, the more it feels like I’m in the right place at the right time.**

**“I’m in my mid 50s and taking on a whole new career path. I cannot wait to continue moving forward.”**

**- Mark Bee, Ordained September 2020 in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich**



# Mission Shaped Ministry

In addition, before ordination, all candidates will have taken the MSM (Mission Shaped Ministry course (reflecting the need for a cohort of priests well-versed in the need for a blended economy of ways of being church in our present era). Candidates will also have taken modules in scripture, pastoral care, preaching and leading worship before ordination.

This course is intentionally non-academic, while fostering deep theological formation. There is no requirement to write essays, or read theological books, though candidates may wish to do so and then will be supported and encouraged. There is no academic assessment, and candidates are asked to complete a short self-assessment of their learning after each module. Formation is seen as organic and person-focussed as each candidate grows in Christ-likeness. The movement towards ordination is viewed through that lens, and not through completing class assignments, giving teaching input "just in time" rather than "just in case"

## Formation after Ordination

In the candidate's diaconal year, and in preparation for priesthood, and throughout the candidate's title curacy, the relationship with the training supervisor is guided by a detailed working agreement.

The formation evenings with the Bishops become monthly, and the ordinands follow the diocesan IME 2 programme which includes theological study and sharing monthly in groups with a mentor.

Candidates are required to take courses for one- three years after ordination to develop their theological and ministerial understanding to equip them for the ministry they have been called to. The courses each candidate undertakes are worked out in relation to their previous education and experience and the ministerial requirements of their local context.



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