

I never expected my life leading to Ordained ministry. As a teenager, my passion was for music, both at school and in my (non-Anglican) Church. I trained to become a professional musician, and fell in love with and, in my early twenties, married a music academic. My time spent at church was chiefly centred around Music in worship and outreach, and I eventually held a role in the denomination helping develop young church musicians across multiple counties. Music was the vocation which our lives was centred around.

It came as quite a shock when I first felt the nudge towards offering myself for priestly ministry in the Church of England. I was at Bristol Cathedral setting up for a concert I was the musical director for when we had to pause preparations for Evening Prayer. I chose to stay and, with one other, joined the Dean and a vergier in the Quire for the spoken service. As we recited the Magnificat, the words of Mary's prophecy when she was pregnant with Jesus, I felt that I was being called to reorientate my life in order to participate in God's mission to 'exalt the humble and meek' and 'fill the hungry with good things'.

In the months that followed, this sense of calling only grew, alongside the feeling that I was being called to serve in the Church of England. I began to attend afternoon services at the Cathedral and my local parish church, both of which were significantly more 'traditional' than the charismatic context I was used to. As I prayed for discernment and clarity, two important things happened in close succession: firstly, I was told my fixed term teaching contract was not going to be renewed, and the Diocese of Bristol posted an advert online for a 'Ministry Experience Scheme' for people under thirty. Cautious that I was not a member of the Church of England, I applied and found myself invited to interview, and then very surprisingly invited to participate in the scheme. Almost overnight, I went from being a musician in a charismatic church in an area of urban deprivation to being an Anglican Church worker serving a semi-rural multi-parish benefice.

My time on the Ministry Experience Scheme helped to bring clarity to my sense of calling, and gave me confidence to offer myself for ordained ministry. Ever since beginning that role, I have felt like God has been continually helping me enter into life in all its fullness as I've begun to fulfil my vocation.

To any young person who feels that God is calling them to any form of ministry, I would want to encourage them to speak to their ministers, or maybe the diocese's Advisor for Ordinands and Vocations. It might seem unlikely but we know from scripture that God often calls the most unlikely people in unlikely circumstances. The One who calls is faithful, and God's providence is greater than those barriers the world puts in place. Pray earnestly, trust willingly, and remember that God's love for you overcomes all.