A Process for those exploring an ordained vocation

This document sets out a process for those wishing to pursue a call to ordained ministry. It gives an idea of the various stages of the process and some sense of possible times – which are only illustrative, someone’s vocations journey may take much longer. Whilst we are delighted when someone is exploring a call to ordained ministry and wish to fully support them in that process, please be aware that there is no guarantee at any stage of the process that someone will be ordained, or that they will be able to take up a curacy post in Bristol diocese, or indeed any diocese. The discernment process is only ever a recommendation to proceed to the next stage and the Bishop has the ultimate decision about who is ordained and where they will be licensed to serve.

A growing sense of call affirmed by others

Conversations with incumbent and/or other priests about ordained ministry

Engaging in prayer, reading, discipleship and conversations and experiences of ministry

Incumbent and candidate affirm a sense of call to ordained ministry. Incumbent refers candidate to Adviser for Licensed Ministry (ALM).

Candidate attends an initial information evening to discuss their vocation and the discernment process and reflect on the criteria for selection.

Complete registration form

Candidate meets with an Assistant Director of Ordinands (ADO) working through the different criteria for selection. This may involve producing written work and doing further reading. Likely to have on average between 4-6 meetings.

Candidate attends a DIOCESAN DISCERNMENT DAY (DD) where they give a presentation, facilitate a discussion and have 2-3 interviews with advisers to discern if their sense of call is informed, realistic and obedient.

ALM identifies areas for candidate to do further work on, based on the criteria (e.g. church placement, theological study, relationships, etc.) Candidate works with a Vocations Adviser.

Candidate attends the ‘AM I CALLED TO BE ORDAINED?’ course, which runs in January and June.

Candidates may be sent to see one or two other advisers.

Candidate attends a discipleship/formation group throughout the process.

Unspecified period of time, but not less than 3 months

Usually between 6 and 12 months
Following a Discernment Day, a candidate is likely to receive one of three outcomes:

- **Candidate receives a recommendation to attend a Bishop’s Advisory Panel (BAP) straight away.** (This takes a Minimum of 14 weeks, assuming availability of BAP dates.)
  - Candidate meets Bishop to verify the DD decision to send them to BAP.
  - Candidate attends a BAP and is debriefed on the outcome by ALM or ADO. Candidate meets ALM to discuss future options.
  - Candidate begins training for ordination. This begins in September of each year and can be done in a variety of ways from full time to part time or mixed mode at a variety of training institutions. It usually takes between 2-3 years depending on age and previous experience.
  - If the Training Institution and the Ordaining Bishop are satisfied that the ordinand has met the criteria for ordination and that this is indeed the call on the person, they will be ordained to a parish as a Deacon and will ordinarily serve a 3-4 year training post called a curacy.

- **Candidate is asked to do Some further work in specified area(s) before attending a BAP.** A timetable will be set out and support given by ADO.
  - Candidate meets with ADO/ALM to review work done and decide next steps. This may involve returning to another DD.
  - Candidate meets ALM/ADO or a vocations adviser to discern together what God might be saying about the way forward.

- **Candidate is not recommended to attend a BAP.**
  - Candidate meets with ADO/ALM to review work done and decide next steps. This may involve returning to another DD.
  - Candidate meets ALM/ADO or a vocations adviser to discern together what God might be saying about the way forward.

The Diocesan Adviser for Ministerial Vocation holds responsibility for overseeing the vocations discernment process. At the appropriate time in someone’s journey, make contact with the Diocesan Ministry Development Team who will work with them through the process.

**In the meantime, it might be useful to find out more.**

**Try some of these resources:**

- ‘The Life and Work of a Priest’ by John Pritchard
- ‘The Contemplative Pastor’ or ‘Under the Unpredictable Plant’ by Eugene Peterson
- ‘Called or Collared’ by Francis Dewar
- ‘Courageous Leadership’ by Bill Hybels
- ‘Making God possible: The task of Ordained Ministry’ by Alan Billing
- ‘What Clergy Do’ by Emma Percy
- ‘Hearing the Call: Stories of Young Vocation’ by Jonathan Lawson and Gordon Mursell

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