

Questions to ask might include:

'Does LPA ministry 'feel right' for me? Can I put into words why?'

'When I think about LPA ministry do I feel positive and joyful, even if also a bit daunted?'

'Is this something I want for myself or do I feel under pressure – if so from whom and why?'

'How will this impact on my family and anyone else who depends on me?'

'Have I got time to give – both for training and for the demands of ministry? What might I need to give up?'

'Is there anything else that I need to be realistic about?'



Affirmed by others

Once we feel the stirrings of a sense of call we may well feel prompted to talk it over with others – our friends and families but also those who can be more objective about us. Your incumbent or another minister in your church should always be among those you talk to. The Diocesan Vocations Co-ordinator is always available to talk with anyone who wishes and there is also a network of vocations advisors around the Diocese. You can get this information from the Diocesan website or from Church House.

Questions to ask might include:

'Could you see me in this role?'

'Do you think others would welcome me in this role?'

'Do I have the right personal attributes (or could I develop them)?'

'Do I have the right skills (or could I learn them)?'



Be open to the possibility that others may NOT see you in the role – and that their intuition may be the right one. Listen carefully and indicate that you really do want an honest opinion – not everybody finds it easy to give feedback. And be of good cheer – you already know that you are called by God. The only question is, to what?

A need for this ministry

God does not call us to exercise a ministry if there is no need for it. It would be a pity to waste our energies when there are so many other important things that we might be able to do for God. So a key question to ask is: what does my church actually need at the present time? We are often inspired by the ministry we see someone else offering – is their ministry sufficient for now or will they soon be in need of a successor?



- **What ministry does your church need? Where are the gaps in ministerial provision in your church? Consider immediate needs but also potential longer term needs. Can you think of other people in your church with untapped gifts and what might each of you most helpfully offer? If time, the group may like to share and discuss these findings**

What can I do next?

Ask God in prayer ... how you may become all that God intends you to be and how best you may serve him.

Reflect on your gifts ... are you able to engage with people?
Are you someone with caring skills and a willingness to support others?

Talk to your parish priest or chaplain ... who will be able to advise you.

The next step

Once you have decided that you would like to explore ministry as a Lay Pastoral Assistant by participating in a course, the next step is to talk to your incumbent. S/he should already have access to this Taster Session and may wish to discuss with you some of the vocational questions that we have just been exploring. S/he may also wish to consult others, including the PCC.

If you and your incumbent agree that it is appropriate for you to attend a course you need to complete the registration form available at this session. Please hand (or email) this to your course leader and parishsupport@salisbury.anglican.org at the first session.

You will need to apply for an **enhanced Child and Adult Workforce DBS clearance with a check against the Child and Adult Barring Lists** and will also need to attend Safeguarding Training. This process will initiate when you complete and submit the registration form for the LPA course.

It is your responsibility to book onto the online **Basic awareness (C0)** and **Foundation (C1)** course (<https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/>) or in person course (www.salisbury.anglican.org/learning/courses) via the website and remember **you cannot be commissioned without having completed the safeguarding training and have a valid DBS certificate.**

Initial training for Lay Pastoral Assistant ministry consists of at least ten sessions plus a Concluding Session, each about 2 hours long. Your course leader will advise on this as sometimes it is a mixture of evenings and Saturdays. The sessions are usually two weeks apart so that some tasks and activities can be completed in between. **Be aware that some of the sessions may touch on sensitive issues that might need working through with someone you trust.**

Remember that participation in the course is part of the discernment process and does not guarantee that people will be recommended for commissioning. We suggest that a written reflection '**Why I believe God is calling me to the ministry of a Lay Pastoral Assistant**' would be helpful. This needs to be *up* to 2 sides of A4 and if this feels difficult for any reason feel free to use other formats. The important thing is that you have reflected with your incumbent concerning this potential ministry, so that together you can decide whether it is now right for you to proceed. Commissioning takes place in Deaneries or in your own parish by arrangement and is conducted by either an archdeacon or suffragan bishop.

Once you have been commissioned as a Lay Pastoral Assistant you are expected to take part in the Diocesan CMD programme which offers a range of different ways of deepening your learning or developing specialisms. Your Commission will be renewed every three years following a review of your ministry which your incumbent will conduct.

Closing Prayer

Spend some time in quiet reflecting on all you have heard and said, your thoughts and reactions.

**All highest and glorious God,
cast your light into the darkness of my heart.
Grant me right faith, firm hope, perfect charity, profound humility,
with wisdom and perception, O Lord
so that I may always and everywhere
seek to know and do what is truly your holy will,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

St Francis of Assisi (1181–1226)

Appendix: Course Outline

- Session 1: Who are we?**
- Session 2: Who am I?**
- Session 3: Journey of life**
- Session 4: Learning to listen (or Developing listening Skills 4a)**
- Session 5: Engaging with families**
- Session 6: Coming alongside those with acute and chronic illness**
- Session 7: Valuing later life**
- Session 8: Why and when we visit**

CHOOSE AT LEAST 2 OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Session 3a: Our role at a time of loss**
- Session 4a: Developing listening skills**
- Session 5a: Nurturing the spirituality of children and young people**
- Session 8a: Knowing our limits**

Concluding session