



MINISTRY IN THE
CHURCH OF
IRELAND

**EXPLORING ORDAINED AND
DIOCESAN READER MINISTRY**



Is God calling you?

Yes he is. God calls all His followers into some kind of service.

But service can take many forms, so where is God calling you?

We are all called to a deeper relationship with God and with each other, reflecting His love to others – wherever they are and whatever they do in life. For most of us that means getting involved in our local church, serving in all kinds of ministry such as hospitality, children’s ministry, prayer and outreach. For some, the calling will be to help lead and teach the church and this involves being authorised to minister in a public capacity. In the Church of Ireland this usually means either a commissioning into a role as Diocesan Reader or ordination into the role of a Priest or Minister.

Diocesan Readers are lay people who are licensed (authorised) by the bishop to preach, teach, lead worship and engage in other pastoral work, not just in their own parish but in other churches throughout the diocese. This is a significant and growing role in the life of the church involving people of all ages.

Ordained Ministers are called to proclaim God’s Word, call people to repentance, baptise and disciple them, lead them in prayer and worship, and encourage and comfort them. They serve and pastor usually within a parish church context.

Is this ministry for you?



DO YOU FEEL A CALLING TO TEACH AND PASTOR OTHERS?

The Calling to Ordained Ministry:

Every one of us, as Christians, has a common calling as Christ's ambassadors to the world. However, it may also be that you have a strong sense of a call (or vocation) into ordination. This is a call that can come to you over many years or in a much shorter period of time. It can come to the young or old, experienced or inexperienced. A vocation for ordination is usually recognised firstly by a person feeling a strong, persistent conviction that God is calling them, usually after much thought and prayer. Then secondly, when the church recognises this calling in a person and their ability to undertake it.

What if I am interested in ordained ministry?

Some people who have a strong conviction to serve Christ rule out the ordained ministry as an option before ever properly considering it. If you believe you have a growing calling to serve Christ and others through leadership then you should consider also being open to God in prayer to a calling for the ordained ministry. For many this will still be a calling, for now, into lay leadership but for others the conviction that ordained leadership may be ahead, could form.

If you think that God might be calling you to ordination, even if doubts persist, you should talk to close Christian friends and to your minister. It is not presumptuous to do this, nor does it elevate you in any way above others; on the contrary it is a process that requires genuine humility. Your minister and others will help you discern if this is a calling that you should begin to explore.



HOW TO EXPLORE ORDAINED MINISTRY

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11)

The process of exploring ordination is designed to build your faith, discover your gifts and test your calling to ordination. It is important to note that beginning this process does not imply that a person will or should become ordained. Many people undertake various beneficial aspects of the route without becoming ordained but, through the process of exploring it, they have discerned a strong calling to areas of lay leadership that they may not have had previously.

The stages for exploring ordained ministry.

The Exploring Ordination Group: This is an informal group that meets 4 times per year and its meetings involve exploring ministry in different settings, broadening understanding of ministry roles and with time for advice and questions. It can be joined following a recommendation from your minister and is run by the Diocesan Director of Ordinands (DDO) who will help and guide you through the whole process. Participants must have been actively involved in this group for at least a year before any further recommendations are made. If a call is recognised they may recommend you for one of the following options:

- 1. The Foundation Course:** This course is a distance learning graduate certificate in theology, ministry and mission that begins in February each year, lasting for 15 months. It is designed for those who are keen to develop their own capacity for furthering God's mission and to test God's calling on their life. For some the course will help confirm a call to ordination and for others it will further enhance a call to, and skills in, lay ministry. It is a prerequisite for the Masters in Theology Ordination route but not necessary for the Ordained Local Ministry route.
- 2. Masters in Theology Course (Full time):** Based in Dublin, this course requires the Foundation Course graduate certificate to access it. It is 3 years long (full time) and in the third year students serve an internship with a training parish, usually near to their home. The MTh allows a candidate to be ordained for *stipendiary* ministry, which means that the church has certain obligations to provide an income (stipend), housing and other expenses. Most stipendiary ministers end up in parish ministry.
- 3. Masters in Theology Course (Part time):** The part-time MTh is a four-year part-time course taught by means of blended distance learning and residential input over 36 weekends. The students undertake the same modules as those studying full-time and are qualified at the end for the same stipendiary ministry. The internship takes place in the fourth year.

Selection Conference: Before the MTh is started a candidate must have the recommendation of both their local minister, the DDO for ordination, diocesan bishop and agreement of the Selection Conference. The Selection Conference is for the whole Church of Ireland and so involves candidates from all over the island. It usually takes two days and involves several interviews, assessments and questions by bishops and others.

- 4. Ordained Local Ministry(OLM) Course (Part time):** Before being nominated for an OLM post, the lead person for the locality must make a case as to why a locally ordained person is required. Once this need has been accepted by the diocesan bishop he may give permission for an individual to be put forward for formal selection. This means that OLM ministers are ordained to fulfil a clearly identified role in a specific locality and cannot minister in other parts of the diocese unless permitted by the bishop. Their role tends to include pioneer ministries in settings such as church plants, chaplaincies and key assistant roles in churches where ordained ministry is essential. OLMs cannot receive stipendiary benefits (although they may receive a wage) and are supervised by a stipendiary minister. They cannot transfer to another diocese and if they wish to pursue stipend ministry must go through national selection. The Ordained Local Ministry course includes 12 modules of part-time learning over 3 years based in Belfast.

KEY TIMES OF THE YEAR...

Exploring Ordination Group

4 evenings per year
(can be joined at any stage)

Closing date for the Foundation Course

End of September

Commencement of the Foundation Course

Mid-February

Recommendation for Selection Conference

September

Selection Conference

March/April

Masters in Theology course commencement

September



The Exploring Ordination group is free but the Foundation Course Certificate costs £1,800 in total. Of this amount, two thirds is covered by the central church and sending diocese and the remaining amount (£600) is the responsibility of the student. It is usually due at the beginning of the course. It may be the case however that your local parish will assist with this amount.

COST

On successful selection for the Masters in Theology course the fees and college accommodation are paid for by the Church of Ireland with a small living grant also available to students.

The costs for the OLM Course are less than that for the MTh and will vary depending on each context. For more information on costs contact the Diocesan Director of Ordinands.

For more information on ordained ministry:

Please contact the Diocesan Director of Ordinands:

Rev. Adrian Green
adrian-green@hotmail.co.uk

-or contact the Diocesan Development Officer:

Andrew Brannigan
andrew@downanddromore.org



Diocesan Readers are people in the Church of Ireland, from all walks of life, who are trained and licensed by the church to preach, teach and lead worship in a voluntary capacity.

Diocesan Lay Readers are men or women, old or young, from a wide variety of backgrounds who have a significant voluntary role in assisting the ministry of the church. They are authorised by the bishop to preach, teach, lead worship and engage in pastoral work, not just in their own parish, but also in other churches throughout the diocese. As such Readers can be asked from time to time to support other churches in need of someone to help preach and read services. As the role of a Reader in teaching and leading is significant, potential Readers are given training in Biblical studies, theology, ministry and preaching over a two year period before they are commissioned.

If you think that God might be calling you to serve him more fully through a teaching and leadership role within the church, then a Diocesan Lay Reader role may be for you

Vocation and Nomination

The vocation or call to become a Reader may be felt by an individual or may come from outside; from their minister, a fellow worshipper, or from someone else entirely. If you think that God might be calling you to Diocesan Lay Reader ministry you should consider if you:

- Have an active faith in prayer, study and ministry to others.
- Have a consistent involvement in ministry in your local church.
- Have a desire to teach, preach and communicate the faith Biblically.
- Are prepared to commit your time and energy to this calling.
- Have the support of others around you in this calling.

As Diocesan Lay Readers minister to the local church it is necessary for all candidates to have the support of their church and a nomination from their Rector in order to proceed. Therefore, it is important to talk to your minister who will advise you and prayerfully consider whether to recommend you for the course.



TRAINING PROGRAMME

2019 onwards

The training for Diocesan Lay Readers begins in February each year and last for two years.

The training is designed to cover all the key aspects of Reader ministry and to equip you with the knowledge, skills and practical experience to effectively support the church in this vital role

The training course has 3 strands:

Graduate Certificate in Theology, Ministry and Mission.

This distance learning certificate is run in partnership with the Church of Ireland Theological Institute (CITI) and St. John's Theological College, Nottingham. It is identical to the Foundation Course used as an access course for ordination training except that it is studied over two years instead of one. The course has three modules on:

1. Biblical Studies. Studied from March-October
2. Christian Doctrine in Focus. Studied from October to June the following year
3. Theological Perspectives: Christian Ministry. Studied from June to March the following year

These modules are taught through a combination of distance learning and contact time at CITI. Assignments and tutor support for this certificate are submitted and assessed online.

Formation for Ministry

In addition to the 3 modules outlined above there will be 6 Reader study Saturdays at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute on 4 other subjects:

1. Homiletics -how to prepare and deliver sermons.
2. Liturgy -leading worship within the Church of Ireland.
3. Church History -the historical context of the church
4. Spirituality -the beliefs, values and way of life that reflect Biblical teaching

These subjects are looked at concurrently over the study days and are assessed through a combination of assignments and practical work.

Diocesan Training

This takes place in Belfast and involves around 13 evening sessions over the two years focusing on developing the knowledge and skills to deliver Biblical preaching and lead liturgical worship in church. These practical skills will also be assessed via 3 preaching assignments and 2 liturgy assignments.

- 2030 Readers: The diocese is keen to encourage younger Diocesan Lay readers in their 20's and 30's to play a full part in the leadership of the church. Candidates in this age range will, in addition to participating in the rest of the training, be offered further help to develop their leadership skills.
- Training Support: The support of each candidate undertaking this course will be a crucial element in helping their development as Diocesan Lay Readers. Each meeting of diocesan candidates will include some tutor group support as well as one-to-one support from the Diocesan Warden of Readers and Diocesan Development Officer

Applications:

The closing date for application to Diocesan Reader ministry is the middle of January each year

SELECTION FOR READER MINISTRY

Key characteristics that candidates should be developing for Diocesan Lay Reading Ministry include vocation, faith, leadership, relationships and spiritual disciplines.

The selection process is designed to test the vocation of applicants for Reader ministry and to assess, both their potential for serving and developing as a Reader, and their ability to cope with and benefit from training. There are 3 steps:



Step (1) **Vocation**

This involves your prayerful consideration of whether God is calling you to be a Diocesan Lay Reader and a discussion with your local minister. At this point it may be helpful to also meet with the Diocesan Warden of Readers to informally talk about what is involved and get more information.



Step (2) **Nomination**

Should you and your minister both believe that this is a calling you would like to test further, your minister will nominate you to the Warden of Readers for the diocese, who is responsible for Lay Reader Training. You will also be asked to fill out a short application form to accompany this nomination.



Step (3) **Interview**

Once nominated, the Warden of Readers will arrange a date for you to be interviewed by a panel of 3-4 people. These interviews are designed to help explore, in a supportive environment, the key characteristics that candidates should have for Diocesan Lay Reading ministry.



COST

The total cost for the course is £1,800. However the diocese pays one third of the amount with the remaining two-thirds shared by agreement between the sending parish and the candidate, usually with the parish covering at least one third of the full amount. This sum can be paid in instalments.

The cost includes all the teaching, materials and any accommodation and food required during study days but does not cover travel expenses.

For more information on Diocesan Reader ministry:

Please contact the Diocesan Warden of readers:

Rev. Willie Nixon

revwillie@drumbegparish.com

-or contact the Diocesan Development Officer:

Andrew Brannigan

andrew@downanddromore.org