

Ministry in the Church of England

Preface from the Archbishop of Canterbury

The letters of St Paul often tell us about all the gifts the Church needs in order for it to do its work and to be itself. Everyone has something Jesus Christ has given them which has to be shared with the whole community. Among these gifts is a cluster of things that all have to do with taking some kind of responsibility for the Church's growth and the Church's direction - the apostle, the prophet, the teacher, and so on. And while all sorts of different people may exercise these gifts in various ways, the Church has always organized itself on the basis that it needs some visible focus for this kind of ministry. It has worked on the assumption that the task of taking responsibility and nurturing the vision of the Church needs to be recognizable both in and beyond this or that local community, and so it has given some people the job of doing this in a very public and official way.

If you're thinking about ordained or accredited lay ministry in the Church of England, you'll have started thinking about 'going public' in this way. And you'll probably have begun to face the potential cost of it. At the very heart of this calling is God's invitation just to be there, in the middle of the Church, holding it in prayer, seeking God's will for the Church's future, trying to put yourself completely at the disposal of God for that future. It isn't a role that lends itself very easily to self-congratulation, a nice clear sense that you've done the job, because there's always more to discover of God and God's purpose for the future. You have to become a certain kind of person, not just do a certain number of things. And that can be hard, since we all like to know we've done all right, that we've ticked the right boxes. But it can also be liberating, because this is a role in which God is helping you become yourself more deeply and fully, through your relationships with the whole community of God's people.

This booklet will help suggest the questions you might be asking of yourself and others as you explore whether God is leading you in this direction. You'll need to know yourself reasonably well; you'll need to have some of the habits of life that will open you up to God daily - reading the Bible prayerfully and carefully, taking time for quiet with God, joining in the worship of the Church; you'll need friends who can help you see yourself honestly.

Above all, you need to trust God. If he is really calling you, then, as St Paul says, remember that 'the one who calls is faithful' - God will give you what you need to follow him. If he is calling you to some other kind of witness and work, remember that it is still you he wants, still you with your particular gifts and oddities, which are precious to him. As you read these pages, ask God's Spirit that whatever happens in your exploration of ministry may set you free to show God's glory and love more fully. That's what it's all about - nothing else, nothing less.

+Rowan Cantuar

1. Have you got a vocation?

The short answer to that question is yes you have! God calls us because he loves us. As Christians, we are all called by virtue of our baptism to be in Christ: to grow into ever closer union with him and to live out our lives in response to his life, death and resurrection. For each of us that involves living in a particular way and becoming a particular kind of person: someone who reflects something of the life of Christ. That is our primary calling: to represent Christ in the world. As one of the great spiritual writers put it:

*Christ has no body now on earth but ours,
No hands but ours, no feet but ours;
Ours are the eyes through which to look out
Christ's compassion to the world
Ours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good,
And ours are the hands with which he is to bless men and women now.*

St Teresa of Avila (1515–82)

This is our common calling as Christians.

But there is a further calling, a particular calling, which is not for everyone but may be for you. This particular calling is to serve God and all people through the Church's ordained ministry or through one of its licensed lay ministries. For this particular calling, it isn't enough simply to be convinced yourself that you have a vocation. You have to allow your sense of vocation to be tested by the Church through its discernment processes. It is the Church that validates and authorizes that calling.

2. What are the marks of a vocation?

In exploring whether you are called by God to ordained ministry, or to one of the licensed lay ministries, you will probably be asked to meet a number of people, such as Vocations Advisers who are experienced in discerning vocation. They will help you to discover whether you show signs of having a vocation to ministry. There are lots of marks of a vocation but the following four are particularly important:

1. Do you have an internal sense of call?

You may have a strong inner conviction that God is calling you. How you experience that conviction will vary. It might be a nagging feeling over time that will not go away. It might come as a bolt out of the blue that this is what God's will is for you. However you experience the call of God it is likely to be persistent and will not go away. Your sense of calling needs to be tested by the Church.

2. Has your sense of call been recognized by others?

If you feel a sense of call, it is a good idea to share it with your vicar or chaplain and your family and friends – those you can trust – to see whether they can see God's calling in you. Those who know you well will be able to be honest about whether they can see you in the role you feel called to. Indeed they may have spotted it a long time ago and are waiting for you to recognize it for yourself.

3. Is your sense of call realistic?

Given the kind of person you are, with your particular strengths and weaknesses, have you got what it takes to fulfil your vocation? Answering that question involves you in a candid and searching self-assessment. It is important to remember that God will never call you to something which is beyond your capacity to fulfil. Although it needs to be remembered that without God none of us has a capacity for anything. Often God calls and then grows us into the capacity to fulfil our calling. Through God's grace, we might be surprised at what we could be capable of.

4. Is your sense of call informed?

Do you know what you are letting yourself in for? At one level, of course, none of us knows what we're letting ourselves in for! That's what makes the vocational journey so exciting and full of surprises. Nevertheless, it is important to have some understanding of the expectations and demands that will be placed upon you if you are to fulfil your vocation. You need to have some understanding of what is involved in mission and ministry in a changing society and the kind of tasks that you may be called upon to undertake.

In the Bible there are many examples of people being called in different ways. You might like to read some of the following passages and use them as a way of reflecting upon your own sense of call and the range of different ways in which God calls.

The Call of Abraham: Genesis 12

The Call of Moses: Exodus 3

The Call of Samuel: 1 Samuel 3.1-10

The Call of Saul: 1 Samuel 9 and 10

The Call of David: 1 Samuel 16.4-13

The Call of Isaiah: Isaiah 6.1-8

The Call of Jeremiah: Jeremiah 1.4-9

The Call of Mary: Luke 1.26-38

The Call of Peter: Luke 5.1-11

The Call of the First Disciples: John 1.35-46

The Call of Mary Magdalene: John 20.1-18

The Call of Peter: John 21.15-19

The Call of Paul: Acts 9.1-22

The Call of Lydia: Acts 16.14-15

The Christian Calling: Ephesians 1.3- 14

3. What could you be called to?

As you try to discern what it is that God may be calling you to, it's important to consider all the possible options. Although this booklet is concerned primarily with two of those options – ordained ministry and accredited lay ministry – this section considers a range of options so that your exploration of what it is that you may be called to can be as informed as possible. It includes the licensed lay ministry of a Church Army Evangelist and of a Reader, and the calling of the Religious Life.

Church Army Evangelist

Church Army Evangelists are lay ministers who share the Christian faith through words and action and equip others to do the same. Over 500 Evangelists and staff are devoted to a wide range of service in Anglican churches, projects and teams throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. The Church Army trains and sends Evangelists to work in five areas of focus: area evangelism; children and young people; church planting; homeless people; older people. For further information contact: www.churcharmy.org.uk

Reader Ministry

Readers are lay people who are called to serve the Church in a preaching, teaching and pastoral ministry. They are theologically trained to proclaim the gospel, to lead worship and to minister effectively alongside and in collaboration with their parish priests. Before starting training (which usually lasts three years and leads to the nationally accredited Church of England Readers' Certificate), they must be recommended by their parish priest and Parochial Church Council. They are selected at diocesan level. For more information contact: www.readers.cofe.anglican.org

The Religious Life

Some men and women are called to live what is known as the 'Religious Life', as a monk or a nun, a Franciscan friar or a sister. This way of life is diverse and ranges from the enclosed contemplative life through to the contemplative life in action. There are many religious, both lay and ordained, living in community throughout the country. There are others living dispersed lives as oblates and members of Third Orders. More information about the different religious orders can be obtained from *The Anglican Religious Communities Year Book* (published by Canterbury Press) or by visiting the Anglican Communities web site: www.orders.anglican.org/arcyb/

Accredited Lay Ministry

There are those who feel called to enable the Christian community to exercise its ministry in the world but who do not believe that they are called to ordination. Accredited lay ministry is open to men and women who are selected and trained in the same way as candidates for ordination. They may work as administrators, educators, missionaries, or in other specialist areas.

Ordained Ministry

Most ordained ministers are **priests** (also known as presbyters). Their work is to build up the Body of Christ in the Church and in the world through the celebration of the sacraments, teaching, preaching and pastoral care. It is a ministry of leadership and mission, enabling all Christian people to realize their potential as they witness to Christ in the world. But priesthood is not only about what a person does. It is also about what a person is. Through the lives they lead, priests point to the life of Christ crucified and risen, encouraging all God's people to show love, care and compassion and to strive for justice and peace. As they do this, priests share in people's sorrows and joys as they walk with them on their individual journeys. For some this ministry is exercised full time, for others ministry is exercised as they continue in their on-going occupations.

In the *Common Worship Ordination Services*, the ordaining bishop says these words which express the heart of the ministry of a priest:

Priests are called to be servants and shepherds among the people to whom they are sent. With their bishop and fellow-ministers, they are to proclaim the word of the Lord, and to watch for the signs of God's new creation. They are to be messengers, watchmen and stewards of the Lord; they are to teach and to admonish, to feed and provide for his family, to search for his children in the wilderness of this world's temptations, and to guide them through its confusions, that they may be saved through Christ for ever. Formed by the Word, they are to call their hearers to repentance and to declare in Christ's name the absolution and forgiveness of their sins.

With all God's people they are to tell the story of God's love. They are to baptize new disciples in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and to walk with them in the way of Christ, nurturing them in the faith. They are to unfold the Scriptures, to preach the word in season and out of season, and to declare the mighty acts of God. They are to preside at the Lord's table and lead his people in worship, offering with them a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. They are to bless the people in God's name. They are to resist evil, support the weak, defend the poor, and intercede for all in need. They are to minister to the sick and prepare the dying for their death. Guided by the Spirit, they are to discern and foster the gifts of all God's people, that the whole Church may be built up in unity and faith.

The ministry of a **deacon** is to be a servant, both within the Church and in the wider community. A person who is accepted for ordination as a priest is first ordained as a deacon. Then, after a period of normally a year, he or she is ordained to the priesthood. This reminds us that humble service is always at the heart of priestly ministry. However, some are called to be life-long distinctive deacons. These are people who are called to ordained ministry but not as priests. Their ministry encapsulates the servant nature of all Christian ministry.

In the *Common Worship Ordination Services*, the ordaining bishop says these words which express the heart of the ministry of a deacon:

Deacons are called to work with the bishop and the priests with whom they serve as heralds of Christ's kingdom. They are to proclaim the gospel in word and deed, as agents of God's purposes of love. They are to serve the community in which they are set, bringing to the Church the needs and hopes of all the people. They are to work with their fellow members in searching out the poor and weak, the sick and lonely and those who are oppressed and powerless, reaching into the forgotten corners of the world, that the love of God may be made visible.

Deacons share in the pastoral ministry of the Church and in leading God's people in worship. They preach the word, and bring the needs of the world before the Church in intercession. They accompany those searching for faith and bring them to baptism. They assist in administering the sacraments; they distribute communion and minister to the sick and housebound.

Deacons are to seek nourishment from the Scriptures; they are to study them with God's people, that the whole Church may be equipped to live out the gospel in the world. They are to be faithful in prayer, expectant and watchful for the signs of God's presence, as he reveals his kingdom among us.

After ordination, most men and women will begin their ministry in a particular parish and many will minister primarily in a parish setting of one kind or another throughout their lives. They will combine evangelism with pastoral care, preaching, teaching and leading worship. These ministries will aim to develop the life of the whole People of God in the service of God and of his world. Some will function in a specialist ministry as chaplains to hospitals, prisons, industry, schools, universities, colleges of higher and further education and the armed forces. Some will operate as Pioneer Missional Ministers and are likely to be involved with fresh expressions on church. Other areas of life such as youth or children's work, education, mission and evangelism, ecumenism, community projects and media work may be the primary focus for the ministry of a priest or a deacon. Some will engage in this ministry full time, while others will engage in it part time while continuing with their existing occupations.

4. Have you got what it takes?

If you feel called to ordained ministry or accredited lay ministry, you will have to let your sense of vocation be tested by those who have been appointed by the bishops to exercise discernment on behalf of the Church.

Those trying to discern your vocation will be asking themselves two questions:

- Are you being called by God and by his Church to ordained or accredited lay ministry?
- Do you have the necessary gifts and potential to fulfil your vocation?

They are fundamental questions. In order to answer them, those discerning your vocation will want to focus on nine aspects of your life. These nine aspects are called the Criteria for Selection. You will need to have fulfilled satisfactorily these nine Criteria for Selection if the answer to the two fundamental questions above is to be yes.

The Criteria are as follows:

A. Vocation

You should be able to speak of a growing sense of being called by God to ministry and mission, referring both to your own inner conviction and the extent to which others have confirmed it. Your sense of vocation should be obedient, realistic and informed. You should also be able to demonstrate ways in which your vocation has had an impact on your life.

Questions:

What signs have you perceived that God may be calling you to ministry?

Who else has perceived your vocation?

What effect has your vocation had upon you?

B. Ministry within the Church of England

You should demonstrate an understanding of your own tradition within the Church of England, an awareness of the variety of traditions and practice that are encompassed within the Church of England and show a commitment to work within that variety. You should be able to speak of the distinctiveness of ministry within the Church of England and of what it means to be a deacon, priest or accredited lay minister. You should show a commitment to a ministry of gospel proclamation, through word and sacrament, pastoral care and social action.

Questions:

What do you appreciate most about the Church of England?

In your experience, what makes a good minister?

C. Spirituality

You should show commitment to a spiritual discipline, involving individual and corporate prayer and worship, including a developing pattern of disciplined daily prayer, Bible study and regular receiving of Holy Communion. Your spiritual practice should be such as to sustain and energize you in training and ministry. You should demonstrate a connection between your prayer life and daily living and show an understanding of God's activity in your life.

Questions:

What is your pattern of prayer?

From where do you receive spiritual support and guidance?

D. Personality and Character

You should show an appropriate degree of self-awareness and self-acceptance, and sufficient maturity to sustain the demanding role of a minister. You should be able to face change and pressure in a flexible and balanced way. You should be a person of integrity and be seen as such by others. You should demonstrate a desire and capacity for further self-development and growth.

Questions:

What are your main strengths and weaknesses?

How well suited temperamentally are you to the ministry to which God may be calling you?

E. Relationships

You should show an awareness of your strengths, weaknesses and vulnerabilities in order to demonstrate a capacity to build and develop healthy personal, pastoral and professional relationships, together with an awareness of the power dynamic inherent within such relationships. You should show evidence of integrity in all aspects of your life and relationships – emotional, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and more generally in matters of honesty. You must submit to the disciplines in *Issues in Human Sexuality*. You should show an ability to listen to others and demonstrate a willingness to negotiate over disagreements.

Questions:

How well do you relate to others?

What kind of relationships do you need to sustain you in your vocation?

F. Leadership and Collaboration

You should demonstrate an ability to offer leadership in the Church community and to some extent in the wider community and to guide and shape the life of the Church community in its mission to the world. This includes a capacity and willingness to draw on and develop the abilities of others. You should be a witness

to the servanthood of Christ and show evidence of providing an example of faith, love and discipleship which is inspiring to others.

Questions:

What has been your experience of exercising leadership?

How good are you at working alongside and motivating others?

What is your preferred style of leadership?

G. Faith

You should show an understanding of the Christian faith and a desire to deepen your understanding of it. You should demonstrate a personal commitment to Christ and a desire and capacity to communicate the gospel. You should be able to make connections between faith and the complex demands of contemporary society.

Questions:

What is your gospel? What is the heart of the good news you want to share?

What experiences in your life have strengthened or weakened your faith?

H. Mission and Evangelism

You should demonstrate a wide and inclusive understanding of God's mission to the world that permeates your prayer, thinking and action. You should be able to articulate what it means to proclaim the good news of the kingdom and be able to speak of Jesus Christ in a way that is attractive and appropriate. You should show an awareness of how changes in culture and society have an impact on the life of the Church. You should also show potential as a leader of mission and a commitment to enable others in mission and evangelism.

Questions:

How have you experienced God's mission to the world?

What does it mean to you 'to proclaim the good news of the kingdom'?

I. Quality of Mind

You should have the necessary intellectual capacity and quality of mind to undertake satisfactorily a course of theological study and to cope with the intellectual demands of ministry. You should demonstrate a desire and commitment to engage in theological study and a willingness to embark upon life-long ministerial and theological formation. You should exhibit a readiness to reflect and enquire.

Questions:

How best do you learn? Is it by listening, watching, reading or other ways?

What would excite you most about theological training?

Apart from the Criteria for Selection, those discerning your vocation may ask you about:

- **Your family**

Just as in other areas of life, those who offer themselves for Christian ministry must be ready to consider the implications this will have for their families. Being a visible representative of the Church can make considerable demands on the whole family, and your family (as well as you) must be prepared to acknowledge the difference this will make. There will almost certainly be social and financial implications. Being faithful to your vocation will be costly in all sorts of ways and will involve sacrifice. Those discerning your vocation will want to be assured that you have taken account of this and that your family is supportive of your calling.

- **Your health**

Those discerning your vocation will want to be assured about your general health and any particular problems, which may affect your ability to cope with the demands of professional ministry. Before you go to a Bishops' Advisory Panel you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire about your medical history. If there are any concerns arising from the questionnaire you might be asked to have a medical examination by one of the Ministry Division's medical advisers before or after your panel.

- **Divorce**

If you have been divorced but have not remarried, you can be sponsored by a bishop for a panel in the usual way. However, if you are divorced, your former partner is still alive, and you have remarried or if you are married to a divorced person whose former partner is still alive you will require an Archbishop's Faculty under Canon Law. If this applies to you, your Diocesan Director of Ordinands will explain in detail to you what is involved.

5. What happens at a Bishops' Advisory Panel?

Those who are called to ordained or accredited lay ministry are selected for training in exactly the same way. When those discerning your vocation consider the time to be right they will advise your bishop to sponsor you for a Bishops' Advisory Panel. These panels are held throughout the year and are arranged by the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council acting on behalf of the diocesan bishops. The minimum age for sponsorship is 18 but most people are likely to be 20 or over. Panels normally last from Monday to Wednesday, and you will be expected to be resident for the full time. At a panel you are likely to meet a wide range of men and women who are offering for ordained or accredited lay ministry. There will be a maximum of 16 candidates and a total of 6 Bishops' Advisers. Also present will be a Bishops' Advisory Panel Secretary from the Ministry Division. The Bishops' Advisers, drawn from all over the country, are appointed by their diocesan bishops and are trained by the Ministry Division.

Before the panel

Some time before the panel you will be asked to fill in a detailed registration form and to provide the names of referees. You will also be asked to produce a Written Reflection of between 500 and 750 words about an aspect of Mission and Evangelism (Criterion H) that is related to your experience and to which you feel drawn as part of your calling. Your Diocesan Director of Ordinands will send all your paperwork to the Ministry Division, which in turn will send you a booklet entitled *Going to a Bishops' Advisory Panel*, which explains in detail what will be expected of you. Several months normally elapse between being sponsored by your diocese and the panel itself.

At the panel

As the whole aim of the panel is to discover God's will for you and the other candidates, the times set aside for prayer and worship are central to the panel. At the panel you will experience:

- three interviews with Bishops' Advisers which will focus on the Criteria for Selection;
- a presentation (which you will have prepared before the panel) in which you will speak for up to five minutes on a topic chosen by you, which relates to an aspect of one of the Criteria for Selection ;
- a group discussion, which involves facilitating as well as participating in a discussion group;
- a personal inventory in which you will be asked to respond in writing to a series of questions based on the Criteria for Selection;
- a pastoral exercise in which you will be asked to respond in writing to a complex pastoral situation.

All these will help the Bishops' Advisers to get to know you as a person and show them the ways in which you meet the Criteria for Selection.

After the panel

When the panel is over the Bishops' Advisers send their recommendation for each candidate to the sponsoring bishop. This recommendation is advice to your bishop and the decision about your future rests with him. The advice of the Bishops' Advisers will take one of the following three forms:

- **Recommended for training** The way is open for you to embark upon training.
- **Conditionally recommended for training** This means that your recommendation is dependent upon certain conditions being fulfilled. It may mean that the Ministry Division has not yet received all your paperwork or it may be that you have not yet fully met one or two of the Criteria for Selection and need to do some work on them before you are ready to enter training.
- **Not recommended for training** The reasons for your not being recommended for training will be given. It is important to emphasize that this is not a denial of your vocation to Christian service and witness, but rather a call to fulfil it in ways other than ordained or accredited lay ministry. Your Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocations Advisers will help you to explore other ways of responding to your calling to serve God.

On receiving the recommendation from the Bishops' Advisers your bishop will write or speak with you in order to inform you of his decision and ask you to be in touch with your Diocesan Director of Ordinands.

6. What about Training?

The purpose of training is to equip you for a ministry in which you are continually learning. Developing a more thorough knowledge of the Christian faith – in the Scriptures and through the life, worship and teaching of the Church – is an important part of that purpose. But alongside the development of your thinking must go your formation as a minister, which will involve:

- the growth in your personal faith in Christ;

- a deepening of your disciplined, personal communion with God;
- acquisition of ministerial skills and an understanding of how they might interact in mission with the culture of the world around us;
- a developing awareness of the sort of person you are and how you relate to others.

Training itself is and ought to be a demanding experience. It is part of continuing to discern your vocation and to discover what sort of ministry is appropriate for you.

You will be encouraged to undertake some theological learning and exploration of types of ministry during the discernment phase leading up to attending a Bishops' Advisory Panel. This may be accredited learning, under the title of 'Education for Discipleship', through a college, course or diocesan programme.

The Church of England has a variety of theological colleges, which offer one-, two- and three-year full-time training. For the most part, training in a theological college will be residential.

The Church of England also has a national network of theological courses offering one, two or three years of part-time training. While on a theological course, candidates are not required to move house or change occupation, and the training takes place through a combination of week nights, weekends and summer or Easter schools. Candidates starting to train part time on theological courses are normally over the age of 30. Candidates for ordained ministry who will be deployed locally might train on the diocese's training scheme. The training is similar to that on a course but with greater emphasis on ministry in the local context and on the development of the local ministry team.

Once you have been sponsored for training, you will have to consult your bishop and Diocesan Director of Ordinands before applying to a theological college or Course. Full details of theological colleges and courses are given in the Ministry Division booklet, *Theological Training in the Church of England*.

Some general guidance is given in what follows about pathways through training. However, you should bear in mind that full account will be taken of any prior learning you may have in theology and ministry and the best pathway for you within your vocational journey will be found. In some cases this could involve a combination of types of training, for example some full-time and some part-time as appropriate.

If you are under 30 when you begin training you will normally undertake three years' training full time at a college, unless you already have a degree in theology, in which case the course is usually two years.

If you are between the ages of 30 and 49 at the start of your training you will normally undertake either two years full time at a college or three years part time on a course.

If you are aged 50 and over, you are most likely to train on a course though the length and content of your training is decided by your sponsoring bishop.

As you reflect upon and decide which form of training is most appropriate for you, you will liaise closely with your Diocesan Director of Ordinands, who will help you to think through the issues and advise you.

Finance

Training grants are available from Central Church Funds and no candidate who has been recommended for training will be prevented from training through lack of funds. Your Diocesan Director of Ordinands will explain in detail how the financing of your training will be arranged.

7. Where do you go from here?

Having read this booklet you're probably wondering 'What do I do next?' There are three ways forward all of which are important if you want to test your calling.

1. Pray

You will need to spend time in prayer, asking God for the guidance of his Holy Spirit. In your prayer you need to ask for the grace to be open to whatever God may be calling you to and the courage to say yes. You may feel that what God is asking of you is too much for you, is beyond you. But remember the calling of Jeremiah '*But Lord I am only a child*' or the calling of Peter '*Depart from me for I am a sinful man*'. God often calls those who consider themselves unworthy of his calling or who are taken by surprise by it. But remember also that God never calls us to something that is impossible for us. Our sense of calling has to be lived out in tune with our spiritual walk with God and our faith in God, who always upholds us and provides for us.

2. Talk

As you explore your vocation you will need to talk to a lot of people. Your first port of call should normally be your parish priest or chaplain. He or she will then put you in touch with a Vocations Adviser or the Diocesan Director of Ordinands, who will want to talk about your vocational journey so far in considerable depth. In the course of exploring your vocation you will probably meet others exploring theirs. Spending time sharing with others, listening to their stories can be immensely enriching and moving and can help you to reflect on God's presence and calling in your own life in a new way. Every year there are a variety of vocations events and conferences, held all over the country, which provide opportunities for these kinds of encounters. Details of the year's vocations events are contained in a booklet entitled *Vocations Events*, which is available from the Ministry Division. And of course, as you talk to others about your sense of vocation and where you feel God may be leading you, it's good to share, if you can, with those nearest and dearest to you: your family and friends. They know you well (sometimes better than you know yourself) and they will be quick to tell you if this is the wrong path for you or, what is more likely, that your vocation comes as no surprise to them. Family and friends can be a source of wonderful support and encouragement in your vocational journey.

3. Read

As you explore your vocation it is essential that you read as much as you can. One of the signs of a vocation is that it is informed, and for it to be informed you will need to have gained some understanding of what it is that you feel called to. For instance, if you have a vocation to ordained ministry, you will need to have done some reading on what ordained ministry is and what ordained ministers do. Indeed to have done some reading on all of the areas of the Criteria for Selection will be of enormous help to you for the simple reason that at various stages of the process of the discernment of your vocation you will be asked searching questions. If you have done some reading and reflecting you will be able to respond to those questions with greater confidence and understanding. Reading will help you to think through issues more clearly and as a result you will find yourself growing and changing, which is always one of the outcomes of any vocational journey. The Ministry Division compiles a wide-ranging and comprehensive reading list, which is available from the Vocations Officer.

By praying, talking and reading you will be able to explore the nature and variety of ministry within the Church of England and to reflect more deeply on your sense of calling. This is a lengthy process, which must not be rushed. It is hoped that this booklet will have helped you on your on-going journey of exploration as you discover what God has in store for you for his glory and the good of his Church.

Useful Addresses:

The Ministry Division

The Vocations Officer

Ministry Division

Church House

Great Smith Street

London SW1P 3NZ

Tel: 020 7898 1399

www.cofe-ministry.org.uk

Church Army

The Vocations Officer

Marlowe House

109 Station Road

Sidcup

Kent DA15 7AD

Tel: 020 8309 9991

www.churcharmy.org.uk

Readers

Central Readers Council

Church House

Great Smith Street

London SW1P 3NZ

Tel: 020 7898 1421

www.readers.cofe.anglican.org

Religious Communities

Anglican Religious Communities
Church House
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3NZ
www.orders.anglican.org/arcyb/

Additional Curates Society

The Vocations Secretary
Gordon Browning House
8 Spitfire Road
Birmingham B24 9PB
Tel: 0121 382 5533

Church Pastoral Aid Society

The Vocation & Ministry Secretary
Athena Drive
Tachbrook Park
Warwick CV34 6NG
Tel: 01926 334 242
www.cpas.org.uk

Some Prayers for Vocation

Lord, you call us to be story-tellers:
planting your explosive news into our defended lives;
locating us in the script of your human history.

You call us to be trailblazers:
living in your future that we receive only as gift;
subverting the fixed, fated world of low horizons.

You call us to be weavers:
tracing, stretching, connecting the knotted threads;
gathering up unravelling, disconnected lives.

You call us to be fools –
for Christ's sake: bearing life's absurdities and incongruities;
puncturing our seriousness and grandiosity.

You call us to be hosts:
welcomers of the sacred, intimate, transfiguring;
lavish celebrants of our communities and homecomings.

You call us to be poets:
artists and illuminators of inner space;
naming, invoking, heralding your ineffable presence.

You call us to be gardeners:
sowers, cultivators, nurturers of fragile lives;
benefactors of your gratuitous harvest.

You call us to be conductors
celebrating polyphony, coaxing symphony;
orchestrating the praise of your inhabited creation;

Lord, you lavish gifts on all whom you call.
Strengthen and sustain us and all ministers of your church,
that in the range and diversity of our vocation,
we may be catalysts of your kingdom in the world,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Roger Spiller (1944–)

Father,
I know you love me and have plans for me.
But sometimes I am overwhelmed by the thought of my future.
Show me how to walk forward one day at a time.
May I take heart while I search openly, learn all about the choices, listen to others for
advice, and pay attention to my own feelings. By doing these things, may I hear your
call to live a life that will let me love as only I can, and allow me to serve others with
the special gifts you have given me. I ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

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)

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands.
Do with me whatever you will.
Whatever you may do I thank you.
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me and all your creatures.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul.
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart.
For I love you Lord and so need to give myself,
surrender myself into your hands without reserve
and with boundless confidence
for you are my Father.

Amen

Charles de Foucauld (1858–1916)

You have a vocation from God.

If you already know what it is, pray to be faithful.

If you are still searching, pray to hear God's voice and to respond generously.