Dioceses have responded to the call to work towards a 50% increase in candidates for ordination with new posts and new procedures. A review of numbers in ordained ministry over the last 67 years shows that the 50% increase in candidates for ministry by 2020 agreed by the General Synod in February, 2015, is needed to stabilise and increase the numbers ministering in parishes, chaplaincies and new forms of church.
The Church of England is seeking to increase by half the numbers training for ordained ministry and to sustain those numbers for a decade: an increase from about 500 to 750 by 2020. At the same time, the Church is also seeking greater diversity among those training for ministry. This will better reflect the communities where the Church is working, in terms of age, gender and ethnic and social background. The 50% increase is an aspiration and not a limit if more candidates come forward and dioceses require more new clergy.

The Bishop of Guildford, the Rt Rev Andrew Watson, chair of the Ordained Vocations Working Group said, "The aspiration to increase the number of new clergy by 50% is part of a wider vision to release and develop the gifts of the whole people of God."

"It's encouraging to see most of the dioceses really rising to this challenge, as they reshape their vocations teams and put new and more proactive vocations strategies in place. We are picking up a fresh commitment to 'pray to the Lord of the Harvest', along with early reports of an increase in the number of enquiries from potential candidates."

Encouraging more young men and, especially, young women, as well as more Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) worshippers to consider ordination will help the Church of England hit its aspiration of an extra 50% new clergy each year, according to a report on ordained vocations statistics published today. The Church is not just looking for an increase in numbers but also a growth in diversity. Dioceses have said that ministry in the future needs to embody the diversity in the Church and the nation to realise the hopeful future at the heart of Renewal and Reform.

The statistical review to help dioceses plan for the future shows that, while similar numbers of men and women are being recommended for ordination training each year, women are testing their vocations at a later age and tend to retire sooner than the men. Currently, women recommended for training are, on average, significantly older than the men recommended. The majority of younger paid clergy are men, while, among older clergy, more are women. The Church is encouraging women to test their vocations younger.

Hitting the extra 50% aspiration is not just a matter of recommending more people for training. The Church is looking for more people with the right gifts who have a vocation to ordained ministry. It is calling on all worshippers to consider what God is calling them to in the expectation that additional people will step forward to a variety of lay and ordained vocations.

The figures also show that the proportion of BAME candidates recommended for training is lower than the BAME proportion in the population. As part of the push for more candidates for ordination, the Church will be aiming for a greater diversity among its clergy, in terms of ethnic and social background, to reflect the communities where it looks to grow God's church.

An accompanying projections report shows the effect of changes that will flow from increased numbers. The age profile of the clergy would become much flatter as numbers increase, reducing the risk associated with large numbers approaching retirement.
The projections (Figure 10 and Table 4) illustrate a steady decline in the total pool of clergy if the current trends in ordinations and retirements continue (status quo scenario). Clergy delaying retirement by a year (retirements 1 year later scenario) would help slow the rate of decline in numbers but cannot prevent it. Reaching the aspiration of a 50% increase in ordinations (ordinations 50% increase levels sustained scenario), would provide a stable pool of around 7,600 FTE clergy. If the rise is only a temporary peak and ordinations fall again to current levels gradually after 2023 then the pattern of decline will return (ordinations rise and fall scenario).

Alongside these reports, each diocese will receive a parallel report of its own statistics. Dioceses will then use these to plan their own strategy for increasing vocations to the priesthood, in the full knowledge of where they are doing well and where they are doing less well. As dioceses develop their own plans, the national aims will develop accordingly.

Currently, around 500 candidates for ordained ministry are recommended for training each year. By 2020, it is hoped to increase this number to around 750, including a substantial increase in the numbers of young candidates and in the diversity of their backgrounds.

As well as the overall numerical increase the Church is seeking to:

- Increase the proportion of younger ordinands so that half of those recommended for stipendiary ministry are under 32
- Increase the proportion of women among the ordinands under 32 to about half of the total
- Increase the percentage of ordinands who identify as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic towards the same proportion as in the general population in England (15%).

  Progress in these areas will be monitored and reported annually, along with a review of the Church of England's deployment needs.

Other priority areas will be developed in response to the needs of the dioceses and national deployment. There are four current areas for such additional priorities. They are:

- An increase in the number of pioneer ministers
- An increase in lay ministers to serve alongside ordained ministers
- The encouragement of the vocations of all people, including how people live out their faith in daily life
- The encouragement of vocations in religious life.

**Notes**

Read the blog at

https://www.facebook.com/notes/renewal-and-reform/i-can-find-myself-in-these-statistics/1078573235553190