

Selection is about discerning what God has called you to do. Our criteria reflect this.

 young woman standing at front of church, speaking at wooden lectern

Mike Still

Selection is a journey of discovery to help you grow your God-given gifts. At some point in the journey, a decision is taken as to whether your gifts are the right ones for ordained ministry.

You will begin by meeting regularly with your vicar or chaplain to talk about your sense of calling. If your call seems to point clearly towards formal ministry, you will start working with diocesan staff. This part of the process is one of preparation and formation, and can therefore take a long time. It is rarely less than a year.

Time spent discerning your vocation is a time of personal growth. You will be increasing in self-awareness, developing a disciplined prayer-life, and building your knowledge.

As an ordained minister, you must be resilient and open to transformation. In ministry you will be dealing with the essence of what it means to be human, both in yourself and in others. A big part of selection and training is therefore to develop a deep self-awareness and acceptance. You will be expected to discuss complex areas like your close personal relationships, major life events, your personality and your faith and prayer life.

You will only attend a selection panel when those working with you feel you are ready. At this point you will be sponsored by your bishop to enter our national selection process.

## **Testimony: Claire Jones**

### **Praise God who calls the most unlikely of us**

 Young woman ordinand

Women and preaching just didn't go together, as far as I could see. Scripture seemed to say no – and on the rare occasions I did hear women preach, I had my suspicions confirmed: people of my gender clearly couldn't be trusted to handle the Bible properly; we'd only get distracted by emotions and relationships.

Over the last decade, my understanding of the role of women in leadership and ministry has changed fairly wholeheartedly, but it wasn't a simple process. As a teenager who took the authority of Scripture very seriously, I had to spend a couple of years reading books about interpreting the Bible, having conversations with people of a variety of perspectives, and wrestling in prayer, before I eventually became convinced that God can and does call women to every kind of ministry today.

It was somewhere in the midst of this wrestling that I became aware of a very deep desire in me to preach. It didn't really occur to me that this might mean ordination – but I took a gap year working in a church where I started to get some experience, studied theology at university and with the help of my college chaplain, I began speaking to a vocations advisor.

The idea of heading into the formal discernment process still made me uneasy though; I felt too young and too immature to be trusted with a grown-up ministry role. I wanted to test out other ways of using my gifts and spend time really listening to see what direction God might be calling me in.

So, I spent three years after university working for Christian Aid, in a couple of roles that were, on paper, perfect for me. I was using my theology degree, being creative, writing lots, and was highly motivated by working for justice for the world's poorest people. On top of that, I made the most wonderful friends, had a decent salary, and got to enjoy everything the 'young professional' life in London had to offer.

But there was a restlessness I couldn't shake off.

I had got involved in a small and dynamic church, serving on the PCC and the leadership team for the evening service, preaching regularly. But I had so many ideas still – politics? Writing? Campaigning? Teaching? Underlying it all was a fear that I wasn't really good enough to be a priest. I still felt that I needed to pull myself up by my bootstraps before the church would consider me.

The turning point for me was spending a year as a non-resident member of the Community of St Anselm. Through it, I learned a lot about being part of Christ's Church: for instance, about committing wholeheartedly to a diverse group of people, and learning to love one another in all our differences. But most profoundly, I learned from God that I didn't need to make myself a "better" person to serve him. That his greatest desire when it comes to me, is for relationship with me. That he asks only that I draw very near to him and keep my eyes fixed on him. Forming me and shaping my character is God's job: my only task is to stay very close to him.

From there, the doors just seemed to open. I left my job, moved up the country to spend a year on a [Church of England Ministry Experience Scheme](#) placement and went through the diocesan discernment process, through which both I and the Church of England sensed that God is indeed calling me to ordained ministry.

It's an enormous joy to be able to train alongside my civil partner, Rose, and to keep listening to how and where God might be calling us to serve him in the future. I hope that my future ministry will be about helping all sorts of people in all sorts of ways to encounter the God who loves them so deeply: by building relationships, by practical service, by administering sacraments, by writing for the Church, and of course, by preaching!

Praise God who calls the most unlikely of us to join in his work. I am so thankful to have been invited on this adventure.

**Claire Jones**

## **The selection process**

Our selection process for ordained ministry seeks to uncover God's calling for you.

We aim to establish whether your gifts point towards ordained ministry, or if your calling in fact lies elsewhere.

Evidence is collected through references, your application paperwork, and a residential known as a bishop's advisory panel. The panel will make a recommendation to your bishop, who makes the final decision.

Ministers must be listeners, resilient, and open to transformation. You need to be missional, adaptable, and collaborative.

To test you for this challenge, our selection criteria cover the following nine areas listed below. It is important to reiterate that selection is a process of formation and personal growth. Do not be put off if you do not meet all of these criteria right away. You may in time!

### **Vocation**

You should be able to articulate a sense of vocation to ordained ministry, and to be able to reflect on the effect of this calling on your life.

How has this conviction developed? Have conversations with others confirmed it?

Do you understand what it means to be a deacon or priest?

Is your sense of vocation obedient, realistic, and informed?

### **Ministry within the Church of England**

There are many different traditions and worship styles within the Church of England. You should demonstrate an understanding of this diversity, and how your own tradition fits within it.

You need to be committed to learn from and work generously with difference, including reflections on changes in contemporary society and what this means for ministry and the Church.

You should be able to speak of the distinctiveness of ordained ministry. What does it mean to exercise public ministry?

### **Spirituality**

You should be able to demonstrate a commitment to spiritual discipline, including prayer, worship, Bible study, and receiving Holy Communion, which sustains and energises you.

How do you discern God's activity in your life? How has your spiritual life changed over time? And how has it changed you?

How does prayer affect engagement with the world and with others?

### **Personality and character**

Ministry is demanding, so you need to be self-aware, mature, and stable. How do you deal with change, pressure, and stress?

Integrity is essential if you are to generate trust and honesty.

How have you coped with difficult life experiences? How have you reflected on them and incorporated them within your life and understanding?

### **Relationships**

Ministers need to be good at building healthy, personal, professional, and pastoral relationships with those they serve.

You need to be willing to learn from experience, committed to building inclusive relationships, and welcoming of diversity.

How do you manage conflict and difficult relationships? Where do you draw the line between personal and professional life?

### **Leadership and collaboration**

As an ordained minister it will be your responsibility to offer leadership in the church community. You should be able to lead by example in your faith and discipleship, inspiring others as a witness to the servanthood of Christ.

What is your leadership style? What are your strengths and weaknesses? How would you demonstrate your ability to guide and shape the life of the church and its mission to the world?

## **Faith**

You must understand Christian faith, and desire to deepen your understanding. Your personal commitment to Christ should shape your life and work.

How would you reflect critically on your faith and how it connects with contemporary life?

How do you engage others in sharing your faith effectively?

## **Mission and evangelism**

Mission is central to ministry, and your personal commitment to this should be reflected in thought, prayer, and action.

How would you explain to others the good news of Jesus such that it is exciting, accessible and attractive? How would you enable others to develop their own vocation as witnesses of Christ?

## **Quality of mind**

You may not have studied theology academically before. This should not put you off. Ordained ministers need to be curious, open and willing to learn. They need to be able to reflect and to ask questions.

Part of your training will involve study and you will need to show a capacity to undertake this. We support people with disabilities to train, including learning disabilities such as dyslexia. We also regularly support people who have not done any study before.

Training is about making connections between faith and life, about gaining skills to be a minister and developing a lifestyle that will sustain you in ministry.

## **Further information on seeking ordination**

There are some restrictions that will prevent you from being ordained. We've listed these here, along with some of the common misconceptions on barriers to ordination.

## **Mutual Flourishing**

We celebrate the holding of different theological views, and encourage mutual flourishing of ministry in different traditions. Therefore, if you disagree with the ordination or consecration of women, you are still welcome to be ordained. However, all candidates for ordination must assent to the *[five guiding principles](#)* on the ordination of women.

## **Safeguarding**

All candidates for ordination must comply fully with the Church of England's policies on [safeguarding](#).

## **Age**

You must be over eighteen to attend selection. If younger, you are very welcome to start working with your vicar, chaplain, or diocesan vocation team to prepare to attend selection once old enough.

Upper age limits are set by dioceses, so if you think you are too old we would encourage you to check with your diocese before discounting ordination.

## **Gender**

There are no restrictions to ordination based on gender. Female, male, non-binary, and transgender candidates are equally welcomed.

## **Sexuality**

There are no restrictions to ordination based on sexuality. All candidates for ordination must affirm they are willing to live within the Bishops' guidelines on *[Issues in Human Sexuality](#)*.

## **Nationality**

You do not have to be English to be ordained into the Church of England. However you must be receiving Holy Communion in a Church of England church. This might be in England, the Diocese in Europe, the Isle of Man, HM Armed Forces, or a British overseas territory.

If you are part of an Anglican church not in the Church of England, you should talk to your Bishop first.

You will need to comply with immigration rules, set out by the Home Office. We are not able to provide immigration advice.

### **Marital status and relationships**

We recognise marriage as between one man and one woman. Whether married or single, you are equally welcome to be ordained.

Unmarried relationships must be celibate, and all candidates must affirm to live within the Bishops' guidelines on *Issues in Human Sexuality*.

If you are divorced and have remarried whilst your former spouse is still living, or if your spouse is divorced and their former spouse is still living, then you will need permission from your archbishop before you can be ordained. These decisions are taken on a case by case basis.

This process does not apply if you are divorced and have remained single, or if you have remarried after your former spouse has passed away.

### **Faith and denomination**

To be ordained into the Church of England you must be receiving regular Holy Communion in a Church of England church. You must be baptised and confirmed, and will be asked to produce evidence of this as part of selection. Speak to your vicar or chaplain if you are unsure of the denomination of the church in which you worship.

If you are part of an Anglican church outside of the Church of England, you should speak to your bishop about seeking ordination.

It is unusual, but not unheard of, for those already ordained in another denomination to move into ordained ministry in the Church of England. If this is your calling, we would encourage you to speak first to your own church leader or spiritual adviser, to ensure you are in good standing as you leave, and to reflect prayerfully before exploring ministry in the Church of England.

"The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'"

*1 Samuel 3:10*

## **Explore more**

## Explore further with your diocese

Register your interest, experience ministry and test your vocation

## The Ministry Experience Scheme

If you are aged 18-30 why not spend a year serving God through the Ministry Experience Scheme.

### Ordained Ministry

General term to describe deacons, priests and bishops

### Vicar

A clergy person responsible for a parish and the cure of souls there.

### Calling

A person's sense that a specific role or course of action is being asked of them.

### Vocation

A person's sense that a specific role or course of action is being asked of them.

### Discipleship

A commitment to following Jesus day by day

### Mission

Action to help the world become more like the place God intended it to be, and share the good news of Jesus

### Communion

a) the sacramental sharing of bread and wine by the faithful, following the example given in the Last Supper of Christ with his disciples; b) a service in which Holy Communion is received.

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**Source URL:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/vocations/preparing-ordained-ministry/understanding-selection>