



The Church of England is on course to ordain around 950 men and women this year to minister in churches across the country.

This summer marks the start of a wave of ordinations of deacons and priests from a wide range of ages and professions including a former lorry driver, an award-winning performance poet, a former member of the British Army, teachers and a former midwife.

The Bishop of Sheffield, Steven Croft, Chair of the Church of England's Ministry Council, said the ordination of the new priests and deacons was a joyous occasion and a sign of a hopeful future for the Church of England.

"The ordination of so many men and women is an occasion of joy, not only for these priests and deacons and their friends and families but for the communities they will serve and for the Church of England as a whole," he said.

"I thank God that so many different men and women have answered God's call to ordained ministry, for their witness to the good news of the gospel and for the life of service to all that they are embarking upon. They are a sign of a hopeful future for the Church of England."

Those being ordained include Lucy Savage, 26, who will be made a deacon at Wakefield Cathedral on July 2.

Her journey to ordained ministry was first inspired aged just nine years old by her mother Jenny's ordination in 1999 at Bradford Cathedral.

"I remember having an overwhelming feeling at my mother's ordination service that this was going to be me one day - I had a great sense of peace and a curiosity about God," she said.

"Over the years I have been inspired by her example of love and service and her great hospitality to all."

Also being ordained as a deacon is Catherine Okoronkwo, a former teacher, who will be ordained on June 26 in Lichfield Cathedral.

The daughter of a former United Nations diplomat, and born in Nigeria, Catherine was brought up in an Anglican family, has lived in the Middle East and was educated in Israel, the US and the UK.

One of the turning points in her journey to ordination was being asked by the Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu if she had thought about ordination - after meeting him following a service in St Christopher's Church, Sparkhill, Birmingham.

"Something had always kept calling me back to think about what my faith would mean in terms of lived experience and how I might do something practical that reflects my passion and commitment to follow Jesus," she said.

"This chance meeting with the Archbishop was a key moment in helping me to take this calling seriously."

Rev Sharon Lord, a former midwife, was ordained a priest at All Saints Church, Burton-on-Trent on Sunday (June 19).

She said: "In 2012 God sent me a 'curve ball' in the form of a calling to be ordained. It would not go away and kept on coming back.

"I had a really successful career and I loved it - and at the time, being ordained was not in my plan at all.

"I loved my job in the health service and I loved being a midwife with a passion but I don't miss it, I'm having a fabulous time and I think that it is a sign that this new vocation has come from God."

Rev Phil Maries, a former scaffolder and lorry driver for 32 years, will be ordained as priest on June 25 in his parish of Normanton All Saints, a former mining village in the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales.

His journey to faith and eventual ordination was influenced by a CB broadcast he heard by a vicar in the early part of his career while working as driver on the road to Glasgow.

He said: "The vicar who spoke on the CB radio broadcast would not have known if he had reached anybody - but that was his calling, and it was a life-changing moment for me. Looking back, my life could have gone two ways - the way that it has done, or I could have ended up in prison or an alcoholic and in a very low place.

"The faithfulness of that vicar has had an enormous impact on my life and I want to pay that back and do the same for somebody else."

Rev Sunny George, a former teacher in an engineering college, who settled in the UK from India in 2006, will be ordained a priest on July 2 in Leicester Cathedral.

Rev Sunny, who ministers in All Saints Church, Leicester, said of his ordination as a priest: "It is a blessed occasion for me - I can see that God has been preparing me for this day."

As part of the ordination service, the new priests and deacons are addressed by a Bishop of the diocese in which they will serve who will say:

"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."

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