We want to encourage the church to release the gifts of ministry among all its members, especially those who serve and lead in different contexts. Together to build up the church and participate in mission.

Jane Willis
Ministry is a response to the needs of the Church and the world and is part of every Christian's calling to love and to serve. Lay ministries are diverse, with a wide variety of contexts and roles, ranging from short-term tasks to life-long vocations.

The Church at all levels has a role to play in encouraging and training people in the skills needed for service.

There are a range of lay ministry roles available in different dioceses, with most selection, training and authorisation taking place in dioceses or parishes. When that service takes on the character of public ministry then particular forms of training and authorisation may be required.

Lay ministry falls broadly into three categories: Recognised, Authorised and Licensed.

**Locally Recognised**

**Recognised** ministries happen in the local parish, benefice, chaplaincy or fresh expression. Examples of recognised ministry include leading a home group, pastoral care, assisting with children and youth ministry, offering prayer and listening, acting as a chaplaincy assistant or exploring growing church locally.

Selection, recognition and training is usually local, led by the minister in the parish or deanery. Some local ministry roles will have diocesan training too, for example safeguarding courses.

Recognised ministers would usually be supervised by the incumbent or a delegated responsible person authorised or licensed to lead an area of work. There should be regular local review for renewal of recognition.

Responsibility for safeguarding training and checks lies with the PCC or other local responsible body.

**In the Community - Authorised**

**Authorised** ministries represent the church in the wider community.

Authorisation (which might be called Commissioning) is by the bishop on the advice of local officers, it may be time limited or reviewed regularly on behalf of the bishop.

Examples of authorised ministry includes pastoral assistants, worship leaders, preachers, or assistant youth and children's ministers.

Selection may be local or diocesan, while training is usually through a diocesan programme.

Authorised ministers are supervised by the local incumbent with final accountability to the bishop.

Responsibility for safeguarding training and checks is with the diocese.
“I first got involved with doing youthwork when I was about 17. My church was really good at raising up young leaders.

I felt God was calling me to work with young people. I spoke to my church leader about it and applied for a youth pastor training scheme. Now I'm the youth minister at Christ Church Bedford, where I run activities for young people, build relationships with the local schools and help organise a town-wide youth event a couple of times a year.

At the heart of my ministry is young people engaging with God and to support them in that journey, and if they're in a place where they're not sure about God, to come alongside them and help them to find God for themselves and understand God as their friend and someone who loves them and cares about them.”

AJ Wade, Youth Minister

In Leadership - Licensed

Licensed lay ministries represent the church in a public, representative or leadership role. Examples of licensed lay ministers include Readers, (also known as Licensed Lay Ministers), Church Army evangelists, lay workers and some lay pioneers.

Licensed ministers may be involved in evangelism, mission-enabling, teaching, preaching, leading of worship, taking funerals, leading a Fresh Expression and community outreach.

Licenses are issued by the diocesan bishop as required by Canon and are nationally recognised.

Selection is carried out by dioceses, following national guidelines. Training is carried out by the diocese or on behalf of the diocese and there is provision for ongoing ministerial development.

Licensed lay ministers are supervised by the local incumbent, with final accountability to the bishop. There should be a regular, ideally annual, review.

Responsibility for safeguarding training and checks is with the diocese.
“I was part of a church that released so many people’s gifts by inviting them to have a go. Lots of us were invited to preach. It had a massive impact: many of us went on to some kind of ministry. Just giving chances can really help people discover their gifts.

I had a go and I realised I wanted to continue to preach, but I probably would need some training and to formalise the arrangement, so that was the time I considered becoming a Reader. It came from the angle of a call to preach, something I found I was good at, and others encouraged me. I also had people giving me wise advice for discerning what was at the root of that call and to talk seriously to about working out what my call was to, particularly since so often people assume that a sense of calling is to ordained ministry.

I’ve found part of my role is to be in the church and in the workplace and to share a lay perspective with ordained ministers, but also to think about what it means to exercise pastoral responsibility on behalf of the church.”

Richard Medcalf, Reader

Note: These categories naturally overlap, and not every form of ministry will fit naturally into just one. These descriptions are intended as a guide to help dioceses release the gifts of all God’s people in the way they plan their lay ministry work. They are intentionally broad and may not always reflect the way you choose to do things.

If you’re looking to become a lay minister, speak with your vicar, chaplain or equivalent, or with the vocations team in your diocese.
Discernment is a journey of discovery to help you grow your God-given gifts. When discerning a call to licensed lay ministry or to be a reader, an individual will be asked to explore, with the guidance of a vocations advisor, six characteristics, which they should inhabit: Love for God, Call to Ministry, Love for People, Wisdom, Fruitfulness and Potential.

Click here to read more.

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

1 Corinthians 12: 4-7

Related

Growing vocations everywhere

Good practice and resources to support dioceses in growing vocations to ministry.

The Ministry Experience Scheme

If you are aged 18 to 30, why not spend a year serving God through the Ministry Experience Scheme; and if you are passionate about working with children, young people and families then there is the new MES CYPF stream beginning this September.

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