



MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

EXPLORING ORDAINED MINISTRY



DO YOU FEEL A CALLING TO TEACH AND PASTOR OTHERS?

The Calling to Ordained Ministry:

Every one of us, as Christians, have a common calling as Christ's ambassadors to the world. However, it may also be that you have a strong sense of a call (or vocation) into ordination. This is a call that can come to you over many years or in a much shorter period of time. It can come to the young or old, experienced or inexperienced. A vocation for ordination is usually recognised firstly by a person feeling a strong, persistent conviction that God is calling them, usually after much thought and prayer. Then secondly when the church recognises this calling in a person and also their ability to undertake it.

What if I am interested in ordained ministry?

Some people who have a strong conviction to serve Christ rule out the ordained ministry as an option before ever properly considering it. If you believe you have a growing calling to serve Christ and others through leadership then you should consider also being open to God in prayer to a calling for the ordained ministry. For many this will still be a calling, for now, into lay leadership but for others the conviction that ordained leadership may be ahead, could form.

If you think that God might be calling you to ordination, even if doubts persist, you should talk to close Christian friends and to your minister. It is not presumptuous to do this, nor does it elevate you in any way above others; on the contrary it is a process that requires genuine humility. Your minister and others will help you discern if this is a calling that you should begin to explore.



EXPLORE ORDAINED MINISTRY

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11)

The process of exploring ordination is designed to build your faith, discover your gifts and test your calling to ordination. It is important to note that beginning this process does not imply that a person will or should become ordained. Many people undertake various beneficial aspects of the route without becoming ordained but, through the process of exploring ministry, they discern a calling to areas of lay leadership that they may not have had previously.

The stages for exploring ordained ministry.

The Exploring Ministry Group: This is an informal group that meets 4 times per year and its meetings involve exploring ministry in different settings, broadening understanding of ministry roles and with time for advice and questions. It can be joined following a recommendation from your minister and is run by the two Diocesan Directors of Ordinands (DDO) who will help and guide you through the whole process. The next steps may include:

Certificate in Christian Theology and Practice (CTTP): This course is a distance learning certificate involving 6 modules taught over 6 weekends in Dublin. It begins each November and lasts for 14 months. It is a key part of the study for ordained ministry as a 'traditional' minister in the Church of Ireland (the MTh route) but is also part of the newer Ordained Local Ministry route (see below). The CTTP is also used for those studying to become a Lay Reader.

Masters in Theology Course (Full time): Based in Dublin, this is 3 years long (full time) and in the third year students serve in a placement with a training parish. They also complete a Masters dissertation in the 3rd year. The MTh allows a candidate to be ordained for *stipendiary* ministry, which means that the church has certain obligations to provide an income (stipend), housing and other expenses. After completing their training almost all stipendiary ministers start parish ministry as Curates. Students on the MTh F-T receive a living grant to enable them to study full-time.

Masters in Theology Course (non-residential): Similar to above the non-residential MTh does differ in that it is a four-year part-time course taught by means of blended distance learning and residential input over 36 weekends. The students undertake the same modules as those studying full-time and are qualified at the end for the same stipendiary ministry.

Selection Conference: Before the MTh is started a candidate must have the recommendation of both their local minister, the diocesan bishop and agreement of the Selection Conference. The Selection Conference is for the whole Church of Ireland and so involves candidates from all over the island. It usually takes two days and involves several interviews, assessments and questions by bishops and others.

Ordained Local Ministry(OLM) Course (Part time): OLM ministry is driven by particular needs in a locality where an ordained person is required. Therefore OLM ministers are ordained into a particular local ministry and cannot exercise this ministry beyond that unless permitted by the bishop. They cannot receive stipendiary benefits (although they may receive a wage) and are supervised by a stipendiary minister. Their role tends to include pioneer ministries such as church plants, chaplaincies and key assistant roles in churches where ordained ministry is essential. OLM training consists of the CTTP followed by a further 18 months learning in a context based educational programme with 6 modules relevant to ministry. Typically this will total around 3 years of part-time study. OLM candidates are selected by their local diocese (in partnership with another diocese) in conjunction with a ministry where ordained leadership is required.

KEY TIMES OF THE YEAR...

Exploring Ministry Group

4 evenings per year
/Sep/Nov/Feb/May
(can be joined at any stage)

Closing date for the CCTP

Mid-October

Commencement of the CCTP

Mid-November

Closing date for the Masters in Theology

November

Closing date for Ordained Local Ministry

June

MTH course commencement

September

OLM course commencement

January



COST

The Exploring Ordination group is free but the Foundation Course Certificate costs £2,100 in total. Of this amount, two thirds is covered by the central church and sending diocese and the remaining amount (£700) is the responsibility of the student. It is usually due at the beginning of the course. It is often the case however that the local sending parish will assist with this amount.

On successful selection for the Masters in Theology course the fees and college accommodation are paid for by the Church of Ireland with a substantial living grant paid to full time students.

On successful selection for the OLM Course the fees are covered by the diocese and a small grant is awarded each year towards study books.

For more information on ordained ministry:

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