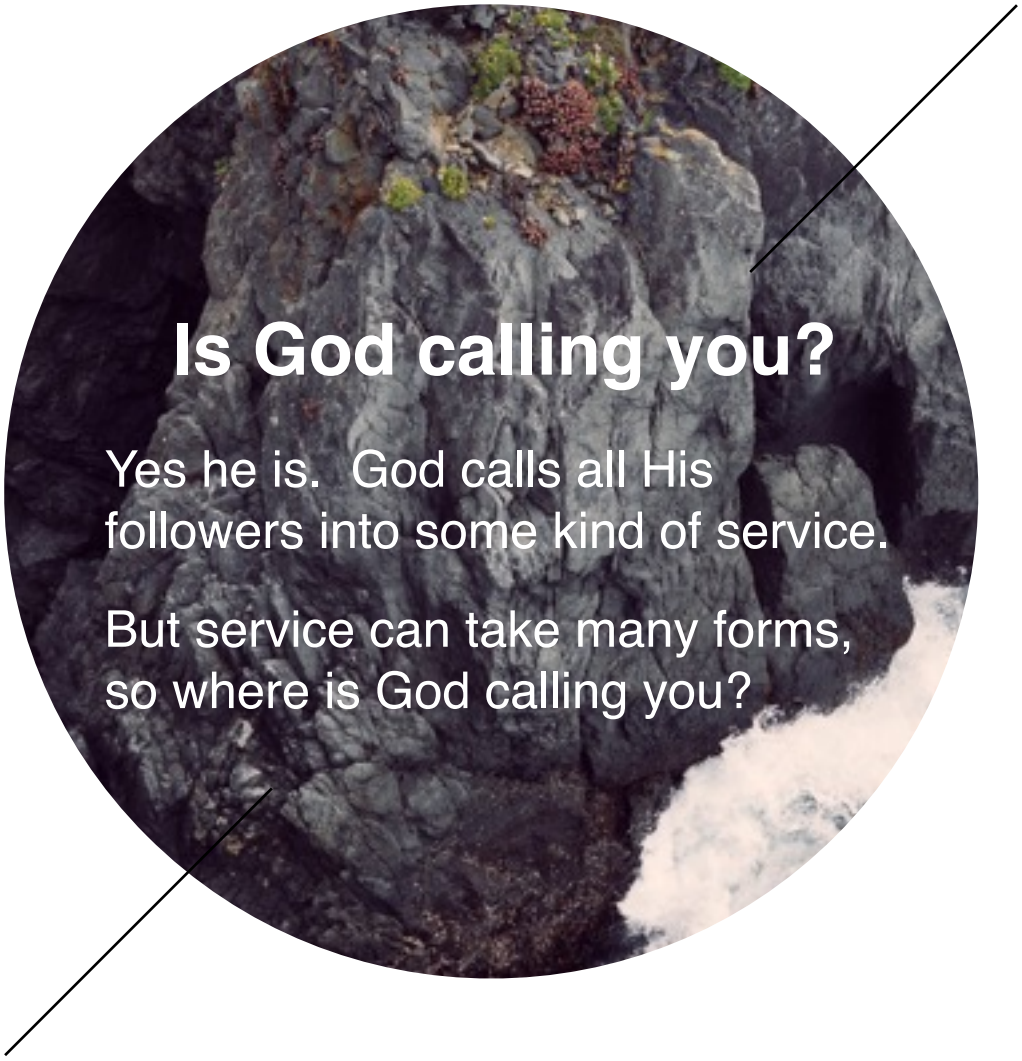
DIOCESE of
Down & Dromore

MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

EXPLORING ORDAINED AND DIOCESAN READER MINISTRY



Is God calling you?

Yes he is. God calls all His followers into some kind of service.

But service can take many forms, so where is God calling you?

We are all called to a deeper relationship with God and with each other, reflecting His love to others – wherever they are and whatever they do in life. For most of us that means getting involved in our local church, serving in all kinds of ministry such as hospitality, children's ministry, prayer and outreach. For some, the calling will be to help lead and teach the church and this involves being authorised to minister in a public capacity. In the Church of Ireland this usually means either a commissioning into a role as Diocesan Reader or ordination into the role of a Priest or Minister.

Diocesan Readers are lay people who are licensed (authorised) by the bishop to preach, teach, lead worship and engage in other pastoral work not just in their own parish but in other churches throughout the diocese. This is a significant and growing role in the life of the church.

Ordained Ministers are called to proclaim God's Word, call people to repentance, baptise and disciple them, lead them in prayer and worship, and encourage and comfort them. They serve and pastor usually within a parish church context.

Is this ministry for you?

DO YOU FEEL A CALLING TO TEACH AND PASTOR OTHERS?

The Calling to Ordained Ministry:

Every one of us, as Christians, has a common calling as Christ's ambassadors to the world. However, it may also be that you have a strong feeling 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 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 route for 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 route does not imply that a person will or should become ordained. Many people undertake various beneficial aspects of the route without becoming ordained but, by exploring it, they have discerned a strong calling to areas of lay leadership that they may not have had previously.

The stages for exploring ordained ministry.

1. **The Exploring Ordination Group:** This is an informal group that meets 4 times per year and involves a mix of exploring ministry in different settings, broadening understanding of ministry roles and with time for advice and questions.
   It is usually run by the Diocesan Director of Ordinands (DDO) who will help and guide you through the whole process. Members are usually expected to belong to this group for at least 1 year and, should they decide they want to explore the calling further, will take part in a few 'support interviews' designed to help discern God's call for the next stage.

2. **The Foundation Course:** This course is a distance learning graduate certificate in theology, ministry and mission that begins in February each year and lasts for 15 months. It is designed for those who are keen to develop their own capacity for furthering God's mission and to test God's calling on their life. For some the course will help confirm a call to ordination and for others it will further enhance a call to, and skills in, lay ministry.

3. **Selection Conference:** During the Foundation Course students exploring the call to ordination will decide with their DDO if they would like their names put forward for the Selection Conference for ordained ministry. If agreed they will be asked to attend interviews with the Bishop (and others that he appoints) who will decide whether to recommend attending selection conference. This decision is made in the October after the Foundation course's February start but the conference doesn't take place until the following Spring.
   The Selection Conference is for the whole Church of Ireland and so involves candidates from all over the island. It usually takes a few days and involves several interviews, assessments and questions by bishops and others.

4. **Masters in Theology Course:** If the selection conference results in a recommendation for the ordained ministry then students will be accepted onto the Masters in Theology Course the following September, based in Dublin. The course is 3 years long (full time) and in the third year students are ordained as deacons and placed with a training parish, usually near to their home.

5. **Priesthood:** At the end of the Masters course the deacons will have been assigned a parish (usually for 3 years) to work as assistants to the Rector, called Curates. Before they begin their role however they are ordained as priests/presbyters and after around 3 years of the curacy these are eligible to become Rectors of a parish themselves.

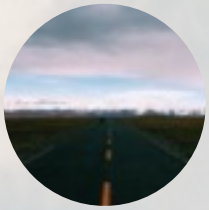
KEY TIMES OF THE YEAR...

Exploring Ordination Group	4 evenings per year
Closing date for the Foundation Course	End of October
Commencement of the Foundation Course	Mid-February
Recommendation for Selection Conference	October
Selection Conference	March/April
Masters in Theology course commencement	September

COST

The Exploring Ordination group is free but the Foundation Course Certificate costs around £1,650 in total. Of this amount two thirds is covered by the central church and sending diocese and the remaining amount (around £550) is the responsibility of the student, usually due close to the beginning of the course. It can be the case however that the local parish assists 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 small living grant also available to students.



Other routes into ordained ministry:
While this is the main route into ordained ministry in the Church of Ireland there are other training options for ordination becoming available including part-time training, pioneer and Self Supporting Ministry.

Please contact the DDO for more information on this.

For more information on ordained ministry:

Please contact the Diocesan Director of Ordinands: Rev. Adrian Green
adrian-green@hotmail.co.uk

-or contact the Diocesan Development Officer: Andrew Brannigan
andrew@downanddromore.org

Diocesan Readers are people in the Church of Ireland, from all walks of life, who are trained and licensed by the church to preach, teach and lead worship in a voluntary capacity

Diocesan Lay Readers are men or women, old or young, from a wide variety of backgrounds who have a significant voluntary role in assisting the ministry of the church. They are authorised by the bishop to preach, teach, lead worship and engage in pastoral work, not just in their own parish, but also in other churches throughout the diocese. As such Readers can be asked from time to time to support other churches in need of someone to help preach and read services.
As the role of a Reader in teaching and leading is significant, potential Readers are given training in Biblical studies, theology, ministry and preaching over a two year period before they are commissioned.

If you think that God might be placing on you a calling to serve him more fully through a teaching and leadership role within the church, then a Diocesan Lay Reader role may be for you

Vocation and Nomination

The vocation or call to become a Reader may be felt by an individual or may come from outside; from their minister, a fellow worshipper, or from someone else entirely. If you think that God might be calling you to Diocesan Lay Reader ministry you should consider if you:

- Have an active faith in prayer, study and ministry to others.
- Have a consistent involvement in ministry in your local church.
- Have a desire to teach, preach and communicate the faith Biblically.
- Are prepared to commit their time and energy to this calling.
- Have the support of others around you in this calling.

As Diocesan Lay Readers minister to the local church it is necessary for all candidates to have the support of their church and a nomination from their Rector in order to proceed. Therefore, it is important to talk to your minister who will advise you and prayerfully consider whether to recommend you for the course.

TRAINING PROGRAMME 2017 onwards

The training for Diocesan Lay Readers begins in February each year and last for two years.

The training is designed to cover all the key aspects of Reader ministry and to equip you with the knowledge, skills and practical experience to effectively support the church

The training course has 3 strands:

Graduate Certificate in Theology, Ministry and Mission.

This distance learning certificate is run in partnership with the Church of Ireland Theological Institute (CITI) and St. John's Theological College, Nottingham. It is identical to the Foundation Course used as an access course for ordination training except that it is studied over two years instead of one. The course has three modules on:

1. Biblical Studies. Studied from March-October 2017
2. Christian Doctrine in Focus. Studied from October 2017 –June 2018
3. Theological Perspectives: Christian Ministry. Studied from June 2018-March 2019

These modules are taught through a combination of distance learning and contact time at the CITI. Assignments and tutor support for this certificate are accessed and submitted online.

Formation for Ministry

In addition to the 3 modules outlined above there will be 6 Reader study Saturdays at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute on 4 other subjects:

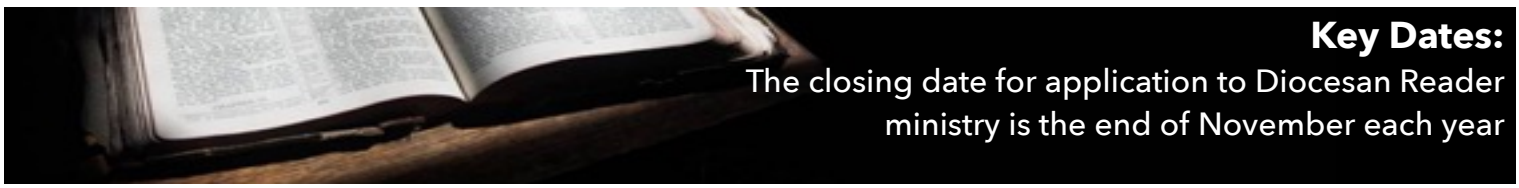
1. Homiletics –how to prepare and deliver sermons.
2. Liturgy –leading worship within the Church of Ireland.
3. Church History –the historical context of the church
4. Spirituality –the beliefs, values and way of life that reflect Biblical teaching

These subjects are looked at concurrently over the study days and are assessed through a combination of assignments and practical work.

Diocesan Training

This takes place in Belfast and involves around 15 evening sessions over the two years focussing on developing the knowledge and skills to deliver Biblical preaching and lead liturgical worship in church. These practical skills will also be assessed via 3 preaching assignments and 2 liturgy assignments.

- 2030 Readers: The diocese is keen to encourage younger Diocesan Lay readers in their 20's and 30's to play a full part in the leadership of the church. Candidates in this age range will, in addition to participating in the rest of the training, be offered further help to develop their leadership skills.
- Training Support: The support of each candidate undertaking this course will be a crucial element in helping their development as Diocesan Lay Readers. Each meeting of diocesan candidates will include some tutor group support as well as one-to-one support from the Diocesan Warden of Readers and Diocesan Development Officer



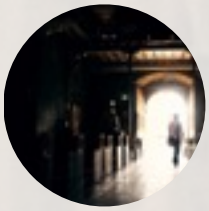
Key Dates:

The closing date for application to Diocesan Reader ministry is the end of November each year

SELECTION FOR READER MINISTRY

Key characteristics that candidates should be developing for Diocesan Lay Reading Ministry include vocation, faith, leadership, relationships and spiritual disciplines.

The selection process is designed to test the vocation of applicants for Reader ministry and to assess, both their potential for serving and developing as a Reader, and their ability to cope with and benefit from training. There are 3 steps:



Step (1) **Vocation**

This involves your prayerful consideration of whether God is calling you to be a Diocesan Lay Reader and a discussion with your local minister. At this point it may be helpful to also meet with the Diocesan Warden of Readers to informally talk about what is involved and get more information.

Step (2) **Nomination**

Should you and your minister both believe that this is a calling you would like to test further, your minister will nominate you to the Warden of Readers for the diocese, who is responsible for Lay Reader Training. You will also be asked to fill out a short application form to accompany this nomination.

Step (3) **Interview**

Once nominated, the Warden of Readers will arrange a date for you to be interviewed by a panel of 3-4 people. These interviews are designed to help explore, in a supportive environment, the key characteristics that candidates should have for Diocesan Lay Reading ministry.

COST

The total cost for the course is £1,650. The diocese pays one third of the amount with the remaining two-thirds shared by agreement between the sending parish and the candidate, usually with the parish covering at least one third of the full amount. This sum can be paid in instalments.

The cost includes all the teaching, materials and any accommodation and food required during study days but does not cover travel expenses.

For more information on Diocesan Reader ministry:

Please contact the Diocesan Warden of readers:

Rev. Willie Nixon
revwillie@drumbegparish.org

-or contact the Diocesan Development Officer:

Andrew Brannigan
andrew@downanddromore.org