

The purpose of this leaflet is to offer some introductory thoughts on the subject of ordained ministry within the Diocese of Exeter, the ministry of a priest and of a permanent deacon.

Often we think of ordained ministry in terms of what people do. But this leaflet will take a different approach. Why vocation of priesthood, whilst some priests will continue to operate fairly traditional styles of ministry, others will find very different renewed interest in the place of permanent deacons in the church – an expression of ordained ministry for which they are therefore to focus on particular tasks.

Given this fluidity in role how can we talk about ordained ministry? Hopefully the list below will help to identify certain aspects.

Called: All ordained ministry has at its root a sense of call (that is what the vocation means). In other words we are not called to be a deacon. There will need to be a sense of God's call which is recognised by the individual and by the wider church. This call will always need to be tested through the selection processes of the church.

Set aside: Ordained ministers are set aside. That is to say that their ministry should shape the whole of their life (which is not always true for the church). Obviously all Christians are called to have a faith which is reflected in everything they are, and do. This is an example in this. They will, however, never be perfect.

Offering & Enabled: Ordination is a process by which service is offered and through the grace of God enabled. Any one who is calling in their own strength is seriously misguided. Both offering and being touched by grace have an unpredictable element. An appreciation of that should accompany anyone considering ordained ministry.

Public: Ordained ministry involves a degree of public scrutiny. Whilst all Christians may be held to account by friends and family, the press or gossiped about in the local bar. But ordained ministry is open to that degree of public awareness and judgement. It is a matter of members of clergy families.

Order: At the root of the word 'ordained' lies the sense of order – anyone ordained is 'in holy orders'. This involves a commitment for the welfare of the church community, and to its means of governance and to those placed in authority within it. This is about having an awareness of the effect of one's words and actions upon other members of the body of Christ and acting responsibly in the light of that.

The second commandment relates to the centrality of our relationship with our fellow human beings. It is the function of that commandment, to remind them of what it means, to help and encourage them as they explore what it means for themselves.

Of course there will always be an overlap of these ministries. They are mutually dependent. The two commandments, looking at this Summary of the Law does help to clarify the particular emphases of the ministries of priest and permanent deacon.

Selection and training

Those offering themselves for ordained ministry will face rigorous processes of both selection and training:

Selection: Those considering ordination will normally begin by having conversations with their Rector. They may then work with them, and possibly also to a Vocations Adviser. If it is thought that the vocation may be genuine, they will be referred to a prospective priest a joint Scottish Episcopal Church and Church of England Panel as well). This process takes time, effort

Training: Those accepted for training will then be expected to fulfil the Church's requirements in that field. Training involves the preparation of the person for the demands and opportunities of ordained ministry. This training will be delivered through placements and weekends away. Again this is a demanding process.

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