



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
SUFFOLK

# Self-Supporting Ministry

Use your gifts to serve God and others in the name of Christ





Ordained Ministers (deacons and priests) are called to represent the church in the wider world. They lead the church's mission and ministry through worship and prayer, preaching and teaching, community engagement and pastoral work.

This booklet relates to Self-Supporting Ministers, SSMs who do not receive a stipend for their ministry. Self-Supporting Ministers may serve in their locality or further afield. They may work full or part-time.

**Growing in God**

# Self-Supporting Ministers

Self-supporting ministers (SSMs) are called by God to exercise a priestly ministry within the Church of England.

They are trained to the same standard as any other clergy, and their main duties are broadly similar to stipendiary clergy: to reconcile the divided, heal the broken, and restore the lost, but they choose to exercise their ministry without being paid a stipend.

For some of them this means that their parish is their place of work, for others it is where they live. Most work in teams, and some are a local minister for one particular community, or a sector minister for one particular type of ministry. Some of them are licensed just to a particular benefice or deanery while others are deployable by the Bishop to wherever their skills might be needed most.

Many of them cherish the ability to work out their calling within a secular work environment, or to use the freedom of a reduced parochial commitment to develop ministries in other ways.

All SSMs serve under the terms of a work agreement, which defines their responsibilities and time commitment. They all work within the accountability structures of the parish and diocese.

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God is a god of the unexpected. How could He take an insecure, shy young woman and transform her into his vessel of grace and leadership in his church? I felt God challenging me to leave behind a stable wage and trust God completely for all that I needed. The move has enabled me to become Padre to Sudbury 2470 Squadron Air Cadets and work as a volunteer within St Nicholas Hospice Care Chaplaincy Team. Perhaps the greatest aspect of Self-Supporting Ministry is the opportunity to stand in that precious space between world and church, opening the door for each to meet with the other and find God's blessing. The Revd Jenny Ridley.

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# How do I know if I am called?

God's calling is both simple and complicated. It may start with a strong inner sense of being drawn to something, maybe not clearly defined at first, or by a dissatisfaction with what you are doing at the moment, or perhaps someone who knows you well might encourage you to think about this.

This call needs to be tested by others, including your parish and incumbent, and then by the Diocesan Director of Ordinands and others, who will be able to help you work out precisely what you might be being called to. You may be asked to attend a national selection conference called a Bishops' Advisory Panel.



# Discernment

Discernment takes place in the same way as all offering themselves for priestly ministry. It begins with a talk with your Incumbent and members of your ministry team. It might be helpful for those expressly exploring SSM to meet with the Bishop's Advisor for Self-Supporting Ordained Ministry and other SSMs you might know, and then with a member of the Diocesan director of ordinand's team.

There are several pathways for those exploring Self-Supporting Ministry, some go through the national discernment process, and their call is considered at a Bishops' Advisory Panel (BAP). They might be discerned as having either incumbent potential or assistant minister potential, and after training will have a nationally recognised ministry which makes them deployable across the country. SSMs can also train on part-time courses which include distance learning, private study and written work, dependant on their other commitments. Others may be discerned locally to train through the Auxiliary Ordination Pathway (AOP), in which case they are ordained for ministry within the diocese normally within their home parish. This course is less academic but none the less rigorous. Please see our leaflet on AOP on our website.

If you are not recommended for these pathways further discernment may be required and support is offered from the diocese.



# Training

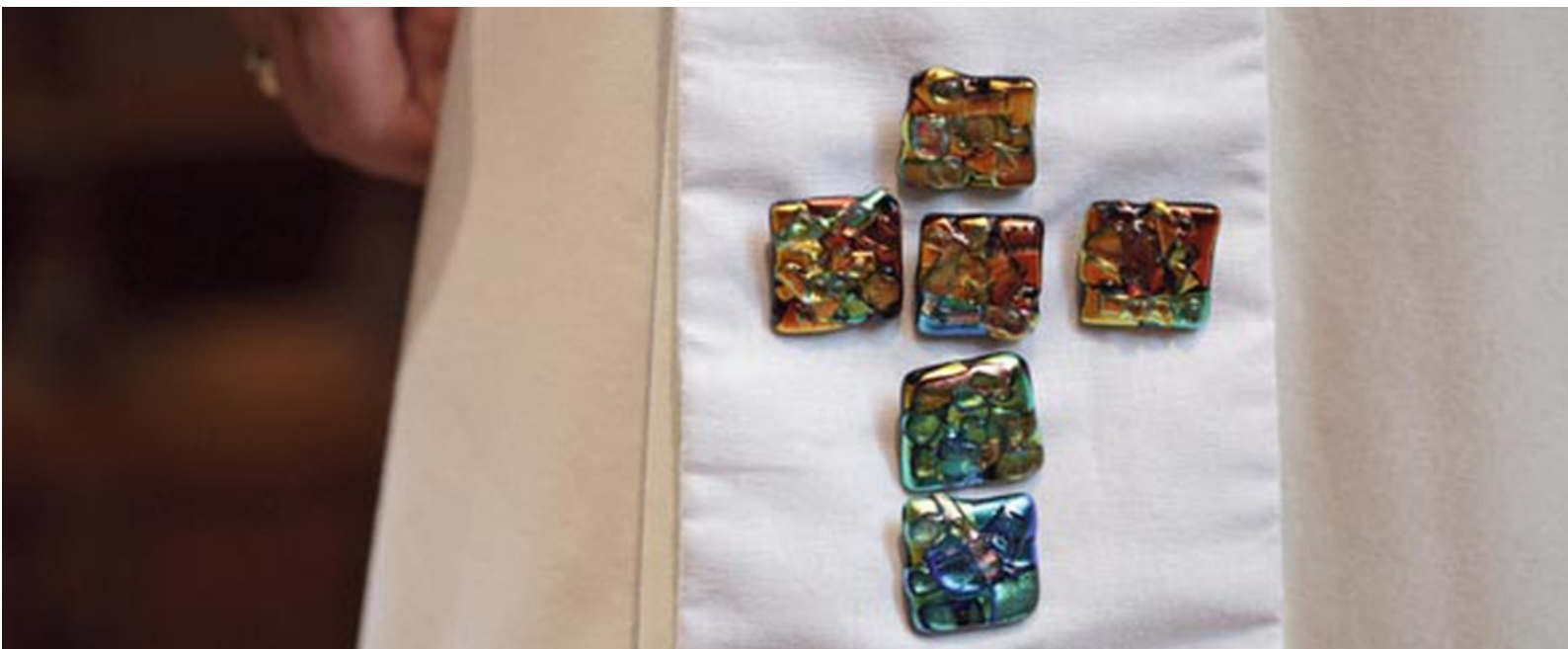
Training through a national training course will involve time and study with others from neighbouring dioceses and this requires focus and commitment and a certain amount of academic study and written work.

If you chose to training through AOP you will be supported by regular meetings with the Bishops. Training follows a broad curriculum and learning points, and some written work is required to help assess how well you have engaged with the training inputs, and your reflections on these will be a key part of your final portfolio.

Ordinands will be expected to serve two placements, one in a parish different from their own to broaden their experience and understanding of the Church of England, and another at the Cathedral. Some might be encouraged to undertake a longer placement to explore new experiences and learning opportunities. These strengthen the formational experience.

Most SSMs move 'back' to the sending parish upon the successful completion of the curacy and Initial Ministerial Education.

During training, all ordinands join a group run by a mentor, meeting about eight times a year, studying a book together and reflecting on their training and to monitor how they are working with their training supervisor.



# When will I be ordained?

After you have successfully completed your training course, the Bishop will ordain you first as deacon and all being well, in the following year you will be ordained priest.

# What support is there?

After ordination most SSMs work as members of a team, supporting and being supported by others. You will also be a member of a cohort group for those who have been ordained recently.



# For more information

Please visit our website pages for exploring your Christian calling available [here](#), where we also have a list of [key dates](#). Resources specific to this role are also available on the diocesan website.

For enquiries about initial or ongoing training:

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