

SHARED DISCERNMENT PROCESS FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY

How does this process work in the Diocese of Truro

January 2023

Did you know?

In 2021, a new national 'Shared Discernment Process' for discerning vocations to ordination was launched by the National Ministry Team for the Church of England. All those who started ordination training in 2022 worked through this new two stage process with our DDO team who have all been trained in using the new process and supporting candidates through it. As a team we believe that it is a very positive development in encouraging vocation to ordained ministry for the Church in the future. This small booklet is designed to help colleagues understand the outline of the new process and what their own role in a person's exploration might be.

Qualities not criteria!

The most distinct change is that we no longer use formation criteria that are to be met, but instead look at how a person inhabits qualities, qualities of personality, character, relationships, and the inner life. This is a key culture change called for by the House of Bishops. The process is designed to enable access for all, as well as being simple, clear, trusted, flexible and welcoming. It has two stages, the first is essentially looking at the experience and development a person already brings and the second is looking for the potential for learning and being that can be developed in on-going formation. The qualities are drawn very much from the ordinal and the domains help reflection on praxis.

There are six qualities:

Love for God, Call to Ministry, Love for People
Wisdom, Fruitfulness, Potential

And each one is explored regarding the candidate's relationship to these four domains:
Christ, The Church, The World, The Self

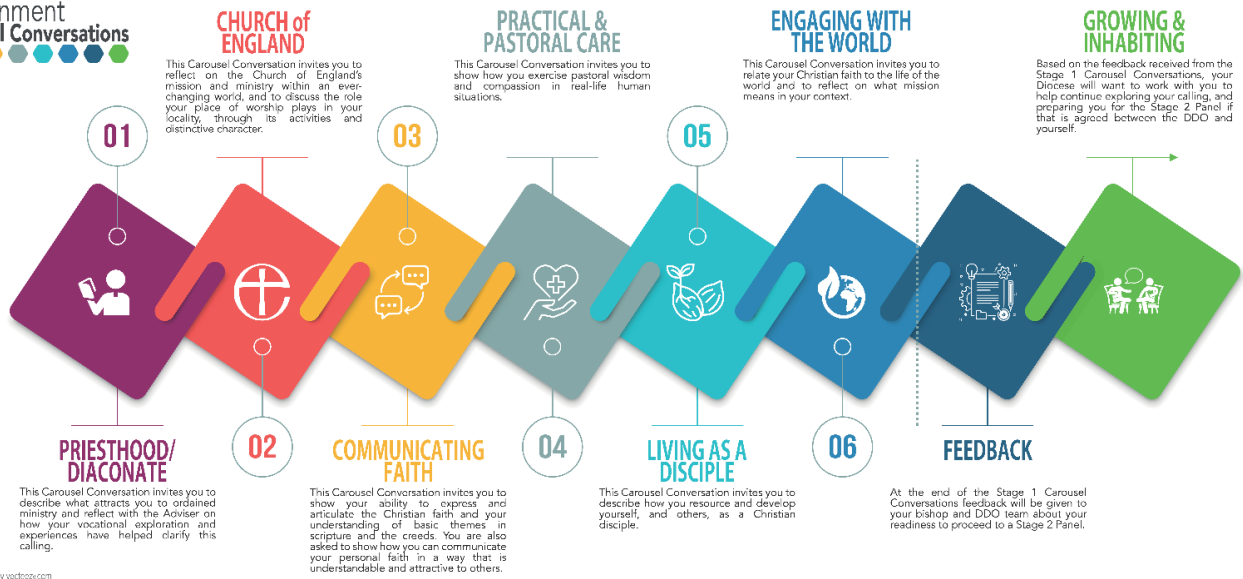
One way of viewing the four domains as shared by the National Ministry Team, is:

- **CHRIST: UP** in relation to God in Christ. Ordained ministry shapes your discipleship
- **CHURCH: ACROSS** to either side. Ordained ministry is never just individual but involves the call of the Church
- **WORLD: OUT** as every quality of ordained ministry has a missional aspect
- **SELF: IN** as ordained ministry has to be inhabited personally and lived out from the person you are

At the end of this booklet are two nationally agreed grids which set out the Qualities for Discernment for both priestly and distinctive diaconate ministry and the things that we are looking to discern in a person as already inhabited, or possible to form and develop in the future.

The national element of the Discernment Process is now held across two Stages, the first being Carousel Conversations that primarily take place online via Zoom within a day, and the second a Stage 2 Panel that is face to face over two days. The first stage, the Carousel Conversations, are focussed on the '*doing*' and '*knowing*' aspects of the qualities and involves 6 15–20-minute conversations with national Bishops' Advisors. The material covered can be seen in the graphic below:

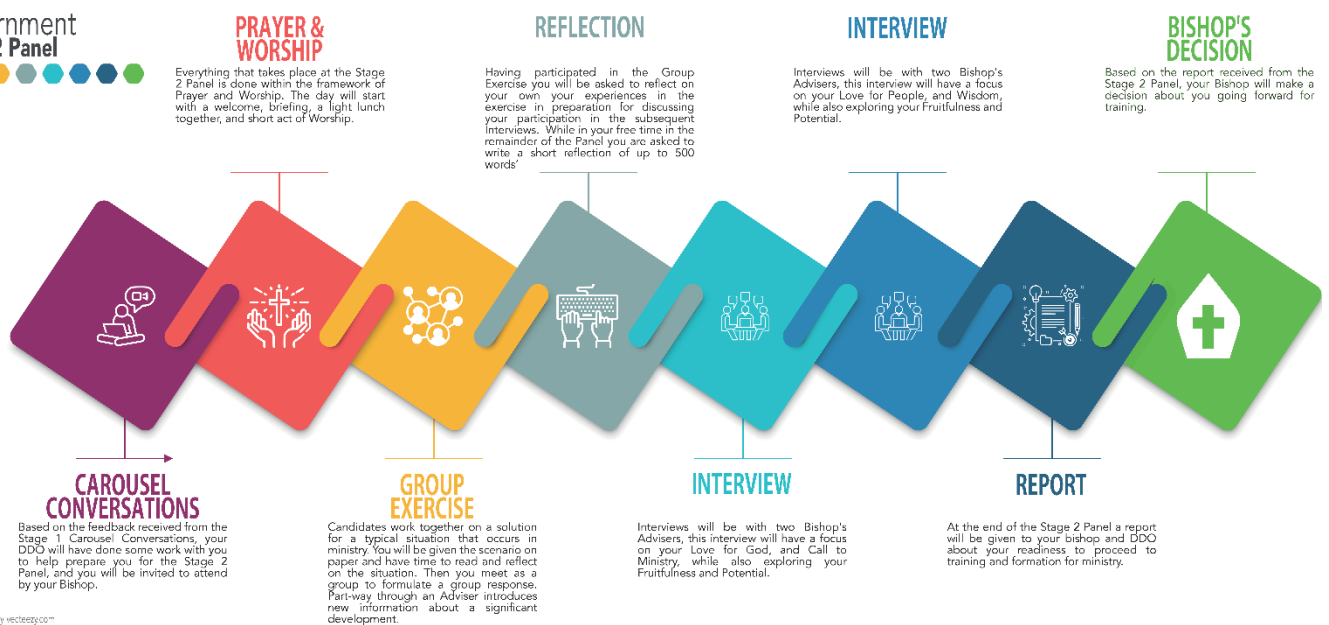
Discernment
Carousel Conversations



Following these conversations, the DDO receives feedback from the Advisors which enables the DDO team and the Sponsoring Bishop to decide at what point a person might be ready to go forwards for the second stage of the process. Prior to the Stage 1 there will also be a Psychological Assessment for Wellbeing by a trained assessor. This is now a national requirement.

At the right time the person can then go to a Stage 2 Panel. This will usually be a residential event, and takes the form of face to face assessment; it comprises of a new form of Group Exercise, alongside two in-depth interviews with pairs of advisors and all focusses on the 'being' and growing' aspects of the discernment qualities. The graphic below explains how it all links together:

Discernment
Stage 2 Panel



From this assessment comes advice on a person's readiness to proceed to training for ordination to the Sponsoring Bishop and DDO Team, of which there are five potential outcomes:

- Yes – a recommendation for training for ordination
- Yes but – some advisory advice for some focussed work to help before training for ordination
- Conditional Yes – but some significant things to be looked at before training for say 6 – 9 months and then either the diocese assesses again locally or the individual can go for further national assessment
- No – not yet. This is a recommendation that a person could come back in a few years after further thinking and gaining experience etc.
- No – it is fairly clear that the person's calling is elsewhere

In the whole of this process safeguarding and well-being are paramount both for the individual, their family and, of course, the people they may lead in the future. For each person there will be a variety of people that will help in their discernment journey, however long it takes – and that can be anything between 18 months, even 2 to 5 years or more, occasionally less – from their immediate family to their church leaders, the DDO Team, the Sponsoring Bishop, friends and perhaps wider family, too.

So, you think God might be calling someone you know to explore a possible vocation to ordained ministry – what do you do?



If you are ordained yourself perhaps you will remember the challenging days of discernment, all those thoughts and questions: What is God really saying? How can I know for sure? Everyone will think it is a ridiculous idea... You will have your own memories. These kinds of thoughts generally rattle around for some time before someone is brave enough to talk to others, and the other's response is really important at that moment.

The rest of this booklet is designed to help you have those early conversations with someone about their possible vocation to ordination; whether they have come to you, or you have seen something in them. It will give you some idea of the kinds of things you can help them to think through alongside supporting them through the process described above alongside the DDO team.

One of the first things to say is that this is a rigorous process, not for the faint-hearted, as it delves into all that a person has been, is, and can be. All the cliches apply: no stone is left unturned, every skeleton is let out of the cupboard, and no secrets can be hidden! Because of this, the first conversation you have with a person needs to help them understand this. We all have 'stuff' of the past that we are perhaps not as proud of as we might wish to be, but that is not necessarily a barrier in this vocation journey, it just might be something that needs to be worked through in the process – that's what the process is for.

As you navigate this process with someone, please do be honest with them and yourself. Do you think that they have got what it might take to be a priest, knowing that yes, God can and does equip but he also isn't starting with a blank slate? Key to answering this will be helping them to ensure that their calling is well informed, realistic and obedient.



*God our Father, Lord of all the world,
through your Son you have called us
into the fellowship of your universal Church:
hear our prayer for your faithful people that in their vocation and ministry each may
be an instrument of your love, and give to your servants exploring ordination the
needful gifts of grace;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the
unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

[adapted from the ordination service for deacons]

Some tools to help you to journey with someone in this new process

There are a number of things you can do to help someone prepare for the journey ahead – a cliché word but none the less true of what happens! There is no particular order to these things, and some will be useful for some individuals and not for others. Choose what works for you, and at the end is a list of books that they will be encouraged to read over time – you could encourage them to get a head start, and maybe read some together:

- Prayer: need I say more – this is one of two keys to enabling a good journey
- Be a companion on the way – this is the second key as a good companion is worth their weight in gold to the traveller, one who will be honest, supportive and encouraging but realistic too
- Regular conversation – to do the two above committing to some regular conversation, although perhaps time consuming, will be a great investment for the future
- Explore their understanding of the breadth of the Church of England – invite them to visit other churches to see different ways of worshipping and then talk about it together
- Explore their ideas around leadership and what that looks like for them – are there any things you can entrust to them for a while to see how they cope if they are not already leading something
- If they are not a member of the PCC invite them to observe some meetings and then talk about the processes they see
- If they don't already lead worship or preach, encourage them to try it out
- In your conversations take a look at some of the approaches that Christians and the Church take to the 'big issues' of the day
- Bible study – encourage regular involvement in a group – perhaps encourage participation in a local Diocesan course
- Introduce the idea of theological reflection!



- Remember the rigour of the process and encourage discussion around the inner life, not just spiritually but also the 'stuff' we would rather not tell others about
- Explore the consequences of ordination on a person's family life

There will a couple of times when you are asked for references, so we generally say that you should have known any person for at least 6 months before we begin to work with them as a DDO team and that they are grounded in a Church of England church worshipping with them at least 3 times a month.

Perhaps one of the things that is most important is their understanding about the difference between the *being* of a Priest or Distinctive Deacon and the *doing* of the work of a Vicar or a Curate. A number of the books below can help this exploration and understanding. They will be asked the following:

'You should be able to articulate a sense of vocation to the ordained ministry and reflect on the effect of this on your life now and in the future. You should be able to speak of the development of your inner conviction and the extent to which others have confirmed it. You should be able to show an understanding of what it means to be a deacon or priest. Your sense of vocation should be obedient, realistic and informed'.



Finally: THANK YOU!

Thank you so much for being a part of a very special journey, for your encouragement, support and your prayers for vocation in our Diocese, that help given to another to discover who God is calling them to be, and, when they know that, what He is calling them to do.

I want to ensure that you know something for yourself too: at every point of someone's journey with you, I and the DDO team are here to support you too. Please do keep in touch with us so that we can help you and encourage you on the days when it feels like really hard work – and there will be some, we know!



Useful Books:

Faithful? Foolish? Called? by Mark Tanner

On Priesthood: Servants, Shepherds, Messengers, Sentinels and Stewards by Stephen Cottrell

What Clergy Do: Especially When It Looks Like Nothing by Emma Percy

Being a Priest Today by Christopher Cocksworth & Rosalind Brown

Presiding like a Woman by Nicola Slee & Stephen Burns

Garden City: Work, Rest, and the Art of Being Human by John Mark Comer

When Jesus Calls by Marcus Throup

Ministry in 3D by Steven Croft

All things Anglican by Marcus Throup

The PCC Member's Essential Guide by Mark Tanner

God of Surprise by Gerard Hughes

The Life you've always wanted by John Ortberg

Contemplative prayer by Eugene Peterson

Generous orthodoxy by Brian McLaren

Spirituality Workbook – a Guide for Explorers Pilgrims and Seekers by David Runcorn

Introduction to Theology by David Ford

Mission shaped church by Graham Cray

Christianity rediscovered by Vincent Donovan

Read the life stories of famous missionaries like Brother Andrew, Hudson Taylor, Jackie Pullinger, Susanna Wesley, Gladys Aylward, George Müller for instance

Miscellaneous things to look up on the web and consider together:

Read the page and follow the links to learn more: [Vocations | The Church of England](#)

If there are children at home then have a look at this panel discussion with seven ministry mums and one ministry dad:

[Ministry Mum panel - Apples of Gold \(pickingapplesofgold.com\)](#)

or read this book: *Breaking the Mould* by Jules Middleton

And for a spouse/partner, what does it mean to be married to an ordained minister?

Minister's Wife, The: Privileges, Pressures and Pitfalls by Ann Benton

Grove Booklet - *Living as a Clergy Spouse* by Matthew Caminer

Self-Supporting Ministry (SSM) (sometimes called Non-Stipendiary ministry or NSM)

Tentmaking: Perspectives on Self-supporting Ministry by James Francis and Leslie J. Francis

Self-Supporting Ministry – a practical guide by John Lees

The Permanent Diaconate

Being a Deacon Today: Exploring a Distinctive Ministry in the Church and in the World by R Brown

For such a time as this: A Renewed Diaconate in the Church of England by Archbishops' Council

The Church Army: [Home - Church Army](#)

The Religious Life [The Religious Life | The Church of England](#)

Explore the different pathways of potential training available today: [Your pathway | The Church of England](#)

Mentoring directory: [Mentor Directory | The Church of England](#) (this can be particularly helpful for those from a Global Majority Heritage background but is open to all – talk to the DDO for further information on this)

*Watch for additional material information being sent to you from time to time
it emerges from the plethora of material constantly being made available*

Qualities for Discernment: Priest

Priest	Christ	Church	World	Self
Love for God <i>The candidate...</i>	Is reliant on God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and lives out an infectious, life-transforming faith	Is rooted in Scripture, the worship of the Church and the living traditions of faith	Whole-heartedly, generously and attractively engages with God's world	Is prayerful and studies the Bible
Call to Ministry <i>The candidate...</i>	Responds to the call of Christ to be a disciple	Understands the distinctive nature of ordained priestly ministry	Is committed to being a public and representative person	Articulates an inner sense of call grounded in priestly service
Love for People <i>The candidate...</i>	Welcomes Christ in others, listens, values and respects; cares for those in poverty and the marginalised	Builds relationships which are collaborative and enabling	Shows God's compassion for the world	Has empathy and is aware of how others receive them
Wisdom <i>The candidate...</i>	Is inquisitive, curious and open to new learning	Shows leadership that enables thriving and healthy churches, handles conflict, and can lead in mission	Is robust and courageous and prepared to take risks	Is a mature and integrated person of stability and integrity
Fruitfulness <i>The candidate...</i>	Embraces the different and enables others to be witnesses and servants	Shows the capacity to exercise sacramental, liturgical and an effective and enabling teaching ministry	Shares faith in Christ and can accompany others in their faith	Has resilience and stamina
Potential <i>The candidate has potential to...</i>	Grow in faith and be open to navigating the future in the company of Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit	Manage change, and see the big picture	See where God is working in the world and respond with missionary imagination	Be adaptable and agile

Qualities for Discernment: Distinctive Deacon

Distinctive Deacon	Christ	Church	World	Self
Love for God <i>The candidate...</i>	Is reliant on God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and lives out an infectious, life-transforming world-focussed faith	Is rooted in scripture, the worship of the Church and the living traditions of faith	Whole heartedly, generously and attractively engages with God's world	Is prayerful and studies the Bible
Call to Ministry <i>The candidate...</i>	Responds to the call of Christ to be a disciple	Understands the distinctive nature of ordained diaconal ministry	Is committed to being a public and representative person of the Church in the forgotten corners of the world	Articulates an inner sense of call grounded in service
Love for People <i>The candidate...</i>	Welcomes Christ in others, listens, values and respects and has a special care for those in poverty and the marginalised	Builds relationships which are collaborative and enabling	Shows God's compassion and care in the world in multifaceted contexts and with social agencies	Has empathy and is aware of how others receive them
Wisdom <i>The candidate...</i>	Is inquisitive, curious and open to new learning that connects church and world	Shows instinctively collaborative leadership that enables healthy churches to be bridge-builders in their communities	Is robust and courageous in reflecting the world to the Church and the Church to the world	Is a mature and integrated person of stability and integrity
Fruitfulness <i>The candidate...</i>	Embraces the different and animates others to be witnesses and servants	Shows the capacity to exercise diaconal sacramental and liturgical ministry and effective and enabling teaching ministry	Is a storyteller of God's love and agent of God's kingdom of justice	Has resilience and stamina
Potential <i>The candidate has potential to...</i>	Grow in faith and to be open to navigating the future in the company of Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit	See the big picture in their context and, within it, enable a Christian community to serve	See where God is working in the world and to read the signs of the times	Be adaptable and agile