

There are thousands of lay ministers using their gifts in a wide variety of different roles, serving alongside ordained ministers.



ns, evangelists, missionaries, pioneers, are lay people, who are not

Diocese of Birmingham

Lay ministries cover a huge variety of different forms of Christian service. [Explore more about some of the numerous types of ministry in the Church of England here.](#)

There are a range of lay ministry roles available in different dioceses, so contact your diocese to find out about different roles where you live.

They will also have information about selection, training and authorisation for lay ministry. [You can find which diocese you are in here.](#)

You can contact your diocese using the webform [here](#).

Lay ministry falls broadly into three categories: Recognised, Authorised and Licensed.

Locally Recognised

Recognised ministries happen in the local parish, benefice, chaplaincy or fresh expression. Examples of recognised ministry include leading a home group, pastoral care, assisting with children and youth ministry, offering prayer and listening, acting as a chaplaincy assistant or exploring growing church locally.

Selection, recognition and training is usually local, led by the minister in the parish or deanery. Some local ministry roles will have diocesan training too, for example safeguarding courses.

As a recognised minister you would usually be supervised by your vicar or by someone they have delegated to.

If you feel called to serve in your local Church in this way, speak to your vicar about how you can pursue your vocation further.

Authorised - In the Community

Authorised ministers represent the church in the wider community. Their authorisation (which might be called Commissioning) is from the bishop, and it may be time limited or reviewed regularly. Examples of authorised ministry includes pastoral assistants, worship leaders, preachers, and assistant youth and children's ministers.

Selection may be local or diocesan, while training is usually through a diocesan programme.

As an authorised minister you would usually be supervised by your vicar, with final accountability to your bishop.

If you feel called to serve in your local Church in this way, speak to your vicar about how you can pursue your vocation further.



"I first got involved with doing youthwork when I was about 17. My church was really good at raising up young leaders.

I felt God was calling me to work with young people. I spoke to my church leader about it and applied for a youth pastor training scheme. Now I'm the youth minister at Christ Church Bedford, where I run activities for young people, build relationships with the local schools and help organise a town-wide youth event a couple of times a year.

At the heart of my ministry is young people engaging with God and to support them in that journey, and if they're in a place where they're not sure about God, to come alongside them and help them to find God for themselves and understand God as their friend and someone who loves them and cares about them."

AJ Wade, Youth Minister

In Leadership - Licensed

Licensed lay ministries represent the church in a public, representative or leadership role. Examples of licensed lay ministers include Readers, licensed lay ministers, Church Army evangelists, lay workers and some lay pioneers.

Licensed lay ministers may be involved in evangelism, mission enabling, teaching, preaching, leading of worship, taking funerals, leading a Fresh Expression and community outreach.

Licenses are issued by the diocesan bishop as required by Canon and are nationally recognised.

Selection is carried out by dioceses, following national guidelines. Training is carried out by the diocese or on behalf of the diocese and there is provision for ongoing ministerial development.

As a licensed ministers you would usually be supervised by your vicar, with final accountability to your bishop.

If you feel called to serve in the leadership of your local Church in this way, or to set up a fresh expression of Church, speak to your vicar and then your diocese's vocations team about how you can pursue your vocation further.



“I was part of a church that released so many people's gifts by inviting them to have a go. Lots of us were invited to preach. It had a massive impact: many of us went on to some kind of ministry. Just giving chances can really help people discover their gifts.

I had a go and I realised I wanted to continue to preach, but I probably would need some training and to formalise the arrangement, so that was the time I considered becoming a Reader. It came from the angle of a call to preach, something I found I was good at, and others encouraged me. I also had people giving me wise advice for discerning what was at the root of that call and to talk seriously to about working out what my call was to, particularly since so often people assume that a sense of calling is to ordained ministry.

I've found part of my role is to be in the church and in the workplace and to share a lay perspective with ordained ministers, but also to think about what it means to exercise pastoral responsibility on behalf of the church.”

Richard Medcalf, Reader

Note: These categories naturally overlap, and not every form of ministry will fit naturally into just one. These descriptions are intended as a guide to help you make the first steps towards lay ministry. They are intentionally broad and may not always be the way your diocese does things. The best thing is to speak to your vicar, chaplain or a lay minister in your church early on about your sense of calling, and to take the conversation further with the vocations team in your diocese.

Get in touch with your diocese

Contact the vocations team in your diocese using the form below to begin exploring whether you have a calling to lay ministry. Your diocese will be sent your message and contact details and may get in contact with the ministry team in your church. If you don't know which diocese your church is in you can [find out on A Church Near You](#). Your data will also be held the [National Church Institutions](#).

First name

Last name

Email address

Diocese

- Select -

?

(Optional) Your Diocese will most likely get in touch with the ministers at your church. If you don't know which Diocese you are in, please enter your postcode on [A Church Near You](#).

Name of church

Message (Optional)

? I agree to the [terms of service](#).

Data will be shared with the Archbishops’ Council, the diocese you have selected, and the ministry team of the church you worship at. **We will not share this data with other third parties.**

Submit

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

1 Corinthians 12: 4-7

Explore more

The Ministry Experience Scheme

If you are aged 18 to 30, why not spend a year serving God through the Ministry Experience Scheme; and if you are passionate about working with children, young people and families then Future Youth could be for you.

Stories of Calling

Find your vocation with these prayers and reflections. Explore Biblical stories of ordinary people called to extraordinary ministries.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/vocations/exploring-lay-ministry>