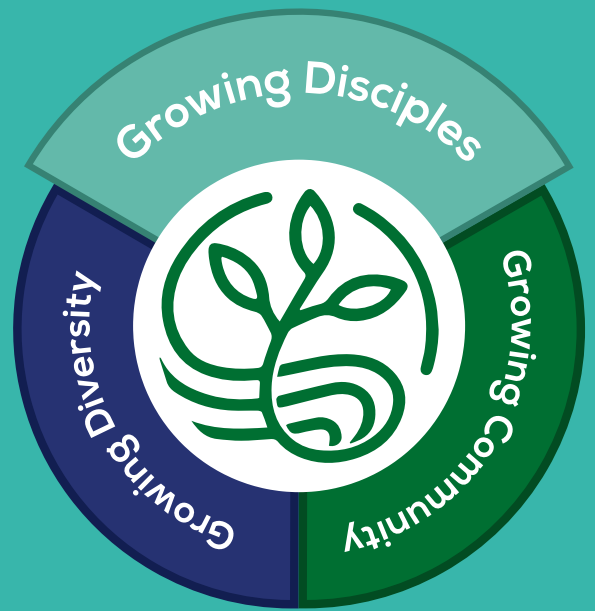


How were they called?

June 2024



Diocese of **Guildford** 

Transforming **Church**
Transforming **Lives**



Celebrating our ordinands

Each year, we love celebrating the next leap in the journey of those being ordained as Deacons and Priests.

For many, the journey to ordination has been a long path. Ordination is both a significant and momentous occasion, where candidates are consecrated and authorised in their new roles as Deacons or Priests.

Please join us in praying for God's grace and guidance as they each step into the next phase of their ministries.

In the following pages, each ordination candidate has kindly shared their story. They share with us what has led them to this point, the encouragements they've had on the way, and the calling they see before them.

Deacons



Alison Anderson



In Him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.

- John 1:4-5

In 2018, a friend asked if I had considered being ordained and I just laughed – and yet here we are. God certainly has a sense of humour.

Having come to faith as a teenager, about 15 years ago I started to take things more seriously. A good friend was dying of a brain tumour and accompanying her on her journey was inspiring, sad, hopeful and disappointing, all at once. I felt I had the choice either to give up on God or go deeper.

I discovered pilgrimage, retreats, quiet days and contemplative prayer. One sunny day, whilst on pilgrimage on St Cuthbert's Way, as I walked alone over the hills from Scotland into England, I felt a peace and a certainty that I should explore doing something more – perhaps become an Occasional Preacher.

After this, I heard about Ordained Local Ministry. Having never previously considered ordination, I now couldn't get it out of my head and started finding various previously well-known Bible passages resonating strongly with me, such as Jesus calling his disciples to "come and see" (John 1:39).

Then on a Quiet Day, the leader (who had never met me), asked me, "Have you thought of being ordained?" Feeling that God's gentle knocking had now turned into a loud banging, I gave in. I talked to my incumbent and others and went through the discernment process.

This was early 2020, and then Covid struck, which was a stormy time both personally and professionally, but I discovered that the Light does truly shine in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it.

The one thing I would say to someone thinking about exploring vocation, lay or ordained, is to follow your thought process, because maybe God really is calling you. Even you!

I now hope to encourage others to “come and see” and let each and every person know that, whatever their ethnicity, gender or sexuality, they are deeply loved by God and they have a unique place in His heart.

Holly Byles



**The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.**

- Psalm 23:1-3

I was introduced to Jesus for the first time at age 20. Having not grown up in a Christian home, and having experienced a sense of being ‘lost’ through my teenage years, I began my Christian journey with evangelistic zeal and a thirst for understanding to better equip me to share God’s love with others. In hindsight, I was discerning the call to ordination even then.

As I look back over my Christian journey - having spent a few years studying theology straight after my conversion experience, and a decade in youth ministry

discipling teens – I recognise how God showed me just the next step each time He revealed more of His plans, gently guiding me.

The next step was all I was ready for! I adored discipling teenagers and walking alongside them as they grappled with big questions and grew from children into adults. God, in His grace, gave me the blessing of serving His church through them.

There came a point about five years ago, however, when I couldn't continue to brush off the nudge. God was taking me into a new season and for a while even saying it aloud made me squirm. Surely, not me, with my past, my struggles and my failures?

My time as an ordinand has been a formative one of learning to own my calling and settle into it. By doing so, I avoid denying God's work in my life and am given the opportunity to point back at the One who calls and the One whom I do not go into this new phase of ministry without.

If you are considering God's call on your life, I would encourage you to hold on tight to the glorious truth that God knows you, He really knows you. And as you ask those big questions about vocation and calling, you need only be entirely and authentically you. Anyone else you may be tempted to try and be is not who God would be calling.

Rather commonly, my anchor scripture is Psalm 23. Those words of assurance, faithfulness, blessing and longing have been so utterly sustaining for me, particularly through nerve-wracking or intense periods of the discernment and training journey. It is a passage that recognises the grit of life and the steadfast presence of God through it all. "His goodness restores my soul".

Rachel-Elizabeth Clark



Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil His promises to her!

- Luke 1:45

Ever since making my first profession of faith at the age of 4, I have always felt a divine call on my life.

As a child, whenever I was asked what I wanted to do when I grew up, my reply was that I wanted to serve God. However, the tradition I was brought up in did not have women in leadership positions, so I thought that the only way I would be able to serve God was either as an overseas missionary or working with children, as these appeared to be the only areas where women were allowed to minister.

At the age of 18, I went on a short-term mission trip to Poland and was asked to preach at one of the Sunday services. I had never experienced a woman preaching but, with lots of encouragement from the rest of the team, I preached my first sermon. I knew in that moment that this was to be an important part of my call in the future.

Twenty-five years later, I was working for a church as a Children's Minister. Members of the congregation and leadership team were beginning to ask whether I had ever considered ordained ministry, and my response was always, "Of course not, I am a woman." But the more people asked, the more I began to wonder whether they really could all be wrong. So, I began my journey of discernment where I discovered that God did call women to ordained ministry and that God was specifically calling me.

It feels incredibly significant that I should be ordained during the year that the Church of England celebrates 30 years of ordained women as priests. It particularly resonates with me as it turns out that, on my ordination day, it will be exactly 30 years to the month since I preached my first sermon on that mission trip all those years ago.

I would encourage anyone who feels called to ministry of any kind that God will fulfil his promise to you, although it may be in a completely unexpected way, as it was for me.

Gabrielle Clarke



For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

- Romans 12:4-5

I've been a Christian all my life. As a young person I was blessed to grow up in a home with a nurturing Christian family and an encouraging church. They taught me well, disciplined me, always encouraged me and recognised the potential that God had given me.

After many years at a Baptist Church, I started worshipping in the Church of England in 2015, and began to feel a nudge from God that this was where He was calling me to be.

I grew up in Surrey and will be heading back to Guildford Diocese for my curacy. Before studying at Ridley College, I worked with children and young people, including working for St Michael's Church in Camberley, Camberley Youth for Christ (working in secondary schools), and serving as Young People's Minister at St Nicolas Church in Cranleigh.

One reason I decided to pursue ordination rather than youth-focused ministry is that I love to work with people of all ages and backgrounds. I hope to bring some of the fun, creativity and playfulness that comes with youthwork into my future ministry.

Creativity is a key aspect of who I am, so any opportunity to find creativity in prayer, spirituality, worship and bringing the Bible to life is a blessing to me. I'm passionate about reaching people in new ways and different contexts, so I am training as a pioneer curate. I also love the transformation and joy that comes with knowing Jesus and hope to be able to share that with others wherever I may be!

A Bible passage that has particularly sustained me through my training is Romans 12, which talks about being transformed by God so that we can know His will, sharing our gifts with one another as the body of Christ. For me, this is an encouragement as it is a reminder that, while I have a call to serve, I'm not alone. I also have God on my side who can transform me and guide me as I seek his will.

Alex Day



Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

- Acts 2:38

I was raised as a Catholic in a mixed Christian household - my mother was a Catholic and my father an Anglican. I attended a Catholic secondary school, but I turned my back on organised religion at the age of 16 or 17 and returned to it again through an Alpha course at the age of 39.

I had originally agreed to attend the course to argue against organised religion. However, I came out the other side having signed up to help on the next Alpha course and have since gone on to help and lead several other courses.

The significant moment in my life which woke me up to my journey with God was towards the end of the first Alpha course I attended. I had an experience of God which confirmed to me that He was real and knew who I was. I had finally heard God and in a way which I couldn't just dismiss as coincidence.

The message from God was loud and clear, I was to repent of my sin and reaffirm my original baptismal vows and then I would be open to receiving the Holy Spirit. After this awakening, my life flipped a full 180 degrees. I met Joanna, now my wife, and together we decided to follow God's call to ministry.

I can confidently name two people who have been a huge influence in my life on the route to ordination: the incumbent of the sending church at St Mary's in Ross-on-Wye and his curate (now vicar of Bartestree Cross Group of Churches.) Sean

and Tiffany were so inspirational in their roles that it made me believe that my calling, which I had spent most of my life running away from, was actually real and that I was able to answer it.

I am really pleased to be able to serve in the Diocese of Guildford, where I grew up, and I am looking forward to giving something back to the communities I'll serve.

It just proves that, at the age of 50, it is never too late to answer the call from God within you. No matter where you are in your life, answering the call from God will change it in an amazing way.

Joanna Day



The promises of the Lord are promises that are pure, silver refined in a furnace.

- Psalm 12:6

I grew up in a Christian home, attending small charismatic house churches and fellowships. My faith has always been core to my life and, after a brief wobble in my late teens, I knew that I wanted to serve God in whatever capacity He led me.

I thought that He might lead me onto the mission field in the Middle East; instead, to my surprise I found myself working in the corporate world, and I have over 20 years of experience in communications and research across a variety of fields. I

love the Middle East and have studied, lived in and worked with both the Arab and Jewish worlds.

Coming from a non-denominational background, my family all thought it somewhat strange when one of my sisters married a vicar. After realising that the Church of England wasn't quite as odd as I thought, I started attending an informal Anglican church myself.

Later I attended a more traditional church and became good friends with the vicar and curate. Their descriptions of their priestly calling and the way they demonstrated Christ's love and concern for the community were incredibly inspirational.

One day, our curate asked me if I had ever considered ordination. It was as if someone had turned a light on and, in an instant, all the seemingly disparate experiences in my life came together and made sense through the lens of ordination.

It is a blessing beyond words to be travelling on this journey with my husband Alex who is being ordained with me on the same day. Our daughter is our greatest joy and we thank God for the opportunity to minister together as a family.

God has a plan for each of our lives. If you don't know what yours is, why not ask Him to show you?

My favourite Bible verses are Psalm 19:9 "The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever," Psalm 12:6 "The promises of the Lord are promises that are pure, silver refined in a furnace", and Jeremiah 23:29 "Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?". The word of God is powerful, and we can depend on it.

Richard Flenley



If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

- Romans 10:9-10

I am not someone who has had the privilege of a significant event which I can associate with a sudden calling to the Christian faith; no sort of “Damascus Road” moment that I can call my own.

I have, however, had the privilege of being brought up in a Christian household where faith was given the opportunity to grow, slowly and surely, with the reassuring support from both my parents and wider church family. And I do very much mean it when I say privilege. I am only too aware that this is not everyone’s experience of coming to faith.

As I write this, I am caused to reflect on a very special few days spent in study and on retreat in a joint residential shared between the final year ordinands studying on Guildford Diocese’s Local Ministry Programme and the ordinands from the equivalent programme from Winchester Diocese.

This was particularly special for me because my own journey towards ordination sees at least part of its genesis in my upbringing in the Vicarage in Micheldever, a parish in the Diocese of Winchester. Being a teenager in that context undoubtedly brought its challenges, but it modelled for me much of what I see as being so special in rural parish ministry. The role of faith and of the parish church intertwined with the busyness of rural life in all of its forms.

Those with me at that retreat will have heard me talk about moments where I questioned my faith, but also of my sense of calling in my late teens towards ordained ministry, albeit very much a “not yet” calling - a sense of calling I shared with one of the key members of the benefice of which Micheldever formed part. There were things I had to do, life that I had to experience before the time would be right.

Fast forward 25 years or so, and I feel that the time is now right.

My young family and I moved from our home in South Manchester to the village of Chiddingfold where we have become active members of the church. I have read, interceded, been a chalice assistant, been on the PCC, and become an Occasional Preacher. The incumbent when we moved here, Sarah Brough, and the current incumbent, Rachel Greene, have both encouraged my growth in faith and my sense of calling to ordained ministry.

It may have been 45 years in the making, but I am here now and committed to offering myself to ordained ministry in God’s mission in Chiddingfold.

I would very much say to those reading this that, to coin a phrase from a priest who spoke to me on a family holiday many years ago, “Never stop listening”.

Will Ingle



“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- Matthew 28:19-20

I was born in Essex but we moved to Jersey in the Channel Islands when I was 2. My mum is a Christian and my dad is not, so I always had the option to go to church. I went with my mum, partly because she was more persuasive and there was cake at church! She has been an influential person in my faith ever since.

When I was 10 years old, I attended Spring Harvest at Butlins and gave my life to Christ. We later celebrated with a baptism in the sea in Jersey when we got home. At 15, I confirmed what I believed at my baptism.

Being a Christian during my teenage years was challenging, especially at school. Each day became a lesson in apologetics as I had to defend my faith from my peers. I am thankful for this, as it made me delve deeper into why I believe in Jesus. It also taught me that you cannot argue someone into faith.

I powerfully felt the Holy Spirit at the age of 15. It was then that I knew God was calling me to leadership in the Christian world, though I didn't really know what that looked like and did not consider myself a leader.

At 17, God reminded me of what he had said and I decided to take a gap year and be part of a church running a leadership course. At a Bible study evening in a friend's living room, while doubting my call to leadership, I again felt the Holy Spirit intensely. In that experience, God made it clear for me to go down the ordination route.

Initially, my response was “no” - I thought I would do that much later in my life. But in preparation, I decided to do a theology degree to set some good foundations. After much prayer and conversations with wiser individuals, I said “yes” to God and started the discernment process. It became evident over that time that this is what God has called me to do.

During the discernment process, which was over 3 years, I lived in East London where I worked for a couple of different churches: I organised rotas, Alpha courses and other behind-the-scenes work. I moved a lot of chairs in this time and I’m sure I will move many more in my future! I was also given a few opportunities to preach, lead services, and help with and lead student, youth and kids’ work.

One encouragement I offer for those exploring is: when you don't feel good enough, don't worry - He is enough. Stick close to Him and follow where He leads, echoed in the Great Commission next to my photo.

Jane Jones



**I lift up my eyes to the hills,
From where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.**

- Psalm 121:1

My journey to ordination has been a little convoluted. I was brought up in an Anglican family, and explored my faith more deeply when I moved away from home to study, and afterwards while volunteering at a rural mission hospital in North India.

Several years working in London followed, including a memorable trip to Taizé with a church group, which resulted in hosting a return group of international Taizé pilgrims at a London meeting.

I met my husband while working for the British Council and we set off on postings abroad for over 15 years, moving frequently as a family. We became involved in local Anglican congregations in North Africa and the Gulf. Looking back, I realise how these places brought stability and friendship to a rather disjointed and challenging way of life.

I became particularly involved as a Lay Leader in Doha where the Anglican congregation met in our children's school gym. Every week, the wall bars and ropes were tied up and the portable altar and rows of chairs came out. The Friday congregation was truly international and inclusive, with hospitality dispensed liberally after the service. I have learned the value of welcome and hospitality in every church community.

On return to the UK, I trained as a Lay Reader on the Diocese of Guildford's Local Ministry Programme, which was deeply rewarding and formational. I will always value my years of lay ministry, which gave me a firm foundation to explore a calling to ordination. After completing the Camino walk (over several stages) in northern Spain, I realised there was another path to pursue which led to my ordination journey and a busy year at Sarum College.

My advice to anyone considering the pull of vocation is: it's never too late!

James Luckey



“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

- Jeremiah 29:11

‘For everything, there is a season...’ I’ve always been aware of God but for most of my life that was from a distance. I may have prayed at important times, but rarely attended church and never felt the urge to discover more.

Things began to change in my 30s, when I went to my local church in Old Woking, albeit irregularly at first. Coming to faith was a drip-drip journey that took nearly 40 years.

Likewise, with vocation, there was no Damascene moment. My sense of calling evolved slowly through engaging with roles such as lesson reader, intercessor and even preacher. At first, I was sure that, although God was calling me to something, it was definitely not ordained ministry.

Time spent with a vocations advisor helped me give voice to that call. Learning via the Local Ministry Programme and Occasional Preachers’ courses both opened my eyes to Scripture and honed vocation. At this point, my then vicar felt I should take things further and speak to the Diocesan Director of Ordinands; however, I was not ready.

Further discernment and discussions with clergy – including becoming a lay chalice assistant – helped me, and reflection on the latter, seeing the golden thread of Holy Communion through my faith journey, brought me to the point

that I believed God's call was indeed to an ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament.

Yet I always felt my professional life still had a role to play. As a journalist, communication is a central tool and I'm blessed with spiritual gifts to this end: using those within both church and workplace, with life experiences in the latter very much helping ministry in the former and – crucially – vice versa. Communication is my passion, both at work and in the church. As a Self-Supporting Minister (SSM), I am excited to have a 'foot in both camps'.

God calls whom God wants. And if God can call someone like me – for whom faith was a slow burner – then maybe, just maybe, there's a call out there waiting for you too.

'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening...'

Jeremiah 29 sustained me after a tough time in training. I prayed fervently as I had felt low, inadequate and disengaged. Not half an hour later, with concentration set firmly on something entirely different, this verse just dropped in my head from absolutely nowhere. It rather blew my mind.

Clare Marren



**Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer.
From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call
as my heart grows faint; lead me to the
rock that is higher than I. For you have been
my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.
I long to dwell in your tent forever and take
refuge in the shelter of your wings.**

- Psalm 61:1-4

God has always surrounded me with goodness, from the faith-filled sisters at my convent school to the friends and ministers who have inspired me. Most importantly my mother, constantly demonstrating God with her kindness, wisdom and values. Also, my children and family, whose loving support and understanding has been extraordinary.

I am so thankful for these blessings. In times of challenge, Christ has been present: as a doctor, teacher, friend and mentor – ensuring I have what I need. The Holy Spirit never fails to amaze me as I find myself guided through life, carried by God's grace.

From the very first 8+ Sunday School class that I reluctantly led 18 years ago, and the calling that shortly followed, God has taken me on an incredible journey towards ordination. I have loved my time at theological college and have learned to see scripture differently. I hope that through my ministry I can help all voices be heard and encourage people to grow closer to Christ.

I have chosen Psalm 17:8 as I so often feel like God is protecting me – like a mother bird shelters her hens under her wings. It is my willingness to be protected and not go my own way that equips me and leads me to solid ground.

To anyone sensing God's call, either in a lay or ordained capacity, I would suggest

they explore it as it feels right, and know God is calling them because of who they are. All they need will be provided.

Crucially, I have discovered the importance of patience. Some favourite song lyrics reflect: 'You are working in our waiting, you're sanctifying us. When beyond our understanding, you're teaching us to trust. God's timing is perfect but frustrating. I have learned God will always provide but in time. If I draw close to God I find reassurance and wisdom, always discovering God is working for my goodness and God's glory.'

Louisa Mason



"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

- Matthew 11:28-29

During a very turbulent upbringing, I came to faith when I was 15 through conversations with someone at school and listening to some Christian music he gave me one weekend.

Whilst listening to the music, God's presence tangibly turned up in my bedroom and I knelt where I was to say "sorry" and "help" as I had no clue what this Christian thing was really about! The next day, I went into school and my friend asked me to church, not knowing anything about the experience I'd had! Since then, the rest has been a journey of discovery through various flavours of church and spirituality until I finally found my home in the Church of England.

I can honestly say that my faith journey is because of God's hand on me. At times, I have protested like a toddler, stropped like a teenager, and tried to think I'm in control, like most adults do. Clearly, God has held onto me despite every obstacle and revealed more of himself over the years when he knows I'm ready.

I would never have thought I was called to ministry. I had so many doubts about the church and ministry in general; and yet, through all of it, God's hand would not let go. My friends quote me as saying "There's no way I want to be ordained!" But God is persistent.

I became a Lay Minister at first, which helped me get involved in church life and test my vocation. It was during the pandemic that I really had a sense of holy unease. After prayer walking on Blackdown, I received a clear instruction that God wanted me to be ordained. I finally submitted. I said, "OK, God, I'll open the door, but you have to do the rest."

Training at Sarum College has been formational. I have learnt, grown and flourished with brilliant tutors and fellow students who make up a diverse group.

My advice to anyone considering lay or ordained ministry is to give it a go. There are great taster courses out there and ways to get involved in church life before you commit. It's really not as scary as you think. We are all works in progress and, if you read the Bible, God uses people with all sorts of backgrounds and lived experiences. Just open the door and God will do the rest.

Rachel Mead



“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned.”

- Isaiah 43:1-2

I was raised in a Christian family and became a Christian at 11 years old. My mum taught me to pray, and that Jesus was the best friend you could have. My dad showed me that Jesus cared about the poor, the outcast and justice. Faith in Him should make a difference in every aspect of my life.

I have been a Cancer and Palliative Care Nurse for 33 years. I've always been involved in church life leading a variety of groups, organising events, speaking and leading at services. I enjoyed this.

Occasionally people would ask if I had considered training for ordination. “If God wants me to be ordained, God will have to write it in the sky!” was my frequent response. I had no sense of a calling.

Ten years ago, we moved to Surrey and my new Vicar suggested God was calling me to ordination. I wasn't ready to hear this, but it became a niggle I couldn't ignore. I didn't pray seriously about it – I was worried that God was going to ask me to give up nursing which I loved so very much.

In 2017, an ordinand on a placement at our church said, “You should talk to your Vicar about your calling. Just take the next step – don't worry about the answer.” I couldn't ignore a stranger's unprompted words. I sensed God at work. I recognise I stepped out in obedience, not yet trust. Close friends prayed and listened.

I eventually met with my Vicar and then two local priests, who all agreed they felt God was calling me into ministry. God affirmed that nursing was part of my ministry.

I entered the formal discernment process as we went into Lockdown, a time of personal, professional and global uncertainty. It is difficult to separate the emotions and fears at this time – but a promise of God’s presence and protection gave me hope and comfort.

I look back and see my journey from fear to obedience, then trust, and now excited anticipation about where God will take me and whether nursing will continue to be a part of my future...

God knows us and calls us as individuals with our quirks, failings and gifts. We do not journey alone – we partner with an extraordinary God!

Tom Musson



“Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!”

- Luke 15:22-24

I was born and raised just outside Nottingham, in a family of five, where I attended our local Church of England church with my mum and sisters from a very young age. There, I slowly grew in awareness and trust in God and His redeeming love for the world.

It was also at that time, whilst at secondary school, when my Religious Studies teacher first encouraged me to explore a call to ordination - with some mixed responses on my part!

I moved up to Durham in 2015 to study music for four years, before completing the Church of England's Ministry Experience Scheme for a local church. I also later held a role within the Durham Diocese.

It was during my time as an intern when I began to formally discern a call to priestly ministry. The Ministry Experience Scheme is a fantastic space to explore your own vocation in many practical ways – I'd thoroughly recommend it. From that, I moved to Cambridge and have loved my time so far training for ordination at Ridley Hall.

I am particularly passionate about music and its relationship to theology and the Church, researching and writing academically about how our sung worship is performed and experienced. I hope to work towards a PhD in this area, at some point, helping to shape our Church's understanding of its worship and use of music.

Outside of that, I love playing tennis, attempting to bake, and reading far too many books.

I'm excited to join Guildford Diocese this summer as a curate at St James' Church in Weybridge. I am looking forward to exploring the diocese and getting to know this beautiful corner of the country.

Karen Wheatley



“A long obedience in the same direction.”

- Eugene H Peterson (quoting Nietzsche)

Growing up in a non-church family, I first encountered God in my mid-teens one evening. Troubled and alone at home, I picked up my Bible to try to find help and God met me there in the scriptures. Shortly after this, I was surprised to find myself praying and having an irresistible urge to attend church.

In the 40+ years since then, I’ve continued being part of a worshipping community. It was not until 2016 that my husband Rob and I joined the Church of England, where for the first time I experienced female leadership being modelled.

Slowly, seeds that were already present began to germinate. I felt led to contribute to serve at our church. The worldwide church has been a lifelong area of interest, and I eventually led the team managing the outward giving budget and raising the profile of our mission partners.

A few years ago, I felt drawn to consider investing more of my time in the church. This prompted me to start a process of discernment by tentatively speaking first to a friend and then to my vicar. However, conversations at this stage were not about ordination.

It became clear to me that God wanted me to help equip his church, but some months on, as I was reading ‘Called or Collared?’ (Dewar), the phrase ‘As clergy’ seized me with a realisation that this was the way God was calling me.

This seemed to be beyond the realm of possibility but nonetheless resonated much in my heart. As I began to pursue this sense of call, it was soon confirmed by others, including two believers and one non-believer, who 'randomly' asked me if I had ever considered ordination.

As I enter this new chapter, I'm looking forward to treading untrodden paths, knowing Christ's hand leading and supporting Rob and me. Since that day I first encountered God, although the route has been varied, I have been seeking to follow the way of 'a long obedience in the same direction' with Christ as my Pole Star.

Priests



Richard Allan



“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

- Luke 6:45

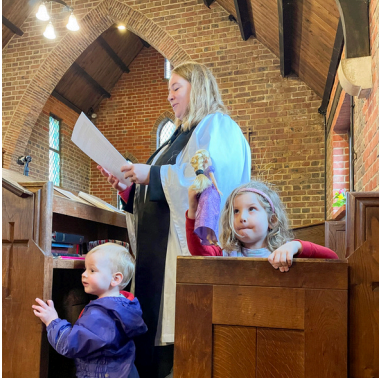
It has been a busy year as a deacon, whilst also juggling part-time employment. My weekly routine has centred around team meetings, preparing Bible study notes, plus leading services and preaching.

A particular highlight was a training evening for small group Bible study leaders earlier in the year. To watch them grow in their roles has been a real joy. It has also been a privilege to learn from my recently-appointed rector, a wise head on young shoulders!

I have been struck again by the call to holiness, mindful that the mouth is the heart's overflow. Luke 6:43-45 stresses this point.

As my life in the twilight zone lengthens, I pray that my remaining time on Earth will count for the gospel and for eternity. I have been amazed and encouraged at how God uses the elderly to further His kingdom, even though society might wish to pass us by.

Lucy Bush



Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher).

- John 20:16

I'm quickly learning that no two weeks are the same as a curate! Serving across the three churches in our parish includes leading school assemblies, toddler groups, putting together Sunday's service, coming up with crafts for our after-school drop-in, and visiting the local college's Christian Union.

On other weeks, I might be leading the service in an assisted-living complex, planning a funeral, setting up our community garden project, writing a sermon, seeing my spiritual director, and joining in with the Parochial Church Council. Every day starts with Morning Prayer, but ends at different times depending on childcare needs and evening activities.

A highlight of my deacon year has been co-leading a Being With course for people exploring the Christian faith - 10 weeks of amazing discussions, eye-opening insights and marvelling in God's goodness. Another fun thing has been starting up a Community Garden in one of our church's grounds and bringing people together to create biodiverse spaces for nature and opportunities for people to bond over gardening.

Some of the challenges have been balancing ministry and family life: Christmas and Easter are interesting! I went on a silent retreat for a few days to get some space and often have my children 'helping' me in services, such as pictured on Mothering Sunday.

At Easter I was so struck by Jesus calling Mary by name (John 20:16). She only recognised her friend once He named her. It's been a reminder to me that God calls all of us by name. This has been helpful when stepping into a ministry role.

If someone is exploring their vocation to church ministry, lay or ordained, I would encourage you to talk to as many people as possible about it! Ask questions, explore the options, and listen to those voices as they help you discern God's call on your life.

Dave Camp



Jesus got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

- John 13:4-5

Looking back over the year since my ordination, there have been many high points, or perhaps learning points. I suppose if I were to narrow it down to just two, the first would be assisting my training incumbent with my first funeral. It was an incredible privilege to be able to listen to someone's life story and give those who knew them intimately the time and space to share their thoughts and feelings, which I have found to be the beginning of healing.

The second was experiencing the change in how people perceived and reacted to me when they became aware that I had been ordained, both at work and in our congregation. There's a heightened expectation of oneself and of others in the way I speak and react. Coming to terms with becoming a public figure can

challenge those (shall we say) more worldly reactions to stressful situations.

For me, a typical week starts with Morning Prayer, followed by Noon Prayer, and finally Night Prayer. Praying the Daily Office helps me inhabit God's space in the midst of my interactions with the world on a daily basis. Because I work five days a week, catching up on parish emails, the inevitable WhatsApp groups, and keeping abreast of what's going on in and around the parish daily is essential. I try to make a concerted effort to set time aside.

Keeping in touch with what's going on feeds into my personal and corporate prayers, thinking around intercessions. It can be a valuable resource for sermon reflection. Preparation for Sunday starts on Monday; perhaps the best nugget of advice I can give is to view time as a gift. Where and for whom will my gift of time bring life? To my family, my parish, and (of equal importance) the wider world.

All these point toward a much wider calling in which prayer and the church are the bedrock for serving. For me, John 13:1-5 encapsulates my calling. That imagery of God literally washing feet - how could I do anything less?

If you are feeling the pull to explore your vocational journey, you might even be unsure if you're really being called. I found it helpful to think about the calling of the prophet Samuel. God called him three times - each time, Samuel thought Eli had called him.

The point is that we often struggle to perceive God's call; what we need is an Eli to help us discern it. Speak to your church's incumbent, be bold, and take the first step. I was 57 when I took mine! God calls us where we are, not where we think we need to be. There is no time like the present. Go on, be bold. Personally, I would not change a moment of this wonderful journey.

Jill Gooding



The Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper.

- 1 Kings 19:11b-12

The year has been a total whirlwind of activity, but also a delight and I have loved it!

Two particular highlights have been starting a new ministry coming alongside residents of nursing homes and seeing people reconnect with their Christian faith. A total joy. The other is being part of the school assembly team at Christmas and Easter and seeing - and hearing - the excitement of the children.

An average week would be a team meeting, supervision, admin time, care home visits, midweek communion, prayer meetings, welcomer at the mums and toddlers group, helping lead our Women's Hour (a social time for the older women in the church), helping to run a course in the evening, leading, preaching or fulfilling another duty at one of the Sunday services, and helping with the youth group in the evening. In amongst this, there have been pastoral visits when needed. It's pretty full-on.

I really enjoy coming alongside people and getting to share in their life stories.

Work-life balance is a bit of a work in progress. I've been taking learning opportunities when they arise, but I'm slowly getting into a better rhythm, establishing a better balance and being clearer on boundaries.

There have been challenges, such as coming way out of my comfort zone in leading our contemporary service, and how we deliver music at our traditional service. I manage these with good team support and 'just getting on with it' to build my confidence.

If feeling a call from God, I would encourage you to just share your nudges with others and talk about it. It took me ages to pluck up the courage to finally share with one of the clergy that I sensed a call to ordination. More importantly, spend time in silence listening to God: that is invaluable.

Erik Heemskerck



"You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will remain - so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He will give you."

- John 15:16

My first year as an ordained minister has flown by, and has been an exciting journey of settling in Cranleigh, growing in my role as an ordained minister, and feeling confirmed in the sense that God has called me to this role and place.

The highlight of the year for me was, without any doubt, our baptism and confirmation service on Easter Eve, which was the culmination of journeying alongside a group of adults and teenagers, some of whom were entirely new to the Christian faith, and for all of whom this marked a big step in their Christian journey. It has been the greatest joy in ministry to see them and others grow in their faith and to spend time with them talking about it.

I have also loved the many ways of being present in the local community that parish ministry offers, from judging the best Edwardian hat in the local care home to spending time with people going through bereavement. It is both a privilege and a challenge that, as a parish church, we have such a daunting number of opportunities to reach 'into the forgotten corners of the world, that the love of God may be made visible', to quote my favourite sentence from the ordinal of deacons.

Perhaps my biggest struggle has been that, in this area, there is just so much that can be done, and I have had to learn, and am still learning, to be patient and not to want too much at once.

As a family, we have loved living in Cranleigh. We have enjoyed going out of the village for our days off together, but also life in the village and the people have been very welcoming. While ministry is demanding, the flexibility of this life has also meant that we often have lunch together as a family and I am able to drop off and pick up my girls at nursery.

What I would say to everyone who is exploring their vocation further is to take it step-by-step, to keep going, to trust God and not to worry too much about where you might end up. I could never have imagined being a minister in an English village having grown up in the Netherlands!

Rachel Johnson



“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

- Luke 6:38

In many practical ways, this diaconate year hasn't been so very different from my previous ministry as a Licensed Lay Minister. Yet it feels very different in ways that are hard to define, as I have been called into a new relationship with God and with my parish.

There have been new opportunities and new responsibilities. But, when I think back over the past year, what stands out are the small things: the pastoral visits, praying with a lady on her deathbed, the casual encounters and conversations.

This brings home to me that we worship a God of relationship and it's so often in those small moments of relationship that faith is nurtured – mine as much as those I meet. These occasions have also highlighted to me how God equips us with everything we need; something which encourages me as I look ahead to the challenges to come as a priest.

As an Ordained Local Minister, I have to juggle parish life, my job at Guildford Cathedral and family commitments. A typical week might see me preparing an all-age service, taxiing my children around, cutting out 120 penguins, leading a Bible study group, and meeting my fellow clergy to plan and pray. There are so many opportunities which I find exciting but sometimes daunting – if only I could be in three places at once!

I have to remind myself to stop and seek where God is leading. In stressful times I

find it crucial to share how I'm feeling with my colleagues, who are unfailingly wise, encouraging and supportive. I couldn't walk this path on my own.

To anyone exploring their own vocation, I would say: be open to the unexpected and trust that, if God is calling you, then God will give you everything you need. That isn't to say the journey will be easy, but you will be blessed more than you could possibly have imagined.

Corinne Jones



**As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,
clothe yourselves with compassion,
kindness, humility, meekness, and patience**

- Colossians 3:12

One of the many aspects of my Deacon year that I have particularly valued is participating in and leading different styles of worship in my parish. A poignant moment came when the congregations of the two churches I serve joined together for Palm Sunday, starting in ancient, intimate St Mary's Quarry Street before processing up Guildford High Street to finish the service in the magnificent surroundings of Holy Trinity.

At the beginning of the service, the Methodist Lay Preacher placed a coat at the foot of the Lenten cross to remind us that we need to let go of the things that bring us status in this world.

The moment was made all the more poignant because I was sitting behind the cross alongside my clergy colleagues and we were all wearing beautiful copes and ceremonial cloaks worn by clergy on special festival days. I did momentarily wonder whether we should be casting aside our cloaks and placing them before Jesus at the foot of the cross.

Two traditions, both represented in my parish: one which involves casting aside, the other which involves putting on. Jesus embodied both of these traditions when He washed His disciples' feet in John 13:4-5. The stole that I wear across me as an ordained deacon symbolises this act of service, much in the spirit of Paul's letter to the Colossians shared in the verse next to my photo.

We are all called to enter into this life of service as deacons, both lay and ordained. And when church traditions - from whatever denomination or culture - can relate to the communities that they serve, these communities, as the body of Christ, can in themselves point to and be a reflection of the kingdom of God.

I pray that the church and its traditions, whatever they may be, might help us all to enter more deeply into the Gospel of Jesus Christ and draw us ever closer to our unbounded God of love and mercy.

If you're looking to explore your vocational journey, I'd encourage you to listen to the voices of discouragement as well as those of encouragement to help you discern the still small voice or deep compulsion of God's call that lies within you.

Ellie Lister



I bow down towards your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything. On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul.

- Psalm 138:2-3

If you go down to the church today, you're sure of a big surprise!
If you go down to the church today, you'll never believe your eyes,
For every bear that ever there was, is gathered there for certain, because
Today's the day the teddy bears come to worship!

What a delight it was to gather for a truly intergenerational act of worship, as treasured teddy bears, some dating back over a century, came with their owners to a family service.

Hearing the stories of bears and owners, from the bear who has kept a young refugee friend company in all the transitions of their life, to a number of well-loved 'Blitz bears' who have been faithful companions through the years, it was a joy to reflect together on how God provides and loves us throughout our lives.

Participating in leading and preaching at special services has certainly been a highlight, from the delight in welcoming four-legged friends to our outdoor pet service, and the joy and beauty of the Christmas Eve Crib service, to kneeling and washing feet on Maundy Thursday. It has been a privilege to serve as an ordained minister over the past year.

Another highlight has been the opportunity to walk alongside people through the varied seasons of life: with the young, in time spent with families in preparation for Christening, at toddler groups, at school assemblies and in confirmation

preparation; with asylum-seeking friends living in our village, listening to their stories and offering support; and with older members of our community, in leading a monthly service of Holy Communion in our local care home, and in pastoral visits.

It has been a privilege to hear something of people's stories and to make connections between their stories and God's big story of love, life and hope.

It has been a rich and varied year, with much to thank God for. God calls each of us according to who he has created each of us to be. The key is to be willing to be obedient in taking each step that He calls us into, wherever that may lead, enjoying the beauty to be found along the way.

Jonny Lowe



"He must become greater; I must become less."

- John 3:30

The last year has been a hugely exciting one, with lots of opportunities to learn and grow as a follower of Jesus serving the local church. It has been a joy to be part of and lead a church family who love one another and are growing as disciples of Christ.

I have enjoyed building relationships, sharing both life and the gospel, and being on mission in our local community. I have had the privilege of leading our evening

congregation, facilitating multiple Alpha courses, preaching and leading services regularly, and developing younger leaders, amongst many other aspects of my role.

Seeing people come to faith and hungry to go deeper with God has been a real joy over the last year.

Some highlights have included seeing people identify their gifts and calling and then putting that into practice. I have baptised young people and students, equipped parents to invest in their teenagers, alongside having profoundly difficult yet healing pastoral conversations.

Juggling family life and being a deacon has been a steep learning curve, a bit of a whirlwind, tiring, yet affirming, profoundly fulfilling and inspiring all at the same time. I am eagerly anticipating what God will do in the coming years in and through me as He builds His Kingdom.

If you are thinking and praying through what it looks like for you to serve the risen Lord, keep pushing the doors and allow God to open them, and simply walk through. I guarantee you will find fulfilment in His vocation for your life.

Alistair Milne



During the first year of curacy, one encounters perhaps predictable struggles – stresses of moving the family, new job, new relationships and, of course, the challenges of working within a Church which is not yet fully formed into the risen body of Christ. It is through the Cross that we receive the Spirit of Jesus on this side of eternity!

The highlights of my curacy have included being part of the sacramental ministry in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, and having conversations with people whilst walking in my collar. Being recognised as an ordained minister had its ups and downs: for example, I started a Greek reading group with two people I met in the street who didn't know each other. However, I have also had someone try to throw a cup of hot water over me whilst I sought to help them in a moment of mental crisis.

One weekly thing I enjoy doing is taking the sacrament to care homes, hospitals and parishioners' homes.

The work/life balance has been managed by developing my “no” muscles. This is important to me as I love being around to see my daughters continue to grow - our eldest starts Reception in September and our youngest took her first steps this week!

As an encouragement for those exploring their calling, I'd say not to hold back from the particular way in which you receive that inner vitality of the Spirit. There is room in the Anglican Communion for every expression of worship and ministry, whilst at the same time asking the question, “What can I receive from the rest of the communion as a ‘gift’ which will help me make room for the ‘other’ in ministry?”

Judith Mitchell



“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

- Jeremiah 29:11

In an average week, my ministry may include leading and/or preaching at Sunday services at our two churches, assisting at our midweek Book of Common Prayer service, visiting a house-bound parishioner, meeting a family prior to an interment of ashes, and leading care-home residents in monthly hymn-singing followed by home communion.

There may also be supervision and formal reflection with my incumbent, perhaps attending a Zoom training seminar and a Ministry Team meeting.

Highlights from this year include the privilege of distributing the bread at two Eucharists, deaconing on Easter Sunday, leading and co-leading worship throughout the year and seeing the individual faces of the congregation from a new perspective – gaining a glimpse of what it means to share responsibility for the care of God’s family.

It has been a joy to get to know baptism families as children start their journey of faith, and to lead our Being With Explorer group.

I have had to learn to say ‘no’ at times, even though saying ‘yes’ has brought me on this journey, and saying ‘yes’ again and again brings God’s unexpected blessings and surprises. I have so much to learn and wish to embrace all the new experiences I am offered, but I have learned that I can’t do everything and that I need to set aside time in order to be who God is calling me to be.

Prioritising time for that and time to rest has been a challenge for me in this first year, but I know that maintaining a healthy life balance is vital in ministry.

The words of Jeremiah 29 have been a comfort when faced with unexpected challenges this year. They have sustained me, reminding me that I am always in God's hands, and encouraging me to trust Him when something surprising happens that doesn't quite fit with the plan that I had in mind!

What I'd like to say to those exploring their own vocational journey is that 'God will sustain you whatever happens and he will equip you for the life He is calling you to'.

Berenice Page



"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me - holy is his name.

- Luke 1:46-49

I felt such joy when I was ordained a deacon in July 2023. I felt this as the Bishop anointed us in the service and this feeling has not left me. This does not mean there have not been challenges - of course there have been!

The Lord does equip. I certainly understood and felt the power of the words in Psalm 28:7 'The Lord is my strength and my shield: my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.'

The parish where I am serving as a curate is a massive highlight. The people have embraced me and encouraged me so much in my ministry. I definitely arrived with an invisible caution 'mind the gap' as I stepped out into new territory. It felt quite different from being an ordinand.

There are enormous privileges in ordained ministry and being a servant of Christ. I was struck by the conviction I felt when taking funeral services and the power of the words that offer so much hope. I also ran the evangelistic course 'Hymns We Love' (which was a personal highlight, as God speaks to me through music) and took part in some of the Alpha course. Again, I was struck by the joy I felt in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others and all the hope that offers.

The church has three services on a Sunday and a highlight is the varied worship offered and I enjoy being part of the different traditions.

I am a Self-Supporting Minister and work part-time as a Hospital Chaplain in Redhill. My weeks are busy and at times challenging.

I would encourage everyone to have honest discussions when putting together the learning agreement. I am very happy with mine; it is a dynamic process and there is flexibility. There is always more to do and more I could do and the challenge is to be honest about what is possible. Prayer life and time to be with God is very important and just as important as the doing.

My journey to ordained ministry was not without challenges and I did not get selected on the first attempt. God did keep pulling me along and, with small steps, I kept following.

Whatever God's call may be to you, if you feel He is prompting take the first steps. The hymn that followed me through this process was 'Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidd'st me come to thee, O lamb of God I come.'

Janet Ruthven



Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

- Proverbs 3:5

My average week in curacy is totally varied. For example, this week I have spent time talking to parents and carers at our toddler café, organising meals for Alpha, preparing a sermon, reflecting on our pastoral care structure, and writing risk assessments!

There are many highlights from my first year of curacy, so choosing only two is hard. One was helping on an Alpha course. It was a real joy to journey alongside people, getting to know them and helping them to draw closer to Jesus.

A second was having the privilege of leading our annual Time to Remember service in November. We invited bereaved people from our church family and the wider community to come and spend time remembering their loved ones. It was a real honour to read the names of everyone being remembered.

I am grateful for the wonderful training and teaching I received on the Local Ministry Programme, but I admit there are times when I have wished I remembered more of what we had been taught. There have been pastoral care situations where I know I am learning as I go along, and pray I am still used by God during the learning.

My encouragement to anyone exploring their vocational journey is to knock on the door and see where God leads them.

Mandie Shirnia



In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

- Philippians 1:4-6

As an Ordained Local Minister, I'm in my home church, with my longstanding friends and acquaintances, yet the dynamics change around me. Some are overly considerate of my needs (uncomfortable) and some stare with raised eyebrows! Many say, "You're a vicar, can you tell me...", and others share in abundance. Most, thankfully, are very excited to know how my vocation has changed things.

It's an honour and a privilege to follow where God leads, engaging in so many new ways with our community and church. I have been honoured to lead funerals, one wedding (not the legal bit yet), our Maundy Thursday service, The Hour at the Cross, an Easter Sunday Feast, and also participate in full submersion baptisms, as well as regularly preaching and leading.

My highlights would be the intimate wedding (five people) and The Easter Sunday Feast. Both were full of love, hope, joy, and the presence of God in abundance.

I'm so glad I responded to the call to ministry, although slowly and cautiously. I would say to anyone who thinks God is calling them but doubts their academic ability (I am dyslexic) to trust Him and be brave. Despite the challenges and tears, it is so worth it. Whatever your age and insecurities, God is faithful.

I'm still learning how to balance all the things I long to do, in my ordained capacity - my work, self-care, seeing friends and family, walking the dogs and taking a holiday, etc. For now, I've given up on my least favourite - household chores - until I work it out!

Heather Valletta



"How can they call on the one they have not believed in? How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? How can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

- Romans 10:14-15

We arrived at Heatherside Church last June and what a year it has been! As part of the wider ministry team of St Paul's Camberley and St Barbara's Deepcut, it has been wonderful to see how God is building His church in Surrey Heath.

It has been a joy to be working as part of a team with St Paul's and St Barbara's, sharing resources and seeing the extension of God's kingdom as the priority, supporting one another and celebrating together. I have valued this greatly.

As a family, we have been welcomed into the community of Heatherside, a place where the church and the wider community 'do life' together. I have enjoyed being part of welcoming new families to the church, building the children and youth work, and ensuring that we're investing in the faith and discipleship journey of all ages.

I have enjoyed leading worship, growing my experience of regular preaching, and re-establishing home groups. The desire to grow in faith and build community is what I have really enjoyed and seek to grow within the church. Having the opportunity to take my first wedding was also a great joy and highlight from this year.

Like any time of transition into a new role and stage of life, there have been challenges. It has required us to find a new normal for us as a family in many

different ways. It is definitely a new experience for everyone to know who you are at a glance in the parish.

I'm very much looking forward to the next step of being ordained as a priest as I continue to discern God's call throughout curacy. The call of Jesus to 'Follow me' has called me into ministry and I look forward to all the future growth and adventures that He will lead me through.

I would encourage anyone who feels that God might be calling them to explore and have a conversation with someone. We can have set ideas of what a call to lay or ordained ministry might look like but I'm learning that there is great freedom in taking one step at a time and allowing the Spirit to lead me. I have found God to be so gracious, leading me every step of the way. I encourage you to do the same.

God Calls You

“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I set you apart.”

- Jeremiah 1:5

God calls every one of us to serve him. This may be in the Church or in the world, or a bit of both. Vocation is about the whole of our lives.

At our baptism, we are called into a relationship with Jesus Christ. We become disciples and play our part in sharing the Good News of the gospel.

When we truly find our place, we are the best version of ourselves, the person God created us to be.

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