

More about the Discernment Process



There are many parts of the discernment journey

As part of the discernment process, the Church is seeking to highlight God's call to each person to be in ministry and to identify men and women who are called to ordained ministry, with a view that they will exercise that ministry as part of the Ministry Team and remain in the Parish.

It might be that during the process means a person recognises that God is calling them to full time Christian ministry for which extensive education and formation is required. These people will explore that call directly with the Bishop and follow the Diocesan process. People under the age of 45 are encouraged to consider this direction. The majority of people exploring new arenas of ministry will be looking to serve in their local context. There is no upper age limit in place. However, where people are aged seventy and over there is a process of regular diocesan review including medical assessment.

Ordained local ministry is not an alternative selection and training process for stipendiary ministry. Deacons and priests in local ministry seeking to transfer to a stipendiary position in due course will normally be required to re-enter the diocesan discernment process, this time for stipendiary ministry, and enter formation with other theological students.

Those exploring a call to the ordained ministry enter into the Diocesan Discernment Process. This involves further interviews with Examining Chaplains, a medical, a psychological assessment and the taking of references. People exploring ordained ministry need to attend a Vocation Discernment Conference. The Conference is usually held during the week and will involve 1½ days including an overnight stay.

Diligence Checks, Faithfulness in Service and licensing

Every member of the Ministry Team undertakes public and representative ministries in the name of Christ and his Church. It is therefore very important that the people called to the Team have the personal qualities and holiness required of those leading the church in this way.

As part of the discernment process the Bishop wants to be satisfied that there is nothing on the person's police record that would preclude them and that the person would fulfil all the requirements to pass the Working with Children Check. All members of the Team should be familiar with and willing to abide by the standards expected of church workers (clergy and lay, paid and voluntary) contained in Faithfulness in Service.

Ongoing Education and Formation

Each member of the Ministry Team will receive an authority or licence from the Bishop for their work. Before the Bishop can issue these documents he must have confidence that each member of the Ministry Team is willing to undertake the education and formation required of them. Lay leaders will be asked to make an initial commitment of one year of training and formation and a further three years of authorised leadership of a lay team focused on a particular area of ministry in the life of the parish. Those called to ordained ministry make a whole of life commitment involving two years of initial training and formation as well as ongoing education.

Experience has shown us repeatedly that training in a team is the best way of equipping people for the ministry they share with others. The details of the training are available through the Newcastle School of Theology for Ministry.