

**Bishops’ Adviser for Diocesan Discernment of Ordained Ministry - Background paper**

**Introduction**

The Diocese of Chester is seeking to recruit an ordained priest as Bishops’ Adviser for Diocesan Discernment of Ordained Ministry. Working collaboratively on behalf of the bishops with a wide range of people, the person appointed will have responsibility for encouraging and enabling rigorous discernment of vocations to ordained ministry, as well as working as part of the Ministry Team in encouraging and supporting the calling and ministry of all God’s people. The postholder will be expected to grow the number and broaden the diversity of those discerning and training for ordained ministry.

**Chester Diocese**

The Diocese of Chester spans from Wirral and the Welsh border in the west to the limestone hills of the Derbyshire Peak District in the east. The north of the diocese reaches up to the rivers Mersey and Tame and the conurbations of south and east Manchester, and south to the towns of Crewe, Sandbach and Nantwich on the outskirts of Stoke-on- Trent and Shropshire.

The Diocese of Chester is currently divided into two archdeaconries. Chester covers the western half and Macclesfield the eastern. Roughly speaking, the Archdeaconry of Macclesfield covers that part of the diocese to the east of the M6, plus the area around Crewe and Nantwich. The Archdeaconry of Chester covers the rest of the diocese to the west of the M6. Each archdeaconry is made up of nine deaneries.

There are around 273 parishes in the Diocese of Chester, about 100 of which can be described as rural. There are approximately 230 stipendiary clergy as well as over 200 licensed Readers and over 70 licensed Pastoral Workers (with about 140 Pastoral Workers and Readers on PTO). The number of self-supporting ministers is increasing, with over 80 in post at present.

Chester Diocese is in a new season of its shared life. Bishop Mark arrived as new diocesan bishop in 2020 and Bishops Sam and Julie joined us in September 2021. We are currently engaged in a Vision and Strategy process, moving from the “Casting the Net Wide” process of listening to God together into the phase of framing vision and defining and implementing strategy.

**The Committee for Ministry**

The work of the Committee for Ministry (CfM) covers a range of activities that encourage, equip and develop the calling of all God’s people, including discernment, training and ongoing support for those in a wide variety of lay and ordained ministries.

Much like Chester Diocese as a whole, CfM is in a significant period of change. Simon Chesters joined as Director of Ministry in September 2021 and since then new members of the core team have joined and other colleagues have moved on to new roles. In addition to this post, a number of other roles are soon to be advertised in order to bring the team back up to full strength.

Areas supported by the Ministry Team include:

* Exploration and discernment for ordained and licensed ministries.
* The Foundations for Ministry course, which provides a resource for people exploring a variety of ways of serving God in the church and the world. FfM has been running for over 20 years but has recently had a significant review and update of the materials and structure.
* Working with University of Chester (which provides an option for validated study on the FfM and Pastoral Worker courses)
* Initial and ongoing training for licensed Pastoral Workers
* Working with Emmanuel Theological College on initial training for Readers as well as training for ordinands
* Support for the community of licensed lay ministers (currently advertising for a new Bishops’ Adviser for Licensed Lay Ministry)
* A combined programme of CMD events for licensed lay ministers and clergy
* Ministerial Development Review (currently advertising for a new Bishops’ Adviser for Ministerial Development, covering CMD and MDR)
* Curacies and IME2 programme, linking to specific support for clergy new in post and those moving into first incumbency posts (recent appointment of new Bishops’ Adviser for Curate Development & Clergy Transitions)
* Clergy sabbaticals, mid-ministry and pre-retirement
* Support for self-supporting ordained ministers
* Co-ordination of the network of spiritual companions, including launching a new spiritual accompaniment training course in Sept 2023
* Working with the diocesan counselling service to offer pastoral supervision resources for clergy
* Support for Dean of Women in Ministry, Diocesan Adviser in Christian Healing, Deliverance Ministry team
* Working with colleagues across Church House on projects including EveryDay Faith, Growing Faith, safer practice in ministry, clergy wellbeing, networks for different groups (church leaders in urban and rural areas, pioneering, leading larger churches).

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