

Self-Supporting Ministry in CofE Birmingham

Introduction

These Guidelines offer some insights into the selection, training and deployment of SSMs in CofE Birmingham.

CofE Bham is enriched by the ministry of Self-Supporting Ministers (SSMs) based in parishes, chaplaincies and work-place settings. The Bishop of Birmingham encourages vocations to this form of ministry, supported by the Sponsoring Bishop, DDO and Vocations' Team, and is committed to the imaginative deployment of SSMs so as to best use their gifts and thereby grow God's Kingdom.

SSM ministry rich, diverse and distinctive. As ministers without stipend, SSMs often exercise a ministry which is flexible and integrates with another professional vocation or substantial personal responsibilities.

Examples of SSM Ordained Ministers include:

Offering pastoral ministry to Colleagues and Clients in a Work-Place settings, ministering in an appropriate way alongside another professional role such as Teacher and Educator, Engineer, Legal Executive, Administrator, Social-Care Worker or Health-Professional. Often work-place SSMs are linked to a Parish in addition.

The term 'Minister in Secular Employment' (MSE) is sometimes used for this expression of SSM ministry.

Leading Parishes in a variety of contexts as Incumbent, either full-time or part-time. There are also SSMs who lead smaller Churches as Assistant Priests under the oversight of an Incumbent.

Serving as Associate Ministers in a Parish setting alongside an Incumbent, as part of a Ministry Team.

Serving as a Chaplain in an institutional or corporate setting such as healthcare or prison.

For further information, please contact Director of Ordinands The Revd Calvert Prentis CalvertP@cofebirmingham.com

Selection and Training

The Director of Ordinands (DDO) oversees the selection and training of Candidates for the Ordained Ministry on behalf of the Bishop of Aston, who is the Sponsoring Bishop.

At ordination Self-Supporting Ministers are admitted to Holy Orders in the Church of God, alongside their Stipendiary Colleagues. In the discernment process, it is the exploration of a call to the Diaconate and Priesthood that is primary, whether a Candidate is looking to Stipendiary Ministry or Self-Supporting Ministry.

All Candidates are tested, both within Birmingham Diocese and at a *Bishop's Advisory Panel*, against national *Selection Criteria* that have been approved by the House of Bishops.

The Church of England - Birmingham has published guidelines with regard to the age at which Candidates may be selected for training for the Ordained Ministry. The Bishop will not usually sponsor a Candidate who will be aged 61 or older at the start of a three-year course or 62, or older at the start of a two-year course.

Before a *Bishop's Advisory Panel*, the future focus of a Candidate's ministry is discussed with the DDO and agreed by the Sponsoring Bishop. A decision is made as to whether a Candidate has potential to hold a position of Primary Responsibility (as an Incumbent or equivalent) or as an Assistant Minister.

We are actively looking for Candidates for Self-Supporting Ministry who are willing to serve as Assistant Ministers in teams of Clergy and Lay People, as well as those who might, after their Curacy, lead a Church community.

Candidates for ministry that might involve this level of responsibility are tested differently at a Bishop's Advisory Panel, most particularly under three of the *Selection Criteria* – *Mission and Evangelism*, *Leadership and Collaboration* and *Quality of Mind*.

SSM Ordinands usually train part-time over two or three years at the Queen's Foundation. Age and accredited prior learning may be taken into account when agreeing a course of training.

Initial Deployment

The Diocesan Bishop oversees the process of deploying Curates according to national guidelines for the identification of Training Incumbents and of Parishes with good training potential.

Training Incumbents receive Diocesan training for their role in the formation and supervision of a Curate, with particular emphasis on SSM ministry issues and opportunities.

- Most SSM Curates are deployed outside the Parish from which they originate, in a context that will ensure their ongoing formation and training. Consideration is given to the Curate's employment and domestic circumstances. They are not asked to move house.
 - If appropriate, a Curate may be deployed in their Home Parish.
 - It may be that serving in their local Parish could give confidence for future growth and development.
 - This may be explored after careful discussion between the Parish Priest, DDO and Sponsoring Bishop.
 - In this case a motion of support from the PCC will be requested.
 - It is important that the potential Curate should share the forward vision for the ministry of the Parish.
 - There must be evidence of effective teamwork in the Parish and of proven ability in the potential Curate to work creatively across groupings in the community.
- All SSM Curates complete a *Working and Learning Agreement* with their Training Incumbent. It is revised regularly and approved by the Bishop of Aston.
- In the *Working and Learning Agreement* it is especially important to clarify boundaries and expectations. If the Curate is in paid employment there should be mention of this important aspect of their ministry. People in the Parish in which they are licensed should not regard such an SSM as 'off duty' or 'not engaged in ministry' when they are not available for Parish work.
- The working and domestic lives of SSMs vary considerably and we recognise that they are able to give varying levels of commitment to ministry in a Parish. The Church of England - Birmingham asks for a minimum of Sunday and two sessions (three hours) a week to be offered.

Ongoing training and formation

SSM Curates participate in Continuing Ministerial Education (CME 1-4).

Consultations take place on weekdays and are open to SSMs.

There is specific CME for SSMs:

- an annual study day for SSMs hosted by the Archdeacon of Aston.
- an annual reflection day for SSM Curates in paid employment arranged by the Bishop's Adviser for Clergy CME.
- the annual day for Deacons Preparing for Priesthood, which is held on a Sunday in order to include SSMs.
- SSM Curates are assessed in the same way as Stipendiary Curates.

After Curacy, SSMs participate in the MDR process.

SSMs are eligible for CME grants on an equal basis with Stipendiary Clergy.

Future Deployment

SSM Curates, like Stipendiary Curates, meet the Bishop of Aston towards the end of their third year in Curacy to review their ministry and discuss future deployment.

There are several possible outcomes:

- to move to another Parish, as an Assistant Priest. This could be beneficial in order to broaden experience of ministry.
- to remain in the same Parish, as an Assistant Priest, if this were deemed appropriate.
- to ask for the Bishop's Permission to Officiate (PTO), especially on reaching the retirement age.
- to transfer to Stipendiary Ministry (see below).
- to lead a Church community, under the oversight of a Stipendiary Parish Priest.

Transfer to Stipendiary Ministry

It is possible to transfer from Self-Supporting Ministry to Stipendiary Ministry.

- Application should be made to the DDO who will initiate a discernment process based on the national Learning Outcomes.
- It is important that there is evidence of potential to minister in a position of Primary Responsibility.
- Note will be taken of the Diocesan Age Guidelines.
- After papers of application and references have been collected, the Sponsoring Bishop may sponsor an SSM for a national Candidates' Panel.
- The Ministry Division accepts cases at a Candidates' Panel only if a Diocese has a stipendiary post to offer.
- The Church of England - Birmingham usually requires an SSM Curate to serve an additional stipendiary Curacy.