

Who's who, and what's what in Christian ministry?

Lay Ministry

In Baptism each member of the Church is 'received into Christ's holy Church, and made a lively member of the same'.¹ In confirmation this is reaffirmed, the individual promising to 'be in charity with all men',² and therefore Pastoral Care is the responsibility of every member of the Church. Realising that some members of the Church have special gifts there are a number of particular roles that it recognises:

Lay Pastoral Assistants who are authorised to take part in the Church's ministry to those in need. This is most commonly exercised through ministries such as taking communion to those unable to attend Church, undertaking to maintain pastoral contact after events such as Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals, and taking part in the ministry of prayer for healing.

Licensed Lay Ministers (called Lay Readers in the past) were originally created to provide suitable people to lead non-eucharistic worship when there was no ordained minister available. The office of Licensed Lay Minister has developed into a key ministry with both pastoral and liturgical aspects, depending on the individual's skills.

Ordained Ministry

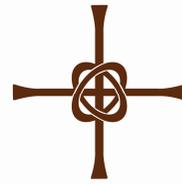
The Church recognises the work of some of its members as being representative of the work of the whole Church. In line with the practice of the early Church,³ the Church of England maintains a threefold order of deacons, priests and bishops.

Deacons have a particular role in promoting the care of those in need and teaching within the Church. They are also called to mediate between Church and Society; calling the Church to remember the wider community,

Priests (also called Presbyters) are called to a particular role of teaching and nurturing the faith of those they serve. In particular, this call to leadership within the Christian community is borne out in their symbolic role of leading the Church in celebrating the Eucharist.

Bishops have a particular role in maintaining the doctrine of the Church, providing a focal point of unity that is symbolised in their role in ordering the Church and presiding over the dispersed Eucharistic community under their care, within the diocese they serve.

Christian ministry is the work of the whole Church. Those with specific roles to play are only able to do so if they are supported by the wider body of the Church.



The Minster Church of Saint Denys, Warminster

Pastoral care

What is pastoral care?

Pastoral care may well be described as the concern for both the material and spiritual welfare that members of the Church exhibit, both for one another and those they meet in the course of their daily lives. This is not just the case in times of trouble, but often becomes more apparent at certain points on the Christian pilgrimage through life.

Who is involved in pastoral care?

The role of the priest

The priest is involved in the sacramental work of the Church. The sacraments are 'outward signs of an inward grace' and are transformative in their nature. They are the outward signs of Christ's inner place in our spiritual lives. It is the priest who leads the Church in services of Baptism and the Eucharist, although it has been common practice for the distribution of bread and wine to be done by those with a diaconal ministry.

The role of the deacon

It is the deacon who holds the key pastoral role within the Church. This is in line with biblical practice when they distributed food and cared for the poor. In the early Church the distribution of food was not only seen in terms of food for the hungry, but the spiritual food of the Eucharist.

In common with the historic practice of the rest of the Western Church all priests within the Church of England remain deacons; thereby retaining this ministry when ordained as a priest. The diaconal ministry of the Church is not restricted to those who are ordained as deacons and in its history the Church of England has given Licensed Lay Ministers and, more recently, Lay Pastoral Assistants a distinctive place within its diaconal ministry.

The role of the laity

Every member of the Church, by their baptism, has a duty to care for their fellow Christian and a duty to extend the Christian offer of sacrificial love to their neighbour, whether friend or stranger. Alongside this general duty of care and charity, the Church authorises some individuals to particular

¹ BCP, The Public Baptism of Infants

² BCP, A Catechism

³ e.g. 1st Letter to Timothy

ministries of pastoral care. Whether as Licensed Lay Minsters (Readers) or Lay Pastoral Assistants, this sharing in the diaconal work of the Church is symbolic of the concern that all Christians should show to each other and, while varying from individual to individual, may include distributing communion, an involvement in the Church's healing ministry and caring for those at various stages of their Christian journey.

In the Minster's community we are fortunate to have a number of people working as Ministers, including priests, deacons, a Licensed Lay Minster and a number of Lay Pastoral Assistants. As well as the needs of the Minster's gathered congregations many of them have pastoral roles in the wider community of the parish which numbers nearly 10,000 people.

Key moments in the Christian pilgrimage

Baptism (also known as Christening)

Although anyone can baptise in an emergency, it is normally a priest who baptises, signifying the entry of the individual into the worshipping family of the Church. For children, each family is normally offered a Baptism Partner; a member of the congregation who both sponsors the child and maintains contact with the child and family. Adults normally have a sponsor who undertakes to accompany them on their spiritual journey.

Marriage (also known as a Wedding)

Under both Church and Civil law, marriages have to be solemnised by a 'clerk in Holy Orders' who can be either a deacon or priest (normally with at least a year since their ordination as deacon). For this reason one of the clergy is normally the focus of pastoral care before and after a marriage.

Funerals

Church of England funerals must be conducted by an authorised minister (either ordained or lay) and normally initial visits are made by the minister conducting the funeral. If long-term care is appropriate or needed then an LPA will normally be involved as the prime contact between the Church and individual family.

Sustaining ourselves for the journey

Communion

The sacrament of Holy Communion, commonly called by its alternative name the Eucharist, is at the heart of the Christian spiritual life. It combines the communal sharing of individual members of the body of Christ with the

personal encounter of the individual with Christ, through the recollection of his own sacrificial death and celebration of the promise of the resurrection. In this way it joins the present day Church with the body of Christ that has worshiped through the ages and in many places; providing individual sustenance and a source of corporate growth. When members of the Church are unable to gather physically it has been the Church's tradition that communion be taken to them by fellow Christians. In this way, although at a different time and in a different place, they can take part in the same physical celebration of the eucharist. From the earliest decades of the Church's life this has been a task given to those exercising the ministry of deacon and, in the Church of England, this means that this has been a key part of the ministry of Deacons and Licensed Lay Ministers, who have more recently been joined by Lay Pastoral Assistants.

Ministry of Healing and Reconciliation (including Confession and Unction)

There is a separate leaflet dealing in more depth with the Ministry of Healing and Reconciliation. However, this is a key part of the pastoral task of looking after the spiritual well-being of an individual. There are particular occasions when an individual needs the sacramental ministry of a priest, either to provide reconciliation or healing through the sacraments of Confession and Anointing. In particular, this is a ministry that is often found necessary towards the end of a Christian's pilgrimage through life and, as such, is a key part of the pastoral work of those clergy who are ordained as priests. The Rev'd Nick Brown

Pastoral contacts at the Minster

Pastoral Co-ordinator, Sylvia Short, on 01985 213224

Pastoral care for members of the congregation, including visiting and home communions (carried out by a combination of lay and ordained members of the Minster's community). **Please make sure that any pastoral concerns are notified – it's better that three people say something than no-one!**

Parish Office, on 01985 215460:

Enquiries about Baptisms and Weddings.

The Rectory, on 01985 213456:

For urgent and confidential matters, and the sacramental ministry of healing and reconciliation.

N. B. The first point of contact for funeral arrangements is normally the Funeral Director, but please feel free to contact any of the clergy for any immediate pastoral needs.