

# 6 A call to an ordained life



All baptised Christians are called to a ministry of some kind. For most, this will be a lay ministry, living out their lives as disciples in any number of ways, both outside and inside the Church. Some men and women, however, will be called to the ordained life, exercising the ministry of a deacon, a priest, or a bishop. They fulfil this ministry on behalf of the whole Church, and in order to enable the whole mission of the Church.

Ordained ministry is lived out in one of the threefold orders (deacon, priest, or bishop). A deacon is called to be a servant, both within the church and in the wider community. They serve in Christ's name, and as they do that they remind the whole church that serving others is fundamental to all ministry. Priests are called to build up the body of Christ through the ministry of Word and Sacrament, pastoral care and teaching. They preside at the Eucharist and administer the sacraments, strengthening the baptised and encouraging them in their discipleship. The call of a bishop is to be a leader and a shepherd within their diocese. They're called to be pastors and shepherds of Christ's flock, teaching the faith, and being a focus of the church's unity and mission in the world.

Bishop John Pritchard says that the central concerns of ordained ministry are "the glory of God, the pain of the world, and the renewal of the Church" and this captures really well the idea of something that is lived not for oneself but for others. And seeing ordained ministry as something undertaken not for the individuals themselves but on behalf of the church as a whole can remind us of the way that *anyone's* ministry is about other people.

❖ ***Think about the ministry of the whole church – how is that also on behalf of others? Who is the church's ministry for?***

So ordination is about "a life lived" – about who you are – before it's concerned with what you do. Within the three orders of ordained ministry clergy can serve in different roles – as vicars, chaplains (in organisations like schools, hospitals,

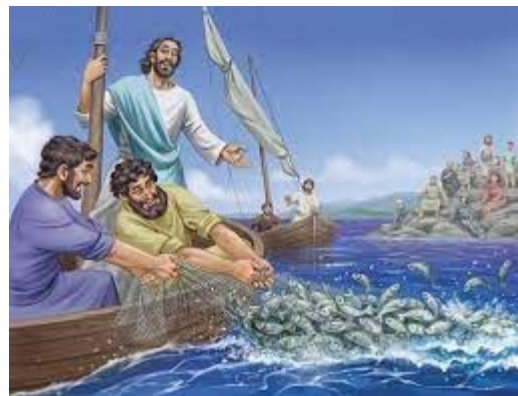
various workplaces and the military), community workers, or teachers for example. I've sometimes said that those different roles are like a variety of "hats" that you can put on or take off at various times in the course of your working life, but that the order of ministry you inhabit is more like your skin – always and deeply a part of who you are.

- ❖ ***Think of the clergy in your ministry unit, or others you have known: what different roles have they exercised over their lives?***
- ❖ ***How does the difference between role and order play out when clergy retire from an active ministry role?***

## **A biblical call story**

### **The Call of Peter Luke 5:1-11**

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.



In Luke's Gospel this wasn't Simon's first encounter with Jesus: Jesus had already been to his house and healed his mother-in-law from a fever. Perhaps this previous meeting was what encouraged Simon to let Jesus use his boat as a teaching platform and then to put out into the deep water and let down his nets for a catch – which probably seemed a futile exercise after a night's unsuccessful fishing. Several things stand out here – not just the vast amount of fish that was caught but Simon's sense of fear and wonder and the feeling that he is in the presence of divine power. Also the way that the prior experience and expertise of Simon and the others isn't forgotten, but will be transformed in this new ministry: "from now on you will be catching people." We can see too in this passage the move from "Simon" to "Peter" – often in the Bible a new role comes with a new name. So there's continuity (fishing for people) and newness (a different name).

This was Peter's first call. A second call came much later, after his threefold denial that he even knew Jesus, and restored Peter – especially in his own understanding – to his ministry as one of the leadership in the early church.

- ❖ ***How have your previous experiences prepared you for the ministry you are exercising now?***
- ❖ ***What is new about your current ministry?***
- ❖ ***When someone is ordained, what are some markers of their new role? What continues?***

### **Other biblical call stories**

1 Samuel 3:1-10

Samuel was called at a young age, and became a priest and a judge. Note how the older Eli helped him discern that it was the voice of God calling to him in the night. *Which of our young people might God be calling?*

John 21: 15-19

Simon Peter called again, after Jesus' death and resurrection. The command to "feed my lambs / tend my sheep / feed my sheep" assures him that his past denials of Jesus do not disqualify him from a ministry of leadership.

Acts 1:13-26

The church calls Matthias to take the place of Judas as an apostle.

## Bi-Vocational Ministry

Some clergy exercise a bi-vocational ministry – being called to work both within the church and in a different occupation. Sometimes both ministries might be “church” ones – for example working for some days in the week within a parish and for the rest of the time in a diocesan or chaplaincy role. Just as often, the priest or deacon might be working within a secular organisation, or be self-employed, as an accountant or a doctor for example. This is not just about non-stipendiary ministry (those not dependent on the church for their primary income) but about choosing to work both for the church and in a secular role.



St Paul, with his tent-making, is an early example of this model of ministry (see Acts 18:1-4). This is not just Paul – and Priscilla and Aquila, who were also tent-makers and leaders – earning money by making tents in order to support himself for his “real ministry.” He’s witnessing to Christ and spreading the gospel when he is tent-making and when he is preaching in synagogues and public places.

And he also used his earnings to benefit the Christian community.

Teresa Morgan, a classics professor at Oxford and a priest in the Church of England has this to say:

I didn't see myself as a priest in my parish and a lecturer at work, but as living one life of faith in several places. Bit by bit, a few ideas began to germinate about how someone might be a priest in and for their working community. ... It seemed to me that ministering at work should be more about “showing” than “telling.” Day by day I would try to be attentive to the people around me, especially if they were in need of practical help, encouragement or just a listening ear. I would speak out and act, if necessary, against inequality, unkindness or injustice. I would try to live in harmony with my colleagues and students, and to foster forgiveness and reconciliation whenever we fell out. I would say everyday to God, “not my will but yours be done,” and wait and see what God did with my obedience.

Within the Diocese of Waiapu (and elsewhere in this province) there are a number of clergy engaged in bi-vocational ministry, with roles in both parishes and businesses or other organisations (the Hato Hone St John Ambulance service, for example).

❖ ***What might be some of the advantages of bi-vocational ministry for the Church?***

## ❖ *What about any disadvantages?*

### **Are you called to the ordained life?**

Most Christians are called to serve God as lay people, both outside and inside the church. Some people, however, are called to ordination. Sometimes a sense of call develops within the person, and sometimes the possibility of ordination is suggested by someone else who knows them well. If you find yourself in that position, the diocese has a process in which the church works with the person to discern whether that is the right path for them.

The process begins when a person indicates a desire to explore a sense of vocation to the ordained life. After talking to their vicar (or to another priest in non-vicar-led parishes), they have an initial conversation with the Ministry Educator, who collects background information about their history, time in the Anglican church, experience of call, outworking of that call, and the ministry they are currently exercising. Then the Bishop reviews all the information and determines whether or not the person will proceed to the Application phase, in which a formal application (including the writing of a spiritual autobiography) is made. The following stages involve interviews by a number of Bishop's Ministry Advisors and a psychologist, and a residential weekend – which is in Auckland, as Waiapu runs a joint process for the discernment of candidates for the ordained ministries of vocational deacon or priest, working together with the dioceses of Auckland and Waikato-Taranaki. At each phase, the Bishop makes a decision whether it's appropriate for an applicant to proceed to the next stage. If a call to ordination is discerned the person proceeds to training and formation, which includes some theological study.



## ❖ *Are you, perhaps, called to the ordained life?*

### **Meet some clergy**



**Octavius Hadfield** (1814-1904), Bishop. Hadfield came to New Zealand in 1839 as a missionary. He was the first priest to be ordained in New Zealand and worked for a while at Waimate North, learning the Māori language. He responded to a request for a missionary for the Kāpiti coast and there earned the respect of both Māori and Pākehā. In 1844 Hadfield's health broke down and for four years he was seriously ill in Wellington, during which he was often consulted by Governor



George Grey. He spoke out on behalf of Māori especially over the war which began in Waitara in 1860. He became the second bishop of Wellington, and later served as primate.

**Roto Waitoa** (d 1866), Priest, was the first Māori ordained in New Zealand. He came from the Ngāti Raukawa of Otaki, and was baptised by Octavius Hadfield in 1841. He became Bishop Selwyn's constant companion on journeys around New Zealand and studied at St John's College. Waitoa was ordained deacon by Selwyn in 1853, and served on the East Coast. He was priested by Bishop William Williams of Waiapu in 1860 at Tūranga (Gisborne). He was noted for his knowledge, sincerity, and humility.



**Cherie Baker** (1928-2014), Priest, was one of the first four Anglican women ordained to the priesthood in New Zealand, on 3 December 1977 (hers was in Waiapu Cathedral). Born in England, her journey included running a large farm after the untimely death of her husband. She found fulfilment in God's service and faced a number of challenges as one of the pioneers of women's priestly ministry. In one of her poems she wrote, "Dear Lord, I am here. Use me as you will. I am yours."

**Doreen Swinburne** (1930-2022), Vocational Deacon. Deacons have a community-facing ministry or service, and Doreen embodied this, serving in a number of roles and locations, including Mt Maunganui where she was chaplain in a retirement village. She described the vocation of a deacon as "to dance on the edge"—like a picture of a cup or bowl. "The inside would be the institutional church and the area around the outside the world. Trying to navigate the edge would take a great deal of balancing ..."



❖ **Think of someone you know who lives the ordained life: how did they get to that point? What is their call story?**

## THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

## Closing Reflections

This study has looked at a number of ways that God can call us. Each of these is more about “being” than “doing”: less “what is God calling me to do?” and more “how is God calling me to be?” We’ve looked together at the call to holiness, to discipleship, to service, to a prophetic life, to a vocation, and to the ordained life. Some of those are common to all Christians: God invites us *all* to be holy, to be disciples, to be servants.

- ❖ ***How do you embody  
holiness  
discipleship  
service?  
(Try to be as specific as you can.)***

Perhaps not everyone is called to a prophetic life (do you agree with that?) but the Church as a whole is. And over the course of our lives we can do many different kinds of work, sometimes for money, sometimes not.

- ❖ ***How are you part of the Church’s prophetic life?***
- ❖ ***How is your work – whether paid or unpaid, whether lay or ordained – part of your call to follow Christ?***

It’s worth remembering that most of God’s mission occurs as disciples serve their callings outside of the gathered church community.

- ❖ ***How does your calling further God’s mission?***
- ❖ ***As this study draws to a close, how has it changed you?***
- ❖ ***What do you want to think more about?***

## THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

## Closing Worship

*You might like to close each session by praying together. Here are some possible prayers.*

God of the desert,  
as we follow Jesus into the unknown,  
may we recognise the tempter when he comes;  
let it be your bread we eat,  
your world we serve and you alone we worship.  
this we ask through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

God, you are working still,  
breaking down and building up;  
open our eyes to discern your hands  
so that we may take our place  
as labourers together with you.  
Hear this prayer for your love's sake. Amen.

God,  
give us work till our life shall end,  
and life till our work is done. Amen.

**E tō mātou Matua i te rangi  
Kia tapu tōu Ingoa.  
Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga.  
Kia meatia tāu e pai ai  
ki runga ki te whenua,  
kia rite anō ki tō te rangi.  
Hōmai ki a mātou āiane  
he taro mā mātou mō tēnei rā.  
Murua ō mātou hara,  
Me mātou hoki e muru nei  
i ō te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.  
Āua hoki mātou e kawea kia whakawaia;  
Engari whakaorangia mātou i te kino:  
Nōu hoki te rangatiratanga, te kaha, me te korōria,  
Āke ake ake. Āmine.**

