



## **Discernment Procedure for LLM (Reader) Training in the Diocese of Guildford**

### **Welcoming Candidates and Incumbents to the LLM (Reader) Discernment Process**

The procedure for discernment begins in your parish and progresses to a discernment panel conducted by the Board of LLMs under the authority of the Bishop of Dorking who then recommends the candidate for training.

The Ministry Division policy paper on Bishops' Regulations for LLM Reader Ministry states:

'LLM Readers bear considerable responsibility in the church as lay ministers authorised by Canon with a teaching and preaching ministry in a pastoral context.'

Another Ministry Division Paper states:

'We stress the need for a common understanding and standard of selection since LLM Readers are nationally accredited and deployed throughout the Church of England.'

The process of discerning candidates for LLM training therefore operates within a national framework.

The Diocese of Guildford welcomes applications for LLM training, and it is necessary for the incumbent to satisfy the Diocese about the prospective role for the candidate. The Incumbent has a significant role in nurturing candidates and due weight will be given by the discernment panel to the Incumbent's detailed written reference, together with the references received from others. Prospective candidates will need to have the full support of their Incumbent and their PCC's approval to proceed with the application.

The first step for potential candidates is to pray and reflect with their Incumbent, which will help the Incumbent to be clear about the reference which they supply later. The Incumbent will explore the nature of the candidate's call to public ministry and Licensed Lay ministry in particular, their spiritual development over time and the demands of the training course.

It should be noted by all concerned that the training is currently a two-year commitment, with an option to continue in study for a third year and will require a significant amount of the candidate's time. The Parish and Incumbent must be prepared to release the candidate from some parish obligations as necessary and support them in their vocational training.

## **Application Requirements**

You are most welcome to make contact for further information or a visit to the course, using these addresses:

Warden of LLM Readers [wardenofllms@cofeguildford.org.uk](mailto:wardenofllms@cofeguildford.org.uk)

Dean of Local ministry Programme [John.valentine@cofeguildford.org.uk](mailto:John.valentine@cofeguildford.org.uk)

Candidates Secretary [llmreader@cofeguildford.org.uk](mailto:llmreader@cofeguildford.org.uk)

Please contact the Candidates Secretary for application forms and guidelines. They can dispatch the forms to you and to the candidate and allocate a place at a discernment panel. Discernment days are usually held at Diocesan House in Guildford on Saturdays in the summer term. The deadline for all paperwork will be three weeks prior to the discernment day. Applications for the following September received later than this will be accepted only in exceptional circumstances. The PCC resolution will need to be passed and supplied to the Candidates Secretary prior to interview.

**The candidate is required to have completed the Diocesan Basic Awareness and Foundation Safeguarding Training prior to application and must hold a satisfactory, current DBS check with barring information for working with Adults and Children, held in the parish.**

The application for discernment includes basic personal details and a personal statement from the candidate of 250 - 500 words. This needs to include confirmation that the candidate has considered with the Incumbent the possibility of other forms of ministry and explain in some detail, giving any relevant background information, why the candidate feels it is right to offer themselves now for the specific training of a Licensed Lay Minister.

LLM Reader ministry welcomes people of all genders, sexualities and ethnicities.

LLMs are initially licensed for 5 years which is renewed by the Diocese in agreement with the parish. At the age of 70, LLMs are given annual Permission to Officiate (PTO) which is agreed by the Parish and Incumbent. In order that LLMs may be trained and licensed prior to PTO, the current guidelines suggest that candidates need to be of a suitable age to complete the discernment process, and training programme before reaching PTO age.

The initial training course normally lasts for two years, commencing each September, and takes place on Monday evenings in Guildford, alongside home study, essays and other written work, residential weekends and possible parish placements. New LLMs then attend the IME course following licensing. Further enquiries about the course should be addressed to the Dean of the Local Ministry Programme [John.valentine@cofeguildford.org.uk](mailto:John.valentine@cofeguildford.org.uk)

## References

The Incumbent is required to give a full and frank reference, which will be confidential to the Candidates Secretary, the Warden, discernment panel, LMP Dean and Year Tutor. In particular, the Incumbent is required to comment on the anticipated future role of the candidate as a LLM in the Parish. The Incumbent should also comment on:

- how long the candidate has been known and how well
- how firm they feel the candidate's Christian faith is, illustrated by examples
- how emotionally-equipped the candidate is for ministry
- how, in practice, the candidate currently lives out their faith and reveals it to others within the parish and in other settings, e.g. at work
- how well the candidate is likely to cope with the discipline of continuing study which is expected of all LLMs
- how well the candidate works alongside others
- one area in which the candidate might grow

Confidential written references are required from two referees, nominated by the candidate. These references will be confidential to the Candidates Secretary, the Warden/Registrar, and the Discernment Panel. These are to be submitted by email and are held in confidence until 3 years after application and then deleted.

The referees should know the candidate well enough to provide a full and frank written reference of 250-500 words. The permission of the prospective referees must have been obtained prior to their nomination. The referees should include 2 lay members of the parish, at least one of them being in a leadership role (such as churchwarden or PCC member). At least one referee should be a person of the opposite gender to the candidate. The candidate secretary contacts the referees directly and requests their references to be supplied by email, at least three weeks before the interview date.

## Support from the PCC and Parish

Along with your Incumbent's reference, your PCC will need to confirm that the candidature has been discussed and agreed. The PCC Secretary's record should include the minute of the meeting which carried the following resolution:

### **This PCC supports N spiritually, prayerfully, and financially as its candidate for Licensed Lay Minister training selection on the understanding:**

- **that it will be required to fund the candidate to the value of around £1000 per annum during two years of training and to a lesser extent thereafter in expenses incurred in service within the parish,**
- **that N will be released from all obligations in the parish during the two years of training, and**
- **that it agrees that on completion of training N will be accepted and regularly used as a full member of the Parish Staff or Ministry Team.**

This resolution must be carried in full and in one sitting. Decisions on funding and deployment must be agreed at the same meeting and may not be deferred. Where a PCC is of the opinion that candidacy

and support should be treated as separate issues, its support should be considered to be other than whole-hearted, and the resolution not carried.

### **The Discernment Day**

Candidates are welcomed to the discernment day at Church House. The Candidates Secretary is responsible for the invitations and arrangements on this day. There will be group conversation and opportunity for relaxed conversation alongside the more rigorous interviews. The candidates enjoy a carousel of interviews covering the core criteria laid out by Ministry Division for all Dioceses:

- Love for God
- Call to Ministry
- Love for People
- Wisdom
- Fruitfulness
- Potential

The chair of the panel is a senior member nominated by the Warden of LLMs with the approval of the Bishop. Three other panel members will normally include the Dean of LMP or a year tutor, a member of the Diocesan Board of LLMs, and another Licensed Lay Minister. All are supplied with copies of application forms and references in advance and meet to make prayerful preparations for the individual interviews in consultation with the chair.

### **Follow up and the Future**

After the discernment day, the selectors assess the suitability of each candidate by reference to all available information. There is no competitive element. The panel may approve as many candidates as are appropriate.

Within seven days, each candidate and Incumbent will receive an email indicating whether they are being recommended to the Bishop for acceptance for LLM training in the current year. The names of candidates will be passed on to the Principal of the Local Ministry Programme who will contact them directly.

Those candidates for whom this is not considered a suitable ministry, or for whom there are other recommendations, will be informed directly with full explanation and have follow up meetings with their Incumbent to discuss the next steps in their ministry within the parish. It is hoped that whatever the outcome of the panel, the discernment day will be a supportive experience as candidates explore their callings from God. Each candidate and Incumbent are held firmly in prayer.

**Application forms are available from, and should be returned to:**

**Candidate Secretary [llmreader@cofeguildford.org.uk](mailto:llmreader@cofeguildford.org.uk)**