**What is a Licensed Lay Minister?**

Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs) are usually local people who are key members of their congregations, exercising leadership in worship, mission, pastoral care and prayer. They will also be living out their faith in the community in some form: they may be in employment, or involved with neighbourhood groups. Their faith is part of their everyday life. They represent the church in the life of the world and reflect the light and love of Christ wherever they are.

At the heart of Licensed Lay Ministry is the call to teach the faith, enable mission and be a leader in church and society. This will usually include preaching, teaching, leading worship and offering pastoral care in church, but also includes sharing faith and caring in the wider community. Any one individual may experience a stronger call to one or more of these roles than to the others but there is an expectation that LLMs could exercise any of these roles. LLM ministry is a ‘whole life’ ministry which bridges between the church and the world.

**Could this be me?**

God calls and equips all sorts of people for this ministry. However, there are some key criteria which the church looks for particularly:

* Relying on God, drawing strength from scripture, the church and prayer.
* Responding to God in their daily lives in the world.
* Relational people, seeking to serve and value others, and able to work collaboratively.
* Wanting to learn and grow in discipleship.
* Self-aware and resilient people who have a supportive network of relationships.
* People who look outwards, reaching out to others and wanting to share God’s love for the world.
* Rooted in their local church, able to connect their Sunday worship with their Monday to Saturday worlds.
* Aged over 18 and under 70 at the time of licensing.

**What do I do first?**

Talk to your incumbent or contact the Ministry Development Team at the Diocese of Bristol. The Adviser for Ordinands and Vocations oversees those who are considering Lay Ministry or Ordained Ministry.

**What training will I need?**

Training requirements for Licensed Lay Ministry vary between dioceses, however all training routes are approved by the central church. LLMs in this diocese are expected to undertake two years part-time training on the ‘Exploring Christianity’[[1]](#endnote-1) course plus the formation year which includes, amongst other things, practical experience of preaching and leading worship, training in pastoral care and a parish placement.

If you have some prior theological learning (e.g. a Certificate in Theology), then contact the Adviser for Lay Ministry to discuss your training. Candidates with special educational needs should also contact the Adviser for Lay Ministry as there may be a more appropriate individually tailored route available for training.

**Who decides if I’m suitable for Licensed Lay Ministry?**

All candidates for licensed ministry, lay or ordained, attend a Diocesan Discernment Day at which a panel of Vocation Advisers reviews various pieces of evidence against the Diocesan Criteria for Selection.

Before attending the Discernment Day, you will be asked to complete an application form and provide 4 references, one of which must be your incumbent or equivalent. You will also require a PCC resolution approving your application and a parish profile, plus a work agreement which has been discussed between you and your incumbent. This is to ensure that you will be working in a collaborative team in which your role is clearly defined and expectations agreed in advance. The Adviser for Ordinands and Vocations will give you more information about this process.

**When can I apply?**

You should have been regularly worshiping at your church for at least a year before starting training (i.e. Exploring Christianity). The Diocesan Discernment Day is usually attended in the second year of the Exploring Christianity course but can be attended in the first year (although the course must be completed before the one-year course of LLM Formation begins).

Flowchart

A growing desire to live out your faith by serving the church in a more public ministry and also sharing faith in everyday life outside the church.

If you have not already done some theological training, start ‘Exploring Christianity’i.

If possible, get some experience in working as a Christian outside the church (e.g. helping with outreach) and / or leading within church (e.g. leading the intercessions).

Speak to your incumbent about your sense of call.

Speak to LLMs about their ministry, read about Reader ministryii, or speak to the Adviser for Lay Ministry.

Contact the Adviser for Ordinands and Vocations. She may send you to speak to a Vocations Chaplain.

When you are ready, the Adviser for Ordinands and Vocations will send you to a Selection Day. Prior to this, you will need 4 references including one from your incumbent. You will also need support from your PCC and to complete some safeguarding requirements.

If you are recommended for training and have completed ‘Exploring Christianity’ (or other equivalent theological learning), you will start the one year Formation course where you will learn practical skills and work with others on a similar journey to become a Licensed Lay Minister. After successful completion of the year, the Bishop is informed. Licensing takes place at a special service in the cathedral where you will be given a Bishop’s Licence to preach and represent the church as an LLM.

1. Information about Exploring Christianity can be found on the diocesan website or contact the Adviser for Lay Ministry. It is a 2 year course giving a good theological foundation to your faith and wider Christian life.

ii Recommended books include *Instruments of Christ’s Love: the Ministry of Readers* by Tovey, Buck and Dodds; *Reader Ministry Explored* by Rowling and Gooder; also see resources on <https://transformingministry.co.uk/publications-handbooks/> especially *Resourcing Sunday to Saturday Faith* [↑](#endnote-ref-1)