

## Foundations in Christian Ministry

A one-year part-time programme to:

- Explore vocation
- Deepen discipleship and develop pastoral gifts
- Discern God's call

In September 2016, the Diocese of Exeter is launching a new lay formation programme, which will be delivered by the South West Ministry Training Course (SWMTC).

If you feel that God may be calling you to a form of ministry in the Church, Foundations in Christian Ministry provides an opportunity to discern that call. It's aimed mainly at people who believe they have a lay vocation, although some potential ordinands may be invited to attend by the DDO or vocations adviser.

### The shape of the course

At the heart of Foundations in Christian Ministry is a belief that we are best able to put ourselves in the way of God when we come together in community with others to learn, share hospitality and pray. To that end, its principal feature is a series of **six study days throughout the year, lasting from 10am to 4.30pm** and held either in Exeter or Plymouth (details overleaf).

At these events, participants in Foundations in Christian Ministry will worship together, study the Bible, learn about theology and spirituality, eat and drink together, and share in Christian fellowship. Each day will involve a mixture of informal lectures, group discussions, practical workshops that equip you with skills in pastoral care to use in the context of your home church and wider community, and free time to socialise.

In addition, there will be an opportunity for an ongoing conversation about the shape of your vocation. This will help you attend to God's word, and develop the habits of prayerful listening for his call.

Alongside attendance at study days, you'll be asked to get involved in two discipleship courses in your local area, and complete a home-study module. These courses will involve a regular commitment at various times throughout the year, though it won't be weekly for the whole period of the programme. You will be given full support and guidance with this aspect of Foundations in Christian Ministry by SWMTC's course team.

As a result of participating in the programme, you may discern a vocation to Reader ministry, or decide to train as a pastoral assistant or evangelist. You may even decide to offer for ordained ministry. SWMTC provides further training for those who pursue each of these callings. Alternatively, you may feel that this year has given you what you need to serve in your local church.

### The aims of the course

So that you know what's anticipated as a result of your participation in Foundations in Christian Ministry, here are the formal aims of the course. By the end of it, you should:

- Be familiar, in outline, with major elements of biblical studies and Christian doctrine, at a level just short of the first stage of a degree
- Have experienced a range of forms of prayer and understandings of spirituality
- Be equipped with pastoral skills that will aid your participation in God's ministry and mission in your local context
- Have considered your own learning style and the place of adult learning in the life of the local church
- Have explored your vocation, with guidance, and talked with a range of others in training for various forms of ministry

- Have developed the study skills required to pursue further training, education and formation in preparation for your future ministry

### **Outline of the course content**

#### **Study Day 1: *Finding ourselves in God*** (September)

This day includes an overview of Foundations in Christian Ministry, introductions to Christian Doctrine and biblical study, and an introductory session on spiritual discernment and pastoral care.

#### **Study Day 2: *Getting to work*** (Mid-October)

This study day includes further input on Christian doctrine, biblical study and pastoral care, as well as an introduction to lay discipleship, personal growth and adult learning, and guidance about working in small groups.

#### **Home study 1**

After Study Day 2, you will be asked to join a short discipleship course in your local area. This will involve attendance at between four and six weekly sessions, sometime in November or December.

#### **Study Day 3: *Exploring vocation*** (January)

On this study day, the focus will be on examining your vocation with God and in community with each other. You'll join ordinands and Readers training from SWMTC in order to learn more about the ministry to which they are called, as well as the options open to you. You'll also attend further sessions on doctrine, the Bible, pastoral care, and spirituality.

#### **Home study 2**

During this term, you will be asked to attend a further course in your local area. This will be a *Pilgrim* course involving six group sessions, where you are invited to engage in group discussion about the life of faith with other Christians.

#### **Study Day 4: *Discipleship at the feet of Christ*** (March)

This study day will help you reflect on your vocation in the light of Holy Week and Easter. There will be input about theology and biblical studies, as well as a continued focus on what happens next in your vocational journey, and a pastoral skills workshop.

#### **Study Day 5: *What sort of a disciple am I called to be?*** (May)

On this study day, you'll have further sessions on theology and the Bible, and further help in examining the varieties of licensed ministry available in the diocese. Diocesan officers will be present to help you prepare for the next phase in your journey.

#### **Home study 3**

During this period, you'll be invited to complete a 10-hour home-study module that helps you reflect on your developing vocation, and move through the relevant selection processes for your chosen ministry. If you don't feel called to a particular licensed ministry at this time, the module will support you in discerning the shape of your discipleship for the future.

#### **Study Day 6: *Celebrating Gifts*** (June)

This extended study day is a chance to come together and give thanks for the community we've formed, praying together for the next steps on our journeys with Christ. A senior member of diocesan staff will be on hand to celebrate your completion of the course, and send you out for the next stage of your training, for whatever ministry you feel called to.

**For more information, please contact Rev'd Dr Tim Gibson, SWMTC's director of lay education: [tim@swmtc.org.uk](mailto:tim@swmtc.org.uk).**