



**Diocese of Canterbury**  
**CHANGED LIVES ➔ CHANGING LIVES**



# THE DOVER PATHWAY

**ENABLING THE ORDINATION OF  
SELF-SUPPORTING MINISTERS OVER 65**

## **The Dover Pathway**

### **Ordination in 2026 for Self-Supporting Ordained Minsters Over the Age of 65**

The Dover Pathway is a route to ordination as a Distinctive Deacon or Assistant Priest for those over 65 years old. It is available to candidates who have an established track-record of leadership and ministry in the local church (normally as a Reader or Authorised Lay Minister) and have previously undertaken theological study. Clergy ordained through this route will be self-supporting and will continue to serve in their current church after their curacy.

The Dover Pathway has two streams. Those aged between 65 and 70 will undertake a one-year programme of training and formation with St Augustine's College. Those over 70 will discern a calling to direct ordination.

### **CANDIDATES AGED BETWEEN 65 AND 70 (Application Deadline 1<sup>st</sup> May 2025)**

#### ***Discernment and Selection***

A discernment process will run during the year in parallel with the training and will include the following:

- Completion of the *Life Events* and *Three Spheres of Vocation* documents (candidates who have participated in the discernment cohort will have completed these already)
- *Traffic Lights* conversations with ADDO (two sessions)
- Assessment for Psychological Wellbeing (90 minutes)
- Stage One Discernment Panel (half-day national assessment)

The Bishop retains the ability to send an ordinand to a Stage Two Discernment Panel if course tutors recommend this as an additional level of assessment.

#### ***Formation and Training***

St Augustine's College will deliver a non-accredited course organised around three main components:

- *Theology and Practice*
- *Bible, Parish, and Preaching*
- *Church and Sacraments*

This will be delivered through two in-person modules at St Augustine's College in West Malling and in four Saturday schools. Modules are taught bi-weekly on Fridays between December and June and will have assignments specific to this program. Alongside the midweek teaching, there will be seven full teaching days (five at weekends, two in the Easter residential week) and also the annual Symposium. Dover Pathway students also have the option of attending residential training on a self-funded basis.

An induction afternoon will be held on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2025 in West Malling. In addition to structured reflection on their own church placement, Dover pathway students will undertake a six-week placement in a different church during the autumn and have a session at West Malling reflecting together on these. Students also have the opportunity to lead corporate worship with their fellow ordinands.

Ordinands will also complete the *Safeguarding Leadership training, Raising awareness of domestic abuse* and *Safer recruitment and people management courses* during the year.

The programme will have its own tutor at St Augustine's who will work with the cohort for the year. The distribution of topics across the year will be:

- September: Thinking Theologically about Mission and Ministry
- November: Theological Reflection on Ministry in an Unfamiliar Context
- February: Inhabiting the Bible, Drawing People into Scripture
- March: Ordained Ministry and Prayer
- Easter Residential 1: Preaching
- Easter Residential 2: Conflict and Reconciliation

### ***Reports and Assessment:***

The Head of Vocations will monitor the progress of ordinands on this pathway through informal conversations with the students themselves and regular liaison with the College Tutor. This will allow any issues which might prevent the ordinand from being ordained at the end of the year to be raised well ahead of ordination.

The following documents will be compiled into a final report for the Bishop before ordination:

- Report from St Augustine's College.
- Report from the Stage One Assessment.
- Report from the Assessment for Psychological Wellbeing.
- References.
- Confirmation that Safeguarding Training has been completed.
- Working Agreement for the Deacon year.

These documents will be available before a final interview with the Bishop at least one month before the date of ordination.

Once ordained, students on this pathway will be part of the Curate training programme (IME2) alongside colleagues from different training pathways. Full details can be found in the [2025 IME2 Handbook](#) (Linked from the PDF version of this booklet)

### ***Recruitment***

All Candidates for the Dover Pathway need a written statement of support from their incumbent (who will be their Ministry Facilitator during training and their Training Incumbent after ordination) and the consent of the PCCs of all parishes in which they will exercise ministry. The Incumbent and PCC will be required to demonstrate that there is a pastoral need for an additional ordained minister, and this will usually be through the production of a benefice Mission Action Plan (MAP).

Candidates who have been part of the Discernment Cohort Programme will not need to complete any additional paperwork themselves. Candidates who are coming into the process will need to complete an *Ordained Ministry Enquiry Form*, which includes a *Confidential Safeguarding Declaration*, *Statement of Financial Position* and *GDPR Consent*. All candidates will require a new DBS Check as a 'Potential Ordinand' or 'Assistant Curate'.

## **CANDIDATES OVER 70 YEARS OLD (Application Deadline 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025)**

Where candidates over 70 are currently in a position of leadership in their local church and have undertaken theological study, The Bishop has the option of ordaining them without an additional period of training. This is subject to the Bishop being convinced:

- That the candidate will be capable of performing the duties of the office throughout the period for which they are to hold the office.
- That the pastoral needs of the parish or parishes concerned or of the diocese make it desirable. This will usually be shown through a production of a benefice Mission Action Plan.

**Any application for direct ordination must be made by the incumbent of the benefice where the candidate will continue to serve.** Potential candidates need to discuss this in detail with their incumbent, who will then have a conversation with the Diocesan Head of Vocation. At this stage the incumbent will be asked to write a statement of support and to seek PCC consent (which is required for The Bishop to issue a licence to anyone over the age of 70).

Before applying, candidates must already have up-to-date safeguarding training (*Leadership, Raising awareness of domestic abuse and Safer recruitment and people management*).

Candidates will meet with the Head of Vocation and complete some initial discernment paperwork before meeting The Bishop. This process will include significant further discussion with their incumbent and other supporting clergy.

Once accepted for ordination, ordinands will undertake the ten-week *Church and Sacraments* module with St Augustine's College. This is taught in the spring and summer terms at St Augustine's campus in West Malling and students will attend in-person.

## **ORDINATION AND LICENSING**

Ordinands who are ordained deacon after their 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday will be licensed for three years to all the parishes in their benefice where the PCC have given their consent. In common with all licensed clergy in the diocese, this licence will allow them to exercise ministry appropriate to their order in their own benefice and, by invitation, within the Diocese of Canterbury. Once they are over 70, licences can be extended for an additional fixed period with the ongoing support of the incumbent and PCC. Ministers ordained by this route will be referred to within the diocese as Self-Supporting Ordained Ministers (Local) or Distinctive Deacons. The local aspect of this ministry means that clergy ordained in this way may not be able to move to another diocese or may be asked to undertake additional training in order to do so.

Ordinands who are already Readers will have most of the robes they need to undertake their new ministry and will often be able to access appropriate clerical garb from the vestries of the parishes they serve. Where additional items are needed (such as a preaching scarf and stoles) the supporting benefice are invited to give these as an ordination gift.

**For more details about the Dover Pathway, Incumbents should contact  
Jon Marlow, Head of Vocations ([ddo@diocant.org](mailto:ddo@diocant.org) or via Diocesan House).**