

# Decade-long path to gain a dog collar

THIRTEEN years ago, she was opposed to women becoming priests. Now she's set to become one herself.

Margaret Hay, from Gosport, is one of 16 people who will be ordained this month. But it took a long journey to get to this stage.

When the vote to ordain women priests was going through general synod in 1992, she went to a rallying service for opponents. She was part of a parish, Holy Trinity, Gosport, that voted not to accept a woman as its priest, and her vicar – the Rev John Capper – was against the idea.

But her journey started 10 years ago, when she was unemployed and praying about her future in church after mass. John approached her with a job idea – working in the diocesan offices to cover maternity leave. She got that job, and was then taken on permanently in the accounts department.

"A couple of years later, John asked to me preach during Lent," she said. "I was quite nervous, but when I got into the pulpit, it felt like the right thing to be doing. After that, I wondered if I could preach again, and then someone told me about Reader training.

"I wondered if I was called to that, and when I spoke to John about it, he said he'd had a meeting with the bishop and that that was what he had suggested too!

## ORDINATIONS: July 2005

### Deacons:

**Margaret Hay** (NSM, St Thomas the Apostle, Elson); **Valerie Howes** (NSM, Droxford and Meonstoke with Corhampton-cum-Exton); **Tom Kennar** (Warblington and Emsworth); **Mark Rodel** (St Jude's, Southsea); **Gary Snape** (NSM, Holy Trinity and St Columba, Fareham) and **Ronnie Williams** (St Wilfrid's, Cowplain)

### Priests:

**The Rev Jane Beloe** (NSM,

Shedfield); **the Rev Frances Gates** (NSM, St Mary's, Fratton, All Saints, Portsmouth, & St George's, Portsea); **the Rev Ruth Loveman** (NSM, St Mark's, North End); **the Revs Colin Prestidge** (NSM) and **Daron Medway** (both Crofton), **the Rev Sandra Phillips** (NSM, Christ Church, Portsdown), **the Rev Gloria Steadman** (NSM, Farlington), **the Rev David Stroud** (Liss), **the Rev James Tabor** (Alverstoke) and **the Rev Eddie Butcher** (NSM, All Saints' Ryde)

"On my Reader's selection conference, people kept asking if I was actually called to be a deacon. At that time, I felt no sense of call to ordained ministry. My Reader ministry has been a very valued part of my life and has given me much needed practical experience."

Her thinking about women as priests changed when she saw the Rev Jenny Lowater celebrating Communion in the cathedral. She started to realise it was God, not Jenny herself, that was offering her the sacraments.

She said: "I'd already been rethinking my ideas, as one of my colleagues, Rod Baker, had said to me: 'How do you tell a woman she can't have a vocation to the priesthood?' The more I tried to unpick

the answer to that, the more I felt a sense of personal vocation."

Then, in 1999, she was in the cathedral for a service to mark the fifth anniversary of the ordination of women priests, which was led by Canon Jane Hedges.

"I'd crept in at the back, but as she said the words of consecration, I had an out-of-body experience and found myself in the lady chapel saying those words myself," said Margaret. "That's when I knew I wasn't called to be a deacon, but a priest."

She was convinced she was too old, that she had misinterpreted the whole thing, and that John Capper wouldn't approve. But she was told her age wasn't a factor, then a vocations chaplain convinced her



Margaret Hay at the cathedral where she will be ordained

that her calling was real. It meant she finally had to tell John.

"He just laughed and said: 'Your vocation is between you and God. I suggest you go for it!'," she said. "It meant the three things I thought were obstacles had disappeared. He was still alive when I was applying, and he wrote on my form: 'I still have reservations about women as priests, but I have no reservations about Margaret as a priest', which was very affirming."

She continued to work in our diocesan offices as she studied, and is now involved with St Thomas the Apostle, Elson. Once she's been ordained deacon on July 2, she'll be a non-stipendiary minister there, and will work only four days a week for the diocese to facilitate her parish work. She should finally become a priest this time next year.

Among the others being ordained deacon is Ronnie Williams, who is originally from Sierra Leone and worked there for

CMS with his wife Claire. His family suffered tragedy in the civil war, and they moved to Emsworth. Before starting his training, he worked both there and at St Jude's, Southsea, as a youth worker.

Tom Kennar used to lead Portsmouth's YMCA and led worship at St Luke's, Southsea, while Mark Rodel, who comes from a Baptist background, helped to re-design our diocesan website.

And both Gary Snape and Valerie Howes will join their spouses in the clergy ranks. The Rev Lorraine Snape is assistant curate in Titchfield, while the Rev David Howes is now retired.

Meanwhile, the number of people called to ordained ministry nationwide is increasing. In 2004, 564 men and women were recommended to train as future clergy in the Church. This is the highest number for six years and represents an increase of more than 10 per cent over the 2003 figure.

## New youth minister starts work in Locks Heath



New youth minister Ed Lane

A NEW senior youth minister has started work at St John's Church in Locks Heath.

Father-of-one Ed Lane, 35, who has moved from Essex, began working on ministry to children and youngsters last month, and was formally commissioned on June 26.

He worked for 10 years in youth work, including spells with Youth For Christ and the YMCA, but worked in life assurance just before taking on this job. His work will involve

training, supporting and overseeing voluntary workers in Sunday School and youth groups, as well as building on current links with local schools.

He will be introduced to those involved in youth ministry in the western wards of Fareham at a service at 6.30pm on July 10. They will be given the chance to worship and pray for his ministry.

The speakers will be diocesan youth and children's work adviser Ben Mizen and Peter

Neilson, youth and children's director at Locks Heath Free Church.

Then on July 17, Ed will be welcomed to the diocese by Bishop Kenneth at the 9.30am confirmation service at St John's Church, Locks Heath.

Ed said: "It won't be an overly hands-on role that I have. We'll still be using our voluntary youth and children's workers, and my role will be to oversee the work and train other people to do it rather than try-

ing to do it single-handedly.

"I'm very excited about the job, and I've discovered that it's a very welcoming church that does 'church' very well. By that, I mean they are extremely good at fellowship and making people feel comfortable within the church family.

"I'll be trying to help people who already have an exciting vision for children and youth work to realise that vision, and to formulate new plans for the future."