



The Rev Elizabeth Groves studies the book she recommends to those exploring becoming a deacon

Explore God's call for future

HAVE you ever felt a call from God to work for the Church? Would you like to explore it further?

You may find it helpful to talk to people who have already responded to God's call in a variety of ways. They can help you think of ways to test what your vocation might be.

Our diocese's vocations group has organised a team of experienced church ministers to be available on October 15. 'Exploring God's Call' takes place between 10am and 12.30pm in Cathedral House, Old Portsmouth. You can speak to a parish priest, non-stipendiary minister, deacon, nun, Reader, Church Army captain and a hospital chaplain about their various ministries.

The Rev Elizabeth Groves, who ministers in the parishes of Botley, Curdridge and Durley, will share information about life as a deacon. Deacons are often described as clergy who have not been ordained

as priests, but she prefers to regard the calling more positively.

"Mine was quite a long journey exploring what Christ was calling me to," she said. "I always thought I was called to the ordained ministry rather than to become, say, a Reader. I explored the priesthood, but after a long exploration, found that every time I spoke about ministry, it was as a deacon.

"It's a ministry of reconciliation. That includes ecumenical relations – deacons can speak across the denominations well, because there is a common understanding of ministry, and different attitudes towards the idea of being a priest don't get in the way!

"There's also the ministry to the poor, deprived, and those on the margins – the expression of Christ's servant ministry in everyday life. A deacon has to be rooted in one parish, but I'm always looking to develop ministry across parish boundaries.

"I enjoy being in Botley, Curdridge and Durley because we have a team of retired priests, a deacon, Readers and the laity all ministering together. I conduct funerals, do pastoral visiting, lead the healing ministry team, facilitate the children's

church, preach and lead non-Eucharistic services. When I speak to people on October 15, I'll emphasise how rewarding it all is."

Elizabeth will also talk about what happened at the Worldwide Diakonia Movement – the global assembly of deacons – which meets every four years and this year took place in Durham, where more than 400 delegates attended from across the world.

Jeremy Hicks, a Reader from Holy Trinity and St Columba, Fareham, will also take part in the event. The software developer has been a Reader since 1998, preaching and leading Alpha and baptism preparation courses.

"I'll be giving an overview about the training I went through, the day-to-day work and the value of being a Reader," he said. "The attraction is that it's a way of affirming lay ministry and saying we are part of the Church's ministry. Readers are often seen as a bridge between the Church and the secular world, and it's important that we sit across that divide."

Anyone interested in attending should contact the Rev Peter Kelly, chairman of the diocesan vocations group, on 01489-892105 or peterkelly@swanmore.net.

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Two sides of same coin

ONE of the contrasts we often hear about in church is the one between 'maintenance' and 'mission'.

Maintenance is seen as bad, evoking something which is looking backward and inward; an endeavour which is about protecting the status quo.

Mission is seen as forward looking and future orientated; something which is about building a church of hope. To adapt George Orwell's distinction between two and four-legged animals in *Animal Farm*: 'Maintenance bad: mission good.'

I don't like this distinction; it is simplistic and unhelpful. We need both maintenance – I, in fact, prefer the word 'stewardship' to denote this – and mission.

The Church of God needs to be faithful to its roots, to the gifts it has received from previous centuries, yet open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised

the last word

by the Ven Chris Lowson
Archdeacon of Portsdown



would lead us into all truth. It is not an either/or; it is a both/and.

The work of the review of diocesan central structures review group (aka the 'Dilloway Report') has had to face up to this tension between stewardship of the resources we have received on the one hand and the need to support the hopes and dreams of the future on the other.

The report - a summary of which you will read in November's edition of the *Pompey Chimes* - holds this tension in the context of its study of how we allocate our central resources to serve the

church in its mission to the world in these two dimensions.

Kairos has revealed many bold and ambitious plans for the future; it has also expressed ways in which we can do what we have always done – served the people of our nation with gospel in our hearts – more effectively in our time and context.

Polarities like maintenance and mission tend to divide us into opposing groups.

I hope we can work together to be faithful to our past and hopeful for God's future.