



Lay Ministry Course

January 2027

Course Handbook

Altar backdrop
School Chapel
Ashton Middle School,
Dunstable.

 The Diocese of
Peterborough

Lay Ministry Course

January 2027

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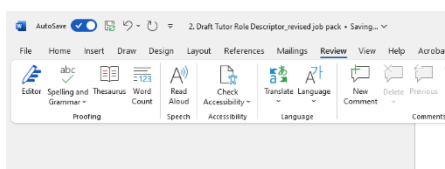
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This document is designed to be listened to, as well as read.

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Review – Read Aloud

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A. Lay Ministry Course Handbook (January 2027)

The Peterborough Diocesan Lay Ministry Course: Empowering Everyday Disciples

Do you have a heart for equipping others, sharing the life of faith, and encouraging discipleship in everyday life?

The Peterborough Diocesan Lay Ministry Course exists to **empower women and men to grow as confident, faithful lay leaders**, rooted in their local churches and communities. It is designed for those sensing a call to go deeper — to serve, to lead, to teach, and to minister in the world.

We believe that **lay ministry is a vital part of the Church's witness and mission**, and we are committed to supporting those who step forward with faith and courage to explore this calling. Whether you're drawn to pastoral care, preaching, evangelism, chaplaincy, or simply want to serve more deeply, this course offers a pathway to explore your vocation and be equipped for it.

Accessible, Supportive, and Formational

The course is intentionally designed to be **inclusive and supportive**, welcoming all, including those:

- Who are new to faith or returning after many years
- Whose previous educational experience may feel distant
- Who are neurodiverse or learn in different ways

We provide **academic mentoring** for those on the Licensed Lay Ministry pathway and create space for **spiritual formation, pastoral support, and practical application** throughout the journey. The learning experience is gentle, structured,

and formational — not just about gaining knowledge, but about growing in confidence, faith, and ministry.

Flexible and Local

Training is delivered through a **blend of online sessions and in-person study days** (usually Saturdays), held at accessible venues across the diocese. Students are supported by tutors and placed in small **practice groups** to support their learning.

The **gateway into the course** is a one-year *Introduction to Theology*, which includes:

- 44 hours of study
- Online learning
- Five in-person study days

At the end of this year, students may:

- Exit with a certificate of completion
- Progress to an **Authorised Lay Ministry Pathway** (in areas such as Pastoral Care, Evangelism, Chaplaincy, or Preaching)
- Continue to the **Licensed Lay Ministry Pathway** leading to Reader licensing

All learning is shaped by the **Reader Formation Framework**, with theological reflection embedded throughout.

Vocational

‘The Introduction to Theology’ acts as both a **stand-alone course** introducing key theological concepts in an accessible manner but also as a **gateway course** to the Authorised and Licenced Ministry pathways.

Applicants who are interested in progressing onto the Authorised or Licenced Lay Ministry pathways will, on application, be put in touch with a **Vocations Adviser** for an initial discernment discussion. Discernment discussions will continue at regular intervals throughout the 12 months of the course.

Cost

Participants on the ‘Introduction to Theology’ course can be self-funded or funded through a parish grant.

Students who intend to enter the Authorised and Licenced Ministry pathways must have the permission of their Parochial Church Council (PCC) who will also be required to acknowledge their willingness to fund students' tuition costs.

Course

Introduction to theology.	£250
Authorised Ministry Pathway.	£200
Licenced Pathway (Y2).	£400
Licenced Pathway (Y3).	£175

Total cost

Total cost to undertake the Introduction to Theology course.	£250
Total cost to undertake Authorised Ministry pathway	£450
Total cost to undertake Licenced Lay Ministry pathway	£825

How to Apply

Applications to join the 'Introduction to Theology' course can be made at any point of the year, via the online application form. <https://forms.office.com/e/ZAqG0aLNTg>

Introductory session

Once your application has been processed and you have been offered a place on the Lay Ministry Course you will be invited to attend the introductory session which will be held on 28th November 2026 at the Diocesan Explore Day.

David Morton

Lay Ministries Officer

David.morton@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

March 2026

B. The introduction to theology course

Annual programme of study

Term 1 - Spring 2027	Sessions	Topics
Wednesday 13 th January 7.00-9.00pm	Session 1	Introduction to the Bible (1)
Sat 30 th January 10am-4pm	Practical 1	Introduction to the Bible (2)
Wednesday 3 rd February 7.00-9.00pm	Session 2	Pastoral Ministry (1)
Wednesday 17 th February 7.00-9.00pm	Session 3	Pastoral Ministry (2)
Saturday 13 th March 10am-4pm	Practical 2	Pastoral Ministry (3) Workshops
Wednesday 17 th March 7.00-9.00pm	Session 4	Key learning assessment (1)
Term 2 –Summer 2027		
Wednesday 14 th April 7.00-9.00pm	Session 5	Reading the Old Testament
Wednesday 28 th April 7.00-9.00pm	Session 6	Reading the New Testament
Wednesday 12 th May 7.00-9.00pm	Session 7	Ethics (1)
Saturday 5 th June 10am-4pm	Practical 3	Ethics (2) Discussion groups
Wednesday 16 th June 7.00-9.00pm	Session 8	Key learning assessment (2)
Term 3 – Autumn 2027		
Wednesday 15 th Sept 7.00-9.00pm	Session 9	Doctrine (1) - What we believe (Historical development)
Saturday 9 th October 10 am – 4 pm	Practical 4	Doctrine (2) - What we believe (Contemporary issues)
Wednesday 20 th October 7.00-9.00pm	Session 10	Mission (1)
29 th October – 31 st October	-	Residential Weekend Launde abbey
Wednesday 10 th November 7.00-9.00pm	Session 11	Mission (2)
Saturday 27 th November 10am -4pm	Practical 5	Workshops Key learning assessment (3)

Practicalities

Preparing for each teaching session.

There will be a small amount of preparation for each teaching session which may include reading or listening to an extract from a book or watching a video. You will get more from each session if you prepare well.

Going deeper

For those students wishing to go deeper into the theological concepts discussed, further study options will be provided for each teaching block.

Study days

Study days provide an opportunity to develop strong, supportive working relationships with those you are studying with, some of whom you will be learning alongside for three years. Past students speak warmly about the impact that learning with others has had on their ministry. Study days also provide the time for more detailed study of individual subjects.

Module Outline 'Introduction to Theology' (Term 1)

Learning outcomes:

- Has a (developing) thorough knowledge of God's story in Scripture and tradition
- Desires to make God known by word and deed
- Sees Christ in others and shows a Christ-like attitude: understanding, respectful, listening, servant-hearted
- Values diversity in principle and action and is prepared to challenge prejudice
- Seeks to model the self-giving love and compassion of Christ as a member of his body
- Listens well; is approachable and welcoming
- Has a generous capacity to serve others in the wider community as well as in the church
- Encourages others in their service of, and prayer, for the wider community
- Can form, develop and maintain safe and healthy pastoral relationships that enable others in ministry
- Can respond appropriately to pastoral situations

Contents:

Pre-course task 1: Read or listen to Mark's Gospel

1. Introduction to the Bible (6hrs)

- An overview of the Bible
- An introduction to the gospels
- Mark's Gospel
- Interpreting difficult texts

Pre-course task 2:

2. An Introduction to pastoral ministry (8hrs)

- Pastoral theology and models of pastoral care
- The inner journey of change, transition and loss
- The inner landscape of experience and reflection
- Theological Reflective Practice

Assessment task: You will be invited to hold a 20-minute discussion with a Tutor.

Assessment method: Curated Discussion

- What have you learnt across the term?
- What has been your greatest point of learning?
- What has been your greatest challenge?
- What God is saying to you about your future ministry.

Module Outline 'Introduction to Theology' (Term 2)

Learning outcomes:

- Understands issues relating to the interpretation of both Old and New Testament texts in diverse contemporary contexts
- Is learning about how Christian beliefs and practices shape the moral life of individuals and communities
- Can connect gathered worship and Christian tradition and ethics with everyday faith and experience, equipping people to face challenges in the world
- Is aware of the opportunities and challenges that the church faces in engaging with contemporary society in mission and evangelism; is able to be imaginative and creative in response
- Can make theological sense of social, political and church contexts
- Understand and evaluate varying approaches to Christian faith, while articulating a personal position
- Models everyday faith related to the world of home, work and society
- Respects others, without discrimination, showing empathy and honesty in their relationships, learning from them
- Can disagree well with others, while valuing and respecting them as members of the body of Christ

Contents:

Pre-course task 1: Read the Book of Ruth

1. Reading the old and new testaments (4hrs)

- An overview of the Old Testament (2hrs)
- An overview of the New Testament (2hrs)

2. Ethics (6hrs)

- An introduction to Ethics
- An introduction to Applied Ethics

Assessment task: 10 minute Presentation. You may use Canva or PowerPoint if you wish.

Assessment method: Presentation

Describe some different views of the basis on which Christians should decide right and wrong. Say what basis *you* think Christians should adopt and explain why you come to that conclusion.

What is being looked for in this piece of work is an appreciation of a variety of Christian approaches to deciding what is right and wrong and the ability to give the reasons for your own approach.

What would make this a particularly good piece of work would be if you give a clear analysis of a variety of approaches and argue cogently for your own view, drawing on theoretical and Biblical material.

Module Outline 'Introduction to Theology' (Term 3)

Learning outcomes:

- is learning about how doctrine and spirituality shape the life of faith and the practices of the Church of England
- Understands Christian beliefs and practices including their diverse historical and cultural developments
- Shows a wide and inclusive understanding and expression of mission based on the Five Marks of Mission, and of how they might be lived out in a given context
- Can engage and enable others in mission
- Can interact and communicate well with a diverse range of people both inside and outside the church
- Models Christian life and shares God's story in a way that helps others to follow Jesus' call in everyday faith
- Seeks to discern and pray about the needs of their local community and the wider world with a willingness to respond as an ambassador of Christ
- Can maintain a faith that is outward facing
- Can share their faith in a way that enables others to relate it to the whole of their lives
- Constantly seek to renew their understanding of the role of the local church in mission
- Can see, respond to and articulate the gospel outside the confines of the church building

Contents:

Pre-course task: TBC

1. Doctrine (1) What we believe (6hrs)

- Creation, fall, providence, incarnation and atonement - an overview

Pre-course task: Read and Reflect on Bosch's 13 point definition of Mission

2. Mission (6hrs)

- Towards a Theology of mission
- Discerning God at work – 'find out what God is doing and join in'
- The ecology of mission
- Mission: Inherited Church and Fresh Expressions

Assessment task: written reflection

Assessment method: Written task (1500 words)

Write a reflection on what God has taught you across your year's study, where he is leading you and how you intend to respond. This task should demonstrate aspects of reflective practice and the ability to reflect on your shared experience with others.

C. Authorised Ministry Units (varying lengths)

Authorised Lay Ministers work within a parish or benefice setting and exercise a particular ministry. On completion of the 'Introduction to Theology' Course, students can choose from one of four units of study. Units of study vary in length dependent on the ministry area but are usually offered as 10 x 2hr sessions (online or in person), 6 x 2hr sessions (online or in person) or 3 x 4hr sessions, held in person on Saturdays in January, February or March each year.

- Pastoral Care
- Evangelism
- Preaching
- Anna Chaplaincy
- Lay Schools Chaplaincy (from 2028)
- Lay Hospital Chaplaincy (from 2028)
- Lay Prison Chaplaincy (from 2028)
- Funeral Ministry

Completion of the relevant unit of study will lead to the student being authorised as a Lay Minister by the Bishop of Peterborough. This will enable them to support ministry within their local context.

Dates 2026-7 and onwards

January to March 2027 and then repeating annually

The length of time studying on the 'Introduction to Theology' Course to the point of being Authorised as a Lay Minister is usually about 15 months.

D. Licenced Lay Ministry Pathway - January 2028 onwards

Sessions are online.

Practical sessions are held in person at a venue that minimise travel for students

Term 1 –Spring 2028	Sessions	Topics
12 th January 2028 7pm – 9pm	Session 1	Vocation and Call to Ministry Here I am Lord, send me!
22 nd January 2028 10am-4pm	Practical I	<i>What it means to be a Reader?</i> Context of Ministry – teachers of the faith, enablers of mission, leaders in church and society. Safeguarding.
2 nd February 2028 7pm – 9pm	Session 2	What it means to be a Reader? Theological reflections on discipleship
16 th February 2028 7pm – 9pm	Session 3	What it means to be a Reader? Theological reflections on mission and ministry
4 th March 2028 10am-4pm	Practical II	<i>What it means to be a Reader?</i> Theological Reflections on Leadership and Collaboration
15 th March 2028 7pm – 9pm	Session 4	What it Means to be a Reader? Personal reflection – my calling to be a Reader
Term 2 –Summer 2028		
19 th April 2028 7pm – 9pm	Session 5	Vocation and Call to Ministry A costly ministry – self-care in ministry
3 rd May 2028 7pm – 9pm	Session 6	Being a worshipful disciple of Jesus Prayer and Rule of Life
17 th May 2028 7pm – 9pm	Session 7	Being a worshipful disciple of Jesus Lifelong learning
10 th June 2028 10am-4pm	Practical III	<i>Teaching the Faith to Others</i> Nurturing others in their discipleship and faith development – catechesis, baptism and confirmation
21 st June 2028 7pm – 9pm	Session 8	Teaching the Faith to Others Nurturing others through prayer, Bible Study and reading scripture
Term 3 – Autumn 2028		
13 th September 2028 7pm – 9pm	Session 9	Vocation and Call to Ministry Making God known in word and deed
7 th October 2028 10am-4pm	Practical IV	<i>Being effective preachers</i> Preparing and delivering a sermon
11 th October 2028 7pm – 9pm	Session 10	When things go wrong Living well together, agreeing to disagree; conflict resolution
25 th October 2028 7pm – 9pm	Session 11	Ministering to those who hold differing beliefs to our own Living well together, agreeing to disagree, pastoral care
18 th November 2028 10am-4pm	Practical V	<i>Care for those in need</i> Funeral Ministry

Practicalities

Residential Weekend

Every alternate year there is a residential weekend which combines teaching and formational activities. This is an opportunity to meet students from across the three years of the course and to celebrate lay ministry in all its forms.

Parish Placement

Students in their second year undertake a short 4-6 week placement in another parish. Ideally, this will be in a parish with a differing approach to ministry.

Your placement will involve; attending worship on at least three Sundays, participating in leading, praying or reading at one service and preaching at another, shadowing the incumbent (or others) for three sessions, observing aspects of pastoral ministry or discipleship.

Preparing for each teaching session.

There will be the need to prepare for each teaching session which may include reading or listening to an extract from a book, watching a video or undertaking a quiz or other activity. You will get more from each session if you prepare well.

Going deeper

For those students wishing to go deeper into the theological concepts discussed, further study options will be provided for each teaching block.

Practical sessions

Practical Sessions provide an opportunity to develop strong, supportive working relationships with those you are studying with, some of whom you will be learning alongside for three years. Past students speak warmly about the impact that learning with others has had on their ministry. Practical Sessions also provide the time for more detailed study of individual subjects.

Modes of Assessment

Progression through the Licenced Lay Ministry pathway is dependent on a number of formal assessments which are usually written but can be submitted through curated discussion in certain circumstances. Further details can be provided by talking to David Morton.

Feedback is provided for each assessed task which is provided within four weeks of submission.

Year 3 Continuing Ministerial Development

Term 1 – Spring 29	Sessions	Topics
Sat 10am-4pm	Practical 1	<u>Church History</u> A study day exploring Church History
Sat 10am-4pm	Practical 2	<u>Leadership</u> Being part of a team; healthy leadership; collaboration; understanding others faith and belief (alternate theologies – feminist, queer, ecological etc)
Term 2 - Summer 29		
Sat 10am-4pm	Practical 3	<u>Nurturing and developing the faith of others</u> Encouraging others to grow in faith; outreach, mission, evangelism
Term 3 – Autumn 29		
Sat 10am-4pm	Practical 4	<u>Biblical Studies</u> A Study Day exploring aspects of the Old Testament
Sat 10am-4pm	Practical 5	<u>Nurturing and developing my faith as a lay leader (Retreat Day)</u> Continuing to grow in faith; remaining alert to the call of God

Learning outcomes

- Models good, collaborative, role appropriate leadership and supports the leadership of others
- Helps to foster a climate of healthy leadership
- Is open to all that others may bring through collaborative team working in a church context
- Develop in shared leadership and collaboration;
- Model accountability within collaborative leadership structures
- Can share leadership, work well as part of a team
- Interacts and communicates well with a diverse range of people both inside and outside the church
- Encourage and enable others to contribute their gifts to the mission and ministry of the church
- Continue to devote themselves to mission, evangelism and growing disciples
- Inspire others to develop their vocation, modelling their ministry for enquirers
- their membership of the body of Christ enables them to both accept and relinquish personal responsibility
- Continue to grow in faith and relationship with Christ
- Remain alert and open to being called by God in a fresh direction in their life and ministry

Practicalities

Residential Weekend

Every alternate year there is a residential weekend which combines teaching and formational activities. This is an opportunity to meet students from across the three years of the course and to celebrate lay ministry in all its forms.

Parish-based project

All students undertake a parish-based project during the third year of the lay ministry course. This project is based in your own parish or benefice and can take the form of a pastoral initiative to support a particular group in the church or in the community or be more evangelistic in nature. It could involve a new initiative in teaching or worship. Your project will be under the supervision of the incumbent or another member of the clergy in the parish or benefice.

Preparing for each teaching session.

There will be the need to prepare for each teaching session which may include reading or listening to an extract from a book, watching a video or undertaking a quiz or other activity. You will get more from each session if you prepare well.

Going deeper

For those students wishing to go deeper into the theological concepts discussed, further study options will be provided for each teaching block.

Modes of Assessment

Progression through the Licenced Lay Ministry pathway is dependent on a number of formal assessments which are usually written but can be submitted through curated discussion in certain circumstances. Further details can be provided by talking to David Morton.

Feedback is provided for each assessed task which is provided within four weeks of submission.

E. Formational Framework

1. Introduction

The Lay Ministry Course 2027 is designed to allow students to gain a broad understanding of key theological concepts which will enable them to develop as Authorised or Licenced Lay Ministers. The course utilises the learning outcomes contained within the national Church of England's Reader Formational framework 2021 and is designed to ensure that Authorised and Licenced Lay Ministers within the Diocese are equipped and formed to serve God within their local context.

Utilising a simple model of theological reflection, the lay ministry course combines learning about key theological concepts with spiritual formation recognising that to minister effectively those participating on the course need to develop in their own walk with God, father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2. Key personal development outcomes

These outcomes will form a central part of the individual's spiritual formation as they progress through the course.

If following a licenced pathway, greater depth will be observed within the Y2 programme of study and the compulsory continuing ministerial development which will occur within the first year of licenced ministry.

Love for God

The student:

- Is rooted in established patterns of corporate worship, Bible reading, prayer, study and reflection
- Relates their prayer and worship to the world of home, work and society
- Is enthusiastic and open about developing their understanding and practice of a range of approaches to Christian spirituality

Love for the World

The student:

- Has a call to serve in this ministry that is recognised and affirmed by others
- Shows personal understanding of their gifts for lay ministry
- Is informed and realistic about the costliness and impact of being in public ministry

Love for People

The student:

- Is a person of openness, stability and self-awareness
- Can nurture themselves while caring for others
- Can recognise, understand and seek to address their own biases

Wisdom

The student:

- Shows personal integrity, emotional maturity and honesty
- Makes good use of feedback, receiving it well and using it to identify areas of strength and areas for development

Fruitfulness

The student:

- Sustains their own resources and energy through good self-care and nurture
- Can recognise, use and develop their gifts and strengths, and understand and mitigate their vulnerabilities
- Models humility
- Resources themselves through good self-care and maintains a breadth of interests to enable flourishing and growth

Potential

The student:

- Engages with change in a flexible way
- Shows imagination, adaptability & creativity
- Takes appropriate care of self and others
- Handles conflict positively
- Reflects critically and with humility on the exercise of their ministry and its opportunities for development and on personal strengths, weaknesses and goals for personal development
- Has an understanding and experience of the Anglican discipline of common prayer
- Sustains the demands of Christian service well

Trustworthiness

The student:

- Is ready to exercise lay ministry as an Authorised or Licensed minister within the Church of England
- Knows the importance of appropriate boundaries including within and between relationship
- Demonstrates the ability to respect confidentiality
- Can reflect on how they integrate difficult personal experiences and hard times in life

F. Levels of Ministry (drawn from the CofE Website)

a) Locally Recognised Lay Ministry (parish based)

Recognised ministries happen in the local parish, benefice, chaplaincy or fresh expression. Examples of recognised ministry include leading a home group, pastoral care, assisting with children and youth ministry, offering prayer and listening, acting as a chaplaincy assistant or exploring growing church locally.

Selection, recognition and training is usually local, led by the minister in the parish or deanery. Some local ministry roles will have diocesan training too, for example safeguarding courses.

Recognised ministers would usually be supervised by the incumbent or a delegated responsible person authorised or licensed to lead an area of work. There should be regular local review for renewal of recognition.

Responsibility for safeguarding training and checks lies with the PCC or other local responsible body.

b) Authorised Lay Ministry (Parish/Benefice based with the Bishops authorisation to minister locally)

Authorised ministries represent the church in the wider community.

Authorisation (which might be called Commissioning) is by the bishop on the advice of local officers, it may be time limited or reviewed regularly on behalf of the bishop.

Examples of authorised ministry includes pastoral assistants, worship leaders, preachers, or assistant youth and children's ministers.

Selection may be local or diocesan, while training is usually through a diocesan programme.

Authorised ministers are supervised by the local incumbent with final accountability to the bishop. Responsibility for safeguarding training and checks is with the diocese.

c) Licenced Lay Ministry (Reader) (Parish/Benefice based with the ability to minister nationally)

Licensed lay ministries represent the church in a public, representative or leadership role.

Examples of licensed lay ministers include Readers, (also known as Licensed Lay Ministers), Church Army evangelists, lay workers and some lay pioneers.

Licensed ministers may be involved in evangelism, mission-enabling, teaching, preaching, leading of worship, taking funerals, leading a Fresh Expression and community outreach.

Licenses are issued by the diocesan bishop as required by Canon and are nationally recognised.

Selection is carried out by dioceses, following national guidelines. Training is carried out by the diocese or on behalf of the diocese and there is provision for ongoing ministerial development.

Licensed lay ministers are supervised by the local incumbent, with final accountability to the bishop. There should be a regular, ideally annual, review.

Responsibility for safeguarding training and checks is with the diocese.

