

# Teaching Course on Ministry and Bishops

## Introduction

The teaching material is aimed at providing an explanation of why the historic faith of the Church teaches that priesthood and episcopacy are male ministries. It is hoped that those who explore this material, whatever their view on this question, will grow in understanding as to what it is that those who keep to the historic faith believe. Many misconceptions abound. We also hope that the content will be accessible to those who are coming new to the question of the identity of men and women in ministry. Deliberately we start at the beginning by asking some basic questions about the nature of vocation and ministry and its relationship to God and the world. We then move on to look more specifically at ordained ministry and the sacred symbols that it bears. The second session opens up the subject of the female vocation and ministry drawing on the strong Biblical tradition. Having established the historic nature of male and female within ministry the third and fourth sessions give explanation of episcopacy. The sessions work rather like a microscope, focusing more precisely as the course continues.

The material is primarily intended for ordinary C of E folk. The media, who have little time for giving the theological background, forms the perception that much of the debate is merely about political manoeuvring. The teaching material presents a traditional thesis – that said we hope that it is encouraging of women's ministry and in a modest way may contribute to the on-going process of discernment.

Ideally the sessions would be given within a group as discussion is anticipated. The group convenor may wish to distribute the whole course material or just the associated handouts. It will be useful to have Bibles to hand. Each session starts with an opening prayer for the group. The supplementary material is provided as a support for discussion.

## Guide to Contents

Session One: What is vocation, ministry, priesthood?  
Handout for Session One

Session Two: The Biblical roots of the ministry of women.  
Handout for Session Two

Supplementary teaching/discussion material for Sessions One and Two

Session Three: The Apostles and their Ministry  
Handout for the group

Session Four: Zooming in on Bishops  
Handout for the group

Supplementary teaching/discussion material for Sessions Three and Four