



The Parish of
**Swindon
New Town**

Ministry Experience Volunteer Agreement

Summary

The Pastoral Assistant Programme is a one-year Ministry Experience Scheme, suitable for those who are looking to explore their vocation to ordained ministry in the Church of England. It includes parish experience, theological training, and vocational discernment.

Aims of the Programme for the Ministry Experience Volunteers

The Programme aims to give Ministry Experience Volunteers an experience of Christian ministry, in the context of parish church life, so as to give them an informed and realistic understanding of that ministry.

Ministry Experience Volunteers will also be given an opportunity to undertake study and training to help them appreciate the knowledge and skills that would be needed for the ministry they are exploring, and so help them develop and discern their vocation and fulfil the potential of the ministry experience. This training will be provided by the Parish of Swindon New Town..

Ministry Experience Volunteers will be expected to live locally to the parish so as to gain a better understanding of the environment in which they will minister. Accommodation is therefore provided as an integral part of the Programme, which you will occupy under a licence at will.

Aims

The Programme aims to support the mission and ministry of the Parish of Swindon New Town.

It aims to deliver a Ministry Experience Volunteer Programme which will:

- i) Equip Ministry Experience Volunteers for mission and ministry (ordained) in a challenging urban environment;
- ii) Attract and encourage high calibre men who may have a calling to serve Society parishes in the future.

Organisation of the Programme and Status of the Ministry Experience Volunteers

The Ministry Experience Volunteers will offer their services as volunteers to the PCC of the Parish of Swindon New Town (the Charity) and will not be employees. The two following basic characteristics distinguish volunteers from the Charity's employed staff:

- i) Volunteers are unpaid and do not receive any material reward for their work.
- ii) There is no contract of employment between the Charity and its volunteers.

As a Ministry Experience Volunteer, you confirm that you offer your services to the Charity without the Charity being under any obligation to pay you for your services and the Charity

agrees to use your services as and when required and available. So far as practicable you will do what you have offered to do and at the times that you agree from time to time, but both the Charity and you recognise that you are not under any obligation to work for the Charity at any particular time or at all and nor is the Charity under any obligation to provide you with any work.

This document is intended to explain how the Programme will operate and reassure Ministry Experience Volunteers that their participation will be rewarding. Whilst you are asked to read this document and sign it, there is no intention to create any contract of employment between you and the Charity.

Expenses

You will receive no monetary payment of any description, except in respect of expenses actually incurred (or reasonably estimated as likely to be incurred) in the course of the ministry experience.

Key Dates

The scheme will begin on **21/09/2025** and end on **20/08/2026**

Outline Week

In a typical week, it is anticipated that Ministry Experience Volunteers will:

- Usually have Thursday as a day of rest.
- During the remaining days of the week, engage with the parish's mission, ministry and outreach provision. Sunday involvement will count towards this. The pattern may need to be adjusted over the year, as the training needs of the Ministry Experience Volunteer, and the ministry aims of the parish change.
- Gain sufficient experience of ministry to allow them to explore their calling.

Ministry Experience Opportunities

The Programme will provide a range of opportunities for Ministry Experience Volunteers to explore parish ministry. These opportunities will include: leading worship, preaching and teaching, pastoral work, mission and evangelism, youth work, schools work, social action projects, and community engagement with other partners.

Ministry Experience Volunteers will be encouraged to develop their own particular strengths and interests, and the intention is for the roles to have some flexibility to allow them to grow and develop around the individual.

Ministry Experience Volunteers will have regular one-on-one meetings with the Parish Priest and/or the Mission Priest to enable discussion and discernment throughout the Programme. Times/Dates for this to be mutually agreed.

Rest

It is expected that Ministry Experience Volunteers will have 24 days off over the duration of the programme. This may include a total of up to 4 Sundays.

Ministry Experience Volunteers should expect to spend the key times of Christmas, Holy Week and Easter in the parish, as well as the Octave which follows.

Time off should be agreed in advance with the Parish Priest.

Ideally that time off will not conflict with the key events, such as Christmas, Easter and Holy Days/Christian festivals.

Duration of the Programme

Whilst it is envisaged that all Ministry Experience Volunteers will complete the Programme, as a sign of their commitment, this agreement is binding in honour only and there is no legal obligation upon the Ministry Experience Volunteer to complete the Programme. Should it become necessary for a Ministry Experience Volunteer to leave early, due to changes in their personal circumstances or otherwise, the Ministry Experience Volunteer would be expected to first discuss their decision with the Parish Priest.

A Ministry Experience Volunteer's participation in the Programme may be brought to an end prior to completion if the volunteer's participation has become unsustainable for any reason.

Funding

The PCC

The Programme will reimburse the Ministry Experience Volunteers for receipted expenses actually incurred in the course of the ministry experience or reasonably estimated as likely to be incurred, including reasonable travel costs. Receipts for travel must be provided.

Standards of Behaviour

Ministry Experience Volunteers are expected to act at all times with due consideration for others and in a manner that reflects the fact they are volunteering for the Church. The parish has implemented an Equality & Diversity Policy and does not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, gender reassignment, race or ethnic origin, religious or philosophical belief, sexual orientation or age.

Ministry Experience Volunteers are not permitted to use illegal substances or misuse prescribed drugs or solvents whilst they are participating in the Programme. The Parish Priest has the right to carry out searches for drugs, including but not limited to searches of desks, cupboards, filing cabinets and packages sent to church addresses. If a Ministry Experience Volunteer is caught consuming such substances, or is believed to be under their influence, then their participation in the Programme may be brought to an immediate end.

Whilst participating in the Scheme, Ministry Experience Volunteers may come into possession of property that belongs to the parish. Ministry Experience Volunteers are expected to treat this property with respect and to return it at the end of the Programme.

Resolving problems

Ministry Experience Volunteers should expect their participation to be a positive experience. If a Ministry Experience Volunteer has a problem or a complaint, in the first instance they should try to discuss the matter with the Parish Priest. If they are unable to resolve the matter, the

Ministry Experience Volunteer should speak to a Churchwarden. They may be able to help the Ministry Experience Volunteer to resolve the problem informally, or the Ministry Experience Volunteer may be asked to provide further details in writing so the matter can be taken forward on a more formal basis.

Any concerns regarding the Ministry Experience Volunteer's behaviour or his ability to participate fully in the Programme will normally be raised with them informally by the Parish Priest. If they are unable to resolve the problem, they may speak to a member of the HR team at the Diocese of Bristol. Occasionally it may be necessary to investigate a problem and during that time, the Ministry Experience Volunteer's participation may be put on hold. Following investigation, if the matter is resolved the Ministry Experience Volunteer will normally resume their participation. Alternatively there may need to be some discussion about how the problem should be resolved, or the Ministry Experience Volunteer's participation may end early, in which case they will be told why.

Safeguarding

The Ministry Experience Volunteer must at all times make keeping children and adults at risk of harm their priority, comply with the safeguarding policies of the Charity and of the Church of England a priority, and undertake appropriate training. If the Ministry Experience Volunteer has any concerns about safeguarding practice, these should be raised with the parish priest, the parish safeguarding officer and/or the statutory authorities as appropriate.

Whistle Blowing

If a Ministry Experience Volunteer becomes aware of any of the following whilst participating in the Programme, they must inform the Archdeacon of Malmesbury (in addition to any appropriate reporting to appropriate public authorities as required by good safeguarding practice):

- a criminal offence
- a failure to comply with a legal obligation;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- the endangering of an individual's health and safety;
- damage to the environment;
- bribery; or
- deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

During the Programme the Charity will need to hold and process some personal information about the Ministry Experience Volunteers, including their name, address and contact telephone number. Ministry Experience Volunteers should ensure up-to-date contact details are provided – if in doubt they should check with the Parish Priest. Please see the privacy notice for the parish.

In some circumstances sensitive personal data about the Ministry Experience Volunteers may also be held, for example regarding their religious beliefs and/or criminal record. If a Ministry Experience Volunteer has any questions or concerns about the data held, then they should contact the PCC Secretary.

In the course of the Programme, Ministry Experience Volunteers may have access to confidential information relating to the parish, members of the clergy and/or parishioners. Ministry Experience Volunteers must not use or disclose this information to any person either during their Ministry Experience or at any time afterwards unless such use or disclosure has been authorised by the owner of the confidential information or is required by law.

Health and Safety

Ministry Experience Volunteers must comply at all times with the health and safety rules and policies of the parish. If a Ministry Experience Volunteer has any concerns regarding the environment in which they are volunteering, they should speak to the Parish Priest.

I confirm that I have read the above information regarding my participation in the Ministry Experience Volunteer Programme. I acknowledge that its terms are binding in honour only and it is not intended to be a legally binding contract and can be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party.

Signed:

Ministry Experience Volunteer

Print Name:

Date:

Signed:

On behalf of the Parish

**Print Name: Fr Toby Boutle SSC,
Rector & parish Priest**

Date:

Signed: