

‘God keeps calling me back to ordination’

EMMA Andersen keeps waiting for God to say ‘no’ to the idea of ordination – but it hasn’t happened yet.

It took her four years to get from her initial calling to starting ordination training. And every time she decided she wanted to stop the process, God kept calling her back.

Even now, half way through her two-year theological training course, she is wondering if God might still shut the door.

However, she remains one of a large number of our worshippers in ordination training. Eighteen men and women from our diocese are currently studying for ordination.

The 43-year-old mum (pictured), who goes to St Peter’s Church, Bishop’s Waltham, was praying for her church and its community back in 2016 when she first felt God’s call.

“I was praying for our church and our local area, asking God to send someone to show everyone who Jesus is,” she said. “I felt God telling me to open my Bible and I turned to Isaiah 6, where he says ‘Here I am, send me’. That verse kept coming up all over the place in relation to ordination.”

Emma initially ignored it, but wondered if her hunger to learn more would be



satisfied by a year-long theological course based in Southampton. Yet she still felt a calling to ministry.

She met our then Diocesan Director of Ordinands and thought she’d convinced her that she wouldn’t be suitable for ordination in the Church of England. However, it was recommended that she progress to the next stage.

“That first meeting only went ahead because I thought that God would shut the door on the idea of me being ordained,” she said.

“I couldn’t even use the words ‘ordination’ or ‘calling’. I kept trying to pull out of the process at various times, but God kept pulling me back. I keep waiting for the door to be closed

on me, but it hasn’t happened yet.

“When I went for my Bishop’s Advisory Panel (BAP), I was also convinced that they wouldn’t think I was suitable for ordination. In fact, I had a brilliant time, and there was a real generosity and love for all traditions in the Church, and a desire to see you as God sees you.”

Meanwhile, she had started leading informal Sunday morning services in St Peter’s church hall, and also helped to launch a Sunday afternoon group for children aged 11-14, called Overflow.

“As part of my initial calling in 2016, I saw an image of myself standing in front of St Peter’s, holding a microphone,” she said.

“But I’d never done that before. At my previous church I’d been involved in organising social things, but always in the background – I would often hide in the kitchen. Even when we hosted Bible studies in our house, I’d go to bed rather than talk about God.

“So it was a massive change to actually start to lead things from the front. But when you step out of your comfort zone with God, he does give you the resources.

“If I do preach, I do genuinely feel that it wasn’t me speaking, but God. I can’t do anything in my own strength, and I am a natural introvert.”

Emma started her ordination training last autumn with St Mellitus College. That’s a mixture of online courses, written work at home and working in a real parish placement. For Emma, that placement will be at St Peter’s Church.

“It is a currently online, but I’m enjoying it, and looking forward to meeting in person in the autumn,” she said.

“I still have no idea exactly what God is calling me to do as a clergy person, but I’m trying to be obedient. I think God only tells you about what you can handle at each stage, so perhaps it’s right that I don’t know where I’ll end up.”