



Good practice in ministry and authorization

Issued by the Archbishop
✠ Sentamu Eboracensis

This is an updated version of the guidance first issued in 2013. Important new sections are marked with lines in the margin.

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1: Good practice in ministry and authorization: Principles

Worship is at the heart of what it means to be Christian disciples and to be a Christian community engaged in God's mission. We grow in Christlikeness as we worship. Numbers of people are drawn to take the things of the Spirit seriously through worship. We both express and deepen our commitment to God, as we devote time to celebrating his love and power.

Leading worship is one important aspect of Christian ministry. There are others, including leadership, evangelism, pastoral care, and teaching. Such a multi-faceted ministry, using the variety of God's gifts amid the opportunities he gives us, is part of what makes it possible for us to be a diocese made up of *generous churches making and nurturing disciples*.

It has always been part of the ethos of the Church of England that worship and ministry should be carried out in an orderly way whilst being free in the power of the Holy Spirit. This leaflet is about how we can do that.

In past centuries, there was tight regulation of worship and ministry, within what might be called a culture of control that was fuelled by political as well as theological disputes. We have moved on a long way since then. More freedom and discretion is encouraged, but as Anglicans we still have a legal framework, and public ministers make solemn oaths and promises. In recent times we have become more aware of the necessity of Safeguarding that is secure and gives proper assurance to the public.

So how do we best maintain the right kind of orderliness, whilst allowing the gifts of God to flourish freely?

It has always been the 'Anglican way' to believe that these two principles are not opposites but that they reinforce each other. Our way of worshipping and ministering should

- point towards God
- be according to the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it
- build up and serve God's people
- be done in such a way that the public can rely on Safeguarding practice, content and quality

There are some rules and guidelines about worship and ministry, certain of which are legally binding. At the end of this leaflet you will find an extract from Canon C8 and the notes to the services of Holy Communion and Marriage. Some of the language is technical, but it is important that you are familiar with the areas and topics covered.

You will see from the following pages that there are particular points on which local clergy are able to exercise some discretion, which are mentioned in the relevant sections.

2: Authority to minister, including inviting visitors

The life of the church is marked by a network of relationships. One of these is the relationship between the diocesan bishop (for us the Archbishop) and everyone else in the diocese. When a parish priest begins his or her new ministry, the Archbishop shares the care of the parish – described traditionally as 'the cure of souls' – with the priest, but does not give it away. The Archbishop has the personal responsibility to make sure that there is adequate ministry in the diocese. In return, everyone in the diocese who is a public minister is personally accountable to the Archbishop. That includes clergy, Readers, Church Army officers, and other licensed and commissioned lay ministers.

The incumbent (vicar or rector) of a parish has the local oversight of Church of England ministry within it.¹ That is why other Church of England ministers have to have the incumbent's consent or invitation in order to minister within a parish.²

In general, all clergy and licensed lay ministers *who have the Archbishop's current authority to minister* are able to conduct worship, to preach, and to conduct funerals. Only priests may preside at Holy Communion and conduct marriages.

¹ In practice this also means a Priest in Charge. During a vacancy, this responsibility is held by the Area Dean and churchwardens together.

² There are a few exceptions to this, applying (e.g.) to hospital, prison and university chaplains, to places where there is a Bishop's Mission Order, and when ministry is offered in their homes to people who are habitual worshippers in another parish.

You will see from Canon C8, which is reproduced at the end of this leaflet, that the parish priest may invite a visiting currently-authorized minister to function within the parish for up to seven days within a three-month period. The parish priest does not need to have permission in advance from the bishop to do this, but that is on the important condition that the priest must be sure that the visitor is in good standing. The priest may rely on what (s)he already knows about the visitor, or have proper evidence by other means. What does this involve?

The simplest situation of course is when a visitor has a current valid authorization to minister in this or another diocese, in the form of a deed as incumbent, a licence, or Permission to Officiate (PTO).

However, if a minister formerly held such an authorization but it is no longer valid (e.g. their PTO is out of date), you must consider them to be unauthorized and not eligible to officiate. This applies to ministers within your own congregation as well as visitors from elsewhere.

If a former or visiting minister does not have a current authorization or if you are unsure, you are required to get advice from your bishop or archdeacon, and you must not allow such a person to carry out any public ministry in this diocese. That includes any kind of officiating, including simply robing, or carrying out other ministerial activities such as assisting at Holy Communion, preaching or giving an address, reading in public, leading prayers (whether robed or not), volunteer pastoral work, or leading a house group. Similar rules apply to formerly-licensed Readers as to clergy.

The law applying to the Church of England has become stricter, mainly in order to ensure better Safeguarding practice. An incumbent who allows an unauthorized or suspended minister to officiate, or even robe without speaking, may be committing an offence against church law and themselves be subject to discipline.

3: Leading worship – general

The incumbent of a parish (in a vacancy, the Area Dean) has the immediate responsibility to supervise the worship that is conducted within the parish.

The normal leaders of worship are ordained ministers, licensed lay ministers (principally Readers), and other trained lay ministers holding an authority from the bishop, including Lay Ministers formerly described as Recognised Parish Assistants.

If none of those is available, it is permissible for another suitable lay person to say Morning or Evening Prayer³ or to use another form of *A Service of the Word*. The incumbent should make sure that the person is confident and prepared.

4: Leading worship – Holy Communion

The person who presides at a Church of England celebration of Holy Communion must have been ordained priest at the hands of a bishop.⁴

It is good for other people to be involved in leading parts of Holy Communion. The guidance notes from *Common Worship* are reproduced at the end of this leaflet.

³ The Collect for Trinity 21 must be used instead of the Absolution.

⁴ If you are intending to invite a visitor to preside, and there is any question whether (s)he is a priest of *the Church of England* or a church in full communion with it, you must consult your bishop.

People who assist in distributing the elements of Holy Communion must be authorized by the bishop, and should have adequate training and preparation.

5: Leading worship – Preaching and teaching

The question often arises about unlicensed lay people preaching and teaching. Are they allowed to do it, and how does authorization apply to them?

It is best to approach this as a question of how God's gifts are recognised, developed and used; and how things can be done in an appropriately-ordered way.

God is constantly raising up new leaders. Someone who does not have the Archbishop's licence may of course have the gifts to grow as a preacher and teacher. Discovering that gift through supervised experience may be an important part of a person's journey into public ministry.

Meanwhile, it is right that we treat preaching and teaching as a precious opportunity. That applies both to the content of the message, and to the way it is delivered. That is the reason for applying a degree of regulation to situations where people who have not had formal training are invited to speak and teach in public worship.

It is not honest to try to avoid principles of good order by saying that an address is 'only a talk' rather than a sermon, or to claim that the points set out here do not apply. For the sake of the members of the congregation, who need to be taught, encouraged and built up, the same good practice must apply to every address that is given during the course of worship.

When someone prepares for authorized (licensed) ministry, whether ordained or lay (e.g. as a Reader), part of their training involves being ready to preach and teach, and to proclaim the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it.

Putting all this together, incumbents should observe the following guidelines.

- People who are in training to be public ministers (e.g. ordinands, Reader trainees and Church Army students) are encouraged to preach as part of their formation. They should always be given feedback on their sermons, and a written note should be made afterwards.
- If an unlicensed lay person (perhaps a potential future minister) is invited to preach, the incumbent has a direct and special responsibility to ensure that the *content, structure and delivery* of the address will all be of sufficient quality. It is best practice for the incumbent to see a draft, sufficiently far in advance to be able to comment on it and for revisions to be made. There should be the opportunity for feedback after the address has been given.
- But it is not satisfactory for an informal arrangement of that kind to persist. Incumbents should be eager to encourage suitable candidates to explore public licensed ministry. They should emphasise the value of the diocese's programmes of proper preparation over a period, including formal study of the Bible and theology, and supervised spiritual development. Safeguarding training and obtaining a DBS disclosure are also a requirement for anyone who could be perceived to be in a ministerial role.
- By law, anyone who has ever been ordained may only lead worship, preach, robe or speak in worship in any capacity, if they are an incumbent or still have a current valid licence or PTO. A similar rule applies to anyone who has ever been admitted as a Reader.

- There are lay ministers with the bishop's authorization, including Lay Ministers formerly described as Recognised Parish Assistants (RPAs) within the diocese. RPAs are not licensed to preach, which means that if they are invited to speak, it should be on the same basis as other unlicensed lay people. That may appropriately be a pathway towards licensed ministry (Reader or ordained) for some individuals.
- The bishop, archdeacon, Diocesan Adviser for Vocations, and Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser are always ready to give advice.

6: Inviting ministers from other Christian traditions

During the last century, there have been huge advances in the relationship between Christians of different traditions. Part of the benefit of this is the way in which it is possible to invite ministers from other churches to take part in worship in a Church of England context.

There are more detailed provisions set out in Canons B43 and B44, but in general:

- The permissions extend to other churches that profess belief in the Holy Trinity.
- A currently-authorized ordained or lay minister of another church may be invited to fulfil a similar function in a Church of England context to that which they carry out in their own home context.
- An ordained or lay minister of the Church of England may accept a reciprocal invitation.
- Special rules apply to celebrating Holy Communion and to taking part in ordinations, and in those circumstances you must ask the advice of your archdeacon or bishop.
- There are legal rules that apply to ecumenical guests taking part in weddings. They are set out in the notes to *Common Worship* and they are reproduced at the end of this leaflet.⁵

⁵ A marriage in a Church of England church must be conducted by a Church of England cleric using an authorized Church of England marriage rite. This is a requirement of both the secular and canon law.

Finally

It is hoped that we can see the points made in this leaflet as a secure support for God's gifts to be used and for his people to be served. They are not meant to be unreasonably restrictive, but it is important that we are all able to minister in a way that really is in line with best practice.

Please remember that your archdeacon or bishop, and other diocesan advisers, are always ready to help.

November 2013: updated March 2019

Appendix

Part of Canon C 8: Of ministers exercising their ministry

Includes text added by Amending Canon 39 (February 2019)

1. Every minister shall exercise his⁶ ministry in accordance with the provisions of this Canon.
2. The minister having the cure of souls of a church ... may allow a minister, concerning whom they are satisfied either by actual personal knowledge or by good and sufficient evidence that he is of good life and standing and that he has authority to officiate in accordance with this Canon (whether in that or another diocese), to minister within their church or chapel
 - (i) except in a case within paragraph (ii), for a period of not more than seven days within three months without reference to the bishop or other Ordinary, or
 - (ii) in the case of a minister who is instituted to a benefice in that diocese or admitted to serve within that diocese by licence under the hand and seal of the bishop and who is not subject to a direction under paragraph 4A, for an indefinite period and without reference to the bishop or other Ordinary,and a minister so allowed shall be required to sign the services register when he officiates. ...
3. The bishop of a diocese confers such authority on a minister either by instituting him to a benefice, or by admitting him to serve within his diocese by licence under his hand and seal, or by giving him written permission to officiate within the same.
4. No minister who has such authority to exercise his ministry in any diocese shall do so therein in any place in which he has not the cure of souls without the permission of the minister having such cure, except at the homes of persons whose names are entered on the electoral roll of the parish which he serves and to the extent authorized by the Extra-Parochial Ministry Measure 1967, or in a university, college, school, hospital, or public or charitable institution in which he is licensed to officiate as provided by the said Measure and Canon B 41 [and special provisions apply to conducting funerals and to Bishop's Mission Orders].
- 4A. In the case of a minister who is instituted to a benefice or admitted to serve within a diocese by licence under the hand and seal of the bishop of the diocese, the bishop may direct that the minister may officiate only in the benefice or (as the case may be) the place to which the licence applies.
5. A minister who has been ordained priest or deacon -
 - (a) by an overseas bishop within the meaning of the Overseas and Other Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967;
 - (b) under section 5 of that Measure for ministry overseas;
 - (c) by a bishop in a Church not in communion with the Church of England, whose orders are recognized or accepted by the Church of England;may not minister in the province of Canterbury or York without the permission of the archbishop of the province in question under the said Measure ...

⁶ This part of the legal text is unchanged from long ago, and is still framed in male language.

6. A minister who does not have authority to officiate in accordance with this Canon or is prohibited or suspended under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 from exercising the functions of his Orders may not vest in a church or chapel during divine service.
7. The minister having the cure of souls of a church ... may not allow a minister to officiate or vest in the church or chapel if they know that the minister does not have authority to officiate, or is prohibited or suspended, as mentioned in paragraph 6.
8. A minister who has authority to officiate in a diocese in accordance with this Canon shall participate in such arrangements as the bishop of the diocese approves for the provision of training in matters relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

Churches in Communion with the Church of England

A list is available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/canons-church-england/supplementary-material#b139>

Please note that this is a list of churches based in other countries, some of which have congregations in England. The Church of England has an ecumenical relationship with other churches based within this country, but generally not a relationship of communion in the technical sense of a full interchangeability of ministries.

From the Notes to Common Worship Holy Communion: Ministries

[order of paragraphs changed]

The unity of the liturgy is served by the ministry of the president, who in presiding over the whole service holds word and sacrament together and draws the congregation into a worshipping community.

The president at Holy Communion (who, in accordance with the provisions of Canon B 12 'Of the Ministry of the Holy Communion', must have been episcopally ordained priest) expresses this ministry by saying the opening Greeting, the Absolution, the Collect, the Peace and the Blessing. The president must say the Eucharistic Prayer, break the consecrated bread and receive the sacrament on every occasion. When appropriate, the president may, after greeting the people, delegate the leadership of all or parts of the Gathering and the Liturgy of the Word to a deacon, Reader or other authorized lay person.

In the absence of a priest for the first part of the service, a deacon, Reader or other authorized lay person may lead the entire Gathering and Liturgy of the Word.

When the bishop is present, (s)he normally presides over the whole service.

As provided in Canon B 18 the sermon shall be preached by a duly authorized minister, deaconess, Reader or lay worker or, at the invitation of the minister having the cure of souls and with the permission of the bishop, another person.

In some traditions the ministry of the deacon at Holy Communion has included some of the following elements: the bringing in of the Book of the Gospels, the invitation to confession, the reading of the Gospel, the preaching of the sermon when licensed to do so, a part in the prayers of intercession, the preparation of the table and the gifts, a part in the distribution, the ablutions and the dismissal.

The deacon's liturgical ministry provides an appropriate model for the ministry of an assisting priest, a Reader, or another episcopally authorized minister in a leadership ministry that complements that of the president.

From the Notes to Common Worship Marriage: Ecumenical provisions

Where a minister of another Christian Church is invited to assist at the Solemnization of Matrimony, the permissions and procedures set out in Canon B 43 are to be followed. The Church of England minister who solemnizes the marriage must establish the absence of impediment, direct the exchange of vows, declare the existence of the marriage, say the final blessing, and sign the registers. A minister invited to assist may say all or part of the opening address, lead the declarations of intent, supervise the exchange of rings, and join in the blessing of the marriage. He or she may also read a lesson and lead all or part of the prayers. Where the couple come from different Christian communions the bishop may authorize such variations to the marriage service as are set out in *An Order for the Marriage of Christians from Different Churches*, which is published separately.