

Lay Licensing Standards in the Episcopal Diocese of Washington (Amended 11/09/07)

Introduction

The canons of the Episcopal Church specify that six lay ministries within the church be licensed by the Diocese. These ministries are Eucharistic ministers and Eucharistic visitors, catechists, pastoral leaders, worship leaders and preachers. All provide lay assistance with the essential sacramental, catechetical and/or the ministry of proclamation so necessary to the spiritual well being of congregations. In addition catechists, preachers and pastoral leaders, provide essential teaching ministries for the well-being of the congregation. Eucharistic visitors and pastoral leaders provide essential care for those in the congregation who are unable to participate in the public life and worship of the congregation. The canons charge the Commission on Ministry to develop standards for the licensing of these ministries.

What follows are the licensing standards developed by the Commission on Ministry. Those seeking to be licensed may meet these requirements by obtaining formal training i.e. through seminary-based or church-based programs, or clergy and **lay** leaders may develop their own congregationally-based training that in their estimation meets these standards. For each ministry some form of training is required in addition to meeting the basic requirements. In addition clergy and lay leaders are expected to create a program of regular supervision of all persons engaged in these ministries.

Application may be made at any time for these ministries using the form provided on the diocesan website, www.edow.org. Licenses may be given for up to three years and are renewable at the end of the licensed period. The rector, chaplain, or in an interim, the senior warden, is responsible for renewing all licenses. Licenses are specific to the congregation in which the recipient is a member and that is served by the recipient. **The exception to this is any diocesan event, such as convention, regional, or multi-congregational gatherings in which licensed lay ministers are invited to participate from several congregations.** For the purpose of these guidelines a congregation may mean a parish, school or cathedral or academic, hospital or prison ministry. Clergy and lay congregational leaders are reminded that these ministries are best represented by those who have discerned both a vocation and gifts for this service to the church.

Basic Requirements

The following qualities are expected of **all** those licensed for ministries in this diocese:

Communicant in good-standing **confirmed or received** through a program that emphasizes the traditions and polity of the Episcopal Church. (A communicant in good standing who has not been confirmed or received may be licensed under extraordinary circumstances. The rector should inform the Bishop of such exceptions when applying to license these individuals and the pastoral reasons for these exceptions.)

Regular attendance at worship;

Having an interest in helping and serving a congregation;

Physical, psychological and spiritual health;

Willingness to work under the direction of the clergy (or the wardens during an interim period or lay leaders designated by the clergy);

Willingness to participate in the training and continuing education related to the licensed ministry;

Participating in an active life of prayer and devotion.

The following **basic** education is required of all those seeking licensed ministries. This basic education is to be provided by clergy and/or lay leaders of congregations.

Knowledge of the liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer 1979 and the role of lay ministers in this liturgy

Knowledge of the Holy Eucharist and its administration

Training about power, authority and boundaries in leadership

For all those serving as Eucharistic visitors, catechists, pastoral leaders and worship leaders the following additional **basic requirement is necessary:**

Safe-guarding Our Children training as provided by the Diocese of Washington.

Participants in Safe-guarding Our Children are issued certificates when this training is completed. These certificates should be presented to the clergy licensing individuals so that participation may be verified. Congregations are encouraged to keep a data base of all members who participate in any training related to licensing.

At present no course is being offered by the Diocese of Washington in the area of prevention of misconduct in working with adults. This course offering is currently under study by the diocese. One congregation in the diocese offers its own training in this area, St. Luke's, DC. If you would like to offer this training to your licensed ministers it is recommended that you contact the clergy and lay leadership in this congregation.

In addition the Committee on Racial Reconciliation offers periodic workshops and events related to training in the area racial reconciliation. Given the diversity within the

congregations of this diocese, licensed lay ministers are strongly encouraged to participate in any offerings by this committee.

The overwhelming majority of licenses issued by the Diocese of Washington are for two ministries, Eucharistic ministers and Eucharistic visitors. It is anticipated that all training for these ministries will take place in the congregation. At this time the Commission on Ministry is also exploring the possibility of offering diocesan wide training particularly for Eucharistic visitors.

Eucharistic Ministers

These ministers assist with the distribution of wine and bread during the Holy Eucharist services. The requirements for this ministry include:

- Understanding the names and uses of altar vessels and linens;
- Understanding the service of Holy Eucharist;
- Administering the chalice and/or paten, use of intinction and the common cup;
- Awareness of the culture of the congregation and the role of Holy Communion in its life and practices around the receiving of communion.

Competency in these requirements could be demonstrated by any **one** of the following:

- Completion of clergy or lay led practice sessions;
- Participation in an instructed Holy Eucharist led by clergy.

Eucharistic Visitors

These ministers are responsible for visiting sick and shut-in members with Holy Communion who are unable to participate in Sunday worship. The requirements for this ministry include:

- Pastoral skills including being able to address issues related to the home-bound or nursing home residents, the terminally ill, death and dying;
- Understanding aging and family dynamics;
- Willingness to keep confidentiality;
- Knowledge of when to notify clergy if changes have occurred in those visited;
- Commitment to report regularly to the clergy about pastoral visits;
- Commitment to visit regularly;
- Understanding of the liturgical services used in ministering to the sick and shut-in including services and prayers for healing and anointing, Holy Communion under Special Circumstances.

Competency in these requirements could be demonstrated by any **one** of the following:

- Completion of relevant seminary classes or workshops in areas such as pastoral care, liturgy, biblical studies, preaching and/or ethics;

Completion of on-line courses from academic institutions in these fields;

Clergy-directed independent study or a mentor relationship with a clergy person to develop these skills with a particular focus on the healing ministry as described on the Book of Common Prayer, the Book of Occasional Services and Enriching Our Worship 2.

The following are more **extraordinary** lay ministries and the requirements reflect this.

Catechists/Pastoral Leaders/Lay Preachers

A catechist is a lay person authorized to lead a program of Christian formation and preparation for the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Confirmation, Reception and the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows. A pastoral leader is a lay person authorized to exercise pastoral or administrative responsibility in a congregation under special circumstances defined by the Bishop. These may include serving as an institutional chaplain in a hospital, campus, prison or other setting, or in rare cases in a parish. Preachers are lay people authorized to preach under the direction of a member of the clergy. **Because preaching is an integral part of ordained ministry, clergy should only seek this license in exceptional circumstances.** These ministers speak for the church and/or train others. The requirements for these ministries are a basic knowledge of:

- The interpretation, authority, use and application of Scripture;
- Church history;
- The polity, governance and structure/organization of the TEC and the relationship of TEC to the world-wide Anglican Communion;
- The baptismal covenant and its application to ministry;
- Christian ethics;
- Individual and corporate prayer;
- Contemporary society and the issues faced and the TEC response to these issues;
- Liturgy

Worship Leaders

These ministers regularly conduct public worship under the direction of the clergy within the congregation and at other sites such as nursing homes or schools. The requirements for this ministry include:

- Understanding of non-Eucharistic worship and the ability to lead these services including Morning and Evening Prayer and Compline, services of healing and Holy Communion under Special Circumstances;
- Understanding of Scripture—interpretation, authority, use and application, and ability to lead a discussion on an assigned text or preach on it;
- Understanding of Christian ethics.

Competency as a catechist, pastoral leaders, worship leader and preacher could be demonstrated by completion of **one** of the following, including, but not limited to:

An Episcopal/Anglican denominationally based course of study such as Education for Ministry, DOCC, Via Media, Cathedral College courses, Lay School of Theology at Virginia Theological Seminary;

Completion of relevant seminary classes or workshops in areas such as preaching, biblical study, pastoral care, liturgy and/or ethics;

Completion of on-line courses from academic institutions in these fields;

Clergy-directed independent study or a mentor relationship with a clergy person that uses resources such as the Church's Teaching Series.

Through these standards the Commission on Ministry is seeking to assure that these ministries are undertaken in ways that are faithful to the church's teaching, and in ways that disclose Christ Jesus as the center of who we are and all that we do. What is suggested here with respect to training is not exhaustive, but respects the ability of clergy and lay leaders to develop what is most helpful in the congregations they serve.