



Diocese of Bristol

Guidelines for 'Occasional Preachers'

Preaching the gospel is a delight and a privilege, and is a key part of the Church's mission and ministry. Under the Church of England Canon Law a sermon should be preached at least once each Sunday in each parish church. Those who preach must be authorised and should 'endeavour with care and sincerity to minister the word of truth, to the glory of God and to the edification of the people' (Canon B18), because preaching is an important and responsible task requiring a depth of Christian experience and understanding. That is why we want to equip those who preach in public worship, and help them reflect on their preaching.

All Christians can and should be sharing faith by giving their testimony, describing their experience of coming to faith and their relationship with Jesus. This is an essential part of discipleship – but is not the same as preaching the gospel in church regularly as an authorised ordained or lay minister. That is why the Canons of the Church of England require that a lay person should have:

1. the permission of the bishop to preach;
2. the invitation of the incumbent of the parish; and
3. why the bishop requires those who preach regularly to undergo theological training.

However there are occasions when it is right to invite visitors or other members of the congregation to preach or give an address who have not undertaken training. For instance:

- If a visiting preacher is licensed to preach in another diocese, s/he may preach in this diocese on an occasional basis in accordance with Canon C8.
- A representative of an organisation supported by the parish (e.g. a mission agency or charity) may be invited by the incumbent to speak about their work on a single occasion, or an author may come and speak about their latest book
- A member of the congregation may speak in public worship because of their particular experience or knowledge (e.g. how their faith impacts their work or life at home, or what it's like to be an oblate of a religious order) perhaps as part of a sermon series
- As part of discerning vocations, a member of the congregation who is exploring a possible call to authorised ministry may preach on up to five occasions, either in their own parish or in a parish where the DDO has arranged a placement with appropriate supervision.

‘Occasional preachers’

Sometimes people are identified as potential preachers, but there is a good reason why it is not appropriate for them to train for licensed ministry. Such people should have:

- Potential or a gift for preaching
- Sufficient Christian experience
- Good standing in the parish
- Been a worshipping member of the congregation for at least six months.

In such cases the incumbent and PCC may apply to the bishop for permission for them to preach from time to time (but not more than five times a year). Before this permission is applied for, the person concerned must have undertaken suitable diocesan preaching training and, following this training, have preached at least once in the parish. This permission should be renewed annually and will be granted after the Bishop has consulted with the Director of Ministry Development who will liaise with the bishop about training and authorisation.

Church-goers often place a great deal of trust in those who lead public worship. We strongly recommend that the parish require potential Occasional Preachers:

- hold a basic DBS disclosure applied for through the diocese of Bristol (or an online updating check that has been checked by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team;
- complete the online Diocesan C0 Basic Awareness safeguarding course and attend the Diocesan C1 Safeguarding Foundation training provided through the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

The permissions included in this document are covered by a general authorisation of the bishop in accordance with Canon B18.

This Policy will be reviewed in September 2020.

June 17, 2019

Implementation of the Policy.

1. Applications for the bishop’s permission to preach should be made to the Bishop of Bristol’s Office on the form appended to this policy.
2. The requirement of training can be fulfilled in one of three ways:
 - a. Completion of the Diocesan ‘Exploring Christianity’ course;
 - b. By prior learning, which the Advisor on Lay Ministry or Director of Ministry Development agree is appropriate for this ministry;
 - c. By a bespoke training package, agreed with the Advisor on Lay Ministry or Director of Ministry Development.
3. Those who have been preaching in the same church prior to the beginning of this policy, have a six month period (ending 31.3.2020) to apply for permission and ensure that the requisite Safeguarding and Training requirements are in place.
4. Application forms are held on file by the Bishop of Bristol’s Office in accordance with GDPR regulations.