**The Diocese of Chichester**

**Guidelines and Criteria for Occasional Preaching**

According to Canon Law, episcopal permission is required for any lay person preaching at the principal act of public worship on a Sunday:

*‘The sermon shall be preached by a minister, deaconess, reader or lay worker duly authorized in accordance with Canon Law. At the invitation of the minister having the cure of souls another person may preach with the permission of the bishop of the diocese given either in relation to the particular occasion or in accordance with diocesan directions.’* (Canon B18.1)

Therefore, all lay people preaching at the principal act of Sunday worship on a regular basis in the Diocese of Chichester will **either** need to be licenced as Readers **or** authorised as ALM through successful completion of the ALM Preaching Elective. This is in order that sound doctrine is preached in our parishes so the household of faith are fed with the Word of God and encouraged and inspired in their Christian discipleship.

This policy also ensures that anyone preaching regularly in parishes within the diocese will have current DBS clearance and safeguarding training, in line with the Church of England’s Safer Recruitment processes.

**What do we mean by preaching?**

Episcopal authorisation as a Reader or an ALM is required for those preaching regularly at the **main act** of Sunday worship. Both are forms of public representative ministry and should be overseen by the incumbent. There is no limit on the number of times Readers can be asked to preach during a year. ALMs can preach up to six times a year, with the incumbent or another member of clergy present (or during an interregnum by a Reader, assistant priest, deacon, or churchwarden).

In addition, Canon B43 allows occasional ecumenical invitations to preach at the main act of Sunday worship to be given to: ‘*A person who is a minister or lay member of a designated Church, and who is baptised*.’ Ordinands or readers in training can also preach as part of their initial training under the supervision of the incumbent.

There is greater flexibility at other services and events where other baptised Christians might offer less formal teaching, though clergy should ensure anyone teaching the faith is appropriately equipped and of good character with a secure spiritual life and that constructive feedback is given.

The giving of a personal testimony should be distinguished from preaching and only requires the invitation of the incumbent or person leading the worship.

**Different Routes:**

*‘The preacher shall endeavour with care and sincerity to minister the word of truth, to the glory of God and to the edification of the people.’* (Canon B18.3)

All candidates will need to go through a discernment process with their incumbent and demonstrate a capacity for training and an aptitude (or potential) for fostering and inspiring others through the ministry of preaching. A candidate should normally be baptised, confirmed, and on the electoral roll of their sponsoring church.

All candidates must have a sufficient theological grounding, which means successful completion of one of the following:

* A Higher Education (HE) course of theological study at certificate level (L4) or above, e.g., an undergraduate or postgraduate theology degree
* A non-validated theological course at equivalent level, e.g. the Bishop’s Certificate or equivalent
* The Sussex Ministry Training Course

Whilst often being pivotal in faith development, completion of discipleship courses such as Living Faith, Alpha, Pilgrim or Christianity Explored are not considered to provide an adequate theological foundation for the ministry of preaching.

All candidates will be subject to the normal safeguarding checks, references, and selection processes, including nomination from the PCC. [[1]](#footnote-1)

Alongside those going through the regular Reader selection process, there are three possible routes for laity seeking regular permission to preach:

* **Ministers from another denomination:** Someone who has previously served as a minister in another Church but has been habitually worshipping in a Church of England would normally go forward as a candidate for Reader ministry. Consideration would be taken about any additional training required and is a decision at the discretion of the diocesan bishop.
* **Candidates who have undertaken the Sussex Ministry Training Course (SMTC), run by the Sussex Gospel Partnership (SGP) or equivalent:** SMTCaims: ‘*to equip students to be confident in handling the word of God’* through significant and rigorous engagement with the bible and theology. Those who have successfully completed this (or a similar) course can be authorised as an ALM without undertaking any additional training.
* **Candidates who have achieved an HE award of Certificate (L4) or above in theology or an equivalent non-validated theological course:** Someone who has achieved the appropriate level of theological study will undertake the diocesan ALM Core Module, followed by the ALM Preaching Elective

There will be a thread of discernment running through the ALM Preaching Elective to ensure that candidates have the capacity to exercise this ministry with confidence and competency.

ALM candidates will have to agree a Role Description before commissioning. Authorisation lasts for a period of three years and can then be renewed following a review by the incumbent and PCC.

1. The process for the selection and training of Readers can be found at: <https://www.chichester.anglican.org/reader-selection-and-training-for-reader-ministry/>

   The process for the selection and training of ALMs can be found at: <https://www.chichester.anglican.org/authorised-lay-ministry/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)