

24 January 2018



Come follow Christ
in the footsteps of St Chad

*To all lay and ordained ministers holding
the Bishop's Licence or Permission to
Officiate in the Diocese of Lichfield*

Lay ministry in our Churches

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

We are writing to you about local arrangements for worship leaders, occasional preachers, and Eucharistic assistants, and we are enclosing new diocesan guidelines for these. We also want to remind you of the need to exercise great care and follow due process in any engagement with the ministry of deliverance.

At the heart of our discipleship is our worship of the God who loves us and invites us to follow Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. This worship finds its focus when we gather together as a Christian community to offer praise and thanksgiving, hear and respond to the Word of God, pray for needs of the church and the world and to celebrate the sacraments of the new covenant.

All baptised Christians are called to exercise their diverse gifts both in the world and the church and, increasingly, this diversity of gifting is being expressed in our corporate worship. So alongside ordained ministers and licenced and authorised lay ministers, our worship is also enriched by those who read the scriptures, assist at the distribution of Holy Communion and lead intercessions.

Local worship leaders and occasional preachers

It is evident that there are some who have gifts in leading worship and preaching, gifts that are recognised by the local Christian communities of which they are a part, whether in a traditional parochial setting or in the context of Chaplaincy work and Fresh Expressions. In some cases there should be the encouragement to explore ordination or undertake training to become a Reader or Authorised Lay Minister. This route involves the discernment and validation of a clear and specific vocation to a ministry which is then authorised by the diocesan bishop. However, for many people this is not an appropriate or a possible way forward.

In order to enable God's people to use their gifts in a way that honours the gospel and enriches our worship, we need to be clear how we can best encourage and support those who are called to lead worship or preach but who do so on an occasional basis, and who are entrusted with these ministries at a local level.

In a public role, anyone leading services or preaching will be seen by others as “representing” the church and so must be equipped and accountable for the task. In a Church of England context, this also means paying attention to the requirements of Canon Law. To this end, new Guidelines have been drawn as a framework to encourage, enable and hold to account those local worship leaders) and those who preach occasionally in the churches, Fresh Expressions and chaplaincies of this Diocese.

The Guidelines are intended to be “light touch”. The process of discernment, selection, training and supervision is entrusted by us to the Incumbent (or equivalent) in consultation with the PCC (or equivalent). The local worship leaders and occasional preachers will be trained locally and will be accountable to the Incumbent who will be responsible for their contribution to public worship. Nonetheless, as a diocese, we will offer support by providing training material and resources. Some resources are already available on the diocesan website or from the Ministry Department and we will be adding to them in due course. Those who hold the Bishop’s licence will have a particular role in training and supporting local worship leaders and occasional preachers in parishes and deaneries. Readers, in particular, will be invited to consider whether they might wish to play a central role in this local resourcing.

These Guidelines do not refer or apply to Communion by Extension.

The context in which local worship leaders and occasional preachers will operate will vary significantly in this large and varied Diocese and in each case there will need to be prayerful discernment at a local level. These Guidelines are intended to support that process so that those with a vocation to a role of this kind - affirmed by the local church - can enrich the worshipping life of local congregations across the Diocese

For those who wish it, there will be an introduction and training evening for these Guidelines for clergy and Readers at St Thomas’ and St Andrew’s, Doxey, in Stafford on 8th March at 7.30pm.

Distribution of the Holy Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in Public Worship

Following a decision made by General Synod in 2015 which removed the requirement for the Bishop to grant authorisation to distribute Holy Communion, we have decided to delegate arrangements for the distribution of Communion to the Incumbent or Priest in Charge of a parish. This means that, as of 1st January 2018, parishes will no longer be required to obtain authorisation via the Area Bishops’ or Archdeacons’ Offices, but will be able to make arrangements locally. As is the case with local worship leaders and occasional preachers, there are Guidelines attached to this *ad clerum* that set out the expectations for such a ministry.

These Guidelines do not refer or apply to Communion by Extension.

The Deliverance Ministry

New national and diocesan guidelines for this ministry will be coming out later this year. In the meantime all clergy and lay ministers must abide by the guidelines issued in 2012 (<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/documents/category/deliverance-ministry/>). This is particularly important where clergy are dealing with individuals. In all such cases, clergy must contact the deliverance team for advice and support. The deliverance ministry (like all

ministry) has the capacity to involve the misuse of power, and therefore abuse. A careful following of the guidelines is essential.

On September 22nd 2018 (more details to follow) there will be a conference with Professor Stephen Pattinson, looking at Shame, Spiritual Abuse, and Safeguarding, with a particular focus on the deliverance ministry. Please put this date in your diary.

Deliverance team contacts:

Diocesan Team Co-Ordinator and Archdeaconry of Stoke-on-Trent: The Rev'd Preb Peter Mockford (team leader) 01782 312163

Archdeaconries of Walsall and Lichfield: The Rev'd Rod Clark 01543 262254

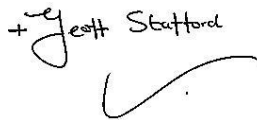
Arcdeaconry of Salop: The Rev'd Anne Netherwood 01691 778495 (available after 7pm)



The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave
Bishop of Lichfield



The Rt Revd Mark Rylands
Bishop of Shrewsbury



The Rt Revd Geoff Annas
Bishop of Stafford



The Rt Revd Clive Gregory
Bishop of Wolverhampton