



Licensed Lay Ministries: Guidelines

(Last updated 11/12/13)

There are seven forms of licensed lay ministries described by the canons of the Episcopal Church (III.4.3-9). They are Pastoral Leader, Worship Leader, Preacher, Eucharistic Minister, Eucharistic Visitor, Catechist, and Evangelist. Lectors are not licensed, but are trained in publically reading the scriptures and are appointed by the clergyperson in charge of a congregation to read the lessons and lead the Prayers of the People. Lectors must receive training in the understanding of scripture, use of the voice, and manner of presentation, and they should participate in the on-going study of scripture.

Persons serving as licensed or appointed lay ministers are expected to embody a mature Christian life-style, reflecting love for and desire to serve Christ in others. Regular participation in the life of the parish, especially in the weekly celebration of the Eucharist is expected.

Pastoral Leader

A Pastoral Leader is a lay person authorized to exercise pastoral or administrative responsibility in a congregation under special circumstances, as defined by the Bishop. Persons licensed for this ministry must complete and comply with the guidelines for the Safeguarding God's People program. A Pastoral Leader must receive training and be examined and found competent by the Bishop, or the Bishop's designee, in the following subjects: Holy Scriptures, The Book of Common Prayer, The Hymnal, the conduct of public worship, church history, and doctrine as set forth in the Creeds and the Outline of Faith; parish administration including business practices; appropriate canons, and pastoral care. A pastoral Leader may be licensed only if, in the judgment of the Bishop, the congregation is unable to secure a resident member of the clergy in charge.

Worship Leader

A Worship Leader is a lay person who regularly leads public worship under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith. The chief function of the Worship Leader is to lead regularly scheduled public worship like Morning or Evening Prayer. Private or small

group worship, like Compline at the close of a vestry meeting, does not require a license. Persons licensed for this ministry must complete and comply with the guidelines for the Safeguarding God's People program. The training should cover Holy Scripture, the Book of Common Prayer and Hymnal, the conduct of public worship, and the use of the voice.

Preacher

A Preacher is a lay person authorized to preach. Persons so authorized shall only preach in congregations under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith. Persons licensed for this ministry must complete and comply with the guidelines for the Safeguarding God's People program. A lay preacher must receive training and be found competent, by the Bishop or the Bishop's designee, in the following subjects: Holy Scriptures, The book of Common Prayer and Hymnal, the conduct of public worship, use of the voice, church history, Christian ethics and moral theology, the church's doctrine as set forth in the Creeds and the Outline of Faith, and homiletics. Persons so licensed serve upon the initiative and under the supervision of the clergy person in charge of the congregation.

Eucharistic Minister

A Eucharistic Minister is a lay person authorized to administer the Consecrated Elements (bread or wine) at a Celebration of Holy Eucharist. A Eucharistic Minister should normally act under the direction of a Deacon, if any, or otherwise, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith. Persons licensed for this ministry must complete and comply with the guidelines for the Safeguarding God's People program. Training should include history and theology of the Eucharist and in the practical aspects of their ministry.

Eucharistic Visitor

A Eucharistic Visitor is a lay person authorized to take the Consecrated Elements in a timely manner following a Celebration of Holy Eucharist to members of the congregation who, by reason of illness or infirmity, were unable to be present at the Celebration. A Eucharistic Visitor should normally act under the direction of a Deacon, if any, or otherwise, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith. People licensed as Eucharistic Visitors should be able to adapt to new or unusual situations, feel comfortable in a hospital or health care facility, and be a good listener. Persons licensed for this ministry must complete and comply with the guidelines for the Safeguarding God's People program and receive training in the history and theology of the Eucharist, and in pastoral care, including a period under the direct supervision of the clergy.

Catechist

A Catechist is a lay person authorized to prepare persons for Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, and the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows, and shall function under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith. Persons licensed for this ministry must complete and comply with the guidelines for the Safeguarding God's People program. A Catechist must receive training and be examined and found competent by the Bishop, or the Bishop's designee, in the following subjects: Holy Scriptures, The Book of Common Prayer and the Hymnal, Church history, the church's doctrine set forth in the Creeds and An Outline of Faith, and methods of instruction and catechesis.

Evangelist

An Evangelist is a lay person who presents the good news of Jesus Christ in such a way that people are led to receive Christ as Savior and follow Christ as Lord in the fellowship of the Church. An Evangelist assists with the community's ministry of evangelism in partnership with the Presbyter or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation, or as directed by the Bishop. At this time the diocese has not designated a formation program for this licensed ministry. Clergy who believe an individual is called or gifted for this ministry should contact the Bishop.

More about licensing

Clergy exercising oversight of a congregation or other community of faith may request the Ecclesiastical Authority to license persons within that congregation to exercise these ministries. The license application is on the diocesan website. The license shall be issued for a period of three years (beginning with lectionary cycle A – Advent of Year A) and may be renewed. The license may be revoked by the Ecclesiastical Authority upon request of or upon notice to the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

In renewing the license, the Ecclesiastical Authority shall consider the performance of the ministry by the person licensed, continuing education in the licensed area, and the endorsement of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith in which the person is serving.

A person licensed in any Diocese under the provisions of this Canon may serve in another congregation or other community of faith in the same or another Diocese only at the invitation of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight, and with the consent of the Ecclesiastical Authority in whose jurisdiction the service will occur.

If you have questions about the canons regarding lay licensing or the policies of the Diocese of Western Michigan regarding them, please contact Canon Spaid at 260-381-2710 or wspaid@edwm.org.