

Lay Readers

While we recognize that the range of responsibilities undertaken by the lay readers varies greatly, the following considerations should be kept in mind:

- i) The Anglican Church supports and encourages baptismal ministry and lay assistance in church services should not be restricted to one or two people.
- ii) Duties assigned to the lay reader:
 - Officiate at the Office when the priest is unavailable.
 - Assist in recruitment and guiding of other laity to participate in the service (and as such, it is their responsibility to engage in ongoing education).

The position of lay reader is in part symbolic, acting to remind the congregation of their identity as the Body of Christ, and as such, the lay reader should not be set apart in such a way as to create an unnecessary distinction between the lay reader and other members of the parish.

Lay readers are not commissioned to exercise the ministry of laying-on-of-hands and/or counselling, unless they fulfil the additional requirements for this and are so authorized by the bishop. (See *The Ministry of Healing* guidelines).

1. Issuing of Licences

When an incumbent desires the services of a lay reader, application should be made to the area bishop. The prospective lay reader will prepare for his/her licencing under the direction of the incumbent. Usually the incumbent will decide the time at which the candidate is ready for episcopal licence. No fixed examinations are set by the diocese because of the variety of circumstances from which the lay readers come and the scholastic ability of the persons themselves.

A letter from the incumbent requesting the licencing of a lay reader(s) should be sent to the area bishop stating that he/she has the concurrence of the congregation in the matter and indicating whether the person should also be licensed to preach.

2. Service of Admission

The admission service may be taken by the area bishop when a visit is expected in the immediate future. Otherwise, it will be taken by the incumbent at an appropriate public service.

3. Renewals of Licence

The licence of a lay reader expires triennially and when this occurs, the request for permission should again be made to the area bishop in writing for the licence to be renewed. It is imperative that this be done otherwise the licence will lapse.



4. **Change of Incumbent**

- i) It is undesirable to ask for the licencing of a lay reader if the incumbent is expecting to move to another parish in the near future.
- ii) **The licence of a lay reader expires when the incumbent moves from the parish.** The new incumbent should request a new licence to be in force under his/her incumbency if he/she desires the services of the lay reader. It must be remembered that a lay reader is licensed to serve only under the incumbent who at that time is in charge of the parish.

5. **Lay Reader Emeritus**

Provision has been made for a certificate to be issued to lay readers who have given devoted and faithful service over a number of years but because of age are no longer able to perform their duties. The request from an incumbent for such a certificate should be made to the area bishop.

