



Guidelines on occasional preaching in the Diocese of Ely

Preaching the gospel is a great delight and privilege. It is a key part of the church's mission and ministry. It is also an important and responsible task requiring a depth of Christian experience and understanding. Rather like an iceberg, the 1/9 we see or hear must have another 8/9 experience, understanding, knowledge and insight under the surface. That is why the canons of the Church of England (see Canon B18) require that a lay person should have the permission of the bishop to preach, as well as the invitation of the local minister, and why the bishop requires preachers to have theological training.

Of course, all Christians should 'be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you' (1 Peter 3.15, GNB) and so it is good to provide opportunities for all disciples to articulate their faith – but this is not the same as preaching the gospel in church regularly as an ordained, licensed or lay minister. When St Paul writes about the church and its worship in 1 Corinthians 11-14, he emphasises that the whole body of Christ is involved in worship but within the body there are different gifts which need to be recognised and used for the building up of the whole body. These gifts need to be exercised 'decently and in good order' and with the proper authority (1 Cor 14.40). Though in the Acts of the Apostles there appears to be a distinction between teaching and preaching, both dimensions have always been required to be properly authorised in the Church of England as can be seen from the Act of Uniformity and the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Because of our high regard for this ministry and our tradition of care in who is authorised to preach (rooted in our Scriptural understanding), those who preach in this diocese must have permission from the bishop and proper authorisation, for they speak not only for themselves but also as representatives of the church.

Bishop Stephen wishes to delegate some responsibility for this to the incumbent of the parish, who (under these guidelines) will assume responsibility for authorising 'occasional preachers' and at the same time be responsible for their oversight and the content of their preaching. The authorising of an occasional preacher will also require the agreement of the parochial church council (and be recorded in their minutes).

Who may the incumbent invite to preach?

1. Licensed ministers from other dioceses and those previously trained in other denominations

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. The principles laid out in this schedule also apply to those who have exercised a preaching/teaching ministry in another denomination and have since found a spiritual home in their local parish church.

2. One-off specialist speakers

A representative of an organisation supported by the parish (eg a mission agency or charity) may be invited by the incumbent to speak about their work on a single occasion; an author might come and speak about their latest book. Such occasions and those also envisaged in 3 and 4 below are covered by a general authorisation of the bishop in accordance with Canon B18. Application forms do not need to be completed.

3. Those discerning vocations

A member of the congregation who is exploring a vocation to authorised ministry may preach occasionally as part of the discernment process although this needs to be under the careful supervision of the incumbent who must give support and feedback.

4. Those giving particular interest or seasonal talks

A member of the congregation may speak in public worship because of their particular experience or knowledge, eg how their faith affects their work as a prison officer, or what it is like to be a Franciscan tertiary.

5. Speakers at all-age worship

Youth, children's and family leaders/ministers/workers are often expected to speak at services involving children and young people as part of their ministry. Such acts of worship may be at the heart of a local church's mission to its community and are, therefore, very important opportunities for communicating the gospel. When these people are licensed this falls within the terms of their licence. Where they are not licensed, the incumbent must give appropriate support and supervision, and if this is to be a regular ministry then there is an expectation that they are authorised as occasional preachers by their incumbent following the guidelines below.

6. Those involved in fresh expressions of church

These provide significant mission opportunities but also need the same careful supervision, authorisation and training for those who speak and preach within them. Flexibility is necessary in fresh expressions but there is still a need to ensure high levels of Christian integrity and quality.

Occasional Preachers

The bishop has decided to delegate permission to authorise 'occasional preachers' to the local incumbent. This is in situations where a person is identified as having:

- 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

Permission is given through the incumbent, emphasising the trust placed in the incumbent to exercise the role of discerning, calling out and supervising those with gifts for this ministry. When there is a vacancy, then the rural dean is responsible in consultation with the churchwardens for the supervision of those who preach. Permission lapses on the institution of a new incumbent but may be renewed.

The bishop's delegation of authority to the incumbent is subject to the following procedure being followed:

1. The first stage needs to be prayerful consideration and conversation by the candidate and the incumbent in consultation with the PCC (on behalf of the congregation).
2. The formal consent of the PCC should be obtained.
3. The candidate should complete Part A of the form overleaf; the incumbent and PCC should complete Part B. This should be sent to the Director of Ministry.
4. Candidate and incumbent will be invited to an evening gathering with the Director of Ministry or Ministry Training Officer where the Bishop's policy and guidelines will be explored, the process outlined, issues of training addressed and the training agreement introduced.
5. Incumbents and candidates complete a training agreement in consultation with the Director of Ministry/Ministry Training Officer. This will take into account previous experience and theological formation/training, outline when the candidate would be preaching and how sermons would be reviewed.
6. Unless the candidate has had extensive training in preaching, candidates would be expected to attend two Saturdays of training during the year – one an introduction to preaching and the other a preaching workshop.
7. Unless the candidate has engaged in formal theological formation/training, candidates would be expected to attend a diocesan discipleship course (delivered locally) or other equivalent training (that has a major emphasis on scriptural formation).
8. All authorised ministers in the diocese are required to follow diocesan safeguarding procedures and to have received clearance following a DBS check.
9. When a training agreement is in place and has been approved by the Director of Ministry, the incumbent issues a letter to the candidate (sample in appendix) authorising their preaching in the local parish(es).
10. After a year, the Director of Ministry/Ministry Training Officer would normally meet with the incumbent and candidate. In preparation for this the incumbent and candidate will consult with the PCC (formally and informally), gather some written feedback, consider the training agreement and further training requirements.
11. Throughout the process consideration needs to be given as to whether the candidate has a vocation to a public licensed ministry (which would involve further training).
12. Authorisation will lapse after a further three years (and every three years thereafter). It may be renewed only after a further review involving the Director of Ministry/Ministry Training Officer on behalf of the bishop.

Application to be an occasional preacher

On completion both forms should be sent, together, to Director of Ministry, Diocesan Office, Bishop Woodford House, Barton Road, Ely, Cambs, CB7 4DX

Part A Details of the Person Requesting Authorisation This form is to be completed by the individual applicant

Before completing this form, you need to have read the 'Preaching in Ely Diocese' paper which accompanies this form and which gives a rationale for this ministry and training. Permission will not be given until a training agreement is in place (agreed by the Director of Ministry) and a letter of authorisation received from your incumbent (or Rural Dean in the case of a vacancy).

Full Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone No:

Email:

DBS disclosure number (if already obtained):

(People in authorised ministry must be CRB checked)

Baptised: YES/NO

Confirmed: YES/NO (It is assumed that anybody wishing to exercise a preaching ministry will be an actual communicant in the Church of England)

Length of time worshipping in this parish:

Details of any previous theological and preaching training:

Details of any previous preaching experience:

I understand I will be accountable to the incumbent of the parish and in my preaching will be faithful to the witness of Holy Scripture and the doctrines of the Church as the Church of England has inherited and expounded them. I understand that this permission refers only to my own parish and will be reconsidered in three years' time.

Signed:

Date:

Part B Details of the parish(es) and incumbent

This form is to be completed by the incumbent

Name of Incumbent:

Name of Parish / Benefice/Group

Church(es) (including Fresh Expressions) at which the person will be invited to speak:

Type of service at which the person will be invited to preach:

Who will supervise this person once authorised if not the incumbent?

Evidence of the candidate's Christian experience and biblical understanding:

The date on which the PCC approved the resolution in support of this application

Is there anything else you would like the Director of Ministry to know?

Signed by the PCC Secretary:	Date:
Signed by the Incumbent:	Date: