DIOCESE of OXFORD
A Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world

Authorised Ministry Scheme

Policy & Procedures

Authorisation to Preach
Authorisation to lead services of Communion by Extension
Authorisation to exercise Lay Funeral ministry

Revised April 2026

Contents

1. Authorisation to Preach

- Selection & initial authorisation for training 2
- Renewals: after initial authorisation 3
- General 4

2. Authorisation to lead services of Communion by Extension

- Selection & initial authorisation for training 5
- Renewals: after initial authorisation 6
- General 7

3. Authorisation for Lay Funeral Ministry

- Selection & initial authorisation for training 9
- Renewals: after initial authorisation 11
- General 12

Appendix 1 - selection framework for safer recruitment 13

Appendix 2 - requirements for a recognised Preaching course 14

Appendix 3 - authorisation process flowchart 15

1. Policy concerning authorisation to Preach

1.1 It is the expectation of the bishops of the diocese that no-one should preach regularly or frequently who has not been authorised to do so (see Canon B18). As a guide, preaching three times (or more) a year on an ongoing basis would class as regular and frequent.

1.2 Suitable persons may preach on a more *occasional* basis at the invitation of the incumbent,[1] without need for further authorisation from the bishop. However, on such occasions when neither an ordained minister nor experienced LLM will be present, the bishops expect that the incumbent will have read through the sermon beforehand and offered appropriate constructive support. (Any person preaching on an occasional basis must also have in place a current Basic DBS check and relevant safeguarding training).

1.3 Preaching includes both formal sermons and any activity taking the place of and fulfilling the function of a 'sermon' in public worship. (The 'Notes' to 'A Service of the Word' state that the term 'sermon' includes less formal exposition, the use of drama, interviews, discussion and audio-visuals, and that hymns or other sections of the service may be inserted between parts of the sermon.)

Selection & initial authorisation for training

1.4 Initial authorisation to preach is given by the bishop on request from the incumbent, supported by a formal resolution of the PCC, DCC or benefice council.

   a. Authorisation will normally extend (only) to those churches for which each respective council is responsible.
   b. Authorisation is conditional also upon
      i. evidence of a current Basic DBS Disclosure
      ii. evidence of current *Leadership* safeguarding training
      iii. confirmation that appropriate references (see §1.5) have been taken.

1.5 It is the responsibility of the incumbent to ensure that the person for whom authorisation is requested is a fit and proper person to be authorised to exercise such a ministry on behalf of the Church.

   a. As a minimum it is expected that, prior to requesting episcopal authorisation, the incumbent will have first:
      i. satisfied themselves of the candidate's suitability for ministry, which would normally include taking appropriate soundings from within relevant congregations. The Selection Framework

[1] Here and throughout this document, 'incumbent' should be understood to mean 'incumbent, priest-in-charge, or (in vacancy) Area Dean.'

(Appendix 1) below, identifies some key areas incumbents and referees should consider.

ii. received additional written confirmation from a Vocations Adviser or Area Dean (someone 'external' to the parish or benefice) as to the suitability of the candidate for public ministry. This would come following a meeting ('discernment conversation') between the candidate and referee, which the incumbent has initiated.

iii. Obtained from all relevant PCCs the required resolution of support for the candidate's authorisation.

b. If the candidate has been attending their current church for less than two years, the incumbent must also obtain a character reference from someone who has known them for at least two years, ideally the incumbent (or equivalent) of the church previously attended.

1.6 Initial authorisation will be given for up to 2 years but may be extended for a further year on request from the incumbent. Any further extensions will be granted only in the most exceptional circumstances, e.g., following prolonged serious illness.[2]

Renewals: after initial authorisation

1.7 For an initial 2-yr authorisation to be renewed to a 'full' authorisation, anyone authorised to preach must:

a. Attend a course on preaching which is *either* offered by the diocese, *or* locally run and recognised by the diocese (see Appendix 2 below) *or* run by another institution (e.g. one of the Oxford theological colleges) but accredited at level 4 or above.[3] (The course may focus on 'All-age' or 'Intergen' preaching for candidates who find themselves preaching primarily in such contexts.)

b. Submit for review and constructive feedback:

i. three sermons (for each either a full text, an audio recording, a video recording, or reasonably full notes) and brief reflection on each.

ii. feedback from others on each sermon

iii. an assignment equivalent to a 1500 word written piece of work at level 4 demonstrating their understanding of preaching. This assignment will often derive from the course attended, though alternatives may be agreed with the training department.

c. Complete safeguarding training in Awareness of Domestic Abuse (either online through https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/ or onsite through the diocesan safeguarding team).

[2] A visual flowchart of the general process for initial authorisations and renewals is given at Appendix 3

[3] Level 4 being broadly equivalent to the level of courses in the first year of LLM training.

1.8 Upon successful completion of these training requirements, the initial authorisation may be renewed for a period of up to three years[4] and may be granted on written request from the incumbent, conditional each time upon:

a. the continued (minuted) support of PCC(s)
b. evidence of current Basic DBS Disclosure
c. up-to-date safeguarding training in both *Leadership* and *Awareness of Domestic Abuse*.

1.9 Requests for subsequent renewals in later years should be accompanied also by a supporting statement from the supervisor (see §1.11 below) and a statement from the person authorised concerning their subsequent learning since the previous renewal (see §1.10 below).

1.10 Following completion of initial training, the person authorised must continue to give attention to their ongoing development in their discipleship and in their preaching ministry. This may include attending appropriate courses, personal study, and attending preaching team meetings in the parish/benefice (where these include a significant element of learning). Areas particularly (though not exclusively) worthy of attention are the Bible, spirituality and preaching.

1.11 The incumbent shall offer ongoing supervision to the person authorised to preach - or appoint some other suitable person to do so.

General

1.12 A person authorised to preach may do so only when invited by the incumbent, and it is entirely a matter for the incumbent's discretion when this should be.

1.13 Those exercising this ministry must conduct themselves in accordance with the reasonable expectations of someone who represents the Church; this includes both while in role and at all other times. If the incumbent becomes aware of conduct which falls short of these expectations, this must be reported to the bishop.

1.14 The bishop may withdraw or suspend authorisation to preach at any time if they believe there is sufficient cause to do so. When authorisation has been withdrawn or suspended, the person may be invited to preach only with the specific permission of the bishop.

1.15 The bishop may issue any further specific directions they think fit in relation to any parish or person, which shall then take precedence over this policy.

[4] For candidates aged 80 or above, the maximum renewal period is two years.

2. Policy concerning authorisation to lead services of public worship with Communion by Extension

Note: this policy concerns only Public Worship with Communion by Extension. It does not apply to taking communion to the sick or housebound.[5]

2.1 Public worship with Communion by Extension may only take place when authorised by the bishop. When a person is authorised to lead these services such authorisation only extends to those occasions on which the bishop has authorised use of the services, whether as a one-off or part of some standing permission. Bishops are likely to limit the terms of their permissions to ensure the service does not come to be seen as an equal alternative to Holy Communion.

2.2 Only those persons specifically authorised by the bishop may lead such services. Deacons and LLMs are not permitted to take these services unless they have received specific authorisation to do so (such permission is not included within LLM or deacon licences).

2.3 A person authorised to lead services of Communion by Extension must also be authorised to preach if they are to do this as part of the service.

2.4 Services of Communion by Extension must always be conducted in accordance with the authorised liturgy, including the notes to this, and the House of Bishops guidelines.[6]

2.5 If an LLM, Accredited Lay Worker or Deacon is authorised to lead Communion by Extension under this policy, they will be expected to attend appropriate training but not to submit evidence for assessment, unless the bishop directs otherwise.

Selection & initial authorisation for training

2.6 Authorisation to lead services of Communion by Extension is given by the bishop on request from the incumbent,[7] supported by a formal resolution of the PCC, DCC or benefice council.

---

[5] 'Communion by Extension' is any service of **public** worship including the distribution of communion using pre-consecrated elements. It can thus be distinguished from home communions, in that these are not *public* worship. A service in a care home, for example, may well *not* be public worship; and if it is not public worship, this should be treated as a Home Communion. (If, however, the service were advertised more widely in the parish it might be that it should be seen as public worship.)

[6] See public-worship-with-communion-by-extension.pdf

[7] Here and throughout this document, 'incumbent' should be understood to mean 'incumbent, priest-in-charge, or (in vacancy) Area Dean.'

a. Authorisation will normally extend (only) to those churches for which each respective council is responsible.
b. Authorisation is conditional also upon:
    i. evidence of a current Basic DBS Disclosure
    ii. evidence of up-to-date safeguarding *Leadership* training
    iii. confirmation that appropriate references (see §2.7) have been taken.

2.7 It is the responsibility of the incumbent to ensure that the person for whom authorisation is requested is a fit and proper person to be authorised to exercise such a ministry on behalf of the Church.
    a. As a minimum it is expected that, prior to requesting episcopal authorisation, the incumbent will have first:
        i. satisfied themselves of the candidate's suitability for ministry, which would normally include taking appropriate soundings from within relevant congregations. The Selection Framework (Appendix 1) below, identifies some key areas incumbents and referees should consider.
        ii. received additional written confirmation from a Vocations Adviser or Area Dean (someone 'external' to the parish or benefice) as to the suitability of the candidate for public ministry. This would come following a meeting ('discernment conversation') between the candidate and referee, which the incumbent has initiated.
        iv. obtained from all relevant PCCs the required resolution of support for the candidate's authorisation.
    b. If the candidate has been attending their current church for less than two years, the incumbent must also obtain a character reference from someone who has known them for at least two years, ideally the incumbent (or equivalent) of the church previously attended.

2.8 Initial authorisation will be given for up to 2 years but may be extended for a further year on request from the incumbent. Any further extensions will be granted only in the most exceptional circumstances, e.g., following prolonged serious illness.[8]

Renewals: after initial authorisation

2.9 For an initial 2-yr authorisation to be renewed to a 'full' authorisation, persons authorised to lead services with communion by extension must:
    a. Attend a course on communion by extension offered by the diocese, or equivalent.[9]
    b. Submit for review and constructive feedback:

[8] A visual flowchart of the general process for initial authorisations and renewals is given at Appendix 3
[9] It seems unlikely that alternative courses will be offered, so it seems best to assess equivalence on a course-by-course basis rather than to set a formal policy.

i. evidence from their leading of two such services (e.g. leader's notes and brief reflection on each)
ii. feedback on each of these services from others, ideally including other ministry team members.
iii. an assignment equivalent to a 1500 word written piece of work at level 4 demonstrating their understanding of communion by extension. [10] This assignment will often be part of the course attended, though alternatives may be agreed with the training department.

c. Complete safeguarding training in Awareness of Domestic Abuse (either online through https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/ or onsite through the diocesan safeguarding team).

2.10 Upon successful completion of these training requirements, the initial authorisation may be renewed for a period of up to three years[11] and may be granted on written request from the incumbent, conditional each time upon:

a. the continued (minuted) support of PCC(s)
b. evidence of current Basic DBS Disclosure
c. up-to-date safeguarding training in both *Leadership* and *Awareness of Domestic Abuse*.

2.11 Requests for subsequent renewals in later years should be accompanied also by a supporting statement from the supervisor (see section §2.13 below) and a statement from the person authorised concerning their subsequent learning since the previous renewal (see §2.12 below).

2.12 Following completion of initial training, the person authorised to exercise this ministry is expected to give continued attention to their own personal spiritual development and devotional life. This may include attending appropriate courses, personal study, and attending ministry team meetings in the parish/benefice. Areas particularly (though not exclusively) worthy of attention are the Bible, spirituality and (if relevant) preaching.

2.13 The incumbent shall offer ongoing supervision to the authorised person - or appoint some other suitable person to do so.

General

2.14 A person authorised to lead services of Communion by Extension may do so only when invited by the incumbent, and it is entirely a matter for the incumbent's discretion when this should be.

2.15 Those exercising this ministry must conduct themselves in accordance with the reasonable expectations of someone who represents the Church; this includes

[10] Level 4 being broadly equivalent to the level of courses in the first year of LLM training.
[11] For candidates aged 80 or above, the maximum renewal period is two years.

both while in role and at all other times. If the incumbent becomes aware of conduct which falls short of these expectations, this must be reported to the bishop.

2.16 The bishop may withdraw or suspend authorisation to lead services of Communion by Extension at any time if they believe there is sufficient cause to do so. When authorisation has been withdrawn or suspended, the person may be invited to minister only with the specific permission of the bishop.

2.17 The bishop may issue any further specific directions they think fit in relation to any parish or person, which shall then take precedence over this policy.

3. Policy concerning authorisation to exercise a Lay Funeral Ministry

3.1 Funerals held under the auspices of the Church of England may be taken only by persons licenced or authorised by the bishop to do so.

3.2 Funeral services must always be conducted in accordance with the authorised liturgy (BCP or Common Worship), including the Notes to this found in *Common Worship*:

- https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/death-and-dying/funeral
- https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/burial-dead

Selection & initial authorisation for training

3.3 Authorisation for lay persons to conduct funerals is given by the bishop on request from the incumbent,[12] supported by a formal resolution of the PCC, DCC or benefice council.

a. Authorisation will extend solely within those benefices for which the incumbent has the cure of souls, or for funerals conducted elsewhere (eg crematoria and cemeteries) of those who were within the those parishes/benefices.

b. Authorisation is conditional also upon:
   i. a current policy on pastoral issues agreed by incumbent and PCC
   ii. a working agreement agreed by incumbent and the lay funeral minister
   iii. evidence of a current Basic DBS Disclosure
   iv. evidence of up-to-date safeguarding *Leadership* training
   v. confirmation that appropriate references (see §3.5) have been taken.

3.4 It is the responsibility of the incumbent to ensure that the person for whom authorisation is requested is a fit and proper person to be authorised to exercise such a ministry on behalf of the Church.

a. As a minimum it is expected that, prior to requesting episcopal authorisation, the incumbent will have first:

[12] Here and throughout this document, 'incumbent' should be understood to mean 'incumbent, priest-in-charge, or (in vacancy) Area Dean.'

i. satisfied themselves of the candidate's suitability for ministry, which would normally include taking appropriate soundings from within relevant congregations. The Selection Framework (Appendix 1) below, identifies some key areas incumbents and referees should consider.
ii. received additional written confirmation from a Vocations Adviser or Area Dean (someone 'external' to the parish or benefice) as to the suitability of the candidate for public ministry. This would come following a meeting ('discernment conversation') between the candidate and referee, which the incumbent has initiated.
iii. Obtained from all relevant PCCs the required resolution of support for the candidate's authorisation.

b. If the candidate has been attending their current church for less than two years, the incumbent must also obtain a character reference from someone who has known them for at least two years, ideally the incumbent (or equivalent) of the church previously attended.

3.5 The first authorisation, at the outset, permits the person authorised to participate/assist in funerals alongside a Licensed minister; and then, having gained appropriate degrees of experience and competence, to conduct funeral services with appropriately less 'hands-on' supervision. While it is anticipated that the initial period of assisting others at funerals (prior to leading services themselves) would typically be in the region of 6-12 months, the point at which authorised persons are permitted to conduct services without direct supervision is a matter on which the incumbent should come to an informed decision, in conversation with the authorised person. In considering this judgment, full account must be taken of such important factors as: current and prior experience, levels of competence, confidence and demonstrable pastoral sensitivity.

3.6 Throughout the full period of authorisation (and, indeed, into future ministry) it is expected that authorised ministers will become part of parish ministry teams with appropriate accountability and support.

3.7 Initial authorisations will be given for up to 2 years but may be extended for a further year on request from the incumbent. Any further extensions will be granted only in the most exceptional circumstances, e.g., following prolonged serious illness.[13]

[13] A visual flowchart of the general process for initial authorisations and renewals is given at Appendix 3

Renewal: after initial authorisation

3.8 For an initial 2-yr authorisation to be renewed to a 'full' authorisation, anyone authorised for lay funeral ministry must:

a. Attend a course on Pastoral Care which is *either* offered by the diocese; *or* locally run and recognised by the diocese; *or* run by any other institution but accredited at level 4 or above.[14]
b. Attend a further course on Funeral Ministry which is *either* offered by the diocese; *or* locally run and recognised by the diocese; *or* run by any other institution but accredited at level 4 or above.
c. Submit for review and constructive feedback:
    i. evidence from their participation and (co)leading in two funeral services (e.g. service outline, leaders' notes, sermon, reflection on their contribution)
    ii. feedback from other ministers (letters from family members and/or funeral directors may also be included if appropriate) on each of these services
    iii. brief reflection on the feedback received from others on the funeral ministry in which they have participated.
    iv. an assignment of 2500 words (or equivalent) at level 4 from the Pastoral Care course, demonstrating their understanding of pastoral care.
    v. a further assignment of 2500 words (or equivalent) at level 4 from the Funeral Ministry course, demonstrating their understanding of funeral ministry.
d. Complete safeguarding training in Awareness of Domestic Abuse (either online through https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/ or onsite through the diocesan safeguarding team).

3.9 Upon successful completion of these training requirements, the initial authorisation may be renewed for a period of up to three years[15] and may be granted on written request from the incumbent, conditional each time upon (i) the continued (minuted) support of PCC(s); (ii) a review of the authorised minister's working agreement; (iii) a review of parish's pastoral care policy; (iv) up-to-date safeguarding training (*Leadership* and *Awareness of Domestic Abuse*) and Basic DBS documentation.

3.10 Requests for subsequent renewals beyond this should be accompanied also by a supporting statement from the Incumbent and a statement from the person authorised concerning their subsequent learning since the previous renewal (see §3.11-12 below).

[14] Level 4 being broadly equivalent to the level of courses in the first year of LLM training
[15] For candidates aged 80 or above, the maximum renewal period is two years.

3.11 Following completion of initial training, the person authorised must continue to give attention to their ongoing development in their discipleship and in their funeral ministry. This may include personal study, engaging in further courses, and attending ministry team meetings in the parish/benefice (especially where these include a significant element of learning).

3.12 The incumbent shall offer ongoing supervision to the person authorised for Lay Funeral Ministry - or appoint some other suitable person to do so.

General

3.13 A person authorised to lead funerals in (the name of) the parish may do so only when invited by the incumbent, and it is entirely a matter for the incumbent's discretion when this should be.

3.14 Those exercising funeral ministry must conduct themselves in accordance with the reasonable expectations of someone who represents the Church; this includes both while in role and at all other times. If the incumbent becomes aware of conduct which falls short of these expectations, this must be reported to the bishop.

3.15 The bishop may withdraw or suspend authorisation exercise funeral ministry at any time if they believe there is sufficient cause to do so. When authorisation has been withdrawn or suspended, the person may be invited to minister further only with the specific permission of the bishop.

3.16 The bishop may issue any further specific directions they think fit in relation to any parish or person, which shall then take precedence over this policy.

APPENDIX 1

Authorised ministry – selection framework

The following grid is offered as a guide to incumbents and other referees engaged with candidates in their discernment towards authorised ministry. It is expected that such qualities expressed here will be readily apparent in anyone exercising public ministry in the diocese. As such these are essential questions to explore with any candidate.

Area to explore	Qualities to be looking for
Are they open to new learning?	✓ Evidence that they reflect on experience. ✓ Openness to learning from others. ✓ Ability to develop practice with the support of others.
How well do they receive criticism?	✓ Apparent that they consider the view of others. ✓ Ready and willing to reflect on feedback when offered. ✓ Keen to learn from mistakes.
What is their pattern of prayer, personally and with others?	✓ Committed to regular personal prayer ✓ Habitually involved in public worship ✓ Willing to join in prayer with incumbent and other ministers
Are they in good standing with the congregation?	✓ Spoken of positively across the congregation ✓ Regarded as trustworthy ✓ Respected for their faith and integrity
Are they prepared to work within the disciplines of the Church of England?	✓ Comfortable with the authority of incumbent and bishop ✓ Attentive to Church teaching and tradition ✓ Ready to work with the ethos and culture of the local church
They are entering into a more public role. Are there any vulnerabilities that might come to light…?	✓ Aware and open about personal vulnerabilities ✓ Understands the responsibility of a public role ✓ Committed to integrity in their personal life

Process

The expected *process* for selection is as follows:

1. Incumbent meets with the candidate and discusses these questions with them (this may be in a single meeting or less formally over a course of time)
2. Incumbent initiates a 'Discernment conversation/interview' for the candidate with a Vocations Adviser or Area Dean (external to the parish or benefice), using the same grid as a starting point for the conversation.
3. External 'referee' confirms in writing their support (or otherwise) to Incumbent.
4. Incumbent seeks views of congregation as to candidate's suitability; and formal approval of PCC(s).
5. Incumbent writes to area bishop requesting initial authorisation. Include confirmation of: (i) PCC resolution, (ii) support of external referee, (iii) Basic DBS currency, and (iv) date of most recent *Leadership* safeguarding training.

If any concern does arise at any point during the process, the Incumbent should discuss with a ministerial colleague at deanery or diocesan level to discern the way forward. (Any safeguarding concerns should of course be taken immediately to the Diocesan Safeguarding team).

If in vacancy, Area Dean to be responsible for the process, in consultation with Churchwardens.

APPENDIX 2

Requirements for a Diocesan recognised preaching course

By way of example, these are minimum requirements for a preaching course to be recognised by the Diocese of Oxford. They are not a complete guide to running such a course or a recommended syllabus – a course may include more.

For a recognised course, the course organisers would need to sign up to these expectations. The diocese would need to be sent in advance the course programme and name(s) of the tutors. After the course, the diocese should be sent the learner feedback and a brief reflection from the organisers on the course, its strengths and weaknesses.

The **course length** must be at least 4½ hours of sessions (not counting breaks) – e.g. one day, two mornings or three evenings. Satisfactory completion of the course includes attending a minimum of 4 ½ hours of sessions (so if the course is longer, someone may be able to complete satisfactorily even if they miss some of the course).

Course content must include

- the theology of preaching
- different ways of preaching
- preparing and delivering a sermon
- evaluating your preaching

Teaching methods must be based on good adult education principles, including:

- A stress on enabling active learning by the participants rather than just delivery of material by the tutor
- Incorporation of teaching for different learning preferences
- Attention to the interests and priorities of the learners as well as those of the tutor.

The course organisers must take responsibility for **ensuring the quality** of their course. This includes obtaining and responding to appropriate feedback on what has been done.

All-age/Intergen preaching courses

For candidates who 'preach primarily in all-age or intergenerational contexts, it is acceptable for the course of learning to focus on preaching in such contexts. The level and quality of course material must be of comparable with other Level 4 courses.

APPENDIX 3

Flowchart of process for initial authorisation and subsequent renewals

see over…

Appendix 3

Authorised Ministries
FLOWCHART (Process)

Initial enquiry/request for Authorisation
Enquiry or request for Authorisation/renewal from Incumbent
to Lay Ministry Training team (LMT) or Bishop's office.

Response to Request (from Bishop or LMT)
Sent to incumbent, giving link to diocesan website and details of preliminary requirements (ie support of Incumbent, PCC and 'external' referee), as well as sight of:
Basic DBS Disclosure Certificate and Safeguarding training certificate(s)
(or at least evidence that training has been booked). Authorised Funeral Ministry also requires Parish/Benefice Pastoral Policy and a working agreement.

Initial (2-yr 'training' period) authorisation issued
Once initial requirements in place, letter of Authorisation to be issued by Area Bishop (cc LMT & Incumbent). This gives initial authorisation for 2 years and includes details of all training and safeguarding requirements to be completed prior to the end of this 2-year term, in order for re-authorisation to be sought at that time.

Training completed?
Prior to expiry of initial 2-yr training authorisation,
Bishop's office to be in touch with LMT asking if training completed;
and with Incumbent and PCC to confirm their ongoing support.

Training completed
(Authorisation renewed)
Assuming continued PCC approval and Incumbent request, authorisation renewed by Bishop (cc Incumbent and LMT)

(Further authorisation renewals require no further training but are conditional on ongoing, DBS current, and review)

Training still not completed after extension
Authorisation expires and is not renewed.

Training NOT completed
Max 1-yr extension given to complete training.
No more, except in exceptional circumstances.

Ongoing renewal of authorisation
Prior to expiry of renewed (all and subsequent) authorisation(s), Bishop's office to contact Incumbent asking if subsequent renewal of authorisation required. If so, this can be issued on receipt of further confirmation of ongoing support of Incumbent, PCC, and sight of most recent DBS and Safeguarding training certificates (*Leadership* and *Awareness of Domestic Abuse*). And so on…