Wider accountabilities

The exercise of a public ministry of this nature brings with it inevitable accountabilities to the wider church. It is for this reason that you will be asked, as part of your selection for authorised ministry, to meet briefly with a vocations adviser or area dean (someone external to your parish or benefice) by way of providing an independent reference with respect to your suitability for this ministry.

All authorisations (whether initial or renewals) are also dependent upon you holding a valid Basic DBS Disclosure, and recent completion of the Church of England's 'Leadership' safeguarding training.

After initial training

Following successful completion of your initial training requirements, the bishop's authorisation becomes renewable on a regular basis, every few years. This is conditional each time upon (i) the continued support of incumbent and PCC; (ii) a review of your working agreement and parish pastoral care policy; (iii) up-to-date DBS and safeguarding training (both Leadership and Domestic Abuse Awareness); and (iv) engagement with any further training as agreed with your incumbent.

What next?

First, explore things with your incumbent. If they are happy to support you in this ministry they will then need to (i) arrange a discernment conversation for you with a vocations adviser or area dean, (ii) satisfy themselves that you will enjoy the support of your congregation and (iii) obtain the formal approval of your PCC(s). You also need to ensure that your Leadership safeguarding training and DBS are current.

Once all this is in place, your Incumbent then writes to your bishop asking for you to be authorised, at the same time confirming that PCC approval, safeguarding checks, a parish policy and a satisfactory report from an external referee are all in order.

Further information

- authorised.ministry@oxford.anglican.org 01865 208282
- An Authorised Ministry Handbook is available on the diocesan website at: https://www.oxford.anglican.org/ministry/lay-ministry/authorised-ministry/

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

Is God calling you to share in the ministry of your Local Church through

Authorised Lay Funeral Ministry?



Want to learn more so you can grow in faith, discipleship and ministry?

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

Emerging patterns of Ministry

As the church grows and responds to needs of mission and ministry within our communities, more people are becoming involved in lay funeral ministry. In light of these welcome changes, the bishops are looking to respond to requests for greater local flexibility combined with appropriate Anglican order. In seeking to encourage and support both new and more established lay funeral ministers within the parishes, we are committed to equipping those stepping into this important work.

Why 'authorised'?

Funerals are at the forefront of the Church's pastoral ministry and public witness. With this comes a significant level of responsibility and visibility. This kind of ministry is not something you do on your own, but as part of a team of ministers led by and accountable to your Incumbent.

While the 'cure of souls' is shared between your Incumbent and the Bishop, your incumbent will have been discerning pastoral gifts in you and encouraging you to develop these. The bishops wish to be linked with you in a real way as you begin to share this ministry in the church. They wish to offer encouragement and support by giving you their blessing and authorising you to such ministries.

What will authorisation mean?

At first, you would receive a letter from the bishop giving you permission to participate in funerals in your parish, benefice or crematorium when asked to do so by your Incumbent. This first (initial) authorisation would normally permit you to participate in funerals alongside a Licensed minister for a period of 6-12 months and, thereafter (again, with the explicit agreement of your Incumbent) to start taking other funerals for a further 12-18 months (up to a maximum of 2 years from the date of initial authorisation). During this time, you would become part of a team of ministers led by your Incumbent, to whom you would also be accountable.

Is training provided?

Absolutely! Funerals matter and we owe it to ourselves and others to responsibly nurture the gifts and character we need for meaningful and compassionate ministry.

The bishop's initial 2-yr authorisation releases you to begin the training requirements you need to fulfil. Essentially, this amounts to submission of a learning portfolio which evidences:

- attendance at an approved Lay Funeral Ministry training course (usually run on a Saturday)
- attendance at an approved Pastoral Care course (diocesan courses run most summers; deaneries and parishes run occasional approved courses also)
- a 2500-word (or equivalent) assignment on pastoral ministry (from the pastoral care course)
- a further 2500-word assignment on funeral ministry
- reflection on feedback received from other ministers, on funeral ministry in which you have participated.
- completion of the Church of England's *Awareness of Domestic Abuse* safeguarding module (diocesan or online).

How does all this connect with the Parish?

First, while it is the bishops who authorise you to conduct funerals in your parish, they do so only at the specific request of both Incumbent and PCC(s). As such, your bishop will need to know that you have the support of your PCC; and, for this reason, a PCC resolution affirming your application is required before the incumbent may seek authorisation on your behalf. While funerals may only be conducted on behalf of your incumbent (whose consent may in some cases be given as part of locally agreed policy), it is worth underling that the goodwill of the family of the deceased will also, of course, be very important.

Second, in order for you to obtain an initial authorisation and to begin training, your incumbent and PCC must have a formally agreed policy on pastoral practice firmly in place.

Third, you will become part of a team with other ministers in your church - a team which may also include associate or retired clergy and Licenced Lay Ministers who will all have undergone significant training. As part of this team, you will need to put together a working agreement with your Incumbent which is reviewed on a regular basis.