

Diocese of Oxford

Policy concerning authorisation to preach

June 2014

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).¹
2. 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.)
3. Authorisation to preach is given by the bishop on request from the incumbent, supported by a resolution of the PCC, DCC or benefice council. Authorisation will normally extend to those churches for which that council is responsible.
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. If the person has been attending their current church for less than two years, the incumbent should always seek a reference for the person from someone who has known them for at least two years, ideally the incumbent (or equivalent) of the church they previously attended.
5. Initial authorisation will be given for up to 2 years, but may be renewed for a further year on request from the incumbent. Further renewals will be granted only if the person authorised has fulfilled the training requirements (see section 7 below) or in the most exceptional circumstances, e.g. following prolonged serious illness.
6. Subsequent authorisations will be for periods up to 5 years, and may be granted on request from the incumbent, supported by a renewed resolution of the PCC, DCC or benefice council, a statement from the supervisor (see section 9 below) and a statement from the person authorised concerning their learning (see section 8 below).
7. Before an initial authorisation may be renewed, 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 below) *or* run by any other institution (e.g. one of the Oxford theological colleges) but accredited at level 4 or above.²
 - b) Submit for assessment three sermons (for each either a full text, an audio recording, a video recording, or reasonably full notes), feedback on these, and an assignment of 1500 words (or more) at level 4 evidencing their

¹ As a guide, preaching more than twice a year on an ongoing basis would be likely to class as regular and frequent.

² Level 4 is the equivalent of first-year university work.

understanding of preaching. This assignment will often be part of the course attended.

8. 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 worthy of attention are the Bible, spirituality and preaching.
9. The incumbent shall offer supervision to the person authorised to preach, or appoint some other suitable person to do so.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. The bishop may withdraw or suspend authorisation to preach at any time if (s)he believes 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.
13. The bishop may issue any further specific directions (s)he thinks fit in relation to any parish or person, which shall then take precedence over this policy.

Policy concerning authorisation to lead services of public worship with communion by extension

Note: this policy concerns only public worship with communion by extension, and does not apply to taking communion to the sick or housebound.

1. Such services 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.
2. Only those authorised by the bishop may lead such services.
3. A person authorised to lead services of communion by extension must also be authorised to preach if they are to do this.
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.³
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

³ See <http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/extension.aspx>

training but not to submit evidence for assessment, unless the bishop directs otherwise.

6. Otherwise the policy is as for authorisation to preach, except that the training requirement is
 - a. Attend a course on communion by extension offered by the diocese, or equivalent.⁴
 - b. Submit for assessment evidence from their leading of two such services, including feedback on this, and an assignment of 1500 words (or more) at level 4 evidencing their understanding of communion by extension. This assignment will often be part of the course attended.

Requirements for a Diocesan recognised preaching course

These are minimum requirements for a 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. Subsequent to 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 4 ½ hours of sessions (not counting breaks) – e.g. one day, two mornings or three evenings. Satisfactory completion of the course includes attending 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 principles⁵, including:

- A stress on enabling active learning by the participants rather than just delivery of material by the tutor

⁴ 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.

⁵ Helpful material can be found at the following sites, though all of them are written for use in quite different contexts:

http://www.gp-training.net/training/educational_theory/index.htm

<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsltd/resources/small-group/index.html>

<http://www.atl.org.uk/publications-and-resources/classroom-practice-publications/learning-sense-makers-guide.asp>

- Respect for different learning preferences
- Some response to the agendas participants bring, not simply what the tutor thinks is important

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.