



Anglican Church of Australia - Diocese of The Murray
The Bishop of The Murray
Bishop John Ford

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POLICY DOCUMENT AND DIRECTIONS ON THE AUTHORISATION OF LAY MINISTRY

This is to confirm the arrangements that are now in place for the authorisation of

1. Ministers of Communion
2. Lay people who can prepare and preach their own sermon unsupervised
3. Those who will share in the leadership of services

This policy document concerns how authorisation for some ministries is to be handled in the future. Of necessity it refers to how those exercising ministry need to follow appropriate safeguarding procedures. It is of course taken for granted that, in addition to individuals covered by this document, all those involved in any work or contact with children or vulnerable adults in any context, must have both safe ministry training and obtain an up to date police check.

1. MINISTERS OF COMMUNION

Each Parish or Pastoral District needs, through its Priest and Council, to agree a list of names that have been suggested as the people the community would like to exercise this ministry. **The list should be sent to me and I will then give the Priest (in his absence the locum or churchwardens) permission to use these people at his discretion.**

Permission will be to distribute communion. That means in either kind, in all circumstances. These people should not be designated either chalice bearers or chalice assistants. They are ***Ministers of Communion***.

If people on the list are to take the Blessed Sacrament to others in their own homes, in hospital, or aged care facilities they will need to participate in current safe ministry training and have an up to date police check.

In addition, if Ministers of Communion are vesting and, therefore, set apart at the front of the assembly as a matter of course, they too will need the safe ministry training and police check. If however, and this is to be preferred, they simply come from amongst the congregation during the Agnus Dei, distribute communion, and then return to their seat, it will not be necessary for them to undertake the safe ministry training (unless they would like to for their own learning) or to obtain the police check.

Permission is given to the priest to use these individuals on the basis that he will ensure they are properly trained and spiritually prepared for this ministry – including the short term preparation in prayer that should take place each and every time they engage in this wonderful servant ministry.

2. LICENCE TO PREACH

I will grant a Licence to Preach to lay people who have the necessary education and training and are prepared to participate in further prayerful formation to equip them to exercise this ministry. No such Licence will be given without a prior interview with me.

A pre-requisite for this will be **a request in writing from the Parish Priest, endorsed by the Council**, that such ministry will be welcomed from the person in question.

Prior to licensing, everyone approved for this ministry will need to make the Declaration of Assent and take the Oath of Canonical Obedience to the Bishop.

Current safe ministry training and police check are essential.

3. LEADERSHIP OF SERVICES

It is possible for a lay person to lead a Christian funeral. This can only be done with the permission of the family of the deceased and if the person designated has received the necessary training. It is not possible for a bereaved family to ask any person to lead the Funeral Rites within our context. A funeral will, by definition, include some kind of sermon or homily. A person who has done the appropriate training and has a Licence in the previous category and whose ministry is acceptable to the family will be deemed to have permission.

As each Parish/Pastoral District's Mission Action Plan (MAP) develops and grows it is likely that communities of faith will need to vary their pattern, content and style of worship. At the heart of our common life is the Eucharist and this is the normative assembly for the baptised every Sunday.

Where it is found necessary because of the priorities of the MAP, communities will look to assemble other than in the context of the Eucharist. It might be that these assemblies are appropriate on Sundays but, for regular members of congregations, they are not, and must not be seen as, an alternative to, or substitute for, the Eucharist.

A pattern for these exceptional gatherings will be established in each Parish/Pastoral District and they will need to fit in with the normative Eucharistic assembly and provision must be made within areas to make it possible for the faithful to be present at the Eucharist in the usual way. In many places it will be deemed necessary that, in addition to being fed at the Lord's table, some people could be called to use their charism and gift to be involved in additional forms of worship that are offered in the service of the MAP. Practicalities will probably dictate that those using their gifts in other forms of worship on a Sunday will need to be encouraged to fulfil their Eucharistic commitment on a weekday. Thus provision of weekday celebrations of the Eucharist will become even more essential.

Groups of individuals will be asked to participate in the provision of these exceptional services and it is unnecessary to designate one person the leader. It is appropriate that each area be permitted to develop its own pattern and style of these celebrations since they should be fitted to the MAP. All of this is to be done under the direction and supervision of the parish priest to whom every person involved is accountable. Training will be offered in the near future for all involved in this.

If the practical outcome of these developments result in any individual emerging as an obvious “leader” of the celebration, and absolutely if their clothing or style might suggest that they are the leader, then these people will need both safe ministry training and police checks. The “rule of thumb test” is to wonder if an outsider were to be in church during such a service would they gain the impression that any one (or more) of those involved were being placed in a leadership role that gave them status as being set apart in a role which might give them authority. If the answer to this question could in any way be in the affirmative, then such a person or people must undergo safe ministry training and have an up to date police check.

All innovations concerning worship are the ultimate responsibility of those who hold my Licence. I take for granted that there will be collaboration between the clergy and others to ensure that these celebrations are properly conducted with dignity and respect. It should be remembered that worship is of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. As such it is always more about God and his life and love than it is about our need for either instruction or entertainment. Whilst I am very keen to encourage appropriate development and innovation within an overall schedule of public worship, it must never be forgotten that the normative assembly on Sunday is at the Eucharist. It is to this foretaste of Heaven that we gather and our policy concerning, and provision of, alternatives must always be based on the very clear intention that they are temporary provisions whilst enquirers are encouraged to become part of us and proceed into a period of formal catechesis and instruction; a critical part of which is introduction into the Eucharistic assembly of God’s pilgrim people.

Appended to this document:

- a) Form for completion concerning Ministers of Communion
- b) Form for completion concerning a lay person to be licensed to preach
- c) Instructions for participating in safe ministry training and obtaining a police check
- d) Safe Ministry Screening Questionnaire

+ John The Murray

Issued by the Bishop on 3rd March 2016 at the Diocesan Clergy Chapter.

These regulations replace all preceding directions concerning the authorisation or licensing of Pastoral Assistants and Lay Ministers.