

Ad Clerum 3e.4

THE AUTHORISATION OF MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Clergy, Readers and accredited lay workers holding authority to minister are defined as those who are beneficed, licensed or holding Permission to Officiate (PtO) in any Church of England diocese.

Whilst this Ad Clerum primarily refers to those in holy orders, it is also applicable to licenced and PtO Readers and Accredited Lay Ministers carrying out non-sacramental duties.

It is the responsibility of the incumbent or equivalent to take steps to ensure that any visiting minister who officiates at divine worship holds suitable authority to minister, as defined above.

These provisions and requirements are set out fully in Canon C8, 'Of ministers exercising their ministry'.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchlawlegis/canons/section-c.aspx>

1). Visiting ministers officiating at weddings, funerals, covering for leave etc.

There is provision to allow visiting Anglican clergy to officiate in any specific church with the incumbent's permission, as long as the incumbent is *'satisfied either by actual personal knowledge or by good and sufficient evidence that s/he is of good life and standing and that s/he has authority to officiate in accordance with this Canon (whether in that or another diocese), to minister within their church or chapel for a period of not more than seven days within three months'*.

This places a specific responsibility on the incumbent (or the sequestrator if the benefice is vacant) to undertake any necessary checks.

In practice, the easiest and most secure method of doing this is to approach the Diocesan Bishop's office and to request that such checks are undertaken centrally. The Bishop's office, normally in the person of the Bishop's chaplain, details below, will make discreet enquiries of the sending diocese as to the individual's authorisation, DBS clearance and safeguarding training. This can usually be completed quickly via email.

The importance of such checks should not be underestimated. In following the above process, which is now reciprocally adopted in the English dioceses, the duty of care with regard to safeguarding is fulfilled and the burden on the incumbent to pursue checks independently is eased.

It will be noted in the above extract from Canon C8 that there is a clear limit, namely *'seven days within three months'* in which a visiting minister can officiate on the basis of the above cross-diocesan checks. *Where a minister from a neighbouring diocese is likely to undertake regular cover or ongoing duties above and beyond this limit, they must seek PtO from the Bishop.*

Visiting clergy undertaking duties as above must sign the register for the occasion.

It should be noted that the above provisions are distinct from the permitted occasional practice of inviting a clergyperson, a lay person, or a minister of another denomination to speak or preach on a specific occasion, in the presence of the incumbent.

2). Authorisation and robing.

The amendments to Canon C8 made in April 2016 now specifically prohibit any clergy who do not hold a licence or PtO, or who are suspended, from robing and processing at divine service.

It is the responsibility of the incumbent or equivalent in the parish to ensure that this restriction is complied with.

3). Overseas Clergy.

Clergy visiting from overseas are permitted to carry out duties as described under 1)., above, but in order to do so they must hold both the Archbishop's Permission to Officiate under The Overseas and Other Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967, and also the Diocesan Bishop's PtO.

The former is required before the latter can be provided.

Overseas clergy PtO is arranged via the Provincial Registrar's office. In the Province of Canterbury, contact should be made with the Joint Provincial Registrar, Stephen Slack, legal@churchofengland.org. His office will supply the required application form. It is usually necessary for the application to be supported by a letter of commendation from the Bishop in the Diocese in which local PtO is proposed.

4). Safeguarding training and Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS).

It is a requirement under the amended Canon that ministers who are authorised by the Bishop in the ways described above should participate in the arrangements approved by the Bishop for training in matters relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

Ministers must hold a current DBS check before authorisation to minister will be considered (or renewed) by the Bishop. Prior to issuing any authorisation to minister, it is now permissible for the Bishop to require a risk assessment to be undertaken if there are reasonable grounds for doing so.

Contact for authorisation enquiries .

The Bishop's Chaplain. chaplain@stalbans.anglican.org.
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