

B6 LAY ELDERS

Lay Elders are chosen by the local church and authorised by the diocesan bishop to undertake specific ministries in the local congregation and community. Their main tasks are pastoral care and leading worship. Most Lay Elders focus on one of these areas, although their commission permits them to work in both. Anyone who is baptised and confirmed and a regular communicant member of the local church may be considered for Lay Elder ministry. It is usual for Lay Elders to work within a ministry team; there is no limit to the number of Elders permitted in a benefice. There are approximately 500 Elders in the diocese.

Selection

A Lay Elder is commissioned to work in a particular benefice. PCC assent is required before an Elder can be commissioned, with at least 75% of the PCC voting in favour. If the Elder is likely to serve in more than one parish within the benefice, the PCC of every parish concerned must formally have given its assent. PCC assent is expressed by the completion of a Request for Commissioning/Recommissioning form, available from the Lay Education and Training Adviser.

If a Lay Elder moves within the diocese, their commission is deemed to have lapsed, although in time they may offer themselves to begin a new ministry in their new parish. Since Lay Elder ministry is peculiar to this diocese, their commission is not transferable.

Commission

A Lay Elder is commissioned in their parish church by the diocesan bishop (or his representative) to serve initially for a maximum of 5 years. The Elder may then be recommissioned for further 5 year periods. Commissioning usually happens within the main act of worship on a Sunday, at an appropriate date. There is a diocesan order of service for this purpose.

Duties

The Lay Elder is responsible for assisting the Incumbent of the parish in pastoral duties, in such ways as are mutually agreed, and with the Incumbent's approval, especially in visiting parishioners at home and in local institutions. The Lay Elder is authorised to lead Morning and Evening Prayer, and Informal Worship which meets the provisions of a Service of the Word. (S)he may assist in the administration of the sacrament, including taking Communion to the sick at home or in hospital. Lay Elders do not hold the Bishop's Licence to preach.

Training

The Diocese provides resources for Lay Elders' training. This consists of a Basic training module (undertaken within 6 months either side of commissioning), followed by modules in Leading Worship and Sharing Pastoral Care (one or both of which are undertaken within the 18 months following commissioning). All modules are adaptable to local circumstances and run locally throughout the year. Training may be delivered by the Incumbent, by the Lay Education Adviser, or by other designated members of the Diocese, or by any combination of these. Various 'continuing ministerial education' opportunities are open periodically to Elders, on their own or with other lay and ordained ministers. The

Diocese also offers resources to Incumbents to support them in their leadership of the ministry team.

Inquiries

All inquiries about Lay Elders' commissioning or re-commissioning, their initial or ongoing training, should be directed to the Lay Education and Training Adviser.

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