

Ministry of clergy with/without PtO in the Diocese of Exeter

Dec 2019

As ordained ministers and as baptised Christians, clergy continue to exercise a Christian ministry in retirement after they have ceased to be beneficed/licensed. The Bishops and Archdeacons are warmly appreciative of that continuing ministry. Some retired clergy hold Permission to Officiate (PtO), others do not. These guidelines aim to clarify the ministry which clergy with PtO and clergy without PtO¹ are permitted to undertake in the Diocese. Inevitably they cannot cover every eventuality and for any ministry which falls outside these guidelines, advice/permission should be sought from the relevant Suffragan Bishop.

General principles

1. All ministry of clergy with PtO and clergy without PtO (in church and outside church) is exercised only with the permission of the relevant incumbent,² or in a vacancy the Rural Dean/Archdeacon.
2. PtO includes both the permission to officiate at services (i.e. preside at/lead them) and permission to preach (*Para 2.4 in the House of Bishops' Policy on Granting Permission to Officiate, July 2018*).
3. Clergy with PtO have a Designated Minister to relate to, and a Statement of Agreed Expectations setting out the scope of their ministry. Sometimes they have geographical restrictions placed on their PtO. Any variation of these requires the permission of the Suffragan Bishop.
4. Clergy without PtO are more limited in the ministry they can exercise compared with clergy with PtO. Ordination conveys the lifelong grace of orders, but in retirement the practical exercise of those orders in certain areas of ministry requires the authority of the Bishop, given in the form of PtO, along with DBS checks and safeguarding training. The table below clarifies what clergy without PtO can do (always unrobed).³
5. When clergy retire, it is important for the parishes to “let go” of their former minister and begin to prepare for a new one. During the vacancy immediately following their retirement, clergy with or without PtO should cease professional relationships with those formerly under their pastoral care and should not undertake any ministry in their former parish(es); nor should they take a funeral service at a crematorium/cemetery for a former parishioner. If they choose to attend a wedding or funeral in a private capacity, they should do so mindful that they have retired from professional relationships with those formerly under their pastoral care.
6. Clergy with or without PtO should not exercise any ministry in their former parishes, unless invited to do so by the present incumbent. It is particularly important that those who retire within easy reach of their former parish(es) observe this. If they are asked to do something in the parishes or at a crematorium/cemetery for former parishioners, they must direct the family concerned to seek the permission of the present incumbent. If he or she is content, the present incumbent (rather than the family concerned) should confirm the invitation directly to the retired minister. Thought should always be given to working together e.g. the present incumbent leading a funeral service whilst the retired minister gives the

¹Clergy without PtO means ordained Anglican ministers who are not currently beneficed or licensed, and who do not hold the Bishop's written Permission to Officiate (PtO) in this or any other diocese.

² Incumbent in this document means either incumbent or priest-in-charge or other responsible person (e.g. the chaplain in an institutional chapel).

³ Any ordained minister without the Bishop's licence or PtO who officiates at or robes for a service, and any incumbent or other authority who allows such a minister to do so, is committing an offence and is liable to a complaint under the Clergy Discipline Measure.

address/tribute. Nothing the retired minister undertakes should undermine the ministry of the present incumbent or prevent the incumbent from building their own pastoral relationships in those parishes.

Practical guidance

7. The following table gives guidelines about ministry which clergy with PtO and clergy without PtO are able to exercise. For comparison, a column detailing the ministry a lay person can exercise has been included.

8. It will be clear from the table that the ministry of clergy without PtO is more restricted than the ministry of a lay person (other than a Lay Reader). With the permission of the incumbent and PCC, a lay person can lead a service of the Word, preach once every six months, take communion to those who are housebound, lead a Quiet Day. Clergy without PtO should do none of these. The reason for this greater restriction is that ordination confers an authority and perceived trustworthiness which can give access into people's lives in a way which being a lay person may not, including the lives of those who are vulnerable. To exercise any of the above ministries could convey the impression that the minister has the Bishop's PtO (and hence has had a DBS check and safeguarding training) when they do not. It is important to avoid this.

	Clergy with PtO	Clergy without PTO (always unrobed)	Lay person (suitably trained/commissioned)
Communion services	All parts of the service	Read, lead prayers. Administer communion, if authorised to do so by the Incumbent and the PCC.	Read, lead prayers, administer communion. Lay Readers may also preach. Other lay people can preach once every six months at the invitation of the incumbent (more than that needs training and the Bishop's authorisation).
Sunday Services of the Word	All parts of the service	Read, lead prayers.	Lead the service, read, lead prayers. Lay Readers may also preach. Others may preach once every six months, as above.
Said midweek MP/EP	All parts of the service	All parts of the service	All parts of the service
Baptisms/ Weddings	All parts of the service	Read, lead prayers	Read, lead prayers
Funerals in church/cemetery/ crematorium	All parts of the service	Read, lead prayers, give a personal tribute (not a sermon).	Read, lead prayers, give a tribute. Some Lay Readers are authorised to take and preach at funerals.
Communion by extension	N/A	No	Lay Readers can lead this service with the Bishop's permission.
Home Communion (Reserved Sacrament)	Yes	No	Yes
Bible Study/ Home / Discipleship Group	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ministry in Schools (Assemblies/ Open the book etc)	Yes	Yes, with qualification in the next column	Yes, with appropriate safer recruitment practice, DBS and safeguarding training.
Leading Quiet Days	Yes	No	Yes
Spiritual Direction/ Accompanying	Yes	PTO is strongly advised, but there may be some exceptional cases where a priest without PTO for reasons of age and in good standing, may continue to offer spiritual direction.	Yes