

Diocese
of
Nova Scotia
and Prince Edward Island
Lay Readers'
Handbook
of Standards and Regulations

Revised June 2008

THE LAY READERS' PRAYER

Loving and eternal God, who through your Son, Jesus Christ, calls your people and sends them forth to witness and serve in your name, bless each member of the Lay Readers' Association of this Diocese. Give us grace that we, walking in the footsteps of your Son, and being filled and strengthened by your Holy Spirit, may serve you and your Church as faithful stewards in the ministry to which we are called and, by our example, enable others to know and love you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Note: new Lay Readers' Prayer presented and adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Lay Readers' Association of Nova Scotia, Tangier Deanery Camp, Ship Harbour, NS, 26th May 2007]

The office of Lay Reader is intended to be an opportunity for ministry in the Spirit in which an individual can respond to the call to be helpful in building up the Body of Christ. It must be recognized, however, that this ministry is more than solely liturgical. It may involve other areas such as pastoral care, Christian education, social action and parish administration.

A. Licensing of Lay Readers

1. All Lay Readers are appointed and licensed by the Bishop to serve in a parish under the direction and supervision of the Rector, such license being held at the pleasure of the Priest and the Bishop.
2. Any candidate for licensing who has not been a Lay Reader before shall normally be required to serve an apprenticeship for a period of up to two years and not less than one year.
3. Installation of Lay Readers shall occur at a regular service of worship or in such place as the Bishop shall determine.
4. In the event of revocation by the Bishop, or resignation by the Lay Reader, the license shall be returned to the Bishop without delay.
5. The license of a lay reader expires with the end of the incumbency of the Rector in a parish. Duties may continue until the appointment of a new Rector under the direction of the Priest-in-Charge or the Bishop.

B. Qualifications for Licensing

To qualify for licensing, candidates for the Office of Reader (including Lay Reader in Training) must:

1. Be regular communicants over the age of 16.
2. Be recommended by their Rector and other members of Parish Council after they have completed the prescribed Basic Education and Training Program (as outlined in Section C).
3. Be approved by the Bishop on the recommendation of the Warden of Lay Readers and the President of the Lay Readers' Association.

The decision to license Lay Readers resides with the Bishop.

C. Education and Training Program

1. The basic instruction and training program is designed to give Lay Readers a standard level of study and an introduction to a pattern which is expected to guide Lay Readers throughout their life and ministry.
2. The instruction will include:

- a) Attendance at courses given specifically for Lay Readers in the following areas of study:
 - (1) Biblical Foundations
 - (2) Doctrine and Church History
 - (3) *The Book of Common Prayer* and *The Book of Alternative Services*
 - (4) Basic preaching skills and sermon preparation
 - (5) Spiritual Discipline (prayer and devotional life)
 - (6) Discernment
 - b) Supervised practical training in a Parish setting.
3. Candidates will develop a variety of skills, interests, and sensibilities to assist in their participation in the areas of Christian activity cited below.
- (a) An ability to read and speak in public and to explain spiritual concepts in language suitable to the listening audience.
 - (b) An understanding of Christian stewardship.
 - (c) A willingness to participate in and to facilitate Christian education.
 - (d) An understanding of evangelism, social awareness, and Christian service.

All Lay Readers shall respond to the Lord's call to serve the Church.

D. Qualifying Procedures

- (1) When candidates complete the training program, they shall undergo certification, beginning with an interview by the Rector. This interview is an opportunity for candidates to share their understanding of their faith in our Lord.
- (2) The Rector shall certify to the Warden of Lay Readers and the President of the Lay Readers Association that the prospective Lay Reader has completed a sufficient level of understanding and, with a letter of reference from the Rector and permission of other members of Parish Council, request the Warden of Lay Readers and President of the Lay Readers' Association to recommend that the Bishop issue the license.
- (3) The Rector may petition the Warden of Lay Readers to waive the requirement and allow a candidate to forgo the certification interview. In the request, the Rector must express in writing satisfaction with the ability of the candidate to carry out the duties as outlined in Section F.

E. Procedure for Application

1. Application for a license, together with a letter of recommendation from the Rector with the concurrence of the Parish Council is made to the Warden of Lay Readers. The application will be sent to the President of the Lay Readers' Association and then to the Bishop.
2. Application for transfer of a Lay Reader's license from another parish should be accompanied by a photocopy of the previous license, a letter of commendation from the Lay Reader's former Rector, and the concurrence of the Rector and Parish Council of the new parish. There should be a three month waiting period before the transfer becomes effective.

F. Duties of a Lay Reader

Under the direction of the Rector and/or the Bishop a Lay Reader may be called upon to:

1. read the appointed lessons and prayers in the church;
2. conduct the Service of Morning or Evening Prayer (not including the Absolution and Benediction);
3. read the Litany, Order of Compline, Service for Young People, or other approved Services;
4. conduct, in case of emergency, the Baptism of any person in danger of death, or the Burial of the Dead;
5. preach a sermon;
6. gather and prepare candidates for Confirmation who, before they are presented to the Bishop, shall be examined by a Priest;
7. support the aims and work of the parish (e.g. Christian Education, youth work, stewardship);
8. carry out other duties when specifically requested by the Rector;
9. exercise responsible stewardship of time, talent, and treasure; and,
10. assist in the distribution of the Elements at the Communion Service and to shut-ins when authorized by the Bishop.

Lay Readers may serve in a parish other than their own when requested by the

Bishop and/or the Rector/Priest-in-Charge of the parish involved and with the expressed permission of the Rector of their own parish. This option is not available to the Lay Reader in Training.

Lay Readers should always be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit in their ministry.

G. Vestments

1. Vestments for leading in the service of worship are either (1) a cassock and surplice or (2) an alb. During non-Eucharistic services, an academic hood may be worn with a cassock and surplice.
2. Lay Readers are responsible for the ownership of their vestments.
3. The badge of office is the medallion featuring the Bishop's mitre over the shield of the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, attached to a ribbon (purple for a Lay Reader, blue for a Lay Reader in Training) The medallion is available currently at the Diocesan Book Room.
4. The Lay Reader (and Lay Reader in Training) shall wear this badge of office around the neck while participating at Public Worship.
5. No other adornments or embellishments (e.g. pins, ribbons, medals, etc.), other than the Lay Reader's medallion, are to be worn with vestments during Public Worship. The only exception may be a poppy.

H. Remuneration

1. Remuneration is officially set by the Diocese and is to be paid to Lay Readers when they conduct church services outside their "home" parish.
2. Parishes benefitting from such services shall be responsible for meeting such cost and should be made aware of their financial obligation by the person securing the services of the Lay Reader.

I. Warden of Lay Readers

There shall be a Warden of Lay Readers who shall be a Priest appointed by the Bishop and have the following duties.

1. Act as the Spiritual Advisor to the officers and members of the Lay Readers Association.

2. Consult with appropriate resource persons regarding course materials for Lay Readers.
3. Assist the Lay Readers in fulfilling their functions.
4. Work in conjunction with the Board of Standards in performing its duties.
5. The Board of Standards must approve alterations to the official Lay Readers' Training program. Should the Board be unable to meet to approve any alteration to the program, the Warden may act on behalf of the Board.

J. Board of Standards

1. This board shall be appointed by the Bishop and consist of:
 - a) the Warden of Lay Readers;
 - b) one other Priest;
 - c) the President and Vice President of the Association, and three other Lay Readers elected at the Annual Meeting of the Association, one of whom may be the past-president; and,
 - d) a member of the Diocesan Standing Committee on Ministry.
2. The Board shall be responsible for:
 - a) the maintenance of a high standard of candidates to be licensed;
 - b) cooperating with Clericus and Regional Councils for the planning, training, and program evaluation of candidates to be licensed, and for continuing education.
3. The Board shall be responsible to the Bishop and report to the Standing Committee on Ministry.
4. All courses of study for official Lay Reader programs must be approved by the Board of Standards.
5. The Board will meet at **least semi-annually**.
6. Should a vacancy arise on the Board, the Lay Readers' Association Executive can propose a name to the Bishop to fill the vacancy until such time as the next appointment is finalized.

K. Diocesan Lay Readers' Association

1. All Lay Readers are members of the Diocesan Lay Readers' Association.
2. Every Lay Reader is expected to pay annual dues, the amount being decided from time to time at the Annual General Meeting.
3. The aims of the Association are to:
 - a) maintain and upgrade standards,
 - b) provide an opportunity for meaningful discussion in a Christian community,
 - c) provide continuing educational opportunities;
 - d) keep Lay Readers informed, and,
 - e) provide opportunities for personal spiritual growth on an ongoing basis.
4. The Association seeks to accomplish these aims by:
 - a) organizing and promoting retreats, conferences, seminars, and other learning sessions on parish, regional, and diocesan levels;
 - b) designing reading courses and circulating book lists and reviews, and,
 - c) circulating a newsletter ("*DIAKONIA*") at least semi-annually.
5. The Association shall keep a current list of Lay Readers.