

Licensed Lay Persons Guidelines in the Diocese of Louisiana

Canon III.4

Revised November 2008

A licensed lay person must be a confirmed communicant in good standing. This means that for the previous year the person must have been:

- faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented
- faithful in working and praying for the spread of the Kingdom of God
- a faithful giver of record in their congregation or other community of faith

In Episcopal schools and other institutional settings, at the chaplain's discretion, the requirement that the licensed lay person be confirmed may be waived, as canon law provides.

The purpose of selection is to appoint persons of good repute to a pastoral ministry requiring skill, sensitivity, and spiritual maturity. Although the Diocese may provide training from time to time, basic training is under the direction of the priest.

A license is given at the request of the priest in charge of the congregation or other community of faith in which the person will serve. A lay person licensed to serve in a congregation need not always be a member of that congregation—especially in the case of seminarians, college students, and other students and faculty who reside temporarily.

The license is for one (1) year and may be revoked by the Bishop or the priest at any time. For an initial license, the Bishop requires evidence of basic training in the licensed area. For renewal of a license, at the request of the priest, the Bishop requires evidence of satisfactory performance of the licensed ministry and of continuing education in the licensed area. Applications for renewal of licenses must be made to the Bishop annually by the priest in charge.

A licensed lay person may serve in another congregation at the invitation of its priest, with the consent of the Bishop.

The following licenses are authorized by Canon III.4 of the Canons of the Episcopal Church:

Pastoral Leader—exercises pastoral or administrative oversight

“A Pastoral Leader is a lay person authorized to exercise pastoral or administrative responsibility in a congregation under special circumstances, as defined by the Bishop.”

Worship Leader—leads public worship

“A Worship Leader is a lay person who regularly leads public worship under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.”

A Worship Leader is not licensed specifically to administer the sacrament or to read the Bible. Anyone may read the lessons (other than the gospel) when so appointed, and only an ordained minister or a Eucharistic Minister may administer the sacrament during the Eucharist.

Preacher—preaches in public worship

“A Preacher is a lay person authorized to preach. Persons so authorized shall only preach in congregations under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.”

Note: Currently the Diocese of Louisiana does not offer this license

Eucharistic Minister—administers Sacrament in Eucharist

“A Eucharistic Minister is a lay person authorized to administer the Consecrated Elements at a Celebration of Holy Eucharist. A Eucharistic Minister acts under the direction of a Deacon, if any, or otherwise, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.”

When so authorized, a Eucharistic Minister may administer either the Bread or the Wine at any Eucharist. There is a restriction that this be done only in the absence of a sufficient number of priests or deacons (see rubrics, BCP 408). Eucharistic Ministers are not to administer the Consecrated Elements outside a celebration of the Eucharist.

Eucharistic Visitor—takes Sacrament to absent members

“A Eucharistic Visitor is a lay person authorized to take the Consecrated Elements in a timely manner following a Celebration of Holy Eucharist to members of the congregation who, by reason of illness or infirmity, were unable to be present at the Celebration. A Eucharistic Visitor should normally act under the direction of a Deacon, if any, or otherwise, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.”

A Eucharistic Visitor receives the Sacrament (either Bread alone or both Bread and Wine) at the end of the Eucharist, takes it to one or more absent members, and administers it reverently. This category of ministry requires special gifts and training in listening to and praying with others. The ministry does not include administering the Sacrament to those outside the congregation, as to the general populace in a prison or nursing home.

Catechist—prepares persons for Baptism and Confirmation

“A Catechist is a lay person authorized to prepare persons for Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, and the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows, and shall function under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.”