

Lay Worship Leader – a role profile

Baptism

The Church is the People of God, the Body of Christ and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. In baptism every disciple is called to make Jesus known as Saviour and Lord and to share his work in renewing the world. Some ... are given particular tasks. (Scottish Ordinal, 1984)

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ, is the vocation of every baptised person. God calls us not just to be members of the Church, but disciples who answer this call in their way of life. This is the vocation to which we respond in different ways.

Ministry

Ministry, service, on behalf of the whole Church, is one of the responses we are called to make as disciples. Ministry fulfils many tasks, such as prayer, pastoral care, governance, evangelism, and enabling worship. For the Church to gather for worship various tasks are needed - preparing the building, playing music or singing, reading from scripture or leading the intercession. In the absence of a priest, deacon, or lay reader, it may also require leading worship. And this is the task of the Lay Worship Leader.

If there is a need for someone to exercise this ministry in your local church, and you think you may be able to offer service as a Lay Worship Leader, and this is affirmed by others in your congregation and diocese, you should start by discussing it with your rector or priest-in-charge.

Role and Public Duties

A Lay Worship Leader serves within the ministry team in their local church, under the direction and authority of their rector or priest-in-charge. Their role is to gather the congregation and lead them in worship which enables them to sense the presence of God. A Lay Worship Leader may assist another minister (lay or ordained) in leading worship in any of these ways:

- Assisting in leading Services of the Word
- Leading worship through music and song
- Leading a lay worship planning team

A Lay Worship Leader may prepare and lead acts of public worship using the following liturgies of the SEC:

- Morning and Evening Prayer or Compline
- Service of the Word
- Any other non-eucharistic service with the agreement of their rector or priest-in-charge (e.g. Taizé worship, seasonal services, Stations of the Cross, praise service)

A Lay Worship Leader will NOT normally:

- Administer the sacraments
- Preach a sermon or other exposition of the Word

UNLESS

- They are specifically authorised by the Bishop for the role of leading the worship of Communion from the Reserved Sacrament using a liturgy approved by the Diocese
- They are specifically authorised to provide an exposition of the Word such as introducing silence or music following scripture; using homilies from an agreed source or supervising clergy; having prepared a sermon under the supervision of priest or interim pastor, introducing a discussion with the congregation of the scripture used etc.

Criteria

The following characteristics may indicate the gifts needed to serve as a Lay Worship Leader. Someone who is:

- A regular worshipper and communicant in their home church
- A prayerful person who engages in studying the Bible
- Willing to commit to a course of initial training and continuing ministry development
- Rooted and grounded in their local community
- Known and trusted by many of the congregation
- Willing to serve as one of the ministry team under the guidance of their rector or priest-in-charge
- Confident in projecting their voice
- Knowledgeable and respectful of local customs for worship, and of the variety of forms of worship within the SEC

It is essential that their suitability as a Lay Worship Leader is affirmed by their rector or priest-in-charge, and by the vestry and congregation where they will serve.

Process of Authorisation

The rector, priest-in-charge or interim pastor provides or arranges for training. Training resources can be found [here](#). When the following are in place the rector, priest-in-charge or interim pastor writes to the Bishop asking for the person to be authorised:

- PVG is in place
- There is confidence among all concerned that initial training is sufficient
- The Bishop grants a licence in person at a Festival of Lay Ministries. Those who are unable to attend will be authorised in absentia and presented with their certificate in their charge on the following Sunday, or in the interim between Festivals of Lay Ministries whenever the Bishop next visits.
- A licence is granted for three years thereafter relicensing is required at a Festival of Lay Ministries