

## Church of Ireland

### The House of Bishops

#### **PROTOCOL FOR THE SELECTION, TRAINING, SUPPORT AND LICENSING OF DIOCESAN READERS**

1. A person who is considering ministry as a diocesan reader should, in the first instance, speak with the rector of his or her parish.
2. A Diocesan Reader ('reader') must:
  - a. be a member of the Church of Ireland or of a church in communion with the Church of Ireland;
  - b. be at least 18 years of age;
  - c. be a regular communicant;
  - d. complete a training course approved by the House of Bishops
  - e. fulfil any additional regulations laid down by the local bishop;
  - f. submit him/herself to the authority of the Church of Ireland; and
  - g. be licensed by the bishop of the Diocese.
3. A candidate reader ('the candidate') must be nominated by his/her rector to the diocesan warden of readers or other such equivalent person in a diocese ('the warden').
4. The warden will meet with the candidate to discuss generally the ministry of reader and the candidate's vocation to that office.
5. If the warden deems it appropriate, s/he will invite the candidate to apply formally.
6. A candidate reader, whose application is supported by both his or her rector and also by the warden, will make application and supply references as required by the diocese.
7. A selection committee (constituted locally in the diocese as determined by the bishop) will interview the candidate. If satisfied that the candidate is called to the

ministry of reader, and is a suitable and qualified person for the office of reader, the selection committee will convey its advice to the bishop.

8. The bishop may accept or decline to accept the candidate for training as a Reader.
9. Each candidate will be subject to Garda/AccessNI vetting which will be overseen locally in each diocese by the bishop or by the person to whom the bishop has delegated such responsibility.
10. Following vetting and prior to licensing, the candidate will be required to undergo Safeguarding Trust training, in the diocese.
11. Paths to training:
  - a. *The Readers' Course* available through the Church of Ireland Theological Institute (CITI). It is a two-year part-time course. It involves six day conferences. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the course, and the final approval of the diocesan bishop, licensing will take place.
  - b. *The 'Cashel' Course* through NUI Maynooth or other accredited courses as may be approved by the House of Bishops. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the course, and the final approval of the diocesan bishop, licensing will take place.
  - c. *In exceptional circumstances:* The candidate may be entered for the *Foundation Course* undertaken through CITI. The candidate will also attend six day-conferences held over a two-year period. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the course, and the final approval of the diocesan bishop, licensing can take place after one year, on the understanding that the diocesan reader the will attend the remaining three day conferences. Exceptional circumstances may include
    1. the academic background of the candidate,
    2. the possibility of the candidate offering for ordination – the Foundation Course being a prerequisite for this.
    3. Candidates not recommended for training for ordination at a Bishops' Selection Conference may, with the bishop's consent, be considered for licensing as diocesan readers on the understanding they undertake to attend the six day-conferences.

12. In parallel with or in addition to any of the courses above (at par. 9), there should be local input on issues and requirements pertinent to the particular diocese. This will be the responsibility of the warden in consultation with the bishop.
13. Each diocese (as may be determined in accordance with local regulation or custom) is responsible for the costs of training its own diocesan readers.
14. During training, the trainee reader may expect the following from the diocese:
  - a. Financial assistance with costs of training, including a book grant.
  - b. Support and advice from the warden through regular meetings.
  - c. Experience in leading worship in a parish other than their own, for a specified period, with permission from the bishop.
  - d. An annual meeting with the bishop.
  - e. Clarity from the bishop or warden as to when a final decision on licencing will be made, the length of the licence and the diocesan process that exists for assessing if a licence should be renewed.
  - f. Clarity as to the diocesan expectations, particularly in terms of Sunday service commitments.
15. During training, the trainee reader may expect the Church of Ireland Theological Institute (or the organizer of the Cashel Course) to:
  - a. Act as the central point of co-ordination for the Readers' Training Programme.
  - b. Serve as the link for communication and support between students and their training provider.
  - c. Provide the venue and accommodation for meetings throughout the course.
  - d. Co-ordinate with the warden in overseeing progress.
  - e. Assist and address any specific learning needs.
  - f. Notify, on completion of the course, the bishop, warden and trainee of the course result and make the necessary arrangements for the provision of the appropriate Certificate of Completion.
16. The bishop will licence the reader. All readers will be licensed, under a time-limited licence (usually 3-5 years).
17. A licence may be renewed.
18. A reader's licence shall expire on the attainment of 75 years of age. Subsequent ministry will be subject to the permission of the bishop.
19. A reader undertakes to be available to serve as required anywhere in the diocese.
20. A reader's licence permits the reader to exercise the Office of Reader only in the

particular diocese/united dioceses.

21. After licencing, the reader may expect the following from the diocese:
  - a. Travelling expenses in accordance with local diocesan regulations.
  - b. Involvement in on-going training as arranged by the warden in consultation with the bishop.
  - c. Contact with and support from the warden as appropriate.
  - d. Overseeing of this ministry ensuring that the diocesan reader retains a firm parish base.
  
22. After licencing, the reader may expect to receive details of on-going 'in-service' training conferences, courses and retreats from the Church of Ireland Theological Institute.
  
23. A reader moving to another diocese may apply for a licence from the bishop of that diocese as in 1 - 5 above. Further training may be required by the bishop.

**House of Bishops of the Church of Ireland**

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