THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Licensed Lay Ministries

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

Ephesians 4: 11-13

Title III, Canon 4 of the Episcopal Church describes the lay ministries which, because of their unique and important role in the life, work, and worship of the Church, should be sanctioned by the Bishop for their worthy purpose. These roles are: Pastoral Leader, Worship Leader, Preacher, Eucharistic Minister, Eucharistic Visitor, Evangelist, and Catechist.

Not all parishes or missions will find need for licensed persons for each of these roles. Likewise, not all people will be called to service in God's Kingdom to one of these positions. For those who are, the Canon aforementioned describes the role of each and the manner by which the Bishop may license or empower the individual who is so called. "Requirements and guidelines for the selection, training, continuing education, and deployment of such persons, and the duration of licenses shall be established by the Bishop in consultation with the Commission on Ministry." *Canon III.4.1(a)*

These ministries are far more than functionary roles. Indeed, these roles are as important as any in the church. In many ways, these leadership roles show to the world how we *are* the church. Therefore, just as in the solemnity of ordained ministry, we must discern God's call to us and attend to it with the same deliberateness and vigor.

This guide will detail the process of licensure for each of these important roles. Expectations for education, training, and oversight will be described and applications for the same may be found at the end of this booklet.

As you discern God's will for you and how you are called to build up His Kingdom, please know you will be held and supported in prayer along the way.

Description of Licensed Lay Ministry Roles

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.

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 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.

A Eucharistic Minister is a lay person authorized to administer the Consecrated Elements at a Celebration of Holy Eucharist. A Eucharistic Minister 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 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 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.

An Evangelist is a lay person who presents the good news of Jesus Christ in such a way that people are led to receive Christ as Savior and follow Christ as Lord in the fellowship of the Church. An Evangelist assists with the community's ministry of evangelism in partnership with the Presbyter or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation, or as directed by the Bishop.

For all Licenses

All individuals who are licensed must be regular in attendance at worship and be baptized and confirmed members in good standing of the Episcopal Church or, at the discretion of the Bishop, another Christian tradition with whom the Episcopal Church is in full communion. They should exhibit and be found in good spiritual, physical, and psychological health. Those who are licensed should demonstrate a willingness to work under the direction of the clergy of their parish, or other congregational leaders who may have canonical authority, and participate in the training and continuing education necessary for their ministry. Licensed Lay Leaders should have an active life of prayer and devotion and a deep interest in helping and serving their congregation.

All licenses are in effect for a term of three (3) years. Licenses terminate the same date as the date of issue, three years following. For example, any license issued on January 1, 2025 will require renewal by January 1, 2028.

Classes will be offered for these Licensed Ministries at various times throughout the year. A license can only be offered to those who complete the requirements, including Diocesan training if needed, for the license they which to obtain.

An Application for the Renewal of License must be filed in the 3 months prior to license expiration. A reminder will be sent to all affected parties 6 months prior to license expirarion. An individual holding an expired license should not engage in the ministries in question until such time as the license has been renewed.

An individual may hold more than one license at any given time.

Other than for those expenses preapproved by the Vestry, and in direct connection to the exercise of the ministry licensed, the licensee is entitled to no compensation. In special circumstances an individual placed in direct pastoral authority over a parish, such as in cases of a member of the clergy from another tradition being received into the Episcopal Church or an individual with a seminary education but not yet ordained, may be entitled to compensation at the direction of the Bishop and with an appropriate Letter of Agreement.

Continuing Education refers to a worthy program of study that promotes our need to constantly be formed for the mission to which God may call us. These may be offered through the Diocese or other ecclesiastical body, institutions of higher learning, training programs, or other such entities. What and where these continuing education opportunities are taken are at the discretion of the individual and should be taken in consideration of the particular ministry that they are called.

Forms for these licenses may be found online at the Diocesan website.

In all cases, the Application for Licensure or an Application for Renewal of License must be accompanied by a letter or support from the Rector, Priest-in-Charge, or Missioner and the Vestry. In the absence of any clergy in the parish to offer such support, a single letter of support from the Vestry will be considered sufficient.

For Licensing as a Eucharistic Minister

Eucharistic Ministers assist with the distribution of the consecrated wine and bread during services of Holy Eucharist. Along with the clergy serving the congregation, they help to bring the sacraments to the people of God who have gathered together to worship and celebrate at God's altar. Therefore, this ministry is not one to be undertaken lightly, but with reverence to the work of hospitality at the altar of God.

Education or Training Required

The Rector or Priest-in-Charge of a congregation (or in the absence of clergy serving the local community, the Dean of the Deanery to which the congregation belongs) should certify that the applicant has been trained in the following areas:

- A basic understanding of the theology of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.
- The names of the linens, vessels, and other items necessary for the appropriate consecration and distribution of the Holy Sacrament.
- Appropriate administration of the chalice (to include the practice of intinction and the Common Cup) and/or paten in accordance with the customs of the parish.

The applicant should also watch and discuss with their Rector or Priest-in-Charge, or other appropriate clergy, the instructed Eucharist from how2charist.com (a free video found at that website).

Applicants must complete all designated training and certification in Safe Church programing and Anti-Racism and Dismantling Racism programing made available by the Episcopal Church. Records of such completion must be on file with the Diocese of West Virginia.

Continuing Education Expected

In order to ensure that the best practices of the Church, and the best interests of the parish, are observed, it is required that the Eucharistic Ministers regularly discuss their ministry with the Rector, Priest-in-Charge, or other appropriate clergy. Such conversations should include ways to afford hospitality to all who come to God's altar, hygiene, and theology.

For Licensing as a Eucharistic Visitor

Eucharistic Visitors provide the vital sacramental ministry of inclusion to those members of a congregation who are unable to attend worship because of illness, infirmity, or other worthy cause. In addition to this sacramental ministry, Eucharistic Visitors also provide a ministry of companionship and pastoral care to those they visit. This pastoral care should not, however, be seen as a replacement for the regular attendance of the clergy (if clergy are present for the congregation) to the sick or infirm.

Eucharistic Visitors will regularly report to the clergy matters of pastoral importance from the members they visit. Eucharistic Visitors should also be cognizant of family dynamics, the stresses of aging and illness, and the need for confidentiality.

Education or Training Required

The Rector or Priest-in-Charge of a congregation (or in the absence of clergy serving the local community, the Dean of the Deanery to which the congregation belongs) should certify that the applicant has been trained in the following areas:

- A basic understanding of the theology of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.
- The names of the linens, vessels, and other items necessary for the appropriate consecration and distribution of the Holy Sacrament.
- The appropriate and dignified distribution of the Holy Sacrament outside of the church and the approved liturgies that accompany them.
- Understanding of the liturgy used in ministering to those who are sick or shut-in. This includes prayers for healing, the anointing of the sick, appropriate lay leading of rites at the time of death, and extemporaneous prayer.
- How to record such home visits in the parish's Register of Services.
- Active listening and pastoral care skills
- Understanding of mandatory reporting laws in the State of West Virginia

Applicants must complete all designated training and certification in Safe Church programing and Anti-Racism and Dismantling Racism programing made available by the Episcopal Church. Records of such completion must be on file with the Diocese of West Virginia.

The applicant should also watch and discuss with their Rector or Priest-in-Charge, or other appropriate clergy, the instructed Eucharist from how2charist.com (a free video found at that website).

Continuing Education Expected

In order to ensure that the best practices of the Church, and the best interests of the parish, are observed, it is required that the Eucharistic Visitors regularly discuss their ministry with the Rector, Priest-in-Charge, or other appropriate clergy. Such conversations should include the theology of the care of souls, liturgy, or other needs as they may arise.

For Licensing as a Worship Leader

Worship Leaders, historically referred to as "Lay Readers," officiate the services of the church without sacramental rites. While the sacraments of the church are properly administered by those ordained for such duties it is important to remember that the worship of Almighty God, the proclamation God's word, and the prayers of the faithful within a congregation may be led by a member of the laity. What makes us as Episcopalians both unique and united is our common form of worship. To that end, it is important for Worship Leaders of our congregations to be trained in how to conduct worship according to the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer.

Education or Training Required

The Rector or Priest-in-Charge of a congregation (or in the absence of clergy serving the local community, the Dean of the Deanery to which the congregation belongs) should certify that the applicant has been trained in the following areas:

- All education and training required to serve as Eucharistic Minister.
- Appropriate resources for finding sermons to read at the services they will be conducting.
- How to record services in the parish's Register of Services.
- Active listening skills
- Understanding of mandatory reporting laws in the State of West Virginia

Applicants must complete all designated training and certification in Safe Church programing and Anti-Racism and Dismantling Racism programing made available by the Episcopal Church. Records of such completion must be on file with the Diocese of West Virginia.

Applicants must also submit documentation of successful for-credit completion of the *Creating Worship that Works* course made available online through the Stevenson School for Ministry, or another training program with prior written approval by the Bishop. Scholarship money is available through the Commission on Ministry.

Continuing Education Expected

In order to ensure that the best practices of the Church, and the best interests of the parish, are observed, it is required that the Eucharistic Ministers regularly discuss their ministry with the Rector, Priest-in-Charge, or other appropriate clergy. Such conversations should include the theology of worship and best practices.

For Licensing as a Catechist

A catechist is a teacher who helps form and equip new Christians for the work of ministry. A catechist may work with adult converts or teens preparing for confirmation. Catechists, working together with members of the clergy, educate and empower each new generation of Christians. This is an important ministry and those who undertake it should be mature in faith, humble in spirit, and have a heart for sharing their faith story.

Education or Training Required

The Rector or Priest-in-Charge of a congregation (or in the absence of clergy serving the local community, the Dean of the Deanery to which the congregation belongs) should certify that the applicant is a good candidate for this ministry and be trained in the following:

- Active listening skills
- Understanding of mandatory reporting laws in the State of West Virginia

Applicants must complete all designated training and certification in Safe Church programing and Anti-Racism and Dismantling Racism programing made available by the Episcopal Church. Records of such completion must be on file with the Diocese of West Virginia.

The applicant should also watch and discuss with their Rector or Priest-in-Charge, or other appropriate clergy, the instructed Eucharist from how2charist.com (a free video found at that website).

Applicants must also submit documentation of successful for-credit completion of the *Teaching Ministry* course made available online through the Stevenson School for Ministry, or another training program with prior written approval by the Bishop. Scholarship money is available through the Commission on Ministry.

Continuing Education Expected

In order to ensure that the best practices of the Church, and the best interests of the parish, are observed, it is required that the Preachers regularly discuss their ministry with the Rector, Priest-in-Charge, or other appropriate clergy. Such conversations should include appropriate curriculum for individuals being trained up in the Christian faith.

For Licensing as an Evangelist

Whereas preaching, prayer, and the sacraments may help bring hearts and minds to the Good News of God in Christ, the evangelist helps "make straight" those paths. The role of an evangelist is to help bring the Good News to the people. How this is accomplished may take many forms: from coordinating new member ministries to intentionally witnessing the faith outside the walls of the church.

Education or Training Required

The Rector or Priest-in-Charge of a congregation (or in the absence of clergy serving the local community, the Dean of the Deanery to which the congregation belongs) should certify that the applicant is a good candidate for this ministry.

Applicants must complete all designated training and certification in Safe Church programing and Anti-Racism and Dismantling Racism programing made available by the Episcopal Church. Records of such completion must be on file with the Diocese of West Virginia.

Applicants must also submit documentation of successful for-credit completion of the *Leading Evangelism* course made available online through the Stevenson School for Ministry, or another training program with prior written approval by the Bishop. Scholarship money is available through the Commission on Ministry.

Continuing Education Expected

In order to ensure that the best practices of the Church, and the best interests of the parish, are observed, it is required that the Preachers regularly discuss their ministry with the Rector, Priest-in-Charge, or other appropriate clergy.

For Licensing as a Preacher

A Preacher proclaims the Good News of God in Jesus Christ. For many, the sermon is the heart of the worship experience and an opportunity to better understand Holy Scripture, the Christian tradition, theology, or God's actions in the world. Preaching is a teaching ministry and therefore one that requires study and deliberate attention. Therefore, the requirements for serving in this important ministry are more strenuous than others.

Education or Training Required

The Rector or Priest-in-Charge of a congregation (or in the absence of clergy serving the local community, the Dean of the Deanery to which the congregation belongs) should certify that the applicant has been trained in the following areas:

- All education and training required to serve as Eucharistic Minister.
- How to record services in the parish's Register of Services.

Applicants must complete all designated training and certification in Safe Church programing and Anti-Racism and Dismantling Racism programing made available by the Episcopal Church. Records of such completion must be on file with the Diocese of West Virginia

The applicant must also submit documentation of successful for-credit completion of Lay Preacher Training Pathway from the Stevenson School for Ministry, or another training program with prior written approval by the Bishop. Scholarship money is available through the Commission on Ministry.

Continuing Education Expected

In order to ensure that the best practices of the Church, and the best interests of the parish, are observed, it is required that the Preachers regularly discuss their ministry with the Rector, Priest-in-Charge, or other appropriate clergy. Such conversations should include the theology of liturgy, current events, Biblical Studies, or other needs as they may arise.

For Licensing as a Pastoral Leader

Leading a Congregation as a Pastoral Leader is a major undertaking. At the heart of this Lay Ministry is the call to serve as shepherd to a congregation but not to sacramental presence. This involves many of the duties often associated with a Priest or Rector. A sense of self awareness differentiation is key to this particular calling—one that asks us to preach and pastor but not celebrate the mysteries of the Sacraments. A humble and gentle spirit are prerequisites for this ministry.

If you believe that you are called to serve your congregation as its Pastoral Leader we encourage you to speak with Bishop Cowden to discuss this possibility. Each Pastoral Leader that God calls is likely to have a different path forward to licensing given the specific circumstances and life histories.