

Common Worship

The Admission and Licensing of Readers

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Authorization

The Common Worship form for the Admission and Licensing of Readers has been commended by the House of Bishops for use by bishops (or, in the case of the Welcome of Newly Licensed Readers, by the minister) in the exercise of their discretion under Canon B 5 of the Canons of the Church of England.

Note

The form for the Admission and Licensing of Readers and the accompanying resources are intended for use within a Service of the Word or a celebration of Holy Communion (see Notes 2 and 3 on page 22).

The Declarations

Before the service the candidates for admission and licensing as Readers make the Declarations in the form prescribed by Canons E 5 and E 6.

The bishop reads the Preface to the Declaration of Assent

The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation. Led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons. In the declaration you are about to make, will you affirm your loyalty to this inheritance of faith as your inspiration and guidance under God in bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation and making Him known to those in your care?

Candidates I, *A B*, do so affirm, and accordingly declare my belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness; and in public prayer I will use only the forms of service which are authorized or allowed by Canon.

I, *A B*, will give due obedience to the Bishop of *N* and his successors in all things lawful and honest.

I, *A B*, about to be licensed to exercise the office of Reader in the Diocese [Parish] of *N*, do hereby promise to endeavour, as far as in me lies, to promote peace and unity, and to conduct myself as becomes a worker for Christ, for the good of his Church, and for the spiritual welfare of all people. I will give due obedience to the minister in whose cure I may serve, in all things lawful and honest.

The Admission and Licensing of Readers

¶ Introduction

Bishop My brothers and sisters, God has gathered us into the fellowship of the universal Church. As members together of his body, Christ calls us to minister in his name and, according to our gifts, to be instruments of his love in the world. Within this ministry, Readers are called to serve the Church of God and to work together with clergy and other ministers. They are to lead public worship, to preach and teach the word of God, to assist at the eucharist and to share in pastoral and evangelistic work. As authorized lay ministers, they are to encourage the ministries of God's people, as the Spirit distributes gifts among us all. They are called to help the whole Church to participate in God's mission to the world.

¶ Admission

The Presentation of Candidates for Admission

The candidates for admission stand and are presented to the bishop.

Bishop, I present these persons to be admitted to the office of Reader:
N, from [*parish*] (*etc.*)

When all the candidates have been presented, the bishop asks these questions, to which the appropriate persons respond (see Note 6)

Bishop Have they made the Declaration of Assent, and thereby affirmed and declared their belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness? Have they also made the declaration of obedience to the Bishop and the declaration which must be made before a Reader is licensed?

They have.

Bishop Are they men and women of Christian character, well versed in the Holy Scriptures and in the doctrines of our faith?

They are.

Bishop Have they been sufficiently prepared for the duties of this office?

They have.

The Questions

The bishop turns to the candidates and says

In order that we may be satisfied that you are ready to begin the ministry of a Reader, you must now answer the questions we put to you.

Do you believe that God is calling you to this ministry?

Candidates I do so believe.

Will you be faithful in leading the people of God in worship, and in preaching the word to them?

Candidates By the grace of God, I will.

Will you be diligent in prayer, in reading Holy Scripture, and in all studies that will deepen your faith and fit you to bear witness to the truth of the gospel?

Candidates By the grace of God, I will.

Will you endeavour to fashion your life according to the way of Christ?

Candidates By the grace of God, I will.

Will you promote unity, peace and love in the Church and in the world, and especially among those whom you serve?

Candidates By the grace of God, I will.

Will you work closely with your colleagues in ministry and encourage the gifts of others?

Candidates By the grace of God, I will.

The candidates turn and face the congregation.

Bishop Brothers and sisters,
these men and women have been chosen for the office of Reader.
Will you uphold and encourage them in their ministry?

All We will.

Bishop Will you continue to pray for them?

All We will.

The bishop invites the clergy of the new Readers' parishes or chaplaincies to stand and asks

Bishop Will you work closely with your new Readers and encourage them to use their gifts and develop their ministry?

Clergy **We will.**

Bishop Will you commend them to the people amongst whom they will minister?

Clergy **We will.**

The Admission

The candidates stand or kneel before the bishop, who admits them to the office of Reader by the delivery of a copy of the Scriptures in accordance with Canon E 5, with these words

N, I admit you as a Reader in the Church,
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

When all have been admitted, the bishop blesses them in these or other suitable words

May the Lord give you wisdom, courage, strength and love to do his will,
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
rest upon you, and on your work done in his name,
now and always.

All **Amen.**

Each new Reader may be vested with a blue scarf (see Note 7).

A hymn may be sung.

The Licensing

The newly admitted Readers may remain in front of the bishop, or they may join their clergy and members of their congregations seated in the nave.

Readers who have moved into the diocese or into a new parish are presented to the bishop using these or other suitable words

Bishop, I present these Readers to be licensed for ministry in this diocese:
N from the Diocese/Parish of A, to serve in the Parish of B [etc.]

When all of these Readers have been presented, the bishop asks these questions, to which the appropriate person responds (see Note 6)

Bishop Have they made the Declaration of Assent, and thereby affirmed and declared their belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness? Have they also made the declaration of obedience to the Bishop and the declaration which must be made before a Reader is licensed?

They have.

The bishop hands the Readers who have moved into the diocese or into a new parish and the newly admitted Readers their licences with these or other suitable words

Receive authority to exercise the office of Reader in this diocese.
May the Lord be with you in all your work and ministry
from this day onwards.

Amen.

When all have received their licences the bishop says to the newly licensed Readers

Bishop We welcome you as ministers of God's word.
All **May the word of Christ dwell in you richly.**

Resources

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Alternative Introduction to the Admission and Licensing

My brothers and sisters,
God has called us into the fellowship of the universal Church.
As members of his body, Christ calls us to minister together in his name
and, according to our gifts, to be instruments of his love in the world.
Readers are called to a ministry of the word,
preaching and teaching,
inspiring others to follow the way of Christ,
and calling them to share in the good news of the kingdom.
They are called to a liturgical ministry,
leading worship,
proclaiming the gospel story
and helping God's people to greet their living Lord,
so that they may worship him, praise him and live by his commands.

Collect

Either the Collect of the day or this Collect is said

Almighty and everlasting God,
by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church
is governed and sanctified:
hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people,
that in their vocation and ministry
they may serve you in holiness and truth
to the glory of your name;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

Readings

The readings of the day may be used, especially on a Principal Feast or a Festival. Alternatively, the following readings are particularly appropriate:

Old Testament	Isaiah 61.1-3a Jeremiah 1.4-10	<i>The Spirit of the Lord is upon me The call of Jeremiah</i>
Psalm	86.1-5,11-12 113 121	<i>Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me Give praise, you servants of the Lord I lift up my eyes to the hills</i>
New Testament	Romans 12.1-13 1 Corinthians 1.18-end 2 Corinthians 4.1-12 Philippians 2.1-11 2 Timothy 4.1-5	<i>Be living sacrifices Christ the wisdom and power of God Treasures in jars of clay Imitating Christ's humility Preach the word in season and out of season</i>
Gospel	Matthew 9.35-end Mark 6.1-5 Mark 10.35-45 Luke 10.1-9 Luke 12.35-40	<i>The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few A prophet without honour in his own town The request of James and John Jesus sends out disciples Be ready for service</i>

Intercessions

Prayers may include the following concerns

- ¶ *The Church and its ministers*
- ¶ *The world and its needs*
- ¶ *The local community*
- ¶ *Those who suffer*
- ¶ *The communion of saints*

These or other suitable responses may be used

Lord, in your mercy
All **hear our prayer.**

Lord, hear us.
All **Lord, graciously hear us.**

And at the end

All Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Litany

If prayers of intercession are said using this litany, not all petitions need to be used on every occasion.

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ,
let us pray to the Father.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace of the whole world,
for the welfare of the Holy Church of God,
and for the unity of all,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

For all the members of the Church in their vocation and ministry,
that they may serve him in truth and love,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

For *N* our bishop,
and for all bishops, presbyters and deacons,
that they may hunger for truth and thirst after righteousness,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

For *N*, *N* and *N*,
called to be Readers in his Church,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

For the mission of the Church,
that in faithful witness we may proclaim the gospel of reconciliation
to the ends of the earth,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

For the unity of the Church,
that we may be one in Christ, according to his will,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who do not yet believe,
that they may receive the light of the gospel,
and for those whose faith has grown cold,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

For the sick and suffering,
for the aged and infirm,
for the lonely and neglected,
and for all who remember and care for them,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

For the poor and the hungry,
for the homeless and the oppressed,
for all prisoners and captives,
and for our brothers and sisters who are persecuted for their faith,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

For *Elizabeth our Queen*,
for the leaders of the nations,
and for all in authority,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

For ourselves,
for grace to repent and amend our lives,
that we may be pardoned and absolved from all our sins,
let us pray to the Lord.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

Remembering [... *and*]
all who have gone before us in faith,
and in communion with [... *and*] all the saints,
we commit ourselves, one another,
and our whole life to Christ our God;

All **to you, O Lord.**

Merciful Father,
All **accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Collects after the Third Collect (BCP Evening Prayer)

1 *For the Church*

Almighty and everlasting God,
who alone workest great marvels,
send down upon our bishops and curates,
and all congregations committed to their charge,
the healthful spirit of thy grace;
and that they may truly please thee,
pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing.
Grant this, O Lord,
for the honour of our advocate and mediator, Jesus Christ.

All **Amen.**

(contemporary language)

Almighty and everlasting God,
the only worker of great marvels,
send down upon our bishops and other pastors
and all congregations committed to their care
the spirit of your saving grace;
and that they may truly please you,
pour upon them the continual dew of your blessing.
Grant this, O Lord,
for the honour of our advocate and mediator, Jesus Christ.

All **Amen.**

2 *For Mission*

(traditional language)

Almighty God,
who hast called thy Church to witness
that thou wast in Christ reconciling the world to thyself:
help us so to proclaim the good news of thy love
that all who hear it may be drawn unto thee;
through him who was lifted up on the cross,
and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

(contemporary language)

Almighty God,
who called your Church to bear witness
that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:
help us to proclaim the good news of your love,
that all who hear it may be drawn to you;
through him who was lifted up on the cross,
and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

3 *A Concluding Prayer*

Almighty God,
who hast given us grace at this time
with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee;
and dost promise
that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name
thou wilt grant their requests:
fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants,
as may be most expedient for them;
granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth,
and in the world to come life everlasting.

All **Amen.**

(contemporary language)

Almighty God,
you have given us grace at this time
with one accord to make our common supplication to you;
and have promised
that when two or three are gathered together in your name
you will grant their requests.
Fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of your servants,
as may be most expedient for them,
granting us in this world knowledge of your truth,
and in the world to come, life everlasting.

All **Amen.**

Introductions to the Peace

God has made us one in Christ.
He has set his seal upon us and, as a pledge of what is to come,
has given the Spirit to dwell in our hearts. *cf 2 Corinthians 1.22*

(or)

We are the body of Christ.
In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.
Let us then pursue all that makes for peace
and builds up our common life.

(or, especially on festivals of the saints)

May the God of peace sanctify you:
may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness
that you may be blameless before him
at the coming of our Lord Jesus with his saints. *1 Thessalonians 5.23; 3.13*

Post Communions

Either the Post Communion of the day or one of these prayers is said

Lord God, the source of truth and love,
keep us faithful to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
united in prayer and the breaking of bread,
and one in joy and simplicity of heart,
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Eternal God, giver of love and power,
your Son Jesus Christ has sent us into all the world
to preach the gospel of his kingdom:
confirm us in this mission,
and help us to live the good news we proclaim;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Almighty God,
who on the day of Pentecost
sent your Holy Spirit to the apostles
with the wind from heaven and in tongues of flame,
filling them with joy and boldness to preach the gospel:
by the power of the same Spirit
strengthen us to witness to your truth
and to draw everyone to the fire of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

God of truth,
we have seen with our eyes
and touched with our hands the bread of life:
strengthen our faith
that we may grow in love for you
and for each other;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Renewal of Commitment

The bishop asks all Readers to stand.

My brothers and sisters,
in the name of the Church
I thank you for your faithful ministry as Readers.
I pray God's continuing blessing upon you
and invite you now to renew your commitment
to the ministry entrusted to you.

Therefore I ask:

will you, as a Reader, continue, as far as in you lies,
to promote peace and unity
and to conduct yourself as becomes a worker for Christ,
for the good of his Church
and for the spiritual welfare of all people?

Readers **With God's help, I will.**

Will you continue to study the Scriptures,
to deepen your knowledge of the Christian faith
and to grow in your discipleship of Christ?

Readers **With God's help, I will.**

Will you give obedience to those who are set in authority over you
and will you work willingly and collaboratively
with all who are your fellow-workers in the gospel?

Readers **With God's help, I will.**

Will you then, in the strength of the Holy Spirit,
continually stir up the gift of God that is in you
to make Christ known to all?

Readers **With God's help, I will.**

Almighty God,
who has given you the will to undertake these things,
give you also the strength to perform them,
that he may complete that work that he has begun in you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

**God our Father,
we offer our lives to do your work
in your Church and in the world.
Help us by your Holy Spirit
to hear more clearly your call to deeper commitment
to your service,
and give us grace to respond with gladness;
for the glory of Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Blessings

The blessing may be preceded by the following:

Bishop Our help is in the name of the Lord,
All **who has made heaven and earth.**

Bishop Blessed be the name of the Lord,
All **now and for ever. Amen.**

The president may use a seasonal blessing, or another suitable blessing.

God give you a vision of his love,
faith to believe it
and grace to fulfil it;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.
All **Amen.**

(or)

God give you grace to follow his saints
in faith and hope and love;
and the blessing ...

(or)

The Spirit of truth lead you into all truth,
give you grace to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
and strengthen you to proclaim the word and works of God;
and the blessing ...

(or)

May the Father, whose glory fills the heavens,
cleanse you by his holiness
and send you to proclaim his word.

All **Amen.**

May Christ, who has ascended to the heights,
pour upon you the riches of his grace.

All **Amen.**

May the Holy Spirit, the comforter,
equip you and strengthen you in your ministry.

All **Amen.**

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.

All **Amen.**

Notes

1 **Forms of Service**

Questions concerning the form of service to be used, and other matters concerning the conduct of the service, are to be determined by the Bishop of the Diocese, in consultation with the bishop who presides at it, in accordance with the rubrics of the service and having regard to tradition and local custom.

2 **Service of the Word / Morning or Evening Prayer**

If the rite of Admission and Licensing is included in a Service of the Word, for example during Evening Prayer in the cathedral of the diocese, the Admission and Licensing takes place after the prayers. At Morning or Evening Prayer from *The Book of Common Prayer*, it follows the prayers after the Third Collect. The prayers should include appropriate intercession for the Church and its ministers (see pages 15–16).

3 **Holy Communion**

If the rite of Admission and Licensing is included within a celebration of Holy Communion, it takes place after the Prayers of Intercession, which should include appropriate intercession for the Church and its ministers (see Resources), and before the Peace.

4 **Ministries**

It is appropriate for the president to delegate suitable parts of the liturgy to Readers. See the Note on Ministries to the Order for the Celebration of Holy Communion in *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, page 158.

5 **The Declarations of Assent and Obedience and the Declaration required by Canon E 6**

The Declarations of Assent and Obedience and the Declaration required by Canon E 6 may be made either before the service in the presence of the bishop or the bishop's commissary or during the Presentation. If the former is the case, the Declaration of Assent, with its Preface, should be printed at the front of the service booklet. If the latter is the case, the Declarations replace the first question asked by the bishop during the Presentation.

6 The Presentation of Candidates for Admission

The questions about the Declarations may be answered by the Warden of Readers or the registrar, or they may be replaced by a statement by the bishop, as follows:

They have affirmed and declared their belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness. They have also made the declaration of obedience to the Bishop and the declaration which must be made before a Reader is licensed.

It is appropriate for the Warden of Readers or someone who has been involved with the candidates' selection, formation and training to answer the questions about their character and preparation.

7 Vesture

The candidates should wear cassock and surplice for the whole service and may either enter wearing a blue scarf or be vested with it during the service.

8 Admission

The bishop shall admit a person to the office of Reader by the delivery of the New Testament, but without imposition of hands (Canon E 5, para. 5).

9 Licensing

The newly-admitted Readers may remain before the bishop and receive their licences from him after all have been admitted. Alternatively they may join their clergy and members of their congregations seated in the nave and receive their licences from the bishop there.

10 Readers Moving to a New Parish or Diocese

When Readers move to a new parish or diocese it is appropriate that they should be welcomed and licensed publicly at the Service of Admission and Licensing. They can be presented to the bishop by the Warden, registrar or parish priest.

The questions about the Declarations may be answered by the Warden of Readers or the registrar, or they may be replaced by a statement by the bishop, as follows:

They have affirmed and declared their belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness. They have also made the declaration of obedience to the Bishop and the declaration which must be made before a Reader is licensed.

11 The Peace

In a Service of the Word, if it is desired to include the Peace it follows naturally after the welcome of newly admitted and licensed Readers. Alternatively, the Dismissal may conclude with the Peace.

12 Renewal of Commitment

Particularly at an annual service for Readers, it may be appropriate for other Readers present to re-dedicate themselves to their ministry at the end of the service (see page 19).

Welcome of Newly Licensed Readers

It is customary for those admitted and licensed as Readers to be welcomed formally by their congregations on the Sunday following the service and to read aloud their licences.

This form of words may be used:

The president says

I present to you *N* who was [*admitted and*] licensed as a Reader by the Bishop of *N* in the cathedral yesterday. Will you welcome and uphold *him/her* in *his/her* new ministry for Christ?

All **With the help of God, we will.**

The Reader reads out the licence, and may be invited to give testimony.

The president may pray for the new Reader.

The president may introduce the Peace in these or other suitable words

We are all one in Christ Jesus.
We belong to him through faith,
heirs of the promise of the Spirit of peace.

All The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

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[An asterisk * indicates that a prayer has been adapted.]

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