

The House of Bishops' Guidelines for Good Practice in the Deliverance Ministry 1975 (revised 2012)

Introduction

The House of Bishops' Guidelines for Good Practice in the Deliverance Ministry were issued in 1975 and have withstood the test of time as concise principles on which to base decisions about a pastoral area of the Church of England's work.

There have been many changes to good pastoral practice since the 1970s, combined with an increased awareness of a wide range of areas including mental health and safeguarding, making it proper to review advice and guidelines within such a sensitive ministry.

As part of the process of review, in 2009 the Archbishops' Adviser for the Healing Ministry undertook a comprehensive survey and review of deliverance ministry, collating and analysing information from every diocese in the Church of England. Having completed this work, and observing the uneven nature of much deliverance ministry practice, she made a series of recommendations in her 2010 report for ensuring best practice in the future.

A review group comprising the Rt Rev'd Michael Scott-Joynt, the Rt Rev'd Paul Butler and the Rt Rev'd Dr. Brian Castle considered the report and its recommendations. It was decided that the existing Guidelines should be reissued together with some further explanatory detail describing a context for best practice. The Guidelines are reissued in order to offer bishops a resource and framework for the manner in which deliverance ministry decisions should ideally be made

Jesus, in his life, suffering and death, and in his resurrection and ascension defeated evil and brought the hope of salvation to everyone. So we can be confident that when we pray the Lord's Prayer for deliverance from evil, God hears us, and that praying with people for their needs and protection is often an appropriate way of ministering to them.

Some people, however, seek specific help when going through times of suffering and anxiety, or when distressed by what seem to be continuing experiences of evil within them or around them. For these people, it may be right to ask for God's saving help through the Church's deliverance ministry.

However, particular caution needs to be exercised, especially when ministering to someone who is in a distressed or disturbed state. Consequently, the following guidelines should be borne in mind in relation to requests for the ministry of deliverance.

1. It should be undertaken by experienced persons authorized by the diocesan bishop

- *The ministry of exorcism and deliverance may only be exercised by a priest authorized by the diocesan bishop.*
- *Everyone involved in this ministry needs clear lines of accountability and the authority of the priest specifically holding this responsibility on the Bishop's behalf needs to be recognized.*
- *All should have proper supervision and should abide by these guidelines and by diocesan regulations. Each diocesan bishop will draw up local regulations or guidelines for the ministry of deliverance for the diocese.*
- *All individuals authorized for this ministry should receive appropriate training and be kept up to date with developments, as well as understanding the deliverance practices of other churches.*
- *This ministry should never be undertaken by one person ministering alone; the authorized person should always be accompanied by another priest or lay minister of mature pastoral experience who is similarly authorized.*
- *Everyone involved in performing this ministry should be covered by adequate insurance. The bishop should ensure that the diocesan board of finance has an insurance policy in place to cover anyone authorised by the bishop to exercise this ministry.*

2. It should be done in the context of prayer and sacrament

- *If an exorcism is to be performed, permission for it must be received under the authority of a diocesan bishop, for each specific exercise of such a ministry.*
- *The relevant incumbent will normally be both consulted and involved.*
- *Suitable resources from The Book of Common Prayer, Common Worship or any other approved source should normally be used as determined by the bishop.*
- *The recipient(s) should be able to trust and to draw confidence from the personal conduct and faith of any person involved in the exercise of deliverance ministry.*
- *The recipient(s) should be made aware that what is offered is a specific ministry*

of the Church and as such draws them into the presence of Jesus Christ in his own healing ministry.

- *This ministry may be exercised in the context of or with the addition of the sacraments.*
- *Language, body language and touch should be courteous and considerate. Recipients should be made aware of how the ministry is to be exercised and no one should receive ministry against their will.*
- *All such ministry should be done with regard to the House of Bishops' safeguarding policies and best practice for children, young people and vulnerable adults.*
- *Any complaints about personal conduct and/or lack of attention to safeguarding should be taken seriously and referred to the appropriate senior diocesan officer for investigation.*

3. It should be done in collaboration with the resources of medicine

- *A multi-disciplinary approach is to be desired, consulting and collaborating as necessary with doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists, and recognizing that health-care professionals and related agencies are bound by codes of conduct.*
- *In relation to counselling and psychotherapy, it should be noted that these should only be provided by suitably accredited counsellors and therapists.*

4. It should be followed up by continuing pastoral care

- *Diocesan advisers for deliverance ministry should be available to advise and when necessary, to work with clergy and chaplains in providing continuing pastoral care on a case-by-case basis.*
- *People in receipt of such ministry should be encouraged to find a caring and supportive home within their local Christian community.*

5. It should be done with the minimum of publicity

- *The privacy and dignity of individuals and families should be respected.*
- *Confidential records should be kept by those carrying out deliverance ministry to protect both those to whom they minister and those who are ministering, within the constraints of the Data Protection Act.*
- *Any limitations to confidentiality should be explained in advance and any disclosure should be restricted to relevant information, which should be conveyed only to appropriate persons, normally with consent and again, within the constraints of the Data Protection Act.*