

Preparing to be a Lay Reader

Course of Study for Lay Readers

Training of a candidate lay reader is the responsibility of his or her rector/priest-in-charge. No specific course of study is provided for lay readers, it being expected that rector/priest-in-charges will develop individual programmes based on the needs of the parish and on the abilities and needs of their candidates. It is expected that candidates read and gain practical experience in the five areas outlined below. A reading list is available from the chaplain, but such list is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive, and it is expected that rector/priest-in-charges will provide their candidates with reading from their own libraries or with material from their own experience.

Biblical Theology

Candidates are expected to be familiar with the Bible. In addition, it is expected that they will have an appreciation for the development of the biblical texts, some familiarity with the different literary types of biblical texts, and some understanding of the various types of biblical criticism. Familiarity with, and the ability to use various non-biblical reference materials, such as concordances, commentaries, Bible dictionaries and atlases, and theological lexicons is expected. Candidates should also have some understanding of the difficulties of translating an ancient text into modern English, and the interpretational bias inherent in various English translations.

Systematic Theology

It is not expected that lay readers be dogmatic theologians; however, they ought to have an understanding of various areas of systematic theology somewhat beyond that acquired in confirmation class. While not exhaustive, most if not all of the following areas ought to be included: doctrine of creation, doctrine of humanity (theological anthropology), sin and evil, doctrine of God, doctrine of the Trinity, revelation, Christology, redemption, atonement, the Holy Spirit (pneumatology), doctrine of the Church (ecclesiology), the means of grace, the Christian life (morals and ethics), last things (eschatology). It is important that candidates discover and clarify their own understanding in these areas of classical theology, as well as gaining some appreciation for differing and conflicting points of view. It is also important that candidates discover the spectrum of Anglican theology in these areas, and find and become comfortable with their own place in the continuum of Anglican beliefs, rather than seeing themselves as possessors of the only permissible "truth."

Church History

It is expected that lay readers understand the historical processes by which the church to which they belong and in which they serve came to be. Candidates are expected to read church history and gain understanding of most of the following: the Jewish background to Christianity, the founding of the Church of the disciples at Pentecost, the early (New Testament) Christian communities, Paul's importance, the development of the threefold ministry, the important Christian heresies, the early Fathers, the Constantinian establishment, the first ecumenical councils, the christological heresies, the great schism between Latin and Greek Christianity, monasticism, Celtic Christianity, Roman christianization of Europe and the British Isles, the Church in the Middle Ages, the European reformations, the English Reformation from Henry VIII to the Glorious Revolution; the English Commonwealth, Presbyterianism, and Puritanism; the Counter Reformation, the Methodist revival, the Evangelical Revival, the Oxford Movement, Anglican missionary activity, the Church in Canada, the development of the Anglican Communion, Vatican II and its influence on all churches, the Faith

and Order Movement of the World Council of Churches, bilateral and multi-lateral ecumenical dialogues. There is no expectation that candidates become church historians, only that they gain an understanding of the church as a community with a history, and particularly an understanding of Anglican history.

Liturgy

Candidates will be expected to read in the areas of liturgical development and liturgical leadership. Without becoming liturgical experts, it is expected that candidates will gain an understanding of how the Eucharistic liturgy developed from the Last Supper of Jesus and the disciples into the present Holy Eucharist. They also ought to gain understanding of the history and development of the various prayer offices. As a goal, candidates ought to be able to explain to others, in some detail, why we do what we do on Sundays. This understanding should extend to being able to plan a service for a particular Sunday, including selecting readings, other propers, prayers, and hymns, and being able to explain their choices. On the practical side, candidates should learn to use their voice in liturgical leadership, the use of liturgical gestures appropriate to their parish, and generally become comfortable and familiar with officiating at an Office or assisting at a Holy Eucharist. Familiarity with all current Anglican liturgies, even those not used in their own parish is expected, as is some familiarity with the breadth of liturgical custom in Anglicanism.

Preaching

Candidates are expected to learn the exegetical and hermeneutical techniques required to produce and preach a sermon from a given text. Doing this will draw on the candidate's learning from the previous four areas of study, thus it is recommended that preaching be tackled near the end in the sequence of learning. It is expected that the sermons produced will be faithful to the biblical text, consistent with accepted Anglican theology and the traditions of the candidate's parish, and will be relevant to the needs of the hearers, the parish, and the world. Above all, a sermon should be "good news" for the hearer, not a riding of the preacher's own theological, psychological, or sociological hobby horse! It is also expected that candidates learn some of the techniques of good sermon construction, and of oral delivery. Instruments for sermon evaluation are available from the chaplain, and may be used with practice sermons in the parish.

The Licence

When a rector/priest-in-charge and candidate agree that the candidate is ready to be licensed, the rector/priest-in-charge will request a licence through the Chaplain to the Lay Readers. The chaplain must receive a description of the training that has been undertaken as well as a copy of the proposed covenant. The chaplain may also require the candidate to meet either with the chaplain or with a senior priest in the local area for an interview. This interview is structured and pastoral in nature, and is intended to deal with any outstanding questions as well as generally assessing the readiness of the candidate for licensing.

Following satisfactory completion of the above, the chaplain recommends the candidate for licensing to the Bishop.