

# **Church of Ireland The House of Bishops**

## **PROTOCOL FOR GRANTING PERMISSION TO OFFICIATE**

### **Introduction**

In the Church of Ireland, as in other churches of the Anglican Communion, ‘prior authorisation to exercise public ministry as an ordained or lay person within a diocese must be obtained from the diocesan bishop or other designated authority.’<sup>1</sup>

Beneficed clergy are licensed to exercise ministry in a particular place by virtue of institution to the benefice. All other clergy require, from the diocesan bishop, either a licence or permission to officiate.

No bishop, priest or deacon coming from another diocese, which includes a diocese within the Church of Ireland or in another province of the Anglican Communion shall exercise public ministry in the host diocese without the prior permission of the host diocesan bishop.<sup>2</sup>

These principles are set out in sections 24 - 26 of Chapter IV of the *Constitution of the Church of Ireland*.

This protocol sets out the circumstances in which Permission to Officiate is granted by bishops in the Church of Ireland.

### **What is Permission to Officiate?**

Section 24 of Chapter IV of the *Constitution of the Church of Ireland* states:

No member of the clergy shall be permitted to serve in any place until examination has been made of such person’s sufficiency, sobriety, and fitness in every way for the ministrations to which such person is to be appointed. On being found worthy by the bishop, such person shall be admitted by the bishop by instrument in writing under the bishop’s hand and seal.

In order to exercise ministry (any form of public, liturgical or pastoral ministry) in a diocese clergy must be beneficed or licensed. Where a member of the clergy is not beneficed or licensed, he or she requires the bishop’s permission to exercise ministry; this is Permission to Officiate.

Permission to Officiate is a concession, a courtesy, granted by a diocesan bishop.

Permission to Officiate may be granted to:

- a member of the clergy, in good standing in his or her own diocese, visiting another diocese; or

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<sup>1</sup> PCLCCAC, Principle 42.1.

<sup>2</sup> PCLCCAC, Principle 42.5.

- retired clergy resident in, and in good standing in a diocese; or
- retired clergy resident in, and in good standing in a neighbouring diocese but who customarily attend or are accustomed members of a parish in a different diocese in which he or she is also in good standing.

Permission to Officiate enables a member of the clergy to exercise ministry publicly, liturgically or pastorally, when invited to do so by a bishop or an incumbent in the diocese in which the permission has been granted by the bishop of that diocese.

Permission to Officiate is held at the bishop's pleasure and may be withdrawn at any time.

### **Stage One:**

1. Before s/he can be permitted by the bishop to minister in a diocese, a member of the clergy from another diocese (which includes a diocese within the Church of Ireland or in another province of the Anglican Communion) must produce to the host bishop such satisfactory evidence of ordination and good standing as may be lawfully required.<sup>3</sup>
  - 1.1. Initial contact may be made directly to the host bishop or the host bishop's office by the enquirer.
  - 1.2. In the case of enquirers from within the Church of Ireland, the host bishop shall be satisfied that the enquirer is in Holy Orders and is in good standing in his or her own diocese.
  - 1.3. In the case of enquirers from outside the Church of Ireland, the host bishop shall (i) seek copies of the Letters of Orders of the enquirer, and (ii) testimonial from the bishop of the diocese in which the enquirer currently serves or last served.<sup>4</sup>
  - 1.4. Permission to Officiate will not be granted where an enquirer is not in good standing in his or her own diocese.
  - 1.5. In the case of all enquirers to exercise public ministry in a particular parish or extra-parochial ministry, the host bishop shall be satisfied that the Incumbent or Chaplain of that parish/sector ministry has given consent to the exercise of such ministry.
  - 1.6. Prior to the grant of Permission to Officiate the bishop shall either (i), in the case of dioceses in the Republic of Ireland, be in receipt of a Vetting Disclosure in respect of the enquirer; or (ii) require the enquirer to undergo the AccessNI Vetting process; and the enquirer shall have completed training in *Safeguarding* Trust.

### **Stage Two:**

2. Granting of Permission to Officiate
  - 2.1. Permission to Officiate is at the discretion of the host bishop and it may be general or it may be limited as to function, duties, time, place or other such matters prescribed by law.
  - 2.2. The host bishop may grant Permission to Officiate informally for a one-off, single purpose, or short time-limited basis (e.g. Holy Week, a weekend), or it may be limited

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<sup>3</sup> PCLCCAC, Principle 42.6, CCI, Ch IV s 24

<sup>4</sup> CCI, Ch IV s 25 and s 26.

as to functions (e.g. for the purposes of officiating at a funeral or marriage), or to place.

- 2.3. The host bishop may give an enduring Permission to Officiate where the following conditions are met:
  - the applicant is resident in the host diocese;
  - the applicant is not resident in the host diocese but customarily worships in a church in the host diocese or considers him/herself to be an accustomed member of a parish in the host diocese, and is in good standing in the diocese in which he or she is resident;
  - the applicant exercises extra-parochial ministry in Ireland and the nature of that ministry may make it appropriate that the applicant has permission to officiate in a diocese (e.g. Director of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute).
- 2.4. Permission to Officiate under 2.2 may be granted by the host bishop by informal recorded exchange e.g. letter or email.
- 2.5. Permission to Officiate under 2.3 will be granted in writing by the host bishop under his or her hand and seal.
- 2.6. In the case of Permission to Officiate under 2.3 where an applicant has not previously made and subscribed the Declaration for Subscription in the Church of Ireland or, at the host bishop's discretion within the diocese in question, the applicant shall make and subscribe the Declaration for Subscription.
- 2.7. Permissions to Officiate under 2.3 shall be recorded in the Diocesan Registry.
- 2.8. Permissions to Officiate under 2.3 remain in place until revoked by the bishop.
- 2.9. Permissions to Officiate are granted, usually without public or liturgical ceremony.
- 2.10. Permission to Officiate does not ordinarily entitle a priest to be included on the Register of Solemnisers for the purposes of officiating at a marriage. Separate application to the bishop should be made where such inclusion is sought.
- 2.11. A host bishop is not obliged to give reasons for a refusal of permission to officiate.

### **Stage Three**

3. Withdrawal of Permission to Officiate:
  - 3.1. Permissions to Officiate may be withdrawn by the host bishop at any time.
  - 3.2. The host bishop is not obliged to set out reasons for the withdrawal of a Permission to Officiate.
  - 3.3. Where Permission to Officiate is withdrawn the affected party shall be informed.
  - 3.4. Withdrawal of Permission of Officiate shall be noted in the Diocesan Registry.

### **Permission to Officiate and the Exercise of Liturgical Ministry:**

When invited to conduct public worship, clergy with Permission to Officiate should bear in mind the following.

- a) The worship should be conducted in a manner consonant with the laws of the Church of Ireland.
- b) The worship should be consistent with the usual pattern and conduct of worship of the particular parish church.

- c) Care should be taken to respect the ministry of lay people and, where the laity are regularly involved in worship, this practice should be encouraged.
- d) With the exception of vacancies and emergencies, the request to conduct public worship should be issued by the incumbent or priest-in-charge.

**House of Bishops  
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