

The Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist

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To: All Clergy
 All Churchwardens
 All Diocesan Organisations

Please share this letter as widely as you can with the people of your church or organisation!

Dear Friends in Christ,

In *Ephesians 1:19-20*, Paul says that God's power to work in us is "like the working of his mighty strength which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms." Alleluia! May we all come to know that power, exercised with the self-sacrificial love of the cross.

Renewal of Lay Ministers' Licences

In Advent 2014 I wrote about the need to train more stipendiary priests – so that we have the Rectors we need in the future. Now I am writing about something equally important: the renewal of Lay Ministers' Licences. This is something that takes place every 5 years in the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist – and the last time was in 2010. That is why we are meeting to renew the licences of all Lay Ministers at Diocesan Standing Committee (DSC) on 18th April.

1 Biblical Foundations

I find it helpful to think about how Jesus called people to be his disciples, and then called those disciples to share in various ministries that he was already doing – he continues to do that today. In John's version of the Great Commission, Jesus says, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (*John 20:21*). Between all of us in the church, as the body of Christ, we continue the mission and ministry of Jesus. And each of us has a part to play.

Let's read *Luke 6:12-19*

¹²Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. ¹³And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: ¹⁴Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and ¹⁶Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. ¹⁷He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

1.1 Jesus Spent the Night in Prayer (vs 12)

Jesus knew that he needed to be deeply soaked in prayer in order to make the right choices. I can imagine that, as he prayed through that night, he brought before God the various people who were following him as disciples. There was quite a large number of them. Now it was time to call those who would exercise special leadership as apostles, and Jesus needed the guidance of the Holy Spirit as he made those selections.

I wonder how much you pray for your church and the community in which you live? God calls all of us who are leaders (clergy, lay ministers, church councillors) to be people of prayer. Bring the needs of the church

Diocesan Vision: To make disciples in vibrant, self-sufficient congregations established and linked to each other by sharing in resources; ministry & service; outreach & evangelism.

and community to God daily in prayer. And in the context of this text, ask God to show you who he is calling to different roles within church and community.

1.2 Jesus Called the Twelve by Name (vs 13-15)

By the time Jesus came down from the mountain in the morning he knew exactly whom God wanted him to call as apostles – special messengers of the gospel. And so he called each of them by name. He knew their strengths and weaknesses (John says he even knew which one would betray him in the end) but he asked them anyway. Jesus was willing to take a risk with his apostles, just as he does when he calls each of us!

I have found that, when I really bring the people and the needs of the church and community to God in prayer, he also shows me whom he is calling. When I approach them they often say, “I was hoping that someone would ask me!” Yet they do not have the confidence to offer themselves until they are asked. Those of us who are clergy and lay ministers have a responsibility to help identify those whom God is calling to become clergy and lay ministers in the future. So always be on the lookout, take it to God in prayer, and then invite them, gently but with conviction.

1.3 He Came Down with them and Stood on a Level Place” (vs 17-19)

Luke paints a picture which looks something like concentric circles:

- ✦ **Jesus** is standing in the centre, and power is coming from him – his teaching is amazing, he heals the sick and it is clear to the people that God is at work.
- ✦ The newly chosen **apostles** are right around him. *Mark 3:14-15* explains clearly what Jesus’ purpose is: “*And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons.*”
- ✦ Beyond them we see a whole lot of **disciples** – people who have been watching and learning from Jesus, and are serious about following him and imitating his lifestyle.
- ✦ Around them are **crowds** of people who have come because they are inquisitive, they want to hear what Jesus has to say, or perhaps they are in need of healing or hope to see a miracle.
- ✦ On the outside are all the **towns and villages** where people are going about their lives as though nothing has happened – perhaps they are not aware of Jesus, or they just don’t care. They are the mission field.

Please see the hand-out of the PowerPoint presentation from DSC on 18th April

But it is not a static picture. Jesus is always calling those on the outside to come closer to him. And as they do so they receive salvation and healing. They also find themselves being challenged and changed, called to reflect the reign of God in the way they live. He calls them to share in his mission and ministry, and in the end he sends them out into the world, to the towns and villages, to do what he has been doing.

1.4 In the Church Today

Jesus still calls everyone from wherever we are to come closer to himself, and then sends us out. So he is calling:

- ✦ **Us** to reach out to those who are not part of the church and have not yet responded to the good news that the Kingdom of God has come in Jesus.
- ✦ Those who are outside the church to become part of the **congregation**, worship regularly and start to play their part in the life of the church.
- ✦ Churchgoers or members of our congregations to become **active members** of the church who have a living relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and are beginning to use their gifts to serve God in and beyond the church – in other words to become disciples.
- ✦ Active, committed members into different positions of **leadership** or **formal ministry** in the church. ***These leaders or ministers include the clergy, licensed lay ministers, churchwardens and church council members, and leaders of organisations.***
- ✦ Everyone to relate more closely to **Jesus**, experience the life-giving love and power of the Holy Spirit, and know God has their loving Father.

1.5 How this Applies to Lay Ministers

First, it should be clear from what I have written that, in order to become a lay minister, **you must first be a disciple of Jesus!** I am not saying you must be perfect, but you must be following Jesus seriously in every part of your life. Becoming a disciple of Jesus involves the whole person, and our lay ministry training therefore involves all these aspects:

- 1) **Head** – Growing in understanding of the Christian faith and also learning more about the ministry you are doing;
- 2) **Hands** – Developing the gifts God has given you and also learning new skills for ministry;
- 3) **Heart** – Increasingly reflecting the attitudes and character of Jesus as you relate to others and to the world, honouring God in your lifestyle and behaviour, giving generously to the church.



Secondly, it is important to understand that **all ministry is equally important** – just different! Active, committed members of the church engage in all sorts of “informal” ministries and serve in many vitally important ways. Many of them work behind the scenes, but without them the church could not function.

Clergy, lay ministers, churchwardens and church councillors, leaders of organisations and others like them engage in various “formal” ministries. **Because they represent the church in an official way**, and often in public they need special selection, training and authorisation. Clergy and Lay Ministers receive a licence from the Bishop; Churchwardens and Church Council members are admitted by the Archdeacon.

2 Licensed Lay Ministers

2.1 Categories of Lay Minister

In the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist we recognise three categories of Licensed Lay Minister – and over time you can be trained and licensed in more than one of them:

- 1) **Worship Leader** – Assisting at the Eucharist, leading morning or evening prayer, conducting funerals, taking communion to the sick and housebound;
- 2) **Preacher** – Preaching and teaching at church services;
- 3) **Pastoral Care** – Christian Listening, hospital visiting, praying for people, healing ministry.

We intend to develop two more categories: **Youth Pastor** and **Evangelist**.

2.2 The Process of Becoming a Lay Minister

There are three stages to becoming a Licensed Lay Minister:

2.2.1 Apply to the Diocesan Office

In order to do this you will need to:

- 1) Complete an **application form** for one of the categories (it is best to train in one area at a time);
- 2) Get it **signed** by your priest and church council to show that you have their support;
- 3) Submit it to the Diocesan Office.

You will then receive a **Probationary Licence** for one year, which means that you can start doing the ministry, under supervision, while you are learning. On the back of the probationary licence is a list of all the training you need to do. Each section must be signed by your trainer when it has been completed.

2.2.2 Do the Training

It is very important to understand that **all our training is done in relationship with others** – in groups or one-on-one. It is **never** appropriate for your priest just to give you the study material and tell you to read it! The training for each category involves three parts:

- 1) Do **“Rooted in Jesus”**, at least books 1 and 2, with a group. This will give you a solid foundation of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.¹ It would be valuable to complete all four books over time.
- 2) Do the **Specialised Training** for your category of Lay Minister. Your Rector or one of your clergy will be able to do some of this training with you, and Diocesan training teams can do the rest.
- 3) **Learn by doing** – one of your clergy or other Lay Ministers should show you how to do things in practice, and guide and mentor you as you start to exercise this ministry.

2.2.3 Receive your Licence

Once you have completed all the training, your Rector or Priest in Charge will return your probationary licence to the Diocesan Office, with all the training sections signed as complete. You will then receive your license after signing a declaration to say that you will submit to the Pastoral Standards of ACSA. All licences that are issued over the next five years will be valid until the end of 2020, when they will need to be renewed.

Please serve God faithfully – and help identify others (especially young people!) who can begin to train as new lay ministers.

2.3 The Pastoral Standards

Everyone who exercises any ministry or leadership in the church is subject to the Pastoral standards. They help us to know what is expected of us, and how to deal with problems when they arise. Many of our clergy have received training in how to run workshops on the Pastoral Standards. ***We are asking all parishes to run these workshops, or to do them together in archdeaconries.***



2.3.1 Expectations

The most important section of the Pastoral Standards deals with expectations – especially in how we live our lives, and what behaviour is acceptable in ministers and leaders. Some of the things covered are:

- ✦ Biblical principles
- ✦ Living a balanced life
- ✦ Guidelines on confidentiality, handling money, and relationships between male and female
- ✦ What ministers should do, and what they may not do.

2.3.2 Procedure when Things go Wrong

The Pastoral Standards explain exactly **what must be done** when something goes wrong in the life or ministry of a minister or leader. This includes:

- ✦ How to report and who to report to
- ✦ How the issue should be investigated
- ✦ How to address the issue once the investigation has been completed.

The goal in the Pastoral Standards is always to put things right and, if possible, to restore those involved to ministry, rather than to discipline or punish them.

Thank you for sharing in the mission and ministry of the church in the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist! May God bless and use you mightily as you offer yourself to him – in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yours in Christ,

†Martin

†Martin: St Mark the Evangelist

¹ Don't forget, we have **Rooted in Jesus** and **Rooted in Jesus Junior** training at Mater Dei from Thursday 30th April to Sunday 2nd May this year – contact Frauke or Jacky at the Diocesan Office to find out more. We would love to have you there!