

Section D

The order of deaconesses

D 1 Of the order of deaconesses

1. The order of deaconesses is an order of ministry in the Church of England to which women are admitted by prayer and the laying on of hands by the bishop.

2. It belongs to the office of a deaconess, in the place where she is licensed to serve and under the direction of the minister, to lead the people in public worship, to exercise pastoral care, to instruct the people in the Christian faith, and to prepare them for the reception of the sacraments.

3. A deaconess may:

- (a) in accordance with Canon B 11 be authorized and invited to say or sing Morning or Evening Prayer (save for the Absolution);
- (b) distribute the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people and read the Epistle and the Gospel.

4. The bishop may also authorize a deaconess to perform any of the following duties at the invitation of the minister of a parish or an extra-parochial place within the meaning of section 1 of the Deaconesses and Lay Ministry Measure 1972:

- (a) to preach at divine service;
- (b) to church women and, in the absence of the minister, to baptize;
- (c) with the goodwill of the persons responsible, to bury the dead or read the burial service before, at or after a cremation;
- (d) to publish banns of marriage at Morning and Evening Prayer (on occasions on which a lay person is permitted by the statute law so to do, and in accordance with the requirements of that law).

When a cure is vacant the first reference in this paragraph to the minister of a parish shall be construed as a reference to the rural dean.

5. Deaconesses may accept membership of any lay assembly of the Church of England.

6. Paragraph 4(b) and (c) of this Canon shall not apply to the Channel Islands.

D 2 Of admission to the order of deaconesses

1. Every woman to be admitted to the order of deaconesses shall be at least 23 years of age, unless she have a faculty from the Archbishop of Canterbury, shall be baptized and confirmed, and shall satisfy the bishop that she is a regular communicant of the Church of England.

2. Every woman who is to be admitted to the order of deaconesses shall first present to the bishop of the diocese:

(a) a certificate signed by a person approved by the bishop that she has been nominated to exercise the office of deaconess within his diocese either in a cure of souls or in a wider area, or is a teacher or lecturer in a school or college or is living under vows in the house of a religious order or community; the said school, college, or house of a religious order or community being situated within such diocese;

(b) (i) her birth certificate;

(ii) a certificate or other evidence of her baptism and confirmation;

(iii) testimony of her former good life and behaviour from persons specified by the bishop.

2A. No woman shall be admitted to the order of deaconesses unless she was accepted for training for admission to that order before the commencement of the Deacons (Ordination of Women) Measure 1986.*

3. No woman shall be admitted to the order of deaconesses except she be found on examination, held by the bishop or by competent persons appointed by him for this purpose, to possess a sufficient knowledge of Holy Scripture and of the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Church of England.

4. No woman shall be admitted to the order of deaconesses who is suffering or who has suffered from any physical or mental infirmity which, in the opinion of the bishop, will prevent her from exercising the office of a deaconess.

5. Every woman who is to be admitted to the order of deaconesses shall, in the presence of the bishop by whom she is to be so admitted or of the bishop's commissary, make the declaration set out below, the preface which precedes the Declaration of Assent in paragraph 1(1) of Canon C 15 (with the appropriate adaptations) having first been spoken by the bishop or commissary:

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.

She shall also make the oath following:

I, A B, will give due obedience to the Lord Bishop of C and his successors in all things lawful and honest: so help me God.

6. A woman shall be admitted to the order of deaconesses according to the form of service authorized by Canon B 1.

***Note:** *With regard to paragraph 2A above, the commencement date for the Deacons (Ordination of Women) Measure 1986 was determined jointly by the two archbishops as being 16 February 1987.*

D 3 Of the licensing of deaconesses

1. No deaconess shall exercise her office in any diocese until she has been licensed so to do by the bishop thereof: Provided that, when any deaconess is to exercise her office temporarily in any diocese, the written permission of the bishop shall suffice.

1A. A licence authorizing a deaconess to serve in a benefice in respect of which a team ministry is established may be in a form which specifies the term of years for which the licence shall have effect.

2. Every deaconess who is to be licensed to exercise her office in any place shall make a declaration and take an oath in the form and manner prescribed for a deaconess before her admission to the order.

3. Every bishop, before licensing a deaconess to exercise her office in any place, shall satisfy himself that adequate provision has been made for her salary, for her insurance against sickness or accident, and for a pension on her retirement.

3A. The bishop of a diocese may by notice in writing revoke summarily, and without further process, any licence granted to a deaconess within his diocese for any cause which appears to him to be good and reasonable, after having given her sufficient opportunity of showing reason to the contrary; and the notice shall notify the deaconess that she may, within 28 days from the date on which she receives the notice, appeal to the archbishop of the province in which that diocese is situated.

On such an appeal the archbishop may either hear the appeal himself or appoint a person holding the office of diocesan bishop or suffragan bishop in his province (otherwise than in the diocese concerned) to hear the appeal in his place; and, after hearing the appeal or, if he has appointed a bishop to hear the appeal in his place, after receiving a report in writing from that bishop, the archbishop may confirm, vary or cancel the revocation of the licence as he considers just and proper; and there shall be no appeal from the decision of the archbishop.

Where the see of the archbishop is vacant or the archbishop is also the bishop of the diocese concerned, any reference in the preceding provisions of this paragraph to the archbishop of the province shall be construed as a reference to the archbishop of the other province, but any bishop appointed by the archbishop of the other province by virtue of this paragraph shall be a bishop serving in the province which contains the diocese concerned.

Any appeal under this paragraph shall be conducted in accordance with rules approved by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York; and any such rules may provide for the appointment of one or more persons to advise the archbishop or bishop hearing such an appeal on any question of law arising in the course thereof.

3B. Where a bishop has granted a licence to a deaconess to serve in his diocese for a term of years specified in the licence, the bishop may revoke that licence under paragraph 3A of this Canon before the expiration of that term, and where he does so that deaconess shall have the like right of appeal as any other deaconess whose licence is revoked under that paragraph.

4. The bishop of every diocese shall keep a register book wherein shall be entered the names of every person whom he has either admitted to the order of deaconesses or licensed to exercise the office of a deaconess in his diocese.

