

Customary for the Diocese of Western Louisiana



The Right Reverend Jacob W. Owensby, PhD, DD

IV Bishop of Western Louisiana

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Ordained Ministry	3
1. Rule of Life	3
2. Pastoral Expectations	3
3. Book of Common Prayer	3
4. Clergy Information Form	3
5. Transition Ministry	4
6. Letters Dimissory	4
7. Vacation Policy	4
8. Reports	4
9. Clergy Supply Policies and Procedures	5
10. Ministry Funds	5
11. Safe Church	5
12. Sabbaticals	5
13. Priests	6
14. Deacons	7
15. Licensed Lay Ministries	7
16. Discernment Process for Holy Orders	8
17. Bishop's Visitation	8
18. Marriage	9

I. Ordained Ministry

The expectations, policies, and guidelines for exercise of ordained ministry are stated clearly in Title III of the Canons of the Episcopal Church and in the Canons of this Diocese. The following policies and procedures articulate these canons, amplify them for our specific setting, and clarify expectations for the clergy of this Diocese. This is not an exhaustive document. Knowledge of and adherence to the canons and the rubrics of the Prayer Book are required.

1. Rule of Life

Each clergy person will maintain a rule of life. Included in that rule will be the saying of the Daily Office at least once each day, weekly Holy Eucharist, a form of personal devotion, daily study, regular consultation with a spiritual director, a routine to maintain physical fitness, a healthy diet, an average of six to eight hours sleep each night, at least one day of rest each week, and an annual physical.

1. Pastoral Expectations

Pastoral Visits: Clergy will regularly visit the sick and the homebound. The dying should receive Last Rites and Viaticum. Care for the family of the dying extends beyond the illness and death into the days, weeks, and months following the burial office.

Funerals: Episcopal clergy bury the dead. When approached to officiate at a burial, clergy are expected to do so. Clergy do not refuse burial because someone is not a member. Burial is provided even for those lacking our faith using the appropriate liturgy in the Book of Occasional Services. Should a member of another congregation request burial, the clergy person should contact his or her clergy colleague in an effort to bring reconciliation.

Weddings: The Canons of the Episcopal Church and the Policy for weddings govern the solemnization of weddings in this Diocese.

2. Book of Common Prayer

All public worship is to follow the authorized Book of Common Prayer (1979). The rubrics of the prayer book must be followed precisely. Rubrics carry the same authority and weight as canon law. Violations of rubrics constitute a Title IV matter. Use of resources from *Enriching Our Worship* or prayer books from other provinces of the Anglican Communion require permission from the Bishop and should be done only on an episodic basis.

3. Clergy Information Form

Information on the basic life facts regarding the members of the clergy in this Diocese is essential to the Bishop in his role as Chief Pastor. Personnel data sheets for this purpose are to be obtained through the Office of the Bishop. They should be filled out and returned promptly, and reviewed periodically for updating. All such forms are the property of the Diocese and will be secured under lock and key. (See **Forms** section)

5. Transition Ministry

The Office of Transitional Ministry (OTM) at The Episcopal Church Center collects, files, stores and disseminates personal data on all clergy in relation to clergy placement. All clergy are expected to complete the profile form, forwarding it to the OTM, and update its contents annually. The Very Rev. Ronald Clingenpeel is our Transition Consultant and provides assistance with your OTM form and all other placement matters. The OTM profiles are used in the calling processes in this Diocese and in most others.

6. Letters Dimissory

When members of the clergy accept a call to and relocate in a new diocese, Letters Dimissory should be requested to be sent to the Diocesan Bishop immediately after taking up residence and being received by the Bishop of the new diocese.

Letters Dimissory for members of the clergy accepting a call as a rector or vicar and relocating in this Diocese are accepted immediately. Members of the clergy accepting a call as full-time assistants or associates in and relocating to this Diocese will remain canonically resident in the diocese from which they come. After two years of service their Letters Dimissory may be accepted. Retired and non-parochial clergy will remain canonically resident in the diocese from which they come.

The issuance and acceptance of Letters Dimissory may be delayed by the Bishop.

7. Vacation Policy

Clergy are entitled to one month of vacation for every calendar year's work and ministry. It is to be taken in consultation with the vestry. Should a priest leave his/her cure before completing a calendar year, he or she may expect only part of the vacation in proportion to the time served.

8. Reports

- a) Clergy in Non-Parochial Employment: An annual report to the Bishop is required. See Title III, Canon 9.3(e). (Appendix B: Report of Activities of Non-Parochial Clergy)
- b) Clergy in the Armed Services: See Title III, Canon 9 Sec.3(d)
- c) Annual Parochial Reports (see page 12)

Annual Parochial Reports must be completed and received by the Office of the Bishop not later than February 1 each year (Canon 22, Sec. 6). The clergy in charge of congregations are reminded that the Canons place the responsibility for delivering this report on them, as well as the Vestry/Bishop's Committee.

d) Annual Audits

An audit of the books of the congregation is required annually by Canon, and must be submitted by September 1 of each year (Canon 23). Audits need not be made by a CPA. A syllabus for use by congregational audit committees is available from the Diocesan House. The clergy in charge of congregations are reminded that these audits protect them, as well as the congregation itself.

9. Clergy Supply Policies and Procedures

The Diocese through the Office of the Bishop maintains a list of clergy available for supply and sets a minimum remuneration on January 1 of each calendar year. Please contact the diocesan office for minimum compensation and mileage rates. The congregation is expected to reimburse the supply priest for mileage in addition to the compensation for services.

10. Ministry Funds

Ministry funds (sometimes known as “discretionary funds”) are the property of the parish/mission, and are to be used to further the missionary and charitable purposes of the congregation. The funds may be held and dispensed by the clergy, as provided by Canon, but should be regularly accounted for to the vestry of the congregation in a way consistent with principles of confidentiality. On the resignation of the member of the clergy from the congregation, remaining ministry funds under his/her care shall be returned to the treasurer of the congregation.

11. Safe Church

The policies and guidelines for maintaining safe and proper boundaries are found in the Safe Church Policies of the Diocese. The Diocese of Western Louisiana does not tolerate sexual misconduct of any kind. Suspected misconduct should be reported immediately to the Intake Officer. Responses to complaints will follow the Title IV processes prescribed by the Canons of the Episcopal Church.

12. Sabbaticals

A professional sabbatical for the clergy is an experience intended to benefit both the clergy and the congregation, allowing for periodic intellectual, spiritual and physical refreshment and renewal deeper than that afforded by short-term continuing education experiences. The Diocese has a policy which is intended to encourage and assist both clergy and their parishes in planning for fruitful sabbatical experiences. Information about planning and funding a sabbatical may be obtained by consulting with the Bishop.

Sabbaticals cannot be taken before the 5th year of continuous tenure in a congregation and would normally be for a period of 3–4 months. After seven years, a sabbatical could be taken for 4–6 months. No priest is to be away for more than six months at a time.

Each person intending to take a sabbatical is required to submit a plan in writing a minimum of nine months before the start date of the leave to the Office of the Bishop. In some cases, a shorter sabbatical could be planned and approved with less lead time.

The proposal must outline in detail intended courses of study, spiritual retreats, workshops or other programs for personal and family renewal. The plan should also include a budget with sources of income, provide for interim coverage for the congregation, and make provision for a re-entry process at the conclusion of the sabbatical. Each priest is expected to work with the Office of the Bishop in working out their individual plan. This plan is to be approved initially by their vestry and then by the Bishop. In all cases, regardless of the length of the sabbatical, the above planning requirement must be fulfilled if diocesan funding is desired.

During a sabbatical, the priests' stipend, housing and benefits package will be maintained.

As continuity is a high value, we urge our clergy to work with the Office of the Bishop to identify early candidates to serve as Sabbatical Supply Priest. This individual shall serve a minimum of Sunday and eight additional hours per week and be compensated at required diocesan compensation levels.

We urge all clergy contemplating taking a sabbatical to seriously evaluate where they are in relationship to their call to serve. Clergy taking sabbatical should serve a minimum of one year more following the end of their sabbatical leave.

13. Priests

- a. Members of the clergy resident in this Diocese may function liturgically in the cure of another only with the permission of the rector of that cure.
- b. Upon the call of a new rector/vicar, all members of the clergy assisting in a congregation will immediately submit their resignations.
- c. Rectors or vicars retiring from a congregation should refrain from performing any liturgy or attending any services in that congregation for a minimum of two years. Once this period of time has passed and a parishioner requests that a former rector/vicar to perform a marriage, funeral, baptism, etc., permission to function must be sought from and granted by the incumbent rector/vicar. Naturally, there may be occasions when pastoral considerations require exceptions. In these cases, the new rector/vicar must be consulted and must grant consent.
- d. Rectors/vicars may not be dismissed by their congregations without the consent of the Bishop. Nor may rectors resign their cures without permission of the vestry.
- e. In the case of serious disputes between the rector and the vestry or the vicar and the mission council, the Bishop should be consulted to explain the canonical procedures for resolution.
- f. With the vestry's consent, a rector may call assisting clergy. Assisting clergy work for and are accountable to the rector. Before calling assisting clergy, rectors must contact the

Bishop. The Bishop will provide a list of names from which the rector may choose candidates.

- g. Rectors have the authority to dismiss assisting clergy. Before dismissing assisting clergy rectors must consult with the Bishop.

14. Deacons

- a. Deacons serve under the direction and supervision of the Bishop and may serve only in a manner and in such places as the Bishop designates. When assigned to a congregation in this Diocese, the deacon works under the supervision of the member of the clergy in charge thereof.
- b. Deacons desiring to relocate to another diocese may do so only with the consents of both the Bishop of this Diocese and of the bishop of the diocese to which the deacon desires to relocate.
- c. Deacons are not authorized to be in charge of a congregation in this Diocese.
- d. Deacons are not authorized to officiate at the rite of Holy Matrimony in this Diocese.
- e. The Bishop may authorize Deacons to conduct the Morning Prayer followed by Communion Under Special Circumstances. Consecrated elements shall be obtained from the Sunday Holy Eucharist of a nearby congregation. Permission must be obtained from the Bishop before leading such a service.
- f. When serving in the Holy Eucharist, Deacons read the Gospel, set the Table, announce the Prayers of the People and the Confession, and proclaim the dismissal. Deacons assigned to a congregation should take leadership in preparing the Prayers of the People each week. During the Eucharistic Prayer, the Deacon stands at the right of the celebrant and elevates the chalice at the Invitation.

1. Licensed Lay Ministries

A confirmed communicant in good standing or, in extraordinary circumstances, subject to guidelines established by the Bishop, a communicant in good standing, may be licensed by the Bishop to serve as Pastoral Leader, Worship Leader, Preacher, Eucharistic Minister, Eucharistic Visitor, Evangelist, or Catechist. Requirements and guidelines for the selection, training, continuing education, and deployment of such persons, and the duration of licenses shall be established by the Bishop in consultation with the Commission on Ministry. (IV.1.a)

Definitions of Ministries

A **Pastoral Leader** is a lay person authorized to exercise pastoral or administrative responsibility in a congregation under special circumstances, as defined by the Bishop.

A **Worship Leader** is a lay person who regularly leads public worship under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

A **Preacher** is a lay person authorized to preach. Persons so authorized shall only preach in congregations under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

A **Catechist** is a lay person authorized to prepare persons for Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, and the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows, and shall function under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

An **Evangelist** is a lay person who presents the good news of Jesus Christ in such a way that people are led to receive Christ as Savior and follow Christ as Lord in the fellowship of the Church. An Evangelist assists with the community's ministry of evangelism in partnership with the Presbyter or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation, or as directed by the Bishop.

A **Eucharistic Minister** is a lay person authorized to administer the Consecrated Elements at a Celebration of Holy Eucharist. A Eucharistic Minister should normally act under the direction of a Deacon, if any, or otherwise, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

A **Eucharistic Visitor** is a lay person authorized to take the Consecrated Elements in a timely manner following a Celebration of Holy Eucharist to members of the congregation who, by reason of illness or infirmity, were unable to be present at the Celebration. A Eucharistic Visitor should normally act under the direction of a Deacon, if any, or otherwise, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

Discernment and Training

Those seeking licenses for Pastoral Leader, Worship Leader, Preacher, Catechist, or Evangelist must enter a period of discernment with the clergy in charge or, in the absence of such clergy, with the Bishop. A revised version of the Discernment process used for ordination is then applied to any such persons. Training will be determined on a case by case basis. However, an intensive process of formation should be expected. For instance, completion of the four-year course of Education for Ministry and additional tutorials by clergy would be standard.

Discernment and training for Eucharistic Ministers and Eucharistic Visitors occurs at the congregational level. The priest in charge, or someone appointed by the Bishop, will provide instruction and request in writing licensing from the Bishop.

Licenses for all lay ministries are for three years. Except for Eucharistic Ministers and Eucharistic Visitors continuing education is required. Renewing any license requires additional training prior to renewal.

1. Discernment Process for Holy Orders

Please refer to the manual for the Diocesan Discernment Process. It is available online at the Diocesan website.

2. Bishop's Visitation

Please refer to the customary mailed to your congregation prior to the visitation.

3. Marriage

Priests performing marriages in the Diocese of Western Louisiana must make use of the liturgies authorized by the Episcopal Church and must adhere to the canons governing this sacrament. Before solemnizing a marriage, priests must attain a license from the civil authority. Deacons are not authorized to solemnize a marriage.

Priests serving in congregations granted permission by the Bishop to solemnize marriages between same-gender persons may do so in their congregation using the liturgies authorized by the General Convention. Priests desiring to solemnize a marriage between same-gender persons but serving in a congregation that has not agreed to do so may solemnize the marriage in another congregation or in an alternative venue. As has always been the case, no priest is required to solemnize any marriage. No congregation is required to offer same-gender marriages.

In the event that a same-gender couple seeks marriage in a congregation in which this is not an option, and the local clergy also declines to solemnize a same-gender marriage, the local clergy should either refer the couple to one of the congregations that offers same-gender marriage liturgies or refer the couple to the Bishop's office so that he can help them make arrangements.

As has already been stated, no congregation is required to offer same-gender marriage. However, any congregation considering offering these liturgies must first undergo a congregational study of the sacrament of marriage. In the event that the clergy, the vestry, and the broad center of the congregation wishes to move forward with using these liturgies, the clergy in charge should petition the Bishop for permission to do so. That petition must include a report of the outlines of and the results of the required study.

All persons seeking to be married in the Episcopal Church must sign a declaration of intention. Please note that the declaration of intention was revised at the 78th General Convention (2015). When these changes take effect, the current form of the declaration must be used. The signed declaration remains as a permanent record within the congregation.

Normally, weddings are not celebrated during Advent or Lent. Weddings should not take place during Holy Week.

Priests are required to provide for thorough, theologically and spiritually rich premarital counseling. In the case of those seeking marriage following a divorce, additional care must be taken to make certain that healing has occurred, that lessons have been learned, that any children from the previous marriage are properly cared for, and that the divorced person is genuinely prepared to enter into the vocation and grace of marriage. Priests must petition the Bishop for permission to solemnize a marriage when one or both of the persons has been divorced.

1. Drug and Alcohol Policy

Please see the Drug and Alcohol Policy found on the Diocesan website.