

**PERMISSION TO OFFICIATE**

**A Step-by-Step Guide**

**Introduction**

Permission to officiate is an authorisation of ministry granted by the bishop to clergy who are not in a formal licensed role in the diocese. Clergy with permission to officiate are often, but not always, retired stipendiary clergy. Some may have retired from self-supporting ministry or from other walks of life. Others may not be retired at all – eg someone in good standing who has left parochial ministry in order to take employment outside the church, but who wishes to continue to offer help with occasional offices, or a person who requires a period of staged return to stipendiary ministry following past difficulties. If a priest’s ministry is centred on one benefice, and he or she is regarded as an integral part of the ministry team, a licence rather than PTO is likely to be the best way of authorising their ministry.

PTO is the bishop’s gift and may be withdrawn at any time. It is granted on condition that required training (for example, a refresher course in safeguarding) is completed. It authorises ministry within the diocese of the bishop who issues it, but a person can hold PTO in more than one diocese. Permission to Officiate normally needs renewal after five years, the same time that renewal of DBS checks is required.

The Clergy Discipline Measure applies to all clergy, however their ministry is authorised, and continues to apply when they are no longer active in their ministry. Safeguarding requirements for licensed and PTO clergy are identical.

A retiring priest will be expected to wait at least six months after retirement before making an application for PTO. This ensures that they have sufficient time to adapt and to reflect on how their vocation to ordained ministry might begin to take a new shape.

**Role Description**

Permission to officiate enables a priest to officiate when invited by the minister having the cure of souls in any place (or the churchwardens / Rural Dean in a vacancy) in the diocese of Truro.

Forms of ministry that usually require permission to officiate include:

a) Taking services and occasional offices, including during a vacancy;

b) Covering a period of authorised absence (such as sabbatical, maternity leave or sick leave);

c) Spiritual direction, mentoring or work consultation (e.g. a retired cleric with experience of church schools can be of considerable help to an incumbent coming new to this specialised area);

d) Conducting retreats or quiet days;

e) Acting as an outside consultant/teacher/facilitator for parishes (e.g. for PCC away days, stewardship campaigns, Lent groups and house groups);

f) Participating in missions, staffing CMD and ordination courses, assisting with ministerial review;

**Applying for PTO**

1. **Getting started**

If you wish to exercise ministry as an ordained person in the Diocese of Truro, you will need the Bishop of Truro’s written Permission to Officiate (PTO). You can apply for PTO by contacting the Bishop’s Office and requesting an Application Pack.

1. **The Application Pack includes:**

* An introduction/Role Description for Permission to Officiate
* An Application Form which you should complete and return to the Bishop’s Office
* A Confidential Declaration Form which you should complete and return to the Bishop’s Office
* A Statement of Agreed Expectations which you should agree with your parish priest/Rural Dean.
* Privacy Notice for PTO

PTO is granted at the discretion of the Diocesan Bishop. New national guidelines were issued by the House of Bishops in 2018, which set out very strict requirements for the granting of PTO. The following information is intended to help you with the PTO application process.

1. **Arriving from Another Diocese**

If you are moving into Truro Diocese, we will need to ask your previous bishop for an Episcopal Reference and Clergy Current Status Letter. You will also be invited to meet with the Diocesan Bishop or Suffragan Bishop. This will provide an opportunity for them to get to know you, and also to talk about what sort of ministry you might wish to offer. They may be able to help you if you need help finding a church or a “Designated Responsible Person” (see below).

1. **DBS Check**

All clergy with PTO must have a current, Enhanced DBS Certificate. We will ask Rosey Sanders at the Diocesan Office to be in touch with you to arrange a new DBS check.

1. **Safeguarding Training**

The application form asks you to provide details of the safeguarding training that you have completed recently and provide a copy of the certificate confirming this. If you have not completed the required modules within the last three years, you will be asked to undertake the required training before your PTO is granted.

A full list of available training courses is available on the diocesan website.

If you have completed safeguarding training in another diocese, we may need to ask you for copies of your certificates, or contact that diocese to confirm the details of your training. Please note that it is now a canonical obligation to complete required safeguarding training, and refresher training is required every three years.

1. **Designated Responsible Person**

A Designated Responsible Person is someone who will be responsible for your ministry locally. This will normally be the incumbent of the parish where you minister, but it could also be a Rural Dean. You should meet with them to talk through the ministry that you will be offering, and review this with them at least once a year.

On your PTO Application Form, you are asked to suggest the name of a person who will provide local oversight for your ministry. The name you suggest will be subject to the approval of the bishop.

1. **Receiving Your PTO**

If all of the above requirements are met, and the Bishop grants you PTO, you will receive it by post. PTO is normally granted for a period of up to 5 years from the date of your DBS certificate, and the expiry date is shown on the permission. From the age of 80, the Bishop will be particularly concerned to ensure that PTO extends only to clergy whom the Bishop feels are still capable of exercising ministry effectively. Once clergy with PTO reach the age of 80, they may apply for renewal of PTO which, if granted, will be a two-yearly basis.

**Using your PTO**

1. **Exercising Ministry with the Bishop’s Permission to Officiate**

Having Permission to Officiate allows you to exercise ministry at the invitation of the incumbent (parish priest, hospital chaplain, etc.). You should meet with your Designated Responsible Person to discuss the ministry which you exercise. It is important to agree mutual expectations for support; keep a simple written record of your agreement, and review this on an annual basis.

1. **Fees**

The diocese offers ministers who are not in receipt of a stipend 80% of the DBF portion of the fee for funerals and weddings. It is the responsibility of the relevant PCC to pay this to the minister concerned – fees must not be paid directly to any individual. Travelling expenses from/to the crematorium or cemetery that may necessarily and reasonably be incurred can be claimed from the funeral director. Income from occasional offices is taxable and those receiving it must declare it to HMRC in the same way as any other income. Fees cannot be claimed for baptism or midweek services

**Renewal**

1. **Renewing your PTO**

You should begin to consider renewing your PTO around 6 months before it expires. You can obtain a PTO Renewal Pack by contacting the Bishop’s Office. The PTO Renewal Pack includes a Renewal Form and a Ministerial Return. You will need to complete the Ministerial Return with your Designated Responsible Person, who should also indicate their support for the renewal of your PTO.

1. **Questions?**

If you have any questions about Permission to Officiate, please do not hesitate to call the Bishop’s Office at Lis Escop, Feock, Truro TR3 6QQ on 01872 862657.