

What next? Licensed and Authorised Lay Ministry after the age of 70

You are nearing another of those significant birthdays with a nought on the end – and probably wondering how on all earth time has passed so quickly, and wondering what happens now in relation to your ministry.

In the past, national CofE policy was that Readers and LLMs transferred to ministry with PTO (Permission to Officiate) when they were 70, and in our diocese Pastoral Assistants and Evangelists at that stage, transferred from being authorised or commissioned to ministry with Permission (PTM). Over the past few years other dioceses have made various changes to the automatic transfer at 70, and following conversations with Bishop’s Leadership Team and Area Deans, before Bishop James left, we have decided on the following process in Rochester.

You will have received papers for a Lay Ministry Development Review, which is an opportunity to consider your ministry in the context of the other demands on your life – health, family, other responsibilities – and to discern what are the priorities God is calling you to. Most of us don’t like to say no, and over the years of church involvement we tend to accumulate extra areas of responsibility and are doing too much, rather than focussing on what we do best, and what is the core of our vocation. As a result of this review, your working agreement will almost certainly need to be amended, and there are two forms of working agreement – one for licensed/authorised/commissioned Lay Ministry, and others for Lay Ministry with Permission – PTO and PTM.

**For licensed Readers and LLM’s**, there is the possibility of remaining licensed or of transferring to PTO, and this is a decision for you and your incumbent (or equivalent) to decide. You might have only been licensed a couple of years ago and have no wish to take a step back or cut back on what you are doing, or you might have been a Reader in full time employment for many years, who found that retirement from paid work released you to flourish in your ministry in a way that wasn’t possible before – and you hope to maintain that level of involvement for the next few of years at least. If you and you incumbent decide that you should extend your licence, this will be for 3 years at a time instead of the 5 years it has been up to now, and the option of transferring to PTO is one you can always choose if your circumstances change – even between reviews.

Equally others of you will know you have given a great deal of time and energy in your role as a Reader/LLM over the years, and you are ready to step back, not to stop altogether, but to preach less often for example, and to be available when things are busy or others in the ministry team are under pressure. Ministers with PTO will not normally be required to do the Leadership Safeguarding training, but the PTO Pathway which is a lighter touch course.

Over the past decade we have seen Readers with PTO as a deanery resource, but unless your ministry is one which is deanery based, we will now be asking your incumbent/parish priest to take pastoral responsibility for you, and to meet with you from time to time, and to nominate your PTO for renewal every 3 years.

**For Authorised Pastoral Assistants and Commissioned Evangelists,** We expect that many of you will be happy to transfer to ministry with permission as you reach the age of 70, in the same way as PA’s and Evangelists have been doing over the past seven years or more. This might mean you should be able to take the PTO pathway for safeguarding training, which is a little less demanding than the Leadership module\*. You and your incumbent will need to create a PTM working agreement which will be attached along with this letter.

If your role is such that you and your incumbent feel it would be helpful to remain authorised (as a PA) or commissioned (as an Evangelist) this might be possible. You will need to review your current working agreement in the light of the LMDR, and amend it as necessary – the template for a generic Lay Ministry working agreement is available from the Warden of Lay Ministry or on the diocesan website.

Of course, there is no obligation to continue in authorised ministry at all beyond the age of 70, and some ministers decide that this is the time has come to stop, either to free their time up for other things, or to make way for newer and younger people. If you come to this decision – please let the Warden of Lay Ministry know.

Karen Senior July 2021

\*Eligibility for the PTO Pathway Safeguarding module is not automatic for those who have PTO or PTM. As a rough guide, anyone with PTO who leads, preaches or conducts funerals more than 10 times a year will be required to do the Leadership Module.

For Pastoral Assistants and Evangelists with PTM, the decision about which safeguarding module you should take will be in discussion with the Warden of Lay Ministry and your Incumbent.