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*Deaconesses, Readers and Other Lay Persons  
Ordinance 1981*

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No. 36, 1981

AN ORDINANCE to provide authority for lay persons to assist in the conduct of public worship and to declare the law on certain other matters.

WHEREAS it is expedient that further provision be made regarding the ministry of lay persons NOW the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney HEREBY ORDAINS DECLARES DIRECTS AND RULES as follows:—

INTERPRETATION

1. (1) In this Ordinance, unless repugnant to the context or inconsistent therewith:—

"Archbishop" means the Archbishop of Sydney.

"Assistant Bishop" means a clergyman holding office in the Diocese as an assistant bishop.

"Minister" means:—

- (a) as applied to a Parish, the Minister duly licensed thereto as the incumbent thereof or the person (if any) appointed thereto pursuant to Section 55 of the Sydney Church Ordinance 1912 (as amended);
- (b) as applied to a Provisional Parish, the Minister duly licensed thereto as curate-in-charge or the person (if any) appointed thereto pursuant to Section 55 of the Sydney Church Ordinance 1912 (as amended);
- (c) as applied to a new housing district, the Minister or one of the Ministers duly licensed thereto;
- (d) as applied to St. Andrew's Cathedral, the Dean thereof; and
- (e) as applied to a Church situated within the Diocese but not situated in any Parish, the Minister licensed to officiate thereat.

"Parish" means:—

- (a) a Parish in the Diocese;
- (b) a Provisional Parish in the Diocese; and
- (c) a new housing district in the Diocese.

"Diocese" means the Diocese of Sydney.

"Church" means a building, being church trust property, duly consecrated or licensed for the celebration of divine service, the administration of the sacraments and the performance of any other rite or ordinance of the Church of England in Australia.

"Church Committee" means:—

- (a) in relation to a Church in a Parish which is the only Church in that Parish — the Parish Council of that Parish but, if there is no such Parish Council, the Minister and the Churchwardens of that Church; and
- (b) in relation to a Church in a Parish which is not the only Church in that Parish, the Church Committee of that Church but, if there is no such Church Committee, the Minister and the Churchwardens of that Church;
- (c) in relation to a new housing district — the local committee

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thereof but, if there is no such local committee, the Sydney Church of England New Areas Committee; and  
 (d) in relation to St. Andrew's Cathedral — the Chapter thereof. "church trust property" means church trust property (as defined in the Church of England Trust Property Act, 1917) held upon trust for the Church of England in Australia in the Diocese of Sydney or any part thereof.

"deaconess" means a person who has been admitted to the Order of Deaconesses described in the Order of Deaconesses Canon 1969.

(2) A building shall not cease to be a Church by reason of that building being used for purposes other than (as well as) those mentioned in the definition of "Church".

2. This Ordinance may be cited as "Deaconesses, Readers and Other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981".

#### MINISTER'S POWERS

3. The Minister of a Church may invite a lay person to do, in that Church, any one or more of the following:—

- (a) read the scriptures;
- (b) read prayers;
- (c) give an address in the office of the burial of the dead;
- (d) speak at a service of public worship or give an address at a service of public worship if either:
  - (i) an exposition is given at that service by a person authorised pursuant to Clause 6 at that service, or
  - (ii) if a sermon is delivered at that service.

#### ARCHBISHOP'S POWERS

4. Subject to this Ordinance, the Archbishop may authorise any lay person to do such of the following as may be specified in any authority which the Archbishop may issue to that person, namely:—

- (a) read morning prayer in any Church at the request of the Minister thereof;
- (b) read evening prayer in any Church at the request of the Minister thereof;
- (c) conduct the ministrations of baptism in any Church where the Minister of the Church is unable to perform the same;
- (d) conduct the office of the burial of the dead in any Church at the request of the Minister thereof;
- (e) conduct the churching of women.
- (f) perform pastoral duties in a parish.

5. Subject to this Ordinance, the Archbishop may authorise a lay person to deliver a sermon or sermons in any Church at the request of the Minister thereof.

6. Subject to this Ordinance, the Archbishop or an Assistant Bishop may authorise one or more representatives of an organisation or corporation to give an occasional exposition of the aims, functions or needs of that organisation or corporation.

#### GENERAL

7. (1) The provisions of sub-clause (2) of this clause shall not apply to a deaconess.

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- (2) The Archbishop shall not issue an authority pursuant to clause 4 or 5 of this Ordinance to a lay person unless:—
- (a) the lay person satisfies the Archbishop that he or she has been adequately trained or has been otherwise equipped and possesses a sufficient knowledge of scripture;
  - (b) the lay person satisfies such other conditions and qualifications as may be prescribed in regulations made pursuant to this Ordinance.
8. An authority issued pursuant to clause 4, 5 or 6:—
- (a) may be limited to a Church or to the Churches named therein or to the Parish or Parishes named therein or may apply to the whole of the Diocese or to any part thereof specified therein; and
  - (b) may be issued subject to any conditions which are specified therein.
9. An authority issued pursuant to clause 4, 5 or 6 may be revoked at any time by the Archbishop.
10. A person to whom an authority has been issued pursuant to Clauses 4 or 5 of this Ordinance shall not be permitted to wear a blue scarf when officiating in Services of the Church unless he or she has been regularly admitted to the Office of Reader by the Archbishop or a person appointed by him or in another diocese of the Anglican Communion.
11. Nothing in this Ordinance shall affect any authority issued pursuant to the Lay Assistants at Holy Communion Canon 1973.
12. The Archbishop may appoint any person to assist him in the exercise of any of his rights, powers and duties hereunder.
13. The Archbishop-in-Council may make regulations at any time and from time to time concerning:—
- (a) the qualifications which a person must possess and the conditions which a person must satisfy before an authority may be issued to that person pursuant to this Ordinance; or
  - (b) the manner in which any authority issued pursuant to this Ordinance shall be given and exercised; or
  - (c) the dress to be worn by a lay person holding any authority issued pursuant to this Ordinance when exercising that authority.
14. Section 17 of the Sydney Church Ordinance 1912 (as amended) is hereby amended by the substitution of the words:—
- (a) in the case of a clergyman or a deacon, he has been licensed or approved by the Archbishop or by a person holding office in the Diocese of Sydney as an assistant bishop; or
  - (b) in the case of a lay man, he has been authorised so to do pursuant to the Deaconesses, Readers and Other Lay Persons Ordinance, 1981, or is a member of a class of persons approved by the Synod by resolution thereof, or
  - (c) in the case of a lay woman, she has been authorised so to do pursuant to the Deaconesses, Readers and Other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981."
- for the words "he be first licensed or approved by the Archbishop".

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**DUTY OF MINISTERS**

15. (1) The Minister of a Church shall not:—
- (a) permit a lay person to give an address during a service except in the circumstances specified in paragraph (c) of clause 3; or
  - (b) permit a lay person to do any one or more of the things mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (e) of clause 4 or in clause 6 in that Church or to deliver a sermon in that Church unless (in any such case) that lay person has been authorised so to do pursuant to this Ordinance.

**TRANSITIONAL AND REPEAL**

16. (1) A lay person who holds a licence or authority under any of the ordinances listed in the Schedule hereto shall retain that licence or authority subject to the terms and conditions on which the same was issued and may continue to do or perform all or any of the things which that person has been authorised to do and perform thereby.
- (2) Subject to sub-clause (1), the Ordinances in the Schedule hereto are repealed.

**SCHEDULE**

Women's Work in the Church Ordinance 1922-1978.  
Readers and other Lay Assistants Ordinance 1976-1978.

I CERTIFY that the Ordinance as printed is in accordance with the Ordinance as reported.

**E. D. CAMERON**  
Chairman of Committees

WE CERTIFY that this Ordinance was passed by the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney on this 8th day of October 1981.

**R. J. BOMFORD**  
**W. G. S. GOTLEY**  
Secretaries of Synod

I ASSENT to this Ordinance.

**M. L. LOANE**  
Archbishop of Sydney

8/10/1981