



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
**Council for Christian Unity**

Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ [www.cofe.anglican.org/info/ccu](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/ccu)

## Summary of Canons B1 to B42

*The Canons of the Church of England prefixed B set out the discipline by which the Church of England delivers its constitutional obligation to provide public worship on a regular basis Sunday by Sunday according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England in every parish in England.*

### **B1**

1. Specifies the permitted *'forms of service'*
2. Indicates that discretion is possible under B5. All services, however, must *'glorify God and edify people'*
3. Defines the phrase *'forms of services'* – to include lectionary and calendar as well as text (but not hymns)

### **B2**

1. Gives General Synod authority to approve, amend and/or permit the use of *'forms of service'*
2. Specifies the need for a 2/3rds majority for any changes
- 2A. (and subsequent sub-clauses) Sets regulations for extending the periods of use of forms of service where approval for use has expired.

**B3** Specifies how local decisions are made as to which form of service shall be used when alternative forms are provided.

**B4** Specifies how forms of services can be provided for special occasions

### **B5**

1. Authorises ministers taking services to make or use variations in any form of service *'which are not of substantial importance'*
2. Authorises ministers to use forms of service considered suitable by him (or her) where no authorised forms of service are provided
3. All such forms of service must be *'reverent and seemly'* and *'neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter.'*
4. If doubts are raised, the Bishop can be consulted. Final resolution of any disputes is to be found in court under the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963.

**B5A** Archbishops may authorise services for experimental use.

### **B6**

1. Sunday to be celebrated as *'a weekly memorial of Our Lord's resurrection' – 'and kept... particularly by attendance at divine service...'*
  2. Principal feasts (as listed) are to be observed
  3. Days of fasting (as listed) are to be observed
  4. Good Friday requires *'attendance at divine service'*
  5. Other holy days may be approved
- Practical implications are set out in subsequent canons.

**B7** Adequate notice is to be given of services on feast days and fast days.

**B8** Regulates how decisions are taken about what the minister should wear when leading divine service.

**B9** Disciplines all those attending the divine service, requiring them to give audible responses, give *'reverent attention'* and follow the rubrics of the service as well as agreed local customs regarding posture.

**B10** Specifies that Morning and Evening Prayer shall be said or sung daily in Cathedrals.

### **B11**

1. Requires Morning and Evening Prayer to be said or sung audibly in every parish church every Sunday.
2. On other days of the week, Morning and Evening Prayer may be said or sung elsewhere than in the parish church if, after consultation with the PCC, this best suits local circumstances. The time and place, however, must be signalled publicly, e.g. by a bell.
3. This requirement may be dispensed with only in accordance with B14A

### **B12**

1. Requires that Holy Communion be consecrated and administered only by an episcopally ordained priest according to Canon C1.
2. At every celebration, the celebrant must receive communion.
3. Specifies how those other than priests may distribute the sacrament of Holy Communion.
4. Indicates that, subject to the Bishop's direction, lay people may read Epistle, Gospel and prayer of Intercession.

**B13** Regulates when Holy Communion must be celebrated in Cathedral Churches.

**B14**

1. Requires Holy Communion to be celebrated in each parish church on each Sunday, principal feast day and on Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday.
2. Dispensation possible only in accordance with B14A
3. In other dependent churches in a parish, Holy Communion to be celebrated *'as regularly and frequently as may be convenient, subject to the direction of the Ordinary under Canon B14A'*.

**B14A**

1. The requirements of Canon B11 and Canon B14 may be dispensed with:
  - (a) occasionally, as authorised by minister and PCC acting jointly
  - (b) regularly, as authorised by the bishop at the request of the minister and PCC acting jointly
 subject to the following considerations:
  - (i) the availability of services of Morning and Evening Prayer and of Holy Communion elsewhere in the benefice
  - (ii) provided no church ceases altogether to be used for public worship
2. Generally regulates what services may be held when there is more than one parish church or place of worship in a benefice, or where a minister holds benefices in plurality. The Bishop may endorse proposals from the minister and PCC(s) or he may specify his own requirements.
3. These regulations also cover 'parish centres of worship' designated under Section 29(2) of the Pastoral Measure 1983
4. Similarly the bishop may direct what services are held in any other premises licensed for public worship under Section 29 of the Pastoral Measure 1983 but not designated a 'parish centre of worship'.

**B15** Specifies the duty of those who are confirmed to receive communion regularly and *'especially'* at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Also specifies the minister's duty to teach people to come to Holy Communion suitably prepared.

**B15A**

1. Those to be admitted to Holy Communion
  - (a) Those confirmed or *'ready and desirous to be confirmed'*
  - (b) *"baptized persons who are communicant members of other Churches which subscribe to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and who are in good standing in their own Church"*
  - (c) Other baptized persons authorised by General Synod
  - (d) Any baptized person in immediate danger of death
2. In the case of anyone who receives communion regularly under clause (b) above and is *'likely to continue indefinitely'*, the minister *'shall set before him the normal requirements of the Church of England for communicant status...'*
3. If there are doubts, the bishop or other Ordinary shall give guidance.

**B16** Regulates how 'notorious offenders' may not be admitted to Holy Communion

**B17**

1. The churchwarden shall provide sufficient bread and wine for communion.
2. *"The bread, whether leavened or unleavened, shall be of the purest wheat flour that conveniently may be gotten"* and *"the wine, the fermented juice of the grape, good and wholesome"*

**B17A** Overwrites the rubric in the Book of Common Prayer, and specifies that alms at communion services shall form part of the general funds of the PCC.

**B18** Requires a sermon at least once per Sunday – preached by an authorised person (minister, deaconess, reader or canonically authorised lay worker) or by someone invited by the *'minister with cure of souls'* subject to permission from the bishop or more general diocesan regulations.

**B19** Provides the text for an extended bidding prayer which may be used before the preacher gives the sermon.

**B20** Allocates the responsibilities for providing music in the context of divine service and ensuring that it is appropriate.

**B21** Indicates desirability of Baptism taking place on Sunday in the context of public worship.

**B22** Regulations concerning the baptism of infants

**B23** Regulations concerning godparents

**B24** Regulates the baptism of adults and the link with Confirmation

**B25** States that the sign of the cross in baptism is important but *'no part of the substance of the sacrament'*.

**B26** Requirement that the minister ensures that children and young people are taught the Christian faith.

**B27** Regulations re confirmation

1. Only permits bishops to administer confirmation
2. Minister to seek and prepare people to be confirmed
3. Requirement of confirmands to be old enough to know and recite Lord's Prayer, Creed and Ten Commandments and *'render account of their faith'*.
4. Minister to ensure all confirmands have been baptized
5. Conditional baptism if in doubt

6. Law of the land permits the bishop to confirm an individual by a new name, if sufficient reason is given for a change. This will then be that person's name.

**B28** Regulating how people can be received into the Church of England

1. By baptism or conditional baptism
2. To be followed, when ready, by confirmation
3. Those who are already episcopally confirmed may, by bishop's permission, be formally received with appropriate prayer. Anyone in this category who is already a priest can only be received by the bishop or his commissary.

**B29** Regulates the priestly ministry of absolution

**B30** Declares the Church of England's teaching on marriage as expressed in the Form of Solemnisation of Holy Matrimony in the Book of Common Prayer. Other regulations apply outside the body of canon law.

**B31** Lists impediments to marriage and the table of kindred and affinity.

**B32** No marriage to be conducted where either participant is under 18 years of age – other than in accordance with the requirements of the law of the land.

**B33** The minister must check whether there are any impediments (as above)

**B34** Regulating the preliminaries (banns etc) which are required before marriage in the Church of England

**B35** Other regulations concerning the preliminaries to marriage and how it should be conducted.

**B36** Regulates services after civil marriage

**B37** Regulates ministry to the sick including the ministry of Holy Communion and unction.

**B38** Regulations concerning the burial of the dead

**B39** Requires ministers to observe the law regarding the registration of baptisms, marriages and burials and to keep a register of confirmations in accordance with Canon F11.

**B40** Requires Holy Communion only to be celebrated in a consecrated or appropriately licensed building, except with the bishop's permission or when giving communion to the sick (Canon B37)

**B41**

1. Services of Holy Communion should not normally take place in private chapels (when these have been authorised) on Sundays or principal feasts, so that the residents of the house are free to attend the services in the parish church.
2. The Bishop may license a minister to conduct all services except marriage in a specified institution (college, school, hospital etc) under the provisions of the Extra-Parochial Ministry Measure 1967.

3. Services conducted in institutions licensed under this Measure do not require the permission of the minister of the parish.

**B42** Requires that English must be used for Church of England services in England – but provides for various exceptions.