

## What is a reader?

Following my recent re-licensing as a reader in Chichester diocese, several people have asked me; 'What is a reader', so I will attempt to explain.

Firstly the term reader is confusing, does it mean I can read? Or I can read in church?, No, well I can to both but that is not what a reader is.

Our official term is Licensed Lay minister (Reader) which is a better term, if a bit of a mouthful.

Reader ministry has been an integral part of the Church of England for the last 152 years.

It starts with a rigorous selection process, before acceptance onto an intense 3 years of theological training, before being licensed. Not dissimilar to the training undertaken by ordinands. (Priests in training before ordination)

We receive a bishop's license, attached to a particular church or benefice and under the supervision of the incumbent. However we are free to minister anywhere in the diocese with the permission and at the request of the incumbent of that place.

We are licensed to lead services, preach, take funerals, carry out pastoral work, lead small groups, in fact it is easier to say what we don't do, which is baptize (except in an emergency), marry, and consecrate at the Eucharist. We can lead a service of communion by extension, but this is very unusual. Some readers are licensed to actually be in charge of a church.

O yes and did I mention we can read in church!!

I personally trained in Peterborough Diocese starting in 2003 and was first licensed in 2006. I remained a reader in Peterborough diocese until we moved to Bolney.