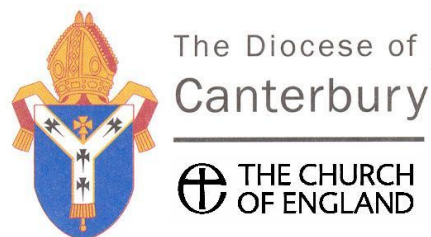


AN INFORMATION GUIDE TO READER MINISTRY



What is a Reader¹?

A Reader is a theologically trained lay minister equipped to be a significant resource within the local church and community. Readers are ministers of the Word with a passion for communicating the Gospel.

Readers normally work in parishes collaboratively as part of a team alongside clergy and other lay ministries to serve the church and community. They minister in a variety of ways according to their individual gifts, circumstances and experience. Some work in sectors such as hospital or prison chaplaincy; others find that their ministry is primarily focused in their place of work or across a social network.

What can a Reader do?

Readers do many things but the most common are those associated with their calling as local lay theologians communicating the Gospel within the church and out into the wider community:

- Exploring the meaning of the Gospel for everyday life, at home, at work and in the community
- Assisting in leading creative mission initiatives and projects
- Encouraging others in deepening their discipleship and exploring their calling
- Preaching and leading worship at church services; assisting at Holy Communion
- Teaching in groups, Sunday school, Bible study and confirmation classes
- Preparing candidates, parents and godparents for Baptism
- Visiting people at home and in hospital – and administering communion to them
- Tutoring on Diocesan courses such as *Deepening Discipleship* and *Authorised Lay Ministry* (ALM)

Readers may also conduct funerals provided they have received specific training and authorization to do so.

The Discernment and Selection process

Potential candidates for Reader ministry will have felt a sense of calling by God which may also have been noticed by the clergy and people in their local church community. The Diocesan Warden of Readers and/or Vocations Officer should be contacted as part of the discernment process and candidates will be invited to complete an *Explore More* course designed to help them in discerning their call from God.

¹ Readers are also known as Licensed Lay Ministers or LLMs in some dioceses and the Channel Islands.

At the end of *Explore More* a Vocations Adviser will help the candidate to consider whether or not to explore Reader ministry further.

Reader candidates will be invited to attend a Diocesan Selection Panel which normally takes place in June/July at Canterbury. The parish priest will be asked to provide a personal reference and the candidate will also need support from their Parochial Church Council (PCC).

The Selection Panel is responsible for deciding whether to recommend a candidate to the Bishop for training. The Panel are looking for:

- discipleship – someone who is an active disciple seeking to grow more Christ-like as they mature in the faith; this will include a commitment to individual bible study and prayer whilst being rooted in a local worshipping community
- calling – someone who clearly feels called by God to serve in the church and wider community as a ‘commissioned’ lay minister; this calling will have been affirmed by the local church
- encourager – someone who encourages others to grow in their discipleship and strives to make new disciples
- potential – someone who has the potential for growth as their discipleship becomes shaped by their calling and formation as a lay minister
- capacity – someone who has the capacity to undertake the academic study and formational training

It’s important to note that the Selection Panel isn’t looking for the ‘finished article’ at this stage.

Initial Training for Reader Ministry

The two year training programme is delivered by the St Augustine’s College of Theology leading to a Certificate in Theology accredited by the University of Durham as part of the National Common Awards scheme.

There are two elements to the course: core modules and Reader-specific modules. The core modules may be undertaken by attending evening classes or teaching days plus one Saturday School each year. Reader-specific training consist of an annual Residential weekend and Study days. Students are also required to participate in tutorial groups which provide additional support, encouragement and formational learning.

Here is a summary of the minimum commitment:

- 28 evening classes (or 14 teaching days) and 3 Study days per year (requiring at least 10 hours private study per week during term time).
- 1 Saturday School and 1 Residential Weekend per year.
- 4 tutorial group sessions and 1 individual meeting with tutor per year.

Admission and Licensing

After completing the two year licensed lay ministries course, students are normally admitted to the office of Reader by the Bishop and licensed for ministry; this normally takes place in the Cathedral at the Celebration of Reader Ministry service in September each year.

Readers are licensed to their deanery under the nomination of their incumbent; licences are open-ended and continue until circumstances change which necessitate a new licence, or they reach the age of 70.

At the age of 70 a Reader may receive the Bishop's permission to officiate (PTO) if this is mutually agreed with the incumbent and PCC. Unlike PTO clergy, Readers with PTO are expected to continue to minister as part of the local ministry team. The PTO process is normally prompted by the Warden of Readers.

Post-licensing Training and Support

New Readers are then supported during a further year of context-based non-validated study enabling them to grow in and reflect on their ministry. This is normally completed under the supervision of the local incumbent.

A wide range of seminars, lectures and workshops are provided by the Diocese throughout the year and is available to clergy, lay ministers and those in training without charge.

Readers are encouraged to network locally and each Deanery has a Reader Representative who may assist in facilitating this.

Ministry Agreement and Review

All Readers in active ministry must have a written ministry agreement with their incumbent; this agreement is subject to annual review. The annual review meeting should take place before the spring and provides an opportunity for reflection as well as identifying areas for continued ministerial development (CMD). Useful statistical information (number of services taken, areas of ministry etc) is also gathered as part of the process.

Safeguarding

All Readers in active ministry must have a current Disclosure and Barring service (DBS) enhanced check and have undertaken authorized diocesan training within three years.

Transfers into and within the Diocese

Admitted Readers arriving into the Diocese may seek to be licensed. It is normal procedure to allow a settling in period before proceeding. Where a Reader moves parish or deanery a similar process is begun. The Warden of Readers is available for further advice.

Ministry Breaks

Sometimes a Reader may wish to take a temporary or indefinite break from active ministry; this may be for a variety of reasons. In all cases the Warden of Readers should be consulted and is available for further advice.

Retirement from active Ministry

When a Reader wishes to retire permanently from regular active ministry, the Warden of Readers is to be informed. The Bishop may grant the title 'Reader Emeritus' in recognition of the service given by the individual.

Further Information

The Diocesan Handbook for Readers is a source of further information and can be downloaded from the Diocesan website.

*Nigel Collins
Diocesan Warden of Readers
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USEFUL WEBSITES/CONTACTS

Diocesan House, Lady Wootton's Green, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1NQ Tel: 01227 459401

Diocesan website

www.canterburydiocese.org

Diocesan Readers webpages

www.canterburydiocese.org/readers

Central Readers Council website

www.readers.cofe.anglican.org

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