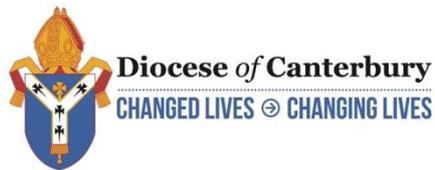




READER MINISTRY IN THE DIOCESE OF CANTERBURY



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Introduction

Readers are ministers of the Word with a passion for communicating the Gospel. They normally work 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.

There are around 150 active Readers serving across the diocese, including 10 in training. Every deanery has at least 3 Readers.

This brochure provides a snapshot of Reader ministry in the diocese.

What do Readers do?

The ministry of a Reader is a Call from God to serve the church and world as a lay minister; this is an extension of their Call to discipleship. As ministers of the Word, Readers are often to be found leading worship, preaching and teaching in church. However, there are three aspects which can be found in the way Readers express ministry:

- enabling mission in everyday life, not just in church
- teaching the faith in all walks of life
- leading in church and society

These three foci are at the heart of the renewed vision for Reader ministry. Readers are equipped for this ministry in their initial training and continued ministerial development as lifelong learners.

Some Readers are authorized for funeral ministry.

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. It is best to discuss this with your parish priest as well as contacting the Diocesan Warden of Readers for advice. Potential candidates may also find it helpful to attend an exploring vocation course designed to assist them in discerning their call from God.

As part of the discernment process a Reader Vocations Adviser will meet with the potential candidate and their incumbent to consider whether or not to explore Reader ministry further.

The Bishop says,

My brothers and sisters, God has called us into the fellowship of the universal Church. As members of his body, Christ calls us to minister together in his name and, according to our gifts, to be instruments of his love in the world.

Readers are called to a ministry of the word, preaching and teaching, inspiring others to follow the way of Christ, and calling them to share in the good news of the kingdom.

They are called to a liturgical ministry, leading worship, proclaiming the gospel story and helping God's people to greet their living Lord, so that they may worship him, praise him and live by his commands.

Introduction to the service of admission and licensing of Readers, Common Worship



Reader candidates will be invited to attend a Diocesan Selection Panel which normally takes place in June 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 is 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 Licensed Lay Ministry course is delivered by 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 consists 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 successfully completing the initial training course, students are 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; licenses are open-ended and continue until circumstances change which necessitate a new license.



Post-licensing Training and Continued Ministerial Development

Following initial training new Readers continue their ministerial formation mostly in-context and under the supervision of their local incumbent. This involves action-learning and some further theological study. Specialized ministry training may be provided as appropriate, eg funerals and bereavement, schools, older people, etc.

A 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.

Ministry Agreement and Review

All Readers in active ministry are required to 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 (types 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 mandatory 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.

Nigel Collins, Diocesan Warden of Readers, January 2020

Appendices:

Appendix A – The Duties of Readers (an extract from the Bishops' Regulations)

Appendix B – Canon E4 of Readers



Appendix A – The Duties of Readers

Ref: Bishops' Regulations for Readers 2000

The ministry of Readers in the Church of England is governed by Canons E4, E5 and E6 which are reproduced below.

- 1.1 The primary duties of Readers are to preach and teach, and to conduct or assist in conducting worship.
- 1.2 Readers assist in the pastoral, evangelistic and liturgical work of the Church in the parish or area where they are licensed or have the bishop's written permission to officiate in so far as their licence or written permission allows, and in accordance with what is agreed with the minister to whom they are responsible.
- 1.3 The lawful duties of a Reader as set out in Canon E4 are as follows:
 - a. To preach at any service;
 - b. To lead worship including Morning and Evening Prayer, appropriate parts of the Holy Communion service, and such other services as may be authorised or allowed by the Canons of the Church of England or approved by the bishop, including a service with Communion by Extension;
 - c. To read the Old or New Testament readings, Epistle or Gospel at any service, to lead intercessions, to receive and present the offerings of the people, to distribute the consecrated bread and wine to the people, to take Communion to the sick and housebound and to publish the banns of marriage in the absence of the priest;
 - d. To officiate at funeral services (but only with the goodwill of the person responsible) provided that the Reader is authorised by the bishop to do so, and is invited by the minister of the parish or place (or, during a vacancy, the area dean);
 - e. To undertake pastoral and educational work;
 - f. To give such other assistance to any minister as the bishop may direct.
- 1.4 Readers may not:
 - a. Officiate at the sacrament of baptism except in an emergency situation when it is lawful for a lay person to baptise;
 - b. Officiate at a marriage service;
 - c. Pronounce the Absolution or give a Blessing but should use an authorised alternative form of words.
- 1.5 Readers may accept invitations to take part in services in a church of another denomination to which the Church of England (Ecumenical Relations) Measure 1988 applies provided that the duties they undertake in the services are the same or similar to those they are authorised to perform in the Church of England. Readers should obtain the approval of the incumbent of the parish where the service is to take place or, where they intend to participate regularly in such a service, of the bishop of the diocese and the PCC of the parish where the service is to take place.

- 1.6 In local ecumenical projects and partnerships (LEPs), Readers may, with the permission of the bishop (given after consultation with the PCC) undertake such duties in the area covered by the project as the bishop may specify.
- 1.7 Readers' licences authorise them to minister in their own dioceses. Invitations to preach or officiate (including at a funeral service) in a different diocese should be referred to the bishop of that diocese, normally through the Warden of Readers of that diocese.

Appendix B – Canon E4 of Readers

1. A lay person, whether man or woman, who is baptized and confirmed and who satisfies the bishop that he is a regular communicant of the Church of England may be admitted by the bishop of the diocese to the office of reader in the Church and licensed by him to perform the duties which may lawfully be performed by a reader according to the provisions of paragraph 2 of this Canon or which may from time to time be so determined by Act of Synod.

2. It shall be lawful for a reader:

(a) to visit the sick, to read and pray with them, to teach in Sunday school and elsewhere, and generally to undertake such pastoral and educational work and to give such assistance to any minister as the bishop may direct;

(b) during the time of divine service to read Morning and Evening Prayer (save for the Absolution), to publish banns of marriage at Morning and Evening Prayer (on occasions on which a layman is permitted by the statute law so to do, and in accordance with the requirements of that law), to read the word of God, to preach, to catechize the children, and to receive and present the offerings of the people;

(c) to distribute the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people.

2A. The bishop may also authorise a reader to bury the dead or read the burial service before, at or after a cremation but only, in each case, with the goodwill of the persons responsible and at the invitation of the minister of a parish or an extra-parochial place within the meaning of section 1 of the Deaconesses and Lay Ministry Measure 1972. When a cure is vacant the reference in this paragraph to the minister of a parish shall be construed as a reference to the rural dean.

3. The bishop of every diocese shall keep a register wherein shall be entered the names of every person whom she has either admitted to the office of reader or licensed to exercise that office in any place.