

WARDENS REPORT 2018

So here we are then, 5 years later. Same place same time. But it certainly doesn't feel like a scene from the film 'Groundhog Day'. It's been an exciting, challenging, and emotional 5 years full of surprises. It has been a prayer and spirit led personal journey. It has been a huge privilege and very humbling experience to serve YOU who are part of a wonderful army of Readers, those with Permission to Officiate, and those who hold Emeritus status. Over 300 faithful dedicated people and also my brothers and sisters in Christ.

These past 5 years have been full of 'change' agendas', not just Diocesan led but change also from the national church. However, throughout my five years as your Warden and servant of God during this wind of change which continues to blow across all deaneries Reader Ministry has continually been reaffirmed by Archbishop Justin nationally, and also by our Diocesan Bishops. Paul and Richard and Bishop Designate Beverly who I have already had the privilege of meeting.

Our Bishops have supported changes which your committee introduced to make our association more efficient. Reader admin was restructured, we said goodbye to Wendy as our secretary as she took advantage of opportunities in being a grandmother. Sam and Debra joined our new admin team and have provided a super streamline service of administration closely working with Readers/Incumbents, and especially the safeguarding team. Now is the time to show our appreciation. Your committee also agreed to centralise our finance arrangements which has made life so much easier in terms of accounting, auditing and not searching for a reluctant Reader to be our Treasurer. I thank Matt Elliot and his team in SJH for their support.

Life Long Learning staff have provided much needed support and guidance to Reader Taster, recruitment and selection, and also journeying with trainees to the point of licencing and PIME. I am very pleased that trainees who find the modules difficult have over these past 5 years been fully supported and given more time to achieve what God has called them do. I thank Bob Banton/Simon Chesters and SJH staff and of course John Applegate and his team at All Saints for their support to our ministry.

Rod Garner retired this year and we shall miss his facilitating of our Summer Study Evenings, and I have been nourished in my personal journey with God when I have met Rod at Costas! The feedback from delegates who attend this year's Summer School was a wonderful testament to a great theologian who has blessed our ministry with his teachings.

My five years have been taken up with personal meetings with individual readers/incumbents and other church officials offering pastoral ministry support and advice when necessary. I have travelled the length and breadth of this diocese to attend deanery meetings, synods and CRC AGMs in London. Yes, I admit I got lost in Wigan town centre!

So, what of the future for Reader Ministry in this diocese? Remember we are reaffirmed in our ministry. We are needed. God has called us to this distinct ministry, a distinct lay ministry. Transforming deaneries, Setting God's people free, the growth in Lay Ministry across our diocese of opportunities for God's people to reach out those on the edge of society. The latter was the reason Reader Ministry began over 150

years ago. As we cope with the spirit led change and challenging agendas, God's will for the followers of his Son, Reader Ministry this year I believe will move from being on the 'outside looking in' to being fully included alongside all lay ministers who work for God. We need to pray for Tim and his work on a scoping project to ensure that God's will for this diocese is prayerfully achieved. Our newly defined roles of being teachers of the faith, enablers in mission, and leaders in church and society will give clarity to those who struggle to understand who we are and what we do. We need to be constant in our prayers to God. We are now on the inside as lay ministers alongside our other brothers and sisters in Christ who have been called to other aspects of lay ministry.

Before I finish, I will make these two pleas. I made these same pleas to Bishop Paul in my final one to one with him last week. Who fully supports them.

I have spent some considerable time over these past 5 years on a working group looking at Clergy and now Lay ministers well-being focussing on mental health issues for those ministers who work at the front line. This is what we do alongside other lay ministers. We need to ensure that we are part of this agenda as it moves forward

My second plea is for a better understanding of our older congregations especially dementia issues and how we minister to those living with this dreadful disease as we, lay ministers, also support their families. For me this is an integral part of the Bigger Church Bigger Difference agenda. We need training and support to help our congregations in their ageing process whatever form that may take. These too are faithful people of God. We need to ensure that we as Lay Ministers, Readers, are part of this agenda as it moves forward.

I conclude then by thanking the Readers Committee for their support and prays, I thank you for your support and prayers, and sincerely thank my wife Joan who will be here today for her unswerving support, most of all I thank God for calling me to serve him and His people

In Jesus name - God bless

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