

READER UPBEAT

Quickening the tempo of Reader ministry in the Church today

FINAL REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON REVIEW OF READER MINISTRY

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT'S NEW AND THE SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction 1 The heart of this report

Int.1.1 Reader ministry has made a vital and outstanding contribution to the life and ministry of the Church of England for over 100 years. This report celebrates that huge contribution by including, in its historical section, an outline of the reintroduction of this ministry in the 1860s, and sketching important points in its history up to the present day.

Int.1.2 **new directions** This is an important time for Reader ministry to be strengthened and given clear and new directions in order for the ministry to develop and flourish in the decades ahead. The long-standing and settled pattern in which Readers were regular officiants at services of Morning and Evening Prayer no longer offers so many opportunities. The future of Reader ministry lies in taking up a variety of new directions. Firstly there are new opportunities on the boundary of the Church, as was the reason why Reader ministry was reintroduced in the 19th century. Secondly, the future lies with putting to work the thorough theological training that Readers have in the tasks of lay education, and also in preaching and teaching which address the questions of daily life which exercise their fellow laity. Readers are uniquely qualified to bring the word of God into issues of working life, voluntary work, leisure and relationships. Thirdly, where Readers have pastoral as well as catechetical gifts, there are opportunities for them to be given pastoral care of parish communities within benefices. Fourthly, they can be part of ministerial teams which are able to make prompt responses to the need for bereavement care and funeral ministry. It is the view of the working group that to licence Readers to the deanery rather than the parish will give the signal that their potential as a resource is very significant and that they are to be used widely to meet the needs of mission in today's more fluid and flexible society.

Int.1.3 In allowing itself to be recast in this way, Reader ministry, we believe, has a very positive future. But it is a future which must be developed in ways which are exploratory, fluid, dynamic and flexible. Readers, by virtue of their training and experience are a great resource for the service of the whole Church, a resource which is theologically articulate, spiritually mature and ministerially skilled. This resource needs to be used to the full. At present, around 10,000 Readers quietly and faithfully carry on their work at the grass roots but are too seldom recognised; their work has been neglected and their potential underestimated.

Int.1.4 Reader ministry is distinct from the many burgeoning lay ministries in parishes and dioceses because it is thoroughly trained and is the primary lay ministry which is licensed by the bishop. It is nationally accredited and transferable across the Church of England and beyond. This report presents for consideration the case for a clear distinction between licensed ministries, as nationally accredited and transferable, and those ministries belonging only to a particular diocese, ministries that may have episcopal permission or a commission. It is recognised that this is a new perspective on nationally accredited lay ministry and, if followed through, will need much work and consultation. The report argues that all licensed ministers should be supported in the dioceses in a similar way to licensed ordained ministries, that is – by well-resourced patterns of work agreements, ministerial review, regular communication, pastoral care and regular attention to issues of ongoing ministerial development and vocation. Readers, as licensed ministers, should not be viewed as those in a static form of ministry, but in a way that is similar to ordained ministers, that is, as those who are growing, developing and

exploring their gifts and potential. With the growing number of avenues opening up for Reader ministry, this vision is a real possibility.

Int.1.5 In view of the changing situation, the intensive theological training and the opportunities arising, it is the view of the working group that Reader Ministry needs to be firmly promoted as the ‘Cordon Bleu’ among lay ministries, and this report seeks to do just that. It is hoped that in future this ministry will receive the attention and support in dioceses which will cause it to develop and flourish in new and exciting ways. The spread of the Gospel is as important in the 21st century as it has ever been; if this report serves to point to ways forward that will enable a more effective and valuable contribution by Readers to the mission and ministry of the Church of England, it will have served its purpose.

Introduction 2

What’s New? The key proposals

As a basis for the recommendations put forward in this report we propose that:

Int. 2.1 a clear distinction needs to be made between lay ministers who are licensed by the Diocesan Bishop (according to Canons E4 to E8) and other lay ministers of varied and more exploratory kinds in the dioceses, where ministers may have permissions or commissions but not the bishop’s licence.

Int. 2.2 consultation takes place to consider the recommendation that all lay ministers licensed under the Canons to belong to a national framework in which they are nationally accredited through training which is nationally moderated¹. For Church Army Evangelists and Readers such frameworks are already in place. Leaving the Church Army with its own structures, this report invites consideration of a national framework for all other licensed lay ministries. Along with Readers, who are much the largest group of lay ministers, such licensed ministry would normally be transferable from one diocese to another and fully supported in a comparable way to licensed ordained clergy, (that is, with a clear job description, regular ministerial review, pastoral care independent of their incumbent, regular attention to their ongoing ministerial development and vocation, and receipt of regular communication, such as bishop’s letters). All this will need to be well-resourced in the dioceses.

Int.2.3 within the overall category of nationally accredited and licensed lay ministers a range of categories could be developed after further consultation. In addition to Readers, these might, over the course of time, be extended to include other areas of ministry such as Evangelists, Pastoral Assistants and Youth Ministers.

Int. 2.4 nationally accredited ministers are all known as Licensed Lay Ministers. A suffix can be used to denote any particular category: eg. Licensed Lay Minister (Reader); Licensed Lay Minister (Pastoral Assistant) etc. It is suggested that according to diocesan custom these ministers can be known either by the title Licensed Lay Minister, (LLM), or by the category title: Reader; Pastoral Assistant; Evangelist etc.

¹ Moderation has now become the work of the Quality in Formation Panel through its Quality, Accountability and Enhancement task group. To avoid confusion the term ‘moderation’ will be dropped.

Int. 2.5 Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers) are thoroughly trained as preachers, catechists and facilitators of learning and as those with the skill to be examples to other laity as bearers and interpreters of the Word of God in daily working life. Their training will enable them to gain such understanding of people and their pastoral needs as will equip them for their role as communicators.

Int. 2.6 more opportunity will be taken to use Readers with pastoral gifts in the care of distinct congregations as the local catechist, pastor and leader of worship. Within a parish also, more opportunity will be given for Readers to take up clearly designated pastoral and liturgical roles.

Int. 2.7 a national consistency is reached whereby it is normal for Readers, with the appropriate training, to take funerals. Such national consistency would also be desirable in other areas of ministry, such as in leading Public Services of Communion by Extension; however, it is recognised that this ministry is only provisional and the need for it greatly varies, particularly from urban to rural areas.

Int. 2.8 in order to meet the challenge of mission in the present generation, Reader ministry, as a whole, seeks to redevelop itself. Readers will be skilled preachers, catechists, and educators, particularly on issues concerning daily life and work; they will seize opportunities on the boundaries of regular church life, in keeping with the revival of Reader ministry in the 1860s. They will take up a great variety of chaplaincy work, forging new opportunities for the public presence of the Church. They will be active in “fresh expressions” of ‘church’.

Int. 2.9 it becomes normal for Readers to be well deployed across a deanery in catechetical, pastoral or mission work and their availability as a resource is signified by their being normally licensed to the deanery.

Int. 2.10 dioceses establish ways of discerning vocations and future ministries in such a way as to ensure that there has been ample opportunity for gifts for a particular category of ministry to be discerned before people are committed for training, and that as people develop there remains the flexibility for growth and development of their ministry with ongoing CME resourcing to equip Readers for specialist areas of ministry.

Int. 2.11 We believe that the strength of these proposals is that they seek to strengthen the national framework for lay ministry while leaving dioceses with the freedom to meet local needs with their own non-transferable, local, innovative and exploratory patterns of ministry.

Int. 2.12 **The vignettes of Reader ministry** Scattered throughout the report are short personal accounts of Reader ministry today. They illustrate something of the rich diversity of the different callings to which Readers respond.

Introduction 3 Summary of recommendations

Int. 3.1 The recommendations in this report reflect the key proposals in Introduction section 2 and also the more detailed arguments presented in chapter 4. In this summary they have been grouped and therefore do not appear in the same numerical order as they appear in chapter 4.

The Recommendations

THE PROMOTION OF READER MINISTRY

We recommend that all dioceses of the Church of England recognise the value of Reader ministry and actively promote it as the best trained and resourced lay ministry with a wide variety of opportunities. **(Recommendation 23; Int.1.5; 4.13.7; 4.13.12)**

THE CATEGORIES OF LAY MINISTRY

We recommend that the name of the office of Reader is changed to Licensed Lay Minister (Reader). **(Recommendation 18; Int.2.4; 4.11.4; 4.11.5)**

We recommend that all lay workers licensed by the bishop are known as Licensed Lay Ministers. A working sub-title can be added which may vary according to diocesan or national practice (eg. Reader, Pastoral Assistant, etc.). Careful consideration, with consultation, is given to the possibility of a national framework through which these ministries can be nationally accredited and normally transferable between dioceses.

(Recommendation 19; Int.2.4; 4.11.1 to 4.11.6.)

READER VOCATION

We recommend that Readers keep before them their calling to be examples of those who are bearers and interpreters of the Word in the context of their daily occupation, be it paid or voluntary. **(Recommendation 1; 3.2.1; 4.1.1 to 4.1.4)**

We recommend that dioceses encourage Readers to see their core ministry of preaching and teaching and leading worship as both a significant part of the Church's ministry to equip lay disciples for their mission in the world and the opportunity to engage in mission on the boundaries of the Church. **(Recommendation 2; 2.7.4; 4.1.1; 4.2.1 to 4.2.10)**

We recommend that the office of Reader, in keeping with other ministerial categories in the Church, is to be seen as fluid rather than static and part of an ongoing journey of vocation, the nature of which is regularly discerned afresh. To address this, dioceses will need vocations advisers to cover the full range of ministries. **(Recommendation 10; 4.5.2; 4.6.5)**

We recommend that parishes specifically encourage vocations to Reader ministry, particularly among young adults. **(Recommendation 12 ; 4.6.1; 4.6.7; 4.6.9)**

We recommend that on-going support be given in the dioceses for Readers to explore their vocation to ministry and to specific missional tasks, including the possibility of ordained ministry, either to the vocational diaconate or to the priesthood.

(**Recommendation 29**; 4.16.4; 4.16.7; 4.16.8)

MINISTRY ACCORDING TO GIFTS

We recommend that dioceses support parishes in the careful discernment of potential gifts in lay persons and certainly prior to them being considered for selection for training as Readers. This is to include the discernment of gifts for the core ministries of preaching and teaching, leading worship and interpreting the faith, by such opportunities being given by incumbents to lay people.

(**Recommendation 11**; 4.6.1 to 4.6.9)

We recommend that dioceses permit their Readers to serve in all aspects of ministry allowed by Canon Law and support them.

(**Recommendation 5**; 4.3.6)

READER TRAINING

We recommend that dioceses strengthen the provision of Reader CME, and in particular the development of the skill of Readers as preachers, catechists and educators enabling them to interpret Christian Faith as it engages with daily life and work.

(**Recommendation 3**; 4.2.2 to 4.2.6; 4.2.10)

We recommend that Regional Training Partnerships seek to create opportunities for those selected for training as Readers and ordained ministers to train together and ecumenically.

(**Recommendation 13**; 4.8.7; 4.8.10)

We recommend that without lowering standards, training programmes for Reader Ministry need to be more flexible. They should be accessible and designed to encourage candidates for ministry, particularly younger candidates. Course design needs to enable this by encouraging varied patterns of engagement and incorporating AP(E)L opportunities for former learning experiences to be recognised.

(**Recommendation 14**; 4.8.9; 4.8.10)

We recommend that dioceses encourage the ongoing development of Readers in ministry by offering CME modules in specialised areas of ministry and by providing resources for Readers to engage with appropriate training offered elsewhere.

(**Recommendation 15**; 4.9.1 to 4.9.6)

We recommend that bishops who support the ordination of a Reader who is 55 or over, take into account the experience of a long-standing Reader when assessing training needs.

(**Recommendation 30**; 4.16.7)

READER DEPLOYMENT

We recommend that dioceses widen their vision to include the possible appointment of a Reader as Reader-in-Charge of a congregation, with the corresponding roles of catechist and of pastoral care, possibly also as a House for Duty appointment. Readers are also considered for sector minister posts.

(**Recommendation 6**; 4.3.4; 4.4.9; 4.10.7 to 4.10.10)

We recommend that dioceses encourage the use of Readers with pastoral gifts in bereavement care and funeral ministry, and deaneries strengthen the teams of ministers available for funeral ministry by including Readers. (Recommendation 7; 4.3.4 to 4.3.6; 4.9.2; 4.9.3; 4.10.8)

We recommend that dioceses, deaneries and parishes look for opportunities for Readers to exercise their ministry on the boundaries of the Church, in breaking new ground with “fresh expressions” of church and mission, and in circles where there might otherwise be no representative public ministry of the Church. (Recommendation 8; 4.4.1 to 4.4.5; 4.4.10)

We recommend that dioceses, deaneries and parishes should look for opportunities for the appointment of Readers as chaplains both to institutions where chaplains are already recognised and in places where such an appointment breaks new ground. (Recommendation 9; 4.4.5 to 4.4.10)

We recommend that Readers are normally licensed to the deanery, although with a designated incumbent specified for accountability and support. (Recommendation 16; 4.10.3; 4.10.13)

We recommend that for Public Services of Communion by Extension, Readers, in the light of their training, are considered as the primary choice among lay officiants. The guidelines for this synodically approved ministry should helpfully be applied more evenly across the country. (Recommendation 28; 4.15.3 to 4.15.6)

CORE READER MINISTRIES

We recommend that dioceses indicate their support for Readers as interpreters of the gospel in daily life by encouraging the use of Readers as preachers at the main parish Sunday service of Holy Communion. (Recommendation 4; 4.2.3; 4.2.4; 4.2.10)

COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY

We recommend that dioceses extensively promote training and support for collaborative ministry which all incumbents with Readers are expected to undergo, as well as Readers and all lay ministers. (Recommendation 21; 4.12.1 to 4.12.5)

We recommend that dioceses ensure that Readers, as licensed ministers, are consulted over the appointments of incumbents and assistant clergy, as a matter of course.

(Recommendation 22; 4.13.8; 4.13.12)

We recommend that deaneries regularly invite Readers, as licensed ministers, to chapter meetings, making collaborative ministry more visible and fostering friendship amongst ministers. (Recommendation 17; 4.10.3; 4.10.13)

SUPPORT FOR READER MINISTRY

We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and that they receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. **(Recommendation 20; 1.4.3; 1.4.11; 4.11.3 to 4.11.7)**

We recommend that dioceses should encourage Readers and all Licensed Lay Ministers to attend to their own spiritual refreshment and development with times in which they step back from active involvement and by provision of financial support for courses relevant to their vocation. **(Recommendation 26; 4.14.4)**

READER FUNCTION

We recommend that the House of Bishops decides whether it wishes to clarify further those circumstances under which it might be appropriate for a bishop to permit a Reader, or other Licensed Lay Minister, to baptise. **(Recommendation 27; 1.4.4; 4.15.2; 4.15.6)**

We recommend that the House of Bishops requests the Ministry Division to set in train a revision of the Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry. **(Recommendation 25; 4.14.5; 4.14.6)**

READER DISCIPLINE

We recommend that the House of Bishops clarifies what expectations there are of Readers and other Licensed Lay Ministers in view of their role as public representatives and teachers of the Christian Faith as the Church of England sets it forth and the House sets in train the preparation of an acceptable disciplinary procedure for Readers. **(Recommendation 24; 4.13.11; 4.13.12)**

CHAPTER 1

THE SURVEYS OF READER MINISTRY AND WHAT THEY INDICATED

1.1 The February 2006 debate on Reader ministry

1.1.1 This report has been prepared at the request of the Archbishops' Council following approval by the General Synod of a private member's motion on Reader Ministry at the February 2006 group of sessions. The motion was proposed by Nigel Holmes (Carlisle), himself a Reader, and successfully amended by Peter Capon (Manchester), another Reader, to read:

That this Synod, aware that the work of the ten thousand Readers is crucial to the mission of the Church, requests the Archbishops' Council to consider how this nationally-accredited office should be developed and Readers more fully and effectively deployed, in the light of the welcome recent introduction of a great variety of patterns of voluntary local ministry, both lay and ordained.

1.1.2 The debate revealed that there are some parts of the church in which Readers' morale is now low – indeed Nigel Holmes was prompted to table his Private Member's Motion after hearing of concerns about the state of Reader ministry at the 2006 Annual General Meeting of the Central Readers' Council, at the national Reader conference that year and at his own Brampton Deanery Readers' meeting. He was then surprised by some statistics he uncovered as he told the Synod: 'between 1996 and 2004 the number of Readers-in-training fell by no less than one-third and in the last four of those eight years by one-fifth.' The debate also revealed that there are many Readers who feel totally fulfilled in their ministry, and who have the satisfaction of believing that they are being given by the church the opportunity to exercise an effective ministry.

1.1.3 However, the general picture of the state of Reader Ministry across the Church as reflected in this debate was one of a resource of ministry that in some places was under appreciated and that there was now an opportunity to explore how this large cohort of increasingly well-trained volunteers could be used more creatively to serve the Church of God. The call was that this should be done in a way that not only clarified the core role of this ministry in a time of diversification of lay and ordained ministries but also improved Reader morale.

Encouraging faith

The main emphasis of my ministry is preaching, encouraging faith and being a Christian witness in the community. I take Communion to the sick and housebound, lead intercessions and am involved in the healing team. I am a regular member of the hospital chaplaincy team and help to run the children's summer club. I am beginning to develop fruitful conversations and build friendships with the Muslims in our multicultural suburban parish

1.1.4 The contribution from Canon Philip McDonough, a Reader from St Albans diocese, summed the situation up well when in his speech he surveyed how Reader ministry had fared in recent years:

Since 1990 patterns and styles of worship have been significantly revised. Pastoral reorganization at national and parochial level has caused drastic alterations, either by extinction or by amalgamations, due to declining numbers of ordained clergy and financial constraints. Throughout this period, Readers, through their diocesan boards, have quietly and faithfully got on with pastoral care and sustained worship in places where it would have ceased many years ago. This has been at a cost to them. Readers have been taken for granted, and now they find themselves at the bottom of the pile in mission and ministry in this national Church.

Canon McDonough went on to say:

I stand here, humbly pleading with the Archbishops' Council to listen and to take Readers and our ministry seriously and place it where it should be within the structures and status of the Church of England, not on the fringes, not as an appendage, not as an add-on when all else fails, but at the centre.

1.1.5 The Archbishop's Council responded to the motion passed in the debate by setting up a working party to review the ministry of Readers.² It was agreed by the Bishops' Committee for Ministry that the key points for the Review were:

- (a) The traditional role for Readers of preaching, teaching and holding a lay theological understanding;
- (b) To give guidance as to the transferability or mobility to other forms of ministry;
- (c) To reaffirm the need for a lay theologized ministry.

It was agreed that the review should consider whether the present Canons authorising Reader ministry were still fit for purpose given the changes that have occurred. It was agreed that review should focus on

- The morale of the Readers
- The range of ways in which they are deployed
- Why some Readers are under used
- The areas of ministry available for Reader ministry and other forms of lay ministry
- Ways in which the roles of a Reader could be clarified and communicated.

Diversity of ministry

I serve in an inner city multicultural parish in a church shared with the Roman Catholics. I lead worship and preach most weeks. I lead a men's group and do baptism preparation and bereavement visiting. I facilitate a group of Readers locally for mutual support. In my daily life I exercise my ministry by being fully involved in the varied communities within the parish of all nationalities, faiths and economic status.

² For the details of the working party see 1.5 and Annex 6, p. 122

1.2 The perceptions and practice of Reader ministry in the Church of England

1.2.1 Clearly the issues raised in the debate in February 2006 reflect the mixed views on Reader Ministry present within the Church as a whole. Although there has been an evolution in the functions of Reader over the last 50 years in almost every diocese, because there has been no national co-ordination of the changes, there are nearly as many versions of change as there are dioceses.

1.2.2 This means that, when a new vicar arrives, or a Reader moves to another diocese, the expectations of their ministry can change, perhaps unsettling their ministry and calling on them to work in a way that is less suited to their gifts. For morale to be healthy there must be agreed (and possibly standardised) expectations between Reader and incumbent. Though it is true that many Readers are thoroughly fulfilled in their ministry, there are others who find that the expectations placed upon them are not consonant with what their training has led them to expect.

1.2.3 The position is complicated still further because of the introduction of voluntary ordained ministry, both Non-stipendiary Ministry (NSM)³ and Ordained Local Ministry (OLM). In many places also new lay ministries have developed on a local basis to meet local needs. These vary from diocese to diocese – pastoral lay assistants, lay evangelists, commissioned lay ministers, etc. – and the nomenclature used from diocese to diocese varies for jobs that are in reality quite similar.

Children and families work

I am a qualified and practising family counsellor in the community. The focus of my Reader ministry is very clearly with children and families: I lead worship in schools, run regular parenting classes and do baptism and Confirmation preparation. I only take part in adult services about once a month.

1.3 The present context of Reader ministry in the Church of England

1.3.1 Not only does the practice of Reader ministry vary from diocese to diocese, but it is also clear from the debate and the response to the questionnaires that while Reader ministry has in recent years become unsettled it has also developed into new areas. This is largely because of the proliferation of patterns and models of ministry, ordained and lay.

1.3.2 From the early 20th century, Reader ministry was the key form of lay public ministry: it was recognised by the whole Church and transferable between dioceses. Since there were few other formal opportunities for an ongoing and trained lay ministry in parishes, for many it was Reader ministry or nothing. Therefore Reader ministry has had a parallel life and scope to that of the ordained ministry: Readers, like parish priests, have often been ‘general practitioners’, turning their hand to whatever is required of them at the time. So Readers embraced a wide range of possibilities for ministry, ranging from leading worship, preaching and teaching to pastoral care and evangelism.

³ Non-stipendiary Ministry is sometimes referred to as Self-supporting Ministry.

1.3.3 The table below illustrates the evolution in the patterns of ministry in Church of England parishes between 1960 and 2006. As expected, we see that in 1960 this focused largely on the work of stipendiary clergy – incumbents and their curates, assisted by deaconesses, parish workers, Church Army evangelists and licensed Readers. There were also some clergy ministering as chaplains in hospitals, prisons and the Armed Services.

Comparison of numbers of licensed ministers 1959/1960 and 2006⁴

	1959/60	2006
Licensed stipendiary clergy	15,582	8,988
Licensed non stipendiary clergy (incl OLM)	287	3,011
Chaplains and other ministries	1,296	1,601
Licensed layworkers and Church Army evangelists	1,501	342
Active retired ordained	1,262	4,440
Licensed Readers	6,452	8,013
Readers with permission to officiate and active emeriti		2,207
Total	26,280	28,602

1.3.4 As can be seen above, there are now more than 8,000 Readers (more than 10,000 if including those with PTO and those who are active emeriti). Of these 97%⁵ are over 40 and 48% over 60. Of the total active movement, although 54% are men and 46% are women, there are now three women in training for every two men (60%). A quarter of a century ago, *The Reader* recorded that there were 6,094 men to just 432 women. Women were first licensed in 1969 and the fact that they now make up nearly half of all active Readers, indicates that the growth of the past 35 years is due mostly to them.

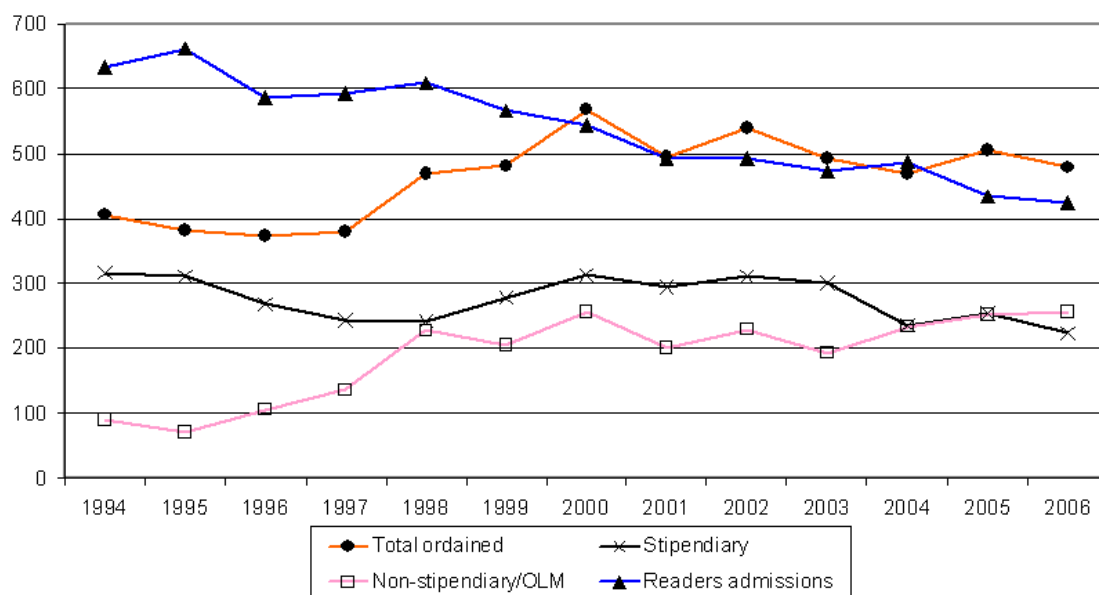
Stores chaplaincy

Early in 1983, when I retired from my previous occupation, at the suggestion of a diocesan adviser, I was guided to a city-centre church and started spending two days a week in a large city-centre store. I was to be there as the representative of the church, to get to know and befriend members of staff. I had the right of access to every part of the store. I would start the day with a visit to the restaurant to chat to people working there. I took lunch in the staff canteen and tea in the snack bar. My wife, also a Reader, joined me and we spent time in the store talking to staff who were not busy. Easter and Christmas services were arranged in the store or the church. There were many pastoral opportunities when staff shared their troubles. We were able to support two women as they got married. When the store went bankrupt we had to comfort some of those in distress. Once the store closed we decided that we could not carry on. We were both over 80!

⁴ *Facts and Figures about the Church of England*, The Central Board of Finance of the Church of England, 1962 and *Church Statistics 2005/6*, Church House Publishing, 2007

⁵ Data from the 2007 Reader Statistics by the Archbishops' Council Research and Statistics Department (Annex 1)

1.3.5 In the period since 1960 there have been several developments in ordained ministries with NSMs, OLMs, house for duty Ministry, distinctive or permanent deacons (in some dioceses) and, most recently, Ordained Pioneer Ministries. It is this growth in the numbers of men and women ordained to the Non-stipendiary Ministry and to the Ordained Local Ministry which is a significant factor in the perception, by Readers, of the loss of identity of their ministry. In fact, in the decade from 1994 the number of those ordained into the non-stipendiary ministry increased by more than 2½ times (from 89 in 1994 to 234 in 2004). Stipendiary ordinations, on the other hand, diminished by a quarter over same period (from 315 in 1994 to 235 in 2004). In 2006 there were just 223 stipendiary ordinations which is lower than the number of NSMs and OLMs ordinations (255). The Figure following, taken from *Church Statistics At a Glance 2005/6*,⁶ shows how these figures equate to Reader admissions.



1.3.6 Stipendiary clergy numbers fell by 10.3% between 2000 and 2006 (from 10,025 to 8,988) and the number of male stipendiary clergy fell by 16.8% over the same period (from 8,945 to 7,438).

1.3.7 Male stipendiary ordinations, in 2006, were 52.5% of the figure 12 years earlier (from 244 to 128), whilst the number of women ordained to stipendiary ministry rose by 24.2% (from 72 to 95) over that same period.

Media interest

I lead worship and preach every week, but do not take funerals. Beyond the parish I lead men’s breakfasts, and when approached I give Christian feedback about TV presentations responding to national and local politics. I am a member of the Lambeth Partnership of Fresh Expressions.

⁶ Church Statistics At a Glance 2005/6, GS Misc 871, Church House, 2007, p. 23

1.3.8 As the Figure above shows, in 1994 there were more than 600⁷ Reader admissions but a total of 405 ordinations. The number of Readers-in-training has declined from 1,607 in 1996 (in which women trainees outnumbered men by 10.1%) to 1,080 in 2006 (in which women trainees outnumbered men by 43.2%). This 32.8% decline is mostly due to an overall 22.2% reduction in the number men entering Reader training. On the other hand, the total number of ordinands in training, over the same period, increased from 1,072 to 1,451 (a 35.4% increase). Moreover, male ordinands had until at least 2006 consistently outnumbered women: the proportion of women in ordination training increased from 37.6% in 1996 (669 men to 403 women), to 49.3% in 2006 (736 men to 715 women). The figures would seem to indicate that a good number of the newly ordained were previously Readers or would previously have sought Reader ministry rather than ordination⁸. Over the same period the number of licensed Readers has fallen slightly, from 8,097 to 8,013 (a 1% decrease only).

1.3.9 The other dramatic shift has been in the age at which people are ordained priest. Whereas once the majority were in their 20s, they are now considerably older.⁹

1.3.10 There has also been, in recent decades, an increase in lay ministries (1.2.3). Some of these are supported by dioceses and exercised under a bishop's commission or permission, but usually not under a bishop's licence.¹⁰ There are many other lay ministers in parishes, including volunteers and some employed directly by PCCs and parish trusts. Following the introduction of Ordained Pioneer Ministry, opportunities for lay pioneer ministry are also being implemented along national guidelines. At times Readers feel undervalued when others with less extensive training have taken on ministerial tasks for which they formerly had responsibility.

1.3.11 There has been for many years the possibility for bishops to licence particular forms of lay ministry. Readers are admitted to the office and licensed under Canons E4 to E6. Canon E7 also permits bishops to give legal authorisation to other lay workers, when certain requirements are met.¹¹ A licence can be given for a specific length of time, and it can be revoked. Canon E7 originally applied to accredited lay workers and those with a nationally recognised Inter Diocesan Certificate, and also for licensing evangelists working under the authority of the Church Army as well as a bishop (Canon E7.2). In recent years the term 'lay worker' has been more widely interpreted in some dioceses. The diocese of Chester has over 40 licensed Pastoral Workers whose diocesan training has equipped them for specific areas of pastoral ministry. A few dioceses have a small number of employed Youth Workers licensed under Canon E7. The diocese of Gloucester has 18 licensed lay workers with various ministries.

1.3.12 The widespread proliferation of ordained and lay ministries has meant that it is more difficult to articulate the distinctive contribution Readers can bring. It is no longer Readers alone who have a public ministerial and pastoral role within their local communities and remain in their parish whilst incumbents come and go. In this context, it is not unreasonable that Readers should feel unsettled and in some cases, even undervalued. The main questions to be addressed within this review concern the distinctive, core ministry of the Reader and how best they can be deployed to serve the needs of the people of God for learning in the present context.

⁷ Reader admissions for years other than 2006 were only shown in the figure above. Exact Reader admissions for 2006 were presented on page 17 of the same publication.

⁸ The ordained increase was NSM+83; OLM+234, total 317. The Reader decline was 268.

⁹ In 1980 there were 278 under 30, but in 2005 just 86 of the 578 ordained. 369 were over 40 and 35 over 60.

¹⁰ In what circumstances a bishop may give a licence to a lay worker is governed by Canon E7. The notion of giving a commission may need further legal examination.

¹¹ See the text of Canon E7 in Annex 5, p.121

1.4 What has been learned from the questionnaires sent to Readers and to dioceses?

1.4.1 The Reader Review Group had gathered many anecdotal impressions about the roles and morale of Readers in ministry, including those presented powerfully in the debate in the General Synod in February 2006. However, the Group felt it important to augment this understanding of the perception of the state of Reader ministry by extending the enquiry to as many Readers as possible throughout the country. To that end it placed a questionnaire in *The Reader* magazine in the winter of 2006 and also made it available through *The Reader* website. 1,060 forms were returned which, for such surveys, is regarded as being a good response (it compares with just 97 that were generated when *The Reader* published a similar centre-spread questionnaire that asked for views about the magazine itself in 2003). The differences between the two datasets are marginal (statistically insignificant) and are therefore reported as a whole. The facts and figures gleaned have informed most of the writing of this report and its recommendations. An Executive Summary of these findings is included in Annex 1 and the Full Report will be made available on the CRC website by the end of June 2008.

1.4.2 Two questionnaires were prepared. One was sent to each diocese, with its questions approved by the Research and Statistics Department of the Archbishops' Council. All dioceses responded. From this a second questionnaire was devised, which was the one that appeared in *The Reader* and, with minimal variation, on the Reader website, (as explained in 1.4.1 above), available for any Reader who wished to respond. The Review Group was especially keen that any Readers who wished to respond should be free to do so, and have their views taken into account. However, such a system is not a statistically precise method of sampling, and consequently the responses have produced an overall impression of Reader morale and aspiration, rather than something that can be empirically quantified.

1.4.3 The analysis of these responses has proved to be challenging, because of the wide variety of ways in which opinions have been expressed. The returned (individual) questionnaires were analysed by three different people. The first researcher (R1) looked at the then 1,020 responses and used personal judgement to divide the responses to key questions. They used few categories and their percentages provide a rough guide only to Reader opinion. The second researcher (R2) read all the questionnaires. They divided responses into three categories only ("yes" or "agree", "no" or "disagree" and "don't know"). A survey of the comments received is included as Annex 3. The third researcher (R3), the research officer of the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council, applied Emergent Content Analysis techniques to a statistically viable, and representative, sample¹². This process involves creating coding categories in the light of the spread of opinion expressed. An executive summary of the findings is included in Annex 1, and the full analysis will be on the website for Reader ministry before the end of June.¹³

1.4.4 Most respondents (73.1% R1; 2 in 3¹⁴ R3) felt that their gifts are adequately used. Reader deployment outside the home parish, though encouraged by the Central Readers' Council for almost ten years, is still very much the exception, so it was encouraging to discover that such deployment was supported by nearly all¹⁵ of those who responded (R1 & R3). It therefore transpires that many would welcome the flexibility of being licensed to a deanery rather than to a single benefice.

¹² A randomly sampled 10% of responses received.

¹³ www.readers.cofe.anglican.org

¹⁴ This is 64% in the Full Report: Table 19, p. 9 (or paragraph 6.2 of Annex 1, p.104).

¹⁵ 96% Table 26 (p. 13) of the Full Report (or paragraph 6.4 of Annex 1, p.104).

Typical interregnum scene!

At present I am running an interregnum in two parishes. So besides leading worship and preaching every week I am also planning services, dealing with parishioner's issues, going into schools and taking assemblies, doing many funerals and generally trying to keep the show on the road with the help of the wardens. At other times my ministry is predominantly one of prayer and spiritual direction, both of which I teach locally and for the Diocesan Training Programme.

1.4.5 One important question was, 'Would you favour significant numbers of Readers being ordained as permanent deacons?' The analysis by R3 indicated over 1 in 3 (36%)¹⁶ in favour. However, R3 also indicated that just under 1 in 4¹⁷ Readers also included comments that indicated that, although they were not personally in favour of ordination to the diaconate, they did support the idea of reviewing the current practices; some felt that ordination into priesthood would be more appropriate, while others objected to ordination *per se* as they felt the lay element of their ministry was important and should be retained. These responses indicate that many Readers (6 in 10¹⁸) favour a more open door for Readers to be ordained; but the questionnaire did not require the respondent to commit themselves, personally, to seek this direction. On the other hand, following R1's work, out of a total of 621 answers to the question, 64.1% were in favour. However, if the responses which did not answer the question are taken into account, the number positively in favour drops to only 39.0% of the 1020 responses¹⁹. This is not far from R3's 36%; we may assume that those who clearly favoured it would indicate this clearly, i.e. be in the 39%. In R3's smaller sample just under 1 in 4²⁰ Readers clearly stated that they did not favour a substantial number of Readers being ordained as permanent deacons. Most important of all, many respondents felt that there should be thorough evaluation and enthusiastic encouragement of Readers to enable them to shape a vision of vocation. This is in line with the working group's recommendation, to encourage this ministry to be dynamic rather than static. (4.5.2; 4.5.4)

1.4.6 A long-standing concern of the Central Readers' Council, dating back more than 20 years, is that the Church of England does not authorise Readers to baptize. Seven out of ten²¹ Readers thought that this should be changed. Interestingly, only 1 in 8²² was involved with baptism preparation.

¹⁶ This 36% relates to the aggregated categories "Yes" and "Yes on Meeting Conditions" from Table 30 (p. 14) of the Full-Report and Figure 13 of the Executive Summary – Annex 1, p.105.

¹⁷ This relates to the category "Not (necessarily) the Permanent Diaconate". The full report shows this as 24% in Table 30 (as above).

¹⁸ 60% in the Full Report. This figure is calculated by aggregating the categories "Yes", "Yes, on Meeting Conditions" and "Not (necessarily) the Permanent Diaconate" from Table 30 (p.14) of the Full Report and Figure 13 of the Executive Summary in Annex 1, p.105.

¹⁹ This question was in fact the same across the different questionnaires referred to in 1.4.1. above.

²⁰ 24% (category "No") in Table 30 of the Full Report (p. 14) and Figure 13 of the Executive Summary, p.104.

²¹ 70% in the Full Report (Table 1, page 2) – see Annex 1, Figure 2, p.98

²² Table 2, page 2 of the Full Report – see Annex 1, Figure 1, p.98

1.4.7 Significant numbers of Readers conduct funerals and three in seven of those who responded²³ felt that they should have the option of retaining the fees.

1.4.8 About Reader training there were many more positive comments than negative comments (see Annex 1, Figure 3).²⁴ The main reservations were directed at the variation between diocesan courses, the length and academic rigour. Moreover, over 6 in 10²⁵ (R3) participate in continuing ministerial education but a further 1 in 9²⁶ (R3) describe this as limited or inadequate. Half of those sampled²⁷ have some experience of additional training in preaching after having been licensed, but 1 in 3 of these Readers described this as limited or inadequate (R3). In their comments some indicate their regret that other less thoroughly trained ministers are allowed to preach, thus removing one of the last distinctive features of nationally accredited Reader ministry²⁸.

1.4.9 The responses to the questionnaire sent to dioceses were much easier to handle because of the far smaller numbers. The response was also good - every diocese sent in at least one response. Many of the questions were identical to those asked in the questionnaire that was completed by individuals; others were designed specifically to ascertain what diocesan policy is on various matters. No questions at all produced unanimous answers. Such lack of agreement raises concerns about the lack of a national approach to Reader ministry. Those who would like national uniformity may be even more disturbed to find that, on a surprising number of issues, the division between one view and the opposite one is close to 50/50.

1.4.10 The majority of the forms were completed by the Diocesan Warden of Readers. Only a handful of responses were completed directly by bishops: of those, one approved wholeheartedly of Reader ministry and actively sought its expansion; another thought the office should be abolished and replaced by a variety of lay ministries.

1.4.11 On most issues, the diocesan responses reflect a wide difference of opinions. On the question of Public Worship with Communion by Extension, for example, replies fell broadly into three categories: (a) not approved 27%, (b) approved/welcomed 9% and (c) allowed only with specific Episcopal approval 64%. These figures concur roughly with those drawn from the responses of individual Readers (see Annex 1, Figure 12). This issue is discussed further in paragraph 4.16.3.

1.4.12 The division was 57%/43% over the question as to whether potential Reader candidates should be encouraged to test their vocation by exercising some kind of ministry prior to selection and/or training. Some kind of lay pastoral involvement is almost universally accepted, so the question implied that preaching trial sermons would be under consideration here. The slight majority was in favour of allowing this kind of activity – but clearly there is a substantial proportion of opinion believing that inappropriate teaching might be given if untrained people

²³ Figure 1 (p.2) of the Full Report shows that 6 in 10 Readers conducted funerals, and Table 27 (p.13) shows that 43% would like to be permitted to receive fees for occasional services (see paragraph 6.4 of the Executive Summary, p. 103).

²⁴ There were in fact 2 in 5 Readers who made positive comments on their training as opposed to 1 in 9 who made negative comments.

²⁵ This relates to the “Yes” category only on Table 7 (page 5) of the Full Report (62% – which is represented in the second row of Figure 5 in the Executive Summary, p. 100)

²⁶ Category “Yes, but Limited/Inadequate” (12%) in the Table 7 (as above).

²⁷ 50% - this relates to the aggregated categories “Yes” and “Yes, but Limited/Inadequate” of Table 8 (page 5) of the Full Report.

²⁸ See Table 16 (page 8) of the Full Report and Figure 10 of the Executive Summary in Annex 1, p.103.

were allowed into pulpits. This is discussed further in paragraphs 4.6.5 and 4.6.6 in the context of how gifts are discerned and developed.

1.4.13 In the areas of training and of ministerial review, similar disparities of view were evident. Initial training is, of course, moderated nationally, so there is some parity there, but in response to a question as to whether CME is made available jointly with clergy, there was a 47% ‘yes’ response and a 53% ‘no’. In an age when collaborative ministry is perceived as being important, this may seem surprising. It is perhaps less so when it is remembered that a good proportion of Readers are in employment and need CME provision to be made available in the evenings and on Saturdays, times when stipendiary clergy would probably be least enthusiastic to participate in a training course.

1.4.14 With regard to the question on the provision of ministerial review for Readers, the division was again 47%/53%. Perhaps alarmingly, the majority reply was that ministerial review for Readers does *not* exist, or does so only patchily or in theory. Only the minority of respondents gave an unequivocal ‘yes’. Strangely, the responses to the individual questionnaire yielded just over 5 in 8²⁹ (R3) able to participate in a scheme of ministerial review in their diocese, although 1 in 3 of these found it to be of limited value. This is discussed in section 4.15.

1.4.15 Respondents to the individual questionnaire were asked to quote examples of ministry, outside the realm of liturgical services, in which they are involved. The list of ideas was impressive and so disparate that those carrying out the analysis of the replies agglomerated them in an “Other” category (see Annex 1, Figure 1). Various chaplaincy roles are prominent in the list, but it is clear that roles (sometimes paid employment) in such disparate areas as police liaison, broadcasting, trades’ union work, para-medical services, human rights activism and local politics are all perceived as areas of ministry. When dioceses were asked if they have any mechanisms or strategies in place for deploying Readers according to their gifts, only 26% replied in the affirmative. It may be that Readers themselves are unilaterally finding ways of exercising their gifts. The development of gifts is addressed in section 4.6.

1.4.16 The responses to two questions were difficult to analyse statistically in the diocesan questionnaire. They are ‘Which aspects of Reader ministry in your diocese (a) should be celebrated and (b) require review?’ As the individual responses demonstrated there were some who hoped for uniformity of Reader functionality across the Church of England. This does not happen now, perhaps especially when policy for Reader ministry changes with the arrival of a new bishop.

1.4.17 For some of the questions, there is significant variance between the individual response and the diocesan responses. When dioceses were asked ‘Would you favour significant numbers of Readers being ordained as permanent deacons?’, only two dioceses said yes – and similarly only two believed that a majority of the Readers were of the same opinion. The individual responses show a significantly higher percentage answering yes to the same question. Some respondents appear to think that the wind is blowing in favour of ordination to the diaconate, however, it is not clear that they would be willing to seek that course themselves – and most dioceses appear from this evidence to be firmly against such an option. This is not easily explained. The review group feel that there is enough evidence here for this matter to be explored further. It is discussed in section 4.16.

²⁹ See Figure 5 of Annex 1, p. 100. This relates to the aggregation of the categories “Yes” and “Yes, but Limited / Inadequate” or Table 6 (page 4) of the Full Report .

1.4.18 Yet the diocesan responses also clearly indicate that lay ministry is greatly valued, even if the size of the slice of lay ministry called ‘Reader’ can vary from one diocese to another. There is also preparedness at diocesan level to ensure that high standards in training and evaluation of such ministers are maintained, though there is also an admission that in places things fall short of the ideal. Throughout the country there is a gospel to be preached and there are pastoral needs to be met. There are also men and women, and specifically, in this context, some 10,000 Readers, willing to meet these needs and to spread the news. This report will fulfil a useful task if it can suggest widely acceptable ways in which the ministers and the needs can be matched, making the most professional and efficient use of the resources available.

1.4.19 While many of those who responded to the individual questionnaire feel that their role as a Reader has been de-valued and that gradually they are being ‘edged out’ of their ministry within the Church³⁰, in general terms the respondents felt that there was still much to be celebrated about Reader Ministry³¹. There was also evidence of a wide range of activities within the Church, but perhaps encouragingly, beyond the church walls, in which Readers were actively engaged³². Disagreements or misunderstandings about roles and responsibilities between Readers and their incumbents were also a major theme to emerge, indicating the importance of agreed expectations³³.

Fire and Rescue Service chaplaincy

Most of my ministry is with the general public as Chaplain to the County Fire and Rescue Services where I serve the professional and volunteer workers and often do follow-up care with victims as well. This overflows into informal hospital chaplaincy. I am firmly based in my local church where I occasionally lead worship and preach.

1.5 The working party and the shape of the report

1.5.1 The members of the working party that has produced this report were invited to join the group by the Rt.Rev.Graham Dow, Bishop of Carlisle, himself acting at the request of the Archbishops’ Council. The bishop is the present chair of the Central Readers Council. The working party members are listed in Annex 6 and represent a spectrum of opinion. There are clergy and Readers, men and women, and varieties of church tradition. Since beginning its work, the group has collaborated with colleagues in the Ministry and Education divisions of the Archbishops’ Council. Also acknowledged in Annex 6 is the considerable number of people who have taken the time and the trouble to comment on earlier drafts, for which the working group is very grateful.

1.5.2 The shape of this report has followed the approach often described as the pastoral cycle (or learning cycle). This methodology has roots in both adult education writings³⁴ and Latin

³⁰ See Figures 9 and 10 of Annex 1, pp.102,103)

³¹ See, in particular, Figure 14 of Annex 1, p.106

³² See Figure 1 in Annex 1, p.98 and also Annex 2, p. 107

³³ This were particularly apparent when considering the effects of the increase of OLMs/NSMs and of Other Lay Ministries and are presented in Figures 9 and 10, Annex 1, pp. 102, 103.

³⁴ D.Kolb *Organisational Psychology*, Prentice Hall 1984

American liberation theology.³⁵ The process starts by noting current experience, and then moves to an *exploration* of this, followed by *reflection*. The fourth stage is to *respond* or plan, leading to a new experience on which the cyclical or spiral process of action and reflection can continue. The different stages of the model are variously named by different authors, and are described in more detail by Laurie Green in his pastoral cycle resource book.³⁶

1.5.3 This study begins with current experience, looking at fundamental questions, ‘What is new and different in Reader Ministry ’ and ‘What are the problems in it that have occasioned this review?’ These have been aired in this chapter. This is followed by exploration and reflection: in chapter two we look at the questions in the light of the Christian tradition, and explore what we may learn from the scriptures about the exercise of ministries within the early church and within the history of the Reader Movement, particularly in the Church of England. Then in chapter three we reflect on what is positive and challenging about the practice of Reader Ministry today. Finally, in chapter four – having articulated the questions, deepened the understanding of the relevant tradition and assessed the health of Reader Ministry – the Review seeks to respond by suggesting ways in which Reader Ministry could be clarified and enhanced in the years to come, including some recommendations for further work. The report concludes with some statistical annexes and the relevant sections of the Canons. For ease of reading the summary of the recommendations has been placed at the start; the action points remain at the end of the chapter from which they are drawn.

Rail system chaplaincy

With Nexus the Chaplain’s duties are clearly to the staff. Should there be any incidents involving passengers or the general public then my duty would be to do whatever I could to help by ascertaining their immediate needs. I would use my contact system to call in other people, family, chaplains, parish priests or ministers if I was asked. My responsibility would then be keeping out of the way of police, fire services and medics and looking after people as they came out. Incident involvement, and the training requirement for it, helps in showing that the chaplain is part of the whole structure and there for everybody. The people who work at Nexus are familiar with the concept of a chaplain. That means that the contact in many cases is very positive and the banter at times very amusing. I am approached by members of staff resulting in some very useful and constructive discussions.

³⁵ Joe Holland *Roots of the Pastoral Cycle* in F. Wijssen, P.Henriot, R.Mejia (eds.) *The Pastoral Circle Revisited*, New York, Orbis, pp.5-12

³⁶ Laurie Green, *Let’s Do Theology* London, Mowbray, 1990, pp.24-30

CHAPTER 2

INSIGHTS FROM SCRIPTURE, TRADITION AND THE HISTORY OF READER MINISTRY

2.1 Introduction to the exploration of New Testament insights

2.1.1 What then can the New Testament offer us in terms of inspiration, nurture and challenge as we explore Reader ministry? This question is made more acute by the fact that a similar exercise done for ordained ministry appears to be very much more straightforward, as the Greek words *episcopos*, *presbuteros* and *diakonos* which are translated into English as bishop, priest (or presbyter) and deacon respectively can be found at least occasionally in the pages of the New Testament. In contrast, there are no apparent roots for Reader ministry within the writings of the New Testament.

2.1.2 In order to answer this question we need to attempt to discover the nature of the earliest Christian communities and what ministry was exercised within that context. From there we can begin to discern what ministry in general was and how Reader ministry in particular might fit into the context of the earliest Christians.

2.1.3 Before we do that, however, it is worth noting that although ordained ministry appears to have a New Testament pedigree, we are mistaken if we believe that modern patterns of ordination and order can be lifted directly from the pages of the New Testament. There are undoubtedly descriptions of *episcopoi* (overseers), *presbuteroi* (elders) and *diakono*i (servants) in New Testament communities, but there are some crucial differences between their New Testament functions and the role of bishop, priest and deacon today. For example, the concept of moniscopacy (the idea that there is a single bishop in each area) does not seem to have developed until the time of St. Ignatius in the second century.³⁷ Likewise the word *diakonos* (deacon) is used more often to refer to people who are clearly not being ‘deacons’ in the church in the sense of the ordained diaconate, than it is used to refer to those who are ‘deacons’ in the three-fold order of ministry. What we find in the pages of the New Testament are seeds, out of which the trees of church order grow in subsequent centuries. The task of recovering the inspiration and origins of a three-fold order of ministry is far from straightforward. The task of exploring the New Testament origins of ordained ministry may appear on the surface to be easier than it is for lay ministry but in reality it is as complex, but in a different way.

Diaconal ministry: supporting the ministry of the sacraments

As a teacher I advise on assemblies and delivery of the RE requirements of the National Curriculum. I also teach the background for and then implement both the regular services of Communion by Extension and the ministry of home communions, preparing and supporting lay assistants in this work. In my rural setting I lead worship or preach at least once every Sunday. I take funerals and help with preparation for baptism and Confirmation

³⁷ Maier, H.O. *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writing of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius* Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2002, pp. 177ff.

2.2 Ministry in the New Testament

2.2.1 One of the most confusing factors affecting study of ministry in the New Testament period is the fact that our English translations struggle to translate the relevant Greek words. So, for example, the English word ministry translates two Greek words (*diakonia* and *leitourgia*)³⁸, though by far the most common word behind the English word ministry is *diakonia*; but *diakonia* itself can also be translated as service (1 Cor 12.5), relief (Acts 11.29), mission (Acts 12.25), task (Luke 10.40) and even daily distribution of food (Acts 6.1), though service and ministry are the most common translations.³⁹ The difficulty that the translators have in giving a consistent translation for the word indicates that ministry in the earliest Christian communities is hard to tie down and ranges from quite vague all-encompassing notions (eg. mission) to very specific activities (eg. waiting at table).

2.2.2 What then did 'ministry' mean in the New Testament communities? For many years scholars were convinced that 'ministry' meant acts of menial service. So, for example, in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Beyer, the author of the article on this word can say that it 'has the special quality of indicating very personally the service rendered to another'.⁴⁰ This traditional interpretation of the word ministry has provided additional problems for Readers whose primary ministerial focus is not generally pastoral.

2.2.3 In recent years, however, there has been a shift of emphasis on what ministry might mean. This shift is largely due to the work of J.N.Collins who in 1980 published a book *Diakonia*⁴¹ in which he argued that, although the word does mean many different things at different times, the major focus of the word is commissioned agency. In other words 'ministry' is as much about being sent to do a task as it is about caring for one's neighbour. Of course this does not mean that one ought not to care for one's neighbour (this is the expectation on all disciples of Jesus), nor that one's commissioned agency cannot include care, simply that the focus of the word is much more on being sent than it is on what is done.⁴²

2.2.4 The impact of this is that Reader 'ministry' is relocated to the centre of any definition of ministry in that it has national recognition and involves a service of admission and licensing. Reader ministry is a lay ministry par excellence that is defined by being commissioned. If Collins' proposed shift in the focus of meaning of the word ministry is accepted then Reader 'ministry' illustrates something important about the nature of a ministry that is called, selected and commissioned.

2.2.5 Another of the impacts of Collins' work has been a revived discussion of who does ministry. In a somewhat controversial second book, Collins posed the question of whether all people do ministry, to which he gives a resounding no.⁴³ Instead Collins identifies the work of ministry as being the terrain of deacons and argues that lay ministers like Readers should be ordained deacon. Others, however, oppose his work vehemently arguing that it is baptism and

³⁸ One of the most confusing examples here is 2 Corinthians 9:12 which literally reads 'for the ministry (*diakonia*) of this ministry (*leitourgia*) not only provides for what the saints lack....'

³⁹ For a full discussion of this see *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church*, GS Misc 854, 2007, pp.8-9.

⁴⁰ H.W. Beyer, 'Diakoneo, Diakonia, Diakonos', in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, Vol.II 1964, p. 81.

⁴¹ John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources*. New York and Oxford: OUP, 1990.

⁴² For a full discussion of this see P. Goeder, 'Diakonia in the New Testament. A Dialogue with John N. Collins,' *Ecclesiology*, 2006; and *Mission and Ministry*, pp. 7-26.

⁴³ John N. Collins, *Are All Christians Ministers?* Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 1992, 1.

baptism alone that qualifies a person for ministry.⁴⁴ Coming from a Roman Catholic perspective, it appears that Collins is looking for the development of a non-priestly yet high profile ministry engaged in the Church's tasks. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Lancaster has recently argued for an extensive extension of the diaconate to address the many forms of poverty in our society.⁴⁵ Debate in this area continues and is far from resolved (see 4.16).

2.2.6 In some ways this discussion cuts right to the heart of the current crisis in Reader ministry. On the one hand are those whose vision for 'every member ministry' appears to dilute the definition of ministry to such an extent that anything done as a Christian is defined as ministry; so much so that existing patterns of ministry, like Reader ministry, seem swamped by the many forms of 'new ministry' that are arising. On the other hand are those whose vision is to define ministry much more tightly, often restricting it to the threefold order of bishops, priests and deacons and cutting out the role of 'Reader' as they do so. Although Collins' himself adopts this latter approach, his theory does not necessarily demand this. Another option is to recognise ministry as 'commissioned service', which widens it beyond ordained ministry but restricts its compass a little. This does not undermine in any way the expectation of involvement by all baptised Christians whose discipleship of Christ expects that they follow his example in word and deed. Self-sacrificial action is expected of all disciples and should be valued as such; ministry becomes instead that specifically commissioned by the Church.

Consultant in palliative medicine

I have the privilege of looking after people who are approaching the end of their lives. I work with the caring team to manage distressing symptoms, provide accurate and understandable information about the patient's illness and the problems they are facing and to support both patient and family on the longest and loneliest journey any of us have to face. My ministry is not overt in terms of being a Reader, but my training has given me a theological and spiritual dimension and a confidence around both liturgy and pastoral care. As a patient put it the day before she died, 'I know that you don't know everything that is happening to me, and I know that you can't make things better, but somehow that's OK, because I know you won't walk away, no matter how bad it gets.' I have become more comfortable with mystery, I witness the peace which passes human understanding and which many of the people I care for find at some point in their journey, and I sense the presence of God in the midst of overwhelming suffering. All this helps me when I preach and when I am simply alongside the people I meet.

⁴⁴ See discussion in James Monroe Barnett, *The Diaconate--a Full and Equal Order : A Comprehensive and Critical Study of the Origin, Development, and Decline of the Diaconate in the Context of the Church's Total Ministry and a Proposal for Renewal*, New York, Seabury Press, 1981, pp. 4-42.

⁴⁵ Patrick O'Donoghue, 'Towards a New Vision of the Permanent Diaconate', *The Pastoral Review*, Vol 4, 1, January/February 2008, pp. 38-43

2.3 Early Christian communities and patterns of ministry

2.3.1 Although the earliest Christian communities were disparate and varied, we can tell some things about them. The evidence that we can glean from the list of greetings at the end of Paul's epistles is that these communities met in houses. Wayne Meeks notes the importance of private households as the location for early Christian communities.⁴⁶ Romans 16 is particularly important for giving us an insight into the different 'houses' that hosted early Christian gatherings. It is also important to recognise that there is evidence for more than one community in large cities. So for example at Corinth we read of gatherings at the house of Crispus (Acts 18.8) and at the house of Gaius (Romans 16.23)⁴⁷, as well as a gathering at Cenchreae of which Phoebe was a member (Romans 16.1). In addition to this the size of Roman houses would make it difficult for each gathering to be much more than 20 or 30 strong.

2.3.2 In due course gatherings in homes were replaced by larger congregations of several hundred persons. Brian Capper points out that the size of the communities must have had an impact on patterns of ministry. In particular he notes that it would be much easier to expect each member of a gathering of 30 people to be engaged in ministry than it would be to expect all members of much larger gatherings to contribute equally to worship:

In the household gathering of two dozen, Paul's vision that every believer had a contribution – a contribution of *ministry* – to make to the community could be realised in practice...In a gathering of several hundred souls, the Bishop could preside, and one or two elders would speak.⁴⁸

In other words, a restriction on ministry exercised in leading worship is the natural effect of a larger congregation. In the early period, when congregations were small, there was a broader and more fluid understanding of ministry that slowly narrowed due to, among other things, practical consideration of size.⁴⁹

2.3.3 Indeed, an examination of Paul's epistles does not point to a single ordering into three clear offices. Instead, Paul's exploration of involvement in the body of Christ is much more fluid than this. In his writings Paul gives various lists of 'gifts'. In 1 Corinthians 12 there are two lists: in verses 8-11 he gives nine examples, but later in 12.28 only eight, some of which overlap and some of which do not. In Romans 12.3-8 another list is given containing this time seven gifts, again some overlapping with those in the other passages and others not. Ephesians 4.11-12 has a much shorter list of just four or five⁵⁰. The interesting feature of these differing lists is that some 'gifts' seem to refer to more formal roles in the church (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherd and teacher), while others are more informal (giving, encouraging, having compassion). It is not even clear whether Paul considers these lists to be lists of ministry, not least because 'ministry' is listed as one of the gifts in Romans 12.3-8. Rather than being lists of 'ministry' as they are often regarded, these lists consist of recognition of the multi-faceted and glorious spirit-given talents that exist within Christian communities.

⁴⁶ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians : The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 75-77.

⁴⁷ Though the reference here might be to Gaius' ability to accommodate all the Corinthian communities when they came together.

⁴⁸ Brian Capper, 'Order and Ministry in the Social Pattern of the New Testament Church' in C. Hall and Robert Hannaford eds. *Order and Ministry*. Leominster, Gracewing, 1996, p.67.

⁴⁹ Factors other than the size of the congregations also affected the ministry of the early Christian community. There was the need to guard against heresy and the need for order in a rapidly growing Church.

⁵⁰ This depends on whether 'shepherd and teacher' is counted as one or two.

2.3.4 The only indication that any gifts were valued more than others is 1 Corinthians 12.28 which lists: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers after which he moves on to listing the gifts as then...then... The fact that these three are repeated again in Ephesians 4.11, alongside evangelists and pastors, points to their relative importance within the early Christian community. Despite this, the Pauline expectation seems to have been that there were many and varied gifts within the communities – so many in fact that the lists are only examples which may have been chosen to fit the point being made⁵¹ – and that all gifts from ‘being encouraging’ to ‘being an apostle’ are to be fostered and valued within God’s people.

2.3.5 Of course, as Capper points out, the contribution of all within the Christian community is much easier when the congregation is small. When the gatherings of Christians became much bigger it was easier to turn to a few ‘leaders’ to exercise their gifts. As Capper says: ‘the ordinary believer’s active participation in the public gathering was effectively excluded.’⁵² We can see this development taking place even within the New Testament itself. The Pastoral epistles display a much clearer and defined view of a ‘bishop/overseer’ and a ‘deacon’ than we find in other New Testament texts. 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 lay out the characteristics of a person undertaking this task as though the role was much more defined than it had been in earlier epistles.

2.3.6 The challenge to larger congregations is how to maintain the emphasis on the gifts of all found in the New Testament texts while ordering a much larger and more varied gathering. What has happened over time is that the demands of larger gatherings have drowned out the discernment and recognition of the varied gifts of the Spirit. One of the insights the early church can offer to our current situation is the essential character of these gifts for the thriving of the body.

2.3.7 Another possible root in the New Testament for the subsequent ministry of Readers is the importance given to the reading of apostolic letters and prophecy. In Colossians 4.16, Paul instructs that his letter be read not only to the church congregation in Colossae, to which he is writing, but also in the church of the Laodiceans. Furthermore, the letter to the Laodiceans is to be read at Colossae. The Revelation of St. John opens with a blessing on ‘the one who reads the words of this prophecy and on those who hear it and take it to heart’ (Rev.1.3). The implication is that it is to be read to the recipient seven churches. Some scholars believe that the Revelation is written to be read in six instalments at the eucharist.⁵³ Both the Colossians and Revelation references suggest the development of an important role in public reading.

2.4 The priesthood of all believers?

2.4.1 One of the familiar phrases used in the discussion of the ministry of all is ‘the priesthood of all believers’. This phrase has become so common that it comes as something of a surprise to discover that it is not biblical; but the concept, if not the exact wording, comes from Martin

⁵¹ Spiritual manifestations ICor 12.4-11; variety Rom 12.3-8 and ICor 12.28; the building up of the Church Eph.4.11-13

⁵² Brian J. Capper *Order and Ministry*. p.68

⁵³ Alan Garrow *Revelation* London, Routledge, 1997, p.4

Luther⁵⁴. Its origins are, however, biblical and can be found reflected in passages such as 1 Peter 2.4-9 and Revelation 1.4-6⁵⁵ which speak of the call upon all Christians to be a holy priesthood (1 Peter) and priests serving God (Revelation). The Revelation passages particularly reflect Old Testament thinking in Exodus 19.6⁵⁶

2.4.2 This vision is radical in nature but not in the way it is sometimes understood. This phrase is sometimes understood to mean that we are all priests (as in bishops, priests and deacons). In the New Testament context this cannot be the case. The word that is used here is not *presbuteros* but various forms of *hiereus*, the word that is more usually used to denote the Old Testament priesthood.⁵⁷ The point made by both the authors of 1 Peter and Revelation is that the old elite priesthood defined by birth has now become so broad that all Christians are now included within its remit. This vision, which widened the calling to serve God to the whole people of God, through worship and proclamation, runs very much in line with Paul's expectation that each member of the body will have gifts given by the Spirit to share with the whole body.

2.4.3 It is worth noting, however, that the emphasis on being a royal priesthood that we find in 1 Peter and Revelation concerns not so much the service of the church, as the service of God in corporate worship and proclamation of his wonderful deeds. The impact of these statements is that each member of the Christian community is now expected to dedicate themselves both to the worship of God in their own right and not to rely on an elite to facilitate the worship for them, and to the proclamation of the acts of God. It means that all people are now able to encounter and withstand the awesome holiness of God. Being a royal priesthood calls therefore on every member of the community to be as dedicated in worship and service of God, as were the priests of the temple who dedicated the whole of their lives to it.

2.5 The implications of the New Testament insights

2.5.1 The New Testament offers various insights into the question of lay ministry and its role in the church today. The first is that the New Testament writers had a vision for the all-embracing nature of Christian community that valued and fostered the gifts and worship of all its members. There can be no doubt that in the earliest Christian communities everyone was expected to contribute to the welfare of the whole gathering.

2.5.2 Gifts and ministry, however, are not the same thing. At no point in his list of gifts does Paul call them ministry; instead ministry is listed as one of the gifts in Romans 12. This seems

⁵⁴ Martin Luther wrote in *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation in 1520*:

As St. Paul says (1 Cor:12) we are all one body, though each member does its own work, to serve the others, This is because we have one baptism, one Gospel, one faith, and are all ... Thus we are all consecrated as priests by baptism, as St. Peter says: 'Ye are a royal priesthood, a holy nation' (1 Peter 2:9) and in the book of Revelation: 'and hast made us unto our God (by Thy blood) kings and priests' (Rev 5:10)

in ed. J.H. Robinson, *Readings in European History* (Boston: Ginn, 1906), 2:

⁵⁵ It can also be found more implicitly in various passages in Hebrews such as Hebrews 13:15 which talk of 'us' offering a sacrifice of praise to God.

⁵⁶ 'you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' RSV

⁵⁷ This illustrates the real complexity of the term 'priest' which draws both on Old Testament categories and on New Testament images of 'eldership'.

to indicate that while everyone's gifts are to be recognised and cherished, ministry has a more specific focus, which, if J.N.Collins is correct, is focussed on commissioning. Ministry arises out of our spirit-filled gifts but is defined more closely as carrying out the task or tasks commissioned by the church⁵⁸.

2.5.3 As time went by and the Christian communities grew, there may well have been a retreat from a reality in which all members of the community contributed out of the gifts they brought to one in which a smaller number of people facilitated the worship and service of the people of God. As a result leadership, ministry and gifts began to merge and mean something similar. In the New Testament these three seem much further apart. Leadership denoted either the day-to-day practical running of the local congregation or the more itinerant apostolic role of people like Peter. Ministry seems more connected to commissioned activity on behalf of the community and gifts to be what all people brought. In other words the leaders were not the only ones to do ministry or to bring gifts.

Leading the people of God in discipleship and mission

I am on the wider leadership team of our church and I lead services and preach regularly. I am also involved in much that is not clearly 'Reader' ministry: our work with children and young people, visiting and encouraging people, leading small groups, prayer, hospitality, organising events etc.. Being a Reader has given me training, authority and responsibility to share in leading the people of God in discipleship and mission - that we all might use the gifts He gives us for His service

2.6 Glimpses of Reader or Lector ministry over the centuries

2.6.1 Following the consideration of New Testament material as that which gives foundation to the Church's understanding of its ministry, it is helpful to note certain historical examples which serve as a background to the ministry of Readers. Building on what has already been observed about the growing importance of the role of public reading in New Testament times, Justin, in his First Apology, explicitly refers to the Reader in the context of the Sunday assembly and celebration of the Lord's Supper. First the Reader (Lector) would both read and expound the context of what had been read and then the bishop would preach.⁵⁹ By this means the Church met the need for persons who were educated and able to read the books of the Church. Subsequently Cyprian appointed a Reader with the laying on of hands, calling this an 'ordination'. Hippolytus, however, provides for a simple enrolment of the Lector with the giving of a Bible. One of the Western Canons of the sixth century gives forms for all ordinations of those in minor orders. In the order for the Lector there is no laying on of hands; rather the ordination into the minor order is with prayer and the giving of the scriptures⁶⁰.

⁵⁸ The idea of ministry as involving the tasks commissioned by the church is discussed in more detail in *Mission and Ministry* GC Misc 854, pp. 61-66

⁵⁹ The Jewish pattern for the synagogue, from which the pattern of early Christian worship developed, allowed a person in the assembly, even a visitor, to read the scriptures and comment on them, as Jesus did (Luke 4.16-20) and as Paul and his companions did. (Acts 13.13-14.1)

⁶⁰ 'When a lector is ordained let the bishop speak about him to the people, pointing out his faith and life and skill. After this, while the people look on, let him give the book from which he is to read, saying to him: "Receive this

2.6.2 George King, a former Honorary Secretary of the Central Readers Board and one of the few to write about the development of Readers, comments

Around the year 200 the Reader ranked very high in the Church compared with other ministers, and...in the *Apostolic Church Order* he took precedence over the deacons...From this position of high importance and of being the highest branch of the lay ministry the Readership seems gradually to have declined, until by the end of the fifth century Readers were of little importance, and had become members of a minor order, and that minor order was given the lowest possible classification in the orders of precedence, and was placed even below the minor orders of acolytes and exorcists.⁶¹

King further cites John Wordsworth, Bishop of Salisbury who wrote in 1901, 'This elevation of ritual and disciplinary officers at the expense of an order of men who had the great duty of reading Holy Scriptures to the people, is a development of a retrograde character.'⁶² Readers or Lectors continued into the medieval church as a 'minor order'. They remain in both the Orthodox and Roman Churches; in the latter they are those who read the scriptures; only they do not read the gospel at the mass.⁶³

2.6.3 One of the most significant offices which can be traced right back to the earliest times of the English Church was that of the parish clerk. Originally ordained into a minor order, but non-celibate, their role was to assist the priest. Gradually they took on functions such as reading the Epistle. By the fourteenth century there were parish clerks who were not ordained; gradually it became normal for this to be a lay ministry, along with other lay ministries such as sextons.

2.7 A brief history of Reader ministry – its revival post-Reformation and again in the 19th century

2.7.1 In England, in response to a shortage of ordained clergy,⁶⁴ the first post-Reformation references to the office of Reader occur in 1560. It was Archbishop Matthew Parker who said that 'a deacon or else some sober, honest and grave layman who as lector or Reader shall...read the order of service appointed'. Bishop Meyrick of Bangor is recorded as having 'ordained' five Readers in Bow Church, London, that January.⁶⁵ According to *Reader-Preacher* by G. Lawton, Readers in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I ministered in poorer parishes 'destitute of incumbents'⁶⁶. They were allowed to read the appointed service 'playnlie, distinctlie, and audiblie' but not to preach or interpret the scriptures. They were permitted to bury the dead and purify women after childbirth but not to administer the sacraments or 'other public rites of the Church'. They were to keep the registers⁶⁷.

and be the spokesman of the word of God and you shall have, if you do your work faithfully and usefully, a part with those who have administered the Word of God" See footnote 63 below.

⁶¹ T.G.King, *Readers: A Pioneer Ministry*, London, Central Readers Board, 1973, pp. 54-55

⁶² John Wordsworth, *The Ministry of Grace*, London, Longmans, 1901, cited by King, *Readers*, p. 60

⁶³ These facts and those in paragraph 2.6.1 are noted by Michael Nazir-Ali in *Shapes of the Church to Come* Eastbourne, Kingsway, 2001, p.164-5. He refers to Joseph Lienhard SJ, *Ministry, Message of the Fathers of the Church* Wilmington, Michael Glazier, 1984, pp. 37,42,132

⁶⁴ Several of the points in this section are made in *Mission and Ministry* GS Misc. 854, p.33.

⁶⁵ Reference to the actions of Archbishop Parker and Bishop Meyrick can be found in T.G.King *Readers: A Pioneer Ministry*, London, Central Readers Board, 1973, pp. 67-68

⁶⁶ G.Lawton *Reader-Preacher* London, Churchman, 1989, ch.9 cited by Rhoda Hiscox *Celebrating Reader Ministry*, London, Mowbray, p.12

⁶⁷ *Mission and Ministry* GS Misc 854 p. 33

2.7.2 In their personal lives the Readers were to be sober in apparel, especially in church, to read a chapter of the Old and New Testaments daily and to ‘move men to quiet and concord, and not give them cause for offence’.⁶⁸ This was at a time when many of those ordained were far from remarkable for their godliness or devotion. When livings were held in plurality, tasks, such as burial, could be delegated to Readers. They were paid and could minister throughout a diocese. However, they did not keep their appointments when an incumbent was appointed and did not minister alongside incumbents as is the case today. The report *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church* comments

It seems probable that the reason why it was Readers who were employed in this way was that the bishops were aware that the fact that office of Reader was one that had existed in the early days of the Church. As in the case of its pattern of ordained ministry, the Church of England was seeking to build on ancient precedent⁶⁹.

2.7.3 Readers were never very numerous but there is evidence that the office persisted until the reign of King George II, when it was resolved that no one should officiate who was not in deacon’s orders. The existing Readers, amongst whom, in the Diocese of Carlisle, for example, were a clogger, a tailor and a butter-print maker, were ‘ordained’ without examination.⁷⁰

2.7.4 The office of Reader was revived a second time in the following century at a meeting of Archbishops and Bishops at Lambeth Palace on Ascension Day, 1866, following calls during the preceding 25 years or so for greater service from the laity, even in the sanctuary. The reasons for its revival lie neither with needing assistance with regular parish church services, nor with a vision for developing the gifts and ministries of members of the congregations. The driving motivation came from the need to extend the effectiveness of the traditional parochial system to new pioneering work on the boundaries between church and world. Mission congregations were established and there were assemblies, for example in prisons or in steelworks. Bishops recognised that the parish churches in their diocese did not serve the working classes well. In some measure this could be redressed by the encouragement of other places of meeting and worship. The licensing of Readers enabled these services to be provided under the authority of the Church.⁷¹

2.7.5 The church realised its inability to cater for the growing population: it grew from 9 million in 1801 to 20 million in 1861, with a concentration increasingly in cities. The greatest shortage of clergy was in the industrialized North. The debate centred not on the need for ministers but on their role. Titles discussed included lay agents, sub-deacons, lay deacons, lay teachers or Readers. As the Bishop of London put it, ‘Every day convinces me more and more that some such organisation is necessary to reach the great mass of our people’.

2.7.6 In some Dioceses there was great enthusiasm for the development of Reader and other lay ministry. For example, in the Durham Diocese there was a significant development in large

⁶⁸ G. Lawton *Reader-Precacher*, ch.9, cited Rhoda Hiscox, *Celebrating Reader Ministry*, p.12

⁶⁹ *Mission and Ministry* GS Misc 854 p. 33

⁷⁰ Richard S. Ferguson *Diocesan Histories – Carlisle*, SPCK, 1889 p.174

⁷¹ Because at first Readers were not allowed to preach when a priest was present or required for the maintenance of the main diet of Sunday worship in parish churches, they found themselves located at the ‘cutting edge’ of mission and ministry. They would assist by leading or contributing to worship in mission rooms, purpose built mission churches, and cottage meetings, ‘in the open air’ and among both the industrial and rural poor. See Rhoda Hiscox *Celebrating Reader Ministry: 125 Years of Lay Ministry in the Church of England*, London, Mowbray, 1991, pp. 13 – 19

bands of parish district visitors, Sunday school teachers, and organisers of women's and men's societies. Bishop Lightfoot in his address to Durham's first Diocesan Conference of 1880 promoted Reader ministry as the organisation of a 'lay agency', where 'the regular troops of the Great King must be supplemented by His voluntary forces'.⁷²

2.7.7 The first English Reader in recent times was J.D.T. Niblett of Standish who in 1866 was admitted in the palace of the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol⁷³. Niblett and his early fellow Readers were instrumental in breaking down the social barriers which existed in the Church, either directly, like the Earl Nelson who only agreed to become a Reader if 'every grade in society' might also become Readers, or indirectly, like the Town Clerk of Louth, who preached regularly to a large group of navvies every Sunday afternoon. These early Readers were teachers and catechists working in Sunday Schools and organising activities for young people. They also lectured to adults and ran Bible classes and would appear as leaders of worship in mission halls or in the open air. Although the Diocesan Readers came from the professions, the Parochial Readers were described as 'the better educated from among the uneducated'! The bishops were nervous of the success of the non-conformists, who employed lay local preachers. As John Wesley had put it a century earlier, 'Use talent and you have talent'.

2.7.8 Even though the first Reader Diocesan Association had been formed in Durham in 1880, the Convocation of the Province of York, meeting four years later really wanted instead a form of 'extended diaconate'. At a joint meeting with the Convocation of Canterbury the latter favoured an extension of the system of Readers, a development that would involve their being allowed to conduct worship and preach in unconsecrated buildings.⁷⁴

2.7.9 In Lincoln in 1891, with the personal encouragement of Bishop Edward King, the Diocesan Lay Readers' Guild was formed 'to give help to clergymen and others in the direction of mission work', and over the next ten years, by invitation, the small but growing band of Guild members held regular Services in mission rooms in five city parishes and twenty two rural parishes, as well as providing worship, catechesis and other services for five branches of the Deaf and Dumb Mission, Lincoln Prison, Girls Home, the Railway Guild, Westgate Institute, Seaman's Institute, Boys Brigade, the mission to men and boys and the Union Workhouse.⁷⁵ The leading of worship, catechesis and evangelism were all an important part of the mission of the Guild, providing front line ministry to the marginalised and the poor.

2.7.10 By May 19th 1906, The Times Newspaper reported that the Bishop of London had designated three forms of Reader -the Parochial, the Marine and the Diocesan. The core work of all these Readers was visiting, Sunday school teaching, open air preaching, leading services in unconsecrated buildings and assisting with portions of Morning and Evening Prayer and the Litany in parish churches. Diocesan Readers might preach after the third collect at Evening Prayer. The marine Readers were opening up new ministry and ordinary Readers had the missionary task of preaching in public places and leading worship in mission rooms for the poor.

⁷² From M.A.Whitehead, an MPhil Thesis of the University of Newcastle, *Episcopal Visitation to Prophetic Episcopacy: a study of the mission of the Church of England, as seen through the relationship between the Bishops of Durham and the Clergy of Stockton on Tees*, 2003

⁷³ T.G.King, *Readers*, p.83

⁷⁴ T.G.King, *Readers*, pp.90, 91, 110

⁷⁵ The Minute Books of Lincoln Diocesan Lay Readers' Guild, Diocese of Lincoln Archives

2.7.11 Readers were often itinerant, preaching and leading worship in many parish churches. Mr. W. Reay-Smith, licensed in 1906, gave 41 years' active service to the Diocese of Newcastle during which he ministered in no fewer than 100 churches, which in those days would have offered a wealth of services of Morning or Evening Prayer.

2.7.12 However, such developments were sometimes cautiously received. Frances Knight observes that:

In the week-night cottage meeting or evening lecture, which typically consisted of Bible readings, a short address and extempore prayer, the rigid social hierarchy that prevailed when the community assembled in the parish church could (theoretically at least) be temporarily suspended, and worship not be subject to the constraints of the Book of Common Prayer. It was also hoped to attract those who might feel ashamed to attend the parish church on Sunday because of the state of their clothes. The use of cottages and other unlicensed premises, and the frequent absence of the Prayer Book, tended to provoke episcopal censure, and as a result, cottage meetings were usually seen as a hallmark of Evangelism.⁷⁶

2.7.13 Yet, despite and sometimes because of the reservations of the more cautious bishops and church structures, Readers and many other local lay people were involved in pioneer ministry within their local communities, institutions and places of work, generating a measure of the energy for outreach and mission typical of the later Victorian and Edwardian era. At that time, the development of Reader Ministry was one of several examples of increasing lay leadership. Alongside formal developments such as the Church Army and the vocation to religious orders of nuns and monks, there were a whole range of other examples involving lay leadership include Sunday School teachers, numerous lady visitors, the emerging structures of the Mothers' Union, the establishment of bible classes, men's societies, the appointment of organists and choirmasters, the leadership of Boys and Girls Brigades, Church Lads' Brigades and the scouting movement.

2.7.14 As a result of a private initiative in 1904, the 2,375 Readers at that time had the chance to subscribe to their own magazine called *The Reader and Lay Worker*. A century later the print run is 10,000.

2.8 A brief history of Reader ministry – continuing historical debate about the appropriate forms of authorisation for Reader ministry

2.8.1 Debate over Readers as lay or ordained was behind the establishment in 1903 of a committee chaired by the Bishop of Salisbury, John Wordsworth, who had studied the history of ministry. The terms of reference were 'to consider the question of restoring an Order of Readers or Sub-deacons in the Church'. Its report the following year, *Readers and Sub-deacons*,⁷⁷ was considered to be of such significance that it remained in print for sixty years. The Committee noted the shortfall in ordinands particularly 'of candidates possessed of anything like large private incomes'! They felt it was not the time to revive minor orders and so recommended extending and regulating the Office of Reader, permitting these laymen to preach in church and take specified parts of Morning and Evening Prayer and of the Litany. They said that whilst they did not consider that this would require a Bill in Parliament or a change to Canon Law, were either of those to prove necessary it should be enacted. They emphasised order and control saying that those authorised to take services should hold a bishop's licence and be trained. They

⁷⁶ F Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society*, Cambridge, 1995, p.41

⁷⁷ *Readers and Sub-deacons* (Convocation of Canterbury no.383)

abolished the distinction in relation to lay ministry between what was permissible in consecrated and unconsecrated buildings, but the pulpit, they maintained, belonged 'to the bishop and his colleagues of the presbytery'. The description 'Reader' was affirmed and was to be the subject of debate in the ensuing century.

2.8.2 In contrast to the recent introduction of a range of ministerial categories in the Church of England, one hundred years ago Reader ministry was then seen as the umbrella for all lay ministries. The Convocations' Regulations of 1905 commissioned all those then called Evangelist, Catechist, Teacher, Preacher, Scriptural Reader and Lay Worker as Reader and some dioceses began to license all their Church Army Officers as Readers. Until 1952 most Church Army Officers were also Readers.

2.8.3 From the end of the nineteenth century most dioceses had two classes of Reader - Diocesan and Parochial.⁷⁸ The former were 'commissioned' whilst the latter were 'licensed' – a distinction, it seems, between officers and other ranks. A significant number at that time was stipendiary. The better-educated Diocesan Readers were permitted to preach their own sermons in the church building itself, a right not granted to Parochial Readers until 1921. The Regulations of that year emphasised that admission was for life and in that respect comparable to ordination. Not long afterwards, in the 1930s, there was a plea for a national service of admission, which took until 2005, 75 years later, (see 4.10.2), to materialise in draft form. The 1930 Regulations also pointed towards the creation of the Central Readers' Board, the idea for which had first been floated in *The Lay Reader* in 1907. The first Annual Conference on Readers' Work was held in 1908 and by 1914 a national office for Readers was opened in Dean's Yard, Westminster, in London. The Board itself was established in 1922, while the magazine proved invaluable for giving the movement a strong identity in this country and indeed overseas.

2.8.4 The Central Readers' Board encouraged each diocese to establish its own committee. Training began to be emphasised and standards were raised. The 1921 Annual Conference on Readers' Work proposed, for the first time, uniform standards for selection and training. Readers were becoming increasingly numerous but were not universally appreciated. In January 1921 a Southwell Reader wrote to the magazine:

Lay Readers in theory are a necessity, in practice they are not wanted by bishop, clergy or congregation...In most parishes the wealthy layman has priority over any licensed Reader...Lay Readers have done the greatest service during war difficulties...they are waiting to do more, much more if permitted, to help in the greater need of these troubled days.⁷⁹

A second letter from a vicar in Leicester, with a very different perspective, appeared in the June issue. Readers had helped whilst he had been ill for six months. 'From the congregation I have heard nothing but praise, and their appreciation of the excellent and practical sermons has been very great and real.' He continued, 'Many priests in the diocese owe much "to the unselfish and most efficient work of this body of Lay Readers"'⁸⁰.

⁷⁸ T.G.King *Readers*, pp.101, 112-113

⁷⁹ Rhoda Hiscox, *Celebrating*, p.22, citing *The Lay Reader*, xviii, January 1921

⁸⁰ Rhoda Hiscox, *Celebrating*, p.22 citing *The LayReader*, xviii June 1921

Pastoral care and chaplaincy

I serve in a rural group of six congregations, leading worship and preaching in all of them as required. I occasionally take funerals and services of Communion by Extension. I facilitate the pastoral care group that covers the whole benefice. I lead the choir for special services, the prayer group and help with Confirmation preparation. Beyond the benefice I am part of the chaplaincy team for the local young offenders institution.

2.8.5 A major debate on Readers and the diaconate took place at the time of the revision of the Regulations in 1930. The Lambeth Conference that year and the Commission of the Church Assembly published a paper entitled *The Staffing of Parishes*⁸¹ which speculated on the possibility of men being able to be ordained yet earn their livings elsewhere.

2.8.6 The other issue of the day was whether Readers should be allowed to administer the chalice. That great character and catalyst of the Reader movement for more than half a century, Canon John Murray, was a great proponent of these changes. As the Master of Selwyn College, Cambridge, from 1909 to 1928, on retirement he became Organizing Secretary of the Central Readers' Board until his death in 1944. As Rhoda Hiscox notes, as early as 1923 the *Church Family Newspaper* described him as 'the heart and brains of the whole movement... the inspiring force'⁸².

2.8.7 At a meeting of the Central Readers' Board in January 1931, Canon Murray said,

we should authorize them [Readers] to administer the chalice. But if we are to do that, surely the simplest and most effective plan is to ordain them outright as deacons, even though this must carry with it a relaxation of the traditional role forbidding them to engage in secular employment which... has been and is being again and again relaxed, even in regard to the Priesthood.

Murray maintained that for half a century Readers had responded to a call

to do the work which, in our ordinal, is the distinctive work of the Diaconate – leading the devotions of the faithful, and preaching and expounding the Word of God in mission rooms and churches... And yet the rank and file of Churchmen are barely conscious of their existence.

Some speakers wanted to go further as they favoured a voluntary priesthood, but that was a step too far for the majority who passed the following motion,

That the principle of the appointment of Voluntary Clergy be accepted – so far as it applies to the Diaconate – and that the Bishops be invited to ordain as Deacons men who have given proof of their spiritual and intellectual capacity by faithful service in the Office of Reader.⁸³

Canon Murray then wrote to all diocesan bishops and secretaries of Readers' Boards outlining the Board's proposals.

2.8.8 During World War II, in 1941, the committee reviewing the Regulations proposed the ending of the two categories, Diocesan and Parochial. From this point Readers could read the epistle but not the gospel, administer the chalice but not the paten and preach at Morning and Evening Prayer but not during Holy Communion. Over the years the range of tasks Readers

⁸¹ *The Staffing of Parishes* (Church Assembly)

⁸² Rhoda Hiscox, *Celebrating*, p.73

⁸³ *The Lay Reader* 1931

have been permitted to perform has increased, but slowly. In 1962 the Central Readers' Board asked that Readers be placed on a par with Deacons, so being allowed all the non-sacerdotal functions in church – baptizing, burying and conducting services after childbirth.

2.8.9 In the Canon Law revision of 1969 the reading of the Gospel and the administering of the bread at Holy Communion were opened not just to Readers but also to other lay people. Readers were permitted to preach at Holy Communion; but the biggest changes of all were that Readers were recognised in the Canons and women were to be permitted to join their ranks. This was the first occasion that accredited ministry had been opened to women on equal terms.

2.8.10 The General Synod was born in 1970 and debated the Deaconesses and Lay Ministry Measure during its early years. This measure was designed to pave the way for further developments, and 'to enable further provision to be made by Canon with respect to the ministry of deaconesses, licensed lay workers, Readers and other lay persons' so that these people would be able to perform duties including burials, 'with the goodwill of the persons responsible' and baptisms 'in the absence of the minister'.⁸⁴ In 1990, Bishop Michael Baughen, then chairman of the Central Readers' Council, wrote, 'The demand for Readers to be allowed to baptize must be agreed soon by the Church'. He also said at that time, 'What saddens me...is to see how desperately slowly changes have taken place, and there are some strong lessons here for the whole Church. The deep opposition to lay ministry... still lingers on'.⁸⁵ In her book *Celebrating Reader Ministry*, Rhoda Hiscox reflects on this: 'For the whole people of God, Readers and clergy and laypeople, disappointment has alternated with hope, tension with trust, frustration with fulfilment'. She quoted the statement of the Central Readers' Board at the time it lost some of its independence to ACCM in 1970 – 'We suffer everywhere from prejudice to Readers and much ill-informed criticism' – and commented herself that 'The national Church was grudging in its recognition of Readers and dilatory in extending their duties despite proven pastoral need. While paying lip service to the priesthood of all believers, it discouraged it when it showed signs of emerging in the lay ministry of Readers'.⁸⁶

2.8.11 It was a former Bishop of Newcastle, Alec Graham, then Chairman of the Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, who in 1984 said that Readers should become 'the Church's lay theologians, thinking, well-informed, articulate.... theological resource people'.⁸⁷ He was pointing to resources that Readers bring to a world in which Christianity appears to be dying through ignorance rather than informed rejection. Exactly a century earlier, in 1884, the Bishop of Bangor wanted 'Christian men who can bridge the gap between the different classes of society; who, being in close communication with the clergyman on the one hand and the industrious masses on the other, can interpret each to each'.⁸⁸ In 1904 Bishop Yeatman-Biggs of Southwark envisaged 'a field of happy, holy usefulness and activity'.⁸⁹ It was not always so. The stipendiary Readers were paid relatively little and life could be anything but happy. Of a Reader in Wales it was said, that at no time did he receive a wage equal to that of a road sweeper. In later years a Stipendiary Readers' Fund was established to help those in need. There was a touching letter from a poor old man who was nearly blind in *The Reader* of February, 1956: 'I am now in my 83rd year and God is very good. I wish to thank you and the brethren for their kindness in the grant which keeps me from debt.' This deserving individual

⁸⁴ Deaconesses and Lay Ministry Measure 1972

⁸⁵ In the foreword to Rhoda Hiscox *Celebrating*, p.vii.

⁸⁶ Rhoda Hiscox *Celebrating*, p.2

⁸⁷ cited Rhoda Hiscox *Celebrating*, p. 2

⁸⁸ cited Rhoda Hiscox *Celebrating*, p.14

⁸⁹ *Lay Work and the Office of Reader* Longmans 1904, cited Hiscox, *Celebrating*, p.17

had just led five services in two months during an interregnum in Cheshire and as he put it “I did it all from memory”!

Local presence in a very rural situation

I minister in a very rural group of nine parishes. As clergy are few and very stretched, I try to be the ‘Church’ presence in the village where I live and to bring together the secular and the spiritual. I lead worship and preach frequently as part of the ministry team, as we endeavour to bring regular weekly worship to each village each week. I lead a small lay ministry team in my own village as well as being active in the Benefice ‘think tank’. I take two school assemblies each week and lead Bible-study, prayer and Lent groups as required. I take communion to the housebound and occasionally take funerals.

2.9 Signs of change in Reader ministry

2.9.1 Both Canon King, Honorary Secretary of the Central Readers’ Board, in 1973, and Canon Tiller, Chief Secretary, Advisory Council for the Church’s Ministry, in 1983, foresaw the growth in the voluntary ordained ministry at the expense of Readers. Canon King wrote that with a ‘changing habit of worship [there is an] increasing need in the Church for ministers who are authorised to celebrate the Holy Communion.’ He envisaged ‘recruitment on a vast scale to the voluntary ordained ministry and many Readers would undoubtedly feel called to ordination as voluntary priests’.⁹⁰ In his Report *A strategy for the Church’s Ministry* Canon Tiller developed this theme, ‘Those men and women who are at present encouraged to train for Reader ministry.... might be candidates for the local priesthood; others would be included as lay pastors in the eldership. It has been pointed out that where there is a suitable Reader already trained to preach the Word and proven to be an acceptable pastor, there is a strong case for calling such a person to a local sacramental ministry as well.’⁹¹ Bishop Robert Martineau, himself originally a Reader, also foresaw the Church ‘encouraging an auxiliary priesthood’ from amongst Readers. ‘These men have just the qualities which a Selection Panel would look for in an auxiliary priest.’⁹²

2.9.2 *A Strategy for the Church’s Ministry* also said, ‘Readers [who did not seek ordination] would not continue to be a separate quasi-order nationally but would be merged into the local ministry’.⁹³ Then, in 1982, there were 1,714 Readers in training⁹⁴; in 2004 there were 1,081. At the time of the above Report, the Central Readers’ Council, in its own submission, was open to change. They saw the need ‘to ask not how the Reader will fit into this development and/or future pattern, but what pattern of ministry the Church needs to develop and is there a place for the Reader within it?’⁹⁵

2.9.3 80 years ago the Archbishop of York, Cosmo Gordon Lang, said, ‘What local preachers have done for Wesleyanism, the Diocesan Readers ought to be able to do for the Church of

⁹⁰ T.G.King *Readers*, p. 163

⁹¹ John Tiller *A Strategy for the Church’s Ministry*, London, CIO, 1983 p.130

⁹² Robert Martineau *The Office and Work of a Reader*, London, Mowbray, 1970 pp.5,6

⁹³ John Tiller *A Strategy for the Church’s Ministry* p.130

⁹⁴ John Tiller *A Strategy for the Church’s Ministry* p.130

⁹⁵ Central Readers Council *Strategy for Ministry*, CRC 1982

England.’ Yet in 2005, whilst the 9,000 Methodist Local Preachers in England, Scotland and Wales led and preached at about two services out of three, Readers are much less involved in that way. *The Ministerial Review Survey* by the Diocese of Lincoln in 2005 was probably the most thorough ever conducted into Reader ministry.⁹⁶ Only 57% led worship once a month or more frequently. This is in stark contrast to a survey conducted in the Dioceses of Ely and Liverpool – one rural, one urban – in 1970. At that time, on average, Readers took part in leading worship on three Sundays out of four and preached on half the Sundays of the year. What was equally significant was that one-third of those sermons were preached outside the benefice to which the Reader was licensed. These two categories, Readers and Local Preachers, are broadly comparable in number yet different in function⁹⁷. Yet there is a major difference in Church culture: virtually all Methodist ministers were first Local Preachers and greatly valued that ministry of the Word; and their congregations do not expect weekly Communion⁹⁸.

2.9.4 One visible change in the role of Readers within churches has resulted from developments in patterns of worship. Within the last 70 years, the Eucharist has increasingly become the main Sunday Service in many churches, and the frequency of Matins, Evensong and evening worship in general has declined. This has had a tendency to maximise the necessity of the priest as a leader of worship, sometimes diminishing the Ministry of the Word. Opportunities for non-Eucharistic acts of worship have been reduced as have the opportunities for the ministry of Readers as leaders of such services. These changes contribute to the present frustration: compared with the past, there are few requests for leading and preaching outside the Reader’s own parish, since NSMs and retired clergy are chosen in preference so that they can celebrate the eucharist.

2.9.5 From December 2000, following a final debate in July of that year, the General Synod permitted services of Public Worship with Communion by Extension. During the Synod debates on the subject some had argued that the ordination of more people would be theologically more acceptable. The Chairman of the House of Laity, Dr. Christina Baxter, a Reader and theological college principal, said, ‘I believe that we need to change our criteria for ordination, so that we have assistant ministers and overseer ministers’⁹⁹. In an earlier debate she had said, ‘If we have to reform ministry or Eucharist we ought to leave the Eucharist as the Lord gave it to us and perhaps significant that the Synod did not confine the administration of the newly approved service to Readers (see 4.15.3).

Earthed sermons

I have been licensed in three dioceses and parishes in Manchester, Durham and Cambridge, as well as leading worship and preaching as a member of staff in two theological colleges. I consider it a great privilege to have been a Reader. I love the discipline of preparing sermons and then preaching them. It gives practical expression to my academic discipline of ethics. As people who are often working in the secular world or immersed in local communities, Readers have a particular responsibility to ensure that preaching is well ‘earthed’ and in touch with what is going on in the lives of their congregations. I found that the fact that I was preaching a little less often than the clergy meant that I had more time to research sermons and focus them. Readers can also make a valuable contribution through widening the scope of intercessory prayer.

⁹⁶ *The Quinquennial Report on Reader Ministry in the Diocese of Lincoln*, Lincoln Diocese, 2005

⁹⁷ *Living God’s Covenant*, Second Interim Report (2007) of the Joint Implementation Commission, Peterborough, Methodist Publishing House, 2007 pp. 57-63

⁹⁸ In the Church of England there has been a decline in services of Morning and Evening Prayer and also Non-stipendiary Ministers would seem to be taking services previously led by Readers.

⁹⁹ *General Synod Report of Proceedings 31.2(July 2000)* p.252

CHAPTER 3

READER MINISTRY – THE CURRENT PICTURE

3.1 The context of Reader ministry today - the Church's mission

3.1.1 Mission is the fundamental task entrusted by Christ to the Church and the Church's ministry must serve its mission. As the recent report *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church* puts it,

Christian discipleship is orientated to God's loving purpose for the world and for the whole of creation that flows from God's plan of salvation. "God our Saviour...desires everyone to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2.4)¹⁰⁰. We do not begin from the mission of the Church, but from the mission of God: that is the foundation of every thought, prayer and action that contributes to the Church's task.¹⁰¹

Using deliberately holistic language, the report describes mission as 'the whole Church proclaiming the whole Christ to the whole world.' The force of this statement is that Christians do not introduce Christ to the world; rather, he is universally present to meet the needs of the whole world, and through his presence in every part of the Church, he is active through the Church's witness and beyond it¹⁰².

3.1.2 The report finds in the words of the Great Commission recorded in Matthew chapter 28, grounds for the fundamental ministries of the Church: the ministries of preaching and teaching the Word, pastoral care and sacramental ministry¹⁰³. The authority of Christ Jesus over heaven and earth is expressed as disciples are made, baptised and taught. But in order to fulfil this mission in its own context, the local church orders its ministry as seems best. The prevailing theology of the local church in Anglican understanding is that the local church is the bishop gathered together with the people. Alongside the bishop are the clergy and other ministers who are responsible for supporting the people in their apostolic mission. The mission of God needs the active participation of all God's people. 'God calls his people to follow Christ, and forms us into a royal priesthood, a holy nation, to declare the wonderful deeds of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.'¹⁰⁴

3.1.3 The bishop has an apostolic role in leading the mission of the church, that is, in seeking the kingdom of God. He has responsibility for the making of disciples, for the pastoral care of all the people and for the church's teaching and sacramental ministries. The bishop can delegate and share the functions of teaching, pastoral care and sacramental provision. He will do this both by working with the priests and deacons with whom he shares responsibility for guarding and passing on the apostolic faith, and by allocating such responsibility to lay persons as best fulfils the Church's mission and is within the boundaries of the Canons and regulations of the Church of England.

3.1.4 In the context of the Church of England, the bishop exercises his authority in a creative tension between parishes, the diocese as a whole and the Church of England. He will support the

¹⁰⁰ *Mission and Ministry* GS Misc 854 p. 57-58

¹⁰¹ *Mission and Ministry* GS Misc 854 p. 58

¹⁰² *Mission and Ministry* GS Misc 854 p.56-7

¹⁰³ *Mission and Ministry* GS Misc 854 p.59

¹⁰⁴ The Common Worship Ordinal, reflecting I Peter 2. 9

parish clergy as, working with their PCCs, they appoint lay people to ministries that are purely local to the parish and to its mission task. For such ministries it is assumed that training will be in the parish, although use will be made of wider provision, such as diocesan or national courses on ministry to children. In the diocese as a whole the bishop may authorise such lay ministries as will be supported by diocesan-wide policy and equipped by diocesan-wide training. But because of the need for the Church of England as a whole to have consistency, some of these lay ministry patterns are agreed across the Church as a whole. Reader ministry is the principal lay ministry which has such national accreditation. It is an important public affirmation of the mission and ministry of all lay people and not just the clergy. Nevertheless, the bishop retains responsibility for how Readers and other diocesan authorised lay ministers are to be deployed in the diocese to meet the needs of God's mission. By ordering its ministry with care, the Church, and specifically, the bishop, bears witness to the God who offers security and serves his purposes for humanity by giving order to his world.

3.1.5 It is helpful to have clarity about the difference between ordained and lay ministries in the Church. The orders of bishop, priest and deacon go back at least to the second century. Those who are ordained into them remain in that order for life. They are understood as reflecting the gift and calling to the whole Church of oversight (episcopate), priesthood and ministry. As the Common Worship ordinal puts it:

To serve this royal priesthood, God has given a variety of ministries.
Deacons are ordained so that the people of God may be better equipped to make Christ known. Theirs is a life of visible self-giving. Christ is the pattern of their calling and their commission; as he washed the feet of his disciples, so they must wash the feet of others.

Priests are ordained to lead God's people in the offering of praise and the proclamation of the gospel. They share with the bishop in the oversight of the Church...With the bishop and their fellow presbyters, they are to sustain the community of the faithful by the ministry of word and sacrament, that we all may grow into the fullness of Christ and be a living sacrifice acceptable to God.

The deacon has been seen as a sign of the calling of all Christians to service. The priest is a sign that all Christians share together in Christ's royal priesthood, offering worship and intercession godwards, and towards the world being bearers of grace and the gospel. The bishop is a sign that God provides oversight and apostolic leadership for his church, a ministry which the bishop shares with archdeacons, rural deans and clergy¹⁰⁵.

Community projects and the legal profession

I have served for over 30 years in an inner city parish involved in many community projects. Now as a High Court Judge my principal focus is ministry in the legal profession and in particular the teasing out of the relationship between faith and work especially in the context of personal, medical and family law and ethics.

¹⁰⁵ Some would describe this significance of the three-fold ministry as iconic.

3.1.6 Lay ministries, such as Reader, do not have symbolic significance in the same way as a sign of God's gift and calling; however, a Reader represents the opportunity for all lay people to become theologically equipped and ready to share in the Church's mission and ministry.

Readers are called to serve the Church of God and to work together with clergy and other ministers. They are to lead public worship, to preach and teach the word of God, to assist at the eucharist and to share in pastoral and evangelistic work. As authorized lay ministers they are to encourage the ministries of God's people, as the Spirit distributes gifts among us all. They are called to help the whole Church to participate in God's mission to the world.¹⁰⁶

Individually authorised ministries are best understood through the theological principles of *focusing*, *representing* and *enabling* what is true of the church as a whole. Thus, for example, Readers might focus, represent and enable the reality of the church as a teaching and learning community, and Pastoral Ministers as a caring community.¹⁰⁷

Opportunities as an authorised lay person

When I was first admitted as a Reader in 1970 – one of the first in the diocese, as this ministry only became opened to women in 1969 – it involved leading services and preaching. Being a Reader meant that people could not say things like “Who does she think she is to stand up at the front of church to lead and preach?” I was there because I had been authorised, not only by the local clergy, but nationally, by the Church of England, after training and with PCC approval. Later, having moved to another area, I was part of the parish staff team and attended staff meetings. When we started to have two evening services instead of one, I was given responsibility for the more formal, choral service. I think that some people might have found that hard to accept had I not been a Reader. I have considered ordination from time to time, but have felt it right to remain lay. I feel that in the transferable nature of Reader ministry, the Church is recognising that lay people, as well as clergy, have the gifts to make a worthwhile contribution, not only to practical and pastoral tasks and to teaching children, but also to the church's ministry of spiritual teaching, preaching and leadership among adults. For some, the very fact that the Reader is not a professional minister makes what they say seem more accessible and realistic, because the Reader has to live it in “the world out there”, just as they do.

Now as the Spirituality Adviser for the diocese where I live, the authority given by my Readership assists my role in leadership.

3.2 Characteristics of Reader ministry today

3.2.1 **Vocational.** There are several key characteristics of Reader ministry. First of all it is a vocation. Readers see themselves as called by God into a public ministry. Since the exercise of that ministry expresses their response to Christ as disciples, it is not simply about doing tasks; it is about 'being' - being disciples who whose calling and ministry is first and foremost in the context of their daily working lives, but who also know that they are trained and authorised for public ministry (see 4.1.1). Many rejoice in being called to this ministry as a lay ministry rather than a clerical one.

¹⁰⁶ Service for the Admission and Licensing of Readers, approved 2006

¹⁰⁷ *Ministry in Focus*, Report by the Ministry Working Party, Diocese of Wakefield, 2004, 4.2, p.3

3.2.2 **Lay.** The specifically ‘lay’ standing of Readers is another important characteristic of their ministry.¹⁰⁸ As articulate laity they can enable and encourage others in the church, and demonstrate that the church is for all, not just clergy. While some tasks undertaken by Readers are similar to some done by clergy, their role is different. The appropriate sense of equality is realised if there is a real sense of partnership and mutual encouragement between priest and Reader. As lay people, Readers have a prophetic voice not tied to the Church institution: being lay is what Readers offer that clergy do not. Readers provide an example of lay commitment; ‘in a visible way they model the ministry of lay people’.¹⁰⁹ If many Readers were to be ordained to the diaconate, their public ministry would become clericalised, thereby removing its significance as a public lay ministry. (see 4.16) This could have a demoralising effect on other laity in the church who might feel that the specific contribution of lay people was being devalued. One Reader expressed this in a sermon,

It is one of the blessings of Reader ministry that it is so flexible: it can be shaped to suit the gifts of the individual Reader and equally to meet the needs of the particular situation.

The ability to look at things freshly, and to shake things about, finds its realisation in Reader ministry, less shackled by expectations and regulations than ordained ministry. Being a Reader is less about function than identity: what is important is that Readers are themselves lay people who both represent the lay people of the Church and who enable other lay people to take a full part in the ministry of all the baptized. It is about sharing ministry. A Reader’s voice does not say ‘I can do this’, but ‘We can do this’.¹¹⁰

3.2.3 **Licensed.** Reader ministry is publicly authorised with an oath to the bishop and legally supported with the bishop’s licence, unlike most other lay ministries. Public authorisation is a sign of the Church’s ministry in the world, that part of God’s action that is expressed through the Church. The structure of Reader ministry enables Readers to know that they act with the Church’s authority. It gives them confidence to develop their gifts in exercising ministry. The Church’s authorisation of public ministry is also protection against self-chosen ministry that the Church is unable to support. Patterns of authorisation nevertheless have drawbacks that must be guarded against. First, the authorisation of some can discourage those who are not authorised from feeling that they have a ministry to offer. Secondly, any authorisation, clerical or lay, can lead to a possessiveness of ‘my ministry’ by those who are authorised; and thirdly, authorisation can lead to inflexibility, where rules about who can do what take precedence over the discovery of gifts and the recognition of the Spirit’s gifting for ministry.

3.2.4 **Canonical.** Reader Ministry operates within clear structures, laid out in Canon Law and *Bishops’ regulations for Reader Ministry*. A parish minister, rural dean or archdeacon must nominate every Reader candidate to the Bishop¹¹¹, with the agreement of the PCC or its equivalent in the place where they intend to minister.¹¹² Currently, Readers operate under licence (or for those over the age of 70, with the Bishop’s ‘Permission to Officiate’), and are supervised and supported by the minister under whose authority they work.

¹⁰⁸ This use of ‘lay’ is short hand for those who are not ordained clergy; the laity are strictly all the people of God, including the clergy.

¹⁰⁹ Michael Nazir-Ali, *Shapes of the Church to Come*, Eastbourne, Kingsway, 2001, p.165

¹¹⁰ Sermon preached on 26th June 2007 at All Saints Convent, Oxford, by Maggie Ellis

¹¹¹ Canon E5.1, see Annex 5, p. 120

¹¹² *Bishops’ Regulations for Reader Ministry*, (Archbishops’ Council , 2000) p 9

3.2.5 Nationally accredited. Readers are nationally deployable and may move from diocese to diocese without further discernment or training because Reader ministry is nationally accredited and recognised. Normally Readers are able to take up their ministry in a new context. The training for their vocational ministry is to a uniform, moderated standard (see 3.6.3). This is in sharp contrast with the increasing number of locally authorised diocesan lay workers whose training is more limited and whose ministry is restricted in scope to a particular parish or to the diocese. Because of the great variety in standards of training of such ministers, no framework is in place for their transfer from one diocese to another.

3.2.6 Voluntary. Lastly, Reader ministry is almost universally a voluntary ministry. Whilst there are burgeoning lay ministries in almost every diocese, it is Reader ministry alone that is voluntary, theologically trained, nationally accredited, transferable, licensed by the bishop and governed by Canon. This is important and gives to Readers an identity quite different from other lay ministers. It is this identity as voluntary licensed lay ministers which this report seeks to strengthen. The only similar group is the very small number of non-stipendiary accredited lay ministers. Following Canon E7, it is possible for a bishop to admit a lay person as a lay worker of the Church if they have had the proper training. However, since the category of lay minister is no longer one of the categories of sponsorship for national selection and training, this means that many voluntary candidates for accredited lay ministry will become Readers, and those who might have been stipendiary accredited lay ministers will become stipendiary Readers and train with other Readers. The category of Reader, among the Licensed Lay Ministers, may prove increasingly helpful for some stipendiary workers, as it already does in a small number of dioceses.

3.3 Changes in patterns of Reader ministry

3.3.1 Changes in patterns of ministry have been encouraged not only by the growth of other forms of ministry, both lay and ordained, (1.2.3; 1.3.4; 1.3.5) but also by the fact that there are fewer stipendiary clergy. Many now work across several parishes. This results in changing demands on lay ministers locally. The role of the stipendiary priest has often changed from being an all-purpose parish minister to a role including responsibilities for co-ordination and oversight, enabling teams of ministries involving mostly unpaid forms of lay and ordained ministers. Readers work within such contexts, which call for extensive collaborative working.

3.3.2 With increased numbers of ministers in secular employment¹¹³ and Ordained Local Ministers (1.3.4), Readers are no longer the only theologically trained Church of England ministers active in employment outside the church, with the opportunities that offers to interpret the world to the church and the church to the world. The Reader's role as a trained theologian, involved in interpreting local life and issues for the world and the church is now, in part, shared with non-stipendiary and ordained local ministers called from within their local communities to serve in the local church and carry with them a theological reflection upon local life.

3.3.3 The diversification of ministries and the involvement of many laity has been a stimulus to positive developments in Reader Ministry. Although some long-established Readers have felt concern when others undertake some accustomed functions, others have responded with enthusiasm to new challenges and possibilities, such as leading and training others in parish ministry groups, and chaplaincy roles (see 4.4 and 4.12). Reader training programmes have evolved to encourage the development of lay theologians and those who can encourage the education and formation of others in their congregations.

¹¹³ Where NSM's are in paid employment they may be described as ministers in secular employment

3.4 National organisation and support of Reader ministry

3.4.1 The Central Readers' Council (CRC) works to enhance the contribution of Readers to the overall ministry of the Church. It works in cooperation with the Ministry Division, which moderates and coordinates the training of Reader candidates. CRC provides a forum for the exchange of ideas between dioceses on Reader matters.

3.4.2 CRC provides Reader certificates for those who have successfully completed initial training before being admitted to the Office of Reader and licensed by their bishop. It publishes a quarterly magazine, *The Reader*. This publication includes articles covering a wide range of theological and ministerial topics, and has a deservedly high reputation. Most dioceses supply it free to Readers as an important means of supporting their ministry. The CRC promotes a website, which is a major national resource for Reader ministry and which offers an increasingly popular forum for discussion of matters of interest to Readers. In addition to diocesan and regional training events, CRC arranges national conferences for Readers. There is a longstanding summer school for Readers at Selwyn College, Cambridge.

3.4.3 CRC is a registered charity. Work is financed mostly from capitation grants made by diocesan Readers' boards. It also administers some charitable trusts, and awards a number of training grants and bursaries. The Council is chaired by a diocesan bishop, and has three representatives from each diocese, including the warden and secretary of Readers. The annual general meeting is held in March /April each year. An executive committee is elected for a five-year term, and usually meets three times a year.

3.4.4 Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry 2000 have been accepted by the House of Bishops, and clarify the basis of the practice of Reader ministry. They expand on the provision made for Readers under Canon Law in Canons E4, E5 and E6. In addition they include information relating to selection and training, admission and licensing, finance, conditions of service and deployment. The regulations are intended to provide a common understanding to be applied in all dioceses, and an agreed framework for further growth and development. If the recommendations of this report are accepted it will be an opportune time for these regulations to be revised.

Chaplain in palliative care

As well as ministry in my parish I am the part-time Chaplain at the London Bridge Hospital. I minister to palliative and dying patients, in particular, and occasionally conduct their funerals. I inaugurated the Annual Memorial Service at Southwark Cathedral and the Christmas Carols Service for patients and staff at the hospital.

3.5 Diversity of diocesan practice

3.5.1 There is some flexibility in the interpretation of the national Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry, and diocesan variations are apparent. As dioceses and parishes develop varied patterns of lay ministry, some Readers may move and find that areas of ministry they have previously carried out are no longer permitted (e.g. funeral ministry) or are undertaken by others. Some may find that they are not fully equipped in areas expected of Readers in the new

location, and similarly some dioceses may find transferring readers appear to them under or over equipped. (see also 1.2.2 and 3.2.5) It is hoped that the publication of this report will lead to clearer expectations and easier transfer between dioceses.

3.5.2 As has been noted, lay persons increasingly share in the ministerial pastoral and teaching tasks of the Church. Along with this there has developed in the dioceses a range of forms of training, authorisation, accreditation and commission.

3.5.3 Some dioceses recognise a range of different specialised ministries, offer various training schemes for these, and arrange for various patterns of authorisation at parish, deanery or diocesan level. Examples include children's work, community ministry, evangelism, music ministry, worship leading, youth work ministry, etc. Some form of lay pastoral ministry is authorised at diocesan level in over half the dioceses, though there is a wide variation in the ways in which diocesan schemes operate. In some cases Reader ministry is integral to the diocesan lay ministry framework, while in other dioceses Reader structures are separate from wider lay ministry schemes. Other recognised and authorised lay ministry includes some hospital, college and prison chaplaincies with lay volunteers / assistant chaplains, and the Mother's Union (with its own pattern of ecclesiastical recognition). All these initiatives have both honoured and encouraged the blossoming of lay vocation and recognised ministry.

3.5.4 In addition, some parishes have set up a variety of locally called, trained and recognised eldership or pastorate schemes. Others have set up ministry teams working alongside ordained clergy and Readers, involving those with a range of worship and pastoral responsibilities, but with training that is unlikely to match the breadth or theological depth of that offered to Readers. In some parishes members of local ministry teams may also preach from time to time.

3.5.5 We have noted that concern has been expressed by some people in relation to the exercise of lay ministries by those who are not licensed (1.2.3; 1.3.5). Readers have sometimes seen certain activities as their province, and are concerned to see some of these at times undertaken by untrained laity (e.g. in some parishes, leading of worship and preaching). However, several activities listed in Canon E4 which Readers may perform without further authorisation have also, by longstanding common custom in many churches, also been carried out by others (e.g. 'teach in Sunday School', 'read the word of God').

3.6 The training of Readers

3.6.1 Both the scope and rigour of Reader training developed very considerably during the second half of the 20th century. Before 1946 readers were usually licensed on the basis of a recommendation to the Bishop. A national examination was introduced for the first time in 1946, which gradually increased in scope and became the 'General Reader's Examination'. In 1975 this was replaced by an essay scheme, where reading lists were provided, and a 'General Readers' Certificate' (GRC) was awarded on the basis of 16 assessed essays based on specific sections of the syllabus. However only a quarter of those admitted as Readers obtained a GRC. From 1989 the centralised scheme was abandoned and each diocese became responsible for devising and delivering its own Reader training course, subject to oversight through a system of national moderation. There is registration of all candidates in training and the award of the Church of England Readers' Certificate is normal.

3.6.2 In 2000, *Reader Ministry and Training, 2000 and Beyond* was published, which clarified and expanded the national criteria for the Initial Training of readers¹¹⁴. Further diocesan initiatives are developing in many places. For example, some have drawn together the training of Readers and ordained local ministers. Some courses are validated by Universities and HE institutions, so that many Readers are now trained to higher education certificate or diploma levels in higher education or their equivalent.

3.6.3 A high proportion of Readers currently licensed has been admitted since 1990 and so have been trained to these standards. For example in one diocese over half of the Reader body was first licensed in 1995 or later. Where this is reflected nationally, the implication is that about half of all Readers have been prepared for ministry in nationally moderated programmes of Reader training leading to an equivalent of level 2 attainment in higher education.

3.6.4 A new ecumenical specification for the education and training of Readers and lay preachers, *A vision for good practice in Reader/Preacher training*,¹¹⁵ published in *Shaping the Future* and adopted in 2006. (This education and training framework is included as Annex 2). This report advocates that “the time has come for all Reader/Preacher training programmes to be accredited by an HE institution”¹¹⁶ and notes the importance of “approaches to learning associated with HE levels 1 and 2 which equip people well for Reader/ Preacher ministry.”¹¹⁷ While the report does not insist that all Readers in training necessarily each gain formal qualifications, the task group agreed that all Readers should be able to work in ways that are self-resourcing. Independent patterns of study which enable this are characterised by descriptors used of HE level 2 courses.

3.7 The importance of collaboration for Reader ministry

3.7.1 The church today increasingly looks for Readers who can work effectively and collaboratively with others as ‘team players’ alongside clergy and other lay ministers. By virtue of their standing as lay ministers holding the bishop’s licence, Readers can play a key role in enabling the successful development of varied patterns of ministry in differing contexts, including local ministry teams and an increasing number of united benefices. They can contribute offering different gifts that complement and work with those of others in the body of Christ.

3.7.2 Reader Ministry is by its very nature a collaborative one. Christina Baxter notes that Readers show ‘by virtue of the call and commission that ministry is always properly plural (Readers are always assistant ministers) and mutual (Readers both receive and give ministry)’¹¹⁸.

3.7.3 The importance of collaboration is a repeated theme in many recent writings and reports on Reader ministry. *Reader Ministry and Training 2000 and Beyond* notes that:

There is a trend away from isolated parish priests working largely on their own with the assistance, perhaps, of one or two other ministers such as Readers or non-stipendiary ministers. Instead, there

¹¹⁴ *Reader Ministry and Training -2000 and beyond*. GS Misc 618 (2000)

¹¹⁵ *Shaping the Future: new patterns of training for lay and ordained* (Archbishops’ Council, 2006) pp31-55

¹¹⁶ *Shaping the Future* p 45

¹¹⁷ *Shaping the Future* p 45

¹¹⁸ Baxter, C in Khurt,G and Nappin,P (eds), *Bridging the Gap: Reader Ministry Today*(CHP 2002), p 2

has been a welcome growth of formal and informal ministry teams. These can be rich in talents, energy and collaborative styles of working, but problematic if team members do not receive adequate training for this new way of working.¹¹⁹

The quinquennial Reader training moderation report *Equipping the Saints* recommends that:

With the growth of local ministry teams, parish staff teams and collaborative styles of working, Readers need to be able to work effectively within different patterns of ministry. Their training should prepare them to work collaboratively not only with their parish priests and with other ministers but also with lay people in their parishes and further afield.¹²⁰

3.7.4 The significance of a collaborative pattern of ministry is discussed further by Christina Baxter in the collection of essays *Bridging the Gap*. She expands on a theological perspective, based on an understanding of a pattern of Christian ministry that reflects something of our understanding of God in the doctrine of the Trinity. She writes:

We also set our understanding within the framework of a Trinitarian theology which recognises that the unity of God is a call to the church to be united, and the differentiation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit within the Godhead encourages us to see that there can be genuine differences of gifting and tasks which does not destroy unity but enriches and contributes to it.¹²¹

3.7.5 Collaboration is dependant on healthy relationships and interactions. Some dioceses have introduced a range of processes and frameworks to encourage and support teams and shared ministry, though collaborative ministry cannot be defined by any single organisational pattern. Characteristics of good collaboration include shared purpose and objectives, consultation and shared decision making, high levels of communication and trust, and some form of accountability and appraisal for those involved in sharing ministry.¹²²

3.7.6 The importance of collaboration within the church is now widely recognized. However, despite embracing the concept of collaboration in principle, in practice the aspirations frequently remain unfulfilled. Patterns that existed in the past can still influence assumptions and expectations of ministerial roles. An inherited tradition of a minister as a superior expert and solo operator dates back to a time when the ‘clerk in holy orders’ may have been the only person in a community with educational qualifications. Some clergy recollect being told during training that numbers of stipendiary clergy and curates would drop, so that ‘in future you will be on your own’. Clergy have not always been prepared for the role of oversight, and some do not recognise the significant difference between delegating work to others, and ministering collaboratively alongside them. Readers also are unlikely to have been trained to work in a collaborative way. In the past, Reader training often focussed on particular tasks and skills, rather than on a potential role in the parish as an enabler.

3.7.7 There are many reasons why good patterns of collaborative ministry are not always embraced and implemented in parishes. Many stipendiary ministers have increasingly large areas of oversight, either in united benefices, across deaneries or with parochial responsibilities augmented by a range of sector portfolios or diocesan roles. Most stipendiary clergy, as general practitioners, find themselves having to be pastors, worship leaders, initiators of mission,

¹¹⁹ *Reader Ministry and Training* p.22

¹²⁰ Thorpe, W. *Equipping the Saints: The Moderation of Reader Training 1999-2003*; Archbishops’ Council; 2003 p.37

¹²¹ *Bridging the Gap*, p.2

¹²² For a longer checklist for Good Collaborative Ministry see *Stranger in the Wings* – ABM 1998 p.51

community chaplains, school governors and taking on many other roles. Some may not be accustomed to working with volunteers, whose employment patterns may leave them unable to meet during daytime hours. The very range of demands can militate against the parish clergy being able to step back and reflect upon the shape and management of their ministry.

3.7.8 The questionnaire sent to Readers indicated that about half the respondents knew of some diocesan provision to encourage team or collaborative working. Patterns of collaborative working and appropriate skills now need to be intentionally fostered by ministerial training courses and diocesan programmes. The importance of ongoing support for developments relating to collaboration amongst clergy and lay ministers is addressed in section 4.12.

Bereavement Officer

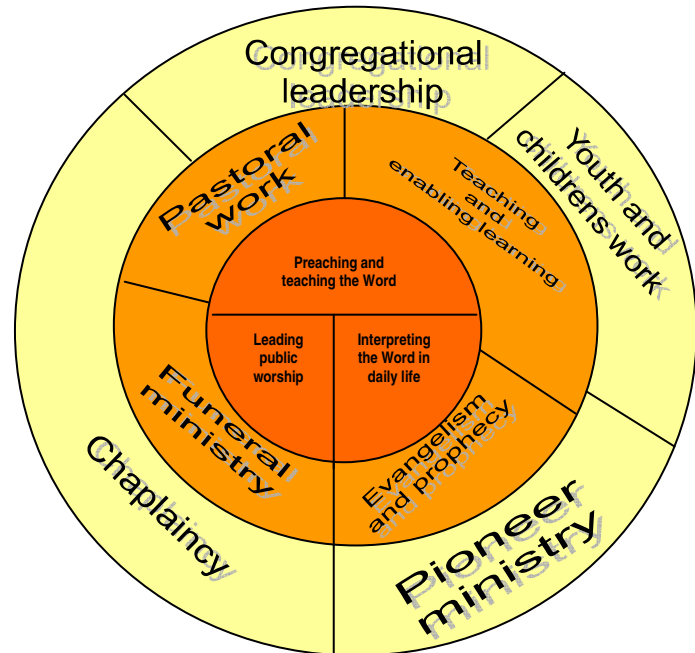
Although I am fully involved in all aspects of parish ministry, my employment as a Bereavement Officer at the Princess Royal University Hospital is really important to me. There are moments when I perceive that our loving God is so desperately needed at these most difficult times, times which affect each one of us.

CHAPTER 4

READER MINISTRY – THE WAY AHEAD

4.1 The vision for Reader ministry

4.1.1. The diagram gives us a way of distinguishing between the core ministry for Readers, for which all are trained, and other significant Reader ministries that flow from this training. At the centre of the target are shown the core ministries. Two of them are public ministries, that is, leading public worship and preaching and teaching the Word. But the Reader is also someone whose very being is a ministry in the world where they are an interpreter of the Word of God in the situations of their daily occupations. To fulfil their liturgical and catechetical ministry Readers now have an exacting theological training, outlined in 3.6 and in 4.8. But this training also gives them the tools for a better theological understanding of daily life. No other lay ministers receive such training and it is this core training upon which the positive future of Reader ministry needs to be based.



4.1.2 In order that the identity of Reader ministry may be strengthened, with the current development of a plurality of voluntary ministries, this chapter concentrates on showing what ministries can follow from the core training. Imagination is needed to follow through the many opportunities available to Readers. At the heart of these opportunities lies the calling from God and the Church to a particular ministry. Fulfilment in that ministry comes from working according to the gifts which God has given and this is in accord with the emphasis of the New Testament. (2.3.3 to 2.3.6; 2.5.1)

4.1.3 To emphasise what Readers 'do' in their ministry is to risk underestimating what it means to 'be' a Reader. All Christian discipleship and ministry involves what we are as much as what we do. A preacher and teacher of the Word has to be the Word of God in who they are, or as St. Paul puts it, a letter for all to read, written by the Spirit.¹²³ For many Readers, their calling and ministry as bearers of the Word of God is in the context of their daily working life. They are able to identify with and share in many of the stressful and difficult issues that people in secular employment face, from redundancy to balancing work life and home life. With other Christians, Readers face daily ethical dilemmas where their beliefs come into conflict with working practices. People tend to see priests as different from themselves and as those who do not face the same dilemmas as they do. The Reader is someone with whom people are more likely to share their

¹²³ 2 Corinthians 3.2,3

difficulties. Readers are a sign of the primary mission of the people of God in the world which the ministries authorised in the Church are to support and service, as part of a teaching and learning community. (3.1.6)

Bringing a faith perspective

I became a Reader in my 20s and have a strong belief in the importance of the Reader living at the interface of the Church and secular worlds. I have worked in five government departments and held three Director General posts in Government. I now coach at Chief Executive and Board level in the private, public and voluntary sectors. I have written books at the interface of leadership and spirituality. I believe strongly in the distinctive Reader ministry where as a lay person I can encourage, stretch and challenge the thinking and actions of both Christians and those who do not bring a faith perspective.

4.1.4 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. We recommend that Readers keep before them their calling to be examples of those who are bearers and interpreters of the Word in the context of their daily occupation, be it paid or voluntary. (3.2.1; 4.1.1 to 4.1.3)

4.2 The core Reader ministries: preaching and teaching the Word and leading public worship

4.2.1 To be a Minister of the Word is a high calling and this ministry is to be greatly valued in the Church. In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer we are given an invitation to experience Christ's presence in proclamation.

'Christ's presence is his existence as Proclamation. The whole Christ is present in preaching, humiliated and exalted. If that were not so, preaching could not have that prominent place which the Reformation insisted upon. This place belongs to the simplest sermon. The sermon is both the riches and the poverty of the Church. It is the form of the present Christ to which we are bound and to which we must hold. If the complete Christ is not in the preaching, then the Church is broken.'¹²⁴

Science, technology and Christian Faith

My job description states that I should "focus my ministry on the work place and on issues related to research and the development of scientific and public policy". This I do as an academic leading one of the best engineering faculties worldwide. I exercise this ministry by speaking on the relationship between future science and technology policy and my Christian faith, encouraging other academics from a wide range of universities world-wide who feel isolated within their local fellowship and being a recognisable beacon to students. I am currently an adviser to the European Commission in developing the European Research Area according to the Lisbon Agenda and am particularly exercised in stabilising the research and innovation base in new member states. I preach at my local church about four times a year and am currently leading study groups looking at current and future technological scenarios including the issue of "what is truth in a digital age?"

¹²⁴ Frits de Lange *Waiting for the Word: Dietrich Bonhoeffer on speaking about God*, Grand Rapids, x, 2000, p.80

4.2.2 Readers have a wealth of experience out of which to preach and teach. They know the world of daily work. They live amongst those whose world-view reflects the mind-set and values of our culture. They have an opportunity to use their understanding of the scriptures and of Christian Faith to inspire and guide others who struggle with the pressures of our world. Bishop Michael Langrish has described Reader ministry in these words:

‘The distinctive role and ministry of Readers is perhaps more important now than it has ever been. In a society where there are constant pressures to push up educational standards and where more and more people have been to university or college, the need for theologically educated and spiritually mature ministers who can speak with authority out of the experience of the lay people of God is needed now as perhaps never before. The need is for people formed equally by their shared experience of their neighbours and their daily grappling with the scriptures and the teaching of the church, in the context of disciplined prayer, who are able, in terms that their contemporaries will understand, both to give an account of the hope and the faith that is within them and to help others to do so too¹²⁵.

4.2.3 Readers, with their experience in the community, either through their employment or in other voluntary activities, are well placed to bring to their preaching and teaching insights about daily life, seen through the eyes of Christian Faith. As lay ministers, Readers see things from a point of view alongside those with whom they work. With their experience and their training they can often speak authentically to people in our congregations about faith at work and challenge congregations to recognise that the church exists for those who live and work all around them. In many places clergy rarely address issues of daily working life, perhaps because they do not feel competent to do so. Yet for most members of a church congregation, much time in the week ahead will be taken up with the joys and struggles of their daily occupation. Readers are well placed to address this important gap: to offer teaching that seeks to equip the laity to understand the purposes of God in what occupies so much time in their lives, and so to inspire greater commitment to discipleship. Such a contribution is thoroughly appropriate at the normal Sunday gathering of the people of God, or parish eucharist.

4.2.4 In the light of the previous paragraph, both in their training, and subsequently, Readers need to study the theology of work.¹²⁶ The reflection on Reader ministry entitled *Bridging the Gap* put it in these words:

Most congregations want to hear sermons that are relevant to their weekday lives; not many preachers provide them. Readers are often better able than clergy to fill this gap. They have not just studied the theology of work, and the Christian work ethic, they have tried to put them into practice, and they know from their own experience just how difficult this can be.¹²⁷

As the chapter in *Bridging the Gap* continues, “The world of work should be taken right to the heart of worship every Sunday.”¹²⁸

4.2.5 The distinction between preaching and teaching the Word is not a firm one. Timothy is exhorted to do both¹²⁹, as an itinerant leader, and it is unlikely that he did them on completely different occasions¹³⁰. A preacher is a herald and a proclaimer of good news,¹³¹ announcing the

¹²⁵ Sermon by the Bishop of Exeter on the Admission and Licensing of Readers, 30th September 2006

¹²⁶ For example: R. Higginson *Called to Account* Eagle, Guildford, 1992; G. Dow *A Christian Understanding of Daily Work*, Nottingham, Grove, 1994

¹²⁷ *Bridging the Gap* p.23

¹²⁸ *Bridging the Gap* p.24

¹²⁹ I Timothy 4.13 (*paraklesis* –preaching; *didascalia* – teaching)

¹³⁰ 2 Timothy 4.2; I Timothy 4.11

kingdom of God as Jesus did¹³². Preachers address our wills: they seek to persuade people to respond to God's call.¹³³ The teacher facilitates learning, which calls for different styles and approaches to teaching. Transformation comes when learners learn and the teacher finds ways to encourage hearers to engage with Christian truth, so that they can apply it with understanding and reason to their situations. Teaching fits well with the notion of the preacher as a 'steward of the mysteries of God'¹³⁴; teachers love the content of God's truth and encourage their hearers to understand it and delight in it. It is possible for parish sermons, taken overall, to reflect both teaching and preaching.

4.2.6 If the core ministry of Readers is to be ministers of the Word, there are antecedents in the history of the Church. The medieval Church had its regular order of preachers, the Dominicans. The Methodist Church has the distinct calling of Local Preacher. The Church of England has historically given an important place to preaching; there is a present need to recover this emphasis which has been affected by the coming of the Parish Communion and the demise of services of Morning and Evening Prayer. It makes good sense of the training undertaken by Readers if their profile as ministers of the Word is heightened, both locally in their parish and also with a ministry wider than their parish. With good supporting structures in the diocese, Readers as preachers would grow in confidence and become a strong asset to the Church.

4.2.7 Of equal importance in the core ministry of Readers is the privilege of leading public worship. In the light of their training many Readers will show ability for planning public worship. Such gifts need opportunity to flourish in the parish or deanery. During their training, Readers will have been exposed to varied styles of worship. This helps to develop their skills in planning worship and in leading intercessions in a variety of ways. (4.8.3) When a Reader leads intercessions or assists another person to develop this ministry, they have the opportunity to cast the prayers in a mature theological way, helping to form a Christian mind set in the members of the congregation and to model possible ways of praying which the congregation may care to use in their private prayer.

4.2.8 As leaders of public worship, Readers need skill in leading worship in relation to different types of congregation. Since all-age worship is often non-eucharistic, it may be a responsibility often allocated to a Reader. This calls for an understanding of the place of children in the church community, along with the theology of childhood and faith development. With support and encouragement this is a ministry in which Readers can excel. (4.4.4; 4.9.5) However, for a Reader to develop all-round skills in leading worship, opportunities should also be given to share in the liturgy of the eucharist, in appropriate places.

4.2.9 Where Readers are developing skills in liturgy and leading worship, it is a good use of them as resource people if both deanery and diocese look for opportunities to use those gifts on a wider canvass than the Reader's own parish.

¹³¹ I Timothy 2.7; 2 Timothy 1.11

¹³² Mark 1.15

¹³³ Following St. Paul, those called to preach will keep the cross of Christ, the means of our salvation, at the centre of their message and look to persuade their hearers to be reconciled to God. I Corinthians 1.23; 2 Corinthians 5.20

¹³⁴ I Corinthians 4.1

4.2.10 Recommendations and Action Points

Recommendation 2. We recommend that dioceses encourage Readers to see their core ministry of preaching and teaching and leading worship as both a significant part of the Church's ministry to equip lay disciples for their mission in the world and the opportunity to engage in mission on the boundaries of the Church. (2.7.4; 4.1.1; 4.1 3; 4.2.1 to 4.2.9)

Recommendation 3. We recommend that dioceses strengthen the provision of Reader CME, and in particular the development of the skill of Readers as preachers, catechists and educators enabling them to interpret Christian Faith as it engages with daily life and work. (4.2.2 to 4.2.6)

Recommendation 4. We recommend that dioceses indicate their support for Readers as interpreters of the gospel in daily life by encouraging the use of Readers as preachers at the main parish Sunday service of Holy Communion. (4.2.3; 4.2.4; 4.2.10)

Action Points

1. Incumbents give Readers ample opportunity to develop their teaching skills through opportunities for enabling learning in varied ways in the benefice. (4.2.6)
2. Incumbents give Readers more opportunity to develop their liturgical skills through planning services and leading a variety of worship services. (4.2.7; 4.2.8; 4.4.4)
3. Incumbents use the experience and training of Readers to offer varied ways of leading intercessions and to model good patterns of prayer. (4.2.7)
4. Each deanery and diocese looks for opportunities to use Readers in teaching and training events, according to their gifts. (4.2.6)
5. Dioceses give opportunities for growth in the liturgical skills of Readers and seek to identify those who are able to pass on their skills to others in the diocese. (4.2.7 to 4.2.9; 4.4.4; 4.8.3)
6. Readers study the theology of work so as to inform their preaching about daily life. (4.2.4)

Involvement in diocesan training

Apart from my responsibilities within my local parish which keep me quite busy I am increasingly involved in areas within the diocese. I am a Reader companion to new Readers once they are licensed, and I am also a Ministry Leadership Team Mentor to a multi-benefice church. In addition I have been responsible for some training within the diocese particularly on the funeral course and the preaching course for Readers. I have visited other parishes to help. It is good to be involved in areas outside the local church.

4.3 The intermediate circle: building on the core ministry - enabling learning, evangelism and prophecy, pastoral work and funeral ministry.

4.3.1 **prophecy** As the diagram shows in the middle circle, we expect that those who have established their core ministry will also be gifted by God in the sphere of other ministries foundational to the growth of the Church. In the first and early second century evangelists,

prophets and teachers moved from church to church and from town to town and the role of the prophet was accepted. In our time, however, there is no clearly accepted designation and authorisation of those with a specifically prophetic ministry. Nevertheless it is to be expected that through the inspiration of the Spirit, a Reader or any other minister of the Word, in their preaching brings the challenge of God and shows how Christian values challenge the values of our society. Authentic prophecy will be recognised and appreciated.

4.3.2 evangelism On the other hand there is now wider recognition of evangelists in the Church of England. Where a Reader is recognised as having the gift of an evangelist, then it will be a right use of their gifts if opportunities wider than the parish can be available. In addition to the long standing ministry of Church Army evangelists, (licensed by the bishop), a bishop can also licence a lay worker as an evangelist¹³⁵ or, if the recommendations of this report are taken up, as a Licensed Lay Minister (Evangelist) – see 4.11. However in the case of a Reader who is also an evangelist, the licence could also include the designation ‘evangelist’; bishops can nominate Readers who clearly have a ministry of evangelism beyond their parishes for membership of the College of Evangelists.

4.3.3 enabling learning The ministry of the Word in a parish is not confined to sermons. There are valuable opportunities also in a variety of teaching events, confirmation courses, retreats and training courses at parish, deanery and diocesan level. Readers who are developing their catechetical gifts have much to contribute to such education, provided that they can see education as far more than ‘transmission’ – of knowledge. While the opportunities for using the theological training in a preaching ministry at regular services may not be as many as was once the case, the opportunities for enabling learning in other contexts are plentiful, and those in whom such gifts are discerned need to be encouraged.

4.3.4 pastoral work It is a small step from the core ministry of preaching and teaching the Word to the pastoral ministries in the Church. These ministries are very closely allied as the list of gifts and ministries in Ephesians 4 clearly indicates. (2.3.3) The Canons state that Readers may visit the sick and give assistance to the minister in pastoral work, with the approval of the bishop¹³⁶. Good pastoral ministry grows out of the love nurtured in discipleship, is part of the charge laid upon every Christian, and is therefore a natural part of the ministry of every Reader. Growth in pastoral love and the desire to share the gospel naturally belong together. It is inconsistent, therefore, to seek to remove the pastoral element from the active ministries of Readers; it is better that it should be developed. Incumbents can give pastoral opportunities to Readers and those who are distinctively gifted pastorally may well take a pastoral responsibility in the parish or in a congregation.(4.10.7 - 4.10.9) If the category of Licensed Lay Ministry is developed nationally to include Pastoral Workers (4.11.2 to 4.11.4), then it may be appropriate for those whose gifts are primarily pastoral to follow this course, since this will not preclude them being given permission to preach and share leadership of worship.

4.3.5 funeral ministry A growing number of Readers now take funerals after receiving training for this ministry. There are very good reasons why this opportunity for ministry should be widely extended. In the words of Bishop John Pritchard:

We’re missing many tricks now that funeral ministry is an open field for secular competitors, and we need to have more people on the ground, to be faster in response and more competent in

¹³⁵ Canon E7. 2 and 3, Annex 5, p. 121

¹³⁶ Canon E4. 2(a), Annex 5, p. 120

delivery. The majority of Readers could offer this ministry, I guess, and good quality training should be the norm.¹³⁷

The Canons state that a bishop may authorise a Reader to officiate at a funeral if it is at the invitation of the minister and with the goodwill of the relatives.¹³⁸ It is to be hoped that incumbents will make good use of suitable Readers for this ministry. When the bereaved family are long standing residents, a Reader may know the local community better than the priest and, if not in full time paid employment, may be able to spend more time with the bereaved family members both before and after the funeral. They can speak at the funeral as a fellow pilgrim, someone alongside the one who has died and engaged in the same joy and struggles of faith. While some would want to confine Readers to their core preaching and teaching role, it is common sense, at a time of stretched ministerial resources, to share the ministry of funerals in a parish, where the Reader, who is trained for public ministry, also has the gifts for pastoral engagement. In seeking to provide a ready response to funeral directors, it is wise to include Readers in the plans deaneries make to meet this need. In the light of the response to the questionnaires there may well be numbers of pastorally gifted Readers who are significantly under used and could share in this important ministry. (4.9.2)

4.3.6 Recommendations

Recommendation 5. We recommend that dioceses permit their Readers to serve in all aspects of ministry allowed by Canon Law and support them. (4.3.4; 4.3.5)

Recommendation 6. We recommend that dioceses widen their vision to include the possible appointment of a Reader as Reader-in-Charge of a congregation, with the corresponding roles of catechist and of pastoral care, possibly also as a House for Duty appointment. Readers are also considered for sector minister posts. (4.3.4; 4.4.9; 4.11.7 – 4.11.10)

Recommendation 7. We recommend that dioceses encourage the use of Readers with pastoral gifts in bereavement care and funeral ministry, and deaneries strengthen the teams of ministers available for funeral ministry by including Readers. (4.3.4; 4.3.5; 4.9.3; 4.10.7 to 4.10.9)

4.4 The outer circle: pushing out the boundaries of Reader ministry: pioneering opportunities, chaplaincy, youth and children's work and congregational leadership

4.4.1. pioneering opportunities As noted in section 2.7 the driving motivation for the 19th century revival of Reader ministry came from the need to extend the effectiveness of the traditional parochial system to new pioneering work on the boundaries between church and world. (2.7.4 to 2.7.6) Readers began leading worship and preaching not primarily in their parish churches but in new mission halls and in the work place. They were at the cutting edge of ministry to those who were not regular worshippers. An important future for Reader ministry today lies with a return to the vision for pioneering work beyond the normal activity of the parish churches. The demands on clergy, which come from normal parish duties, make it stressful and difficult to find time and energy to develop pioneering work. It is expecting a lot of clergy if they are to develop 'new church' at the same time as leading church as we know it.

¹³⁷ Email response to a draft version of this report, 19th January 2008

¹³⁸ Canon E4 .2A, Annex 5, p. 120

Work focus

I am a young and newly licensed Reader. I lead worship and preach in my parish occasionally; I run the youth group and lead Lent groups. But the main focus of my ministry is in my work place – I am a professional environmental scientist. At work I lead a prayer group and find myself doing a great deal of pastoral care. I am often approached to talk to a large variety of groups on environmental ethics.

4.4.2 fresh expressions of church The widespread development of fresh expressions of church since the publication of the Mission-Shaped Church report, in 2004, creates opportunities for Readers with appropriate gifts. As the mixed economy of fresh expressions and inherited models of church becomes reality in an increasing number of parishes, benefices and deaneries, it is both inevitable and desirable that the majority of fresh expressions will be lay led. In these circumstances theologically trained lay ministers will be at a premium.

4.4.3 Fresh expressions are established for the benefit of those who are not yet members of any church. They begin with a process of listening to the local community, be it neighbourhood or network based. Readers, with a vocation to mission, who are skilled as bridge people between world and church and Word and church, could be a vital resource as leaders in the process or as consultants to it. Some fresh expressions develop, initially unplanned, from other pieces of ministry in the community. An increasing number are located in the workplace, in offices and schools. Readers have the authority, the confidence and the experience given by their training, to take initiatives in the public realm, initiatives which are breaking new ground. They may find that their ministry at work, or in the community could develop into leadership of a fledgling fresh expression.

4.4.4 New communities of faith, made up of young Christians and spiritual seekers, will need teachers of the faith, skilled in the more informal disciplines of the teaching ministry. Fresh expressions of church develop culturally appropriate patterns of worship, rooted in the historic Christian tradition without cloning it. Readers with skills, not just in leading worship, but in designing it, are again a valuable resource. In some places training which is being developed by the Fresh Expressions programme to resource lay pioneer ministries could be adapted as additional training in this area for Readers.

4.4.5 The skills of mission accompaniment, of walking alongside a fledgling mission initiative or fresh expression to help it mature, are among the most strategic ministries the church needs to cultivate. Reader training can provide the theological component of the skills needed. Some Readers could act as the Visitor for an initiative authorised by a Bishops' Mission Order.

4.4.6 chaplaincy As a particular form of pioneering ministry that is meeting the needs of people outside the boundaries of the normal church services, more and more doors are opening for the presence of the Church's lay ministers in the form of chaplaincy. Incumbents or bishops with imagination will discover many untapped opportunities in parishes where Readers, as chaplains, could be deployed in a highly significant and fulfilling ministry and their presence as the Church's authorised ministers warmly welcomed. In stores, shopping malls, hospitals, care homes, civic centres, airports, prisons, schools, cadet forces, Scouts and other uniformed organisations, the police and the deaf community, Readers as lay chaplains are to be found. It is also consistent with their training and experience in leading public worship that Readers have confidence to take on such publicly authorised roles. There is a harvest, Jesus says, which is not

yet brought in because of the lack of workers¹³⁹. A great many people in today's stressful walks of life recognise the need for spiritual help and guidance in their networks, along with an independent point of reference in the work place to which employees can turn for help. If changing patterns have led to a reduction of Reader opportunities in church services, other avenues like chaplaincy present a multitude of new openings¹⁴⁰.

4.4.7 In most cases the chaplaincy work is voluntary. In some cases Reader chaplains operate as the only chaplain present; in other institutions or businesses there are chaplaincy teams. A chaplaincy team is a stimulating environment in which to offer ministry where colleagues, often from different denominations, provide a challenge. As chaplaincy ministry expands, dioceses will want to provide opportunities for chaplains in a variety of locations to meet for mutual support and learning. Training courses for lay chaplaincy will also be worthwhile.

Stores chaplaincy

I see my chaplaincy at ASDA as making God's love known to the world where people are, and of being one of the most important ways of bringing the Church into the real world. I approach things quietly and steadily, being careful not to overdo the religious bit. Most people were friendly although some wondered what chaplains did and why they were needed. Prayer and patience seem the way to deal with it, waiting for the time when God will open the door of opportunity and something happens which changes the situation.

I meander round the store, chatting to customers, helping old ladies get things off the top shelf and as time goes by there are occasions when they feel able to come with a problem or just ask for a prayer. This applies to both customers and staff and makes it all worthwhile. Judging the situation carefully can lead to a discussion on prayer or faith and an opening up of questions about Christianity, which need to be answered in a way which is not patronising and is acceptable to the individual. We sometimes never know the good we do.

4.4.8 **youth and children's work** This has been a neglected area in Reader training and ministry. Nurture of the faith of children is an important end in itself; however, provision for children is also an important factor in attracting families to worship and all-age worship is a growth area in church congregations. Many Readers have a background in teaching and have much to offer here. (4.2.8; 4.9.5) There are signs of growth in children's work outside Sunday which is an important sphere of ministry for Readers to explore.

4.4.9 **congregational leadership** There are a few examples in the country of both stipendiary and non-stipendiary Readers who exercise this ministry. Good reasons why this might increase are discussed under deployment of Readers (4.10.6 to 4.10.8).

¹³⁹ St. Matthew 9.37-38

¹⁴⁰ see Annex 2 p. 107

Half-time Stipendiary Reader

I exercise my stipendiary half-time Reader ministry through working a "job-share" with the vicar of our team of 6 rural churches. We aim to model effective lay and ordained leadership of our churches in our partnership. This involves working closely together to ensure that the full range of parish ministry is sustained between us. My part comprises preaching, teaching and leading worship, children's and youth ministry, and many of the practical and administrative tasks, which enables my ordained colleague to concentrate on the pastoral and sacramental aspects of ministry. Discerning strategy and vision, mission and prayer we do together. The combined gifts of two people provide a much richer ministry than either of us ever could alone.

4.4.10 Recommendations and Action Points

Recommendation 8. We recommend that dioceses, deaneries and parishes look for opportunities for Readers to exercise their ministry on the boundaries of the Church, in breaking new ground with “fresh expressions” of church and mission, and in circles where there might otherwise be no representative public ministry of the Church. (4.4.1 to 4.4.5)

Recommendation 9. We recommend that dioceses and deaneries and parishes should look for opportunities for the appointment of Readers as chaplains both to institutions where chaplains are already recognised and in places where such an appointment breaks new ground. (4.4.6 to 4.4.7)

Action Point

7. Incumbents and dioceses encourage appropriate Readers to participate in Mission-Shaped Ministry courses and courses on ‘fresh expressions’ of church as part of CME in order to reinforce the vision of Reader ministry on the boundary between church and society. (4.9.8)

4.5 The pre-selection process

4.5.1 All dioceses are required to have a selection process for testing the vocation of those who offer for Reader ministry. This process is outlined in *Selection for Reader Ministry*¹⁴¹ and normally involves a selection panel. Several dioceses, however, have a pre-selection process that aims to guide candidates according to their gifts. In one diocese, not only is the incumbent’s guidance sought, but interviews are held with a serving Reader and then with the Vocations Adviser, who must be persuaded that Reader ministry is the right way forward if the candidate is to complete the application and proceed to selection.

4.5.2 From the first interest shown by a possible candidate, on to beyond initial licensing, the ongoing journey of vocation for a Reader needs to be seen as fluid rather than static, in keeping with other ministerial categories in the Church. This will only be achieved if the diocese has an integrated team of vocations advisers who share a common awareness both of the potential candidates and of the opportunities for both lay and ordained ministries. During the pre-

¹⁴¹ ABM Policy Paper No. 7 January 1998

selection process, a variety of possibilities may be considered so as to assist the candidate in finding the right direction.

4.5.3 Another important issue at the pre-selection phase is to discern whether or not the parish will truly own the potential Reader and support them through their training. It is helpful if the Warden of Readers or a Vocations Adviser first contacts the incumbent, and then makes a visit to the Parochial Church Council¹⁴². At this meeting the expectations of both parish and Reader are clarified and brought into agreement. In one diocese the candidate will also make a short presentation describing how they reached this point in their journey of discipleship. If the parish clearly embraces its role in supporting a Reader it is more likely that the incumbent will give the support needed and not neglect to use the Reader. It is mismatched expectations between incumbent and Reader which are one of the most common sources of difficulty in the working relationship. On a very few occasions it may be necessary to guide the Reader candidate to a different parish where the incumbent and church will be supportive of the new ministry.

4.5.4 Recommendations and Action Points

Recommendation 10. We recommend that the office of Reader, in keeping with other ministerial categories in the Church, is to be seen as fluid rather than static and part of an ongoing journey of vocation, the nature of which is regularly discerned afresh. To address this, dioceses will need a team of vocations advisers to cover the full range of ministries. (4.5.2; 4.6.5)

Action Point

8. Prior to the selection of a Reader for training, the Warden of Readers in a diocese takes care to ensure that the parish to which the Reader is to be licensed and its incumbent are ready to offer support and encouragement in the development of this new ministry. (4.5.3)

4.6 Selection and the identification of gifts

4.6.1 The selection of people for training is motivated by two important concerns. The first is the Church's need to resource the mission opportunities before it, in the light of which it will seek to discern and call those in whom it sees the potential to fulfil the task. The picture of the congregation at Hippo dragging the reluctant Augustine and presenting him to the bishop for ordination as a priest is a reminder of the importance of the role of the Church in calling people into ministry.¹⁴³ It is the role of bishops to look for those who have gifts to offer for the work of the gospel. It is also the role of incumbents, with their congregations, to be searching out those who can assist with the mission task as it is perceived in the locality. It is to be hoped that parish clergy will specifically encourage vocations to Reader ministry, in view of the thorough training and opportunities which this ministry offers, and particularly among young adults.

¹⁴² One diocese has a Chaplain for Readers in each deanery; that person or a deanery sub-warden could make this visit.

¹⁴³ When Bishop Valerius presented the needs of the Church for a priest, the congregation responded by surrounding Augustine and presenting him at the bishop's throne. P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, London, Faber, 1967, p. 138-9

4.6.2 The other concern is that every disciple should seek to know their calling and, with the help of the Church, seek to discern the gifts God has given them for his mission. Sadly, the Church of England has a long history of defining its ministerial work by function and hierarchy. Those exercising a ministry tend to see themselves not as part of a living body with different gifts but in a hierarchical order of different roles, something like: bishop, priest, deacon, then Reader, other lay ministers. This inevitably leads to some people feeling second or third class in the work of God. The New Testament writings indicate that the Church's vision must be the recognition, release and development of all the gifts God has given, with people working together in a collaborative and non-hierarchical unity. There is a great need in our dioceses to grasp this vision firmly.

4.6.3. Publicly designated ministries need to match the person's gifts. A fulfilled minister is one who sees their gifts flourishing and bearing fruit in the exercise of ministry. Where a Reader, or any minister, operates not out of their gifts, the result is frustration. There is frustration first for those receiving the ministry, and this, in turn, leads to less frequent use of the minister and corresponding disappointment to them.

Discernment of gifts

A new incumbent of a city centre parish inherited a Reader who had for some years taken services of Morning and Evening Prayer and assisted at services of Holy Communion. Also, from the church office in the city centre, he had met couples seeking weddings, made the arrangements, conducted the rehearsal and was the main point of pastoral contact between the church and the couples. In order to use the Reader where his pastoral gifts lay the new incumbent successfully introduced the Reader both to taking funerals and home communions. Subsequently he moved to a very rural benefice in another part of the country where because of the pastoral and liturgical experience he had gained in the city, he was able to manage an interregnum which covered several rural parishes.

4.6.4 Too often those who offered for ministry, even after selection interviews, have been sent for training without sufficient prior evidence of how their gifts are developing. When Readership was the only door available for authorised lay ministry, it was understandable that some who might have been better suited as pastoral assistants or home group leaders offered for selection as Readers and were subsequently trained and licensed. The failure here has been not to have sufficient diversity in the paths available for authorised ministry and not to make sufficient assessment of the gifts before training is started.

4.6.5 The situation has arisen, therefore, in which some Readers of long standing find themselves licensed to a ministry which, in its expectations for the core ministries of leading worship and preaching, does not match their greatest gifts for the work of God. This situation is compounded by the fact that by comparison with the attention given to the ministerial development of those in clerical orders, the personal ministerial development of Readers has been largely ignored in some dioceses. This situation is beginning to be addressed: in one diocese careful reviews of the ministry of each Reader are taking place, including a full confidential interview with the Reader to discuss their perception of their gifts for ministry and

their use in the local situation. A confidential interview with the Reader's incumbent is also conducted since perceptions of ministerial gifts by Reader and incumbent can differ markedly. The aim of the whole process is to bring about a fuller recognition of the gifts of the lay minister and subsequently to channel their gifts into fulfilling ministry. For some the outcome may be a greater share in pastoral care and responsibility. For others a wider itinerant teaching and preaching role may be right. For others there may be hitherto untapped openings for chaplaincy. For still others, it may be appropriate for Reader ministry to be laid down and another ministry taken up. It is important not to think of a person's gifts as fixed and static: gifts are often discerned by taking up new opportunities and by doing things which were not previously attempted. The two concerns: the needs of the Church to fulfil its mission and the need of the individual to discover the ministry for which they are gifted come together when a diocese invests resources in encouraging and discerning vocations. This is always a fluid and ongoing process: for every Reader there needs to be awareness that gifts for ministry and the corresponding callings from God and the commission of the Church always have the potential for further development.

4.6.6 In the process of selection of Readers for training it is vital that there is given every opportunity in the local congregation for the core gifts, and their potential for development, to be tested before selection for training is confirmed by the diocese. This applies particularly to the core ministries of leading of worship and preaching. In the light of the recent flourishing of other ministries, there are now no grounds for people finding themselves in ministries for which they are unsuited. Evidence-based selection offers the best way to select and train people according to their gifts.

4.6.7 To assist the process of matching gifts to training, for both potential lay and ordained ministries, some bishops use the permissions contained in the Canons¹⁴⁴ to encourage incumbents to give opportunities for the gifts of lay people to be discerned and encouraged, both in preaching and teaching and in leading public worship. Many of the churches that have recently emerged successfully encourage growth in ministry by giving such opportunities to their younger members. This is the best way adequately to discern these gifts before selection and training. It is expected that when this is to happen the incumbent will carefully supervise the ministry exercised. Where such opportunities are made available to suitable lay persons in good public standing, this often leads to those who are discovering their gifting subsequently offering for selection for training as a Reader, or offering for ordained ministry. The fears of those who criticise the use of untrained preachers will be more easily allayed if it is expected that those who show the gifts of leading public worship and preaching will subsequently train fully for this ministry.

4.6.8 The gifts needed for the core elements in Reader ministry may also be discerned in a variety of other ways. Participation in the life of the church, including study groups, soon reveals a person's capacity for thought and clear communication. The opportunity to lead intercessions indicates whether or not someone has a gift for speech which can hold the attention of others. It is easy to recognise when the leader of worship speaks with a natural authority, and with a voice that draws others to listen, and when prayers are introduced with sensitivity.

¹⁴⁴ Canon B18.2 See Annex 5 p. 119

4.6.9 Recommendations and Action Points

Recommendation 11. We recommend that dioceses support parishes in the careful discernment of potential gifts in lay people and certainly prior to them being considered for selection for training as Readers. This is to include the discernment of gifts for the core ministries of preaching and teaching, leading worship and interpreting the faith, by such opportunities being given by incumbents to lay people. (4.6.1 to 4.6.8)

Recommendation 12. We recommend that parishes specifically encourage vocations to Reader ministry, particularly among young adults. (4.6.1; 4.6.7)

Action Points

9. Dioceses consider conducting a thorough review of the personal ministerial development of each Reader in order to bring about greater recognition of the ministerial gifts which the Reader has. (4.6.4)

10. The Board of Education consider the possibility of developing a national basis for the recognition, development, training and authorisation of gifts for lay ministry.

Discernment of gifts

During a series of Sunday morning services in the 1980ies entitled 'My Work as God's Work', an incumbent invited the warden of a hostel for ex-alcoholics to give a brief account of his work. The account was so well put together that the gift of speaking in public was immediately recognised. The young man concerned was given opportunities to preach at the smaller services. Subsequently he sensed a call to ordained ministry and is now an incumbent.

Prison chaplaincy

My ministry as a prison chaplain was first indicated when I was on holiday in Normandy at a Christian centre. In prayer with the owners a prophetic picture was shared with me: it was of a strong tower, itself set in a walled city with gates, and my ministry would be one of prayer. For many months it was hard to understand what the picture might mean. Over a year later the words, 'I was in prison and you visited me' struck me during the Sunday service. This led me to make links with the chaplain at Strangeways and to join a prayer group which supported prison ministry. Then through the group came an invitation to assist the chaplain at a nearby privately-run prison.

On my second visit, I realised that this closely fitted the picture I had been given. The prison was walled, had a 'strong tower' within it, and many gates which had to be unlocked and locked as we moved about in the prison. As well as leading evening bible studies, my husband (also a Reader) and I do a full day on different days, visiting men in their cells, making calls on their behalf to their family and, from time to time, sharing the love of Jesus with someone who is at one of the lowest points of their life and praying with them. The other members of the chaplaincy team have been extremely friendly, helpful and understanding. What a difference it makes to remember that it was God himself who called us into this.

4.7 Selection criteria and the national guidelines

4.7.1 Currently, selection for Reader Ministry is carried out under the criteria set out in *Selection for Ministry*.¹⁴⁵ Present selection criteria cover ministry in the Church of England, vocation, faith, spirituality and worship, personality and character, relationships (for example support in the family), and potential for training. In at least one diocese the potential to be a team player is also carefully considered.

4.7.2 New proposals for selection are in process of preparation with our ecumenical partners, outlining a culture of life-long learning in keeping with the report *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church*. It is expected that these proposals will outline the journey through Initial Ministerial Education (IME) 1-7 into Reader ministry, up until the first major ministry review. They will indicate the roles of those who will be partners on the journey and outline good practice for the training practitioners and for the process of discernment prior to admission. It will be understood from the proposals that initial training is not complete at the time when a licence is first granted, but rather after a period of supervised ministry.

4.8 Initial core training

4.8.1 The core training offered to all Reader candidates must aim to produce lay ministers who are theologically articulate, spiritually mature, skilled at the tasks required of them, and able to operate as reflective practitioners. Following the formation of Regional Training Partnerships (RTPs), training schemes are increasingly ecumenical¹⁴⁶. *Shaping the Future*, the follow-up report to *Formation for Ministry in a Learning Church*, contains a national and ecumenical specification for the education of Readers and Preachers for the Church of England, Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church (URC). (Annex4)

4.8.2 Preaching and teaching the Word, being an interpreter of it in the public arena and the leading of public worship are the core areas of Reader Ministry. (diagram 4.1.1) These must be central during initial Reader training. *Shaping the Future* identifies these as key areas of competence, and a helpful list of skills to be addressed in training is included¹⁴⁷.

4.8.3 The importance of training for leading worship and liturgical formation is highlighted by the Liturgical Commission's recent report *Transforming Worship: Living the new Creation*.¹⁴⁸ As Readers are a nationally transferable ministry, it is important to develop flexibility and the ability to adjust to differing contexts. They must become aware of the importance of different settings and church traditions – including those they are less familiar with (and may think they won't need to work with!) A sound knowledge base is needed, as well as practical skills.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ ABM Policy Paper No. 7, January 1998, based on a selection document of 1991 and in response to revised criteria for selection and child protection issues.

¹⁴⁶ *Living in God's Covenant*, The Second Interim Report (2007) of the Joint Implementation Commission under the Covenant between the Methodist Church and the Church of England, includes a recommendation that RTPs should 'in consultation with the appropriate bodies within our churches, develop training programmes that, as far as possible, meet our churches' training specifications for Readers and Local Preachers'. Methodist Publishing House, pp.8, 65

¹⁴⁷ *Shaping the Future* p.39 Annex 4, pp. 114-118

¹⁴⁸ *Transforming Worship: Living the New Creation* GS 1651, 2007 – This encourages those with responsibility for Reader training to revisit liturgical aspects of their courses. Recommendation 23 – 'We recommend that all current providers of Reader training re-visit the liturgical aspects of the courses and look in particular at how they might best make use of the skills available within the emerging RTPs'.

¹⁴⁹ see *Transforming Worship* –section 6.9 (pp50-53)

(4.2.7) Readers in training could be required to visit a wide range of churches and worshipping contexts: this could encourage reflection and be a significant dimension of practical and liturgical formation.

4.8.4 Reader training for preaching and teaching must include awareness of theories of faith development and how adults learn. To enable Readers to develop as facilitators of learning, they need training and practice in developing approaches to educational design and monitoring, to planning and facilitating a range of participative processes for small and large groups, and to developing case studies, problem-based learning scenarios and a variety of learning opportunities¹⁵⁰. The training programme must include developing skills in promoting learning and not simply in communicating information. Readers need to reflect on ways in which people learn and how to respond. Such skills need to be fostered and developed progressively during training, through a range of learning exercises, and not simply assessed in a few practice sermons. If a range of educational approaches is modelled during training, then Readers can discover a range of strategies they can use in their own teaching ministry. Additional training modules for Readers need to build on core ministry training and enable reflection on educational values, educational knowledge and understanding, and appropriate practice.

It is also important for training that Readers gain practice in publicly relating issues of faith to everyday activities (whether work, home or community). This needs to be reflected in the assignments required of those in training and in the patterns of assessment used for developing preaching skills.

4.8.5 Specific attention needs to be given in Reader training to spiritual formation and maturity. As the training process proceeds, those in the diocese responsible for Reader training need to keep in close touch with each of their candidates. It is quite normal for those who are exploring new theological concepts and interacting with many other people on a similar journey to face significant questions about their faith and ministry. The Warden of Readers and the candidate's spiritual companion or director can be an important support at this point. As Reader training is increasingly being given the serious attention given to ordination training, it should become routine practice for the diocese to receive an Annual Report on each candidate. In the light of their training the student also re-evaluates their calling. In this way a process of continuous reflection on their ministry is built into the life-long learning process and formation of each student. From the beginning, the training programme needs to encourage Readers to reflect with others on their gifts, hear what others discern about them and seek particular training in and development in the areas where their gifts are perceived.

4.8.6 The areas of ministry illustrated in the intermediate ring of the diagram (4.1.1) will be addressed at an introductory level in all training programmes. This will include pastoral work, evangelism, and teaching and training in a way that facilitates learning amongst both adults and children. (4.3.2-4.3.4)

4.8.7 The ability to work collaboratively is a key skill for Readers (see 3.7; 4.6.2; 4.12.1 to 4.12.6). Learning this will be greatly assisted if the RTPs create opportunities for those selected for training as Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers) and ordained ministers to train together and ecumenically. There is an urgent need to help all ministers to develop and repeatedly practice collaborative skills, so that these become habits. Work in groups and reflection on this experience is important. Unless group work skills are also assessed, trainees will receive the message (consciously or unconsciously) that individual effort is valued more highly than group participation and cooperation.

¹⁵⁰ Joanna Cox, 'Readers-learning to help others learn', *The Reader* 103 (1), 2006 ,p.17-18

4.8.8 Recent developments in Reader training include partnerships built with HE institutions offering academic validation for courses at HE levels 1 and 2. Many HE institutions now encourage an increasing range of varied educational methodologies and assessment processes, and the creative use of these is essential to enable trainees with different academic backgrounds and learning styles to engage fully. The recent introduction of Foundation Degree programmes offers an excellent potential route for Reader training, as the essential work-based element aims to enable the integration of practice and theory (a key guiding principle encouraged in *Shaping the Future*¹⁵¹.) At this point in time, Foundation Degree training can also attract government funding.

4.8.9 Reader candidates enter training at different stages of life and their journey of lifelong discipleship. For younger candidates, particularly, facing considerable pressures, training pathways need to be flexible and designed to encourage them into Reader ministry. Some candidates have said that it would help to spread modular training over a longer period. It is appropriate to develop processes that formally acknowledge former learning (as with APL - Accreditation of Prior Learning, and APEL - Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning). Reader training courses also need to provide Readers with opportunities to evidence their learning so that it can, where appropriate, be recognised for APL programmes on any future training courses they might undertake.

4.8.10 Recommendations and Action Points

Recommendation 13. We recommend that Regional Training Partnerships seek to create opportunities for those selected for training as Readers and ordained ministers to train together and ecumenically. (1.4.12; 4.8.7)

Recommendation 14. We recommend that without lowering standards, training programmes for Reader Ministry need to be more flexible. They should be accessible and designed to encourage candidates for ministry, particularly younger candidates. Course design needs to enable this by encouraging varied patterns of engagement and incorporating AP(E)L opportunities for former learning experiences to be recognised. (4.8.9)

Action Points

11. Reader Training is designed to develop ministers who are not only theologically articulate, spiritually mature and ministerially skilled, but who also can apply these in flexible and collaborative ways in many contexts. (4.8.1; 4.8.3; 4.8.7)

12. In addressing the core areas of Reader Ministry, the training programme needs to give particular attention to preaching and leading worship within differing contexts, teaching and facilitating learning, and the development of collaborative ministerial habits and skills.(4.8.3; 4.8.6)

¹⁵¹ “Training programmes should integrate academic and practical training. We do not recommend a model where an HE accredited course covers only academic learning leaving a church partner to ‘add-on the practical elements of training.’ (*Shaping the Future* p.46)

13. Reader training needs to be designed using a range of educational methodologies and assessment processes; it needs to be shaped in ways that ensure the integration of theory and practice and that instil a mindset of internalised theological reflection. (4.8.4)
14. Reader Training Programmes should incorporate AP(E)L opportunities for former learning experiences to be recognised. (4.8.8)
15. The ecumenical training specification developed in ‘Shaping the Future’ should be used to encourage increased co-operation in training programmes in RTPs – ecumenically and between dioceses.
16. Throughout the formation process Reader candidates are encouraged to reflect with others on their gifts and ministries. (4.10.1)
17. Towards the end of initial training the RTP or training institution prepares for the diocese a report on each Reader candidate which is agreed by the candidate. (4.10.1)

4.9 Additional training for specific ministries in the light of gifts discerned

4.9.1 The national specification for Reader training does not include any specific recommendations relating to ongoing CME. It is hoped that RTPs or dioceses will offer additional blocks of training that can be accessed by Readers. These need to encourage on-going learning, along with opportunities to practice and reflect on their skills in communication, faith sharing and proclaiming the kingdom of God in varied social and cultural contexts. Readers finding opportunities for a ‘fresh expression’ on the boundaries of the worshipping community will want to develop the gifts and skills that will assist that work. (4.4.2 to 4.4.5) There is a need for specialised training modules to equip more fully Readers who are skilled and gifted in particular areas, or where there is a local need for a particular area of ministry to be offered more widely. Responses to the questionnaire indicate how wide a range of other ministries Readers enter into; they frequently take on major responsibilities as lay people within and on behalf of the church.¹⁵² Such blocks of specialist training are best offered as post-licensing CME options for Readers and ordained ministers. In some specialised areas of ministry, agencies with relevant expertise will be appropriate training providers.

4.9.2 **Training in funeral ministry** Much good training already exists. Courses aim to develop familiarity with the liturgical material and promote sensitive use of it, as well as encouraging appropriate practice when in bereavement care and relationships with families. On some training programmes, visits to crematoria and undertakers are encouraged; this has been found to help promote reflective practice. It is important that training also helps Readers recognise and respond to differing cultural contexts where the church offers this ‘occasional office’. The report by the Liturgical Commission ‘*Transforming Worship*’ notes

..there is the loss within wider society of the kind of shared religious vocabulary and understanding of the Christian story which the pastoral rites assume; and the celebration of rites of passage has in any case been made more complex by the erosion of shared values. The liturgical questions surrounding these rites are deeply bound up with wider issues of culture and society.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Annex 2, p. 107

¹⁵³ “*Transforming Worship: Living the New Creation*” p. 79-80

Consistency nationally will be approached if all dioceses encourage Readers in this ministry and offer training in it. Such training can usefully be shared with Local Preachers and arranged ecumenically.¹⁵⁴

Pastoral and funeral ministry

My ministry focus is with the sick and bereaved. I do a lot of visiting, take the healing service and am just setting up a centre for healing in the community. I take a lot of funerals – usually for people whom I have been accompanying. I run the bereavement visiting team which covers not only the parish but also the local hospital.

4.9.3 Training in Leadership in Pastoral Care The ecumenical training specification in ‘*Shaping the Future*’ anticipates that initial training will introduce all readers to basic issues of managing confidentiality, listening without being judgmental, recognising where people are emotionally and spiritually, and handling conflict. Additional training in greater depth is needed, for example, to develop leadership in pastoral care. (4.3.4) This would include understanding of guidelines and associated recommendations in relation to pastoral ministry with those who may be vulnerable.¹⁵⁵

4.9.4 Training for Work with Particular Needs Where Readers feel called to work pastorally in wider contexts or amongst people with particular needs, focussed training programmes for such work may have been developed by specialist agencies – for example: hospital chaplaincy, relationship counselling with Relate and work amongst deaf people. It is hoped that dioceses will encourage Readers to undertake such appropriate specialist training where it is on offer. .

Specialist ministry to deaf people

I am a Reader in the local Deaf Church – although I am not deaf myself. I lead worship (signing) and occasionally preach, but the main focus of my ministry is pastoral and being an advocate for deaf people in a hearing world.

4.9.5 Teaching and enabling learning among children. With increasing concern in our country about the healthy development of children, this ministry is of particular importance; it is one of the areas of work specified in the Canons and for which Readers are specifically licensed.¹⁵⁶ It is hoped that during initial training, significant foundations will be laid for the understanding necessary to lead all-age worship. (4.2.8; 4.4.4; 4.8.3). However further work with children is not included in the ecumenical training specification, and additional specialist training modules would be an essential way to equip Readers who are called to a distinctive ministry among children in church, for example in Sunday groups or through the leading of collective worship in schools. Work on appropriate training has been suggested in documents such as ‘*Children in the midst*’¹⁵⁷, and should involve more detailed reflection and training on issues relating to:

¹⁵⁴ The Methodist Church permits Local Preachers to take funerals *Living God’s Covenant*, 42, p.57

¹⁵⁵ See “Promoting a Safe Church”, House of Bishops guidelines; 2006.

¹⁵⁶ Canon E4.2 (a), Annex 5, p.120

¹⁵⁷ “*Children in the midst – Theology, principles and curriculum elements for training people to work among children*” GS Misc 781

- Children’s work outside Sundays (e.g. schools work; mid-week and holiday clubs; pram and crib services etc.),
- Children and spirituality,
- Children and the sacraments,
- Preparing children’s talks and activities
- Issues relating to pastoral care of children in particular situations (e.g. bereavement; hospital visits; funerals).

One diocese offers a “Children’s work training specialism”.

4.9.6 Recommendation and Action Points

Recommendation 15. We recommend that dioceses encourage the ongoing development of Readers in ministry by offering CME modules in specialised areas of ministry and by providing resources for Readers to engage with appropriate training offered elsewhere. (4.9.1- 4.9.5)

Action Points

18. Wherever possible RTPs or other Reader Training institutions enable Readers to develop specific gifts to meet specific ministry needs with appropriate training. (4.9.1; 4.9.4)

19. Dioceses offer CME modules in a variety of specialist ministries which are available for Readers. (4.9.1)

20. Courses of training for Readers in funeral ministry are made available in all dioceses, giving consistency across dioceses. (4.9.2)

21. Dioceses and incumbents set before Readers, who may or may not themselves be deaf, the important opportunity of ministry to deaf people. (4.9.4)

Prison Chaplaincy

‘I was in prison and you visited me’. I was seeking God’s direction for my ministry and studying theology at St. John’s Nottingham. After hearing this gospel read I made contact with the Chaplain at a local prison and I began as a part-time Assistant Prison Chaplain and trained as a Reader. Licensed as a Chaplain, I worked in Nottingham prison with those serving life sentences. After seven years I moved to another prison working with skilled specialist officers and sex offenders. I set up a choir and guitar club. I preached in the prison and on the local Methodist circuit. I took placement students from St. John’s and was active in my local Nottingham parish.

Since then I have moved to another diocese and part of the country, working in a prison with 685 men and a staff team of 300. The chaplaincy team share the gospel, give bibles, teach, pastor and guide. Offenders come from many ethnic and faith groups and each has its own chaplain. I have learnt a great deal whilst facilitating the teaching and worship groups of the various world faith chaplains. In all three prisons we have benefitted from the superb support from the bishops, and enjoyed Carol services, Christmas and Easter days working with them. I have grown as a Christian and joyfully go to work, where I am expected to speak about faith in Jesus Christ to everyone I meet.

4.10 Admission, licensing and deployment

4.10.1 Reference has already been made to the importance of the parish ‘owning’ the ministry of the new Reader. (4.5.2) Every new minister should receive the care of the Church in placing them in a context where they can flourish.

4.10.2 The form of service for The Admission and Licensing of Readers in any diocese is the responsibility of the Diocesan Bishop. A new form of service was agreed by the House of Bishops in January 2007 for use in any diocese. It can be found on the website for Readers in the Church of England.¹⁵⁸ Readers had input into the preparation of this service which it is hoped will be used widely and adapted for local use.

4.10.3 Decisions about the deployment of Readers are best made taking into account the two important concerns mentioned earlier. (4.6.1; 4.6.2; 4.6.5) There are the needs which call for both mission and ministry in the locality – such as in the deanery. Alongside that there is the need for an individual Reader to exercise a ministry which flows from their gifts and gives opportunity for their development. In their responses to the questionnaire many Readers urged that there should be scope for wider Reader deployment. The obvious move is to license most Readers to the deanery, but with a ‘home base’ under the care of a particular incumbent for accountability and support. Such a licensing policy would give a clear signal that wider deployment than one parish is to be considered. It has the great advantage of retaining flexibility whilst indicating clearly under whose authority and care the Reader will work. Often ministerial resources are unevenly distributed in a deanery. Rather than taking for granted that a Reader would remain at the parish from which they began their training or started their licensed ministry, it would be through regular discussions between Rural or Area Dean, Warden of Readers, the relevant incumbents, the bishop and the Reader themselves that the best arrangements for deployment would be reached. This practice could be applied to an archdeaconry, deanery, episcopal area or even to a whole diocese.¹⁵⁹ Recognising Readers as an important resource in a deanery will be helped if Readers are often invited to chapter meetings. This will help build good patterns of collaborative ministry among ministers with the bishop’s licence as well as fostering friendship.

4.10.4 It is consistent with giving serious attention to Readers that all dioceses move to a point where for every active Reader there is a Ministerial Agreement, an agreement which is frequently revisited, and certainly every time the licence is due for renewal. Such an agreement clarifies expectations between incumbent and Reader and guards against misunderstanding, disappointment and resentment. When a Reader begins their ministry the agreement is vital. It should clarify the opportunities for preaching that will be given to them and the number of times when they will be expected to be available in a month. It will specify clearly the location of their ministry and any particular roles and responsibilities in the benefice or wider. Dioceses will need to have in place procedures for supporting the completion of these agreements and their regular reassessment. This report advocates the widening to all licensed lay ministers the encouragement and care that until now been offered in a systematic way only to those in holy orders.

4.10.5 In most localities there would be great value in the deanery assembling an inventory of available ministerial skills. Readers would be included in the audit according to the ministries for which they are most gifted: such as preacher, teacher, pastor or evangelist, for example. The

¹⁵⁸ www.readers.cof.anglican.org

¹⁵⁹ One diocese has a policy of licensing all Readers to an Episcopal area, but with a particular incumbent specified (but not on the licence) for accountability and support

audit could be prepared ecumenically with the relevant Circuits of the Methodist Church and other churches. It would include, for example, local preachers from the Methodist and URC churches. The Canons offer ways forward for such preachers to be recognised in Anglican churches. Canon B43 offers a clear way for Local Preachers to perform many of the duties taken by Readers.¹⁶⁰ Correspondingly, there are procedures in other Churches for recognising Anglican lay preachers. A Methodist Superintendant may invite an Anglican Reader to conduct a service on the circuit plan. Should the sharing of ministry become more significant there is a procedure by which a Reader can be ‘authorised to serve as a local preacher’¹⁶¹. The Second Interim Report, *Living God’s Covenant*, includes this recommendation,

We recommend that our two churches maximise the practical opportunities for the sharing of lay ministry (particularly that of Reader and Local Preacher) that are already legally available under the rules of our churches.¹⁶²

4.10.6 There are good reasons why gifted teachers should move from church to church when the congregations are small and when good teaching is needed to build up the believers.¹⁶³ Let Readers who are gifted as evangelists also have a more mobile ministry, taking opportunities to lead people to faith.

4.10.7 By contrast, the pastoral ministry needs to be local, since it is the pastor who represents the care of Christ, the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep and is known by them, leads his sheep to pasture and whose voice the sheep hear.¹⁶⁴ It is to be hoped that Readers with significant pastoral gifts will be given some clear area of pastoral responsibility in their parishes. (4.3.4; 4.9.3) However, the discussion about how to deploy those with pastoral gifts needs to be taken to deanery level, particularly in deaneries in which there are many small parish congregations in multiple parish benefices. There are several examples, across the dioceses of the Church of England, where Readers have been entrusted with pastoral care of a particular parish church or congregation, working under the licensed priest. In a benefice where the priest has several churches, the question must be asked as to how good pastoral care is delivered to all the churches. Appointing a Reader-in-Charge is one way of providing consistent pastoral care and quite possibly also of enabling worship to be at a regular time each Sunday. As Bishop John Pritchard has put it:

I think every community needs a ‘focal Christian person (persons)’ and Readers, having been trained so well, are ideally placed to have this responsibility. The crisis in clergy numbers in the next phase of our life means we have to be much more flexible and light-on-our-feet.¹⁶⁵

Congregations value a representative person, a ‘shepherd’, so to speak, who reflects to them the care of Christ the Good Shepherd. Growth in a congregation is more likely to occur when the same pastoral person is present each week rather than when services are staffed by a rota of ministers. There are many parts of the world-wide Anglican Communion where the care of local congregations is largely in the hands of a lay catechist, who is both teacher and pastor to the people.

¹⁶⁰ Annex 5, p. 119

¹⁶¹ *Living God’s Covenant* p. 49,50

¹⁶² *Living God’s Covenant* pp. 8, 65

¹⁶³ Brian J. Capper, in chapter 3 in *Order and Ministry in the Social Pattern of the New Testament Church*, argues that I Corinthians 12.28 indicates a peripatetic ministry of teaching (with apostles and prophets) to the congregations meeting in homes. *Order and Ministry*, Gracewing, Leominster, 1996, p.75

¹⁶⁴ John 10. 14-16

¹⁶⁵ Email response to a draft of this report, January 19th, 2008

4.10.8 Readers make valuable members of pastoral teams, for example, in a benefice, where they can be given the opportunity to take funerals and do such pastoral work as is entrusted to them. At every level the pattern of ministry needs to be collaborative, the members of the pastoral team with the clergy. (4.12)

4.10.9 While it is well known that parishioners can have reservations about receiving pastoral care from lay persons, these reservations can be overcome in time if the appointed lay person clearly has pastoral gifts for the task. Without such a development, unrealistic expectations of pastoral care are imposed on the clergy that they cannot fulfil. The old model is still strong in people's minds, based on the pattern of each parish having its own priest. This model cannot be sustained, and new models of pastoral care are necessary¹⁶⁶.

4.10.10 The issue of Readers exercising a sacramental ministry is addressed in 4.15 concerning the administration of baptism and leading services of Public Worship of Communion by Extension. It is easy for Readers to see what fellow Readers may be permitted to do in a different diocese and expect to be given similar opportunities. The frustration that this undoubtedly generates needs to be set alongside the fact that the contexts vary greatly. Those writing this report believe that the practice of Readers taking funerals should be supported in all dioceses. However, all ministry in the Church is exercised under the authority of those to whom it is committed - bishops or incumbents. Decisions are made as seems good to those who have to make them and need to be respected. The willingness for ministry is an offering we make to God and the Church; it is no-one's right to exercise a particular ministry.

4.10.12 The practice is not uniform concerning the age at which Readers should cease to be licensed and receive Permission to Officiate (PTO). The Bishops' Regulations (2000) state that

'On reaching the age of 70 Readers who wish to remain in active ministry should apply for the bishop's written permission to officiate. This should indicate the area in which they may minister and the duties they are permitted to perform. It should be for a limited period subject to renewal'¹⁶⁷.

The regulations also state that 'Readers who have surrendered their written permission to officiate may be given the title Reader Emeritus as an indication of their continuing link with the Reader network, though retired from active ministry'¹⁶⁸. As people are increasingly remaining active to an older age and living longer a cut off age set at 70 will seem less satisfactory. This report proposes that when a Reader is in good health and wishes to continue their active ministry, the licence should continue until age 75. After that, a PTO would be issued with the provisos stated in the regulations. The regulations clearly envisage that the title of Reader Emeritus would be for Readers who are no longer active in ministry.

4.10.13 Recommendations and Action Points

Recommendation 16. We recommend that Readers are normally licensed to the deanery, although with a designated incumbent specified for accountability and support. (4.10.3)

¹⁶⁶ Some consider that for a Reader to be recognised in such a role in the community they would need to have a clear recognition symbol, similar to the way in which clergy are recognised by the collar.

¹⁶⁷ *Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry* 2000 4.6 p.12

¹⁶⁸ *Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry* 2000 4.7 p.12

Recommendation 17. Deaneries regularly invite Readers, as licensed ministers, to chapter meetings, making collaborative ministry more visible and fostering friendship amongst ministers. (4.10.3)

Action Points

22. Great care is taken over the deployment of Readers and it becomes normal practice for their deployment to be discussed by all interested parties at a deanery level or sometimes wider. (4.10.1; 4.10.2)

23. Dioceses issue Reader licences up to the age of 75 provided that the Reader is in good health and available for active ministry. (4.10.12)

24. Working ecumenically, deaneries are encouraged to prepare an audit of the ministerial resources available to serve the churches in that locality. (4.10.5)

25. Careful consideration is given in deaneries as to how the deployment of suitably gifted Readers might assist the need to find pastoral care for congregations. (4.10.7; 4.10.9)

26. Deaneries give thought to how Readers with appropriate gifts might exercise a more itinerant ministry making good teaching and preaching available more widely. (4.10.6)

27. Dioceses study the service for Admission and Licensing of Readers approved in 2007 and adapt it for local use. (4.10.2)

Welcoming the stranger

I belong to an organisation which cares for seafarers throughout the world. Employment contracts can be from two to twelve months away from home and families. Life at sea is lonely and dangerous. Time in port can be anything from forty minutes for a container ship to two or three days for general cargo. The mission station provides a 'safe' place for seafarers to relax and keep in touch with their loved ones by cheap international calls or the internet. I am there to welcome seafarers to listen, to offer help and to respond to questions such as "Where can I get a haircut?", "Will you pray for my family?", "Can I have a telephone card?" It is a way of showing the love of God for the stranger in our midst.

4.11 A framework for licensed lay ministry in the Church of England

4.11.1 The untidiness of developments in lay ministry over the last four decades has led to a desire for greater consistency across the dioceses, making the transferability of ministry easier when a person moves from one diocese to another. At the same time, dioceses continue to experiment with an increasingly varied range of lay ministry patterns and training, including those developed in response to local contexts and needs. In the light of these variations and developments, the working party offers proposals in two areas.

4.11.2 The first proposal is that there be a clear distinction throughout the Church of England between lay ministries that are licensed by the bishop according to the Canons and those which are not. Into the latter category would fall the purely diocesan initiatives through which lay

ministers are authorised, but not licensed, in some cases with appropriate commissions or permissions from the bishop. The ministries of those trained and authorised in this way are not necessarily transferable from one diocese to another when a person moves.

4.11.3 Correspondingly, it is proposed that all Ministries that are licensed should be subject to national accreditation, moderated training, and given diocesan support in ways which are in parallel with the support given to the clergy. This means ministerial agreements or job descriptions, regular ministerial review, provision for CME, the nurturing of their on-going vocational journey and systematic pastoral care in the diocese. This category need not be restricted to Readers as they currently operate, but would obviously include them. After further consultation and work to develop appropriately benchmarked frameworks, this category might also include licensed Evangelists,¹⁶⁹ Accredited Lay Ministers (a national selection category no longer available), and some other ministries such as licensed Pastoral Workers. It is not being proposed that all pastoral workers across the Church of England should be licensed. Dioceses will want to retain flexibility in the specific lay ministries they authorise. However, a national standard of training and accreditation may be helpful for the standing and transferability of some pastoral workers.

4.11.4 The second proposal relates to the title by which Reader ministry is described and known. There is growing unease in several dioceses with the name Reader. It is not easy for those outside the Church to understand this title, and responses to the questionnaires from Readers indicated a considerable body of support for a change of name. While the origin of the name was suited to those who read the service of Morning or Evening prayer, the nature of the ministry has now changed. At the time of writing, the dioceses of Oxford, Bristol and Salisbury have already made a change of name for this reason. The preferred title amongst these three dioceses is Licensed Lay Minister, although the title 'Reader' is retained on the licence. Other dioceses are now discussing future name changes. A consistency of nomenclature nationally, is therefore highly desirable. However, it is also true that many Readers throughout the Church of England are attached to their current title. There is also a view strongly held by some that any change of name should clearly indicate the core ministry of preaching and teaching the Word.

4.11.5 The working group judges that the time is now right for a change of name, particularly in conjunction with the suggestion of developing a national framework for a variety of licensed lay ministry. The group proposes that there should be an overall category for all licensed lay ministry throughout the Church of England, that of Licensed Lay Minister. Under Canon E7 a bishop may licence as a Lay Worker a lay person who has received training to an appropriate level. It is proposed that within this category, and following consultation and detailed work, there could be clear sub-divisions of ministries with different foci: viz. Reader, Evangelist, Pastoral Worker and possibly, in due course, Youth Minister, Pioneer Ministers and others. The licence could include both names, and the lay ministers could be known either as Licensed Lay Ministers or by their focus, e.g. Reader, Evangelist, Pastoral Worker. This would require no immediate change in the Canons. The training would be organised by dioceses and Regional Training Partnerships. If this proposal is taken up, a change of the Canons to reflect it could be made in due course.

4.11.6 Since 2007, those candidates formerly known as Accredited Lay Ministers are no longer being considered by national Bishops' Advisory Panels. This change reflected the tiny number of candidates coming forward; however, it closes the door for a training path to a nationally

¹⁶⁹ The Church Army has its own well-established selection, training and deployment patterns for its evangelists who are nationally accredited and licenced by the bishop according to Canon E7.2

recognised role of lay minister that is paid for by the Church nationally. On the other hand through the RTPs, Readers now have access to a training of a very high standard. While bishops may continue from time to time to use the canonical provision to license lay ministers who have trained in other ways and with different ministerial foci, the likelihood is that Reader ministry, with its high standard of theological training, will continue to be the usual form of licensed lay ministry available in the Church. Those who formerly became nationally selected Accredited Lay Ministers (stipendiary or non-stipendiary) will be able to follow the path to licensing as Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers) and also be stipendiary if that seemed appropriate to their diocese.

4.11.7 Recommendations

Recommendation 18. We recommend that the name of the office of Reader is changed to Licensed Lay Minister (Reader). (Int.2.4; 4.11.4, 4.11.5)

Recommendation 19. We recommend that all lay ministers licensed by the bishop are known as Licensed Lay Ministers. A working sub-title can be added which may vary according to diocesan practice (e.g. Reader, Pastoral Assistant etc). Careful consideration, with consultation, is given to the possibility of a national framework through which these ministries can be nationally accredited and normally transferable between dioceses. (4.11.1 to 4.11.6.)

Recommendation 20. We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and that they receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. (1.4.3; 1.4.11; 4.11.3; 4.13.6)

Prayer and spiritual direction

My ministry is of contemplative prayer and spiritual direction so in the parish it is therefore largely not a public ministry. However I lay on hands with prayer for healing at healing services and after communion services on Sundays. Beyond the parish, I speak at Cursillo weekends nationwide.

4.12 Training in collaborative ministry for incumbents and those relating directly to Readers

4.12.1 Readers always minister in partnership, with clergy and lay colleagues and with teams. To develop collaborative patterns of ministry requires changes in the ways in which lay and ordained ministers are trained. It has been noted in *Shaping the Future*, that the incumbent is seen as a co-ordinator of range of non-stipendiary ministries, both ordained and lay, and that to develop skills in working collaboratively with all other ministers is among the learning outcomes expected by the time a priest is to be appointed to a post of incumbent status.¹⁷⁰ (4.9.3). Those who are to be licensed to a post of incumbent status are now expected to be able to 'demonstrate effective collaborative leadership and the ability to exercise this in a position of

¹⁷⁰ Parameters of the curriculum and post-ordination phase of IME in *Shaping the Future*, pp.68-72

responsibility’, ‘demonstrate ability to supervise and manage others’ and ‘show an integration of authority and obedience, leadership and service that empowers and enables others in their leadership and service’¹⁷¹. Training that promotes collaboration needs to be developed in order for successful patterns of collaborative ministry to become a widespread reality. (see Annex 4))

4.12.2 To create an expectation and culture of collaboration involves both ‘un-learning’ and ‘re-learning’ on the part of many in the church, including clergy and Readers. Healthy collaborative working of lay and ordained sometimes fails to develop through ‘benign neglect’. In his book *Ministry in Three Dimensions*, Steven Croft observes:

The model of training and deployment for lay ministry in many congregations is higher initial training [especially if provided by Deanery or Diocese] followed by low or non-existent on-going support – the “sink or swim” model. Many clergy pass that model of ministry on to lay people in their congregations because that is exactly what they have experienced themselves.¹⁷²

4.12.3 The role of the incumbent as the coordinator, encourager and enabler of local collaborative ministry between ordained and lay ministers is crucial to the healthy development of collaborative working. So it is really important that during the appointment process when clergy are appointed to parishes where Readers are serving, they show evidence of collaborative skills that have been developed and demonstrated in their current and previous appointments. (see 4.13.8)

4.12.4 Stipendiary clergy are often regarded as team leaders; therefore supportive programmes of ongoing training need to be developed in dioceses to enable them to carry out this role effectively and so as to build healthy patterns of collaboration between clergy, Readers, lay ministers and groups in parishes. This means good communication, the development of mutual respect, reflective practice, and the recognition of people’s particular skills and gifting. Long established clergy may be used to hierarchical delegation and never have experienced leadership modelled by those who enable lay collaborative ministry. All incumbents with Readers should be expected to undergo such courses, with their Readers. These programmes can usefully consider group practice and facilitation, developing teamwork, group decision-making, conflict resolution and appropriate coaching and mentoring skills.

4.12.5 Since the development of such patterns needs constant reinforcement and support, the help of ongoing group mentors or consultants has worked well in many places. Some dioceses are encouraging patterns of developmental review for local ministry teams or collaborative structures. If each diocese incorporates the development of collaborative working skills into its strategies for leadership development, CME and Ministerial Review, it is to be hoped that developments both at the level of initial training (4.9) and ongoing training will lead to a change in culture in Anglican ministerial practice which makes truly collaborative practices more achievable. Where appropriate, this area may need to be identified as a developmental opportunity or training need.

¹⁷¹ Shaping the Future – p 70

¹⁷² Stephen Croft, *Ministry in Three Dimensions, Ordination and Leadership in the Local Church*, London, DLT, 1999 p.178

4.12.6 Recommendations and Action Points

Recommendation 21. We recommend that dioceses extensively promote training and support for collaborative ministry which all incumbents with Readers are expected to undergo, as well as Readers and all lay ministers. (4.12.1 to 4.12.5)

Action Points

28. RTPs and Reader training institutions show evidence of their intention to develop the effective collaborative attitudes, habits and skills expected by the learning outcomes listed in ‘Shaping the Future’. (4.12.1)

29. Bishops and archdeacons take care that when clergy are appointed to parishes where Readers are serving a successful candidate should demonstrate evidence of the necessary attitudes and skills to work well with Readers. (4.12.3)

An on-going development of ministry

I was, and still am, passionate about lay leadership in the church; so when I first began to experience God’s call to leadership it was naturally to lay leadership that I turned. Throughout my Reader training and ministry it was a privilege to preach and teach from within the congregation, to be truly part of “the priesthood of all believers”, to be able to bring the perspective of the ordinary person in the pews into the pulpit.

Through doing this there developed a strong sense that this was just the beginning, that God wanted to take my passion for lay leadership into the priesthood, to use all my training and experience as the foundation to further journeys. My time as a Reader was a sure and certain foundation on which my future ordained ministry is being built, a ministry that will, I hope, be used to build and develop the lay ministry of the church in the years to come.

4.13 Support for Reader ministry

4.13.1 The incumbent. Whether the Reader is licensed to a parish or deanery or wider, the support of the Reader’s designated incumbent is vital if the ministry of a Reader is to flourish. As a minister given the bishop’s licence, a Reader should receive the same quality of attention by the incumbent as would be given to an ordained colleague. This means personal support and supervision as well as the opportunity to share in discussions of the ministerial task. Most Readers, and especially those who are experienced, will be looking for a relationship of partnership in which it is recognised that the ministries of Reader and priest are distinctive but equal. Sadly, it does not always feel this way to the Reader. Furthermore, if the incumbent is the leader of a variety of lay and ordained ministries, then the ministry team across the parish or benefice will be a place where truly collaborative leadership together brings team support to all who exercise a ministry, be it authorised by the bishop or by the parish. (4.12.1 to 4.12.5)

4.13.2 Diocesan Reader Associations (or Boards or Councils). These exist in most dioceses to resource and oversee Reader ministry throughout the diocese. Increasingly they are linked to the body responsible for all ministry matters in the diocese and are sometimes subsumed within it.

These associations have their own constitutions and usually a standing or executive committee. They provide diocesan-wide study days, residential conferences, an annual licensing service with the bishop and they hold an AGM. They circulate newsletters and, increasingly, maintain a local website, itself a way of enhancing the diocesan community of Readers. The association's interests are all the current matters to do with the selection, training and formation of Readers and the future development of Reader ministry. If the provision of support structures and pastoral care for Readers is to be effective, the diocesan associations have an important role to play in monitoring this support.

4.13.3 Diocesan Wardens. The bishop appoints the Warden of Readers in each diocese. As well as serving on the Diocesan Reader Association (or its equivalent), it is common for the Warden to:

- advise the bishop on Reader matters and ensure that Reader ministry runs smoothly in the diocese.
- hold a central role in the planning and delivery of vocational awareness, selection, training and life-long learning for Readers.
- work collaboratively with other advisers for vocation and ministerial education in the diocese, and the staff of RTPs and regional courses for ministerial training.
- oversee the process of ministerial agreements and ministerial review for Readers.
- handle complaints by Readers using the national grievance procedure.

Perhaps above all, the warden needs to be readily accessible to all Readers as a point of support and encouragement. Where the suffragan bishop is the warden, in a matter of discipline there could be confusion of roles. For that reason, and to manage Reader matters on a day to day basis, it is highly desirable that another person is given responsibility for most or all of the functions listed above. This may be the secretary of the diocesan association, who can helpfully share the work of the Warden. The frequency of access of the Warden to the bishop and his staff, and to the bodies where policy is made, will give some indication of how creatively the Reader movement is engaged with ministry development in the diocese. In dioceses where Reader ministry has been 'taken for granted', it is hoped that this will now change.

4.13.4 Sub-wardens or Deanery Wardens. When appointed, these provide more immediate local advice and support than the Warden can offer. In a geographically large diocese, and liaising with the Rural or Area Dean, they often organise meetings for fellowship and support in a local area. Readers benefit from being in an active community of Readers, just as clergy benefit from their corporate gatherings. Furthermore, a sense of mutuality and shared ministry with clergy is enhanced if there are meetings in a deanery for all ministers, both lay and ordained. On the ecumenical front meetings between Readers and local preachers are to be encouraged. As an action point this report encourages that a deanery audit of the available gifts for ministry is undertaken. (4.10.5). Such an audit will provide a basis for invitations to ecumenical gatherings of all lay ministers – Readers, local preachers and others, situated in a deanery or Methodist circuit or group of parishes.

4.13.5 CME Staff. The response to the questionnaires shows that there is a lack of consistency across the dioceses in making provision for Reader CME. This report strongly recommends that a comparable level of support is given to the Church's Readers as to its clergy. This would include a systematic approach to Reader CME in each diocese, for which resources should be made available. A CME adviser for Readers needs to be appointed. In 2003 the Central Readers Council considered the report of a working group on Reader CME which was subsequently

circulated to all the dioceses. If little attention has been paid to the report this is further evidence of the neglect of Reader ministry.

4.13.6 Pastoral Care. The pastoral care of the clergy in a diocese belongs to the Bishop; however the situation is less clear for Readers. It is not realistic, given the size of dioceses in the Church of England, for the Bishop to be the main line of pastoral care for its Readers, who, in total throughout the country, outnumber the clergy. This report proposes that the main line of pastoral care for Readers should be understood as shared between the Reader's incumbent and the Warden of Readers. Where relationships with the incumbent are good, a Reader will receive pastoral care comparable to that which the incumbent would offer to any member of the congregation. However, for a minister licensed by the Bishop it is appropriate to make provision also for pastoral care independent of the Reader's incumbent. An additional port of call is the Warden, to whom the Bishop has delegated the oversight of Reader ministry in the diocese. A bishop will, however, normally welcome access to him by any who hold his licence. This can certainly be a possible way forward for a Reader where other channels have not proved fruitful. In most dioceses pastoral care for clergy is shared by the Bishop with the suffragan bishops, archdeacons and rural/area deans. Geography is a factor here. Readers may feel that they fall between the categories of congregation and clergy and so are easily overlooked. To avoid such situations, wardens and sub-wardens need to be proactive in keeping the pastoral care of the large number of Readers under constant review. (4.14.2) Area/rural deans can be asked to help since they often have a good knowledge of the situation in the benefices in their deanery.

4.13.7 Bishops, archdeacons and area/rural deans. The questionnaire to the dioceses appeared to reveal that attitudes to Reader ministry vary greatly amongst the bishops. Some are very enthusiastic about the work of Readers. Some accept them as just there, but concentrate their attention on clergy, seeing the work of ministry as primarily that of the clergy. Readers will certainly be aware of the position of their diocesan bishop towards their ministry. It would be an enormous help to Readers across the country if the bishops were more uniformly strongly supportive of Reader ministry. The authors of this report hope that enough has been said to indicate that there is much to celebrate about Reader ministry today and a great deal of potential for the development of the ministry of those with the core training of preaching and teaching the Word and leading public worship. It is also the vision of this report that all Readers should receive the ongoing interest in their dynamic vocational journey that is afforded to clergy. Archdeacons and Rural deans will be likely to reflect attitudes held by their bishop. There is little excuse for Readers being neglected, so long as in each diocese it is clear whose responsibility it is to support them.

4.13.8 The Introduction of a new incumbent. Since Reader ministry is predominantly local, and Readers work with a designated incumbent, even if licensed on a wider basis, a Reader is particularly vulnerable when there is a change of incumbent. There are many stories of Readers with flourishing ministries who find that the new incumbent does not favour or make use of Readers. Rejection of a ministry that has previously been well received is a particularly painful experience and difficult for the Reader to understand. When this rejection is because of the Reader's female gender this is a traumatic experience, yet one of which there are a large number of examples. To seek to avoid this damaging experience it is important when appointments are being made to a living to ascertain carefully the attitude of a candidate to Readers before the appointment is made. The track record in the candidate's present post is the most reliable guide. If, as a matter of course, Readers have an opportunity to meet candidates for the incumbent's post and to express their opinion, this will both encourage the Readers in a parish and help to avoid the appointment of an unsuitable incumbent

4.13.9 **Fees for services.** There is a division of opinion amongst Readers as to whether or not Readers should receive fees for occasional offices, particularly funerals. The income from such offices has been taken as the income of the benefice, a contribution towards the stipend of the incumbent. However, although non-stipendiary clergy do not receive fees when they officiate, clergy with permission to officiate are entitled to receive fees. A policy paper on the subject is awaited at present, following extensive consultation. Meanwhile two dioceses have proceeded with a decision that fees will be paid to all who take such offices – clergy or Readers.

4.13.10 **Reader support for other lay ministries.** If an outcome of this report is that Readers receive much stronger support for their ministries and their vocational development than hitherto, this report will have achieved its main aim. However, there is a corresponding duty for Readers, namely, to welcome and support those finding their ministry in the various forms of lay ministry which are developing. This includes responding positively to those who, though less fully trained than Readers, may be taking opportunities to discover and develop their gifting in preaching and leading worship. It would be highly inconsistent if Readers, seeking greater support themselves, fail to offer it to other lay ministers who are also fulfilling some kind of commissioned task. We need as much of the ministry of Christ to the world as possible, with encouragement to all to step out in a variety of forms of service.

4.13.11 **Reader discipline.** Readers must expect to receive a CRB clearance in order to hold a licence, and follow appropriate national guidelines for ministry.¹⁷³ This is the case now for all lay people working under the authority of the Church in roles which could bring them into contact with children or vulnerable adults. The Church has an understanding of how the Christian Faith is to be lived in Christian discipleship and this leads to expectations of those who preach and teach that faith. According to the Canons the bishop may summarily revoke a Reader's licence for a cause which appears to him to be good and reasonable, and after having given the Reader sufficient opportunity of showing reason to the contrary¹⁷⁴. The Reader may then appeal to the archbishop of the province. There is, therefore, a marked contrast between the discipline afforded to Readers and that afforded to clergy through the Clergy Discipline Measure. (CDM) Some of the principles underlying the latter need to be considered in the drafting of a new and acceptable disciplinary procedure for Readers. Clarification is urgently needed from the House of Bishops as to what expectations there are of the conduct of Readers who hold the bishop's licence to lead worship and teach the Faith.

4.13.12 Recommendations and Action Points

Recommendation 22. We recommend that dioceses ensure that Readers, as licensed ministers, are consulted over the appointments of incumbents and assistant clergy, as a matter of course. (4.13.8)

Recommendation 23. We recommend that all dioceses of the Church of England recognise the value of Reader ministry and actively promote it as the best trained and resourced lay ministry with a wide variety of opportunities. (4.13.7)

¹⁷³ eg. *Promoting a Safe Church* -policy for safeguarding adults in the Church of England (House of Bishops 2006)

¹⁷⁴ It may be necessary, legally, for the bishop to show that any invocation of the Christian Faith in discipline is not discriminatory.

Recommendation 24. We recommend that the House of Bishops clarifies what expectations there are of Readers and other Licensed Lay Ministers in view of their role as public representatives and teachers of the Christian Faith as the Church of England sets it forth and the House sets in train the preparation of an acceptable disciplinary procedure for Readers . (4.13.11)

Action Points

30. Incumbents give personal support and supervision to Readers and all Licensed Lay Ministers in their benefice or for whom they are the designated incumbent on the licence. Where there is a ministry team, the incumbent encourages a culture of mutual support. (4.13.1)

31. Pastoral care for Readers in a diocese is shared between the incumbent and the Warden of Readers. (4.13.6)

32. Diocesan Associations monitor the pastoral care and provision of support for Readers in the diocese. (4.13.2)

33. Diocesan Wardens of Readers provide a good link between the bishop and the licensed Readers by having regular meetings with the bishop and being readily accessible to Readers. (4.13.3)

34. In a deanery or similar area Readers meet from time to time with Methodist local preachers and on a fully ecumenical basis with all lay ministers. (4.13.4)

35. When a diocese is making incumbent level appointments to a parish where a Reader has an acknowledged ministry, care needs to be taken to appoint a priest who is supportive of Reader ministry. (4.13.8)

36. Readers positively welcome and support those finding their ministry in the various forms of lay ministry which are developing. (4.13.10)

37. Readers must expect that a CRB clearance will be necessary if their licence is to remain. (4.13.11)

4.14 On-going review

4.14.1 Regular, reflective and robust review is essential for any professional minister. The emerging culture of Reader ministry described and encouraged in this report deserves such serious review, both for the health of the Church and for the support, morale and development of each Reader. This is a marked shift in culture for many of our Readers of long standing and not one which is easy to adjust to, in spite of its many benefits. Response to the questionnaires indicates that on-going ministerial review is not yet an integral part of Reader ministry in the dioceses. This important culture change has to come. The report *The Review of Clergy Terms of Service* calls for a culture of regular ministerial review, coupled to ongoing professional development, for which the Diocese will make provision and for which each minister, including Readers, will be responsible. Already, most Reader courses encourage the Reader in training to engage in serious and review of their learning and of their developing Ministry. This is intended to establish an expectation for engagement in life-long learning, an essential feature of the shift in culture being called for.

4.14.2 Without the careful reflection on one's ministry, the need for CME is easily set aside or becomes simply a matter of pursuing one's own interests. The process of ongoing review needs to take account not only of the Reader's own perception of their ministry, but also the perception of others and, in particular, that of the incumbent. This does not have to be resisted. It has many parallels with the line management review which is now normal in most professions and places of work.

4.14.3 Regular review provides the opportunity for the Reader and reviewer to consider the development of gifts and how they are being used. This is a discussion which will also consider the needs of the deanery or diocese for mission. (4.6.1; 4.10.3) The review is the means of both accountability for ministry and encouragement. It provides an occasion for the regular review of the existing Ministry Agreement and the drawing up of a new one, when appropriate. It provides a check on the match of expectations between Reader and incumbent or PCC. The content of the review can cover things as diverse as relationships in a ministry team, collaborative working, spiritual development, use of quiet days and spiritual directors, theological reading, work-life balance and personal health. It can review new openings for mission initiatives beyond the church. The review is an essential part of an approach to each Reader's ministry which is dynamic and open to vocational growth and change as well as supported by the diocese. This is the culture which this report is strongly supporting.

4.14.4 On-going review also provides a vital opportunity for the Reader to reflect on whether or not time is being set aside for daily spiritual disciplines and for equally important opportunities for time on retreat. We are easily caught up in the busyness of our culture and poor at making time to pray and create unhurried time and space for reflection and the presence of God. Every minister also needs times when the usual activity of ministry is set aside and there is an extended period for spiritual refreshment. Just as it is hoped that dioceses will support Readers in accessing training for specific ministries, so it is hoped that through the CME budget dioceses will support times for refreshment for all their licensed ministers.

4.14.5 It is a matter for each diocese to decide how provision is made for Reader Ministerial Review. The Diocesan Reader Association (or equivalent) is likely to be responsible for it. It needs to be a robust system involving all Readers, and to indicate the CME needs which are to be addressed. It will give an indication of the health of Reader ministry throughout the diocese. It indicates where there are problems and issues to be addressed, such as poor collaborative working, the need for conflict resolution or under-use of gifts. Very occasionally it may lead to a Reader being moved to another parish where their gifts may be needed and used. In some dioceses a more thorough and formal review is conducted before the renewal of Readers' licences which is usually done around every 5 years. Such a formal review gives confidence that the renewal of each Reader's licence is appropriate.

4.14.5 At the national level, feedback about Reader ministry from the dioceses will indicate whether or not the current Bishops' Regulations are clear and relevant or in need of revision. Since they were last revised in 2000, and a major shift in culture of Reader ministry is envisaged, it is expected that one outcome of this report will be newly worked Bishops' Regulations.

4.14.7. Recommendations

Recommendation 20 (repeated). We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. (1.4.3; 1.4.11; 4.11.3; 4.13.6; 4.14.3)

Recommendation 25. We recommend that the House of Bishops requests the Ministry Division to set in train a revision of the Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry. (4.14.5)

Recommendation 26. We recommend that dioceses should encourage Readers and all Licensed Lay Ministers to attend to their own spiritual refreshment and development with times in which they step back from active involvement and by provision of financial support for courses relevant to their vocation. (4.14.4)

A safe haven of friendship

A Phillipino seafarer recently went home after a three-month convalescence in Middlesbrough. Daniel was badly injured onboard his ship, and had to be airlifted to hospital for urgent medical treatment to his leg and head. After successful surgery, Daniel was befriended by the local branch of The Mission to Seafarers. Most nights, Daniel would visit the centre to telephone home and chat with staff and volunteers. For over 150 years, seafarers have come to recognise the flying angel logo as a safe haven of friendship and support. Many seafarers come from the poorest, most disadvantaged parts of the world and through our work, have learnt to trust The Mission as the strong shoulder of support they need. As a chaplain at Teesport I visit seafarers on their ships offering help and assistance; I also offer support to all port workers.

4.15 Readers and sacramental ministry

4.15.1 **Administering Baptism** In chapter 2 it was noted that the issue of Readers baptising has been raised on a number of occasions in recent years. This is an issue on which there are sharply divided views. In preparation for this report, the individual responses by Readers to the questionnaires recorded that 70% are in favour of Readers having permission to baptise (1.4.5 and Annex 1.2.2). Since baptism by a lay person is fully accepted when administered in an emergency, such a baptism is not invalid. It is also the practice to accept fully the baptism administered by other churches, without thought as to the ministerial standing of the one baptising. With the support of the Superintendent, Methodist Local Preachers are permitted to baptise¹⁷⁵. On the other hand, there are others who argue that baptism is of such significance as the sacrament of initiation into Christian Faith and discipleship that its administration should normally be reserved for those who are ordained and to whom the Church entrusts the guarding and the transmission of the Christian Faith.

4.15.2 Canon B 21 states that baptism in a parish is the responsibility of the minister with the cure of souls. The Canons explicitly permit deaconesses to baptise and the Ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer permits deacons to baptise. In both cases this is 'in the absence of the priest'.

¹⁷⁵ SO 010A(2) noted in *Living God's Covenant*, Second Interim Report (2007) of the Joint Implementation Commission under the Covenant between The Methodist Church of Great Britain and The Church of England, p.57

On baptism the Canons are silent for Readers and lay workers¹⁷⁶. The Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry in 2000 state, 'Readers may not officiate at the sacrament of baptism except in an emergency situation when it is lawful for a lay person to baptise'.¹⁷⁷ In a very few dioceses, bishops, have, however, on rare occasions given permission for a Reader to baptise in Church.¹⁷⁸ It will be helpful to all Readers if the House of Bishops would consider whether it wishes further to clarify if there are any circumstances under which it might be thought appropriate for a bishop to permit a Reader to baptise.

4.15.3 Public Services of Communion by Extension Since these services were approved by the General Synod in 2000, it has been possible for deacons, Readers and other approved lay persons to lead such services on the occasions where they have been authorised by the bishop. However, the use of this provision is far from uniform across the Church of England. The circumstances under which a bishop may give permission for it are clearly stated in the form of service: 'permission should relate to specific pastoral circumstances, thus emphasising the exceptional nature of this ministry'. The Guidelines Issued by the House of Bishops state: 'Communion by Extension must always be regarded as exceptional and provisional, looking to circumstances when a priest will be available to preside at a celebration of Holy Communion.'¹⁷⁹ The need for this ministry varies greatly from one part of the country to another and from urban to rural locations. In some areas there are very few retired priests and many smaller congregations. In such pastoral circumstances, a Public Service of Communion by Extension enables a regular Sunday congregation to receive Holy Communion as well as hear the ministry of the Word when they might not otherwise be able to do so.

4.15.4 Leading Services of Communion by Extension is a ministry to which Readers are well suited; with their training and experience in preaching and public worship, they would be an obvious first choice. Such a ministry is often greatly appreciated because it is offered by someone within the locality and with a settled pastoral relationship to the church. The Roman Catholic Church is making considerable use of a similar practice in order that their people may receive sacramental nurture. When a Reader is appropriately placed 'in charge' of a congregation, then a service of Communion by Extension, on some occasions, fits with the Reader's role of leadership which is pastoral, catechetical and liturgical. However, such an appointment of a Reader would, in the course of time, be likely to raise the question as to whether or not the person would be a suitable candidate for ordination to the diaconate (ie. a commissioned task) or to the priesthood.

4.15.5 In order to meet the desire for a eucharistic service led by the priest, there are many multi-parish benefices where the times of the services have been arranged not to suit the local people but to enable the priest to move from church to church taking the services. Services are no longer held weekly. It is better to support regular services and to use Readers where they are available. If this is desirable and Public Services of Communion by Extension are not thought to be acceptable, then the alternatives are for the Reader to take the role of catechist, with more non-eucharistic services, or for more ordained priests to be found. (4.16.4)

¹⁷⁶ Canon D1.4(b)

¹⁷⁷ *Bishops' Regulations for Ministry*, 2000, 1.4 (a), p.8

¹⁷⁸ The Bishop's Regulations and Guidelines October 1993 for the Diocese of Winchester state 'Readers may not normally officiate at baptism except 'in extremis' or on an occasion with specific permission of the Bishop. (para.4d2). The Report on Reader Ministry, October 2005, in the largely rural Lincoln diocese states 'permission has been given occasionally for Readers to baptise in church' (p.12). This reflects their significant ministry amongst smaller rural congregations.

¹⁷⁹ *Public Worship with Communion by Extension*, Church House Publishing, 2001, pp. v and 33

4.15.6 Recommendations

Recommendation 27. We recommend that the House of Bishops decides whether it wishes to clarify further those circumstances under which it might be appropriate for a bishop to permit a Reader, or other Licensed Lay Minister, to baptise. (1.4.4; 4.15.2)

Recommendation 28. We recommend that where parishes have permission to hold Public Services of Communion by Extension, Readers, in the light of their training, are considered as the primary choice among lay officiants. The guidelines for this synodically approved ministry should helpfully be applied more evenly across the country. (4.15.3)

Opportunities in a college for students with special needs

I worked on the staff of a special College of Further Education for people with physical and sensory disabilities. The majority of the students were aged 16 to 22.

After I had been there two or three years, I realised that due to their low resistance to infections, or in some cases to their degenerative disability (eg muscular dystrophy) a small number of students sadly died. The pastoral needs of both fellow students and staff in bereavement were often mishandled or overlooked.

I was able gradually to set about meeting their emotional and spiritual needs by bringing in bereavement counselling courses and introducing weekly group meetings in which there was the chance, in a very relaxed way, to explore the Christian Gospel, I also held weekly services for staff and students, leading these as a Reader and paving the way for the eventual creation of a part-time chaplain's post. The college wanted an ordained person and after she arrived, although we worked as a team together, I felt that my contribution was less valued and diminished.

4.16 Should Readers become deacons?

4.16.1 A report entitled '*For such a time as this*' was presented to the General Synod in 2001 arguing the case for a renewed diaconate in the Church of England. This followed an earlier report by the House of Bishops in 1988 entitled '*Deacons in the Ministry of the Church*'. The 2001 report pointed out that historically the diaconate had shown a capacity to be adapted to the changing needs of the Church and society. It argued: 'the need at the present time may well be to find an overarching rationale that brings together the diverse roles – liturgical, pastoral, communal, administrative, catechetical and prophetic – that *diakonia* (diaconal ministry) has taken in the Church's life.'¹⁸⁰ The report expects most deacons to be voluntary ministers; it indicates what the different roles indicated above might mean in practice, roles which it argues cannot be fulfilled by a one year transitional diaconate. In looking for a renewed diaconate, the report is aware of the three-fold order of ministry as God's gift to the Church, and of its development in other churches and communions. However, there is care also to recognise the importance of Reader ministry and lay pastoral ministers. To press its case, the report argues that the strength of the diaconate is not only its historic place in the Church of God, but also its value as a representative sign to the Church of the servant calling of all God's people. 'A renewed diaconate', it suggests, 'would have a special role in the Church's mission, which must

¹⁸⁰ *For such a time as this*; report to the General Synod; Church House Publishing; 2001, p.5

always hold together the evangelistic, the pastoral and the liturgical'¹⁸¹. Nevertheless, the report acknowledges that 'Readers may, with specific permission, carry out all the duties assigned to deacons, with the not insignificant exceptions of baptism and officiating at marriages.' However, the Reader, it says, 'is not an 'ecclesial sign' in the same way that ordained ministry is'.¹⁸² (See also 3.1.5; 3.1.6)

4.16.2 There are many things about Reader ministry which point to its diaconal character. It is a ministerial task, focused in the office to which Readers are admitted, a commissioned task or diakonia in the service of the gospel. (2.2.3; 2.5.2) It is not primarily about leadership of the Christian community. Readers work with their incumbents to whom the bishop entrusts the leadership in mission of the parish and the pastoral 'cure of souls'. All that the Readers do under the leadership of their incumbent has at certain times in history been the province of deacons.

4.16.3 The results of the questionnaire completed by a large number of Readers indicate that around 60% of those who completed the exercise consider that ordination would be an appropriate step for some Readers. (1.4.5 and Annex 1¹⁸³) However, for many of them it may well not be the diaconate which is in mind, but the priesthood. There are indications that a primary cause of this aspiration is to seek to resolve the sense of identity-loss which has arisen as Readers have felt squeezed by the upsurge of new ministries, both ordained and lay, and as opportunities for leadership of non-eucharistic worship have declined. There is a regrettable perception that ordination brings status, usually giving a more significant position in the parish staff. But it will be better if the issue of Reader identity is not confused with the issue of vocation to ordained ministry.

4.16.4 This report fully supports the possibility that a Reader might test their vocation to ordained ministry, either to the vocational (or distinctive) diaconate or to priesthood, as has always been the case. Incumbents, Wardens of Readers and bishops have a duty to encourage a dynamic sense of ongoing vocation in Readers. Gifts and skills for ministry are always developing. However, since the diaconate has fallen out of fashion, other than as a transitional year before ordination to the priesthood, very few have offered for the permanent diaconate; rather more have offered and been accepted for the priesthood. But the vocation to ordination is something that is distinctive and is discerned by the Church. Any sense by Readers that a natural or easy passage to ordained ministry would be appropriate fails to understand the distinctive value of Reader ministry as well as the distinctive character of ordained ministry.

4.16.5 Ordained and licensed lay ministries are quite distinctive, but equal. For a Reader to enter ordained ministry means both loss and gain for the Church. There is no longer the same possibility of them being a fellow traveller with the laity in the struggles of life, one who is an example to other laity of thoughtful Christian discipleship and one who is authorised by the Church to speak about issues from the experience of being a lay person. To many Readers, being lay is of central importance in how they perceive their ministry. This may also be a time in our society when we are better served by a public ministry in which partnership between clergy and laity is emphasised rather than by a further clericalisation of that public ministry. For these reasons this report leaves open the matter of possible ordination to the diaconate rather than pressing for substantial numbers of Readers to follow this route.

¹⁸¹ *For such a time as this*, p.50

¹⁸² *For such a time as this*, p.41

¹⁸³ This refers to agglomerated categories of "Yes", "Yes, on meeting conditions" and "Not (Necessarily) the Permanent Diaconate" – Figure 13 Annex 1 (p.105) or Table 30 (p.13) of the Full Report.

4.16.6 The order of deacons goes back to the earliest years of the Church and there is a prima facie case for re-establishing it in a permanent form. However, it is the view of some that as long as those in deacon's orders remain almost indistinguishable in the eyes of the wider community from those in priests' orders, the permanent diaconate will never flourish in this country. This is in contrast to the order of deacons in the predominantly Lutheran churches of Germany and Scandinavia. Were the diaconate to take a new shape, however, as an order of those commissioned to a definitely mission directed task, with a distinctive selection and training, then ordination to the diaconate could serve to focus the role of some of those Readers who are willing to build on their core ministry by exploring ministry beyond the boundaries of the church congregations.

4.16.7 We have emphasised that ministry is the Church's calling and commission in the light of the needs of mission, and not only about the individual discerning a new direction for the development of their gifts and testing their calling. (4.6.1; 4.6.2; 4.6.5; 4.10.3) It is the role of the Church, in the widest sense, to perceive the gifts of individuals and to encourage them to try new openings for ministry, opportunities which the local or wider church perceives for its mission. Church members, incumbents, rural deans, Wardens of Readers and bishops have a vital role to play in seeking to encourage individual Christians to consider new ministries.

Ministerial assistance

I share with the incumbent in a large urban church the work of evangelism, pastoring and discipling. I lead midweek groups – Alpha and Bible Study- and am the coordinator for all the midweek groups in the parish. I am one of five people constituting an informal eldership to pray and plan strategy with the incumbent. I lead worship in church and in the local hospital and preach every three or four weeks.

4.16.7 Recommendations and Action Points

Recommendation 29. We recommend that on-going support be given in the dioceses for Readers to explore their vocation to ministry and to specific missional tasks, including the possibility of ordained ministry either to the vocational diaconate or the priesthood. (4.16.1 to 4.16.6)

Recommendation 30. We recommend that bishops who support the ordination of a Reader who is 55 or over, take into account the experience of a long-standing Reader when assessing training needs. (Recommendation 30; 4.8.11)

Action Points

38. In giving careful attention to the support of their Readers in their vocational journey, Wardens of Readers and incumbents seek to discern those Readers for whom a vocation to ordained ministry might be appropriate, either to the diaconate or to priesthood. (4.16.2)

39. Readers take care to reflect on their spiritual and vocational development, with someone to accompany them, renouncing the attraction of status, but recognising that for those who are

called there is always the possibility to test a vocation to the diaconate or the priesthood. (4.16.1 to 4.16.6)

4.17 Conclusion

4.17.1 This report is written with the conviction that the time is right for Reader ministry to be strengthened, given clear new directions and to develop its distinctive and important identity in a new national framework for licensed lay ministry. The way forward, we believe, does not lie with seeking to restrict either the growth either of non-stipendiary ordained ministry or of local and diocesan lay ministries for which the bishop may give a permission or commission. The morale of Readers will be built up with a clear identity of the exciting range of opportunities ahead of them, in the light of their thorough and quite distinctive training as lay people interpreting and ministering the Word and in leading public worship. If these opportunities are fully embraced, then the potential for 10,000 Readers to advance the Church's mission is enormous.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION POINTS according to whom they are addressed

5.1 Addressed to the Bishop, the Diocese and the Warden of Readers

Recommendation 2. We recommend that dioceses encourage Readers to see their core ministry of preaching and teaching and leading worship as both a significant part of the Church's ministry to equip lay disciples for their mission in the world and the opportunity to engage in mission on the boundaries of the Church. (2.7.4; 4.1.1; 4.1.3; 4.2.1 to 4.2.9)

Recommendation 3. We recommend that dioceses strengthen the provision of Reader CME, and in particular the development of the skill of Readers as preachers, catechists and educators enabling them to interpret Christian Faith as it engages with daily life and work. (4.2.2 to 4.2.6)

Recommendation 4. We recommend that dioceses indicate their support for Readers as interpreters of the gospel in daily life by encouraging the use of Readers as preachers at the main parish Sunday service of Holy Communion. (4.2.3; 4.2.4; 4.2.10)

Recommendation 5. We recommend that dioceses permit their Readers to serve in all aspects of ministry allowed by Canon Law and support them. (4.3.4; 4.3.5)

Recommendation 6. We recommend that dioceses widen their vision to include the possible appointment of a Reader as Reader-in-Charge of a congregation, with the corresponding roles of catechist and of pastoral care, possibly also as a House for Duty appointment. Readers are also considered for sector minister posts. (4.3.4; 4.4.9; 4.11.7 – 4.11.10)

Recommendation 7. We recommend that dioceses encourage the use of Readers with pastoral gifts in bereavement care and funeral ministry, and deaneries strengthen the teams of ministers available for funeral ministry by including Readers. (4.3.4; 4.3.5; 4.9.3; 4.10.7 to 4.10.9)

Recommendation 8. We recommend that dioceses, deaneries and parishes look for opportunities for Readers to exercise their ministry on the boundaries of the Church, in breaking new ground with "fresh expressions" of church and mission, and in circles where there might otherwise be no representative public ministry of the Church. (4.4.1 to 4.4.5)

Recommendation 9. We recommend that dioceses and deaneries and parishes should look for opportunities for the appointment of Readers as chaplains both to institutions where chaplains are already recognised and in places where such an appointment breaks new ground. (4.4.6 to 4.4.7)

Recommendation 10. We recommend that the office of Reader, in keeping with other ministerial categories in the Church, is to be seen as fluid rather than static and part of an ongoing journey of vocation, the nature of which is regularly discerned afresh. To address this, dioceses will need a team of vocations advisers to cover the full range of ministries. (4.5.2; 4.5.4; 4.6.5)

Recommendation 11. We recommend that dioceses support parishes in the careful discernment of potential gifts in lay people and certainly prior to them being considered for selection for training as Readers. This is to include the discernment of gifts for the core ministries of preaching and teaching, leading worship and interpreting the faith, by such opportunities being given by incumbents to lay people. (4.6.1 to 4.6.8)

Recommendation 14. We recommend that without lowering standards, training programmes for Reader Ministry need to be more flexible. They should be accessible and designed to encourage candidates for ministry, particularly younger candidates. Course design needs to enable this by encouraging varied patterns of engagement and incorporating AP(E)L opportunities for former learning experiences to be recognised. (4.8.9)

Recommendation 15. We recommend that dioceses encourage the ongoing development of Readers in ministry by offering CME modules in specialised areas of ministry and by providing resources for Readers to engage with appropriate training offered elsewhere. (4.9.1- 4.9.5)

Recommendation 16. We recommend that Readers are normally licensed to the deanery, although with a designated incumbent specified for accountability and support. (4.10.3)

Recommendation 18. We recommend that the name of the office of Reader is changed to Licensed Lay Minister (Reader). (Int.2.4; 4.11.4, 4.11.5)

Recommendation 19. We recommend that all lay ministers licensed by the bishop are known as Licensed Lay Ministers. A working sub-title can be added which may vary according to diocesan practice (e.g. Reader, Pastoral Assistant etc). Careful consideration, with consultation, is given to the possibility of a national framework through which these ministries can be nationally accredited and normally transferable between dioceses. (4.11.1 to 4.11.6.)

Recommendation 20. We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and that they receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. (1.4.3; 1.4.11; 4.11.3; 4.13.6; 4.14.3)

Recommendation 21. We recommend that dioceses extensively promote training and support for collaborative ministry which all incumbents with Readers are expected to undergo, as well as Readers and all lay ministers. (4.12.1 to 4.12.5)

Recommendation 22. We recommend that dioceses ensure that Readers, as licensed ministers, are consulted over the appointments of incumbents and assistant clergy, as a matter of course. (4.13.8)

Recommendation 23. We recommend that all dioceses of the Church of England recognise the value of Reader ministry and actively promote it as the best trained and resourced lay ministry with a wide variety of opportunities. (4.13.7)

Recommendation 26. We recommend that dioceses should encourage Readers and all Licensed Lay Ministers to attend to their own spiritual refreshment and development with times in which they step back from active involvement and by provision of financial support for courses relevant to their vocation. (4.14.4)

Recommendation 29. We recommend that on-going support be given in the dioceses for Readers to explore their vocation to ministry and to specific missional tasks, including the possibility of ordained ministry either to the vocational diaconate or the priesthood. (4.16.1 to 4.16.6)

Recommendation 30. We recommend that bishops who support the ordination of a Reader who is 55 or over, take into account the experience of a long-standing Reader when assessing training needs. (4.8.11)

Action Points

4. Each deanery and diocese looks for opportunities to use Readers in teaching and training events, according to their gifts. (4.2.6)
5. Dioceses give opportunities for growth in the liturgical skills of Readers and seek to identify those who are able to pass on their skills to others in the diocese. (4.2.7 to 4.2.9; 4.4.4; 4.8.3)
7. Incumbents and dioceses encourage appropriate Readers to participate in Mission-Shaped Ministry courses and courses on 'fresh expressions' of church as part of CME in order to reinforce the vision of Reader ministry on the boundary between church and society. (4.9.8)
8. Prior to the selection of a Reader for training, the Warden of Readers in a diocese takes care to ensure that the parish to which the Reader is to be licensed and its incumbent are ready to offer support and encouragement in the development of this new ministry. (4.5.3)
9. Dioceses consider conducting a thorough review of the personal ministerial development of each Reader in order to bring about greater recognition of the ministerial gifts which the Reader has. (4.6.4)
19. Dioceses offer CME modules in a variety of specialist ministries which are available for Readers. (4.9.1)
20. Courses of training for Readers in funeral ministry are made available in all dioceses, giving consistency across dioceses. (4.9.2)
21. Dioceses and incumbents set before Readers, who may or may not themselves be deaf, the important opportunity of ministry to deaf people. (4.9.4)
23. Dioceses issue Reader licences up to the age of 75 provided that the Reader is in good health and available for active ministry. (4.10.12)
27. Dioceses study the service for Admission and Licensing of Readers approved in 2007 and adapt it for local use. (4.10.2)
29. Bishops and archdeacons take care that when clergy are appointed to parishes where Readers are serving a successful candidate should demonstrate evidence of the necessary attitudes and skills to work well with Readers. (4.12.3)
31. Pastoral care for Readers in a diocese is shared between the incumbent and the Warden of Readers. (4.13.6)
32. Diocesan Associations monitor the pastoral care and provision of support for Readers in the diocese. (4.13.2)
33. Diocesan Wardens of Readers provide a good link between the bishop and the licensed Readers by having regular meetings with the bishop and being readily accessible to Readers. (4.13.3)
35. When a diocese is making incumbent level appointments to a parish where a Reader has an acknowledged ministry, care needs to be taken to appoint a priest who is supportive of Reader ministry. (4.13.8)
38. In giving careful attention to the support of their Readers in their vocational journey, Wardens of Readers and incumbents seek to discern those Readers for whom a vocation to ordained ministry might be appropriate, either to the diaconate or to priesthood. (4.16.2)

5.2 Addressed to the Deaneries

Recommendation 7. We recommend that dioceses encourage the use of Readers with pastoral gifts in bereavement care and funeral ministry, and deaneries strengthen the teams of ministers available for funeral ministry by including Readers. (4.3.4; 4.3.5; 4.9.3; 4.10.7 to 4.10.9)

Recommendation 8. We recommend that dioceses, deaneries and parishes look for opportunities for Readers to exercise their ministry on the boundaries of the Church, in breaking new ground with “fresh expressions” of church and mission, and in circles where there might otherwise be no representative public ministry of the Church. (4.4.1 to 4.4.5)

Recommendation 9. We recommend that dioceses and deaneries and parishes should look for opportunities for the appointment of Readers as chaplains both to institutions where chaplains are already recognised and in places where such an appointment breaks new ground. (4.4.6 to 4.4.7)

Recommendation 16. We recommend that Readers are normally licensed to the deanery, although with a designated incumbent specified for accountability and support. (4.10.3)

Recommendation 17. Deaneries regularly invite Readers, as licensed ministers, to chapter meetings, making collaborative ministry more visible and fostering friendship amongst ministers. (4.10.3)

Recommendation 20. We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and that they receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. (1.4.3; 1.4.11; 4.11.3; 4.13.6; 4.14.3)

Action Points

4. Each deanery and diocese looks for opportunities to use Readers in teaching and training events, according to their gifts. (4.2.6)

22. Great care is taken over the deployment of Readers and it becomes normal practice for their deployment to be discussed by all interested parties at a deanery level or sometimes wider. (4.10.1; 4.10.2)

24. Working ecumenically, deaneries are encouraged to prepare an audit of the ministerial resources available to serve the churches in that locality. (4.10.5)

25. Careful consideration is given in deaneries as to how the deployment of suitably gifted Readers might assist the need to find pastoral care for congregations. (4.10.7; 4.10.9)

26. Deaneries give thought to how Readers with appropriate gifts might exercise a more itinerant ministry making good teaching and preaching available more widely. (4.10.6)

34. In a deanery or similar area Readers meet from time to time with Methodist local preachers and on a fully ecumenical basis with all lay ministers. (4.13.4)

5.3 Addressed to the Incumbents and Parishes

Recommendation 4. We recommend that dioceses indicate their support for Readers as interpreters of the gospel in daily life by encouraging the use of Readers as preachers at the main parish Sunday service of Holy Communion. (4.2.3; 4.2.4; 4.2.10)

Recommendation 7. We recommend that dioceses encourage the use of Readers with pastoral gifts in bereavement care and funeral ministry, and deaneries strengthen the teams of ministers available for funeral ministry by including Readers. (4.3.4; 4.3.5; 4.9.3; 4.10.7 to 4.10.9)

Recommendation 8. We recommend that dioceses, deaneries and parishes look for opportunities for Readers to exercise their ministry on the boundaries of the Church, in breaking new ground with “fresh expressions” of church and mission, and in circles where there might otherwise be no representative public ministry of the Church. (4.4.1 to 4.4.5)

Recommendation 9. We recommend that dioceses and deaneries and parishes should look for opportunities for the appointment of Readers as chaplains both to institutions where chaplains are already recognised and in places where such an appointment breaks new ground. (4.4.6 to 4.4.7)

Recommendation 11. We recommend that dioceses support parishes in the careful discernment of potential gifts in lay people and certainly prior to them being considered for selection for training as Readers. This is to include the discernment of gifts for the core ministries of preaching and teaching, leading worship and interpreting the faith, by such opportunities being given by incumbents to lay people. (4.6.1 to 4.6.8)

Recommendation 12. We recommend that parishes specifically encourage vocations to Reader ministry, particularly among young adults. (4.6.1; 4.6.7)

Recommendation 20. We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and that they receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. (1.4.3; 1.4.11; 4.11.3; 4.13.6; 4.14.3)

Recommendation 21. We recommend that dioceses extensively promote training and support for collaborative ministry which all incumbents with Readers are expected to undergo, as well as Readers and all lay ministers. (4.12.1 to 4.12.5)

Recommendation 28. We recommend that where parishes have permission to hold Public Services of Communion by Extension, Readers, in the light of their training, are considered as the primary choice among lay officiants. The guidelines for this synodically approved ministry should be applied more evenly across the country. (4.15.3)

Action Points

1. Incumbents give Readers ample opportunity to develop their teaching skills through opportunities for enabling learning in varied ways in the benefice. (4.2.6)

2. Incumbents give Readers more opportunity to develop their liturgical skills through planning services and leading a variety of worship services. (4.2.7; 4.2.8; 4.4.4)

3. Incumbents use the experience and training of Readers to offer varied ways of leading intercessions and to model good patterns of prayer. (4.2.7)

7. Incumbents and dioceses encourage appropriate Readers to participate in Mission-Shaped Ministry courses and courses on ‘fresh expressions’ of church as part of CME in order to reinforce the vision of Reader ministry on the boundary between church and society. (4.9.8)

21. Dioceses and incumbents set before Readers, who may or may not themselves be deaf, the important opportunity of ministry to deaf people. (4.9.4)

30. Incumbents give personal support and supervision to Readers and all Licensed Lay Ministers in their benefice or for whom they are the designated incumbent on the licence. Where there is a ministry team, the incumbent encourages a culture of mutual support. (4.13.1)

31. Pastoral care for Readers in a diocese is shared between the incumbent and the Warden of Readers. (4.13.6)

5.4 Addressed to the Readers

Recommendation 1. We recommend that Readers keep before them their calling to be examples of those who are bearers and interpreters of the Word in the context of their daily occupation, be it paid or voluntary. (3.2.1; 4.1.1 to 4.1.3)

Recommendation 2. We recommend that dioceses encourage Readers to see their core ministry of preaching and teaching and leading worship as both a significant part of the Church's ministry to equip lay disciples for their mission in the world and the opportunity to engage in mission on the boundaries of the Church. (2.7.4; 4.1.1; 4.1.3; 4.2.1 to 4.2.9)

Recommendation 3. We recommend that dioceses strengthen the provision of Reader CME, and in particular the development of the skill of Readers as preachers, catechists and educators enabling them to interpret Christian Faith as it engages with daily life and work. (4.2.2 to 4.2.6)

Recommendation 4. We recommend that dioceses indicate their support for Readers as interpreters of the gospel in daily life by encouraging the use of Readers as preachers at the main parish Sunday service of Holy Communion. (4.2.3; 4.2.4; 4.2.10)

Recommendation 10. We recommend that the office of Reader, in keeping with other ministerial categories in the Church, is to be seen as fluid rather than static and part of an ongoing journey of vocation, the nature of which is regularly discerned afresh. To address this, dioceses will need a team of vocations advisers to cover the full range of ministries. (4.5.2; 4.5.4; 4.6.5)

Recommendation 20. We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and that they receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. (1.4.3; 1.4.11; 4.11.3; 4.13.6; 4.14.3)

Recommendation 21. We recommend that dioceses extensively promote training and support for collaborative ministry which all incumbents with Readers are expected to undergo, as well as Readers and all lay ministers. (4.12.1 to 4.12.5)

Recommendation 22. We recommend that dioceses ensure that Readers, as licensed ministers, are consulted over the appointments of incumbents and assistant clergy, as a matter of course. (4.13.8)

Recommendation 26. We recommend that dioceses should encourage Readers and all Licensed Lay Ministers to attend to their own spiritual refreshment and development with times in which they step back from active involvement and by provision of financial support for courses relevant to their vocation. (4.14.4)

Recommendation 29. We recommend that on-going support be given in the dioceses for Readers to explore their vocation to ministry and to specific missional tasks, including the possibility of ordained ministry either to the vocational diaconate or the priesthood. (4.16.1 to 4.16.6)

Action Points

6. Readers study the theology of work so as to inform their preaching about daily life. (4.2.4)
16. Throughout the formation process Reader candidates are encouraged to reflect with others on their gifts and ministries. (4.10.1)
31. Pastoral care for Readers in a diocese is shared between the incumbent and the Warden of Readers. (4.13.6)
36. Readers positively welcome and support those finding their ministry in the various forms of lay ministry which are developing. (4.13.10)
37. Readers must expect that a CRB clearance will be necessary if their licence is to continue. (4.13.11)
39. Readers take care to reflect on their spiritual and vocational development, with someone to accompany them, renouncing the attraction of status, but recognising that for those who are called there is always the possibility to test a vocation to the diaconate or the priesthood. (4.16.1 to 4.16.6)

5.5 Addressed to the Regional Training Partnerships

Recommendation 13. We recommend that Regional Training Partnerships seek to create opportunities for those selected for training as Readers and ordained ministers to train together and ecumenically. (1.4.12; 4.8.7)

Recommendation 14. We recommend that without lowering standards, training programmes for Reader Ministry need to be more flexible. They should be accessible and designed to encourage candidates for ministry, particularly younger candidates. Course design needs to enable this by encouraging varied patterns of engagement and incorporating AP(E)L opportunities for former learning experiences to be recognised. (4.8.9)

Action Points

11. Reader Training is designed to develop ministers who are not only theologically articulate, spiritually mature and ministerially skilled, but who also can apply these in flexible and collaborative ways in many contexts. (4.8.1; 4.8.3; 4.8.7)
12. In addressing the core areas of Reader Ministry, the training programme needs to give particular attention to preaching and leading worship within differing contexts, teaching and facilitating learning, and the development of collaborative ministerial habits and skills. (4.8.3; 4.8.6)
13. Reader training needs to be designed using a range of educational methodologies and assessment processes; it needs to be shaped in ways that ensure the integration of theory and practice and that instil a mindset of internalised theological reflection. (4.8.4)
14. Reader Training Programmes should incorporate AP(E)L opportunities for former learning experiences to be recognised. (4.8.8)
15. The ecumenical training specification developed in ‘Shaping the Future’ should be used to encourage increased co-operation in training programmes in RTPs – ecumenically and between dioceses.
16. Throughout the formation process Reader candidates are encouraged to reflect with others on their gifts and ministries. (4.10.1)

17. Towards the end of initial training the RTP or training institution prepares for the diocese a report on each Reader candidate which is agreed by the candidate. (4.10.1)

18. Wherever possible RTPs or other Reader Training institutions enable Readers to develop specific gifts to meet specific ministry needs with appropriate training. (4.9.1; 4.9.4)

28. RTPs and Reader training institutions show evidence of their intention to develop the effective collaborative attitudes, habits and skills expected by the learning outcomes listed in 'Shaping the Future'. (4.12.1)

5.6 Addressed to the House of Bishops

Recommendation 24. We recommend that the House of Bishops clarifies what expectations there are of Readers and other Licensed Lay Ministers in view of their role as public representatives and teachers of the Christian Faith as the Church of England sets it forth and the House sets in train the preparation of an acceptable disciplinary procedure for Readers. (4.13.11)

Recommendation 25. We recommend that the House of Bishops requests the Ministry Division to set in train a revision of the Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry. (4.14.5)

Recommendation 27. We recommend that the House of Bishops decides whether it wishes to clarify further those circumstances under which it might be appropriate for a bishop to permit a Reader, or other Licensed Lay Minister, to baptise. (1.4.4; 4.15.2)

5.7 Addressed to the Ministry Division or Board of Education

Recommendation 19. We recommend that all lay ministers licensed by the bishop are known as Licensed Lay Ministers. A working sub-title can be added which may vary according to diocesan practice (e.g. Reader, Pastoral Assistant etc). Following consultation and the development of national frameworks, these ministries can be nationally accredited and normally transferable between dioceses. (4.11.1 to 4.11.6.)

10. The Board of Education consider the possibility of developing a national basis for the recognition, development, training and authorisation of gifts for lay ministry.

ANNEX 1 The Survey Questions and the Results

1. Introduction and Method

- 1.1. This is the Summary of the Reader Review Survey Results paper which reports on the findings gleaned from the Reader Review questionnaire which was openly distributed through “The Reader” magazine in the winter of 2006 and posted on *The Reader* website. The full analysis, including a copy of the questionnaire, will be made available on the Central Readers Council’s (CRC) website by the end of June 2008. The Research and Statistics Department (of the Archbishops' Council) provided professional guidance in the analysis and interpretation of the data.
- 1.2. 1057 completed questionnaires (825 from the magazine and 232 from the web) were returned to the Ministry Division of the Archbishops’ Council for analysis. Given the complexity of such a large scale analysis, around a tenth of the returned questionnaires from each source were randomly selected and analysed. This represents a good proportion whose representative validity was sought by using systematic random sampling methods. Though the two data sets were analysed separately, the differences between them were minimal. Consequently, for the purposes of this report, the data has been analysed as a single unit in the interest of clarity.
- 1.3. Emergent content analysis techniques (a detailed description of which is in the full report mentioned in paragraph 1.1) was used to carry out the analysis. The following results are given in absolute numbers or percentages as appropriate.

2. Reader Ministry

- 2.1. In addition to leading public worship, preaching and teaching, the majority of Readers are involved in pastoral ministry (8 in 10). Prominent among other areas of ministry are those involved in conducting funerals (6 in 10). Interestingly, less than 2 in 10 respondents indicated that they worked with Young People. The category “Other” agglomerates all the responses given in the open ended question. These represent such a variety of different areas of ministry (including working with the elderly – 5 responses, on university campuses or in schools – 3 responses) which made it impractical to expand.

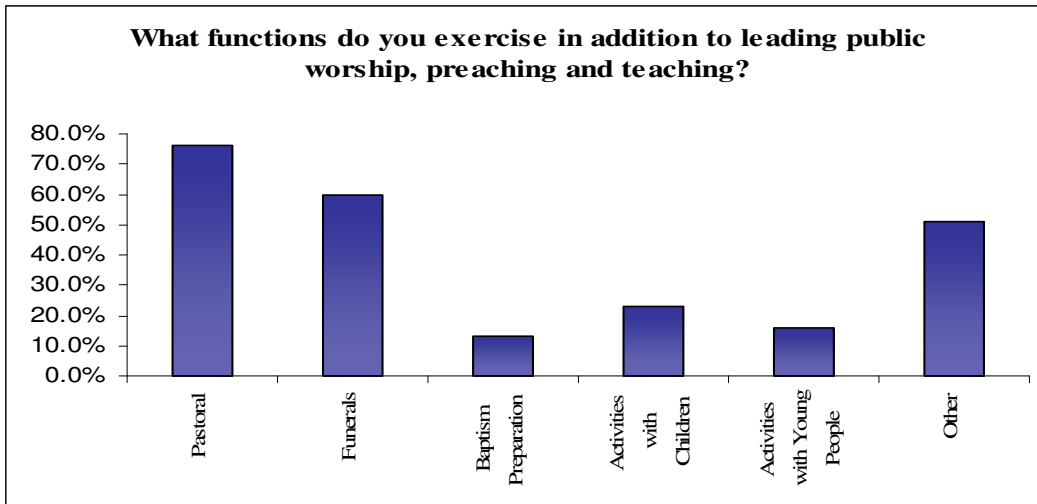


Figure 1

2.2. 1 in 10 Readers assist with baptism preparation but 7 in 10 would like to be able to baptise at public services.(Figure 2)

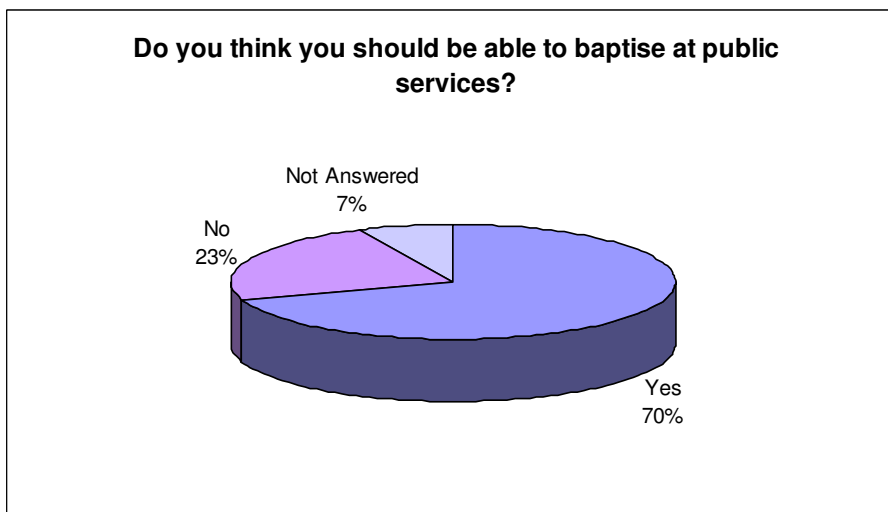


Figure 2

3. Reader training

3.1. On training, Readers presented many more positive, than negative comments (3:1). These were:

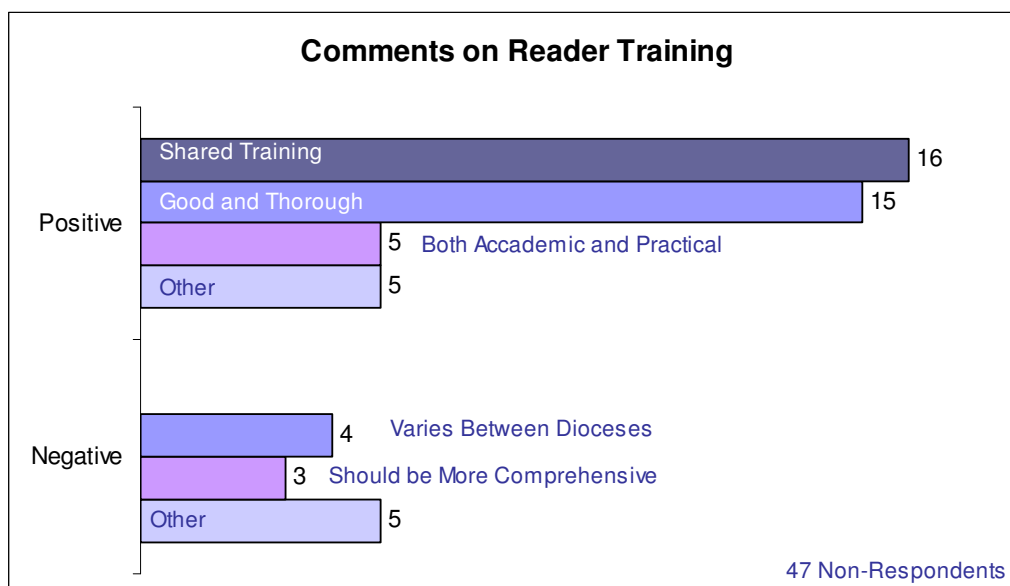


Figure 3

3.2. They also noted that training of authorised lay ministries is often done in partnership with the Methodist Church (Figure 4)

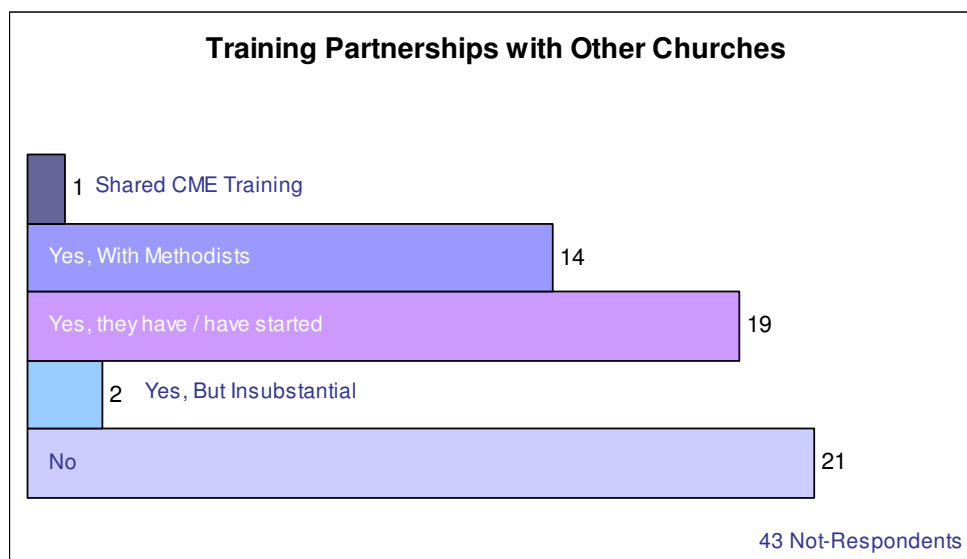


Figure 4

4. Continuous Ministerial Reviews and Development

- 4.1. 7 in 10 respondents indicated that they have participated in regular ministerial review but, approaching half are currently participating fully (see “Yes” in the first row in Figure 5).
- 4.2. Over 5 in 7 Readers are participating in Reader CME (see both “Yes” and “Yes, but Limited/Inadequate” in the second row of Figure 5), however, around 1 in 9 of these describe this as limited or inadequate (included in the “Yes, but Limited/Inadequate” responses).
- 4.3. Half of the Readers who responded to the questionnaire have had ongoing training in the ministry of preaching, but 1 in 8 of these described this as limited or inadequate .

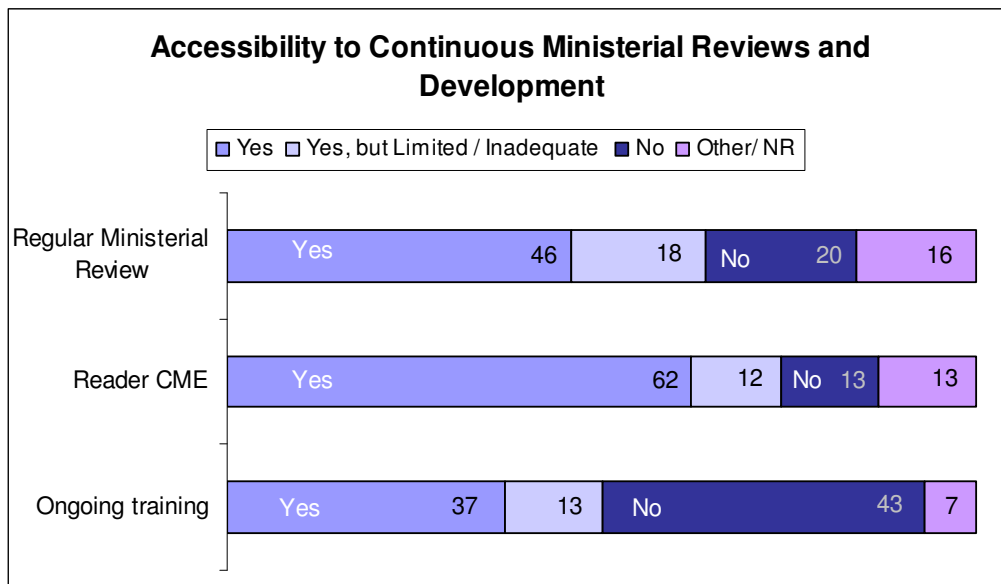


Figure 5

5. OLM/NSM and lay ministries

5.1. Just under 5 in 10 Readers indicated that there was an OLM scheme operating in their dioceses (Figure 6); just under 1 in 2 Readers have a diocesan supported lay ministry (other than their own) in their diocese (Figure 7).

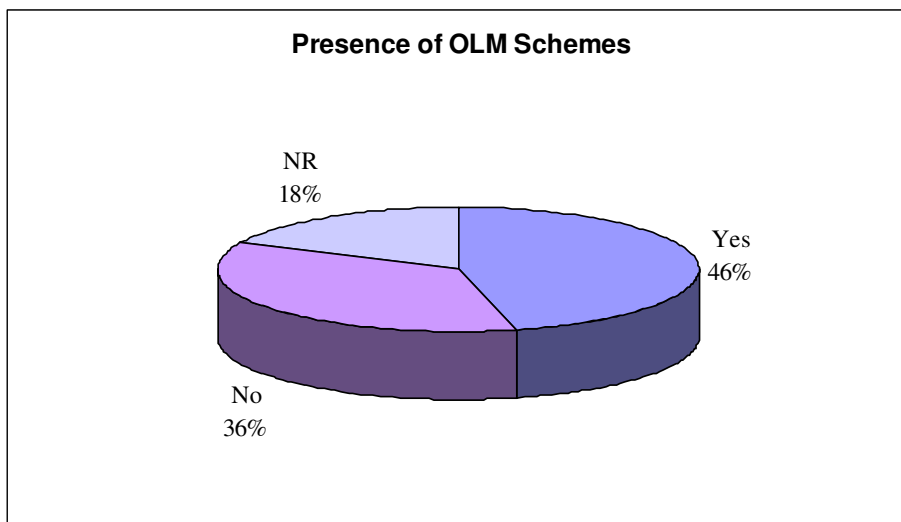


Figure 6

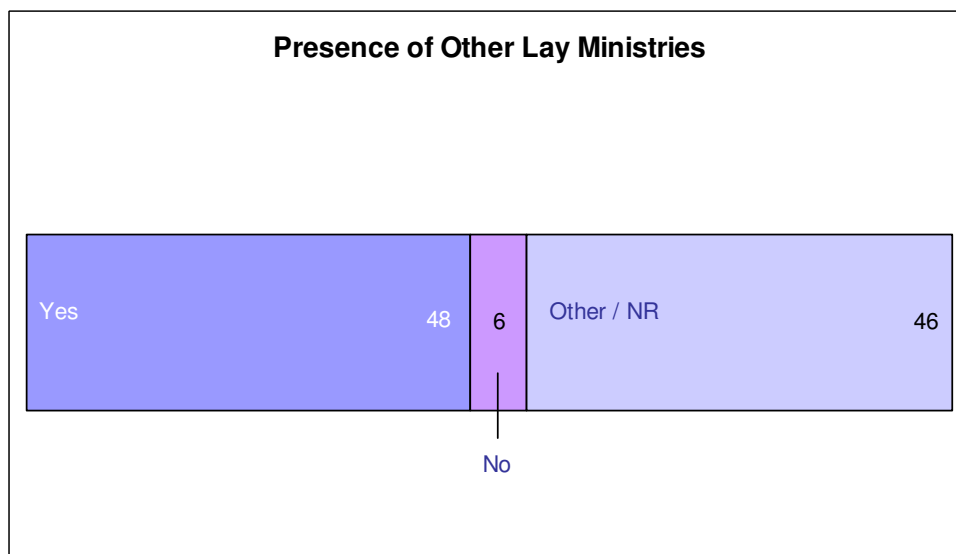


Figure 7

5.2. They also noted that other authorised lay ministries' training is mostly completed through their own courses and at times in conjunction with Readers (Figure 8).

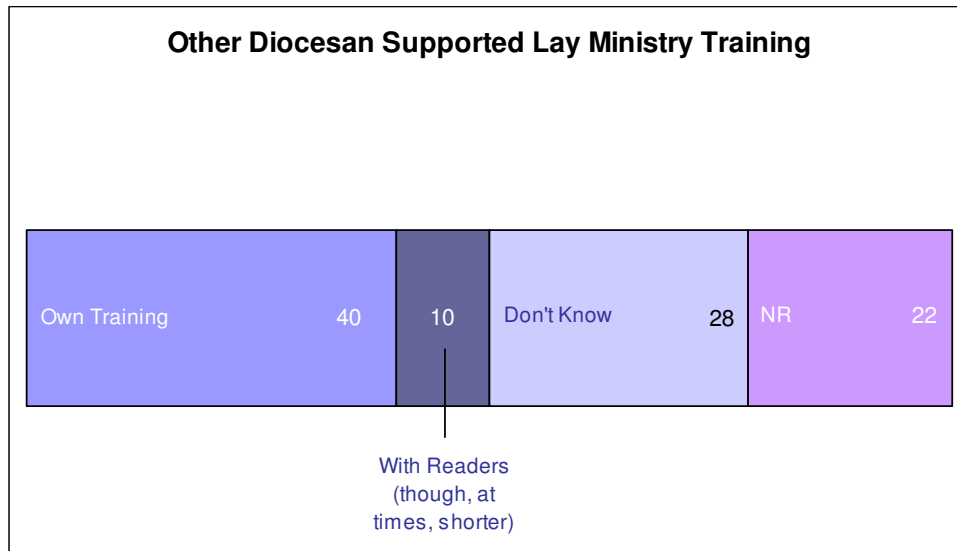


Figure 8

5.3. Readers expressed more negative than positive comments concerning the effects of NSM and OLM ministries on their own ministry (3:1). These are illustrated in Figure 9 below:

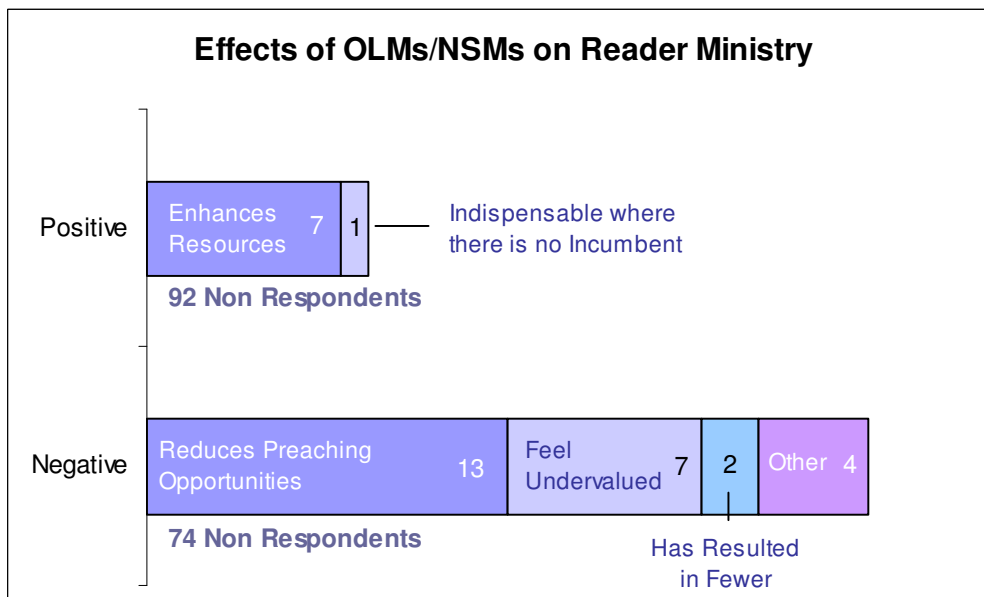


Figure 9

5.4. Readers expressed almost equal numbers of negative comments as positive comments concerning the effects of other lay ministries detailed in Figure 10 below:

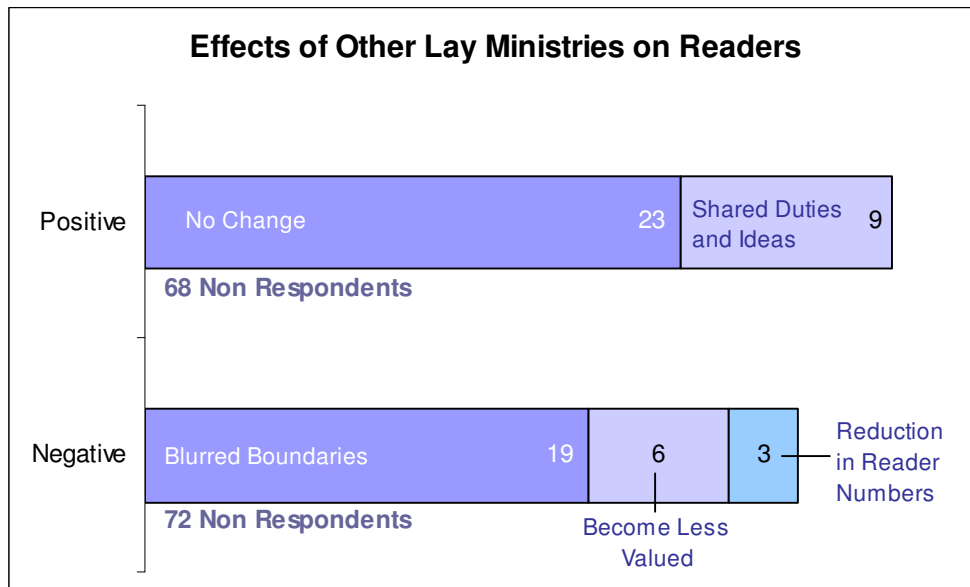


Figure 10

6. Collaborative ministry

6.1. Over half of Readers were unable to comment on diocesan programmes to help them engage in collaborative ministry and only 2 in 10 Readers responded affirmatively. (Figure 11)

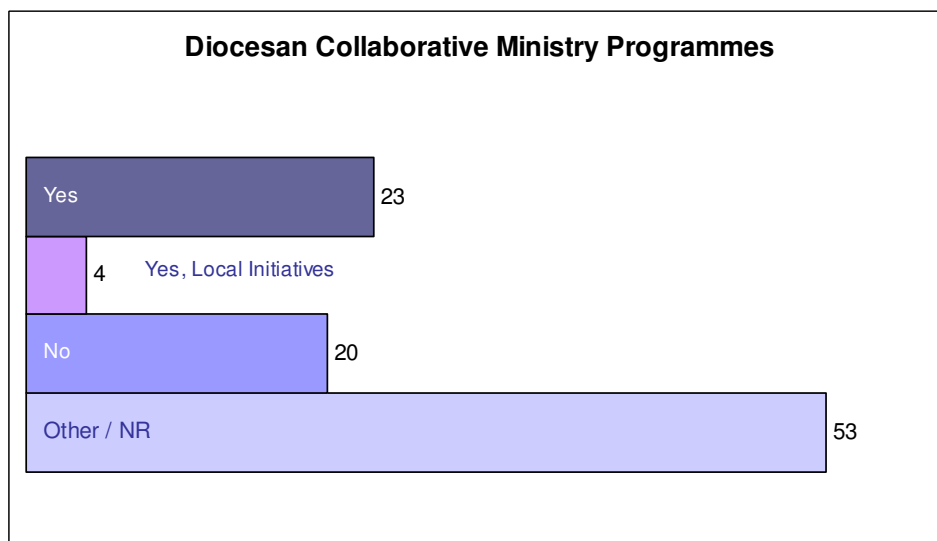


Figure 11

6.2. 2 in 7 Readers reported difficulties when there is a change of incumbent. However, 2 in 3 felt their gifts were adequately used.

6.3. In total, 4 in 7 Readers indicated that they reside in dioceses where communion by extension is permitted, of which 1 in 8 specified that this was granted on completion of further, specific, training. Figure 12 explores this in more detail.

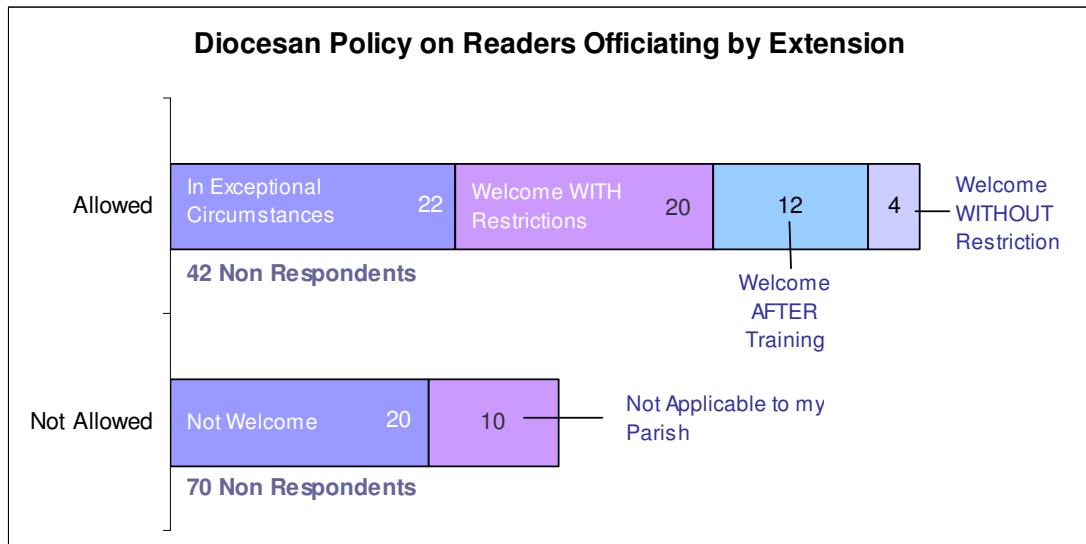


Figure 12

6.4. Nearly all the Readers felt that they should be deployable outside their home parish. Only 2 respondents did not support this idea. 3 in 7 would like to receive fees for occasional offices.

7. Future Role

7.1. 6 in 10 Readers would like to consider change and perhaps an alternative ministry, but only 1 in 3 would like to consider the permanent diaconate – albeit with conditions (Figure 13) 3 in 7 felt that significant numbers of their fellow Readers favoured being ordained as permanent deacons.

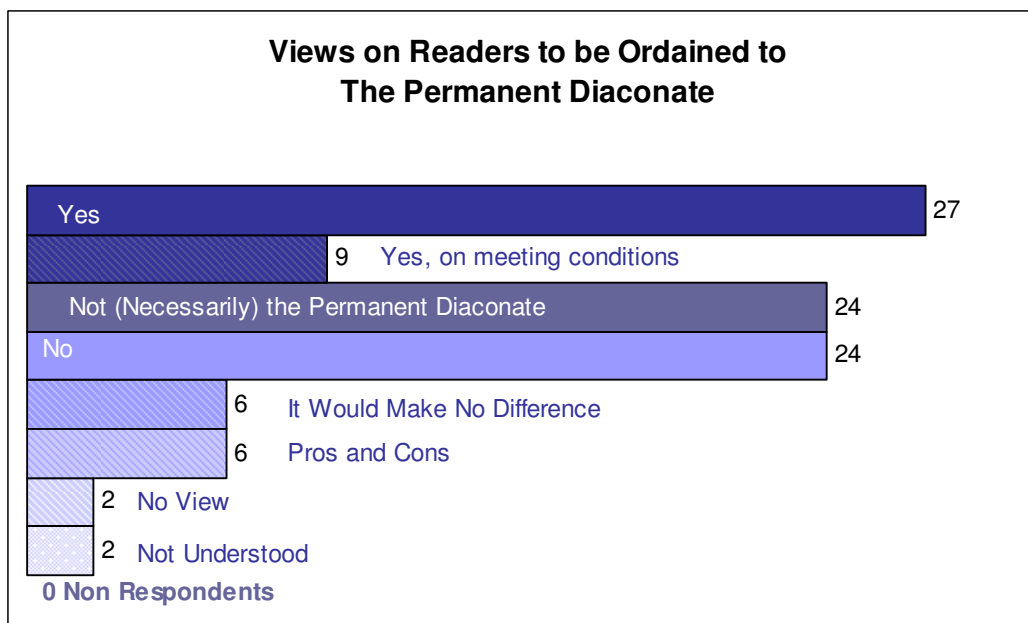


Figure 13

7.2. The first three rows of Figure 13 represent the 6 in 10 who would like to consider an alternative. The voices, “Not (necessarily) the Permanent Diaconate” and “Yes, on meeting conditions” respectively refer to instances in which respondents answered yes to the question though the rationale that followed implied that the Permanent Diaconate was not necessarily the answer but wished to emphasise that something should change from the current situation; the latter refers to respondents who believed that this should remain an optional avenue for those Readers who feel inclined towards ordination, or restricted to those who, during their ministry, had proved they were good candidates for ordination.

7.3. Over half of Readers see a positive role for reader ministry in the future while in addition 2 in 7 feel there should be change. Explanations volunteered (in order of incidence) were:

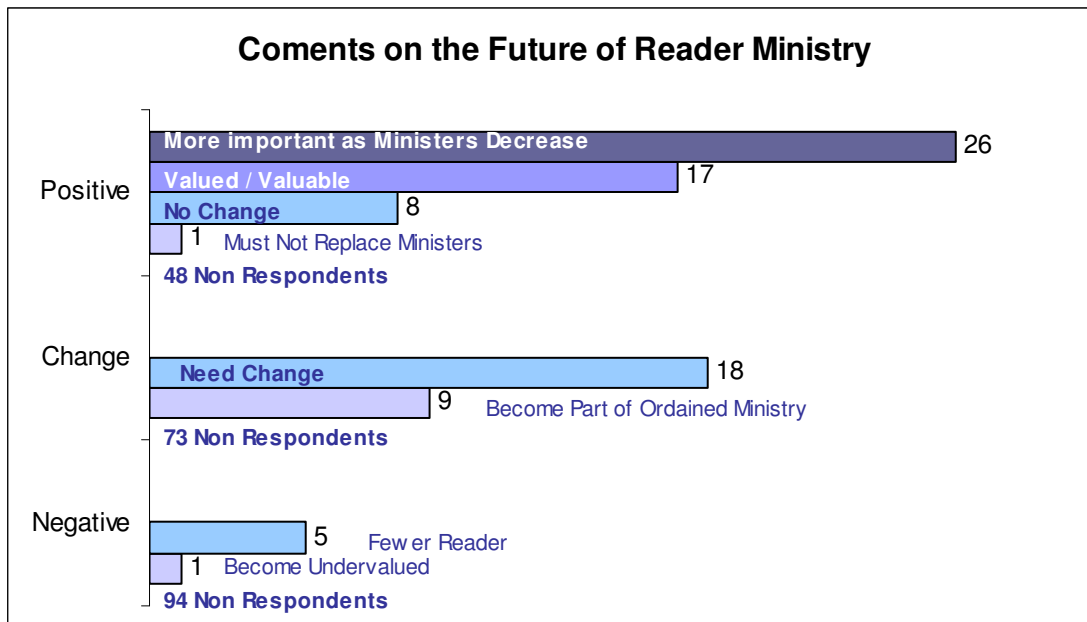


Figure 14

**Anna Aprea
Ministry Division
May 2008**

ANNEX 2 The Diversity of Reader Ministries

The responses to the individual questionnaires revealed a wide range of activities beyond the normal Reader activities of the parish which the respondent regarded as belonging to their ministry as a Reader.

Arts: hymn writing; organ playing; worship leading; art ministry

Buildings: Clerk of Works

Chaplaincies: airport, deaf and blind, retail, shopping mall; hospital (many-some paid); to the mayor; juvenile secure training centre; Scout District; fire, police and ambulance; university.

Children and School: assemblies; school visits to church; church holiday club; teaching, pastoral; music; nurseries

Christian Education and Training: running diocesan training courses; Confirmation classes for colleagues.

Community activities: hospice trustee; community men's breakfasts.

Counselling: bereavement counsellor

Ecumenical: preaching in other local churches (several mentioned); Lay Preacher in the French Reformed Church; Churches Together groups; ecumenical outreach project

Environment:

Fresh Expressions

Fund Raising: promoter of house to house and street collections

Health care: para-medical services; HIV/AIDS; various health related groups

Human Rights:

IT: web-site responsibility (eg. church, CRC)

Law: magistrates; probation service

Liturgy: altar server for 40 years

Marriage: marriage preparation

Media: local radio

Missionary bodies: Mission to Seafarers

National Church: Church House Trustee

Politics: local government; town councillors

Prison: visiting

Rural: Rural Officer; pastoral role in the farming community

Social Concern: Winter night shelter; work with the homeless; people with disabilities; nursing and care homes; work with the marginalised

Spirituality: 'Quiet Garden' movement

Stewardship:

Blessing marriages

Uniformed Organisations: armed forces cadets; youth organisations

Workplace: mentioned by many; trade union

ANNEX 3 A Survey of Comments from the Questionnaires

By Nigel Holmes

Never before has so extensive a survey of Reader opinion been contemplated. The quarterly magazine *The Reader*, which 10,000 Readers receive, carried a four-page questionnaire in the issue published early in December, 2006. That questionnaire could also be obtained from *The Reader Website*. Some 1,060 forms were returned which is regarded as a strong response for a survey of this kind. All were read by one member of the Reader Review Group who summarized the responses and writes :

‘As you can imagine, this has generated a unique snapshot of Readers, their work, their motivation and their observations. In addition to the bald statistics there is also much colour and individuality, but overall clear messages come through which it would be unwise to ignore.’

‘I am afraid to say that lay ministry is not a priority in this diocese. There is no strategy as such and little encouragement for new vocations.’ This was one view but very much the exception. In most cases there was praise for the standard of selection and training if not of subsequent care and communication. However some maintained that the training was a deterrent to people as it was both too academic and long drawn out.

Readers undertake a wide range of tasks ranging from mission co-ordinator to working with people with dementia. Chaplaincy featured in only a few and included prison and a juvenile secure unit, hospital and hospice, nursery, school and higher education, including international student ministry, Air Training Corps, Scouts, British Legion, St. John Ambulance, shopping mall, night shelter, cathedral and chaplain to the mayor. Many, as might be expected, led home groups. Others mentioned : care of the elderly, prayer co-ordinator, website, hymn writing, bishop’s adviser for ecumenical affairs, pastoral responsibility for a daughter church, for developing a Saxon church as a base for spirituality and pilgrimage, community radio, overseas link, interpreter for the deaf, healing ministry, involvement in synods and churches together, Reader newsletter editor, parish magazine editor, church historian, interment of ashes and even the co-ordinator of the clergy fraternal !

There was overwhelming pressure for Readers to be allowed to baptize with over 70% in favour. Some admitted that they already did baptize and many another could not understand why, when any lay person can baptize in an emergency, accredited and trained Readers were not allowed to do this particularly when they had prepared the parents. One claimed to have baptized with the bishop’s permission when the incumbent was off sick for more than a year. Another looks back with joy at having baptized his grandchildren more than 20 years ago. A third said, ‘I baptized all through the interregnum’. ‘Baptism – it’s in the Great Commission, after all !’

Slightly more than half 54.5% were opposed to the retention of fees though some in favour pointed out that they received an income in retirement lower than retired clergy who were allowed to retain the fees. Comparison was also drawn with the organist and verger, who also offer their services as Christians, yet are paid. Rewards, however, can come in other ways. “After a funeral the family took my husband and me out for a meal to say ‘thank you’”. Some dioceses have unilaterally allowed Readers to retain funeral fees, which heightens the sense of unfairness perceived elsewhere.

Almost two-thirds undergo regular review but many had merely a passing involvement or none at all. ‘I have not had a review with my vicar for 9 years’ was one response whilst another had quite some excuse ‘Haven’t yet had the chance. We’ve been in an interregnum for three and a half years!’ Another said, ‘Never been involved in ministerial review in almost 40 years’. ‘After five years with our ‘new’ incumbent life continues to be challenging. What else to do with a vicar who has very little (sic) people skills’. One man said, ‘I have been a director of Christian Aid, Age Concern and the Missions to Seafarers. With this last I preached in more than 30 different churches each year for five years. I am not properly used as a Reader as nobody has ever talked to me about my ministerial gifts.’ ‘Ministerial review – My vicar said, “You write it and I’ll sign it”’. One said that in the future Readers are to meet the Bishop every few years for a chat, another that ‘the warden invites all Readers to dinner once a year’

and a third that the suffragan bishop regularly meets all Readers. 'Bishops' hospitality can be heart-warming'.

There was a strong feeling that the norm in future would be to deploy Readers to areas of need, though some added that this ought only to apply to the willing. 'There should be a national policy to prevent the vicar of the parish seeking to hold on to lay or ordained ministers he has, instead of sharing out to less fortunate parishes.' A convincing 95.5% supported such a move. This is perhaps prompted by the underuse and insecurity of Readers. Although 73.1% of Readers say that they are adequately used many will have felt that this was not so at some time in their ministry. This figure implies that more than a quarter, 2,500 Readers, are not adequately used – a huge waste of talent the Church can ill afford. 'Some incumbents seem to have difficulty knowing how to deal with Readers' said one and posed the question 'What is missing in their training?'

A Reader spoke of how he managed 4,000 people in his work 'Reader training ignores Monday-Friday at the workplace'. 'In the industrial workplace the misuse of such a resource by undertrained and underperforming management would not be acceptable'. A third pointed to the human consequences, 'I was informed by the incumbent to find a new spiritual home three weeks into his incumbency'. 'After a change of incumbent, I was not licensed for ten years.' 'He was extremely authoritarian.' One succinctly summarized the hurt, 'The insensitivity can be breathtaking'. Others spoke of clergy unwilling to recruit Readers and indeed a number of respondents said that they would no longer recommend Readership to those considering ministry as they did not believe it had a future. It should, of course, be said that many were happy with their role as lay ministers and felt that with the decline in the number of paid clergy they would have a continuing role in public worship, particularly were Communion by Extension or lay presidency to be freely available nationally. In a mobile society it seems all the more peculiar that policies such as Communion by Extension, OLM and other lay ministries can be so markedly different from one diocese to another.

The insecurity of Readers derives both from the fact that they are subject to the whim of the incumbent and that with the advent of non-stipendiary and local ordained ministry, opportunities for traditional public ministry are declining. With the creation of diocesan lay ministry schemes, other areas, once the preserve of Readers, are no longer so. The key question raised over and over again is whether there can be a future for Reader ministry when it is no longer distinctive in any significant way. 'Readers are in a rut', 'boundaries have become blurred', 'the problem at parish level is knowing what to do with us' illustrate the feelings. One said, 'Sorting out the ministerial confusion will require some strong leadership from the centre – General Synod'. One sentence summed up what many perceive. 'We get platitudes about the uniqueness of Readers but none will articulate this uniqueness.' 'The general feeling is that Reader ministry needs to be defined.' 'The ministry needs actual rather than verbal encouragement.' 'We used to feel like a collaborative team – Vicar and Reader. Now with NSM it's clergy and laity and I'm not used nearly as much.'

The underuse was often attributed to the growth in the number of eucharistic services and the prevalence of a policy of 'liturgical integrity' which maintains that the president should preach. One replied 'definitely not' when asked if his gifts were adequately used, and another 'no, not at all, in spite of many conversations' but the attitude of others was rather that they believed they 'could do more'. The problem could sometimes be 'New vicar doesn't seem to know how to use Readers'. 'The sheer number of existing Readers should and could make a difference were they rightly used'. 'Young people need to see that Readers have an important contribution to make.' Some stressed the importance of lay people being seen as leaders in parish life and in public worship. There was no little emotion: 'One feels ignored as a Reader – that is until the vicar and curate are taken ill!' Hardly anyone felt that his or her diocese offered much help in collaborative ministry. 'Clergy are the greatest hindrance – blinkered and determined to plough their own furrow alone.' That memorable offering came from the wife of a clergyman! The decline in usage is relatively recent. 'I definitely was busier ten years ago' is a typical comment.

Disappointment was expressed at the perceived 'diminishing role of the Reader'. One suggestion for revival : 'Some stipended (sic) positions might help to nudge people into doing this' [Reader ministry] after retiring early. One Reader reported that he is paid £6,000 a year and is allowed to keep the fees for the 90% of funerals in the parish which he conducts. Some find it hard to accept the way in which the Church appears to have changed. 'We are a Church of a Prayer Book, not just one service !' 'I have never been allowed to lead a main service.' 'I rarely now lead an act of worship as Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer are reduced.'

So what might be the way forward ? The first, personal, question in relation to ordination found that almost two-thirds (64.9) were in favour of significant numbers of Readers being ordained deacon. If you include those who would support ordination to the priesthood but not to the diaconate as only they could meet the perceived need for presiding at eucharistic services, the number in favour of some form of smooth transition towards ordination rose to 7 out of 10 and even more thought that their fellow Readers would welcome such a development (77.8%). Whilst some felt 'The Church of England exaggerates the importance of ordination' most were realistic enough to realise that this was unlikely to change and that 'It doesn't take a brilliant mind to see the solution when paid clergy numbers are falling'.

Anecdotal evidence reported that significant numbers of Readers have been ordained, both through OLM and NSM, and even more are switching during training. Those in dioceses with OLM often thought that 'OLM is likely gradually to replace Reader ministry' and generally 'If I was training today I'd almost certainly look to ordained ministry' and 'In my group, licensed in 2000, 50% of Readers wanted to be ordained' for 'they see it as necessary in order to exercise a full ministry'. The number of Readers-in-training has fallen by more than a third in ten years. 'It is the Cinderella of C of E ministries, we're really ignored.' 'Many Readers are discouraged, disheartened, disillusioned, sad and hurt.' 'More potential Readers are going on to be ordained.' 'There is only one Reader in our diocese under 40 and she is now hoping to be ordained.' The other side of the coin is 'It is confusing when other lay ministries are made to seem much more important'. Some welcomed the advent of these new categories, 'Better to be lay – the ordained are obliged to toe the party line' but another thought 'new lay ministries confuse parishioners'. A number of Readers looked for a 'career structure' whereby there is active evaluation of gifts, as ministry is seen to be dynamic rather than static. 'I feel that past training and experience should open the door [to ordination] with little further training'. 'After 10 to 15 years' service, Readers should be fast-tracked to the ordained ministry if they wished – and to the priesthood.' 'Time-scale minimal, cost nil.' 'The only training necessary [is] for sacramental ministry.' 'YES!! We have the people, skills, commitment, the confidence of our communities – what are we waiting for ?'

There were a number of significant statements. 'The ordinary person sees little difference between us and the clergy and accepts us as such.' 'I think the Reader is *de facto* a Deacon.' 'Most of my liturgical functions [have been] displaced by a permanent Deacon.' 'I feel undervalued – 2nd class. I'm not good enough to administer the sacraments except to the sick. Ordinary church members do not understand the distinction between the blue and the black scarf.' On the second question as to whether others would favour a significant number being ordained to the diaconate, one said, 'This is taking place. Very progressive Warden of Readers – 100% support.' Another remarked, 'The previous Bishop of Norwich wanted Readers to be Deacons 20 years ago but it came to nothing; presumably he was overruled.'

Further observations : 'Some Readers would regard ordination as making their ministry more complete.' 'If significant numbers of Readers were ordained as permanent Deacons, would the role of Reader gradually disappear ? Personally I would favour this to happen – the permanent diaconate to replace Reader ministry – no-one understands the term Reader – Deacon might be better.' There was a virtually unanimous desire to see the name changed. 'Minister' appears to be the most popular choice. Some pointed to the fact that certain dioceses have already changed the name off their own bat.

To become Deacons would 'take the role of Readers in the leadership of the Church a step further and signal a new departure, which is needed. It would offer an opportunity to extend the use of their gifts. A number have gone on to full (sic) ordination.' 'OLM and NSM send lots of mixed messages to congregations.' 'OLMs are ordained and therefore take precedence irrespective of ministry or study by

Readers.’ [There is] ‘so little difference between Readers and Deacons that it seems to me that the two threads of ministry should be joined’. An advantage of Readers becoming Deacons was seen to be that they could then conduct marriages. An observation drawing on conversations at Reader training days said that many Readers do feel called to ordination. Some backed this up with diocesan and deanery survey figures. The reason more have not transferred appeared to be the requirement to undergo further selection and training after many years practical ministerial experience and that relatively late in life.

One suggested joining the names ‘Deaconed Reader’ ! Another observed that he had to ‘augment the work of OLMs who are not always gifted in preaching’. On this theme another wrote ‘The only duty distinctive to a Reader as a layman is to preach, yet that is the one duty which has decreased over the years’. Others pointed out that some of the new diocesan lay ministry schemes do indeed permit preaching and because these are new they carry a novelty value which prompts dioceses to promote them to the detriment of Reader ministry. One spoke for probably the majority in saying ‘The role of the Reader in the future doesn’t look good.’ ‘Readers could be relegated to having no liturgical role.’ ‘If Readers can become permanent Deacons it must be the clear policy of the whole of the Church of England.’ A final sartorial suggestion : ‘Reader ministry is losing out to OLM because new recruits prefer to be ordained....people like the idea of a clerical collar.’ And one called for a collar for Readers ‘even of a different colour’ which would give a whole new meaning to blue collar worker !

There is such a range these days of other lay ministry that it is impossible to summarize. As one said it can involve ‘nearly anyone who the incumbent likes’. Other views : ‘Many take family services without training’. ‘PAs and other untrained people are used both to lead services and to preach to an extent to the detriment of trained Readers.’ Most are happy to see new people being involved in ministry but bemoan the lack of training and, it seems, Readers feel threatened most over the granting to others of permission to preach. ‘Other lay ministries have reduced the numbers going for Reader ministry and have left some Readers feeling unsure of their role.’ Of a new scheme one wrote, ‘It will greatly affect it [Reader ministry] within the next two years when such training is completed and Parish Lay Ministers will be publicly indistinguishable [from Readers] in all but title’. One said, ‘A Parish Lay Minister can do everything a Reader can do except funerals’. Another, ‘Sadly I’m not sure I see a role [for Readers] in 20 years. Unless training alters radically, no young people will be attracted.’

On the ecumenical front the closest working is with the Methodists. Contrasts are drawn with Methodist Local Preachers. ‘I was for many years a Methodist Local Preacher. They are seen as key personnel in that church, whereas I sometimes feel Readers are seen as a necessary evil by the Church of England hierarchy. Changing this begrudging attitude would be helpful.’ Another, in a local ecumenical project, said that whilst Local Preachers could lead Communion by Extension, Readers could not as his diocesan bishop was set against its introduction. ‘The public cannot understand the anomaly.’

Communion by Extension produced a range of responses which defy summary. There is, it seems, no national policy as virtually every bishop appears to interpret what was permitted by the General Synod in a different way. One bishop, whilst in favour generally, refused permission to a Reader because Christmas Eve and Easter were thought to be too significant occasions. In other cases it is allowed only at festivals. ‘With my previous vicar I often officiated by extension. During the interregnum the bishop put a stop to it saying it was not allowed.’ The policy has also been reversed by a new bishop entering the diocese. One said ‘Incumbents use Readers without the bishop’s specific authority. “The bishop doesn’t want to know”.’ Diocesan policies were variously described as ‘forbidden’, ‘almost forbidden’, ‘strictly forbidden’, ‘a last resort’, ‘welcomed’, ‘actively discouraged’, ‘under revision’, ‘over my dead body’, ‘hesitant’, ‘undecided’, ‘permission is given freely’, ‘encouraged but not for regular use’, and ‘sympathetic’.

Finally, the sad and the triumphant. The question, ‘Have you had a voice in the appointment of parish incumbents?’ Answer : ‘Yes, as acting chairman of PCC.....But.....’ Next question: ‘Have you experienced any difficulties when there is a change of incumbent?’ Answer : ‘I was asked to leave the parish where I had been licensed for 30 years ! Incumbent preferred a quiet life.’ To the question of

involvement with parochial appointments one Reader was able to declare with gravitas : 'I am the patron'.

We are aware that the establishment of the Reader Review Group and the distribution of this questionnaire has prompted a number of dioceses to consult their Readers in new ways and to develop fresh forms of communication. The disparity of the findings drawn from the responses of dioceses and individuals demonstrates the need to see Readers in a new light and actively to develop their potential in that role, or in others, for mission and ministry. One respondent pointed out that diocesan communication 'has fallen by the wayside'. There are many hopes resting on the publication of this report. 'God will make his will known...Never before in my 20 years has such process been initiated. We're in exciting times.'

ANNEX 4 The Education and Training Framework

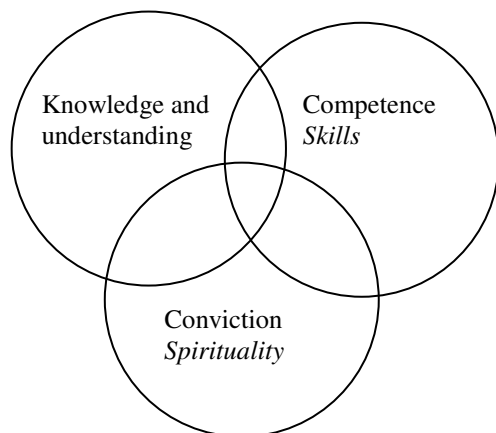
Underlying principles of this specification

Essential principles for Reader/Preacher education and training are:

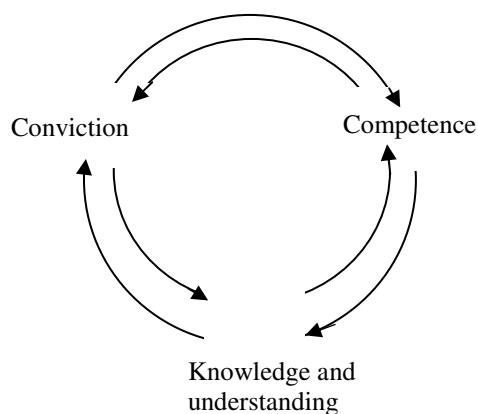
- to make maximum use of **ecumenical** resources and opportunities, to appreciate the gifts and strengths of our ecumenical partners and to value our own tradition;
- to promote and reflect on **collaborative** working, at all levels, whether it be:
 - ecumenical;
 - within the education and training provision itself;
 - among the learners;
 - in local situations;
 - between ministries;
 - with congregations (e.g. shared planning, participation in worship);
- to promote an **enabling** ministry which fosters learning and growth
 - within the education and training provision itself;
 - among the learners;
 - in local situations and with congregations;
- to provide learning opportunities **accessible** to the broadest possible range of people:
 - encouraging imaginative ways of acknowledging previous experience and learning;
 - offering introductory preparation and support (e.g. through an Education for Discipleship programme, taster courses and/or use of learning advisers);
 - stretching people beyond their current capabilities by including depth as well as breadth;
 - making learning fun;
 - assessing imaginatively rather than by examination;
 - ensuring that no one testing their call to Reader/Preacher ministry is denied access for financial reasons;
- to provide **reflective** learning opportunities by:
 - requiring regular self-appraisal by learners;
 - requiring theological reflection on the everyday, current affairs, contemporary culture;
 - relating academic theology, Bible study and the here-and-now.

Education and training framework

The training of Readers/Preachers involves Knowledge and Understanding, Competence and Conviction:



While each area is important in itself, formation occurs in their dynamic interaction.



Together, in balance, they shape the life and ministry of a Preacher/Reader.

1 Knowledge and understanding

In order to contribute to the ministry of the Church and to witness to the faith in the world, it is essential that Readers/Preachers acquire good grounding in theology and Christian doctrine. Essential learning outcomes are:

A working knowledge of the Bible

- understanding different views about the truth and authority of the Bible and its continuing application today, and coming to a reasoned, reflective commitment to a personal view;
- engaging with Bible passages for oneself;

- exploring the methods and insights of biblical criticism and interpretation and showing their relevance for contemporary worship, preaching and mission.

A basic understanding of Christian doctrine

- reflecting on major statements of faith held by Christians, and demonstrating their application to contemporary issues;
- reflecting on the traditions and histories of the Church, denominational emphases and expectations of Readers/Preachers;
- reflecting on the nature of the Church and its mission.

An exploration and appreciation of the theology of worship, the diversity of worship and liturgy in our denominations and their significance for the contemporary Church;

- recognizing the pattern of the Church Year, theological themes and wide use of the Bible in the Revised Common Lectionary;
- exploring traditional and contemporary expressions of spirituality in the Christian Church and beyond.

Critical reflection on issues

- considering contemporary theological issues;
- reflecting theologically on contemporary moral, ethical and social justice issues;
- evaluating ways that theology might be expressed to people outside the Church.

2 Competence

In order to encourage lively, inclusive, worshipping communities in a variety of contexts, it is essential that Readers/Preachers acquire skills in leading worship, in preaching, in enabling learning, communication and mission and in pastoral sensitivity. Essential learning outcomes are:

Worship-leading skills

In order to empower people to worship within the church and outside of it (workplace, home etc.), it is essential that training for worship leading develops skills in:

- reading the Bible clearly and in an appropriate manner;
- leading prayers and meditations with sensitivity;
- the use of denominational and other liturgical resources;
- choosing appropriate hymns / songs;
- working collaboratively with worship leaders, musicians and others;
- using the arts and new technology (as appropriate and as available);
- devising and leading a variety of services such as all-age worship;
- evaluating what has been prepared against accepted liturgies.

Preaching skills

In order to proclaim (in a variety of contexts) the challenging and comforting good news of God's love in Christ, it is essential that training for preaching develops skills in:

- handling biblical passages appropriately and imaginatively;
- setting Bible passages and stories in their wider context;
- using commentaries and other tools;
- relating Bible exegesis and contemporary experience;
- articulating faith and theology in an informed and accessible way;

- developing a variety of styles of preaching appropriate to different groups and different settings, including the use of the arts and new technology (as appropriate and as available);
- choosing and organizing other activities that could function as a sermon, including collaborative ventures;
- addressing a range of moral and ethical issues.

Skills to enable learning, communication and mission

In order to help people communicate faith in the Church and in the world, it is essential that Readers/Preachers develop skills in:

- gauging where people are and how they might develop;
- appreciating that people learn in a variety of ways;
- using varied and appropriate styles that help people learn;
- fostering collaborative ways of working and learning;
- evaluating how well people have learned / grown.

Pastoral skills

In order to develop pastoral sensitivity in a variety of settings, it is essential that Readers/Preachers develop skills in:

- gauging where people are emotionally and spiritually;
- listening without being judgemental;
- managing confidentiality;
- handling conflict;
- encouraging others in discipleship, ministry and faith-sharing.

3. Conviction and spirituality

Formation

In order to nurture their Christian life, it is essential that Readers/Preachers are meeting with God as they continue to test their calling throughout their training and ministry. Who they are, as people; their spirituality, attitudes, qualities and maturity, in their home church community and in the wider world, are as important as their knowledge and competence.

To nurture their Christian life and ministry, it is essential that Readers/Preachers:

- are developing, reflecting on and evaluating their personal discipline of prayer, worship and thoughtful study of the Bible;
- are aware of, and are exploring the resources available for spiritual growth;
- are reflecting on God in other experiences;
- explore their understanding of, and participation in God's mission;
- appreciate the spirituality of their own and others' traditions (ecclesial, cultural, etc.);
- experience, and reflect on, the worship and spiritual life of different congregations.

Continuing development

Continuing development is a fresh exploration of new areas as well as a refreshing and up-dating of existing knowledge, skills and spirituality. The underlying principles of this specification (ecumenical, collaborative, enabling, accessible, reflective) and the overlap and balance of Knowledge, Competence and Conviction are equally essential in the devising of continuing development provision.

The ideal for Continuing Development provision is:

- ecumenical, centrally agreed resource materials with study guides;
- regional activities, resources and events;

- scope for local ecumenical support;
- annual points of completion and achievement for each individual's development portfolio;
- an overlap between provision of continuing development for Readers/Preachers and CME;
- cost-effective, funded as much as possible by denominations.

How initial training and continuing development are delivered

It is essential that the ways in which Reader/Preacher training (initial training and continuing development) is delivered reflect the underlying principles (ecumenical, collaborative, enabling, accessible, reflective). Therefore, there is an expectation that the teaching and tutoring model these qualities and demonstrate the competences expected of Readers/Preachers.

Other essential features are:

- the acknowledgement, valuing and use of each learner's previous experience and learning;
- an appropriate mix of input and experiential work;
- an appropriate mix of individual and group settings;
- an appropriate range of learning methods (e.g. distance learning, locally supported learning, seminar work, computer interactive working, practical experience);
- imagination, creativity and fun;
- assessment which is moderated to the satisfaction of the participating denominations;
- provision of an HE accredited training programme, which allows students engaging in a common programme either to work for HE credits or not;
- reflection on and evaluation of the learning experience by learners, teachers, tutors and mentors.

Much of this specification is relevant to the formation of other lay ministries and, indeed, ordained ministries. We have aimed to express it in ways that encourage cross-referencing, further development and appropriate application. Our main sources for this section have been *Reader Ministry and Training 2000 and Beyond, What makes a Local Preacher?* and TLS 2003-4 Course Handbooks.

ANNEX 5 Relevant Parts of the Canons of the Church of England

B11 Of Morning and Evening Prayer in parish churches

1. Morning and Evening Prayer shall be said or sung in every parish church at least on all Sundays and other principal Feast Days, and also on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Each service shall be said or sung distinctly, reverently, and in an audible voice. Readers, such other lay persons as may be authorised by the bishop of the diocese, or some other suitable lay person, may at the invitation of the minister of the parish or, where the cure is vacant or the minister is incapacitated, at the invitation of the churchwardens say or sing Morning and Evening Prayer (save for the Absolution).

B18 Of sermons in parish churches

2. The sermon shall be preached by a minister, deaconess, reader or lay worker duly authorised in accordance with Canon Law. At the invitation of the minister having the cure of souls another person may preach with the permission of the bishop of the diocese given either in relation to the particular occasion or in accordance with diocesan directions.

3. The preacher shall endeavour with care and sincerity to minister the word of truth, to the glory of God and to the edification of the people.

B43 Of relations with other churches

1. (1) A minister or lay person who is a member in good standing of a Church to which this Canon applies and is a baptized person may, subject to the provisions of this Canon, be invited to perform all or any of the following duties -

- (a) to say or sing Morning or Evening Prayer or the Litany;
- (b) to read the Holy Scriptures at any service;
- (c) to preach at any service;
- (d) to lead the Intercessions at the Holy Communion and to lead prayers at other services;
- (e) to assist at Baptism or the Solemnization of Matrimony or conduct a Funeral Service;
- (f) to assist in the distribution of the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people at the Holy Communion;

if the minister or lay person is authorized to perform a similar duty in his or her own church.

6. Notwithstanding any provision of any Canon, a deaconess, lay worker or reader of the Church of England who receives from a person authorised by a Church to which this Canon applies an invitation to take part in a service may in the course of that service perform any duty assigned to him or her if-

- (a) the duty so assigned is or is similar to a duty which he or she is authorized to perform in the Church of England; and
- (b) he or she has before accepting the invitation obtained the approval of the incumbent of the parish in which the service is to take place and also, in the case of an invitation to take part in a service on a regular basis, the approval of both the bishop of the diocese and the parochial church council of that parish.

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.

E5 Of the nomination and admission of readers

- 1. A candidate for the office of reader in a parish or district shall be nominated to the bishop by the minister of that parish or district; and a candidate for the said office in a wider area by one of the rural deans or archdeacons after consultation with the minister of his parish or district.
- 2. The nominator in making such a nomination shall also satisfy the bishop that the said person is of good life, sound in faith, a regular communicant, and well fitted for the work of a reader, and provide all such other information about the said person and the duties which it is desired that he/she should perform as the bishop may require.
- 3. No person shall be admitted to the office of reader in the Church except it be found on examination, held by the bishop or by competent persons appointed by the bishop for this purpose, that he/she possesses a sufficient knowledge of Holy Scripture and of the doctrine and worship of the Church of England as set forth in *The Book of Common Prayer*, that he/she is able to read the services of the Church plainly, distinctly, audibly, and reverently, and that he/she is capable both of teaching and preaching.

E6 Of the licensing of readers

- 3. The bishop of a diocese may by notice in writing revoke summarily, and without further process, any licence granted to a reader within his diocese for any cause which seems to him to be good and reasonable, after giving the reader sufficient opportunity of showing reason to the contrary; and the notice shall notify the reader that he/she may, within 28 days from the date on which he/she receives the notice, appeal to the archbishop of the province in which that diocese is situated.
- 4. No bishop shall license any reader to be a stipendiary in any place until he has satisfied himself that adequate provision has been made for the stipend of the said reader, for his/her insurance against sickness or accident, and for a pension on his/her retirement.

E7 Of lay workers

- 1. A lay person, whether man or woman, who satisfies the bishop that he or she:
 - a) is baptized and confirmed and a regular communicant of the Church of England.
 - b) has had the proper training; and

- c) possesses the other necessary qualifications.

May be admitted by the bishop as a lay worker of the Church. A lay worker may perform the duties set out in this Canon or any of them, if authorised to do so by licence or permission of the bishop of the diocese in which he or she is to serve.

2. A man or woman admitted to the office of evangelist is thereby admitted as a lay worker of the Church.
3. A lay worker may in the place where he or she is licensed to serve, and under the direction of the minister, lead the people in public worship, exercise pastoral care, evangelize, instruct the people in the Christian faith, and prepare them for the reception of the sacraments.
4. A lay worker may:
 - a) in accordance with Canon B11 be authorised and invited to say or sing Morning or Evening Prayer (save for the Absolution);
 - b) distribute the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people and read the Epistle and the Gospel.
5. The bishop may also authorise a lay worker to perform any of the following duties 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:
 - (a) to preach at divine service;
 - (b) to church women
 - (c) with the goodwill of the person responsible, to bury the dead or read the burial service before, at or after a cremation;
 - (d) to publish banns of marriage at Morning and Evening Prayer (on occasions on which a lay person is permitted by the Statute Law so to do and in accordance with the requirements of that law).

E8 Of the admission and licensing of lay workers

3. Where any person is to be a stipendiary lay worker in any place in a diocese, the bishop shall not license that person as a lay worker unless he is satisfied that adequate provision has been made for his or her salary, appropriate insurance and a pension on retirement.

ANNEX 6 The Members of the Working Party and Acknowledgements

The Members of the Working Party

Rt. Rev. Graham Dow (chair) Bishop of Carlisle, chair of the Central Readers Council
Rev. Joanna Coney Warden of Readers, Oxford Diocese
Joanna Cox National Adviser in Lay Discipleship and Shared Ministry, Education Division
Dr. Paula Gooder (until November 2007) Reader and member of the General Synod
Nigel Holmes Reader and member of the General Synod
Rev. Christopher Lowson Director of Ministry, Ministry Division
Dr. Alan Wakeley Secretary, Central Readers Council
Rev. Canon Alex Whitehead Warden of Readers, Lincoln Diocese

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The Bishop of London
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The Bishop of Oxford
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The Bishop of Southwell
The Bishop of Wakefield
The Bishop of Warrington with Nick Daunt, Liverpool Warden of Readers
The Rt. Rev. Michael Baughen, formerly Bishop of Chester and chair of the CRC
The Rt. Rev. Christopher Mayfield, formerly Bishop of Manchester and chair of the CRC

Dr. Martin Davie Theological Consultant, House of Bishops
Ms. Sue Hart Reader, member of the Central Readers Council
Dr. Susan Salt Reader, Central Readers Council, Chair of Conferences Committee
Prof. John Wood Chair Editorial Committee, *The Reader*

The Rev. Lynda Barley Head of Research and Statistics
Ms. Anna Aprea Asst. Research and Statistics
The Rev. Alec George Moderator of Reader Training

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