

Resourcing Sunday to Saturday Faith

Readers, Lay Ministers & Everyday Faith

*The renewed vision of The Central
Readers' Council of The Church
of England & The Church in Wales*



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Preface

In early 2018, I along with two of my colleagues, Gertrud Sollars, CRC Vice-Chair and Andrew Walker, CRC Secretary, toured the country meeting with representatives from every diocese in the Church of England (and some from the Church in Wales).

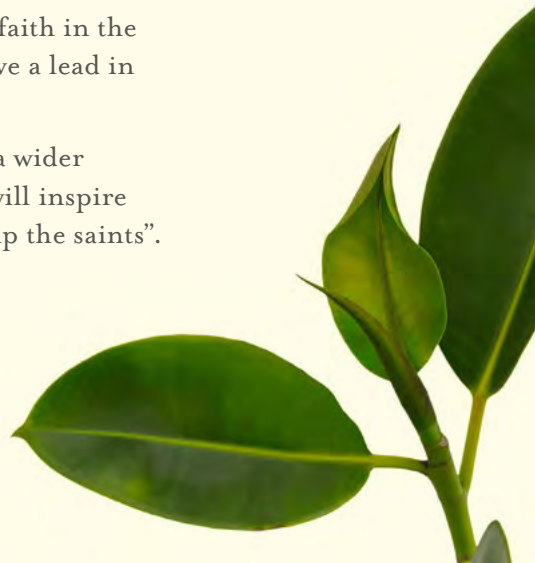
We proposed three key themes for the future of the Central Readers' Council: teaching the faith, enabling mission in the everyday, and leading in church and society. This booklet now seeks to set out these themes in greater detail.

We are convinced from the feedback we received, that it is right to pursue these themes. We believe that they can help in the process of renewing Reader (Licensed Lay Minister) ministry for the 21st Century, encouraging a new generation to explore God's call to this vital work.

The theme that links the three foci is that of everyday (or Sunday to Saturday) faith, and the urgent need within the church for skilled teachers who can take us all deeper in faith, enable us to live this faith in the everyday circumstances of life, and so give a lead in church and society.

We hope this booklet will be the start of a wider conversation in the church, and that it will inspire a new generation of ministers who "equip the saints".

+Martyn Leicester
Chair of the Central Readers' Council



Introduction

Expanding our Vision



Skydiving isn't for everyone. But throwing yourself out of an aeroplane at 12,000 feet is one certain way to get a different perspective on the world! Life is an equal mix of adventure and danger when viewed from this height and speed.

At this moment in the life of the church, we need a fresh perspective. We are living at a time of great ferment in the church. As well as internal disputes (our understanding of sexuality and marriage being the latest), we are also having to face up to mistakes in the past (particularly in the area of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults), and we are doing all this in the context of a society where many are bewildered by the sheer scale of change.

How then are we to obtain this fresh perspective? What stance should we adopt, and where is our vantage point?

One option, expounded recently by the American writer Rod Dreher in his book *The Benedict Option*, is to retreat into what Dreher calls “stable communities of faith”, little islands “of sanctity and stability amid the high tide of liquid modernity”. He uses the example of St Benedict, founder of Western monasticism, whose Rule, according to Dreher,

“played a powerful role in preserving Christian culture throughout the so-called Dark Ages.” This option is appealing, particularly in its call to prayer and spiritual disciplines, and there is an encouraging movement of ‘new monasticism’ in the church today. But this form of monasticism is less about withdrawal from the world and more about equipping people to serve others and engage confidently with society.

This links with the model offered by Pope Francis, who, according to one recent commentator “sees in the tribulation and ferment of the church an opportunity for patient conversion through a renewed, humble and joyful dependence on God’s mercy.” Francis’ vision then, is for a church which is outward looking, confident and humble in evangelism, and reliant on God. In his speech to the Cardinals, shortly before being elected Pope, he imagined Jesus not on the outside knocking to be let

in, but on the inside, asking to be let out. He portrayed the church as paralyzed by introversion, reflecting its own light rather than Christ’s, becoming sick and self-referential, bent over like the woman in Luke 13:10. He then presented a picture of an evangelizing church which puts Christ at its centre, and which goes out of itself to the peripheries, to places of need and suffering.

This confident vision for the church’s engagement in the world is far from being triumphalist. “As in our lives, our moments of defeat are opportunities for conversion and growth. But first we have to learn... to discern and reform.”

The call to discern and reform offers the possibility of an expanded vision. Confident in God and in God’s calling of us, we can look to the future with hope, inspired afresh by the vision of God’s kingdom.



Discern and Reform

At its heart, the Church of England report *Setting God's People Free*, and its follow-up work, is seeking to bring about a change in culture in the church, one which makes everyday (or Sunday to Saturday) faith central to all we do. In effect, this is saying that we need the whole people of God to be confident in faith and living out this faith in homes, schools, communities and places of work. This is how we engage confidently in society.

One vital strand of this work concerns ministry in the church. As the national report makes clear, we need a change of culture in which all ministers work together and see themselves as mutually accountable, of equal worth and status, complementary in gifting and vocation and equal partners in mission.

This booklet is a challenge to the church. We believe that Readers and Lay Ministers are a wonderful gift from God to the church, but an object or a person only becomes a gift as it is received. We want to invite the church to consider afresh how the gift of lay ministry is received.

This booklet also lays out a challenge to Readers and Lay Ministers. We believe that Lay Ministers are uniquely equipped to enable all baptised Christians to live out their Christian faith in the places where they spend the majority of their time. As people who daily move between the worlds of work, home, social networks and church, Lay Ministers can teach the faith and play a part in leadership such that all God's people grow in confident and humble witness to God's kingdom.



This then is not a call to ever more frantic activity. Neither is it a suggestion that the many different areas of ministry to which Readers currently give their time and energy are all wrong. Far from it – we rejoice that Readers exercise a wide and diverse ministry.

Rather, this is a call to expand our vision:

- to look to the **93% of our population** who have very little or no formal contact with the institution of the church;
- to look to the Christians who mix with ‘**the 93%**’ on a daily basis, and consider how we equip them for mission in their everyday lives;
- to look at how we identify and train hundreds of new Readers and Lay Ministers for this vital ministry of equipping others.

We hope that this booklet will start a conversation. There are questions at the end for your personal reflection and for use in gatherings of lay ministers and clergy. We want to hear from you. Please email comments / questions /responses to: **CRCvisionfeedback@gmail.com**

The Central Readers’ Council has already started work on a new suite of resources which will be available soon on our website **readers.cofe.anglican.org** (currently being redesigned and due to be re-launched autumn 2019). These are intended both for existing Readers and Lay Ministers to encourage on-going learning and reflection, and we hope they will also prove inspiring for people considering Reader /Licensed Lay Minister training. And we also hope that dioceses will take a fresh look at their vocations work and their training of Readers/ LLMs and how they receive the gifts of these servants of God.

93%



Chapter 1

Baptism:

God's story and our story

In the centre of Oxford is a bookshop called Blackwell's. It's a huge bookshop with a large basement where the university students go to get their academic texts. But on the ground floor, near the entrance, are all the popular books. And many of these are books by authors who have connections to Oxford – CS Lewis and his Narnia books, JRR Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, and others such as JK Rowling and her Harry Potter books. What do all these books have in common? They are stories which capture the imagination, which transport us to a different world, a world which, however strange, somehow connects with our own experience and invites us to reflect on it in a different way.

Christians too have story which can sound very strange to people who have not heard it before. It has the power to capture the imagination and transport us to a different world. It helps us make sense of life and helps us find meaning. **The problem is that we have forgotten how to tell our story – or to put it another way, we have only been telling part of the story.**

Walter Brueggemann, an American writer, summarises this story as being about “the God who calls and the God who sends”. “The call” he says, “is not to join an institution or to sign a pledge card; it is rather to sign on

for a different narrative account of reality, one that is in profound contrast to the dominant account of reality into which we are all summarily inducted.”

Eugene Peterson, another American author and church minister, also wrote extensively about this “different narrative.” His son Leif said at his funeral that his dad had only one sermon, that he had everyone fooled for 29 years of ministry, that for all his books he only had one message. It was a message his dad whispered in his heart for 50 years, words he had snuck in to his room to say over him as he slept as a child:

**God loves you.
God is on your side.
He is coming after you.
He is relentless.**

*God loves you.
God is on your side.
He is coming after you.
He is relentless.*



This story of God's love is one which takes us out of ourselves. It enlarges our world and fills it with colour and beauty. We start to view the world and the people around us in a different light. Colleagues at work become people with hopes and aspirations, challenges and needs. As we pray for them, so we are filled with compassion and we seek to show them the love of Christ in practical ways. The call centre operative on the other end of our telephone line becomes more than a nameless individual – we 'see' them as someone created by God and loved by God. And the friend who is struggling with problems at home is surprised when we offer to pray for them and wants to know why prayer makes a difference.

This story touches every part of our lives and every part of God's world. If we retell the story as if it only concerns what happens in church services and imply that God is not interested in the other 90% of our lives, we scandalously distort the story.

Back to basics

So why is it that we struggle to tell such a compelling and wonderful story, and to convey its full implications?

In part this is because we simply don't know the story. The church has been described as "a mile wide and an inch deep". Many people in our churches simply haven't reflected on how the story impacts the many different parts of their lives.

In part, we struggle to tell the story because of what one writer calls our "practical atheism". Gregory Jones says: "**when we become overly preoccupied with maintaining the activities of our institutions, when fear of scarcity overwhelms us, when survival dominates our mindset, we lose sight of God... we become practical atheists rather than Spirit-inspired people of hope.**" Sometimes this manifests itself very clearly – church meetings without a word of prayer or a verse of Scripture. Other times it's

implicit – church services which make no reference to the places where most people spend most of their time.

Sometimes we assume everyone knows our story already. And there may be some truth to the thought that many people in society think they already know what the church is about and are put off by this 'assumed story' (however far this deviates from the true story). So perhaps we should ask: **what would it take for the church to surprise people again?**

The social activist Dorothy Day once said: "To be a witness does not consist in engaging in propaganda, nor even in stirring people up, but in being a living mystery. It means to live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist."

This is the task facing the 21st Century Western church. People will not start to listen simply because we shout louder or use

What would it take for the church to surprise people again?

better social media or more modern music. They will take notice when the Christian they know in their department at work, or the Christian they encounter at their sports club, or the Christian they interact with on social media clearly lives by a different story and is ready to tell them the story when they ask.

When God's story becomes our story

In the Church of England service of Holy Communion, there is a lovely prayer which recounts the story of God's love for all God has made. As the story of Jesus is recounted by the Celebrant, the congregation repeat the refrain "this is his story... this is his story... this is his story".

As the prayer continues there is a sudden change. The refrain dramatically changes to "this is our story... this is our story... this is our story".

This is a snapshot of what it means to teach the faith – enabling people to find their place among the people of God and so see God's story as their story. Teaching the faith is about storytelling. And this story has the power to change people.

Stories and rituals often go together. Just as in the Eucharist, we "do this in remembrance of him", so also in baptism and confirmation, we bring together God's story and our story.

In the service of baptism, the story of God's love and God's call is recounted and enacted by the community often alongside the story of how the individual heard God's call (many services of adult baptism or confirmation invite candidates to share their own story). Candidates and community are then commissioned together – sent out to live the story in their workplaces, homes and social networks.

Because baptism is such a significant coming together of 'lived story' and 'spoken story', the moment when an individual joins a community of people who say together "this is our story", the church has historically devoted great time and care to the process of preparing people for this moment (and preparing parents and godparents for the moment when their children are baptised). This is not something which can be rushed. It requires a skilled teacher, someone who not only knows the story inside out, but who is able to discern how God is at work. **In the past, this process of preparation, often known as catechesis (from the Greek "to instruct", but which also carries the sense of "the echo" of God's story being lived in us), was overseen by dedicated lay ministers known as catechists.**

In many parts of the Anglican communion this form of lay ministry still exists and is much valued.



The Church of England has not used this title (for obvious reasons!) but in recent years we have started to consider again the importance of catechism. A new, short summary of the faith called *The Pilgrim Way* has been produced and is available on the Church of England website: churchofengland.org/our-faith/pilgrim-way It is structured around the apostles' creed, the Lord's prayer, the commandments and the beatitudes.

There is also the Pilgrim course to help individuals and small groups explore these same cornerstones of the Christian narrative.

Whatever the title, we desperately need skilled teachers who will live the story, tell the story and accompany people as they explore the full implications of becoming part of the story. Our argument in this booklet is that Readers are ideally placed to meet this urgent need.



Chapter 2

Teaching the faith





Another way of picturing the task of teaching the faith is that of the prism. Light is refracted when it enters the prism, and each colour is refracted by a different amount. This means that white light entering the prism is dispersed in to its different colours.

The teacher's aim therefore, is to help the students see the colour. The physics doesn't change, it is all a matter of seeing what is already there.

The teacher of the Christian faith is facilitating a process which leads the learner (disciple) to the point of seeing the whole world as God sees it. This is about bringing out the colour, the richness, and the texture such that we can truly appreciate the "fulness of life" which Jesus came to bring.

Or to put in another way, we want the student to reach the point of saying "now I truly see".

It is important to remember that it is God who opens eyes. But the Christian teacher works with God – sometimes asking questions which provoke a new way of seeing; sometimes telling stories which invite a comparison; sometimes responding to questions and shining a light to help others find their way. This is skilled work and requires significant training for those who work with God in this way.

We want to suggest five key characteristics for those who would teach the faith (expressed throughout this booklet with the teaching aid **WAGOLL** – What a Good One Looks Like).

WAGOLL

WHAT A GOOD ONE LOOKS LIKE

A good teacher of the faith is someone who loves God and has a thorough knowledge of God's story; who loves people and knows how to listen; who loves learning and knows how people learn; who reflects regularly on their practice; and does all this in a spirit of prayer, imagination and creativity.

1

A teacher who loves God and has a thorough knowledge of God's story (Scripture and tradition)

We have argued in chapter one that teaching the faith can be likened to storytelling. The starting point then is knowledge of the story – sometimes described as a love letter from God.

There is no substitute for detailed study of the Bible such that we can see the “big story” of God's creation and involvement in the world. As an ancient text, written over hundreds of years by many different authors, we should not expect it to be easy reading. But Christians have always believed it to be authoritative (see Article 6 of the 39 Articles in the Book of Common Prayer). Tradition and reason can help us interpret Holy Scripture, and the church has always believed that Christian ministers should be trained for ministry through study of theology as well as practical experience.

Several writers have written about the authority of Scripture being like a “five act play”. NT Wright invites us to “Suppose there exists a Shakespeare play whose fifth act had been lost. The first four acts provide, let us suppose, such a wealth of characterization, such a crescendo of excitement within the plot, that it is generally agreed that the play ought to be staged.

Nevertheless, it is felt inappropriate actually to write a fifth act once and for all: it would freeze the play into one form, and commit Shakespeare as it were to being prospectively responsible for work not in fact his own. Better, it might be felt, to give the key parts to highly trained, sensitive and experienced Shakespearian actors, who would immerse themselves in the first four acts, and in the



2

A teacher who loves people and learns how to listen well to the stories of individuals and communities (experience)

The skill of listening is in short supply today. Social media encourages us to broadcast our own opinions and only 'follow' those who share our opinions. Political debate has become the art of soundbites.

Good teachers take the time to listen – to know the story of their students and to understand what motivates them. And deep listening is a skill that has to be learnt (“observing what falls out of someone’s pocket as they are talking”). It is often said that Jesus spent thirty years listening and learning before he embarked on three years of public ministry.

Sometimes it is about asking the right questions – open questions which help people articulate their thoughts and feelings; questions which uncover the issues and concerns which people are wrestling with in their workplace or at home; questions which show you are interested and want to learn from them as well as teach them.

Sometimes it is about challenging the questions we are asked. In Luke 10, we read of Jesus meeting an “expert of the law”. When this expert asks Jesus a question, Jesus responds with a question (a question about the law i.e. drawing on the learner’s experience).

As the conversation continues, we find Jesus subtly shifting the question – having been asked about “eternal life” (future tense), Jesus then says, “do this and you will live” (present tense). He then tells a story ostensibly about a “neighbour” but which in fact turns out to be about an enemy who overcomes his enmity to offer help to someone in need.

Training for ministry therefore, is not only about studying Scripture and theology, but it is also about listening and the use of questions to open our eyes to new perspectives.



A teacher who loves learning and has a good understanding of how people learn (pedagogy)

We cannot be a good teacher unless we are first a good learner and understand different approaches to enabling learning.

Much has been written about the way people learn (usually referred to as pedagogy, though there are specific theories about andragogy i.e. the way adults generally prefer self-directed learning and will bring in their previous experience). Increasingly, this needs to be a core part of our training of Readers and Lay Ministers.

*We cannot be
a good teacher
unless we are first
a good learner*

Similarly, much has been written on Jesus' approach to teaching and learning – in particular the apprenticeship model, sometimes described as:

- 1. I do. You watch. We talk.**
- 2. I do. You help. We talk.**
- 3. You do. I help. We talk.**
- 4. You do. I watch. We talk.**
- 5. You do. Someone else watches.**

This can happen both formally (an agreed mentor relationship) or informally (the apprentice picks up habits and ways of doing things without the teacher necessarily being aware).

We also need to understand what it is we are teaching. We have spoken in this booklet about storytelling and also about the way God opens our eyes so that we can see as God sees. But we also need to note that there is a difference between teaching “the faith” i.e. the tradition passed on to us by previous generations (referred to as “the deposit” or “the treasure” in 1 Timothy 6:20 and 2 Timothy 1:14) and teaching “faith” which is more akin to trust. The two are directly related – teaching “the faith” or “the story” (as we argued earlier) should lead to faith and trust in God expressed in our everyday lives. But this is not automatic – it is possible to have an intellectual interest in “the faith” which yields no fruit in our lives. Similarly, it is possible to teach the faith in a way which suggests it only impacts certain parts of our lives (related to gathered church) rather than the whole of our lives.

4

A teacher who makes time for prayerful reflection on Scripture, experience and the process of learning (reflective practice)

All of the above takes time. It does not happen quickly, and it does not happen without hours of dedicated time. This is a real challenge for those involved in lay ministry where training is often done alongside a demanding job and a full home life.

Rather than shortening training however, we need more flexible training. Indeed we would go so far as suggesting longer training courses (six years would be equivalent to the training programme for most clergy) but with much more flexibility (more work done in tutor groups often meeting remotely over the internet) and with provisional licensing after only one year (allowing for greater training ‘in context’ with the clergy and local church community also involved in the training). This proposal is less about lengthening formal training and more about growing the sense of life-long learning and blurring the transition from the end of formal training to the start of public ministry. The temptation can be to think that once initial training is over and someone is licensed by their bishop, then the ‘learning’ takes second place to the ‘doing’ i.e. we are so busy in ministry that there is no space for on-going reading or reflection.

... Increasingly we need to recognise that since the goal is to prepare people for whole life discipleship, then the whole of life can be a context for learning



5

A teacher who prays with imagination and creativity

Initial training then should be more about establishing habits of learning – approaches to Bible study, skills for community listening and discernment, and reflection on experience – habits which will survive the demands of everyday life and changes in life circumstances.

Individual Learning Plans, developed with a skilled facilitator are hugely important in recognising both the individual's strengths and weaknesses, their prior learning, and the different contexts for learning (both formal and informal). The temptation can be to assume that all learning happens in the classroom, but increasingly we need to recognise that since the goal is to prepare people for whole life discipleship, then the whole of life can be a context for learning. Formal learning contexts then become more about helping people make the connections – how is their learning at work or at home connected with their learning in church and in their ministry training? Reflection is a key component in theology and learning.

Another way of considering all this, is through the language of “formation” i.e. being formed in to the likeness of Christ. In Philippians 2 we read “let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” and we go onto read of how Jesus “emptied himself, taking the form of the slave.” Teaching the faith is about soaking ourselves in Scripture and opening ourselves to work of the Spirit of Jesus, such that the mind of Jesus is formed in us, and our whole lives are shaped by him.

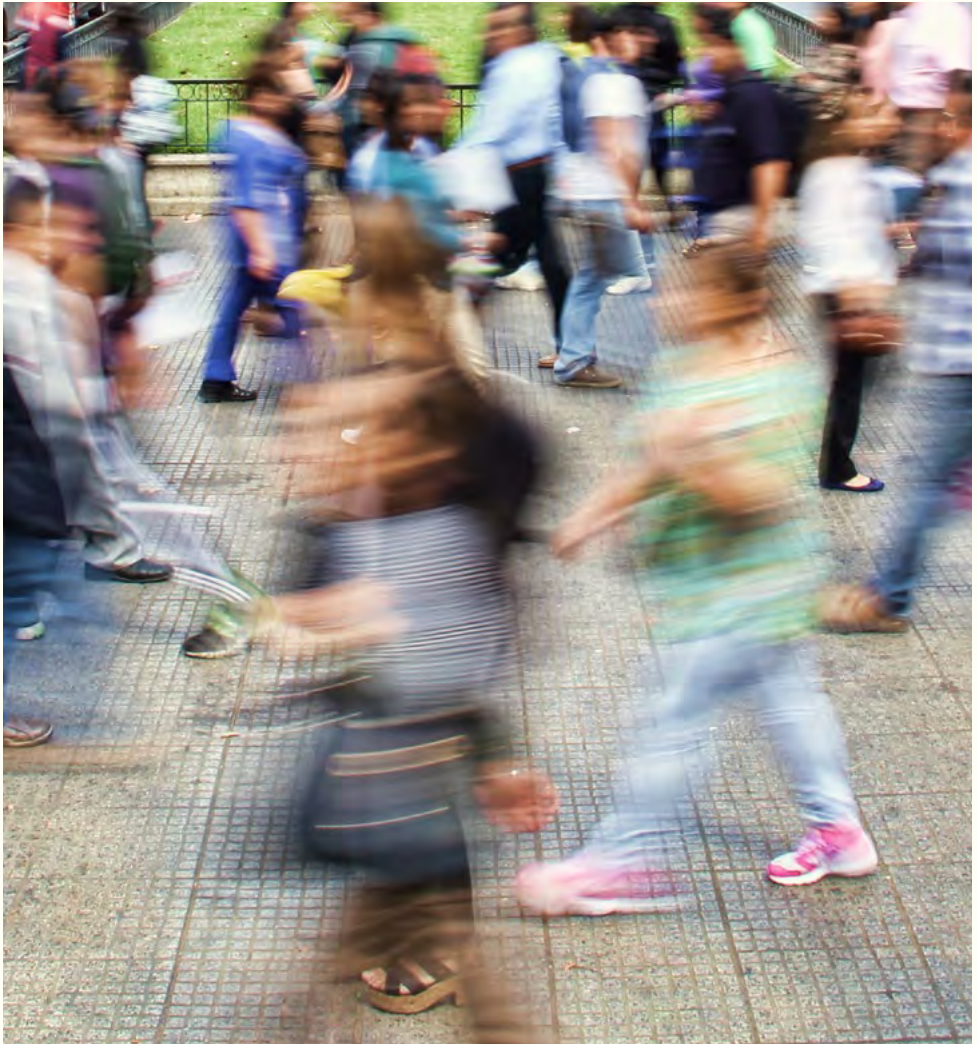
We will explore later the ‘holy habits’ of ministry (see the leadership section) but here we simply note the importance of imagination and creativity – as we pray for people, so we imagine them learning and growing, and picture the next steps that they might take. We will need to be creative in thinking about these next steps given the different ways people learn and their different contexts and background.

There is now a whole science known as “the gamification of learning”, developed on the understanding that most young people spend large amounts of time playing – and learning from - computer games. This gives a sense of the sort of imagination and creativity needed in teaching these days.

Our aim then is to teach the faith, such that people live by faith every day of their lives. Faith is the gift of God, and we are given the indescribable privilege of working with God as God “opens the eyes of the blind”.

Chapter 3

Enabling mission in the everyday



... Form and build, sustain and support these men and women of influence whose task is nothing less than reshaping and transforming the world

Whenever we are given the privilege of preaching or teaching in church, we would do well to remember that the people we are addressing are people of enormous influence. Each one of them is a leader, whether they think of themselves in that way or not.

The woman sat over there by the pillar is a primary school teacher. She has 25 children in her class. Over the next ten years she will profoundly shape 250 lives and families for good.

This elderly lady sat near the front has eight grandchildren. She prays for them, she teaches them their prayers, every time she sees them, she builds up their sense of worth.

That man who is welcoming people is a police sergeant. He is befriending the Muslim community in the place where he works and so shaping community relations.

The person who leads the intercessions works in a large office. She is the person younger staff turn to whenever they need a listening ear.

The lady in the overcoat is a Macmillan nurse. She will spend this evening with someone who is dying.

This teenager who is assisting at the altar might be in a senior role in a major company in ten years' time. In the meantime, she will be the most remarkable ambassador for Christ in her own peer group, the only Christian these young people know.

These people in front of us, whether it is five or five hundred, are not simply members of the church. They are people of influence in their families, in their places of work, in their communities, in the whole world. Our task, when we stand up to preach on

Sunday, or when we lead a small group meeting, is to equip them for their task on Monday, whatever that may be.

Listen again to the words of Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount he says this: "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world". You are people of influence, spread across the world to prevent decay, to establish peace and justice (salt is both a preservative and a fertilizer). You are people of influence, showing the way and helping people to see in very dark places.

The calling of every local church is to form and build, sustain and support these men and women of influence whose task is nothing less than reshaping and transforming the world.

And Readers and Lay Ministers are uniquely placed to enable this work.



Teaching 'Everyday Faith'

We have already suggested that our aim is to teach the faith, such that people live by faith every day of their lives.

The Bible of course is full of stories of what this looks like – Jesus in particular often chose examples from the everyday life of his disciples: fishing, travelling, farming, celebrating.

Arguably the weakest area of most teaching and preaching today is the practical application for everyday life. We can spend hours on exegesis of a Bible passage (important work – but as the teacher Paula Gooder has said “you don’t show your underwear in public!”). And we can delve into complicated doctrinal arguments (again important background work – but intellectual stimulation is not our ultimate goal). Or we turn the application into ‘spiritual platitudes’ e.g. pray more, volunteer in church, depend on God (all good – but still begging the question ‘how does this connect with our everyday lives?’)

The real question then is how does this Bible passage speak to the primary school teacher, the grandmother, the policeman, the officer manager, the Macmillan nurse? And the only way we can get anywhere near answering that is spending time with the people doing it.

WAGOLL

WHAT A GOOD ONE LOOKS LIKE

A good enabler of mission teaches everyday faith; models everyday prayer; encourages everyday witness and sustains everyday action.

The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) produces some great resources which help explore how to do this licc.org.uk and one of their latest books gives some examples of what everyday faith looks like in practice: Mark Greene The one about... 8 stories about God in our everyday.

So how do we find wisdom from God for every decision (e.g. the difficult ethical decisions at work)? How can we see every interaction as an opportunity to express God’s love (e.g. the passing encounter on the bus)? How can we face every circumstance with courage and hope (e.g. when we’re ill or facing hardship)? These are just some of the questions at the heart of everyday faith.

Modelling 'Everyday Prayer'

Praying is not something we do once a week in a particular building. It is an expression of relationship – a child speaking to a loving parent – and therefore can happen at any time and in any place.

Enabling mission in the everyday is also about modelling prayer in every situation: quietly praying for our work colleagues or customers; praying about each decision we make; sitting in silence for a few minutes to remind ourselves that God is with us; reviewing each day in prayer to notice where God was active.

There are now various apps which can be downloaded on to your phone to help in this – everything from Daily Prayer, with morning, midday, evening and night prayers, through to the prayer of Examen – an app which guides you through a review of the day.

So how do we model prayers of thanks (e.g. acknowledging God in the middle of a busy day)? How do we model intercession (e.g. praying for five friends or work colleagues)? How do we model silence (e.g. using part of our lunch break to find a quiet space)? How do we model the power of liturgy (e.g. memorising prayers with our children)? These are just some of the ways of exploring everyday prayer.



Encouraging 'Everyday Witness'

We all know that people 'read' our lives much more intently than they listen to our words. This means that our witness to God's story is all encompassing – actions and words.

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect," (1 Peter 3:15).

As people read our lives, so they ask questions. And the way these questions are addressed is all important – note the phrase "with gentleness and respect" which emphasises once again the lived story alongside the spoken story.

"Everyday faith conversations" are simple conversations where we speak of God as naturally as we speak of a close friend. Recent research has suggested that 1 in 5 people would like to know more about the Christian faith. This doesn't necessarily mean they will come to church, but it might mean that they are ready to talk to their work colleague or friend who they know to be a Christian.



Sustaining 'Everyday Action'

Encouraging all baptised Christians to be ready to respond to questions and to tell their story is an important role for Readers and Lay Ministers. There is no denying that many people find this hard. So, the more it is practiced when we are gathered in church, the more likely people are to do it in the other contexts of their lives. The short course *Talking Jesus* talkingjesus.org is full of practical ideas for growing confidence in everyday faith conversations.

So how do we encourage people to tell their story and God's story (e.g. when asked 'why do you go to church')? How do we encourage people to ask questions (making it clear that we don't have all the answers and we wrestle with many questions ourselves)? How do we encourage people that they are being "salt and light" whether they realise it or not? These are just some of the ways we act as witnesses in everyday life.

Everyday action starts with simple acts of kindness (remembering that in the New Testament, the word for 'ministry' is the same word for 'service') But how do we sustain such acts of kindness when we are tired, unwell or simply don't feel like it?

This is about resilience and perseverance, and the way these are grown through 'holy habits' (explored more in the next chapter) and through seeing ourselves as part of a bigger story. Seeing each small act of kindness as part of the story of God's love and the enactment of God's kingdom, changes our perspective and encourages us to keep going.

Similarly, social action can be hard to sustain. This includes social care e.g. safeguarding the vulnerable; social innovation e.g. finding new ways to help people who have experienced homelessness; and social justice e.g. campaigning for decisive action on climate change. The Church of England is involved in vast numbers of projects (33,000 according to a recent survey) and we do them as an expression of our faith i.e. faith is not an add-on to such projects, it inspires, directs and sustains our work as part of the story of God's action.

Core Christian practices such as forgiveness, reconciliation and peace-making are essential to this work and apply in so many different spheres of life, from office politics to community relations.

Seeing each small act of kindness as part of the story of God's love and the enactment of God's kingdom, changes our perspective and encourages us to keep going

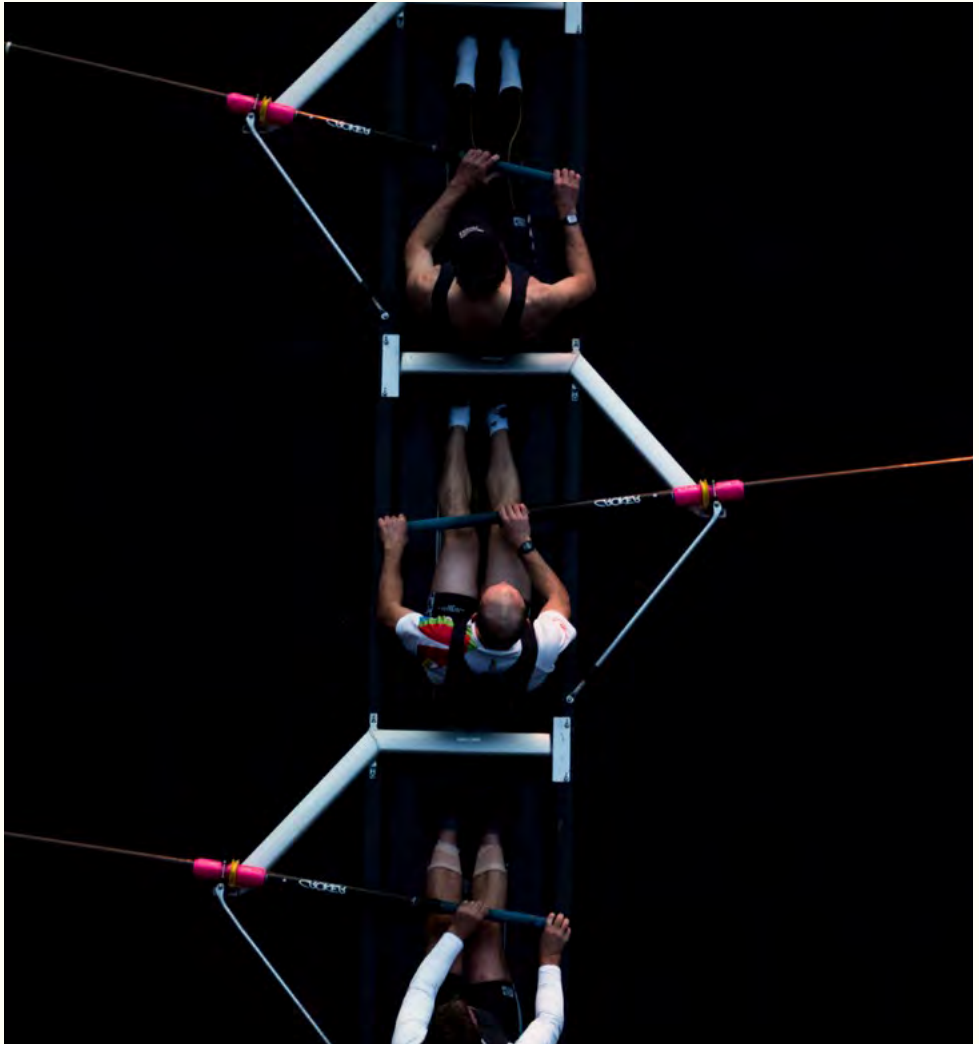
Readers and Lay Ministers have a key role in helping people sustain everyday action.

So how do we sustain the 'holy habits' which feed everyday action (e.g. an attitude of generosity which makes us responsive to the person in need)? How do we sustain Christian practices such as forgiveness and reconciliation such that they are practiced in the workplace as well as the local community? These are just some of the questions involved in sustaining everyday action.



Chapter 4

Leading in church and society





*Create the places and processes
so people can actually learn together*

Teaching the faith and enabling mission in the everyday are key aspects of leading God's church. Together they shape individuals and communities.

Many Readers and Lay Ministers also exercise leadership in society as well as church. From running a business to overseeing a group of apprentices in the office, or being a part of a school governing body, or leading a fundraising campaign in the village, leadership roles come in many different shapes and sizes.

So, it is important to reflect on these leadership roles. They can bring great joy as well as great frustration – particularly when things go wrong, or when those who “lead from the second chair” (as many Readers do) fail to recognise that leadership is not all about position, status and authority.

Leadership has been defined in many different ways.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has said this: **“I know of no single formula for success. But over the years I have observed that some attributes of leadership are universal and are often about finding ways of encouraging people to combine their efforts, their talents, their insights, their enthusiasm and their inspiration to work together.”**

Margaret Wheatley, a writer on leadership says, “I think a major act of leadership right now, call it a radical act, is to create the places and processes so people can actually learn together, using our experiences.”

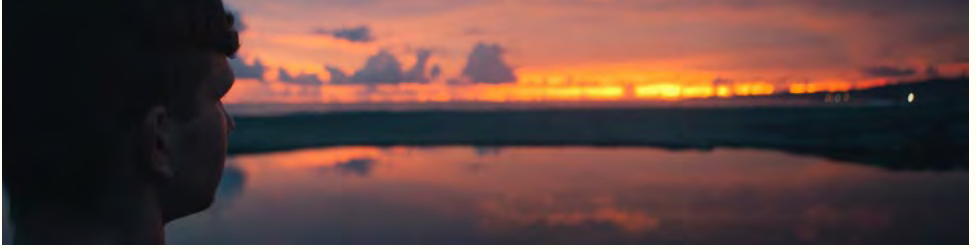
Most writers now agree that leadership is not about heroic figures working their own magic to make wonderful things happen. Neither is it about following the latest theory from a leadership guru. Rather it is more about enabling individuals and groups to come together and make something happen.

We want to suggest that Readers and Lay Ministers are particularly well placed to model good leadership in terms of humility, team work and good self-care. These areas are common to all leadership and hence a part of Sunday to Saturday faith for many people.

WAGOLL

WHAT A GOOD ONE LOOKS LIKE

A good leader in church and society models humility and team work, and resources them self through good self-care.



Modelling humility

Research into the characteristics that people look for and admire in leaders consistently shows that honesty, integrity and character come top of the list. Yes, we want our leaders to be inspiring, forward-looking and competent but all of these count for little if we don't believe our leaders match their words with actions.

In their excellent book *Leading by Story* Vaughan Roberts and David Sims start by offering reflections on the character of the leader:

Those who are effective in leadership are often people who are willing to give without counting the cost, and who are sufficiently confident in themselves not to need their egos boosted by the continuous admiration of others. Leadership like love works best when you give it away.

In the Orthodox Jewish tradition, Moses is referred to as the most humble man who ever lived. He had the most contact with God and yet remained humble, and he lived the paradox. Related to this is the Hasidic saying: 'Everyone must have two pockets. In the right pocket one must keep the words for my sake the world was created and in the left I am but dust and ashes.'

Character is formed in community. It is as we spend time with people that we are not only faced with their flaws and idiosyncrasies, but we discover our own biases and vulnerabilities – in short, we discover how difficult it is to love people. But when we are committed to being with other people in community, then the values and practices of that community start to shape us. This is why churches have sometimes been described as “communities of character”.





Modelling good team work

We need these “communities of character” more than ever today. With pressure on institutions and with a fragmentation of society, it will become ever more important to have places where leaders are being formed with the qualities needed to draw people together across divides, model good disagreement and inspire commitment to the common good.


For Christians, this is about being formed in the likeness of Christ; who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. (Philippians 2: 6-8)

Leadership is always corporate and always involves learning. Wherever we exercise leadership, we do it with others and share learning even as we work together.

For this reason, all those involved in leadership must pay attention to their role within a team. This is perhaps one of the biggest sources of frustrations for many Lay Ministers and it needs therefore to become a central part of the life-long learning for both Lay Ministers and clergy.

Much has been written about team working, but a good starting point for reflection and learning is Patrick Lencioni’s *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. The five areas express well the common challenges: absence of trust; fear of conflict; lack of commitment; avoidance of accountability; inattention to results. And Lencioni goes to suggest ways in which teams can reflect on each of these areas.

And within any team, there is often a specific ‘authorised’ leadership role alongside the ‘senior’ leader. In their book *Leading from the Second Chair*, Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson define a second chair leader as “a person in a subordinate role whose influence with others adds value throughout the organisation.” To fulfil this role well, they highlight the importance of paying attention to the relationship with the “first chair” leader, growing relationships with other members of the leadership team, and finding contentment in the second chair role. This is a particular calling or vocation and needs to be valued as such.



Resourcing yourself through good self-care

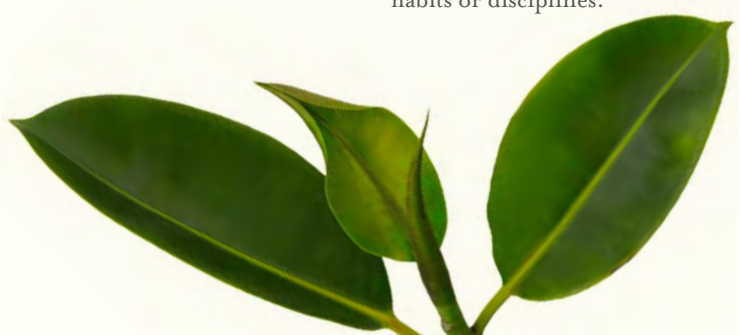
“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28).

Before we can watch over or lead the flock, the Church of God, we have first to learn to keep watch over ourselves. This reminds us that we are all followers before we are leaders.

Over the years, different traditions in the church have emphasised different disciplines of the Christian faith. Religious communities have also set out “rules of life” both for those living in the community and dispersed members who are linked to the community.

One writer has recently suggested ten “holy habits” for all Christian disciples. Drawing on Acts 2, Andrew Roberts suggests that these habits are life-giving and transformative and are core to how we watch over ourselves. As we practice these habits, so they take us deeper in faith and form us in the image of Christ. The ten habits are: eating together, prayer, making more disciples, gladness and generosity, breaking of bread, service, fellowship, worship, biblical teaching, sharing resources.

While commending these habits for all baptised Christians, we also want to suggest that those who give significant amount of time to Christian ministry, need to focus on particular habits or disciplines.



Holy Habits for Christian Lay Ministers

- **Study of the Bible and theology such that we refill the reservoir from which we teach.**
- **‘Everyday faith conversations’ such that we are aware of the stories, and the questions that people are asking.**
- **Prayerful reflection on our practice of ministry, and in particular:**
 - + **inviting regular feedback;**
 - + **exploring our role within the team of ministers in our church;**
 - + **considering carefully how we are dealing with conflict;**
 - + **challenging ourselves to be more creative and try new things (even if they fail!)**

These “*holy habits for ministers*” need to be practised regularly if they are to be effective. Some are daily or weekly activities, others need to be built in to an annual cycle e.g. a ministerial review with a colleague.

Resourcing ourselves in this way is part of our Sunday to Saturday faith, and part of how we influence and shape society.





Afterword — Confidence

We believe that Readers and Lay Ministers are a wonderful gift to God's church. We are convinced that the church needs its Readers and Lay Ministers to be confident — confident in God and confident in God's call to this unique ministry.

For too long lay ministry has been viewed as somehow 'second best' — even the use of the word 'lay' implies non-professional, non-specialist and lacking in knowledge. We believe that the church needs to start a conversation about changing this terminology, and possibly even the titles used for ministers.

But this situation won't be addressed by Readers / LLMs complaining or withdrawing. It will only be addressed when the whole church recognises and receives the particular gift of this form of ministry, and the ministers themselves are confident in their calling.

This booklet has been an attempt to set out an expanded vision for this ministry. As people who daily move between the worlds of work, home, social networks and church, Lay Ministers can teach the faith and play a part in leadership such that all God's people grow in Sunday to Saturday faith.

So, at a time when many in the church, including her ministers, have become "worried and upset by many things", we want to repeat the words of Jesus to Martha: "only one thing is needed."

Let us sit at the Lord's feet and listen to what he is saying. The questions below may be helpful for that, as may the other resources which have been mentioned in this booklet. Please let us know what you think God is saying to the church at this time.

Questions for discussion & reflection

For the whole church:

1. How can we start a new conversation in our churches about 'Sunday to Saturday faith' and the place of all ministers in enabling all God's people to live out their faith in their workplaces, social networks and families?
2. How might the understanding of baptism as foundational for all ministry help "all ministers [to] work together and see themselves as mutually accountable, of equal worth and status, complementary in gifting and vocation and equal partners in mission"?
3. What else can we do to celebrate lay ministry and enable the whole church to receive the gift of lay ministry?

For Readers and Lay Ministers:

4. You may find yourself currently involved in a wide variety of ministry, from leading services to pastoral visiting – how are you involved in "teaching the faith" in these situations and how can you 'hone your skills' in this ministry?
5. How will you ensure that everything you do is enabling mission in the everyday i.e. how will you stay in touch with the questions people are facing in their workplace, social networks and family, and how will you resource them to address these questions?
6. How will you reflect on your leadership role and what action will you take to resource yourself for this role, and set an example in humility and team working?
7. What do you want to say to the Central Readers' Council about how we resource you (and your diocese) for this work?

Please send responses to
CRVisionfeedback@gmail.com



