

## BRIEFING SHEET FOR CLERGY AND PCC MEMBERS: LICENSED LAY (READER) MINISTRY

### Licensed Lay (Reader) Ministry (LLM) in our Diocese

Readers/LLMs play an important role in the public ministry of the Church by leading worship, teaching and preaching, as well as in a wide range of missional and pastoral contexts. As theologically trained lay people they offer a ministry within the church and to the wider community; and are well placed to encourage people in their everyday faith.

### What are Readers?

The office of Reader in the Church of England is governed by canon law<sup>1</sup>; Readers are:

- Called by God to a ministry of the Word
- Licensed by the Bishop to exercise a public and representative lay ministry in Church and the wider community
- Theologically trained and equipped as:
  - teachers of the faith
  - enablers of mission in the everyday
  - leaders in church and community

The ministry of individual LLMs/Readers varies according to their individual gifting and mission context. Whilst most Readers minister collaboratively as part of a team of lay and ordained ministers some work very much on the margins of society sharing God's love and message of hope to those who may not yet know it. Some are also trained and authorised for funeral ministry.

### The Discernment and Selection process

Potential candidates for Reader ministry will have felt a sense of calling by God which may also have been noticed by others. There may have been some exploratory meetings to reflect on this sense of Call and to discern the next steps. Due to the current situation candidates with the support of their parish priest and PCC will be invited to attend a Discernment Panel in late June at Canterbury (this may be completed by other means and is dependent on Government advice/restrictions).

The Parish Priest will be asked to provide a personal reference and the candidate will also need support from their Parochial Church Council (PCC). Support may vary according to context, but will include:

- The Parish Priest normally acts as Supervising Minister for the duration of the training. This will include providing opportunities for the student to complete course requirements such as preaching and leading worship.
- Students will need space and time to undertake academic study and so should be released from some or all of their parish commitments during the first 2 years of training (the training includes a placement in another parish).
- Course costs are paid centrally by the Diocese and a one-off grant towards the cost of robes is offered to students prior to licensing.
- PCCs are expected to reimburse students for the cost of travel to attend training and placements.
- PCCs should consider providing additional financial assistance towards the cost of books and other resources.

The Discernment Panel is responsible for deciding whether to recommend a candidate to the Bishop for training. The main purpose of the panel is to consider whether the candidate is being called to a nationally governed 'licensed' lay ministry in the Church rather than to a locally 'recognised' lay ministry or something else.

The National Selection criteria are currently under review, and a new discernment framework for lay and ordained ministry is being developed. The panel will be looking for:

---

<sup>1</sup> The canons directly relating to Readers are E4, E5 and E6, the latest edition can be found at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/canons-church-england>

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

It is important to note that the panel isn’t looking for the ‘finished article’ at this stage. The Bishop makes the final decision about whether to recommend a candidate for training. If recommended, the course begins in September.

### **Initial Ministerial and Formational Training** (this may change due to Government guidance)

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

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

### **Admission and Licensing**

After completing the course, students are normally admitted to the office of Reader by the Bishop and licensed for ministry; this takes place in the Cathedral at the Celebration of Reader Ministry service in September each year. Readers are licensed to their deanery on the nomination of their incumbent; licenses are open-ended but subject to annual ministerial review.

### **Post Licensing Formation**

Following licensing new Readers are required to complete further formational learning under the direction of the Warden of Readers, this includes:

- Action learning – being part of a supervised training group which assists in the process of transition to licensed lay ministry
- Further study and learning – this involves participating in a range of blended learning modules aimed at equipping the Reader for missional ministry and leadership in everyday life

The length of post licensing learning will vary according to the individual rather than being pre-determined.

Readers may also participate in diocesan *equipping for ministry* events and CMD.

### **Further Information is available on request from<sup>2</sup>:**

Nigel Collins, Warden of Readers [ncollins@diocant.org](mailto:ncollins@diocant.org)

---

<sup>2</sup> There is more information in the *Diocesan Reader Ministry Handbook* available on <https://www.canterburydiocese.org/ministry/reader-ministry/>