Welcome to this newly styled Newsletter from us as Co-Wardens we hope you like it!

Nigel & Donald

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Tuesday or Thursdays: Donald (Tuesday or Thursdays); Nigel (Wednesdays)

Archdeaconry Reader Representatives:
Ashford: Frank Conley; Canterbury: Margaret Hawkins; Maidstone: Pat Tatchell
Donald writes…

It has been a wonderful opportunity to be involved with Reader ministry here in the Diocese of Canterbury and in the UK. I started my ministry as a Lay Reader in the Diocese of Quebec, in a remote Northern mining town where my supervising priest was 200 miles away.

In two different dioceses in Canada, I have been involved with Reader and Lay ministry training and have worked hard to build mutually supporting and affirming team ministries with Readers, self-supporting clergy and stipendiary clergy in parish situations.

I am here in the UK for 3-5 years and am the house-for-duty priest /Rector of the Benefice of High Downs.

Working with Nigel is another blessing of mutually supportive and affirming team work. I hope and pray that our ministries together are a blessing for all of you as Readers.

Nigel writes…

Working with Donald as Co-Warden of Readers gives me an ideal opportunity to model the ‘Priest-and-Reader’ working relationship. This is not always easy, but one we are happy to accept. We’ve not really shared out responsibilities, although we seem to have settled into areas where we are gifted. For Donald this has been taking up a role on the SEITE Council and taking a lead with Reader training; for me this has been getting to grips with the administrative aspects of the role. We have approached events by agreeing which of us to take a lead; for example I led on the Selection Day, while Donald led on the Reader Forum with Bishop Robert; then I took on the New Readers’ Residential and Donald took on the Cathedral service. When an enquiry or pastoral issue arises, we discuss which of us is best suited to taking follow-up action.

I’m juggling a 4 day a week job as Lay Minister of an ecumenical fresh expression of church with the 1 day a week as Co-Warden, so this does mean I can respond to Reader-related emails more readily than Donald. My home parish is Buckland-in-Dover where we are in interregnum. My wife is one of the churchwardens and I took on the role of PCC Secretary to support her and our other warden; I’m the point of contact in the parish for occasional offices etc, so I keep quite busy! Our parish has just been re-organised into a new Dover Town Benefice and Group Ministry so we have some exciting times ahead.

Please be assured of our prayers for you and the ministry you exercise, but we would also welcome your prayers as we strive to do our best to support the ministry of Readers.

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People and Places

People are listed alphabetically

Geoff Ayling has withdrawn from training and resigned as a Reader.

Alice Bates was welcomed and licensed by the Bishop at the annual Celebration service; Alice worships at St Leonard’s Deal having moved from Rochester Diocese.

Donald Baldwin celebrated 50 years as a Reader; tribute was paid to him at the annual Celebration service (a copy of the tribute can be found on p8). Donald will be retiring from active ministry at the end of November.

James Beck was welcomed and licensed by the Bishop at the annual Celebration service; James worships at St Mary’s Kennington having moved from Portsmouth Diocese.

Frank Conley, Deanery Reader Adviser for Elham has also been appointed Ashford Archdeaconry Reader Representative with immediate effect.

Rosemary Cowling was granted the title Reader Emeritus at the annual Celebration service as she retires from active ministry (a copy of the tribute read out at the service can be found on p8).

Margaret Davison was granted the title Reader Emeritus at the annual Celebration service as she retires from active ministry (a copy of the tribute read out at the service can be found on p7).

Geoffrey Harris has resigned as a Reader.

Robert Hilton from North Downs Deanery passed away in August; May He Rest in Peace and Rise in Glory!

Flora Laundon from Elham Deanery passed away shortly after being featured in the Spring edition of Outlook; Flora was among the first women to be licensed as Readers in our Diocese in May 1970. Her Reader’s scarf resides in the Co-Wardens’ office having been passed on from her estate.

Angela Lewis-Johnson has moved away from the Diocese, we wish her well in her new home.

Denis Osborne from Elham Deanery passed away in September; May He Rest in Peace and Rise in Glory!

David Parry is now worshipping at Boughton Monchelsea and has begun the process of being re-licensed in the North Downs Deanery; David was previously licensed as a Reader in the Maidstone Deanery.

John Rees retired from active ministry at the end of August, he was unable to attend the annual Celebration service, so a tribute was sent to be read out at his last service in the Benefice (a copy can be found on p9).

Barry Smallman will be retiring from active ministry at the end of December at the age of 90 years young.

Roger Thornington, a Reader from Liverpool Diocese has moved into the Diocese and worships at St Mary Bredin, Canterbury; we
are in the process of arranging for him to be welcomed and licensed.

**Graham Truss** has resigned as a Reader and worships with his family at Harbour Community Church.

**Terry Valiant**, a Reader from Exeter Diocese has moved into the Diocese and worships at Harvest New Anglican Church; we are in the process of arranging for him to be welcomed and licensed.

**THANKS must be recorded to Pat Tatchell** for standing in as Acting Warden of Readers following Rob Mackintosh’s retirement. Pat remains Maidstone Archdeaconry Reader Representative and a mine of information!

**CONGRATULATIONS** to **Les Carter** (Romney & Tenterden), **Keith Clark** (Ospringe), **Peter Clough** (Canterbury) and **George Hulme** (Sittingbourne) who have now graduated from the SEITE and the Reader training programme.

**Pat Tatchell**

**PLEASE LET US KNOW** of any changes in your contact details or circumstances

THANK YOU

**PLEASE PRAY FOR** our Readers in training:

Year 1: **Denise Blaskett, Pauline Cruickshank, Peter Evans, Sarah Lane, Angie Stupple, Kevin Swinney, Deborah Waller and Bob White.**

Year 2: **Brian Edwards, Caroline Ramshaw, Nicola Lord, Gordon Mackley, Jenny Groombridge, Esther Jonas, Pamela Cuerden and Sam Walker.**

Also for those continuing their post admission training:

Year 3: **Martin Lees, Barry Lock, Ann MacDonald** and **Gavin Netherton**. Year 4: **Charlotte Coles, John Seldon, Sonja Drew, Robin Fassenfelt, Susan Shaw, Sally Muggeridge, Lis Willmet, Janice Wright** and **John Morrison.**

**Re-Freshing Readers for Ministry**

**Saturday 15th February 2014**

Back in February a good turnout of Readers gathered at Smarden Charterhouse Hall for the first Readers’ Forum of the year. As a parting gift Rob Mackintosh guided participants through sessions entitled ‘Blessed are the Peacemakers’ and ‘Leading from the Second Chair’. To his surprise (and delight) he was presented with a farewell gift in anticipation of his

The Diocesan Reader Ministry Handbook (revised November 2014) is now available on the Diocesan website

Celebration of Reader Ministry service 2015 – Sunday 20th September, 6.30pm
retirement as Diocesan Director of Licensed Ministries and Warden of Readers.

Readers’ Forum
Saturday 31st May 2014

A few months later a large number of Readers gathered in the Chapel of Canterbury Christ Church University for our second Readers Forum of the year.

Our morning was led by Rt Revd Robert Paterson, Chair of the Central Readers Council (CRC) and Bishop of Sodor and Man. He began by encouraging us to reflect on the ministry of a Reader in his presentation entitled ‘Forward be our watchword!’ – as the Reader said to the tug-o-war team. He followed this with a session on preaching.

Both sessions are reproduced towards the end of the Newsletter.
Reader Selection Day 2014

The annual Selection Day for potential Reader ministry candidates was held on Saturday 5th July. Prior to attending the candidates had completed some initial discernment interviews as well as gaining the support, recommendation and nomination of their Parish Priest and PCC.

On the Day the candidates took part in a series of one-to-one interviews with Panel members as well as a group exercise.

The Panel recommended eight candidates for training: Denise Blaskett (All Saints, Whitstable), Pauline Cruickshank (St Peter in Thanet), Peter Evans (St Mary of Charity Faversham), Sarah Lane (St Lawrence in Thanet), Angie Stupple (St Mary’s Dover), Kevin Swinney (St Mary of Charity Faversham), Deborah Waller (Sturry) and Bob White (Saltwood & Lympne).

Since this they have all begun training – please hold them in your prayers as they take the next steps of their walk with God.

Celebration of Reader Ministry service
Sunday 28th September 2014

Around 50 Readers from across the Diocese gathered at the Cathedral for our annual celebration of Reader Ministry service.

Canon Clare Edwards, Vice Dean welcomed everyone to the service which was also attended by senior staff, Diocesan Secretary, Chair of the Licensed Ministries Framework, SEITE representatives, the Warden of Readers from Rochester Diocese, supporting clergy, friends, family and Cathedral visitors.

As is our practice we included two ‘conversations’ which looked inwards at our calling and outwards at our ministry. Barry Lock was interviewed by Donald; he spoke of his calling from a very young age and of his journey to being trained as a Reader. Margaret Hawkins was interviewed by Nigel; she spoke of her gradual calling to be a Reader and how that had influenced her working life as a teacher and then into retirement.

Bishop Trevor formally welcomed Nigel and Donald to their new roles, then admitted and licensed four new Readers: Martin Lees, Barry Lock, Ann McDonald and Gavin Netherton. The Bishop then welcomed and licensed James Beck and Alice Bates who have moved into the diocese from Portsmouth and Rochester.

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Celebration of Reader Ministry service 2015 – Sunday 20th September, 6.30pm
respectively. In recognition of their service to the church as Readers, Rosemary Cowling and Margaret Davison were granted the title emeritus as they retire from active ministry; a brief citation was read out prior to this. Donald Baldwin received a surprise when he was called out to receive recognition of celebrating 50 years of ministry as a Reader.

All Readers re-committed themselves to serve the Church and the Bishop challenged them to encourage others to join their number.

Pictured from left to right: Rosemary Cowling, Margaret Davison, Alice Bates, Ann McDonald, Barry Lock, Bishop Trevor, Gavin Netherton, James Beck and Martin Lees

“Tributes”

You will find reproduced below the tributes read out for Margaret Davison, Rosemary Cowling and Donald Baldwin at the Celebration of Reader Ministry service. You will also find a copy of the letter read out at John Rees’ last service in his benefice.

Margaret Davison

Margaret Davison has had an active twenty six years of ministry in the parishes of St Mary’s Maidstone and then Littlebourne. During her studies she was described by one of her tutors “as a Reader of considerable personal gifts and abilities”. She has served her parishes and community in a host of different ways, Church Warden, Liturgical Assistant, Intercessor, Preacher, community and church group leader in youth and children’s work. She has also had a long involvement in prison ministry and in nursing and residential home ministry. Time and again in his Epistles, Paul writes with thanks for the things that the leaders and Christians have done in the various early churches. It is now our time to say thank you to Margaret for her long, varied and dedicated ministry
and confer upon her the honour of Reader Emeritus.

Donald Baldwin

It is not often we have a Reader celebrate a golden Jubilee of ministry, more precisely licensed ministry. Donald Baldwin is such a Reader. He was first licensed in the Diocese of Bristol in 1964 and has since then served in the Dioceses of Southwark, Chelmsford, St Albans and Europe before coming to Canterbury. His ministry has included leading and preaching at morning and evening prayer services, taking occasional services at Sandwich United Reformed Church and St Bart’s Chapel, being involved in numerous community and Christian organisations and serving on Deanery Synod and PCC. Every year Donald participated in continuing ministry training through planned reading, attendance at Diocesan sponsored events and taking courses and conferences at his own expense. One of Donald’s previous Rectors reported on Donald’s long history using The Book of Common Prayer and his training and preparation to move to use more contemporary service formats. This Rector said in an annual ministry review “I find Donald a loyal, dependable and devout person who is an asset to our church and community”.

Rosemary Cowling

Rosemary Cowling began her Reader ministry in the Diocese of Rochester in 1976. After an eight year ministry she resigned and moved to Canterbury Diocese. After a number of years worshipping in the Parish of Upchurch with Lower Halstow with Iwade, where she was described “as having built up trust and appreciation from the people of the parish” she was licenced in Canterbury Diocese in 2002. Her Priest commented “It has been a joy to see her take up the ministry of Reader once again and to see her grow in confidence and competence as she exercises it.” Rosemary has had an important pastoral ministry doing home visits and home communions. As a former nurse, she was at home doing the Parish hospital ministry at the Medway Hospital. She contributed to the sustaining ministry during two long interregnums in her parish and one of her ministry reviews commented that this ministry was much appreciated during the last eighteen month interregnum. Her Rector commented on one of her recent ministry reviews: “her preaching is helpful, down to earth and simple.” It has now come time to say thank you to Rosemary for twenty years of Reader ministry and for the witness of her life as a Christian in her community and her work as a nurse and confer upon her the honour of Reader Emeritus.

John Rees

To the Clergy, Wardens and People of the Benefice of Romney Marsh,

As you celebrate the ministry of one of your Readers, John Rees, we would like to
acknowledge the appreciation and respect of the Diocese of Canterbury and our Bishops for John’s long and gracious ministry.

One of John’s previous rectors wrote about John in 1993, “He is a man who is well respected by our congregation and is a person who himself is very respectful of other people.” Another rector commented on John’s special ministry with the All Soul’s Service, and how without John’s ministry the Benefice would not have services in each church. Another successive rector has written, “John continues to be a long serving servant of the Church. A unique man, big in all respects.”

John was first licensed in 1995 and granted Permission to Officiate (PTO) in 1999. At a time when Readers were expected to slow down and cease regular ministry at age 75, John was made Reader Emeritus in 2003 but with the need he saw, “the harvest is great, but the workers are few” (Matthew 9. 37), he continued to minister, as and where he was. In 2005, he was made Deanery Reader Advisor and was able to support Readers across the deanery of Romney and Tenterden. He agitated for wider ministry for Readers and encouraged Readers to look for opportunities to minister with the communities and institutions with which they had contact.

At age 86, John has felt the need to step back from his Reader ministry. It is time for us to echo our Lord’s words in the Parable of the talents and say to John, “well done good and faithful servant.” On behalf of the Diocese of Canterbury, we would like to say Thank you to John for his long and varied ministry.

Funeral Ministry: training for Readers

As you will be aware, Readers may not conduct funerals until they have completed training in funeral ministry. A training programme is running at the moment which will lead to the participants receiving authorisation from the Bishop.

The training consists of a set of core initial sessions, a period to gain practical experience alongside the parish priest and colleagues there is then a final session for collective reflection and then a short piece of reflective writing.

It is likely that this will be repeated according to demand. Nomination for training must come with the support of the parish priest.

Ministerial Development and Review for Readers and Continued Ministerial Development

Ministerial Development and Review (MDR) for Readers

An annual ministerial review is a requirement for all active Readers and is one of the most significant ways in which incumbents support this vital ministry in the diocese. The Review is best done in the New Year while memories are still fresh, and allows the Licensed Ministries Framework to consider and implement future CMD events in a timely fashion.

The MDR process for Readers is summarised as follows:

The Diocesan Reader Ministry Handbook (revised November 2014) is now available on the Diocesan website

Celebration of Reader Ministry service 2015 – Sunday 20th September, 6.30pm
• MDR Pack sent to incumbents and Readers
• The Reader completes the Reader Ministry Review (RMR) Form Part 1 (Annual Return) and reflects on their ministry using the Reflection Based on Promises Made at Licensing as a reflective tool
• Reader Ministry Review meeting between the Reader and incumbent
• Completion of the Reader Ministry Review Form Part 2 (Ministerial Review Form)
• RMR Forms Part 1 and 2 sent to Co-Wardens of Readers

The Review may result in the need to revise the Reader Ministry Agreement (a template is included in the MDR Pack). In the case of a Reader aged over 70 years (ie with the Bishop’s Permission to Officiate) the Review should include a frank discussion around the continuation of PTO and the outcome should be recorded. If the recommendation is for the PTO to be continued the incumbent must ensure that the PCC consider a resolution to support this, a copy of which is to be sent by the PCC Secretary to the Co-Wardens.

During an interregnum the Area Dean and Churchwardens share oversight of the parish. In this instance the Reviewer could be another clergy member of the ministry team, a Churchwarden or the Area Dean. Advice is available on request from the Co-Wardens.

If there are circumstances which may delay or prevent the MDR process form being completed the Reader and/or incumbent should inform the Co-Wardens immediately.

MDR Packs will be circulated in early January 2015.

**Continued Ministerial Development (CMD)**

As Readers we are committed to the principle of lifelong learning and the Diocese supports this by providing CMD events throughout the year which are open to all active Readers.

In addition, it is possible for active Readers to request financial assistance with an identified CMD need. Applications should be submitted in writing to the Co-Wardens, a decision will be made in dialogue with Neville Emslie, the Ministry Development Officer.

The **Myland-Adams Fund** administered by the Central Readers Council may be a possible avenue for financial assistance with study, a brief summary of the details are provided below:

**Broad Criteria for the award of a grant from the fund:**

- Applicants must be licensed Readers and should reside within one of the dioceses of the Church of England or of the Church in Wales;
- These funds are not available for initial training, but for help towards the cost of courses of study taken subsequently, for which insufficient funding is available from

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*The Diocesan Reader Ministry Handbook (revised November 2014) is now available on the Diocesan website*

**Celebration of Reader Ministry service 2015 – Sunday 20th September, 6.30pm**
other sources. The grant may be used to supplement fees or for necessary books and resources, but not for cost of living expenses;

- Applications must be for programmes, courses or research in the broad field of theology, with the primary aim of enhancing the applicant’s knowledge and practice as a Reader;
- The programme, course or research is normally part-time and offered by an accredited institution (including distance-learning) situated within the British Isles.

Applicants must use the application form and must be supported by their Warden of Readers. Applicants should apply well in advance as the panel (The CRC Executive committee) meet twice a year in March and September.

Further details and application forms can be obtained from the Co-Wardens of Readers or the CRC website: www.readers.cofe.anglican.org

Safeguarding: Important Information

As you will appreciate the Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is a subject to be taken very seriously. At the moment, there are two aspects that need to be highlighted to all active Readers: (1) DBS Check and (2) Training.

DBS Checks

We appreciate that Readers may have more than one DBS (formerly known as a CRB) for a variety of purposes; unfortunately these are not yet ‘transportable’ and so only the one completed through the Diocese is accepted for ‘church purposes’ (see also below under the heading ‘Update Service’).

ALL active ministers must have a valid Enhanced DBS (formerly CRB) certificate or their licence or permission to officiate is invalid.

Around 3 months before a DBS is due to expire a letter and application form is sent to the person directly from the Diocesan Safeguarding staff. When you receive this notification you should immediately begin the DBS application process through your Parish Disclosures Officer (PDO). The Safeguarding team will issue reminders until an application is submitted. When you receive your DBS through the post you then need to ensure that the Safeguarding Team see the original certificate as they no longer receive a copy from the DBS Authority.

If a DBS expires the Co-Wardens will contact the incumbent and Reader concerned to inform them that the Reader is suspended from public ministry until the DBS is completed. This may lead to the revoking of the Reader’s licence or permission to officiate. This may sound harsh, but is the only course of action possible at this stage.

If you have problems with this process, or there are extenuating personal circumstances which prevent you from taking action please contact the Safeguarding Team or one of the Co-Wardens as soon as possible. Often there is a difficulty in meeting up with your Parish Disclosure Officer (PDO), if this is the case the Co-Wardens and Archdeaconry Reader representatives are authorized to check identity documentation.

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The (DBS) Update Service

In a nutshell, it is possible for someone to register with the Update Service (FREE) online within 19 days of their DBS certificate issue date. This means that a new DBS is not required unless it is for a different level or category of check; instead the organization needing a check simply contact the DBS to verify that there are no changes to the person’s circumstances/status. This is complicated, but for Readers it does mean that if you register for the Update Service, you will not necessarily need to re-apply for a new DBS certificate. If in doubt, check with the Safeguarding Office.

Safeguarding Training for Readers

The Diocesan Safeguarding Team will be running a series of training events specifically for Readers, PTO clergy and others involved in ministry. Each session will cover safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

Dates and venues will be:
- **Saturday 7th February** at Archbishop’s school, Canterbury.
- **Thursday 12th February** at Lenham Community Centre.
- **Saturday 14th February** at Smarden Charter Hall.
- **Wednesday 25th February** at Seasalter Christian Centre.
- **Tuesday 17th March** at Holy Trinity Church, Margate.

All sessions will start promptly at 1.30pm and end at 4.30pm with registration from 1pm. Tea and cake will be served midway through the session.

Please make every attempt to book onto some training at your earliest convenience. Diocesan training is important even if you have completed training through work because of the differences in good practice and handling disclosures.

Safeguarding Guidance and Advice

The Diocesan website has useful information and the current guidance. You should know the name of your Parish Safeguarding Coordinator (they should be listed on your Parish Safeguarding Policy Statements).

The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers are available for advice and support, their contact details are:
- Mrs Elaine Rose 07831 860218
- Mr Simon Tapp 07770 300154

Seven Questions

Here are answers to 7 common questions regarding Reader ministry:

1. **Are Readers automatically ex officio members of the PCC?**
   
The short answer is NO! The annual meeting may decide that some or all of the licensed Readers on the electoral roll of the parish should be members of the PCC; however this should be a decision made annually at each APCM.

2. **What happens when a Reader moves parish?**
   
   In all cases please let the Co-Wardens know at the earliest opportunity.

   If the Reader is moving parishes within the Diocese, then the current licence/PTO ceases. It is normal practice for a settling in period of 6 months in the new parish before requesting a new license. This will then
require the support of the parish priest and PCC. A new enhanced DBS check will also be required.

If the Reader is moving away from Canterbury Diocese, then there is also a 6 month settling in period before initiating a similar process as outlined above to the Warden of Readers. It is also common practice for the new Warden to contact us as part of the references process.

3. What happens during an interregnum?

The Churchwardens and Area Dean share responsibility for the continuing ministry of the parish. Many parishes will have other supporting clergy. Readers should strive to build good working relationships within the parish leadership.

4. Where can I find advice or information about Reader ministry?

The Deanery Reader Adviser (DRA) should be a local source of advice or information. Alternately the Co-Wardens can be contacted.

The Diocesan Reader webpages may be a source of information, it includes:
- The Diocesan Readers Handbook (revised November 2014)
- A leaflet for people thinking about Reader Ministry
- Reflections on the Promises made at Licensing
- A link to the National website of the CRC

5. Are Readers paid fees?

As voluntary ministers Readers are not paid fees, but should be reimbursed for expenses such as travel costs.

When conducting funerals Readers may retrospectively claim 80% of the Diocesan fee. Please contact the Diocesan Finance team for further advice.

6. Who is my Deanery Reader Adviser and what do they do?

The ‘DRA’ is appointed by the Co-Wardens and ideally resides and worships within the deanery (sometimes one person covers more than one deanery, especially if there are not many Readers in the deaneries concerned). It should be remembered that they are volunteers, their role description includes:

- To be the first person in line to whom a Reader should turn should problems arise or advice be sought in the deanery.
- To provide pastoral care for Readers and Readers-in-training in their deanery; this involves having a separate meeting with each Reader at the beginning of the appointment and being prepared to meet regularly as necessary.
- To arrange a meeting for Readers and Readers-in-training in their deanery at least once a year in order to provide support, encouragement and growth in their ministry. The frequency of these meetings may vary between deaneries.
- To liaise with the Area Dean on all Reader matters and to meet with the Area Dean at least once a year with the aim of:
  - encouraging each other in their work with Readers and to review the deployment of Readers in the light of deanery mission action planning.
• considering whether appropriate links may be established between Readers able to increase their ministry and parishes in need of additional lay ministerial assistance (this may involve discussions with neighbouring Area Deans).

• ensuring that Area Deans and Deanery Reader Advisers together provide sufficient pastoral care of Readers and Readers-in-training without an incumbent.

• To liaise with the Co-Wardens of Readers on all matters of concern to Readers both by attending the meetings of the Deanery Reader Advisers as well as speaking directly to the Co-Wardens.

• To be familiar with the system of Reader Ministry Review so that the Adviser may be able to support the Archdeaconry Reader Representative in responding to individual Reader reviews.

The DRAs are listed in the Diocesan online directory, their details can also be obtained from the Co-Wardens.

7. What is the Diocesan Readers Committee and what do they do?

The committee is part of the Licensed Ministries Framework (LMF) and operates alongside the Co-Wardens to encourage and support the ministry of Readers in the diocese. They also get involved in event planning. The current membership includes:

- The Co-Wardens
- The 3 Archdeaconry Reader Representatives
- The National Consultant for Reader Formation
- The Chair of the Licensed Ministries Framework
- The Ministry Development Officer
- The Vocations Officer/Diocesan Director of Ordinands
- The Licensed Ministries Administrator

WANTED – MORE READERS!

Reader Recruitment 2015

Bishop Trevor has charged us as Readers to encourage others to consider Reader ministry. We are well placed to encourage members of our church communities to consider how they are being called by God and to recognise the potential for future Readers. Those who are exercising ‘ALM’ ministry within our parishes may well be Readers of the future; but we must not forget that God calls others too.

It may be helpful to remember that often the ‘first steps’ towards answering the call of God is when prompted by someone else - could YOU or I be that someone else?

Our annual Reader selection day is on Saturday 27th June – so the period from December to March is the best time to be encouraging people to explore Reader ministry. If you need assistance please contact your Deanery Reader Adviser or the Co-Wardens.

The Diocesan Reader Ministry Handbook (revised November 2014) is now available on the Diocesan website

Celebration of Reader Ministry service 2015 – Sunday 20th September, 6.30pm
Diary Dates and Events 2015

Early Jan  Ministerial Development and Review (MDR) for Readers packs to be sent out
Sat 17 Jan  Funeral training session, 10am-2.30pm Diocesan House
Sat 7 Feb  Safeguarding training for Readers, Archbishop’s School, Canterbury
Thu 12 Feb  Safeguarding training for Readers, Lenham Community Centre
Sat 14 Feb  Safeguarding training for Readers, Smarden Charter House
Wed 25 Feb  Safeguarding training for Readers, Seasalter Christian Centre
Sun 1 Mar  Deadline for MDR to be completed and submitted to the Co-Wardens
Wed 11 Mar  Bishop’s Day, 9.30am-1pm Canterbury Christ Church University
Mon 16 Mar  Deanery Reader Advisers meeting 10am-12pm Diocesan House
             Readers’ Committee meeting, 12-2pm Diocesan House
Tue 17 Mar  Safeguarding training for Readers, Holy Trinity Church, Margate
Sat 21 Mar  Central Readers Council (CRC) AGM, London
Fri 24 Apr  Closing date for Reader applications
Sat 18 Apr  Reader’s Forum, 9.30am-1pm, Godmersham village hall
15/16 May  The Gathering, Canterbury Cathedral
Mon 8 Jun  Deanery Reader Advisers meeting 10am-12pm Diocesan House
             Readers’ Committee meeting, 12-2pm Diocesan House
Sat 27 Jun  Selection Day, Diocesan House, 10am-4pm
Sat 18 Jul  Reader’s Forum, 9.30am-1pm, Canterbury venue
19/20 Sep  Reader New Admissions Residential, Canterbury
Sun 20 Sep  Celebration of Reader Ministry Service, 6.30pm Cathedral
Mon 19 Oct  Deanery Reader Advisers meeting 10am-12pm Diocesan House
             Readers’ Committee meeting, 12-2pm Diocesan House

Advance Dates 2016

Thu 5 May  National 150th Anniversary of Readers, 2pm All Souls Langham Place, London
Sat 16 Jul  National Celebration of Discipleship, venue to be announced

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Reader Merchandise

Reader Badges

Large enamel & chrome badge (35mm, suitable for wearing on a chain) £5.50; small enamel & chrome badge (15mm with tie tack) £4; small chrome badge (15mm with tie tack) £2. Postage is free.

Send your order to: Central Readers Council (Badges), Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ

Clothing

The Associate Secretary of the CRC runs a business which sells shirts, polo shirts, sweatshirts and outdoor fleeces with the Reader logo and can include some personalized print, such as your name, benefice, role etc. Contact Jeff Heaton, jeffb.heaton@gmail.com, tel 01422 379144 for more details/prices. A google search of ‘Readerwear’ will come up with a link to the brochure with price list as a pdf document (you may have to scroll down a bit to find it (look out for a reference to the Diocese of Carlisle).

Articles and Submissions

Donald Baldwin has submitted two articles which may be of interest, these follow below.

Why are we called “Readers”?

I thought we would all already know why we are called Readers, but from comments I have heard, there are some of us who do not know. Before the reformation there was a “minor order” of readers, but these died out about the time of the reformation.

With the reformation, the Church of England decided to familiarise the ordinary people with the Bible. Out of the several (seven?) monastic daily offices, Morning and Evening Prayer (Matins and Evensong) were created “to be read daily” and the priest shall cause a bell to be tolled beforehand to invite the parishioners to join him. Each of these included the reading of a chapter of the Old Testament (most covered once a year) and a chapter of the New (gospels in the morning and epistles in the evening - covered three times a year). Also the Psalms were included to be said each service, covering the whole Psalter once a month.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth the first, there was a shortage of clergy, due to the large number executed under Queen Mary. In those days few could read and write. So in about 1560, to maintain the daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer (Matins and Evensong), lay men who could read, were appointed to read the daily offices, and they were called “Readers”. They were paid and temporary, lasting until a parish priest could be appointed. This order of Reader died out in the 1700’s.

During the time of Queen Victoria, there was again a shortage of clergy. The Methodists had dealt with this by creating “Local Preachers”, who were not ordained, but led worship. The Church of England decided to do the same in 1866, but revived the old name of “Readers”.

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These men (women were not admitted until 1969) were licensed by the diocesan Bishop. Our title is not understood, and after many years of debate (I have been a Reader since November 1964) we still cannot find a better name on which we can all agree.

**Women speaking in church?**

One Sunday, after the morning service, I thanked the two ladies who had read the lessons, and one of them said, “What about women being forbidden to speak in church?” Our minds went to 1 Corinthians 14, verse 34, where St. Paul wrote, “women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak.” (Perhaps this is an issue today, as we think about women becoming bishops in the Church of England.)

My mind went back to an explanation by Joan, a very Christ-like person, who had been a missionary in the Lebanon, where Joan had seen worship in the synagogue. While the men were worshiping downstairs, the women were upstairs in the gallery, discussing shopping in quite loud voices, sometimes shouting from one side of the synagogue to the other, and interrupting the worship. With this situation, it is not surprising that St. Paul forbade women to speak in church. The lesson reading lady then linked this with the chatter in church before worship!

At the public lecture in May by the Revd Canon Professor Loveday Alexander, she encouraged us to look at the context in the Bible of our readings in church. I repeated Joan’s explanation, and our speaker told us that in the original Greek, the word translated “speak” meant chattering. Our speaker added that on the same letter, St. Paul said that women should have their heads covered when praying, which would have been aloud, and also when prophesying, which would also have been aloud.

Donald R. Baldwin

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**CANTERBURY READERS:**
**PRESENTATIONS GIVEN BY BISHOP ROBERT PATERSON ON 31 MAY 2014**

**‘Forward be our watchword!’ – as the Reader said to the tug-o-war team**

The title comes from one of that large number of hymns that Mrs Alexander wrote to teach her confirmation classes the essentials of Christian belief and practice. It was in the earlier editions of ‘Ancient and Modern’ but was culled early on, leaving ‘All things bright and beautiful’ = ‘I believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth’, ‘There is a green hill’ = ‘Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried’, and other well-known hymns. ‘Forward be our watchword’ was a hymn about Christian mission. The vicar in my second curacy, for whose disciplined and cheerful training I will always be grateful, used to add the bit about the tug-o-war team (except that, in his case, it was the curate’s team), and it took me a while to recognise that tug-o-war teams go backwards!

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‘Forward be our watchword!’ – as the Reader said to the tug-o-war team. So, forwards or backwards for reader ministry? Forwards, without a shadow of doubt, but radically re-imagined for a new and challenging future.

**What can we learn from history?**

I speak to you today for two reasons: I didn’t duck fast enough when asked to take on the chairmanship of the Central Readers’ Council and I am absolutely convinced of the importance both of articulate Christian discipleship and lay public ministry. Let’s take a look at the Reader story.

“The history and development of Reader Ministry within the Church of England has been documented by a series of commentators … The order was revived at a meeting of Archbishops and Bishops at Lambeth Palace on Ascension Day 1866, **largely as a means to extend the effectiveness of the traditional parochial system to new pioneering work on the boundaries between church and world.** From that point onwards the role of the Reader has evolved to mirror much more closely the liturgical role of the clergy. In 1941 Readers were allowed to read the epistle, but not the gospel, to administer the chalice but not the paten, and to preach at Morning and Evening prayer, but not at Holy Communion. In 1969 Readers were authorised to read the gospel and to preach at Holy Communion. In 1969 the ministry was extended to women as well as to men.

“Comparisons between the figures for 1959/1960 published by the Church of England … and the figures for 2006 … demonstrate the increasing significance of Reader ministry over this period. In 1959/1960 there were 6,452 licensed Readers; by 2006 the number of licensed Readers had increased to 10,220 including those with permission to officiate and active emeriti. During the same period the number of licensed stipendiary clergy had fallen from 15,582 to 8,988 and the number of licensed non-stipendiary clergy (including ordained local ministers) had risen from 287 to 3,011.

“The crucial question raised by the development and expansion of Reader ministry concerns the extent to which this remains a distinctive ministry with distinctive potential, or whether it is simply the extension of significant components of ordained ministry to authorised lay people.”

I will come back to this important study later. What I want to talk about in this address is a primary question that needs to be resolved in a new context.

**What is a Reader?**

I know how difficult it is when someone asks you, “Why do you think God is calling you to be ... a reader? ... a deacon? ... a priest?” The difficulty lies in defining what we really mean by “reader”, “deacon” and “priest”. The simple definitions rely on the obvious: “A reader is trained, admitted, licensed and wears a blue scarf in church” or “A reader conducts Morning & Evening Prayer and preaches”. Those answers would have been expected 20 or 30 years ago when public ministry was focused on the people up-front in church, but they won’t do in this

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1 © ‘The Psychological Type profile of Readers in the Church of England: clones of the clergy or distinctive voices?’ - Leslie J Francis, Susan H Jones & Mandy Robbins, March 2011

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changing, kaleidoscopic age. We need to discover what is the heart of reader ministry, what makes a reader different from a deacon other than a collar, or a priest other than the authority to absolve, preside at the eucharist and bless in the name of God? In an age of considerable change we must dig deeper.

You will, I hope, agree that the key elements are. Readers are ...

- Christians who exercise a ministry of the Word: they have been trained in theology / God-talk, **people who can bring God into the conversation**; and

- **Christians who are day-by-day working outside the confines of the Church as an institution.** [I should explain that I do not subscribe to the foolish view that clergy are not in the real world but they do have to spend some time dealing with the institution; Readers do not.]

The liturgy for admission and licensing of Readers we use in the Diocese of Sodor and Man includes the following introduction:

**My brothers and sisters, God has called us into the fellowship of the universal Church.**

As members of his body, Christ calls us to serve in his name and, according to our gifts, to be agents of his mission in the world.

Readers are called to the ministry of the Word:

- to engage *people* in conversation about God and with God,
- to lead *them* to Christ that they may become *his* disciples, and
- to equip *them* to share the good news of God’s kingdom.

*They also lead worship, teach and preach, building up the Church in Christ’s name, and working together to make him visible.*

Readers bring the Word of the Lord (and the interpretations of that expression are manifold) to the world. You are, in short – and do not be ashamed of this! – lay theologians. Let me add that I don’t for a moment suggest we should use ‘lay theologians’ as a title, any more than I think ‘licensed lay minister (Reader)’ is a title: both are simply useful descriptions.

**Lay** because you must remain rooted outside the system, outside holy order, always having the freedom to be “out of order”. When I hear of readers who are churchwardens and PCC secretaries and run the flower rota or lead the women’s guild - and, worse still, when I hear readers ‘moasting’ (moaning-boasting) about all they do for the church - my heart sinks. That’s not because any of these acts of service are under-valued but because the job of a lay theologian is to be out there in the world, away from church-centred activities: in local politics, as prison visitors, Samaritans, in a good-neighbours scheme, coaching a kids’ soccer/netball team, or whatever keeps you in direct contact with those who are not (or not yet) church, and with issues that don’t benefit the church directly.

Canon Stephen Cherry has commented:

“**Smart Readers will realise that they can do ministry, do theology, share in God’s mission without getting involved in all the ‘stuff’ that attaches to the clergy. I know that there was a**
very sad Reader in the TV series, ‘Rev’. But until then the figure of the Reader was unknown in popular culture. Lucky Readers!

“What was sad about Nigel [the Reader in ‘Rev’] was that he was so churchy and so much wanted to be a vicar. The tragedy was that he did not see that his churchiness was precisely what would undermine his ministry if he were ever ordained.”

That was the joke: the reader trying to be what he isn’t, instead of being what he is.

Theologians because you have been trained in God-talk. Dr William Sangster was interviewing a shy candidate for the Methodist ministry. “I would not set the Thames on fire,” said the young man. “I am not interested in that,” said Sangster, “but if I dropped you in the Thames, would it sizzle?” The communication of God-talk is always “theology coming from someone on fire”.

Central to equipping Christians for God’s mission – which is what a theologian does - is theology, which I would define as absorbing the Holy Scriptures, understanding the teaching of the Church and helping people to apply that in practice. Theology “must never ... remain in the hands of a scholarly or priestly élite but must be reclaimed as an essential component of every Christian’s kit-bag.”

More than ever today the Church needs people who can take what’s going on in the world around them – whether it’s international or local news, some programme on television, whatever - and reflect on it with a theological perspective. And what the world needs is people who can put into words what they know of God and his love and share it well outside the perimeters of the church.

A need for lay-led mission

Some commentators today see the reduction in clergy numbers (which will get worse before it gets better) as the reason for lay-led mission. That’s a context, not a reason. The reason lies in the primacy of Christian discipleship in mission.

Dawkins, Hitchens and the others of the ‘new atheism’ movement are confronted by professional, academic theologians but are not being answered by the church at the grass-roots. The new atheists will engage with ‘religion’, ‘faith’, ‘the church’ (which Dawkins hates because he believes that the church hates science!) and they go along with much of Jesus’ teaching, but they do not engage with the Person of Jesus Christ and the great credal affirmations of his birth, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming. Our congregations are largely incapable of bringing him into the conversation because there is a high level of theological illiteracy – which we can start to do something about. That’s why the your ministry as lay theologians who can bring God into the conversation and help the Church to do that is so important.

In 1993, Matthew Parris, not by any means a professed Christian, wrote:

“The propensity of my countrymen to discuss their church instead of discussing the reason for it - to discuss their religion in isolation from any consideration of the existence of a deity - has always amazed me. I wonder whether, perhaps, I have missed something obvious; whether part of my brain is absent.

2 Bishop Harry Moore

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“How is it possible - would somebody please explain - to hold and canvass vigorous opinions on whether women should be priests or the Church of England “established”, whether prayers should be said or sung, or the Bible read in the King James or more modern versions, what vestments should be worn, what music played, what bells rung, what hands clapped or incense used ... How is it possible, I ask, so much as to begin such enquiries, or to feel remotely interested in the answers, without first determining the question to which they are mere postscripts? Does the God of the New Testament exist?”

That’s the big question, not all the other stuff the media tell us we’re bothered about.

Old and New

Matthew 13 is a chapter of parables. The reign of the Heavenly One – the kingdom of God – once discovered, is worth all the world; indeed, it’s only when you discover that it’s worth more than everything, you begin to know the meaning of what Jesus is saying. So simple! “Have you understood this?” asks Jesus. By implication the disciples say, “Of course we have, Master; do you take us for fools?” Well, try this, then:

Jesus said, “When, therefore, a teacher of the law becomes a learner in the kingdom of Heaven, he is like a house-holder who can produce from his store things new and old.” (Matthew 13.52)

When a teacher of the law becomes a learner, a disciple in the kingdom, when readers and clergy (including bishops) recognise that they, too, are learners - apprentices - they, too, are laity, people of God, then they find that the greatest treasure of all belongs to them.

“Teachers who become learners” - a beautiful description of a theologian - acquire a treasure chest which has in it for us to pull out what Jesus calls “the old”, the inheritance, the tradition, that which has been faithfully handed on from one to another over the years. This is deeply rooted in the Old Testament, of course.

This well-aged treasure is the rich inheritance of the Scriptures, the Bible; it’s God’s people’s story; it’s our own story. Of course, anyone who takes “the old” seriously will find him/herself challenged by it because the more you know, the more you find your prejudices begin to unravel. A sense of being part of something unbroken by time, particularly, from the Christian point of view, of being part of the Church inaugurated by covenant with wandering Abraham, 4,000 years ago gives depth to the picture of faith. Without these perspectives, without bringing out “the old” from our treasure, without giving real priority to the Bible as we read it with reason in the light of a living tradition, and without recalling our own story, we will know everything about the world and the present moment - ‘homo-up-to-datum’ in Daniel Boorstin’s words - but we will lose our spiritual and moral bearings and mislead others. In Winston Churchill’s words, “The further backwards we look, the further forwards we can see.”

Now from that treasure chest also comes “the new”, the immediate, the local, that which stares us in the face every day, (and by that I don’t mean ‘the modern’) including our lives as they have unfolded this week. Look at the way the Apostle Paul saw what was going on in Athenian religion and immediately harnessed it to the cause of the gospel:

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Men of Athens, I see that in everything that concerns religion you are uncommonly scrupulous. As I was going round looking at the objects of your worship, I noticed among other things an altar bearing the inscription ‘To an Unknown God’. What you worship but do not know – this is what I now proclaim. (Acts 17. 22, 23)

A failure to understand and use “the new” leaves us with a faith and a message that’s a museum-piece from an archaeological dig, an irrelevance, a faith rightly rejected as absurd by our contemporaries. Some church-goers today have the curious notion that all you have to do is what you did 50 years ago but louder and everyone will come flocking back to church. Nice idea but that thinking is off with the fairies! ‘Business as usual’ means going backwards.

Both old and new matter to Jesus and to the New Testament witness to him. This paradox is at the heart of Matthew the disciple and of Gospel that bears his name. For instance, Jesus declares that he was sent specifically to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (10.6; 15.24) but heals the Roman officer’s servant (8.5-13); Jesus says he came to fulfil the law of God (5.17-20), but repeatedly asserts, “You have heard it said ... but I say to you ...” These paradoxes reflect the varying emphases of the Church of the first century. The mission of God was expanding from a Jewish milieu into a Gentile world. Some saw themselves as Christian Jews, and others as Gentile Christians.

Lay theologians are in the ideal position to have constant access to both dimensions, and as lay people particularly the contextual, what we can describe as “the world”. When readers become more clericalized than the clergy they lose one of the key elements of their ministry and they discard half of the treasure of the Kingdom.

[PS. We may also note that some people also read this verse as Matthew’s signature, a hint that he has done some charismatic exegesis or creative interpretation of the tradition he had received.]

This rough Venn diagram describes a few ministerial identifiers. If the only identifiers we have as Readers (leading worship and preaching) are what we have in common with the clergy, no wonder some Readers have a crisis of identity! I have the greatest respect for the liturgical, preaching and teaching ministry of readers, as of clergy - I have spent a good deal of my ministry practising, teaching and writing liturgy and preaching - but I want to challenge Readers to the distinctiveness of being lay, of recognising that you can open doors outside the church building that ordained ministers cannot.

If Readers are to have pioneering roles in the future or some to exercise a ministry in enabling the Church to express itself in a fresh way then Francis, Jones and Robbins point to the need to select, train and develop readers who have gifts different from those of the bulk of the clergy. They write:

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“... if in the current generation of serving Readers are largely clones of the clergy, we might expect close similarities between the psychological type profile of Readers and the psychological type profile of clergy. If, however, Reader ministry is recruiting candidates capable of extending the scope of authorised ministry, building bridges with the unchurched and equipped to pioneer fresh expressions of church, we might expect some significant differences between the psychological type profile of Readers and the psychological type profile of clergy.”

However, though their sample of Readers is relatively small (236 Readers and 863 Clergy), they have found that just 92% of male Readers and 82% of female Readers appear to have a spread of psychological type profiles similar to that of the clergy. Interestingly, a similar survey at the National Readers’ Conference 2012 produced broadly similar results. That seems to be pointing us towards a more imaginative approach to recruitment of people who are more ‘lay’ in their outlook.

If ever there is a lesson for the Church today it is this: value both the old and the new as gifts from the treasure of God’s kingdom. Not either: both. And who better to explore the contextual, the new, but lay ministers.

Because Readers are numerically strong, unless we grasp the meaning of what authorized ministry a Reader is called to we shall not be able to establish collaborative working between all those who minister in the public arena and some Readers will feel threatened. We need to be proud of being lay and of being able to open doors, build bridges that are not available to clergy.

There will be a role in the future for people we may call “vicar’s helpers” (and I use the term with the utmost respect because I have gained immense support from such people throughout my ministry) who are not trained in or serious about theology, who do not need constantly to be committed to life in the contemporary context; however, I believe that the Church should expect different things from Readers. If we (I count myself an honorary reader) are to be taken seriously, we have to develop a distinctive ministry beyond the one we exercise when dressed up in church on Sunday - not replacing it but affirming our being lay. Out-growing the image means taking seriously the connecting of word and world, the ministry of a lay theologian.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- What is special about being lay?
- What special gifts and experience do I bring to making connections between word and world?
- In what variety of ways do you use your theology (using the term in its broadest meaning)?

PREACHING THE WORD: A STUDY ON JOHN CHAPTER 9

You had a choice at this point: listen to me further on lay ministry or on preaching the word. In fact, I won’t do all the talking: that will be up to you.

“The preacher is not a lone figure, preaching what appeals to him most and leaving

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the rest unsaid. He is, rather, the last in the apostolic line of those through whose preaching God’s salvation in Christ continues. Through him the gospel reverberates.”

Archbishop Donald Coggan: On Preaching, (1975/78)

Bible and context

I’m not dealing with how to preach but with the nature of the sermon in liturgy. Not ‘What medium?’ nor ‘What technique?’ though these are important. Ordinary preaching is a key and generally neglected opportunity for most parishes, most of the time. Still too much tidy, churchy, thematic, always-eucharistic, passionless, powerless preaching.

**What do you think are we doing when we preach?**

Here are a few of the almost infinite number of possible responses:

- Not such good answers...
- Stirring people to act in a particular way (very common - the ‘Aim’ preacher)
- Educating in the Bible
- Passing comment on biblical texts
- Passing comment on contemporary issues
- Offering helpful hints for harmful habits

Better ...

- Affirming Christian doctrine
- Recalling people to the ‘tradition’ (what we 'hand on')
- Addressing ethical issues
- Addressing a special event or occasion
- Challenging aspects of traditional practice
- Breaking the hard heart and healing the broken one (John Newton)
- Contemporising God’s historic self-disclosure in Christ in order to offer people the opportunity to respond in faith (R.H. Mounce)
- The basis of sacramental acts and a kind of sacramental act in itself.

**Two of my answers**

1 **Preaching as a person-to-person encounter with the word**

Liturgy is encounter, not a series of anniversaries (“be born in us today”), and so is preaching: an encounter with Christ.

Just as the Eucharist is a kind of incarnation of the Word (though with lots of caveats), so is preaching (with similar caveats).

- “… the word becomes event” (Helmut Thielicke)
- “… here the original word becomes audible” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)
- “… bringing truth through personality” (Phillips Brookes)

2 **Preaching as building and equipping a community**

Developing a consistent comprehension of the Bible over a period of time to frame a community
in the gospel: Letting God’s light shine in our hearts to reveal the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ - see 2 Corinthians 4.6.

- Keep in touch with God such that the life of the Spirit and the ways of the kingdom matter to you.
- Keep in touch with the Bible by reading it systematically and at reasonable length. Connecting a thorough understanding of the text with a thorough understanding of the contemporary context: bridging the gap between the world of the Bible and the world of today.
- Keep in touch with the world such that at least you know it’s moving fast.
- Keep in touch with God’s mission and his calling to be one of those who speak for him in a special way.

“As long as I can discover no connection between the gospel and the problems of my life, then it has nothing to say to me and I am not interested. And that is precisely why the gospel must be preached afresh and told in new ways to every generation, since every generation has its own unique questions. This is why the gospel must constantly be forwarded to a new address, because the recipient is repeatedly changing his place of residence.

“... In short, if the basic questions of life have shifted, then I must redirect the message of the gospel. Otherwise I am answering questions that have never even been asked. And upon hearing such answers, my opposite number will just shake his head and say, "That's no concern of mine. It has nothing to do with me."

Helmut Thielicke: How Modern Should Theology Be? (1967)

Lay theologians as conversation-starters, people who can bring God into the conversation.

Essentially, you preach in order to start a conversation with the word of God:

- by helping Christians to get to know their book;
- by helping the people to use the book wisely and effectively;
- by leading people by/through/with the book to the Word incarnate, Jesus Christ;
- by building up principles for living in the light of the Word; and
- by encouraging selfless discipleship 24/7 and committed participation in God’s mission.

Thus enabling the word to be an effective transforming influence on life.

This is less about presenting the word to the people (or throwing it at them!) and more about helping to place the people in the Word so that they can better understand the Bible and their own context, thus to hear the Word and be equipped to think and act more Christianly.

"More than ever today the Church needs people who can take what’s going on in the world around them – whether it’s international or local news, some programme on television, whatever - and reflect on it with a theological perspective.

And what the world needs is people who can put into words what they know of God and his love and share it well outside the perimeters of the church."

(From comments I have made in many dioceses)
Exercise in John 9.

Read the whole passage in such a way that it makes an impression on you.

How does it strike you?

- Take the whole chapter and identify no more than 3 elements that are a word for the body of Christ. (The circle starts with 'Who sinned?' and physical blindness, and takes us round to who is guilty and who is blind.) Or
- What word can be heard today in the reference to Siloam? (v7 - Jesus is the one God sent) Or
- What is the word today about the sabbath (v14 - making bricks) Or
- What is the word saying in relation to persecution (v22 - of families)? Or
- Does God listen to sinners? (v31 - is ours a private faith?) Or
- What is God saying to us about the healed man’s worship of Christ? (v38 - the start of the Christian Church?)

Let me offer a few snippets of advice.

- Do not pre-text or ride a hobby-horse.
- What was the intention of the writer, insofar as we can understand it?
- Bring your hearers to mind, and their world, their community, their hopes, fears, aspirations, pains, joys, etc. in order to be able to apply in their context what you have discovered.
- What is the call of God in all this?

Conclusion

Ultimately, the work of the Spirit in the preacher is so to deepen people’s knowledge and experience of Christ Jesus so that they can hear God knocking at the door.

“... if the passion and integrity of one’s preaching does not rest on, or arise from (and this will sound very evangelical) a personal conviction that conversion is possible, one might as well shut up. ... I not only preach for conversion, I preach from conversion.” Archbishop Rowan Williams

+ Robert Sodor as Mannin

A last word...

We hope you found this Newsletter helpful and informative, it’s a bit of a bumper edition, but there has been a lot to update you with. We would welcome any news you’d like to share, reports from any training etc and we will include this in future editions.

With Thanks and Blessings

Nigel & Donald

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