

Update on Reader ministry

Over the last 12 months we have been working to reshape the way we lead, support and administer Reader ministry. That works builds on the Reader review and significant changes in personnel both within the Wardens Team and the Diocese more widely. This paper gives an update on that work.

Defining the Reader vocation

We know that we need to be able to describe and define the particular calling of Readers. In part that is necessary as other ways of serving the church and world are recognised by the church, including as Chaplain, Pioneer, Local Worship Leader and Local Minister, but it's also about discerning the kinds of ministry that we need from Readers in the future.

This description is where we have settled - *'Readers are community theologians who teach, preach and enable everyday faith.'* This describes our need for people who are theologically trained, who are communicators, story tellers and teachers and who can shape the minds, hearts and souls of people and congregations around the good news of Jesus Christ, the story of Scripture and the wisdom of our tradition so that they can live out their calling as disciples in everyday life. It doesn't aim to describe everything that Readers currently do, but the heart of what we need to move towards in the future.

We should expect to have fewer people called to this kind of ministry in the future - both because the church is smaller now than it was, and because more people will be called to other forms of lay ministry - but we absolutely need Readers who are *'Community Theologians for everyday faith'* amongst us.

Exeter Diocese and SWMTC

As our thinking has developed, we have been in conversation with Exeter Diocese who are also thinking about Reader ministry now and into the future. This is particularly important given our shared investment in SWMTC. These conversations are ongoing.

Licensing and PtO

We have already begun to implement the decision to end the requirement for Reader licenses to end at age 70 and to move to a renewable 3-year license system. As part of the renewal process, and in order to receive their license, Readers will need to have a Working Agreement, developed with their incumbent or equivalent. We hope this will help clarify the roles and responsibilities of Readers, encourage good communication between Readers and clergy and provide a regular space for discernment and discussion.

Ensuring Readers and clergy have support to do this, and to do so well, will need attention. As a first step, a new Working Agreement template has been put together and will be made available.

Readers and Diocesan ministry

Until recently most of the administration and resourcing of Reader ministry has been done through the Wardens Team and its associated structure. While this has given a strong identity to the Reader community, it has prevented Reader ministry from being properly integrated into the thinking and planning of the Diocese. It also means that Readers have not benefited from Diocesan administrative and support structures.

All Reader administration is now done by Lis Escop and the Ministry Team, giving Readers equality with other ministries, both ordained and Lay.

This will help with specific issues already identified as being needed, including further developing the Working Agreement system and establishing a new approach to regular reviews for Readers.

Sally Piper, Head of Ministry and herself a Reader, is now working to integrate Reader ministry with the other work of her team at Church House, bringing Readers into the heart of the thinking, planning and organisation of ministry for the Diocese.

With Jane Kneebone's forthcoming retirement, a new appointment will be made. It will continue to focus on Readers in training, to have a significant teaching role with SWMTC and will be part of the reshaped Ministry Team at Church House.

Care for Readers

We are blessed by our Chaplain to Readers, who provides direct support and pastoral care to Readers when needed. We want to expand the role, encouraging Deaneries to appoint a local Reader chaplain who can enhance this care and support at a more local level.

The Wardens Team and the Reader leadership structure

With this change of administrative structure, we have also reviewed the way Reader ministry is led. As a result

1. The **Wardens Team** will continue to hold leadership and oversight responsibility for Reader ministry:
 - to hold the oversight for the vision for and vocation of Reader ministry.
 - to ensure Reader ministry is embedded in the wider life and ministry of the Diocese.
 - to consider issues relating to the wellbeing of Readers.
 - to consider issues relating to the relationship between clergy and Readers, and between Readers and others in recognised lay ministries
 - to oversee the pattern and planning of events that focus on Reader ministry.

Over time these terms of reference are likely to change, as Reader ministry is more fully integrated into the life of the Ministry Team, so will need to be kept under review.

The current membership of the team has been reviewed and now includes the Head of Ministry and the Ministry Programme Coordinator.

2. The **Readers Committee** will be disbanded and replaced by a new Reader Chaplain Team, made up of those who take up the new local Reader Chaplain role. It will be chaired by the Chaplain to Readers and its role will be:
 - to share responsibility for the pastoral care of Readers
 - to discuss issues relating to the wellbeing and care of individual Readers
 - to provide a forum for support, mutual learning and discussion for those providing pastoral care to Readers
3. The annual **Readers Day** should continue in the current pattern