



DIOCESE OF TRURO

REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF READER MINISTRY

Prepared by the Diocesan Reader Ministry Working Party

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The office of Reader is an ancient and honourable one going back to the very earliest days of the Christian Church which inherited it from Jewish synagogue worship. A former Hon Sec of the central Readers Council (George King) said: -

Around the year 200 the Reader ranked very high in the Church compared with other ministers, and....in the Apostolic Church Order he took precedence over the deacon¹.

1.2 It was revived within the Church of England briefly from 1560 until the reign of King George II and again from 1866. But now largely unchurched generations have no clue what it signifies and those within the church have become confused by the wider range of lay ministries which have now been given varying degrees of recognition. The annual survey of Readers undertaken by the diocese shows great variability from parish to parish in the degree to which Reader Ministry is used and the scope of their activities. Sometimes there is a feeling of being held back, at other times that the burden of responsibilities is too heavy. So the Warden of Reader's Committee has decided that the time has come to take stock and look forward.

1.3 In January 2021 it appointed a small ad hoc and time-limited Working Party of Readers and Priests to look into the situation and report back, with secretarial support from Melanie Pomery, Ministry Programmes Coordinator. The goal of their work being to answer the question **'How can we create an environment within parishes and within the diocese that will enable Reader Ministry to flourish?'** To do this it was felt that two principal pieces of work needed to be undertaken (1) Defining the Role, and (2) Valuing the Role. The original brief for this project is attached at Annexe 1.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Reader Ministry is a distinctive ministry which is a great asset to the Church. Readers are as numerous in the Diocese as licensed clergy. Although their professional theological training equips them to be the only non-ordained ministers authorised to preach and teach as well as lead services, their episcopal licence makes clear that their ministry should not be confined to what goes on in church.

2.2 In distinction from ordained ministers, Readers serve in a voluntary capacity and are still immersed in civilian life. They are expected to "walk the talk" and live out what they preach at the front line in secular life. Because of the variety of their giftings and opportunities it has been difficult to come up with a succinct definition of their role, but the Working Party commends the following:- **A Reader is a Lay Minister working under episcopal licence and in agreement with their incumbent, theologically trained and qualified to preach, teach, lead church services and interpret the Christian faith to other lay people from a position of understanding of secular life and to offer pastoral care in the name of the church to all sorts and conditions of people in sickness and in health, in dying and bereavement. They are also to assist in mobilising their fellow laity for mission and helping to build discipleship.**

2.3 Despite its centuries of pedigree, the title Reader is no longer properly understood in secular society, nor even by many ordinary churchgoers. The alternative of Licensed Lay Minister has been gaining ground in recent years and we recommend it should become the norm, but with the title of Reader still available for those with a strong affection for it. However, for this to happen the

anomalous situation for Readers aged over 70 who are forced to no longer minister under licence, but only a 'Permission To Officiate', needs to be resolved.

2.4 The encouragement of other authorised lay ministries during recent years, such as that of Local Worship Leader, has created some confusion in the mind of congregations and some LWLs themselves as to whether or how their role differs from that of a Reader. Whilst the encouragement of lay leadership more broadly should be welcomed, it is felt that any LWL who feels that they might be called to preach should be expected to discuss this in the context of progressing to training for Reader ministry or even possibly towards ordination.

2.5 Readers can be a resource for the Church far beyond their 'core competencies'. A range of different activities outside church have been identified that they can be engaged in from school chaplaincy to youth work in general to various forms of evangelism, online service and social media content provision, a focal minister role and much more. No one Reader could possibly do them all at once, but after an initial, say three years, period from admission – during which appropriate on-the-job training would be undertaken - it is proposed that encouragement should be given to consider adopting one or more of these additional ministry roles according to gifting and opportunities. A competence review at this stage, as with curates, is also recommended to guide the choice of complementary roles, or for an inevitable few, a conclusion that they are not, after all, suitable Reader material.

2.6 The work of the Reader as part of the benefice or cluster team should inevitably relieve some pressure on ordained members of the staff team, but their role should not be seen as just taking up the slack to allow more of what the incumbent normally does to happen. This would be to lose the additional impact that the Reader's role and gifting could achieve as lay theologian and active minister in all sorts of non-church settings. In short, Readers should not be straightjacketed into supporting an introspective model of ministry.

2.7 Many recent Church documents and reports have stressed the importance of collaborative working in ministry. The oversight ministry model particularly encourages this. But there is still a legacy, evidenced in annual report returns by Readers, of situations where relations between Reader and incumbent are such that the Reader feels excluded and marginalised and channels of communication restricted. Often this leads to Readers feeling that they have no option but to seek to exercise their ministry elsewhere. It is therefore recommended that there should be greater emphasis on teamwork in both pre and post ordination training for clergy and in Reader training. The SWMTC model where Readers and clergy are trained together is a worthy model, but only a proportion of our clergy come through that route.

2.8 Readers should ideally be well integrated into parish life, not only for their competence as lay theologians, but also for the continuity they are able to offer as they are normally ministering in a parish for a much longer period than the average incumbent. Measures like encouraging the *ex officio* option for Readers to be PCC members and ensuring that their ministry is not curtailed during transitions. Where they are able they should be given a role in the Transition Team.

2.9 At the moment Ministerial Development Review (MDR) is not applicable to Readers and Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) relies on self-selection of courses to follow, which are offered during the working day and they do not enjoy the annual grant for external courses given to clergy despite the Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry stating that Readers be required to undertake post-admission training and have financial help provided for them to do so.

2.10 We recommend that both MDR and a more structured form of CMD (including a grant for external courses) should be made available to Readers on a systematic basis. The periodicity of MDR should be

co-ordinated with that for License and safeguarding renewal, either by extending licenses to six years, or reducing them to three.

2.11 Although Readers now have fixed term licences rather than the previous open-ended ones, there is still an insistence that their licence has to be surrendered when they reach the arbitrary age of 70, regardless of how many years are left to run. They have the option to continue in ministry provided they have a working agreement with their incumbent specifying which regular ministry they will be involved in and approval of the continuation their ministry by formal minuted vote of all PCCs in the benefice/s they serve. But rather than serving under a licence for regular ministry within a specified jurisdiction they merely get a Permission To Officiate (PTO) '*when invited to do so on single occasions*' with no location specified.

2.12 We consider this practice to be discriminatory and demotivating treatment of nearly half the current active Reader workforce and recommend that it be discontinued. If this is not possible then a change of wording for PTO certificates should be brought in that corresponds to the reality of the service they are expected to give. There should also be written assurance that Readers over 70 can continue to use the title of Licensed Lay Minister (LLM).

2.13 Although they are not subject to the same round-the-clock pressure or the experience of living in tied accommodation, Readers could benefit from some equivalent of the Clergy Covenant to safeguard their wellbeing. Currently Readers in difficulty tend to turn to – depending on their situation and the issues involved – their incumbent, rural dean or spiritual director. Alternatively they may go to their Deanery Reader Steward or one of the officers of the Warden of Reader's Committee. If it is an issue of conflict resolution and/or safeguarding this tends to go straight to the Chaplain of Readers. But the final word rests with the Suffragan Bishop as Warden of Readers.

2.14 Arrangements could be improved if there were proper job descriptions for these posts. There is also an issue that Deanery Reader Stewards vary greatly in their level of activity, maybe partly because electronic communications now make it easier for Readers to go straight to other office holders without the need for an intermediary. If this office is to be retained it should have a proper Job Description and any Stewards who are no longer active should be replaced.

2.15 The diocesan website has been a fruitful source of complaints from Readers for such reasons as difficulty in finding information, lack of cohesion/joined up thinking on the ministry page, information being out of date. Forthcoming upgrades of the site should not only update information in relation to Reader Ministry, but also change its location within the wider architecture so that it is clearly situated within the context of Ministry in general and Lay Ministry in particular.

2.16 Presentation of this Report to the Warden of Reader's Committee concludes the mandate of the Working Party. After consideration of our Recommendations an Action Plan should be drawn up identifying timescales and responsibilities for implementation. This should be followed up by a Review of progress one to one and a half years from receipt of this report.

2.17 A full list of the Working Party's Recommendations is included in section 6 of the Report.

3. DEFINING THE ROLE

a. Distinctives and Definitions of Reader Ministry

3.1 Reader Ministry is the only non-ordained office which authorises its holder to preach regularly in church. No doubt because of this it is also the only non-ordained office for which a rigorous university-level training in theology is required taking a number of years. In addition: -

- A rigorous process of discernment and selection before training is authorised.
- Readers (licensed Lay Ministers) are Re-licensed every five years.
- They cease to be licensed at the age of seventy but may seek permission to officiate.
- Licensing and 'permission to officiate' have the same requirements.
 - Current safeguarding training to C2 level
 - Current diocesan enhanced DBS check
 - A work agreement discussed with the incumbent or, if in transition, the rural Dean.
 - The support of the church councils in the cluster or benefice to which the license or permission will apply. (this must be in the form of a formal minuted resolution)

3.2 All this implies something more substantial than the original role of the Reader or Lector in synagogue worship to read a passage of scripture and expound on it. But it has to be acknowledged that the role of lay theologian is foundational to the ministry and distinctive to it.

3.3 The license issued to a Reader actually starts with activities outside of formal church worship: -

- Visiting the sick, to read and pray with them
- Teaching in Sunday School and elsewhere
- General pastoral and educational work
- Giving assistance to any minister as the Bishop may direct

3.4 It continues with stipulations related to church worship

- Reading Morning and Evening Prayer (save for the Absolution)
- Publishing Banns of Marriage
- Reading the Word of God
- Preaching
- Catechising children
- Receiving and Presenting the offerings of the people
- Distributing the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people
- Burying the dead
- Reading the burial service before, at or after cremation (with the goodwill of the family and incumbent and if trained to do so)

3.5 Such a diverse range of ministry activities is difficult to pigeonhole. For many of them their performance is not limited to clergy and Readers but may be undertaken by other lay persons suitably authorised. The distinctiveness of Reader Ministry is not so much in the discrete items they are licensed to perform, but in the rounded whole of their ministry life. Their preaching and teaching informs their other activities and vice versa.

3.6 Bishop Lightfoot in his address to Durham's first Diocesan Conference of 1880 promoted Reader ministry as the organisation of a '*lay agency*', where '*the regular troops of the Great King must be supplemented by His voluntary forces*'.²

3.7 Reader ministry is distinctive from ordained ministry in that while Readers are professionally trained and committed to their ministry, they serve in a volunteer capacity and are still immersed in civilian life. They are expected to ‘walk the talk’ and live out what they preach at the front line in secular life, often with highly demanding and influential roles.

3.8 The Central Readers’ Council website³ defines Reader ministry thus:

‘A Reader (LLM) is a lay person who, following a call from God, is trained and licensed by the Anglican Church to teach the faith, enable mission and lead in church and society.

Readers (LLM) are uniquely equipped to enable 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, Readers (LLM) 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 ministry involves working together with an incumbent. It can also involve pastoral care, funeral ministry, and involvement in many other aspects of leadership in church and society.’

3.9 Trying to sum all this up in a single statement a new definition of Reader ministry could read like this: -

A Reader is a Lay Minister working under episcopal licence and in agreement with their incumbent, theologically trained and qualified to preach, teach, lead church services and interpret the Christian faith to other lay people from a position of understanding of secular life and to offer pastoral care in the name of the church to all sorts and conditions of people in sickness and in health, in dying and bereavement. They are also to assist in mobilising fellow laity for mission and helping to build discipleship.

3.10 This is felt to be the shortest an adequate definition could be, but if something shorter is required by way of just a strap line, then this is commended: -

Community Ministers who teach, preach and enable everyday Christian faith.

RECOMMENDATION: 1 That the definition and strapline for Reader Ministry in the paragraphs above be adopted for use in this Diocese.

b. Reader or Licensed Lay Minister - What’s in a Name?

3.11 Recent replies when asked to comment on the title have included: -

PT – *When I have told people that I am a Reader I get the response "I used to read lessons in church"; they clearly don't understand. I tend to refer to myself as a Licensed Lay Minister which I think is a much better title.*

LK - *I have been involved in church in some way all of my life and only recently became aware of Readers. I was puzzled at first as the name doesn't tell us, either churchgoers or in the community what their role is. In fact I think most would think that they just read the lesson on Sunday mornings which is soooooo far from the truth.*

AH - *C of E members largely know what it is, and non-members won't understand either. Leave alone. Far more important things to be doing.*

MA - *I'm in favour of the compromise — that we are called "Licensed Lay Minister" and "Reader", and can use either or both of those terms as we wish.*

CT - *There is no quick fix with this. Changing to LLM may cause as many questions as having the title Reader. To me our Title is Reader – our job description is Licensed Lay Minister.*

WH - *No one knows what the word connotes. Moreover, it suggests that all we do is "word" rather than "action." We are, or should be, more than people who read what is put in front of us. For example, we write and then deliver our own "talks." I prefer the term Licensed Minister or Licensed Lay Minister.*

3.12 The alternative name of "Licensed Lay Minister" has been promoted for some time now. In 2008 a comprehensive 120 page report for General Synod was published on 'Reader Ministry in the Church Today' (the final report of the Working Group on Review of Reader Ministry⁴) It included at Recommendation 18 that *'that the name of the office of Reader is changed to Licensed Lay Minister (Reader)*. The sub-title of Reader was proposed to distinguish it from other potential licensed lay ministries (eg. Pastoral Assistant, Evangelist, etc). The Central Readers Council website now refers to *'Licensed Lay (Reader) Ministry⁵*'.

3.13 In our view the title 'Licensed Lay Minister' now commands much wider understanding both within and without the Church of England than Reader, Minister also being a word in common usage across denominations, and the distinction between 'lay' and 'ordained' also having a wider understanding.

3.14 In 2016 Readers in the Diocese were given an opportunity to vote on this. All Readers (including Readers-in-Training and those serving under a Permission to Officiate) were given the opportunity to decide on this matter. The ballot paper offered three options and the results were:

'Of the 122 Readers who could Vote 97 sent in their vote (nearly 79%) with the following result:

Retain the title Reader	15
Change name to LLM	35
Retain the title Reader but allow LLM too	44

Note: Included in the 97 are 3 Readers who voted to abstain.

3.15 But although the Licensed Lay Minister title seems to have the greatest support in the wider Church, a major obstacle to the general use of the title of Licensed Lay Minister is posed by the fact that nearly half of the active Readers in the Diocese (53 out of 108) do not hold a Bishop's licence. How has this come about? It is the result of the longstanding practice (initiated in the days when Readers had a licence for life and were not, as they are now, given time limited licenses which necessitated periodic review) of Readers licenses being terminated when they reach the age of 70. They are only permitted to continue their ministry thereafter (which most choose to do) under a Permission To Officiate (which could only allow the odd title of 'Permitted Lay Minister.')

3.16 A normal Reader's licence names the parish or parishes within which the Reader is to serve and states that *'I authorise you to visit the sick, to read and pray with them, to teach in Sunday School and elsewhere, and generally to undertake such pastoral and educational work and to give such assistance to any minister as I may direct. I do authorise you during the time of divine service to read Morning and Evening Prayer (save for the Absolution), to publish banns of marriage at Morning and Evening Prayer to read the Word of God, to preach, to catechise the children and to receive and present the offerings of the people. Further I authorise you to distribute the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people and to bury the dead or read the burial service before, at or after a cremation but only, in each case, with the goodwill of the family of the deceased and at the invitation of the minister but only where a Reader has completed a course of training in conducting such services'*.

3.17 But a PTO only gives permission to officiate *'when invited to do so on single occasions by any Incumbent, Minister or Sequestrator of any Benefice, Parish or district therein, and when required to administer the elements at the Holy Communion and to perform any other ecclesiastical duties belonging to that office.'* No parish or parishes are named on the PTO.

3.18 It is hard to consider this distinction as being anything but anomalous when in order to apply for a PTO it is now required to have a PCC resolution endorsing the application from the parishes where the PTO Reader is expected to serve and also an adopted Working Agreement with the incumbent/s. (Not exactly taking the odd service on single occasions!). The PTO issue will be further discussed in the next section on 'Valuing the Role.'

3.19 The 2008 General Synod report referred to above ⁶ also had a section entitled 'Should Readers become Deacons?' (Section 4.16) They decided to leave this question open, but considered that the then current situation whereby individual Readers could be assisted in discerning a vocation to Deacon or Priestly ministry on a one-off basis should be allowed to continue. More recently there have been multiple ordinations of Licensed Lay Ministers to a permanent Diaconate in both Chelmsford and York Dioceses. Archbishop Sentamu invited Readers to consider being ordained as Deacons in 2018⁷. He went on to ordain 17 serving Readers in 2019⁸ explaining that: -

"I have had the great privilege to meet Readers across the Diocese who are exercising their ministry both in the church but also reaching out in mission to their communities – supporting local community projects, working with schools and care homes, engaging with people who wouldn't normally come to church. This missional, servant-hearted work is more usually recognised in the church as the ministry of a Deacon. It is a great joy to be with these servants of God and his Church as they take this next step in their journey following where he leads, and sometimes after many years of faithful service already. Praise be to our God who is always calling us onward!"

3.20 However, until there is wider debate and consensus in both the Diocese and the national Church it is not felt that a special general call to Readers to consider ordination to the Diaconate would be appropriate at this time.

3.21 Our Recommendations on the issue of the title for Reader Ministry are as follows: -

RECOMMENDATION 2: Licensed Lay Minister should become the general preferred title for those exercising Reader Ministry in the Diocese

RECOMMENDATION 3: PTO regulations should be reviewed so that this title is made available to all those in active Reader ministry.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The option of continuing with the title of Reader should be kept available for the time being for those prevented by PTO from adopting the new title and for long-serving Readers unhappy at the prospect of losing this title

c. A unique lay ministry, or just one among many others?

3.22 It is not just its roots in antiquity that sets Reader Ministry apart from other lay ministries. It also is not so much the role as the formation, training, and practice - focusing on becoming a lay theologian - which fits them for worship leader / preacher roles for all forms and expressions of worship, with options for further training. The role of funeral minister is sufficiently common to Readers that initial training is included in Reader formation training. Reader ministry is the only licensed ministry (other than ordained ministry) for which preaching is a core competence and covered in their basic training.

3.23 It has been known for Local Worship Leaders to be put on the regular preaching rota after only minimal instruction with the aspiration that further training will be undertaken whilst 'on the job', which does not always materialise. We would advocate that any who feel a call to preach should discuss this with their incumbent in the context of progressing to training for Reader ministry or even possibly towards ordination.

3.24 The point about Readers being lay theologians is probably the most important here, not only because of the academic rigour of the training required, but because of the level of commitment that is necessary to become a fully trained and licensed Reader. Most Readers see their training and licensing as life-changing, far beyond what most of them visualised when they embarked on the path to Readership. They find themselves not only being authorised to preach, offer reserved communion, take funerals and so many other ministries, but discover that they are rewarding and a fundamental part of their service and identity as Christians. Being a lay theologian does not only require three years' study, but also an ongoing routine of reading, contemplation, debate and the discipline of keeping up to date. The amount of head space required for this is considerable, but it is precisely this that feeds into all a Reader does and is.

3.25 To quote a colleague, "It's not a hobby or a Sunday pastime – it's my life and therefore the opportunity should be afforded to Readers to live out their calling." The time and energy involved both in training and Reader ministry is such that it is often taken up in retirement – but people in their 60s have every expectation of treating it as quite close to a full-time job. There are a lot of parallels with self-supporting ordained ministry. All Readers will have different ministries that they feel called to – and that may change and develop over time, or be adapted to accommodate new things happening and new incumbents.

3.26 The grid below was compiled from responses from a number of serving Readers: -

What is a Reader / LLM Who are we? What does a Reader do?

Support the incumbent- pray with/for	Emergency baptism	Chaplains for care homes.
Write services	Messy church	Pastoral work – Church family.
Lead service	School assemblies.	<u>Lay Theologians</u> of our parishes
Community- visible in the wider community	This is important, we need to go to our community as they are not coming to us!! School sports fixtures on a Sunday now as well as sports clubs. We are now 3 rd generation of non-church goers. (from my observations of friends).	Making accessible coordinating like-minded people/groups
Pastoral		
Preaching		
Praying		
Funerals		

<input type="checkbox"/> Keep to the basics.	<input type="checkbox"/> Carry out Spiritual MOT	<input type="checkbox"/> Bible study /prayer group
<input type="checkbox"/> Love God, love me, love my neighbor.	<input type="checkbox"/> Walk, talk with the Trinity	<input type="checkbox"/> Thank you for ...
	<input type="checkbox"/> Gossip the Gospel, use words if I must	<input type="checkbox"/> Ignatius exercises!
		<input type="checkbox"/> Examen

Qualities of a Reader . called by God

Free thinker	Loves people	Role model
Listener	Creative	Friend
Carer	Inventive	Journey
People person	Honesty	Chanel
Accept all, warts and all	Lead music /worship	Sharing Gods love with people show then God loves them.
Watches	Apostle	Talents
Studies	Disciple	Holding a hand
Loyal	Witness	Teaching
Team person	Being there	Walking along side
Sets high standards	Prayer	
Clear mind	Signpost to Jesus	

3.27 The Reader as theologian is going to be expressed in whatever they feel called to do, overtly in preaching or more subtly in pastoral work. Whatever the level of academic knowledge, the life commitment of Readers needs acknowledging, and putting to work. Because that's what they signed up for!

3.28 Readers occupy a unique position in the life of a church. In all or most cases

- They are qualified lay theologians
- They are the perennial leaders of a church (surviving the terms of successive clergy)
- For some people this is the end point of a growing ministry in the church that may have started with local worship leader training.
- For a few it is a stepping-stone on to ordained ministry.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Any Local Worship Leader, who feels that they might be called to preach, should be expected to discuss this in the context of progressing to training for Reader ministry or even possibly towards ordination.

d. Readers as a resource for the Church far beyond 'core competences'

3.29 In order to be selected for initial Reader training the bar is already higher in terms of leadership potential, academic capacity and spiritual maturity than (for example) for Local Worship Leaders or other commissioned ministry. It is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that what Readers do in Sunday worship should be considered as just a core competence to which it is very appropriate for other service opportunities to be added according to the individual Reader's gifting, time capacity and local opportunities, with additional training offered where needed, to fulfil this/these additional roles. But before extra responsibilities are added for newly licensed Readers a new first step could be considered whereby an initial on-the-job training process for say the first three years of ministry, maybe similar to that newly ordained curates have to follow, At the end of the three years, as with new curates, the new Reader would have to be signed off as competent or, very occasionally, not signed off because the system recognises that it made a mistake in licensing them in the first place.

3.30 Assuming new Readers are doing well, perhaps after three years we might offer them a range of complementary roles to take on, *alongside* their core ministry of leading worship. Some of these roles are ones that wouldn't necessarily need to be done by a Reader, but could fit well. For example:

1. Focal minister – could they even occupy a ‘house for duty’ under a deanery plan?
2. Pastoral – Ministry team member / leader
3. Funeral ministry – at the moment taster funeral training is offered immediately after licensing, but might this be better delayed while core skills are consolidated?
4. Training others – eg safeguarding, LWLs,
5. Social media content?
6. Online service provision
7. Spiritual director / supervisor
8. Evangelist (cf other gifts of the Spirit)
9. Youth work, including uniformed organisations
10. School chaplain
11. Discipling new Christians, running discipleship courses

3.31 Clearly most of these roles would need additional training.

3.32 In other words, the base-level is Reader – but what might come next? Some Readers might be content to remain at this level for many years – especially if they have full-time jobs or families at home. But that might change at retirement, or if their home circumstances change.

3.33 Thus the concept explained here, of Readers being considered as a pool of people to be considered for additional complementary ministries. There would be an *expectation* that Readers might be offered additional ministry opportunities (though recognising that for many Readers this would not be realistic because of the constraints of not enough hours in the day).

The additional ministry concept as an aide for Readers who feel underused

3.34 The plea that we are hearing is that not all incumbents value Reader ministry, sometimes do not take it seriously, and skills and callings are going to waste. This is reflected in the responses to the annual diocesan Reader survey. Most are more than happy to be part of a team, but many feel excluded.

3.35 It has been suggested that Readers could travel to neighbouring parishes, in a similar way to Methodist Local Preachers, in the circumstances where there is work to be done a few miles down the road. This might solve some issues of feeling under used. The 2008 Report to General Synod included Recommendation 16 that ‘*Readers are normally licensed to the deanery, although with a designated incumbent specified for accountability and support.*’⁹

3.36 One particular strength of this *additional-ministry* approach is that in some parishes Readers who find themselves very little used, possibly because there are more than enough other leaders of worship (or the parish priest keeps it to her/himself), or because the parish priest is underwhelmed by their performance in this area. By automatically suggesting a process looking at alternative ministries it might be possible for that Reader to still find fulfilment, albeit in an alternative ministry, at least at that time.

A particular word about Focal ministry

3.37 With the advent of the On the Way initiative, looking at how we might change the shape of ministry in the light of the challenges of Covid etc, there is a renewed interest in the diocese in Oversight Ministry (OM). OM is a particular way of defining stipended clergy appointed to lead larger groups of churches, with an emphasis on empowering local leadership in each church.

3.38 Hand in hand with OM goes the concept of Focal Ministers. These are lay or ordained people recognised as leaders by their congregation, who provide the local focal point of pastoral and other ministry in that local congregation, and are very likely to be the key people the oversight minister relates to in that group of churches. It is likely that many Readers may possess the leadership and

pastoral gifts required for this role. Equally we should recognise that some Readers will not be the right people for this role.

3.39 We believe there is scope for a process to identify which Readers might be appropriate to take up a role as Focal Ministers, and be provided with appropriate training and support if this role is to be created in a church where they are already known and respected. This could be at the church they consider their home church. But perhaps there is scope too for deployment to a nearby church, if an individual Reader is willing to throw themselves into a new community, and has the right characteristics to quickly get the confidence of the congregation.

Ordained Local Ministers (OLM)

3.40 Finally, with fewer stipended clergy in the future but sacramental activities in the church expected to remain only to be done by priests, it would seem odd not to mention the possibility that some Readers might well be considered for exploring ordination, especially if slightly less onerous selection and training processes are required for OLM ministry.

RECOMMENDATION 6: A process of formal on-the-job training should be considered for the first three years of newly licensed Readers' ministry culminating in a competence review on conclusion.

RECOMMENDATION 7: After competence review for newly licensed Readers and at least at licence renewal for established Readers there should be a consideration of possible complementary roles

RECOMMENDATION 8: When the On the Way process proposes an Oversight Minister/Focal Ministers pattern a process to identify which Readers might be appropriate to take up a Focal Minister role should be initiated.

e. Is there a role for Readers to support other ministries?

3.41 We need to be very careful how we use the word 'support', at the risk of its being seen as Clergy support. So, before looking at supporting ministries, we want to ensure the word is used in the correct context.

3.42 Readers/LLMs are not there to support clergy, or free up the clergy because their workload is too great, or they need time off, or because they just 'don't do' certain things! Readers/LLMs, along with the ordained priests, deacons, and other lay people, are there to share the gospel and build the kingdom of God. Priests have a unique calling: being a priest does not mean that at their ordination God gave them the ability to be great at everything ministry requires to be "sustainable and fruitful"! (*On the Way*)

3.43 An increasing number of people in churches are having to do more and more in order to keep church the way they like it. People who begin to feel a stirring of a call to 'something new' find these callings fizzle out, or that they are under used, because it is the priest's way, or the traditional way, of doing church that takes priority; everyone else just fills the gaps.

3.44 Research by Stephen Nance in 2020 (to be published in a Grove book this year) makes the following points about Christianity and church:

- Local ministry is where most people form their opinions of church.
- People generally like the local church and say it does good things.
- Church people are embarrassed to discuss God and Gospel outside of church circles.
- The 'fringe' group of church attenders is decreasing, and those who have no church attendance is on the increase.

3.45 This research gives us even more data to support local ministry in different and new contexts.

3.46 Readers/LLMs are perfectly placed. They are usually well known in their local communities, grounded through living and working (paid and voluntary) there. They are likely to be able to form relationships or have existing relationships with those who are not church attenders.

3.47 So, here is a suggested list, open to interpretation and discussion, and where fluidity is key:

- Leadership in other roles i.e. church groups - bell ringers
- Paid diocesan roles
- Community links
- Funerals
- Worship
- Preaching
- Supporting incumbent
- Challenging incumbent
- Working alongside the incumbent
- Open the book
- Lesson support in schools
- Church roles, i.e. health and safety, rotas, etc.
- Support your rector to take risks!
- Context based social groups
- Youth groups
- Enquirer groups.

3.48 The latest research, that many of us are embarrassed to talk about God and the gospel outside of church circles, indicates that a lot of the above suggestions will be challenging if they are to be Christ-centered. If they are not, we risk just being 'nice' people!

3.49 The list of supporting ministries cannot and should not be a tick box exercise: each Reader/LLM will be called because of their particular gifts. Under the umbrella of leadership, or the Deanery/Benefice/Parish vision, Spirit-led discernment through prayer will be the guiding principle, and may lead each Reader/LLM to establish desire lines. Desire lines are paths that may yet be untrodden, but get to the same place. For example, a walk across the grass rather than on the tarmac path alongside it! This approach will allow each Reader/LLM in their context to use their own gifts and call to ministry but with the same end.

RECOMMENDATION: 9 Because of their unique status as trained theologians who are grounded in secular life and called to work on the margins Readers should not be straightjacketed into supporting an introspective model of ministry.

4. VALUING THE ROLE

a. The Imperative of Collaborative Working

4.1 Ministry for a Christian Presence in Every Community¹⁰ (emphasises the importance of parish ministry being a joint effort with clergy and lay ministers working co-operatively together. *'Ministry is collaborative, given to build up the body of Christ'* it states. We are also told by Christina Baxter that Readers show *'by virtue of their call and commission that ministry is always properly plural (Readers both receive and give ministry)*¹¹.

4.2 The Church of England's 'Vision for Lay Ministries' document¹² spells this out *'Lay ministries flourish when ministry is truly the work of co-labourers, God's servants working together to bring in the harvest... This is a key area of challenge for lay ministries, in an institution that can be hierarchical in myriad ways including in terms of clericalism.....The challenge of power dynamics is nothing new for followers of Christ yet the challenge for the church is deeply ingrained and a key barrier to flourishing lay ministries.'*

4.3 However, although many parishes would appear to be approaching the ideal of collaborative working much remains to be done. The move towards teams and clusters of parishes may subdue the temptation towards clerical exclusivity of lone incumbents. The annual survey of Readers reveals a number of instances of Readers feeling themselves marginalised and left at the periphery of parish life. Anonymised comments for the 2020 annual report included: -

'I feel that I don't have the support of the incumbent – am not included in any planning nor have been included in the Zoom services.'

'Only the usual – hoping that one day Clergy and Readers might find ways to communicate more effectively. In my experience, aside from one very notable and positive exception, there has always been a wide gap!'

'I continue to be concerned that clergy do not know how to use Readers and some think PTO Readers cannot do anything.'

'Arrival of new vicar a year ago who now wants to do all funerals. A feeling that Readers are being side-lined and confined to being Vicar's worship helper rather than an integral part of the Leadership Team.'

4.4 Another area where Readers can feel on the side-lines of parish life is the question of participation in Parochial Church Council meetings. At present it is left at the discretion of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting as to whether Readers should participate in PCC meetings on an *ex officio* basis. The Truro Diocese Reader's Handbook (5.9...) states that *'Deaneries are encouraged to invite Readers to chapter meetings unless the nature of the subject matter under discussion means that it is inappropriate for them to attend.'* But as these meetings usually take place during normal working hours for lay people this must have limited practical application.

4.5 Can a solution for this situation be found? The reader/incumbent relationship is clearly foundational for not only the flourishing of Reader Ministry, but for the harmonious life of the parish as a whole and the ministry of both clergy and other authorised lay ministries too. One Reader consulted had this suggestion *'Clergy should be required to consult with Readers and fully involve Readers in the life of the Church where they are licensed. This should include regular meetings at staff level in the parish. In the annual or other reviews for clergy, this should be specifically addressed.'* Another stated that *'a culture of good communication and team-work should be promoted.'*

4.6 Communication and understanding of the Reader's role within parish life is currently supposed to be promoted by the requirement for Readers to discuss and agree a work agreement with their incumbent (or if in transition their rural dean) and have the support of the PCC by a formal minuted resolution for each parish within the benefice or cluster they are licensed to. But there is a good deal of anecdotal evidence that the work agreement discussions and formal adoptions by PCCs can often be a box-ticking exercise given lip service at best. But where there is a culture of teamwork in ministry, work agreements, meaningful discussions and good communications are more likely and thus job satisfaction is high. Conversely where there is little teamwork, communication is poor and problems more likely to arise. It would therefore seem important to raise the profile of these parts of the process for introducing and sustaining Readers in parish ministry.

RECOMMENDATION: 10 Readers should be recognised as core members of the staff team in the benefice or cluster where they minister

RECOMMENDATION: 11 Parishes should be encouraged to adopt the *ex officio* option for allowing Readers to participate in PCC meetings

RECOMMENDATION: 12 Incumbent Clergy should have initial and refresher training in performance management, work agreements and leading teams.

b. Training and ongoing encouragement for Collaborative Ministry - team-working and better communication.

4.7 The SWMTC course includes both Ordinands and Readers-in-training who are trained together for a collaborative working approach to ministry including team working and better communication. However, on average slightly less than half annually of the newly appointed clergy in the diocese have come through the SWMTC course. Not least for the majority who have not, an emphasis on team-working and better communication in post-ordination training and ministry review is therefore called for. Two instruments which would appear to be appropriate vehicles for training and ongoing encouragement towards this end – Continuing Ministry Development (CMD) and Ministerial Development Review (MDR).

Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD)

4.8 At the moment only a limited range of CMD topics is covered in the in-house programme offered, currently via Zoom, by our diocese¹³, although the diocesan website also signposts a number of courses offered by external sources¹⁴. Neither of these listing currently include the team-working topic. The Exeter Diocese website¹⁵ by contrast offers a much wider range courses which includes a session on 'Leading Teams' which is actually run by a member of staff from Truro Diocese!

4.9 However, a new CMD system for our diocese is proposed and was due to start in September 2020, but this has been postponed to June this year. It will offer a much wider range of courses through an online learning platform linking to a national Church of England learning platform which is currently being rolled out. Each course advertised is accompanied by an email address for registration

4.10 The menu of courses offered by our diocese are advertised to all Clergy and Readers through a quarterly emailing called 'Ministry Matters' and periodic news updates between Ministry Matters editions. Each course advertisement is accompanied by a clickable link for registration. Courses currently advertised are only offered during the daytime midweek, which limits accessibility for Readers with a day job. Although a recording may be offered later, that precludes the usual opportunity for interaction with the speaker/s and other participants.

4.11 In December 2020, a Truro Diocesan report to the Episcopal College¹⁶ stated that *'The Church of England emphasises that the purpose of CMD is to "strengthen a culture of lifelong learning in the church."*' A 2017 'Statement of Expectation' from the Church of England¹⁷ regarding CMD states that: *'CMD provides a foundation of practical skills and valuable space for Clergy and Readers to gather around scripture, listen and talk to one another and deepen their insights. It is vitally important that we continue to affirm and encourage ministry after formal training has ended.'*

4.12 Both these statements would easily embrace training for collaborative ministry as part of the CMD offering. But this would only be effective if there was a reasonable rate of take up. The 20 'free' courses run by the diocese in the second half of 2020 attracted a total of 307 attendances, or an average of 14 per session. But these attendances were booked by only 131 individuals registering for an average of between 2 and 3 sessions each. Of the attendees 82 were clergy (out of a total of 117 licensed clergy) and 49 were lay (out of a total of 93 Readers). This gives a much higher proportional uptake by Clergy than Readers. But given the timing of the sessions referred to above, this is perhaps not surprising.

4.13 In addition to the 'free' courses offered by the diocese, clergy have an annual grant of £250 to aid their take-up of courses from other sources. Readers in this diocese have no such provision, although they are known to be included in the £250 grant provision in other dioceses. It is therefore highly likely that Readers also benefit less from the CMD offering from external sources.

4.14 The Bishops' Regulations¹⁸ state at para 3.4 that *'Dioceses should require licensed Readers to undertake post-admission training and Continuing Ministerial Education and Development and provide financial help for them to do so;'*

RECOMMENDATION: 13 Readers should be expected to embrace the principle of lifelong learning, but the achievement of this requires revisiting the timing and practical arrangements for delivery of in-house courses by the diocese as well as provision for Readers to claim up to £250 per annum for participation in externally provided courses.

Ministerial Development Review (MDR)

4.15 The importance of MDR has been highlighted by the recent Clergy Covenant process which culminated in the adoption by General Synod of the Clergy Covenant for Wellbeing Act last year. Its recommendations include a more effective use of Ministerial Development Reviews.

4.16 The diocesan MDR handbook¹⁹ states that: -

- *MDR in the Diocese of Truro is an expression of the Bishop's oversight of ministers in the diocese. It is intended to support and nurture those who are called to ministry.*
- *The process of review will help ministers to reflect upon their vocation and the opportunities and demands of their particular situation.*
- *The purpose of MDR is to support and encourage clergy in developing their ministry.*
- *It is not conceived in the same way as an 'appraisal' since clergy are not employees. Rather it is a demonstration of the pastoral and professional care of clergy by the Bishop.*

4.17 The transition from referring to 'ministers' in the opening comments to 'clergy' later makes it clear that Readers/Licensed Lay Ministers are not currently included in this programme in our diocese, which currently involves a review process every two years. However, the Bishops' Regulations for Readers²⁰ state at para 5.4 that: -

Periodically Readers should undergo a formal in-depth review of their ministry; dioceses will vary in their requirement but it is recommended that such a review take place every three or five years paying attention to areas of fulfilment and satisfaction, noting opportunities for expansion of ministry or re-deployment, and needs for refreshment or retraining.

The advisability of a co-ordinated Review and Relicensing process for Readers

4.18 Currently Readers' licences come up for renewal every five years in this diocese. Renewal of DBS safeguarding checks is required every three years and MDR for clergy is required every two years and Readers' working agreements with incumbents are intended to be reviewed annually (Bishops' Regulations para 5.2). A more co-ordinated process whereby time periods coincide rather than overlap. Given that safeguarding is the most immovable object a three year module approach would have much to commend it, both DBS review and MDR could take place on that frequency, with license renewal either reducing from the current five years to three, or extending by one year from five years to six thereby covering two DBS & MDR cycles. A negative outcome for safeguarding compliance at the midpoint in a licence could in any case be grounds for early termination.

4.19 It is to be hoped that such a regular co-ordinated Review of Reader ministry activities, with the active involvement of incumbents, who would need to be supportive, could help diminish the instances recorded in the annual survey of Readers complaining of being outside the Incumbent's circle of trust. The use of external Facilitators, as in clergy MDR, together with a revamped CMD programme for Continuing Professional Development then might not only erase the current issues complained of but more importantly lead to an expansion and extension of God's kingdom in Cornwall through the release of the training and talents of the considerable asset that is the Readers of the Diocese to more fully fulfil their God-given calling at little or no additional cost.

RECOMMENDATION: 14 A form of Ministerial Development Review for Readers should be introduced at the earliest opportunity on a three-yearly cycle to co-ordinate with DBS and safeguarding training renewals.

RECOMMENDATION: 15 The time period for Licence renewal for Readers should be reviewed to better co-ordinate with safeguarding checks and MDR – either extended from 5 years to 6 or reduced to 3 years.

RECOMMENDATION: 16 Incumbents should have an active role in this process and better and more frequent channels of communication between Clergy and Readers fostered.

RECOMMENDATION: 17 Although they are not subject to the same round-the-clock pressure or the experience of living in tied accommodation, Readers could also benefit from some equivalent of the Clergy Covenant to safeguard their wellbeing.

c. The Demotivation of Readers over 70

4.20 It seems strangely ageist that at the age of three score years and ten Readers suddenly stop being licensed and have to apply for a limited permission instead. However there is no reference in Canon Law to an age limit for Reader ministry or of a need to switch to ministry under the more limited PTO terms. This means that Readers over 70 can no longer use the accepted alternative title of Licensed Lay Minister. And yet the conditions to be fulfilled to obtain this 'permission' are just as rigorous as for a license for the under 70s – there must be a working agreement with the incumbent of the parish, benefice or cluster where they are to minister and written, minuted approval from all relevant PCCs. But instead of receiving a licence to a specific settled place of ministry and a specified schedule of approved activities they are merely permitted to minister '*when invited to do so on single occasions*' and no parish or benefice location for this ministry is stated on the Permission.

Despite the recommendation in the Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry (...4.6) that the PTO 'should indicate the area in which they may minister and the duties they are permitted to perform.'

4.21 Nearly half of those active in Reader ministry in the Diocese are over the age of 70. They are subject to the same regime of work agreements with incumbents and PCC approval of their ministry as Readers under 70, but are subject to renewal every three years instead of every five years.

4.22 For licenses to be removed at the age of 70 seems utterly illogical (although it seems to be applied because clergy have to seek Permission To Officiate after retirement from a paid position) and it is arguably not legitimate as it discriminates because of age. Also the Diocesan Registrar has confirmed (see Annexe 2) that there is no legal obstacle to removing the requirement for Readers to switch to PTO status when they reach 70.

RECOMMENDATION: 18 Our view is that the practice of terminating Reader licenses automatically at the age of 70 is discriminatory and demotivating and should be abolished. However, if this is not possible, we would recommend a review of the wording of Reader PTO certificates, at the very least removing the 'by invitation on single occasions' phrase.

RECOMMENDATION: 19 If mandatory transition for Readers to PTO at 70 is to be maintained, there should be written assurance for affected Readers that they may continue to use the title 'Licensed Lay Minister (LLM)'.

d. The Role of Readers in the parish before, during and after Transitions

4.23 The Bishops' Regulations²¹ (paras 4.8 & 4.9) state that: -

- *During a clergy vacancy it is normally appropriate for the Reader's ministry to continue with supervision and support from the Rural Dean and churchwardens. A potential incumbent should be made aware of any existing Readers in the parish and declare acceptance of the principles and practice of Reader ministry.*
- *At a suitable time after the end of the vacancy the new incumbent (priest in charge etc.) in consultation with the PCC should re-nominate the Reader to the Bishop for the licence to be updated. If at the end of, say, six months the new incumbent or the Reader cannot agree to re-nomination the matter should be considered by the Bishop in consultation with the Rural Dean and the Warden of Readers.'*

4.24 Guidance for the Diocese of Truro²² has a key phrase that rings through that is "may be invited". Readers may be invited to play various roles before, during and after transitions, and may play a key role in the transition team. Or they may not.

4.25 The Churchwardens and the Rural Dean have legal responsibility for the life of the parish/es for the duration of any transition and the PCC/s have the right to choose representatives to serve on the Transition Team, but beyond that all is discretionary. As the Rural Dean is effectively the incumbent for the transition period any Readers in the affected parish/parishes need to agree with him/her what their role will be during transition. Readers should have a right to expect that at least their legacy ministry role as set out in their ministry agreement with the outgoing incumbent can continue, but there may be a need for some expectation management on both sides. Both overloading the Reader with new responsibilities and diminution of their role need to be avoided if possible. But communication and the frequency of Reader meetings with their new 'incumbent' are inevitably likely to be diminished in comparison with what held when the parish had a resident incumbent. Although the Reader may well be the only Licensed Minister left in the parish, they should not presume to take over responsibilities which would normally fall to an incumbent to carry out. But neither should be unreasonably excluded from the leadership of parish life altogether.

4.26 Therefore an early meeting between Reader and Rural Dean is important in any transition process to ascertain the extent to which the Reader is willing and able to take on additional duties. The Rural Dean will also sound out the Churchwardens as to the likely reaction of the parish/es to any additional duties/roles proposed. Roles typically considered may include a debrief of the outgoing incumbent, discussion of patterns of worship during transition, setting up or co-ordinating a pastoral team, being involved in parish profiling, dealing with emergency calls and co-ordinating the parish response, and serving on the Transition Team.

4.27 It has become commonplace for parishes to remain in transition for many months, running into more than a year. A Reader may be asked to undertake a heavy workload during this time. So consideration should be given to putting support resources in place for him/her to be able to turn to during this extended period.

4.28 Reader training now includes a session on Transition and that knowledge, including the trip hazards to be avoided, should make including the Reader as a member of the Transition Team an obvious choice unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary, which could include the inability of the Reader to make the necessary time commitment.

RECOMMENDATION: 20 Readers should at the very least be able to expect a continuation of their pre-existing ministry commitments during Transition.

RECOMMENDATION: 21 Unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary, the Reader should be invited to become a member of the Transition Team.

RECOMMENDATION: 22 Readers should normally be expected to shoulder some of the burden of additional ministry work arising from Transition, as long as due consideration is given to their capability and time capacity for the tasks considered.

e. How are Readers Supported and Conflicts Resolved?

4.29 The pastoral and practical support for Readers / Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs) follows the following pattern: -

The Personnel

- Incumbents
- Rural Deans
- Spiritual Directors
- Deanery Reader Stewards (DRS)
- The Secretary of Readers
- The Chaplain of Readers
- The Deputy Warden
- The Warden of Readers

4.30 In the annual questionnaire to readers in the last few years, Readers have asked who they go to for support and generally it depends on the situation they are in and what the problem is.

4.31 In times past when email was not the first choice for communication, Deanery Reader Stewards had an important role in coordinating and communicating with Readers/LLMs in their area. They were to be the first port of call especially as the chaplain was restricted geographically. They also convened meetings of readers in their area for social functions as well as Bible studies or general discussions. In some places this still works and is a useful facility but in many others the role exists only in name.

4.32 Most readers will go to their Incumbent or Spiritual Director, but if they are not appropriate pastorally or if it is a safeguarding concern they will often go straight to the chaplain. The latter role has changed a good deal in recent years with electronic communication making the Chaplain more accessible.

4.33 Technical questions about licensing tend to go to the secretary.

4.34 Conflict resolution matters usually come straight to the Chaplain if brought about by the Reader. If by the incumbent then it might go through the Rural Dean, Warden or Deputy Warden. The Chaplain is also safeguarding contact for Readers and so deals with matters of conflict with safeguarding implications which involved the diocesan safeguarding team.

4.35 There should be a job description for the Chaplain and other roles such as Warden/Deputy Warden/Secretary, etc. and an appointment procedure.

4.36 The final word is always in the hands of the Suffragan Bishop as Warden to Readers e.g. if a Reader is to have their license withdrawn or not renewed the news will come from the Warden to whom the Reader has a final right to appeal.

RECOMMENDATION: 22 If the Role of Deanery Reader Steward is to be continued, it should have a proper Job Description, and any Stewards who are no longer active should be replaced.

RECOMMENDATION: 23 All support roles for Reader Ministry should have a proper Job Description and an appointment procedure.

f. Readers and the Diocesan Website and other messaging

4.37 The Diocesan Website has proved a fruitful area for complaint from Readers (LLMs) for a variety of reasons.

- difficulty in finding information
- lack of cohesion / joined up thinking in the ministry page
- some information is dated

4.38 The Chaplain of Readers has consulted Church House staff pointing out specific anomalies on the site which is under evolving development.

Under Ministry (for example):

- The Lay Ministry Tab: does not include reader ministry
- The Vocations Tab: is restricted to ordained vocations
- Readers: is a separate Tab

4.39 The contents of the Readers Page and Links were also discussed. Some of these things need updating but it was suggested that content should not be reviewed until after this report is published.

4.40 The key notion is that Reader Ministry should be an integral part of ministry in its widest sense and at the moment it looks like a 'bolt-on'

4.41 The Website does not need to be looked at in terms of how Readers are represented rather than how vocations and ministry are presented and how Readers fit into that. Currently the website reflects a heavy emphasis towards ordained ministry.

4.42 Further development of the website is ongoing and intended but deciding the content of the reader/LLM pages before the consultation is complete would seem premature.

RECOMMENDATION: 24 Attention should be given in forthcoming upgrades of the diocesan website to not only updating information in relation to Reader Ministry, but also changing its location within the architecture of the website so that it is clearly situated within the wider context of Ministry in general and Lay Ministry in particular and clearly visible among the ministry options presented to those exploring vocations.

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1 This Working Party was convened on an *ad hoc* and time limited basis. Our mandate will be concluded when this report is received by the Warden of Reader's Committee. However, we are conscious that change cannot come from mere words on paper alone. We therefore strongly recommend that steps are taken to ensure that our Recommendations are individually addressed and an Action Plan is drawn up identifying timescales and responsibility for implementation. A Review of progress should then follow one to one and a half years from receipt of this report.

RECOMMENDATION 25 After consideration of our Recommendations an Action Plan should be drawn up identifying timescales and responsibility for implementation. This should be followed by a Review of progress one to one and a half years from receipt of this Report.

6. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

3. DEFINING THE ROLE

a. Distinctives and Definitions of Reader Ministry

Definition

A Reader is a Lay Minister working under episcopal licence and in agreement with their incumbent, theologically trained and qualified to preach, teach, lead church services and interpret the Christian faith to other lay people from a position of understanding of secular life and to offer pastoral care in the name of the church to all sorts and conditions of people in sickness and in health, in dying and bereavement. They are also to assist in mobilising fellow laity for mission and helping to build discipleship.

Strapline

Community Ministers who teach, preach and enable everyday Christian faith.

RECOMMENDATION: 1 That the definition and strapline for Reader Ministry in the paragraphs above be adopted for use in this Diocese.

b. Reader or Licensed Lay Minister - What's in a Name?

RECOMMENDATION 2: Licensed Lay Minister should become the general preferred title for those exercising Reader Ministry in the Diocese

RECOMMENDATION 3: PTO regulations should be reviewed so that this title is made available to all those in active Reader ministry.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The option of continuing with the title of Reader should be kept available for the time being for those prevented by PTO from adopting the new title and for long-serving Readers unhappy at the prospect of losing this title

c. A unique lay ministry, or just one among many others?

RECOMMENDATION 5: Any Local Worship Leader, who feels that they might be called to preach, should be expected to discuss this in the context of progressing to training for Reader ministry or even possibly towards ordination.

d. Readers as a resource for the Church far beyond 'core competences'

RECOMMENDATION 6: A process of formal on-the-job training should be considered for the first three years of newly licensed Readers' ministry culminating in a competence review on conclusion.

RECOMMENDATION 7: After competence review for newly licensed Readers and at least at licence renewal for established Readers there should be a consideration of possible complementary roles

RECOMMENDATION 8: When the On the Way process proposes an Oversight Minister/Focal Ministers pattern a process to identify which Readers might be appropriate to take up a Focal Minister role should be initiated.

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5. NEXT STEPS

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

² From M.A.Whitehead, an MPhil Thesis of the University of Newcastle, Episcopal Visitation to Prophetic Episcopacy: a study of the mission of the Church of England, as seen through the relationship between the Bishops of Durham and the Clergy of Stockton on Tees, 2003

³ <https://transformingministry.co.uk/information/>

⁴ <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/gs1689-reader%20Upbeat%3A%20reader%20ministry%20in%20the%20church%20today.pdf>

⁵ <https://transformingministry.co.uk/information/>

⁶ <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/gs1689-reader%20Upbeat%3A%20reader%20ministry%20in%20the%20church%20today.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/23-february/news/uk/archbishop-of-york-readers-ordained-deacons-scheme>

⁸ <https://dioceseofyork.org.uk/news-events/news/archbishop-ordains-new-deacons-for-the-diocese-of-york/>

⁹ <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/gs1689-reader%20Upbeat%3A%20reader%20ministry%20in%20the%20church%20today.pdf>

¹⁰ (<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/GS%20Misc%201224%20Ministry%20for%20a%20Christian%20Presence.pdf>)

¹¹ Baxter, C in Khurt,G and Nappin,P (eds), Bridging the Gap: Reader Ministry Today(CHP 2002), p 2

¹² (<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/GS%20Misc%201265%20A%20Vision%20for%20Lay%20Ministries.pdf>)

¹³ <https://trurodiocese.org.uk/resources/ministry/cmd/>

¹⁴ <https://trurodiocese.org.uk/resources/ministry/external-course-opportunities/>

¹⁵ <https://exeter.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-Jan-March-CMD-revised-3rd-edition-READERS.pdf>

¹⁶ Truro Diocese CMD Programme 2020; “Report on the provision of CMD within the Diocese of Truro during 2020.”

¹⁷ https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/continuing_ministerial_development_guidance.pdf

¹⁸ Bishops’ Regulations for Reader Ministry 2000 <https://transformingministry.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Bishops-Regulations-For-Reader-Ministry.pdf>

¹⁹ Ministerial Development Review Handbook 2017, Diocese of Truro

²⁰ Bishops’ Regulations for Reader Ministry 2000 <https://transformingministry.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Bishops-Regulations-For-Reader-Ministry.pdf>

²¹ Bishops’ Regulations for Reader Ministry 2000 <https://transformingministry.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Bishops-Regulations-For-Reader-Ministry.pdf>

²² Diocesan Terms of Reference for Transition Teams and correspondence with the Head of Ministry

ANNEXE 1

Defining the conversations about Reader Ministry

How can we create an environment within parishes and within the diocese that will enable Reader Ministry to flourish?

2 pieces of work to answer help this question:

1. Defining the role – some questions for consideration:

- a. How does/could Reader Ministry ‘fit’ within the variety of lay and ordained, licensed, authorised and commissioned ministries?
- b. Would a different title, e.g. Licensed Lay Minister (LLM)
- c. Is there a unique role for Readers/LLMs? Does there have to be?
- d. How could we encourage/enable Readers/LLMs to use their God given gifts in all of life (Sunday – Saturday) – not just on Sundays?
- e. Is there a role for Readers to support other ministries?
- f. How can we celebrate the vast array of ‘ministries’ exercised by Readers within the Diocese whilst not diluting one of the main identities – that of a Lay Theologian?

2. Valuing the role – some questions for consideration:

- a. How do we ensure that our structures/systems/processes encourage and value Reader Ministry?
 - i. Licensing & Relicensing (?PTO)
 - ii. Ministry Development Review (MDR)
 - iii. Continuing Ministry Development (CMD)
 - iv. Diocesan Website and other messaging
 - v. Before, during and after Transitions
 - vi. Other issues?
- b. How should conflicts be resolved?

Suggested Terms of Reference for a Task and Finish Group

- Maximum of 2 – 3 meetings
- Membership: 7 members maximum: Majority Readers plus 1 or 2 Clergy.
- Group should be chaired by a Reader
- Report from Group to be presented to the Warden’s Meeting on 25 May 2021
- Mel Pomery (Ministry Programmes Co-ordinator) will provide secretariat support (arranging meetings and taking notes, but she will not write the report!)

Possible Group Members:

Readers: Roy Cooper, Jane Darlington, Liz Lane, Tony Le Fevre, David Fieldsend

Clergy: Helen Baber and Caspar Bush

Suggested Reference Documents:

Ministry for a Christian Presence in Every Community:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/GS%20Misc%201224%20Ministry%20for%20a%20Christian%20Presence.pdf>

A Vision for Lay Ministries: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/GS%20Misc%201265%20A%20Vision%20for%20Lay%20Ministries.pdf>

Kingdom Calling: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Kingdom%20Calling%20Web%20Version.pdf>

Resourcing Sunday to Saturday Faith: <https://transformingministry.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/19466-Council-CoE-Resourcing-Faith-Booklet-AW.pdf>

ANNEXE 2

From: Laura Chesham <LChesham@VWV.CO.UK>

Sent: 23 April 2021 12:54

To: 'David Fieldsend' <davidfieldsend@hotmail.com>

Subject: RE: Review of Reader Ministry in Truro Diocese [VWV-LIVE.FID2688178]

Dear David

Many thanks for your email - please accept my apologies for the delay in replying.

I thought it would be helpful to set out the legal framework for Readers as it applies to their licensing/age:

- The Canons of the Church of England (Canon E4.1) confirms that *"a lay person, whether man or woman, who is baptized and confirmed and who satisfies the bishop that he is a regular communicant of the Church of England may be admitted by the bishop of the diocese to the office of reader in the Church and licensed by him to perform the duties which may lawfully be performed by a reader..."*.
- Canon E6 also provides *"No person who has been admitted to the office of reader shall exercise his office in any diocese until he has been licensed so to do by the bishop thereof; Provided that, when any reader is to exercise his office temporarily in any diocese, the written permission of the bishop shall suffice"*.
- In 2000 the House of Bishops of the General Synod accepted the "Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry". The intention of the Regulations is to *"provide an agreed framework for further growth and development...These Regulations clarify the basis of their duties and the practice of their ministry, and provide a common understanding to be applied in all dioceses"*.
- The Regulations provide at paragraph 4.6 that *"On reaching the age of 70 Readers who wish to remain in active ministry should apply for the bishop's written permission to officiate"*.
- As referenced in the Canons, the role of reader is considered an "office" in the Church of England. There are age limits imposed on certain ecclesiastical offices under the Ecclesiastical Offices (Age Limit) Measure 1975. Any person to whom the Measure applies will not be capable of being appointed to the office if they are aged 70 or over. This Measure applies to any person who holds an office subject to Common Tenure.
- Readers may, in principle, receive a stipend. If they do, they will be subject to the Common Tenure rules. It therefore follows that where a Reader does not receive a stipend, they will not be subject to the Common Tenure rules. In practice the officer of Reader is voluntary and unpaid, and therefore I anticipate that it's unlikely that there are many (if any) Readers who receive a stipend and therefore would be subject to the Common Tenure Rules.

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- Any Reader who receives a stipend (and therefore under Common Tenure) would be required to retire at 70. Where the bishop wishes for the Reader to continue to exercise their Reader ministry other than through PTO, then he can issue a direction authorising the holding of the office as Reader for a further time-limited period. As I've said above, I anticipate it unlikely that there are Readers receiving a stipend and therefore I have included this detail for completeness only.

My view is that, except in the (possibly limited) cases where a Reader receives a stipend and the Common Tenure rules apply, there are no legal requirements under ecclesiastical law requiring Readers to "give up" their licence at aged 70 and move to PTO instead. The House of Bishops' Regulations appear to be a form of guidance with the aim of bringing some consistency to the approach to Reader ministry across the Dioceses. I expect like much of the guidance from the House of Bishops, there is an expectation that it should be followed unless there is a "cogent" reason why not. However, these Regulations are now over 20 years old and pre-date the Equality Act 2010 and the Common Tenure rules.

I agree with you that a shift in general practice across Dioceses is unlikely to be quick to come to fruition. In the meantime, however, I do not see why the wording of the Reader PTO could not be made more specific so as to reflect the Reader ministry in a similar way to the Licence (and to tie together with the Diocese's policy).

I hope the above is helpful, but please let me know if you have any further questions.

With kind regards

Laura

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Senior Associate

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