

Reader Upbeat

revised report

Reader Upbeat: revised report

Ministry Division

Church House,

Great Smith Street,

London SW1P 3AZ

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Responding to 'Reader Upbeat'

We commend the report *Reader Upbeat (GS 1689)* and the shortened version as helpful contributions to the understanding and practice of Reader ministry. Included in the report are 30 recommendations for the future.

Some of the recommendations are inspirational and many are incontestable.¹ Many – perhaps most – of the recommendations relate to one key issue, that is whether all those who are trained, admitted, deployable and licensed Readers are full partners in the public ministry of the Church.² The key to resolving this underlying issue may lie in adapting recommendation 25 (on the Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry) by not separating Reader ministry from other forms of public ministry but including them in such regulations (appropriately adapted) as exist for those who are ordained. Just as the three orders of ministry have different natures and functions, so it should be possible to build into unified regulations such distinctions as apply uniquely to lay ministry.

Some of the recommendations need to be considered in a distinct but equally broad context: for instance the report makes recommendations about the conditions under which a Reader might baptize and the desirability of Readers presiding at services of Communion by Extension.³ These may be described as 'presenting symptoms' of a need to think through a much more important conundrum, the role of a lay minister to whom pastoral and liturgical oversight is entrusted within a local community. There is little point in an argument over contentious presenting symptoms about which agreement will not be reached until the Church develops something of a common mind on the underlying puzzle.

With the Central Readers' Council we call on our brother Bishops and the wider Church to face these issues and to work towards a common mind. It will never be satisfactory to tick off each recommendation in *Reader Upbeat* and imagine all is well, least of all for those who give so freely of their lives and commitment in Reader ministry.

At the same time as we point to the need for the Church at national level to face these primary questions we acknowledge that there are other matters to address in many of the recommendations, such as the growing link between Reader ministry and fresh expressions of Church. The following document should enable dioceses to respond to these questions in a common format as well as inviting the Church to begin the discussion of the two underlying issues we have outlined above.

+Graham Bishop of Norwich and
Chair of the Ministry Council

+Robert Bishop of Sodor and Man and
Chair of the Central Readers' Council

¹ Recommendations 1 and 2, for instance.

² Recommendations 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27 & 28 may be said to refer directly to this, and 8, 10, 12, 14, 25 & 29 tangentially.

³ Recommendations 27 and 28.

Reader Upbeat: revised report

Preface

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth”

The report *Reader Upbeat!* was presented at the July 2008 session of the General Synod. A motion was passed by substantial majorities in all three houses, a motion which in its amended form read as follows:

“That this Synod welcomes the report on Reader Ministry and, celebrating the ministry of Readers, calls upon the dioceses, deaneries and parishes of the Church of England, along with the House of Bishops:

(a) to encourage the study of the report, and in particular by clergy and Readers;

(b) to consider how its recommendations and action points may be pursued nationally and in each diocesan and local situation; and

(c) in the case of dioceses, to report back to the Ministry Council of the Archbishops’ Council by July 2010 on initiatives they have taken to implement one or more of the recommendations.”

Following indications gained from the Synod debate, the report has been amended for this publication. The original report containing the remaining supporting annexes can be found by accessing the original report on

www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/agendas/gs1689.rtf

It is hoped that dioceses will support its distribution to all clergy, Readers and members of the diocesan Bishop’s Council and encourage it to be read.

In its amended form:

Chapter 1 What’s New and a Summary of the Recommendations includes the main points of the original Introduction.

Chapter 2 Reader Ministry Now is formed by the merger of Chapters 1 and 3

Chapter 3 Reader Ministry – The Way Ahead is drawn from Chapter 4

In Chapter 2, ‘Reader Ministry Now’, the report assesses current experience of Reader ministry, and looks at fundamental questions such as: ‘What is new and different in Reader Ministry’ and ‘What are the problems in it that have occasioned this review?’ It reflects on what is positive and challenging about the practice of Reader Ministry today.

In Chapter 3, ‘Reader Ministry – the Way Ahead’, the report seeks to suggest ways in which Reader Ministry could be clarified and enhanced in the years to come, including thirty recommendations for further work along with some appropriate action points.

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The summary of the recommendations and action points according to whom they are addressed, has become Annex 1 (formerly chapter 5). The relevant sections of the Canons of the Church of England has become Annex 2 (formerly Annex 5); the list of the members of the working party, with acknowledgments has become Annex 3 (formerly Annex 6).

The remaining annexes (4 to 7) are available on line at www.cofe.anglican.org/lifeevents/ministry/ and www.readers.cofe.anglican.org/

In the light of the response to questionnaires, Annex 4 (formerly Annex 2) shows the range of activity beyond normal church activity which Readers consider to be part of their ministry. Some short vignettes – Readers writing about their own ministry - have been added to it.

Annex 5 is a new short essay by the Bishop of Oxford, **The Reader as Lay Educator**.

The important background material, in Chapter 2 of the original report, has been moved to be Annexes 6 and 7. Annex 6 explores what we may learn from the scriptures about the exercise of ministries similar to Reader ministry within the early church. Annex 7 considers the history of the Reader Movement, particularly in the Church of England.

The amended version is the work of the Chair of the original working group, the Bishop of Carlisle, the Ven. Christopher Lowson, Director of Ministry, Ministry Division and Professor John Wood, the Chair of the Editorial Committee for *The Reader*, (a Reader).

The members of the working party that produced the full report were invited to join the group by the Rt. Revd. Graham Dow, Bishop of Carlisle, himself acting at the request of the Archbishops' Council. The working party members, listed in Annex 3, represent clergy and Readers of different traditions and a spectrum of opinion. Since beginning its work, the group has collaborated with colleagues in the Ministry and Education divisions of the Archbishops' Council. Also acknowledged in Annex 3 is the considerable number of people who took the time and the trouble to comment on earlier drafts of the full report, for which the working group is very grateful.

+Graham Dow

April 2009

Chapter 1

What's new and a summary of the recommendations

1.1 The heart of this report

1.1.1 Reader ministry has made a vital and outstanding contribution to the life and ministry of the Church of England for over 100 years and anticipates an exciting and challenging future. This report celebrates that huge contribution. There is a historical essay in Annex 7 outlining the reintroduction of this ministry in the 1860s, and sketching important points in its history up to the present day. It is time to recapture the vision.

1.1.2 **New Directions** This is an important time for Reader ministry to be strengthened and given clear and new directions in order for the ministry to develop and flourish in the decades ahead. The long-standing and settled pattern in which Readers were regular officiants at services of Morning and Evening Prayer, while valuable, does not reflect the range of ministry opportunities in the modern world. The future of Reader ministry lies in taking up a variety of new directions.

First, many of the new opportunities are at where the traditional institutional church meets society face to face; in fact it was for just such reasons that Reader ministry was reintroduced in the 19th century.

Secondly, the thorough theological training that Readers have received needs to be put to work in the tasks of lay education, and also in preaching and teaching which address the questions of daily life faced by their fellow laity.

Thirdly, where Readers have pastoral as well as catechetical gifts, there are opportunities for them to be given pastoral care of parish communities within benefices or congregations within multi-parish benefices.

Fourthly, they can be part of ministerial teams, for example in deaneries, which are able to make prompt responses to the need for bereavement care and funeral ministry.

1.1.3 In allowing itself to be recast in this way Reader ministry, we believe, has a very positive future. But it is a future which must be developed in ways which are exploratory, fluid, dynamic, flexible and inevitably risky. Readers, by virtue of their training and experience, are a great resource for the service of the whole Church; a resource which is theologically articulate, spiritually mature and ministerially skilled. This resource needs to be used to the full. At present, around 10,000 Readers quietly and faithfully undertake their work at the grass roots but are too often unrecognised; their work has been neglected and their potential underestimated.

1.1.4 Reader ministry is distinct from the many burgeoning lay ministries in parishes and dioceses because it is thoroughly trained and is licensed by the bishop. It is nationally accredited and transferable across the Church of England and beyond. This report presents for consideration the case for a clear distinction between licensed ministries, as nationally accredited and transferable, and those ministries belonging only to a particular diocese, ministries that may, nevertheless, have episcopal permission or a commission. Our proposals seek to strengthen the national framework for lay ministry while leaving dioceses with the freedom to meet local needs with their own non-transferable, local, innovative and exploratory patterns of ministry. All resources need to be utilised to maximum effect in the spread of the Gospel.

1.2 What's new? – the key proposals and challenges

Underlying the recommendations put forward in this report are the following proposals.

1.2.1 A clear distinction is made between lay ministers who are licensed by the Diocesan Bishop (according to Canons E4 to E8) and other lay ministers of varied and more exploratory kinds in the dioceses, where ministers may have permissions or commissions but not the bishop's licence.

1.2.2 Consultation takes place to consider Recommendation 19 that all lay ministers licensed under the Canons belong to a national framework in which they are nationally accredited through training which is nationally moderated (Recommendation 19).⁴

1.2.3 Within the overall category of nationally accredited and licensed lay ministers, a range of categories could be developed after further consultation. In addition to Readers, these might, over the course of time, be extended to include other areas of ministry such as Evangelists, Pastoral Assistants and Youth Ministers. Such licensed ministry would normally be transferable from one diocese to another and fully supported in a comparable way to licensed ordained clergy (Recommendation 20).⁵

1.2.4 Nationally accredited ministers are all known as Licensed Lay Ministers. As proposed in Recommendations 18 and 19 a suffix can be used to denote any particular category: e.g. Licensed Lay Minister (Reader); Licensed Lay Minister (Pastoral Assistant) etc. It is suggested that according to diocesan custom these ministers can be known either by the title Licensed Lay Minister, (LLM), or by the category title: Reader; Pastoral Assistant; Evangelist etc.

1.2.5 Readers continue to be thoroughly trained as preachers, but also as catechists and facilitators of learning and as those with the skill to be examples to other laity as bearers and interpreters of the Word of God in daily working life. Their training will enable them to gain such understanding of people and their pastoral needs as will equip them for their role as communicators. (Recommendations 1, 2 and 3)

1.2.6 More opportunity will be taken in parishes to give Readers with pastoral gifts areas of pastoral responsibility and, more widely, the care of distinct congregations as the local catechist, pastor and leader of worship (Recommendation 6).

⁴ Moderation has now become the responsibility of the Quality in Formation Panel of the Ministry Division. To avoid confusion the term 'moderation' will be dropped.

⁵ Leaving the Church Army with its own structures, this report invites consideration of a national framework for all other licensed lay ministries

1.2.7 A national consistency is reached whereby it is normal for Readers, with the appropriate training, to take funerals (Recommendation 7).

1.2.8 In order to meet the ongoing challenge of mission in the present generation, Reader ministry, as a whole, seeks to redevelop itself. It is envisaged that Readers will not only be skilled preachers and educators, they will seize opportunities on the boundaries of regular church life. They will take up a great variety of chaplaincy work, forging new opportunities for the public presence of the Church. They will be active in 'fresh expressions' of 'church' (Recommendations 8 and 9).

1.2.9 It will become normal for Readers to be well deployed across a deanery in catechetical, pastoral or mission work and their availability as a resource is signified by their being normally licensed to the deanery (Recommendation 16).

1.2.10 Dioceses establish ways of discerning vocations and future ministries in such a way as to ensure that there has been ample opportunity for gifts for a particular category of ministry to be discerned before people are committed for training, and that as people develop, there remains the flexibility for growth and development of their gifts and potential with ongoing CME resourcing to equip Readers for specialist areas of ministry (Recommendations 10 and 11).

1.3 The Recommendations

Building on the above proposals, the report in Chapter 3 offers 30 key Recommendations and supporting Action Points. It is hoped that these will stimulate further discussion in the dioceses.⁶ To give Readers a quick guide to the recommendations, they are grouped and listed here.

The promotion of Reader ministry

We recommend that all dioceses of the Church of England recognise the value of Reader ministry and actively promote it as the best trained and resourced lay ministry with a wide variety of opportunities. (**Recommendation 23**; 2.5.6; 3.1.1 - 2; 3.13.7)

The categories of lay ministry

We recommend that the name of the office of Reader is changed to Licensed Lay Minister (Reader). (**Recommendation 18**; 3.11.4; 3.11.5)

We recommend that all lay workers licensed by the bishop are known as Licensed Lay Ministers. A working sub-title can be added which may vary according to diocesan or national practice (e.g. Reader, Pastoral Assistant, etc.). Careful consideration, with consultation, is given to the possibility of a national framework through which these ministries can be nationally accredited and normally transferable between dioceses. (**Recommendation 19**; 3.11.1 to 3.11.6.)

⁶ The recommendations which follow are grouped by subject and do not appear in the same numerical order as they appear in Chapter 3. In Annex 1, the recommendations and action points are grouped according to whom they are addressed.

Reader vocation

We recommend that Readers keep before them their calling to be examples of those who are bearers and interpreters of the Word in the context of their daily occupation, be it paid or voluntary. (**Recommendation 1**; 3.1.1 to 3.1.3; 3.2.1)

We recommend that dioceses encourage Readers to see their core ministry of preaching and teaching and leading worship as both a significant part of the Church's ministry to equip lay disciples for their mission in the world and the opportunity to engage in mission on the boundaries of the Church. (**Recommendation 2**; 3.1.1 – 3.1.3; 3.2.1 – 3.2.7; 3.4.1; 7.2.4 – 7.2.9)

We recommend that the office of Reader, in keeping with other ministerial categories in the Church, is to be seen as fluid rather than static and part of an ongoing journey of vocation, the nature of which is regularly discerned afresh. To address this, dioceses will need vocations advisers to cover the full range of ministries. (**Recommendation 10**; 3.5.2; 3.6.5)

We recommend that parishes specifically encourage vocations to Reader ministry, particularly among young adults. (**Recommendation 12**; 3.6.1; 3.6.8)

We recommend that on-going support be given in the dioceses for Readers to explore their vocation to ministry and to specific missional tasks, including the possibility of ordained ministry, either to the vocational diaconate or to the priesthood. (**Recommendation 29**; 3.16.4 - 5)

Ministry according to gifts

We recommend that dioceses support parishes in the careful discernment of potential gifts in lay persons and certainly prior to them being considered for selection for training as Readers. This is to include the discernment of gifts for the core ministries of preaching and teaching, leading worship and interpreting the faith, by such opportunities being given by incumbents to lay people. (**Recommendation 11**; 3.6.1 to 3.6.9)

We recommend that dioceses permit their Readers to serve in all aspects of ministry allowed by Canon Law and support them. (**Recommendation 5**; 3.3.4 - 5)

Reader training

We recommend that dioceses strengthen the provision of Reader CME, and in particular the development of the skill of Readers as preachers, catechists and educators enabling them to interpret Christian Faith as it engages with daily life and work. (**Recommendation 3**; 3.2.1 – 4; Annex 5)

We recommend that Regional Training Partnerships seek to create opportunities for those selected for training as Readers and ordained ministers to train together and ecumenically. (**Recommendation 13**; 3.8.8)

We recommend that without lowering standards, training programmes for Reader Ministry need to be more flexible. They should be accessible and designed to encourage candidates for ministry, particularly younger candidates. Course design needs to enable this by encouraging varied patterns of engagement and incorporating AP(E)L opportunities for former learning experiences to be recognised. (**Recommendation 14**; 3.8.9)

We recommend that dioceses encourage the ongoing development of Readers in ministry by offering CME modules in specialised areas of ministry and by providing resources for

Readers to engage with appropriate training offered elsewhere. (**Recommendation 15**; 3.9.1 to 3.9.4)

We recommend that bishops who support the ordination of a Reader who is 55 or over, take into account the experience of a long-standing Reader when assessing training needs. (**Recommendation 30**)

Reader deployment

We recommend that dioceses widen their vision to include the possible appointment of a Reader as Reader-in-Charge of a congregation, with the corresponding roles of catechist and of pastoral care, possibly also as a House for Duty appointment and that Readers are also considered for sector minister posts. (**Recommendation 6**; 3.3.4; 3.4.9; 3.10.7 - 8)

We recommend that dioceses encourage the use of Readers with pastoral gifts in bereavement care and funeral ministry, and deaneries strengthen the teams of ministers available for funeral ministry by including Readers. (**Recommendation 7**; 3.3.4 -5; 3.9.2 - 3; 3.10.7 - 8)

We recommend that dioceses, deaneries and parishes look for opportunities for Readers to exercise their ministry on the boundaries of the Church, in breaking new ground with 'fresh expressions' of church and mission, and in circles where there might otherwise be no representative public ministry of the Church. (**Recommendation 8**; 3.4.1 to 3.4.5)

We recommend that dioceses, deaneries and parishes should look for opportunities for the appointment of Readers as chaplains both to institutions where chaplains are already recognised and in places where such an appointment breaks new ground. (**Recommendation 9**; 3.4.6 - 7)

We recommend that Readers are normally licensed to the deanery, although with a designated incumbent specified for accountability and support. (**Recommendation 16**; 3.10.3)

We recommend that for Public Services of Communion by Extension, Readers, in the light of their training, are considered as the primary choice among lay officiants. The guidelines for this synodically approved ministry should be applied more evenly across the country. (**Recommendation 28**; 3.15.3 to 3.15.6)

Core Reader ministries

We recommend that dioceses indicate their support for Readers as interpreters of the gospel in daily life by encouraging the use of Readers as preachers at the main parish Sunday service of Holy Communion. (**Recommendation 4**; 3.2.2 - 3)

Collaborative ministry

We recommend that dioceses extensively promote training and support for collaborative ministry which all incumbents with Readers are expected to undergo, as well as Readers and all lay ministers. (**Recommendation 21**; 3.12.6)

We recommend that dioceses ensure that Readers, as licensed ministers, are consulted over the appointments of incumbents and assistant clergy, as a matter of course. (**Recommendation 22**; 3.13.8)

We recommend that deaneries regularly invite Readers, as licensed ministers, to chapter meetings, making collaborative ministry more visible and fostering friendship amongst ministers. (**Recommendation 17**; 3.10.3)

Support for Reader ministry

We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and that they receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. (**Recommendation 20**; 1.2.3; 3.11.3 – 7; 3.13. 5-6; 3.14.3)

We recommend that dioceses should encourage Readers and all Licensed Lay Ministers to attend to their own spiritual refreshment and development with times in which they step back from active involvement and by provision of financial support for courses relevant to their vocation. (**Recommendation 26**; 3.14.4)

Reader function

We recommend that the House of Bishops decides whether it wishes to clarify further those circumstances under which it might be appropriate for a bishop to permit a Reader, or other Licensed Lay Minister, to baptise. (**Recommendation 27**; 3.15.2)

We recommend that the House of Bishops requests the Ministry Division to set in train a revision of the Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry. (**Recommendation 25**; 3.14.5; 3.14.6)

Reader discipline

We recommend that the House of Bishops clarifies what expectations there are of Readers and other Licensed Lay Ministers in view of their role as public representatives and teachers of the Christian Faith as the Church of England sets it forth and the House sets in train the preparation of an acceptable disciplinary procedure for Readers. (**Recommendation 24**; 3.13.11)

Chapter 2

Reader ministry now

(abridged and amended from chapters 1 and 3 in the report *Reader Update!*)

2.1 The February 2006 debate on Reader ministry

2.1.1 The report brought to the General Synod in July 2008 was prepared at the request of the Archbishops' Council following approval by the General Synod of a private member's motion on Reader Ministry at the February 2006 group of sessions. The motion was proposed by Nigel Holmes (Carlisle), himself a Reader, and successfully amended by Peter Capon (Manchester), another Reader, to read:

That this Synod, aware that the work of the ten thousand Readers is crucial to the mission of the Church, requests the Archbishops' Council to consider how this nationally-accredited office should be developed and Readers more fully and effectively deployed, in the light of the welcome recent introduction of a great variety of patterns of voluntary local ministry, both lay and ordained.

2.1.2 The debate revealed that there are some parts of the church in which Readers' morale is now low. However, the debate also revealed that there are many Readers who feel totally fulfilled in their ministry, and who have the satisfaction of believing that they are being given by the church the opportunity to exercise an effective ministry.

2.1.3 The general picture of the state of Reader Ministry across the Church as reflected in this debate was one of a resource of ministry that in some places was under appreciated and that there was now an opportunity to explore how this large cohort of increasingly well-trained volunteers could be used more creatively to serve the Church of God.

2.1.4 The contribution from Canon Philip McDonough, a Reader from St Albans diocese, summed the situation up well when in his speech he surveyed how Reader ministry had fared in recent years:

Since 1990 patterns and styles of worship have been significantly revised. Pastoral reorganization at national and parochial level has caused drastic alterations, either by extinction or by amalgamations, due to declining numbers of ordained clergy and financial constraints. Throughout this period, Readers, through their diocesan boards, have quietly and faithfully got on with pastoral care and sustained worship in places where it would have ceased many years ago. This has been at a cost to them. Readers have been taken for granted, and now they find themselves at the bottom of the pile in mission and ministry in this national Church.

Canon McDonough went on to say:

“I stand here, humbly pleading with the Archbishops’ Council to listen and to take Readers and our ministry seriously and place it where it should be within the structures and status of the Church of England, not on the fringes, not as an appendage, not as an add-on when all else fails, but at the centre.”

2.1.5 The Archbishop’s Council responded to the motion passed in the debate by setting up a working party to review the ministry of Readers.⁷ It was agreed by the Bishops’ Committee for Ministry that the key points for the Review were:

- (a) The traditional role for Readers of preaching, teaching and holding a lay theological understanding;
- (b) To give guidance as to the transferability or mobility to other forms of ministry;
- (c) To reaffirm the need for a lay theologized ministry.

It was agreed that the review should consider whether the present Canons authorising Reader ministry were still fit for purpose given the changes that have occurred. It was agreed that review should focus on

- The morale of the Readers
- The range of ways in which they are deployed
- Why some Readers are under used
- The areas of ministry available for Reader ministry and other forms of lay ministry
- Ways in which the roles of a Reader could be clarified and communicated.

2.2 The present context of Reader ministry in the Church of England

2.2.1 The issues raised in the debate in February 2006 reflect the mixed views on Reader Ministry present within the Church as a whole. Although there has been an evolution in the functions of Reader over the last 50 years in almost every diocese, because there has been no national co-ordination of the changes, there are nearly as many versions of change as there are dioceses.

2.2.2 This means that, when a new vicar arrives, or a Reader moves to another diocese, the expectations of their ministry can change, perhaps unsettling their ministry and calling on them to work in a way that is less suited to their gifts. For morale to be healthy there must be agreed (and possibly standardised) expectations between Reader and incumbent.

2.2.3 The position is complicated still further because in the period since 1960 there have been several developments in ordained ministries with Non-stipendiary Ministry (NSM),⁸ Ordained Local Ministry (OLM), House for Duty Ministry, distinctive or permanent deacons (in some dioceses) and, most recently, Ordained Pioneer Ministries. There has also been in recent decades an increase in lay ministries developed on a local basis to meet local needs. Some dioceses recognise a range of different specialised ministries, offer various training schemes for these, and arrange for various patterns of authorisation at parish, deanery or diocesan level. Some of these are exercised under a bishop’s commission or

⁷ For the details of the working party see Annex 3

⁸ Non-stipendiary Ministry is sometimes referred to as Self-supporting Ministry.

permission, but usually not under a bishop's licence.⁹ Examples include pastoral lay assistants, lay evangelists and commissioned lay ministers – the nomenclature used from diocese to diocese varies for jobs that are in reality quite similar. Some form of lay pastoral ministry is authorised at diocesan level in over half the dioceses, though there is a wide variation in the ways in which diocesan schemes operate. There is also children's work, community ministry, evangelism, music ministry, worship leading, youth work ministry, etc.. Most are volunteers; some are employed directly by PCCs and parish trusts.

2.2.4 Other recognised and authorised lay ministry includes some hospital, college and prison chaplaincies with lay volunteers or assistant lay chaplains, and the Mother's Union, with its own pattern of ecclesiastical recognition. All these initiatives have both honoured and encouraged the blossoming of lay vocation and recognised ministry. Following the introduction of Ordained Pioneer Ministry, opportunities for lay pioneer ministry are also being implemented along national guidelines.

2.2.5 Some parishes have set up ministry teams working alongside ordained clergy and Readers, involving those with a range of worship and pastoral responsibilities, but with training that does not match the breadth or theological depth of that offered to Readers.¹⁰

2.2.6 Readers can feel undervalued when others with less extensive training have taken on ministerial tasks for which they formerly had responsibility. Readers have sometimes seen certain activities as their province, and express their concern at seeing some of these at times undertaken by untrained laity. However, several activities listed in Canon E4, which Readers may perform without further authorisation, have also, by longstanding common custom in many churches, also undertaken by others (e.g. 'teach in Sunday School', 'read the word of God').

2.2.7 The diversification of ministries and the involvement of many laity has been a stimulus to positive developments in Reader Ministry. Although some Readers have felt concern when others undertake some accustomed Reader functions, others have responded with enthusiasm to new challenges and possibilities, such as leading and training others in parish ministry groups, and chaplaincy roles (see 3.4.6 - 7). Reader training programmes have evolved to encourage the development of lay theologians and those who can encourage the education and formation of others in their congregations (see Annex 5).

2.2.8 From the early 20th century, Reader ministry was the key form of lay public ministry: it was recognised by the whole Church and transferable between dioceses. Since there were few other formal opportunities for an ongoing and trained lay ministry in parishes, for many it was Reader ministry or nothing. Readers, like parish priests, have often been 'general practitioners', turning their hand to whatever is required of them at the time. They embraced a wide range of possibilities for ministry, ranging from leading worship, preaching and teaching to pastoral care and evangelism.

2.2.9 There is some flexibility in the interpretation of the national Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry, and diocesan variations are apparent. As dioceses and parishes develop varied patterns of lay ministry, some Readers may move and find that areas of ministry they have previously performed are no longer permitted (e.g. funeral ministry) or are undertaken by others. Some may find that they are not fully equipped in areas expected of Readers in the new location.

⁹ In what circumstances a bishop may give a licence to a lay worker is governed by Canon E7 (see Annex 2). The notion of giving a commission may need further legal examination.

¹⁰ Other parishes have set up locally called, trained and recognised eldership or pastorate schemes.

2.2.10 There has been for many years the possibility for bishops to licence particular forms of lay ministry. Readers are admitted to the office and licensed under Canons E4 to E6. Canon E7 also permits bishops to give legal authorisation to other lay workers, when certain requirements are met.¹¹ A licence can be given for a specific length of time, and it can be revoked. Canon E7 originally applied to accredited lay workers and those with a nationally recognised Inter Diocesan Certificate, and also for licensing evangelists working under the authority of the Church Army as well as the authority of a bishop (Canon E7.2). In recent years the term 'lay worker' has been more widely interpreted in some dioceses. The diocese of Chester has over 40 licensed Pastoral Workers whose diocesan training has equipped them for specific areas of pastoral ministry. A few dioceses have a small number of employed Youth Workers licensed under Canon E7. The diocese of Gloucester has 18 licensed lay workers with various ministries.

2.2.11 Many priests now work across several parishes. This results in changing demands on lay ministers locally. The role of the stipendiary priest has often changed from being an all-purpose parish minister to a role including responsibilities for co-ordination and oversight, enabling teams of ministries involving mostly unpaid forms of ordained and lay ministers, including Readers.

2.2.12 With an increase in the numbers of Ministers in Secular Employment (MSEs)¹² and OLMs, Readers are no longer the only theologically trained Church of England ministers active in employment outside the church. The Reader's role in interpreting local life and issues for the world and the church is now, in part, shared with non-stipendiary and ordained local ministers called from within their local communities to serve in the local church and carry with them a theological reflection upon local life.¹³

2.2.13 The table below illustrates the evolution in the patterns of ministry in Church of England parishes between 1960 and 2006. As expected, we see that in 1960 this focused largely on the work of stipendiary clergy – incumbents and their curates, assisted by deaconesses, parish workers, Church Army evangelists and licensed Readers. There were also some clergy ministering as chaplains in hospitals, prisons and the Armed Services.

Comparison of numbers of licensed ministers 1959/1960 and 2006¹⁴

	1959/60	2006
Licensed stipendiary clergy	15,582	8,988
Licensed non stipendiary clergy (incl OLM)	287	3,011
Chaplains and other ministries	1,296	1,601
Licensed layworkers and Church Army evangelists	1,501	342
Active retired ordained	1,262	4,440
Licensed Readers	6,452	8,013
Readers with permission to officiate and active emeriti		2,207
Total	26,280	28,602

¹¹ See the text of Canon E7 in Annex 2

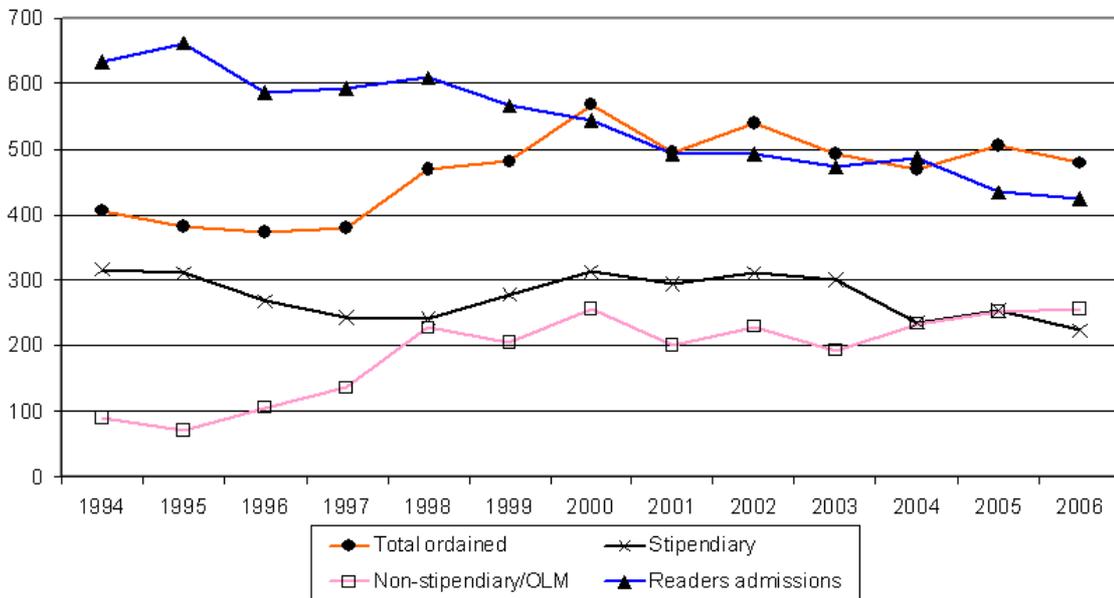
¹² Where NSM's are in paid employment they may be described as ministers in secular employment (MSEs)

¹³ The Reader, however, brings a specifically lay perspective to issues of daily life and work (see 3.2)

¹⁴ *Facts and Figures about the Church of England*, The Central Board of Finance of the Church of England, 1962 and *Church Statistics 2005/6*, Church House Publishing, 2007

2.2.14 As can be seen above, there are now more than 8,000 Readers (more than 10,000 if including those with PTO and those who are active emeriti). Of these 97%¹⁵ are over 40 and 48% over 60. Of the total active movement, although 54% are men and 46% are women, there are now three women in training for every two men (60%). A quarter of a century ago, *The Reader* recorded that there were 6,094 men to just 432 women. Women were first licensed in 1969 and the fact that they now make up nearly half of all active Readers, indicates that the growth of the past 35 years is due mostly to them.

2.2.15 It is the growth in the numbers of men and women ordained as NSMs and OLMs which is a significant factor in the perception, by Readers, of the loss of identity of their ministry. In fact, in the decade from 1994 the number of those ordained into the non-stipendiary ministry increased by more than 2½ times (from 89 in 1994 to 234 in 2004). Stipendiary ordinations, on the other hand, diminished by a quarter over same period (from 315 in 1994 to 235 in 2004). In 2006 there were just 223 stipendiary ordinations which is lower than the number of NSMs and OLMs ordinations (255). The Figure following, taken from *Church Statistics At a Glance 2005/6*,¹⁶ shows how these figures relate to Reader admissions.



2.2.16 As the Figure above shows, in 1994 there were more than 600 Reader admissions but a total of 405 ordinations. There has been a 32.8% decline in Readers-in-training from 1,607 in 1996 (in which women trainees outnumbered men by 10.1%) to 1,080 in 2006 (in which women trainees outnumbered men by 43.2%). On the other hand, the total number of ordinands in training, over the same period, increased from 1,072 to 1,451 (a 35.4% increase). The figures would seem to indicate that a good number of the newly ordained were previously Readers or would previously have sought Reader ministry rather than ordination.¹⁷ Over the same period the number of licensed Readers has fallen only by 1%.

2.2.17 The widespread proliferation of ordained and lay ministries has meant that it is more difficult to articulate the distinctive contribution Readers can bring. It is no longer Readers alone who have a public ministerial and pastoral role within their local communities and remain in their parish whilst incumbents come and go. In this context, it is

¹⁵ Data from the 2007 Reader Statistics by the Archbishops' Council Research and Statistics Department

¹⁶ *Church Statistics At a Glance 2005/6*, GS Misc 871, Church House, 2007, p. 23

¹⁷ The ordained increase was NSM+83; OLM+234, total 317. The Reader decline was 268.

not unreasonable that Readers should feel unsettled and in some cases, even undervalued. The main questions to be addressed within this review concern the distinctive, core ministry of Readers and how best they can be deployed to serve the needs of the people of God for learning in the present context.

2.3 What has been learned from the questionnaires sent to Readers and to dioceses?

2.3.1 The Reader Review Group had gathered many anecdotal impressions about the roles and morale of Readers in ministry, including those presented powerfully in the debate in the General Synod in February 2006. However, the Group felt it important to augment this understanding of the perception of the state of Reader ministry by extending the enquiry to as many Readers as possible throughout the country. To that end it placed a questionnaire in *The Reader* magazine in the winter of 2006 and also made it available through *The Reader* website. 1,060 forms were returned which, for such surveys, is regarded as being a good response.¹⁸ The differences between the two datasets are marginal (statistically insignificant) and are therefore reported as a whole. The facts and figures gleaned have informed most of the writing of the report and its recommendations.

2.3.2 Two questionnaires were prepared. One was sent to each diocese, with its questions approved by the Research and Statistics Department of the Archbishops' Council. All dioceses responded. From this a second questionnaire was devised, which was the one that appeared in *The Reader* and, with minimal variation, on the Reader website, (as explained in 2.3.1 above), available for any Reader who wished to respond.¹⁹ The responses have produced an overall impression of Reader morale and aspiration, rather than something that can be empirically quantified.

2.3.3 Those who wish to read the results of the survey in more detail and follow the method of the analysis of the responses are referred to the Executive Summary in the Synod Report²⁰ and the full report on the Central Readers Council website. In this abridged report only the most significant outcomes of the survey are included.

2.3.4 From the individual questionnaires the following points are noted:

- Most respondents felt that their gifts are adequately used.
- Reader deployment outside the home parish is still very much the exception, but was supported by nearly all of those who responded. Many would welcome the flexibility of being licensed to a deanery rather than to a single benefice.
- Many respondents felt that there should be thorough evaluation and enthusiastic encouragement of Readers to enable them to shape a vision of vocation. This is in line with the working group's recommendation, to encourage this ministry to be dynamic and flexible rather than static.
- Many Readers favour a more open door for Readers to be ordained; however, only 36% were supportive of a substantial number being ordained as deacons. Many felt that the lay element of their vocation was important and should be retained.

¹⁸ It compares with just 97 that were generated when *The Reader* published a similar centre-spread questionnaire that asked for views about the magazine itself in 2003.

¹⁹ The Review Group was especially keen that any Readers who wished to respond should be free to do so, and have their views taken into account. However, such a system is not a statistically precise method of sampling.

²⁰ www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/agendas/gsl689.rtf.

- Seven out of ten thought that Readers should be authorised to baptise. Only 1 in 8 was involved with baptism preparation.
- Significant numbers of Readers conduct funerals and three in seven of those who responded felt that they should have the option of retaining the fees.
- About Reader training there were many more positive comments than negative comments. The main reservations were directed at the variation between diocesan courses, the length and the academic rigour.
- Over half participate in continuing ministerial education (CME) but some describe this as limited or inadequate.
- Half of those sampled have had some experience of additional training in preaching after having been licensed, but 1 in 3 of these Readers described this as limited or inadequate. In their comments some indicate their regret that other less thoroughly trained ministers are allowed to preach, thus removing one of the last distinctive features of nationally accredited Reader ministry.
- Disagreements or misunderstandings about roles and responsibilities between Readers and their incumbents were a major theme to emerge, indicating the importance of agreed expectations

2.3.5 The majority of the diocesan responses were supplied by the Diocesan Warden of Readers. The following points of interest are noted:

- No questions at all produced unanimous answers. On a surprising number of issues, the division between one view and the opposite one is close to 50/50. Such lack of agreement raises concerns about the lack of a national approach to Reader ministry
- On the diocesan approach to Public Worship with Communion by Extension replies fell broadly into three categories: (a) not approved 27%, (b) approved/welcomed 9% and (c) allowed only with specific episcopal approval 64%. These figures concur roughly with those drawn from the responses of individual Readers. This issue is discussed further in paragraphs 3.15.3 – 3.15.5.
- There was a slight majority in favour of allowing the testing of a Reader's vocation in activity such as preaching before selection for training – but also a substantial proportion of opinion believing that inappropriate teaching might be given if untrained people were allowed into pulpits. This is discussed further in section 3.6 in the context of how gifts are discerned and developed.
- Only 26% of dioceses affirmed that they had in place any mechanisms or strategies for deploying Readers according to their gifts. The development of gifts is addressed in section 3.6.
- 53% stated that CME for Readers was not shared with clergy; the same percentage thought that ministerial review for Readers did not exist or was only patchily implemented.

2.3.6 While many of those who responded to the individual questionnaire feel that their role as a Reader has been de-valued and that gradually they are being 'edged out' of their ministry within the Church, in general terms the respondents felt that there was still much to be celebrated about Reader Ministry. Respondents were asked to quote examples of ministry, outside the realm of liturgical services, in which they are involved. The list was impressive.²¹ Various chaplaincy roles are prominent in the list, but it is clear that roles (sometimes paid employment) in such disparate areas as police liaison, broadcasting, trades' union work, para-medical services, human rights activism and local politics are all perceived as areas of ministry.

²¹ See Annex 4

2.3.7 The diocesan responses clearly indicate that lay ministry is greatly valued, even if the size of the slice of lay ministry called 'Reader' can vary from one diocese to another. There is also preparedness at diocesan level to ensure that high standards in training and evaluation of such ministers are maintained, though there is also an admission that in places things fall short of the ideal.

2.4 The mission of God and the ordering of ministry

2.4.1 The Church's ministry must serve its mission and the mission of God needs the active participation of all God's people. The recent report *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church* says, 'We do not begin from the mission of the Church, but from the mission of God: that is the foundation of every thought, prayer and action that contributes to the Church's task'.²² The report finds in the words of the Great Commission recorded in Matthew Chapter 28, grounds for the fundamental ministries of the Church: the ministries of preaching and teaching the Word, pastoral care and sacramental ministry.²³

2.4.2 To support and service this primary mission in its own context, ministries are authorised, as part of a teaching and learning community. The bishop has an apostolic role in leading the mission of the local church.²⁴

2.4.3 Bishops delegate and share the functions of teaching, pastoral care and sacramental provision both by working with the priests and deacons with whom they share responsibility for the apostolic mission, and by allocating such responsibility to lay persons as best fulfils the Church's mission and is within the boundaries of the Canons and regulations of the Church of England. When the bishop authorises lay ministries there is public affirmation of the mission and ministry of all lay people.²⁵ Such ministries, normally equipped by diocesan-wide training, complement those with national accreditation, such as Reader ministry. By ordering its ministry with care, the Church bears witness to the God who offers security and serves his purposes for humanity by giving order to his world.

2.4.4 It is important that there is clarity about the difference between ordained and lay ministries in the Church. The orders of bishop, priest and deacon go back at least to the second century. Those who are ordained into them remain in that order for life. They are understood as reflecting the gift and calling to the whole Church of oversight (episcopate), priesthood and ministry. As the Common Worship ordinal puts it:

"To serve this royal priesthood, God has given a variety of ministries.

Deacons are ordained so that the people of God may be better equipped to make Christ known. Theirs is a life of visible self-giving. Christ is the pattern of their calling and their commission; as he washed the feet of his disciples, so they must wash the feet of others.

Priests are ordained to lead God's people in the offering of praise and the proclamation of the gospel. They share with the bishop in the oversight of the

²² *Mission and Ministry* GS Misc 854 p.58

²³ *Mission and Ministry* GS Misc 854 p.59

²⁴ In the prevailing theology of the Church in Anglican understanding the local church is the bishop gathered together with the people.

²⁵ In the Church of England, the bishop exercises his authority in a creative tension between parishes, the diocese as a whole and the Church of England. He will support the parish clergy who, working with their PCCs, train and appoint lay people to ministries that are purely local to the parish and to its mission task.

Church....With the bishop and their fellow presbyters, they are to sustain the community of the faithful by the ministry of word and sacrament, that we all may grow into the fullness of Christ and be a living sacrifice acceptable to God.”

The deacon is a sign of the calling of all Christians to tasks of service. The priest is a sign that all Christians share together in Christ’s royal priesthood, offering worship and intercession Godwards, and, towards the world, being bearers of grace and the gospel. The bishop is a sign that God provides oversight and apostolic leadership for his church.²⁶

2.4.5 Lay ministries, such as Reader, do not have symbolic significance as a sign of God’s gift and calling in quite the same way. However, a Reader represents the opportunity for all lay people to become theologically equipped and ready to share in the Church’s mission and ministry.

“Readers are called to serve the Church of God and to work together with clergy and other ministers. They are to lead public worship, to preach and teach the word of God, to assist at the eucharist and to share in pastoral and evangelistic work. As authorized lay ministers they are to encourage the ministries of God’s people, as the Spirit distributes gifts among us all. They are called to help the whole Church to participate in God’s mission to the world.”²⁷

Individually authorised ministries are best understood through the theological principles of *focusing*, *representing* and *enabling* what is true of the church as a whole. Thus, for example, Readers might focus, represent and enable the reality of the church as a teaching and learning community, and Pastoral Ministers as a caring community.”²⁸

2.5 Characteristics of Reader ministry today

2.5.1 Vocational There are several key characteristics of Reader ministry. First of all it is a vocation. Readers see themselves as called by God into a public ministry. Since the exercise of that ministry expresses their response to Christ as disciples, it is not simply about doing tasks; it is about ‘being’ - being disciples whose calling and ministry is first and foremost in the context of their daily lives, but who also know that they are trained and authorised for public ministry (see 3.1.1). Many rejoice in being called to this ministry as a lay ministry rather than an ordained one.

2.5.2 Lay The specifically ‘lay’ standing of Readers²⁹ means that as articulate laity they can enable and encourage others in the church, and demonstrate that the church is for all, not just clergy. While some tasks undertaken by Readers are similar to some done by clergy, their role is different. The appropriate sense of equality is realised if there is a real sense of partnership and mutual encouragement between priest and Reader. As lay people, Readers have a prophetic voice not tied to the Church institution. They provide an example of lay commitment; ‘in a visible way they model the ministry of lay people’.³⁰ If many Readers were to be ordained to the diaconate, their public ministry would become clericalised, thereby removing its significance as a public lay ministry. (see 3.16) This could

²⁶ Some would describe this significance of the three-fold ministry as iconic.

²⁷ Service for the Admission and Licensing of Readers, approved 2006

²⁸ *Ministry in Focus*, Report by the Ministry Working Party, Diocese of Wakefield, 2004, 4.2, p.3

²⁹ This use of ‘lay’ is short hand for those who are not ordained clergy; the laity are strictly all the people of God, including the clergy.

³⁰ Michael Nazir-Ali, *Shapes of the Church to Come*, Eastbourne, Kingsway, 2001, p.165

have a demoralising effect on other laity in the church who might feel that the specific contribution of lay people was being devalued. One Reader expressed this in a sermon,

“It is one of the blessings of Reader ministry that it is so flexible: it can be shaped to suit the gifts of the individual Reader and equally to meet the needs of the particular situation.

The ability to look at things freshly, and to shake things about, finds its realisation in Reader ministry, less shackled by expectations and regulations than ordained ministry. Being a Reader is less about function than identity: what is important is that Readers are themselves lay people who both represent the lay people of the Church and who enable other lay people to take a full part in the ministry of all the baptized. It is about sharing ministry. A Reader’s voice does not say ‘I can do this’, but ‘We can do this’.”³¹

2.5.3 Licensed Reader ministry is publicly authorised with an oath to the bishop and legally supported with the bishop’s licence, unlike most other lay ministries. So Readers know that they act with the Church’s authority. The Church’s authorisation of public ministry is protection against self-chosen ministry that the Church is unable to support. Patterns of authorisation nevertheless have drawbacks that must be guarded against. First, the authorisation of some can discourage those who are not authorised from feeling that they have a ministry to offer. Secondly, any authorisation, clerical or lay, can lead to a possessiveness of ‘my ministry’ by those who are authorised. Thirdly, authorisation can lead to inflexibility, where rules about who can do what take precedence over the discovery of gifts and the recognition of the Spirit’s gifting for ministry.

2.5.4 Canonical Reader Ministry operates within clear structures, laid out in Canon Law and *Bishops’ Regulations for Reader Ministry*. A parish minister, rural dean or archdeacon must nominate every Reader candidate to the Bishop,³² with the agreement of the PCC or its equivalent in the place where they intend to minister.³³ Currently, Readers operate under licence and are supervised and supported by the minister under whose authority they work.

2.5.5 Nationally accredited Readers are nationally deployable and may normally take up their ministry if they move from diocese to diocese without further discernment or training because Reader ministry is nationally accredited and recognised. The training is to a uniform, moderated standard (see 3.8).³⁴ This is in sharp contrast with the increasing number of locally authorised diocesan lay workers whose training is more limited and whose ministry is restricted in scope to a particular parish or to the diocese. Because of the great variety in standards of training of such ministers, no framework is in place for their transfer from one diocese to another.

³¹ Sermon preached on 26th June 2007 at All Saints Convent, Oxford, by Maggie Ellis

³² Canon E5.1, see Annex 2

³³ *Bishops’ Regulations for Reader Ministry*, (Archbishops’ Council, 2000) p.9

³⁴ Both the scope and rigour of Reader training developed very considerably during the second half of the 20th century. Before 1946 readers were usually licensed on the basis of a recommendation to the Bishop. A national examination was introduced for the first time in 1946, which gradually increased in scope and became the ‘General Reader’s Examination’. In 1975 this was replaced by an essay scheme, where reading lists were provided, and a ‘General Readers’ Certificate’ (GRC) was awarded on the basis of 16 assessed essays based on specific sections of the syllabus. From 1989 each diocese became responsible for devising and delivering its own Reader training course, subject to oversight through a system of national moderation. All candidates in training are registered centrally and the award of the Church of England Readers’ Certificate is normal. A high proportion of Readers currently licensed has been admitted since 1990 and so have been trained to these standards.³⁴

2.5.6 Voluntary, (but not exclusively so) Reader ministry is almost universally a voluntary ministry. Whilst there are burgeoning lay ministries in almost every diocese, it is Reader ministry alone that is not only voluntary, but theologically trained, nationally accredited, transferable, licensed by the bishop and governed by Canon. This gives Readers an identity quite different from most other voluntary lay ministers.³⁵ Since the category of Lay Minister is no longer one of the categories of sponsorship for national selection and training, the category of Reader may prove increasingly helpful for some stipendiary workers; already there are effective stipendiary Readers in a small number of dioceses.

2.6 National organisation and support of Reader ministry

2.6.1 The Central Readers' Council (CRC)³⁶ works to enhance the contribution of Readers to the overall ministry of the Church. It works in cooperation with the Ministry Division, which moderates and coordinates the training of Reader candidates. CRC provides a forum for the exchange of ideas between dioceses on Reader matters.

2.6.2 CRC provides Reader certificates for those who have successfully completed initial training before being admitted to the Office of Reader and licensed by their bishop. It publishes a quarterly magazine, *The Reader*, a publication which includes articles covering a wide range of theological and ministerial topics, and which has a deservedly high reputation. Most dioceses supply it free to Readers as an important means of supporting their ministry. The CRC promotes a website,³⁷ which is a major national resource for Reader ministry and which offers an increasingly popular forum for discussion of matters of interest to Readers. In addition to diocesan and regional training events, CRC arranges national conferences for Readers.³⁸

2.6.3 *Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry 2000* have been accepted by the House of Bishops, and clarify the basis of the practice of Reader ministry. They expand on the provision made for Readers under Canon Law in Canons E4, E5 and E6. In addition they include information relating to selection and training, admission and licensing, finance, conditions of service and deployment. The regulations are intended to provide a common understanding to be applied in all dioceses, and an agreed framework for further growth and development. If the recommendations of this report are accepted it will be an opportune time for these regulations to be revised (recommendation 25 - 3.14.6).

³⁵ The only similar group is the very small number of non-stipendiary Accredited Lay Ministers admitted according to Canon E7.

³⁶ CRC is a registered charity. Work is financed mostly from capitation grants made by diocesan Readers' boards. It also administers some charitable trusts, and awards a number of training grants and bursaries. The Council is chaired by a diocesan bishop, and has three representatives from each diocese, including the warden and secretary of Readers. The annual general meeting is held in March /April each year. An executive committee is elected for a five-year term, and usually meets three times a year.

³⁷ www.readers.cofe.anglican.org

³⁸ At present national conferences are arranged every two years. There is also a longstanding summer school for Readers at Selwyn College, Cambridge, in early August.

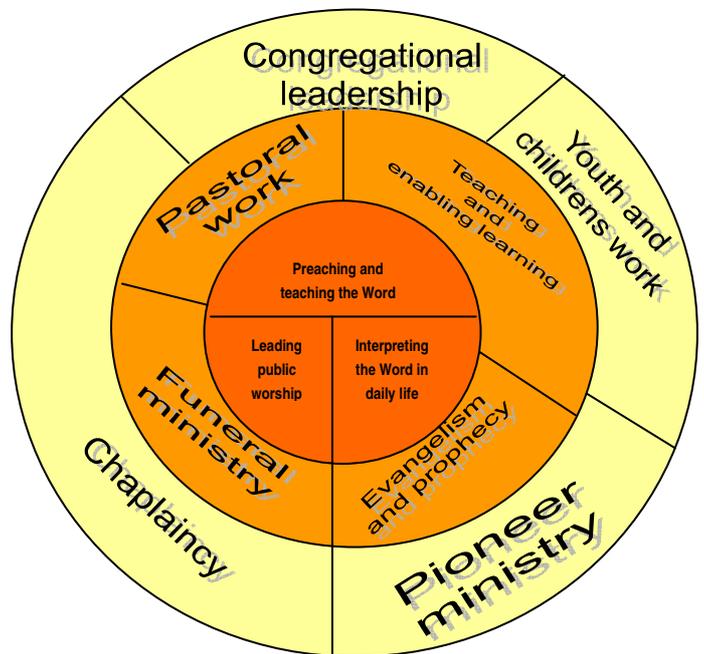
Chapter 3

Reader ministry – the way ahead

(abridged from chapter 4 in the report *Reader Upbeat!*)

3.1 The vision for Reader ministry

3.1.1. The diagram gives us a way of distinguishing between the core ministry for Readers, for which all are trained, and other significant Reader ministries that flow from this training. At the centre of the target are the core ministries. Two of them are public ministries, that is, leading public worship and preaching and teaching the Word. But the Reader is also someone whose very being is a ministry in the world where they are an interpreter of the Word of God in the situations of their daily occupations. To fulfil their liturgical and catechetical ministry Readers now have an exacting theological training, which also gives them the tools for a better theological understanding of daily life.³⁹ No other lay ministers receive such training and it is this training for core ministry upon which the positive future of Reader ministry needs to be based.



3.1.2 In the second and third circles the diagram shows some of the ministries which can follow from the core training. At the heart of these opportunities lies the calling from God and the Church to a particular ministry in the light of the gifts God has given. Imagination is needed to follow through the many opportunities that are now available to Readers.

3.1.3 All Christian discipleship and ministry involves what we are as much as what we do. A preacher and teacher of the Word has to be the Word of God in who they are, or as St. Paul puts it, a letter for all to read, written by the Spirit.⁴⁰ For many Readers, their calling and ministry as bearers of the Word of God is in the context of their daily working life. They are able to identify with and share in many of the stressful and difficult issues that people in secular employment face, from redundancy to balancing work life and home life.

³⁹ See section 3.8

⁴⁰ 2 Corinthians 3.2,3

Recommendation 1 We recommend that Readers keep before them their calling to be examples of those who are bearers and interpreters of the Word in the context of their daily occupation, be it paid or voluntary. (3.1.1 to 3.1.3; 3.2.1)

3.2 The core Reader ministries: preaching and teaching the Word and leading public worship

3.2.1 To be a Minister of the Word is a high calling and this ministry is to be greatly valued in the Church. The Church of England has historically given an important place to preaching; however, there is a present need to recover this emphasis which has been affected by the demise of the services of Morning and Evening Prayer. Readers have a wealth of experience out of which to preach and teach. They live amongst those whose world-view reflects the mind-set and values of our culture. They know the world of work. They have an opportunity to use their understanding of the scriptures and of Christian Faith to inspire and guide others who struggle with the pressures of our world. Bishop Michael Langrish has described Reader ministry in these words:

“The distinctive role and ministry of Readers is perhaps more important now than it has ever been. In a society where there are constant pressures to push up educational standards and where more and more people have been to university or college, the need for theologically educated and spiritually mature ministers who can speak with authority out of the experience of the lay people of God is needed now as perhaps never before. The need is for people formed equally by their shared experience of their neighbours and their daily grappling with the scriptures and the teaching of the church, in the context of disciplined prayer, who are able, in terms that their contemporaries will understand, both to give an account of the hope and the faith that is within them and to help others to do so too.”⁴¹

3.2.2 Readers challenge congregations to recognise that the church exists for those who live and work all around them. They are a sign of the primary mission of the people of God in the world. In many places clergy rarely address issues of daily working life, perhaps because they do not feel competent to do so. Readers are well placed to address this important gap: to offer teaching that seeks to equip the laity to understand the purposes of God in what occupies so much time in their lives, and so to inspire greater commitment to discipleship. Such a contribution is thoroughly appropriate at the normal Sunday gathering of the people of God, often the parish eucharist.

3.2.3 Both in their training, therefore, and subsequently, Readers need to study the theology of work.⁴² The reflection on Reader ministry entitled *Bridging the Gap* put it in these words:

“Most congregations want to hear sermons that are relevant to their weekday lives; not many preachers provide them. Readers are often better able than clergy to fill this gap. They have not just studied the theology of work, and the Christian work ethic, they have tried to put them into practice, and they know from their own experience just how difficult this can be.”⁴³

⁴¹ Sermon by the Bishop of Exeter on the Admission and Licensing of Readers, 30th September 2006

⁴² For example: R. Higginson *Called to Account* Eagle, Guildford, 1992; G. Dow *A Christian Understanding of Daily Work*, Nottingham, Grove, 1994

⁴³ *Bridging the Gap* p.23

As the chapter in *Bridging the Gap* continues, 'The world of work should be taken right to the heart of worship every Sunday.'⁴⁴

3.2.4 The distinction between preaching and teaching the Word is not a firm one. Timothy is exhorted to do both,⁴⁵ as an itinerant leader, and it is unlikely that he did them on completely different occasions.⁴⁶ A preacher is a herald and a proclaimer of good news,⁴⁷ announcing the kingdom of God as Jesus did.⁴⁸ Preachers seek to encourage and persuade people to respond to God's call.⁴⁹ The teacher facilitates learning. Transformation comes when learners learn; they engage with Christian truth and apply it with understanding and reason to their own situations. It is good for parish sermons, taken overall, to reflect both teaching and preaching.⁵⁰

3.2.5 From the start Readers have had a mission to engage with people where they are. The driving motivation for the 19th century revival of Reader ministry came from the need to extend the effectiveness of the traditional parochial system to new pioneering work on the boundaries between church and world. Readers began leading worship and preaching not primarily in their parish churches but in new mission halls and in the work place. They were at the cutting edge of ministry to those who were not regular worshippers. (3.4.1; 7.2.4 - 9)

3.2.6 As leaders of public worship, Readers need skill in leading worship in relation to different types of congregation. In the light of their training and exposure to varied styles of worship, many Readers will show ability for planning public worship. Such gifts need opportunity to flourish in the parish and the deanery. A Reader has the opportunity to cast the prayers in a mature theological way, helping to form a Christian mind set in the members of the congregation and to model possible ways of praying which the congregation may care to use in their private prayer.

3.2.7 Since all-age worship is often non-eucharistic, it may be a responsibility often allocated to a Reader. This calls for an understanding of the place of children in the church community, along with the theology of childhood and faith development. With support and encouragement this is a ministry in which Readers can excel (3.4.8; 3.9.4). However, for a Reader to develop all-round skills in leading worship, opportunities should also be given to share in the liturgy of the eucharist, in appropriate places.

Recommendation 2 We recommend that dioceses encourage Readers to see their core ministry of preaching and teaching and leading worship as both a significant part of the Church's ministry to equip lay disciples for their mission in the world and the opportunity to engage in mission on the boundaries of the Church. (3.1.1-3.1.3; 3.2.1 -7; 3.4.1; 7.2.4 - 9)

Recommendation 3 We recommend that dioceses strengthen the provision of Reader CME, and in particular the development of the skill of Readers as preachers, catechists and educators enabling them to interpret Christian Faith as it engages with daily life and work. (3.2.1 to 3.2.4; Annex 5)

⁴⁴ Bridging the Gap p.24

⁴⁵ 1Timothy 4.13 (paraklesis –preaching; didascalia – teaching)

⁴⁶ 2Timothy 4.2; 1Timothy 4.11. Preaching and teaching are associated together in 1Tim 2.7; 2Tim 1.11

⁴⁷ Note the context in 1Timothy 2.7; 2Timothy 1.11

⁴⁸ Mark 1.15

⁴⁹ Following St. Paul, those called to preach will keep the cross of Christ, the means of our salvation, at the centre of their message and look to persuade their hearers to be reconciled to God. 1Corinthians 1.23; 2Corinthians 5.20

⁵⁰ Teaching fits well with the notion of the preacher as a 'steward of the mysteries of God' 1 Cor. 4.1; teachers love the content of God's truth and encourage their hearers to understand it and delight in it.

Recommendation 4 We recommend that dioceses indicate their support for Readers as interpreters of the gospel in daily life by encouraging the use of Readers as preachers at the main parish Sunday service of Holy Communion. (3.2.2 - 3)

Supporting Action Points

- 1 Incumbents give Readers ample opportunity to develop their teaching skills through opportunities for enabling learning in varied ways in the benefice. (3.2.2; 3.3.1; Annex 5)
- 2 Incumbents give Readers more opportunity to develop their liturgical skills through planning services and leading a variety of worship services. (3.2.6 - 7; 3.4.4)
- 3 Incumbents use the experience and training of Readers to offer varied ways of leading intercessions and to model good patterns of prayer. (3.2.6)
- 4 Each deanery and diocese looks for opportunities to use Readers in teaching and training events, according to their gifts. (3.3.1)
- 5 Dioceses give opportunities for growth in the liturgical skills of Readers and seek to identify those who are able to pass on their skills to others in the diocese. (3.2.6 - 7; 3.4.4; 3.8.4)
- 6 Readers study the theology of work so as to inform their preaching about daily life. (3.2.3)

3.3 The intermediate circle: building on the core ministry - enabling learning, evangelism and prophecy, pastoral work and funeral ministry

3.3.1 Enabling learning The ministry of the Word in a parish is not confined to sermons. There are valuable opportunities also in a variety of teaching events, confirmation courses, retreats and training courses at parish, deanery and diocesan level. Readers who are developing their catechetical gifts have much to contribute to such education, provided that they can see education as far more than 'transmission' – of knowledge. The Bishop of Oxford has contributed a brief essay indicating opportunities for Readers in this ministry (Annex 5).

3.3.2 Prophecy We expect that those who have established their core ministry will also be gifted by God in the sphere of other ministries foundational to the growth of the Church.⁵¹ In the first and early second century evangelists, prophets and teachers moved from church to church and from town to town and the role of the prophet was accepted. In our time there is no clearly accepted designation and authorisation of those with a specifically prophetic ministry. Nevertheless it is to be expected that through the inspiration of the Spirit, a Reader or any other minister of the Word, in their preaching brings the challenge of God and shows how Christian values challenge the values of our society. Authentic prophecy will be recognised and appreciated.

⁵¹ In Ephesians 4.11,12 it is stated that Christ has given to the Church for its upbuilding the ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. See Annex 6; 6.3.3; 6.3.4

3.3.3 Evangelism Where a Reader is recognised in their preaching as having the gift of an evangelist, then it will be a right use of their gifts if opportunities wider than the parish can be available. In addition to the long standing ministry of Church Army evangelists, (licensed by the bishop), a bishop can also licence a lay worker as an evangelist⁵² or, if the recommendations of this report are taken up, as a Licensed Lay Minister (Evangelist) – see 3.11.5. However in the case of a Reader who is also an evangelist, the licence could also include the designation ‘evangelist’. There is now wider recognition of evangelists in the Church of England and bishops can nominate Readers who clearly have a ministry of evangelism beyond their parishes for membership of the College of Evangelists.

3.3.4 Pastoral work It is a small step from the core ministry of preaching and teaching the Word to the pastoral ministries in the Church as the list of gifts and ministries in Ephesians 4 clearly indicates. (Annex 6: 6.3.3) The Canons state that Readers may visit the sick and give assistance to the minister in pastoral work, with the approval of the bishop.⁵³ Good pastoral ministry grows out of the love nurtured in discipleship, is part of the charge laid upon every Christian, and is therefore a natural part of the ministry of every Reader. It is inconsistent, therefore, to seek to remove the pastoral element from the active ministries of Readers; it is better that it should be developed. It is hoped that incumbents will give Readers who are gifted pastorally a particular pastoral responsibility in the parish or in a congregation. (3.10.7 - 3.10.8)

3.3.5 Funeral ministry A growing number of Readers now take funerals after receiving training for this ministry. There are very good reasons why this opportunity for ministry should be widely extended. Readers make valuable members of pastoral teams, for example, in a benefice, where they can be given the opportunity to take funerals and do such pastoral work as is entrusted to them. In the words of Bishop John Pritchard:

“We’re missing many tricks now that funeral ministry is an open field for secular competitors, and we need to have more people on the ground, to be faster in response and more competent in delivery. The majority of Readers could offer this ministry, I guess, and good quality training should be the norm.”⁵⁴

The Canons state that a bishop may authorise a Reader to officiate at a funeral if it is at the invitation of the minister and with the goodwill of the relatives.⁵⁵ When the bereaved family are long standing residents, a Reader may know the local community better than the priest and, if not in full time paid employment, may be able to spend more time with the bereaved family members both before and after the funeral. They can speak at the funeral as a fellow pilgrim, someone alongside the one who has died and engaged in the same joy and struggles of faith. In seeking to provide a ready response to funeral directors, it is wise to include Readers in the plans deaneries make to meet this need. In the light of the response to the questionnaires there may well be numbers of pastorally gifted Readers who are significantly under used and could share in this important ministry. (3.9.2)

Recommendation 5 We recommend that dioceses permit their Readers to serve in all aspects of ministry allowed by Canon Law and support them. (3.3.4 - 5)

Recommendation 6 We recommend that dioceses widen their vision to include the possible appointment of a Reader as Reader-in-Charge of a congregation, with the corresponding roles of catechist and of pastoral care, possibly also as a House for

⁵² Canon E7. 2 and 3, Annex 2

⁵³ Canon E4. 2(a), Annex 2

⁵⁴ Email response to a draft version of this report, 19th January 2008

⁵⁵ Canon E4 2A, Annex 2

Duty appointment and that Readers are also considered for sector minister posts. (3.3.4; 3.4.9; 3.10.7 - 8)

Recommendation 7 We recommend that dioceses encourage the use of Readers with pastoral gifts in bereavement care and funeral ministry, and deaneries strengthen the teams of ministers available for funeral ministry by including Readers. (3.3.4 - 5; 3.9.2 – 3; 3.10.7 - 8)

3.4 The outer circle: pushing out the boundaries of Reader ministry: pioneering opportunities, chaplaincy, youth and children's work and congregational leadership

3.4.1. Pioneering opportunities An important future for Reader ministry today lies with a return to the vision for pioneering work beyond the normal activity of the parish churches (3.2.5; Annex 7: 7.2). The demands on clergy, which come from normal parish duties, make it stressful and difficult to find time and energy to develop pioneering work. It is expecting a lot of clergy if they are to develop 'new church' at the same time as leading church as we know it.

3.4.2 Fresh expressions of church The widespread development of fresh expressions of church since the publication of the Mission-Shaped Church report, in 2004, creates opportunities for Readers with appropriate gifts. As the mixed economy of fresh expressions and inherited models of church becomes reality in an increasing number of parishes, benefices and deaneries, it is both inevitable and desirable that the majority of fresh expressions will be lay led. In these circumstances theologically trained lay ministers will be at a premium.

3.4.3 Fresh expressions begin with a process of listening to the local community, be it neighbourhood or network based, since they are established for the benefit of those who are not yet members of any church. Readers, with a vocation to mission, who are skilled as bridge people between world and church and Word and church, can be a vital resource as leaders in the process or as consultants to it. An increasing number of fresh expressions are located in the workplace, in offices and schools. Readers may find that their ministry at work, or in the community, could develop into leadership of a fledgling fresh expression. They have the authority, the confidence and the experience to take such initiatives in the public realm.

3.4.4 New communities of faith, made up of young Christians and spiritual seekers, will need teachers of the faith, skilled in the more informal disciplines of the teaching ministry. Fresh expressions of church develop culturally appropriate patterns of worship, rooted in the historic Christian tradition without cloning it. Readers with skills, not just in leading worship, but in designing it, are again a valuable resource. In some places training which is being developed by the Fresh Expressions programme to resource lay pioneer ministries could be adapted as additional training in this area for Readers.

3.4.5 The skills of mission accompaniment, of walking alongside a fledgling mission initiative or fresh expression to help it mature, are among the most strategic ministries the church needs to cultivate. Reader training can provide the theological component of the skills needed. Some Readers could act as the Visitor for an initiative authorised by a Bishops' Mission Order.

3.4.6 Chaplaincy More and more doors are opening for the presence of the Church's lay ministers in the form of voluntary chaplaincy outside the boundaries of the parish church. This is a particular kind of pioneer ministry. Incumbents or bishops, with imagination, will discover many untapped opportunities in parishes where Readers, as chaplains, could be deployed in a highly significant and fulfilling ministry and their presence as the Church's authorised ministers warmly welcomed. In stores, shopping malls, hospitals, care homes, civic centres, airports, prisons, schools, cadet forces, Scouts and other uniformed organisations, the police and the deaf community, Readers as lay chaplains are to be found. It is also consistent with their training and experience in leading public worship that Readers have confidence to take on such publicly authorised roles. There is a harvest, Jesus says, which is not yet brought in because of the lack of workers.⁵⁶ A great many people in today's stressful walks of life recognise the need for spiritual help and guidance in their networks, along with an independent point of reference in the work place to which employees can turn for help. If changing patterns have led to a reduction of Reader opportunities in church services, other avenues like chaplaincy present a multitude of new openings.⁵⁷

3.4.7 In some cases Reader chaplains operate as the only chaplain present; in other institutions or businesses there are chaplaincy teams. A chaplaincy team is a stimulating environment in which to offer ministry where colleagues, often from different denominations, provide a challenge. As lay chaplaincy ministry expands, dioceses will want to provide training courses and opportunities for chaplains in a variety of locations to meet for mutual support and learning.⁵⁸ Training courses for lay chaplaincy will also be worthwhile.

3.4.8 Youth and children's work This has been a neglected area in Reader training and ministry. Nurture of the faith of children is an important end in itself; however, provision for children is also an important factor in attracting families to worship and all-age worship is a growth area in church congregations. Many Readers have a background in teaching and have much to offer here. (3.2.7; 3.9.4) There are signs of growth in children's work outside Sunday which is an important sphere of ministry for Readers to explore.

3.4.9 Congregational leadership There are a few examples in the country of both stipendiary and non-stipendiary Readers who exercise this ministry. Good reasons why this might increase are discussed under deployment of Readers (3.10.7 - 8).

Recommendation 8 We recommend that dioceses, deaneries and parishes look for opportunities for Readers to exercise their ministry on the boundaries of the Church, in breaking new ground with 'fresh expressions' of church and mission, and in circles where there might otherwise be no representative public ministry of the Church. (3.4.1 - 5)

Recommendation 9 We recommend that dioceses and deaneries and parishes should look for opportunities for the appointment of Readers as chaplains both to institutions where chaplains are already recognised and in places where such an appointment breaks new ground. (3.4.6 - 7)

⁵⁶ St. Matthew 9.37-38

⁵⁷ see Annex 4

⁵⁸ One diocese ran for many years a very successful course for hospital lay chaplains.

Supporting Action Points

- 7 Incumbents and dioceses encourage appropriate Readers to participate in Mission-Shaped Ministry courses and courses on 'fresh expressions' of church as part of CME in order to reinforce the vision of Reader ministry on the boundary between church and society. (3.9.1)

3.5 The pre-selection process

3.5.1 All dioceses are required to have a selection process for testing the vocation of those who offer for Reader ministry.⁵⁹ Several dioceses, however, have a pre-selection process that aims to guide candidates according to their gifts. In one diocese, not only is the incumbent's guidance sought, but interviews are held with a serving Reader and then with the Vocations Adviser, who must be persuaded that Reader ministry is the right way forward if the candidate is to complete the application and proceed to selection.

3.5.2 From the first interest shown by a possible candidate, on to beyond initial licensing, the ongoing journey of vocation for a Reader needs to be seen as fluid rather than static, in keeping with other ministerial categories in the Church. This will only be achieved if the diocese has an integrated team of vocations advisers who share a common awareness both of the potential candidates and of the opportunities for both lay and ordained ministries. During the pre-selection process, a variety of possibilities may be considered so as to assist the candidate in finding the right direction.

3.5.3 Another important issue at the pre-selection phase is to discern whether or not the parish will truly own the potential Reader and support them through their training. It is helpful if the Warden of Readers or a Vocations Adviser first contacts the incumbent, and then makes a visit to the Parochial Church Council.⁶⁰ At this meeting the expectations of both parish and Reader are clarified and brought into agreement.⁶¹ If the parish clearly embraces its role in supporting a Reader it is more likely that the incumbent will give the support needed and not neglect to use the Reader. Mismatched expectations between incumbent and Reader are one of the most common sources of difficulty in the working relationship. On a very few occasions it may be necessary to guide the Reader candidate to a different parish where the incumbent and church will be supportive of the new ministry.

Recommendation 10 We recommend that the office of Reader, in keeping with other ministerial categories in the Church, is to be seen as fluid rather than static and part of an ongoing journey of vocation, the nature of which is regularly discerned afresh. To address this, dioceses will need a team of vocations advisers to cover the full range of ministries. (3.5.2; 3.6.5)

Supporting Action Points

- 8 Prior to the selection of a Reader for training, the Warden of Readers in a diocese takes care to ensure that the parish to which the Reader is to be licensed and its

⁵⁹ This process is outlined in *Selection for Reader Ministry*, ABM Policy paper No.7 January 1998 and normally involves a selection panel.

⁶⁰ One diocese has a Chaplain for Readers in each deanery; that person or a deanery sub-warden could make this visit.

⁶¹ In one diocese the candidate will also make a short presentation describing how they reached this point in their journey of discipleship.

incumbent are ready to offer support and encouragement in the development of this new ministry. (3.5.3)

3.6 Selection and the identification of gifts

3.6.1 The selection of people for training is motivated by two important concerns. The first is the Church's need to resource the mission opportunities before it, in the light of which it will seek to discern and call those in whom it sees the potential to fulfil the task. The picture of the congregation at Hippo dragging the reluctant Augustine and presenting him to the bishop for ordination as a priest is a reminder of the importance of the role of the Church in calling people into ministry.⁶² It is the role of bishops to look for those who have gifts to offer for the work of the gospel. It is also the role of incumbents, with their congregations, to be searching out those who can assist with the mission task as it is perceived in the locality. It is to be hoped that parish clergy will specifically encourage vocations to Reader ministry, in view of the thorough training and opportunities which this ministry offers, and particularly among young adults. It is the role of the Church, in the widest sense, to perceive the gifts of individuals and to encourage them to try new openings for ministry, opportunities which the local or wider church perceives for its mission. Church members, incumbents, rural deans, Wardens of Readers and bishops have a vital role to play in seeking to encourage individual Christians to consider new ministries.

3.6.2 The other concern is that every disciple should seek to know their calling and, with the help of the Church, seek to discern the gifts God has given them for his mission. Sadly, the Church of England has a long history of defining its ministerial work by function and hierarchy. Those exercising a ministry tend to see themselves not as part of a living body with different gifts but in a hierarchical order of different roles, something like: bishop, priest, deacon, then Reader, other lay ministers. This inevitably leads to some people feeling second or third class in the work of God. The New Testament writings indicate that the Church's vision must be the recognition, release and development of all the gifts God has given, with people working together in a collaborative and non-hierarchical unity. There is a great need for both clergy and Readers to grasp this vision firmly.

3.6.3. Publicly designated ministries need to match the person's gifts; this is in accord with the emphasis of the New Testament (Annex 6: 6.3.3 to 6.3.6; 6.5.1). A fulfilled minister is one who sees their gifts flourishing and bearing fruit in the exercise of ministry. Where a Reader, or any minister, operates not out of their gifts, the result is frustration. There is frustration first for those receiving the ministry, and this, in turn, leads to less frequent use of the minister and corresponding disappointment to them.

3.6.4 Too often those who offered for ministry, even after selection interviews, have been sent for training without sufficient prior evidence of how their gifts are developing. When Readership was the only door available for authorised lay ministry, it was understandable that some who might have been better suited as pastoral assistants or home group leaders offered for selection as Readers and were subsequently trained and licensed. The failure here has been not to have sufficient diversity in the paths available for authorised ministry and not to make sufficient assessment of the gifts before training is started. The situation has arisen, therefore, in which some Readers of long standing find themselves licensed to

⁶² When Bishop Valerius presented the needs of the Church for a priest, the congregation responded by surrounding Augustine and presenting him at the bishop's throne. P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, London, Faber, 1967, p.138-9

a ministry which, in its expectations for the core ministries of leading worship and preaching, does not does not match their greatest gifts for the work of God.

3.6.5 This situation is compounded by the fact that, by comparison with the attention given to the ministerial development of those in clerical orders, the personal ministerial development of Readers has been largely ignored in some dioceses. This situation is beginning to be addressed: in one diocese careful reviews of the ministry of each Reader are taking place, including a full confidential interview with the Reader to discuss their perception of their gifts for ministry and their use in the local situation. A confidential interview with the Reader's incumbent is also conducted since perceptions of ministerial gifts by Reader and incumbent can differ markedly.

3.6.6 The aim must be to have in every diocese a process which brings about a fuller recognition of the gifts of each lay minister and subsequently channels their gifts into fulfilling ministry. For some the outcome may be a greater share in pastoral care and responsibility, for others a wider itinerant teaching and preaching role. For others there may be hitherto untapped openings for chaplaincy. For still others, it may be appropriate for Reader ministry to be laid down and another ministry taken up. This is always a fluid and ongoing process: for every Reader there needs to be awareness that gifts for ministry and the corresponding callings from God and the commission of the Church always have the potential for further development. Gifts are often discerned by taking up new opportunities and by doing things which were not previously attempted. The two concerns: the needs of the Church to fulfil its mission and the need of the individual to discover the ministry for which they are gifted come together when a diocese invests resources in encouraging and discerning vocations.

3.6.7 In the process of selection of people for Reader training it is vital that there is given every opportunity in the local congregation for the core gifts, and their potential for development, to be tested before selection for training is confirmed by the diocese. This applies particularly to the core ministries of leading of worship and preaching. Evidence-based selection offers the best way to select and train people according to their gifts.

3.6.8 To assist the process of matching gifts to training, for both potential lay and ordained ministries, some bishops use the permissions contained in the Canons⁶³ to encourage incumbents to give opportunities for the gifts of lay people to be discerned and encouraged, both in preaching and teaching and in leading public worship. Many of the churches that have recently emerged on the scene encourage growth in ministry by giving such opportunities to their younger members. It is expected that the incumbent will only choose suitable lay persons in good public standing and carefully supervise any such ministry exercised. Experience shows that where such opportunities are made available this often leads to those who are discovering their gifting subsequently offering for selection for training as a Reader, or for ordained ministry. Fears will be more easily allayed if it is expected that those who show the gifts of leading public worship and preaching will subsequently train fully for this ministry.

3.6.9 The gifts needed for the core elements in Reader ministry may also be discerned in a variety of other ways. Participation in the life of the church, including study groups, soon reveals a person's capacity for thought and clear communication. The opportunity to lead intercessions indicates whether or not someone has a gift for speech which can hold the attention of others. It is easy to recognise when the leader of worship speaks with a natural authority, and with a voice that draws others to listen, and when prayers are introduced with sensitivity.

⁶³ Canon B18.2 See Annex 2

Recommendation 11 We recommend that dioceses support parishes in the careful discernment of potential gifts in lay people and certainly prior to them being considered for selection for training as Readers. This is to include the discernment of gifts for the core ministries of preaching and teaching, leading worship and interpreting the faith, by such opportunities being given by incumbents to lay people. (3.6.1 -9)

Recommendation 12 We recommend that parishes specifically encourage vocations to Reader ministry, particularly among young adults. (3.6.1; 3.6.8)

Supporting Action Points

- 9 Dioceses consider conducting a thorough review of the personal ministerial development of each Reader in order to bring about greater recognition of the ministerial gifts which the Reader has. (3.6.5-6)
- 10 The Board of Education considers the possibility of developing a national basis for the recognition, development, training and authorisation of gifts for lay ministry.

3.7 Selection criteria and the national guidelines

Present selection criteria cover ministry in the Church of England, vocation, faith, spirituality and worship, personality and character, relationships (for example support in the family), and potential for training.⁶⁴ In at least one diocese the potential to work in a team is also carefully considered. New proposals for selection are in process of preparation with our ecumenical partners, outlining a culture of life-long learning in keeping with the report *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church*.⁶⁵ According to these proposals initial training will not be understood as being completed at the time when a licence is first granted, but rather after a period of supervised ministry.

3.8 Initial core training

3.8.1 The core training offered to all Reader candidates must aim to produce lay ministers who are theologically articulate, spiritually mature, skilled at the tasks required of them, and able to operate as reflective practitioners.⁶⁶ Following the formation of Regional Training Partnerships (RTPs), training schemes increasingly not only draw together those training for Reader ministry and for ordained ministry but are also ecumenical.⁶⁷ *Shaping the Future*, the follow-up report to *Formation for Ministry in a Learning Church*, contains a national and ecumenical specification for the education and training of Readers and Lay

⁶⁴ *Selection for Ministry*: ABM Policy Paper No. 7, January 1998, based on a selection document of 1991 and in response to revised criteria for selection and child protection issues.

⁶⁵ It is expected that these proposals will outline the journey through Initial Ministerial Education (IME) 1-7 into Reader ministry, up until the first major ministry review. They will indicate the roles of those who will be partners on the journey and outline good practice for the training practitioners and for the process of discernment prior to admission.

⁶⁶ In 2000, *Reader Ministry and Training, 2000 and Beyond* was published, which clarified and expanded the national criteria for the Initial Training of readers.

⁶⁷ *Living in God's Covenant*, The Second Interim Report (2007) of the Joint Implementation Commission under the Covenant between the Methodist Church and the Church of England, includes a recommendation that RTPs should 'in consultation with the appropriate bodies within our churches, develop training programmes that, as far as possible, meet our churches' training specifications for Readers and Local Preachers'. Methodist Publishing House, pp 8, 65

Preachers for the Church of England, Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church (URC).⁶⁸ This report advocates that “the time has come for all Reader/Preacher training programmes to be accredited by an HE institution⁶⁹ and notes the importance of “approaches to learning associated with HE levels 1 and 2 which equip people well for Reader/ Preacher ministry.⁷⁰ While the report does not insist that all Readers in training necessarily each gain formal qualifications, it is understood that all Readers should be able to work in ways that are self-resourcing.⁷¹

3.8.2 Recent developments in Reader training include partnerships built with HE institutions offering academic validation for courses at HE levels 1 and 2 and to diploma level.⁷² The introduction of Foundation Degree programmes offers an excellent potential route for Reader training, as the essential work-based element aims to enable the integration of practice and theory (a key guiding principle encouraged in *Shaping the Future*.⁷³) At present Foundation Degree training can also attract government funding.

3.8.3 The core areas of Reader Ministry, preaching and teaching the Word, being an interpreter of it in the public arena and the leading of public worship, must be central during initial Reader training (diagram 3.1.1). *Shaping the Future* identifies these as key areas of competence, and a helpful list of skills to be addressed in training is included.⁷⁴

3.8.4 The importance of training for leading worship and liturgical formation is highlighted by the Liturgical Commission’s recent report *Transforming Worship: Living the New Creation*.⁷⁵ As Readers are a nationally transferable ministry, it is important that they become aware of the importance of different settings and church traditions – including those they are less familiar with (and may think they won’t need to work with!) A sound knowledge base is needed, as well as practical skills.⁷⁶ (3.2.7) Readers in training could be required to visit a wide range of churches and worshipping contexts: this will encourage reflection and be a significant dimension of practical and liturgical formation.

3.8.5 Reader training for preaching and teaching must include awareness of theories of faith development and reflection on how adults learn.⁷⁷ The training programme should include developing skills in promoting learning and not simply in communicating information. Such skills need to be fostered and developed progressively during training, through a range of learning exercises, and not simply assessed in a few practice sermons. If a range of educational approaches is modelled during training, then Readers can discover a range of strategies they can use in their own teaching ministry.⁷⁸ It is also

⁶⁸ *A vision for good practice in Reader/Preacher training* in *Shaping the Future* p.45.

⁶⁹ *Shaping the Future* p 45

⁷⁰ *Shaping the Future* p 45

⁷¹ Independent patterns of study which enable this are characterised by descriptors used of HE level 2 courses.

⁷² Many HE institutions now encourage an increasing range of varied educational methodologies and assessment processes, and the creative use of these is essential to enable trainees with different academic backgrounds and learning styles to engage fully.

⁷³ “Training programmes should integrate academic and practical training. We do not recommend a model where an HE accredited course covers only academic learning leaving a church partner to ‘add-on the practical elements of training’.” (*Shaping the Future* p.46)

⁷⁴ *Shaping the Future* p.39

⁷⁵ *Transforming Worship: Living the New Creation* GS 1651, 2007 – This encourages those with responsibility for Reader training to revisit liturgical aspects of their courses. Recommendation 23 – ‘We recommend that all current providers of Reader training re-visit the liturgical aspects of the courses and look in particular at how they might best make use of the skills available within the emerging RTPs’.

⁷⁶ see *Transforming Worship* –section 6.9 (pp 50-53)

⁷⁷ To enable Readers to develop as facilitators of learning, they need training and practice in developing approaches to educational design and monitoring, to planning and facilitating a range of participative processes for small and large groups, and to developing case studies, problem-based learning scenarios and a variety of learning opportunities

⁷⁸ Joanna Cox, ‘Readers –Learning to help others to learn’, *The Reader*, 103 (1), 2006, pp 17-18

important for training that Readers gain practice in publicly relating issues of faith to everyday activities (whether work, home or community).⁷⁹

3.8.6 Specific attention needs to be given in Reader training to spiritual formation and maturity. As the training process proceeds, those in the diocese responsible for Reader training will need to keep in close touch with each of their candidates. It is quite normal for those who are exploring new theological concepts and interacting with many other people on a similar journey to face significant questions about their faith and ministry. The Warden of Readers and the candidate's spiritual companion or director can be an important support at this point. As Reader training is increasingly being given the serious attention given to ordination training, it should become routine practice for the diocese to receive an annual report agreed by the candidate and, certainly, a report as the period of initial training approaches completion. In the light of their training the student also re-evaluates their calling. In this way a process of continuous reflection on their ministry is built into the life-long learning process and formation of each student. From the beginning, the training programme needs to encourage Readers to reflect with others on their gifts, hear what others discern about them and seek particular training in and development in the areas where their gifts are perceived.

3.8.7 The areas of ministry illustrated in the intermediate ring of the diagram (3.1.1) will be addressed at an introductory level in all training programmes. This will include pastoral work, evangelism, and teaching and training in a way that facilitates learning amongst both adults and children.

3.8.8 The ability to work collaboratively is a key skill for Readers (see 3.6.2; 3.7; 3.12.1 to 3.12.6). Learning this will be greatly assisted if the RTPs create opportunities for those selected for training as Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers) and ordained ministers to train together and ecumenically. Work in groups and reflection on this experience is important. Unless group work skills are also assessed, trainees will receive the message (consciously or unconsciously) that individual effort is valued more highly than group participation and cooperation.

3.8.9 Reader candidates enter training at different stages of life and their journey of lifelong discipleship. For younger candidates, particularly, facing considerable pressures, training pathways need to be flexible and designed to encourage them into Reader ministry. Some candidates have said that it would help to spread modular training over a longer period. It is appropriate to develop processes that formally acknowledge former learning (as with APL - Accreditation of Prior Learning, and APEL - Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning).⁸⁰

Recommendation 13 We recommend that Regional Training Partnerships seek to create opportunities for those selected for training as Readers and ordained ministers to train together and ecumenically. (3.8.8)

Recommendation 14 We recommend that without lowering standards, training programmes for Reader Ministry need to be more flexible. They should be accessible and designed to encourage candidates for ministry, particularly younger candidates. Course design needs to enable this by encouraging varied patterns of

⁷⁹ This needs to be reflected in the assignments required of those in training and in the patterns of assessment used for developing preaching skills.

⁸⁰ If Reader training courses provide Readers with opportunities to show evidence of their learning this may, where appropriate, be recognised for APL programmes on any future training courses they might undertake.

engagement and incorporating AP(E)L opportunities for former learning experiences to be recognised. (3.8.9)

Supporting Action Points

- 11 Reader Training is designed to develop ministers who are not only theologically articulate, spiritually mature and ministerially skilled, but who also can apply these in flexible and collaborative ways in many contexts. (1.1.3; 3.8.1; 3.8.8)
- 12 In addressing the core areas of Reader Ministry, the training programme needs to give particular attention to preaching and leading worship within differing contexts, teaching and facilitating learning, and the development of collaborative ministerial habits and skills.(3.8.4; 3.8.8)
- 13 Reader training needs to be designed using a range of educational methodologies and assessment processes; it needs to be shaped in ways that ensure the integration of theory and practice and that instil a mindset of internalised theological reflection. (3.8.5)
- 14 Reader Training Programmes should incorporate AP(E)L opportunities for former learning experiences to be recognised. (3.8.9)
- 15 The ecumenical training specification developed in *Shaping the Future* should be used to encourage increased co-operation in training programmes in RTPs – ecumenically and between dioceses.
- 16 Throughout the formation process Reader candidates are encouraged to reflect with others on their gifts and ministries. (3.8.8)
- 17 Towards the end of initial training the RTP or training institution prepares for the diocese a report on each Reader candidate which is agreed by the candidate. (3.8.6)

3.9 Additional training for specific ministries in the light of gifts discerned

3.9.1 There is a need for specialised training modules to equip more fully Readers who are skilled and gifted in particular areas, or where there is a local need for a particular area of ministry to be offered more widely. Readers frequently take on major responsibilities as lay people within and on behalf of the church.⁸¹ Since the national specification for Reader training does not include any specific recommendations relating to ongoing CME, such blocks of specialist training are best offered by RTPs or dioceses as post-licensing CME options for Readers and ordained ministers. These blocks of training need to encourage on-going learning, along with opportunities to practice and reflect on their skills in communication, faith sharing and proclaiming the kingdom of God in varied social and cultural contexts. Readers finding opportunities for a ‘fresh expression’ on the boundaries of the worshipping community will want to develop the gifts and skills that will assist that work. (3.4.2 to 3.4.5) Where the normal CME courses are not adequate for the particular ministry, agencies with relevant expertise will be appropriate training providers.⁸² Readers

⁸¹ Annex 4

⁸² eg. for hospital chaplaincy, with Relate for relationship counselling, and for work amongst deaf people.

should also be encouraged to consider a Christian mentor from someone who is familiar with their daily circumstances.

3.9.2 Training in funeral ministry It is important that training helps Readers recognise and respond to differing cultural contexts where the church offers this 'occasional office'. The report by the Liturgical Commission *Transforming Worship* notes

“..there is the loss within wider society of the kind of shared religious vocabulary and understanding of the Christian story which the pastoral rites assume; and the celebration of rites of passage has in any case been made more complex by the erosion of shared values. The liturgical questions surrounding these rites are deeply bound up with wider issues of culture and society.”⁸³

Existing diocesan courses aim to promote sensitive use of the liturgical material, as well as encouraging appropriate practice when in bereavement care and relationships with families. Visits to crematoria and undertakers are encouraged; this has been found to help promote reflective practice. Consistency nationally will be approached if all dioceses encourage Readers in this ministry and offer training in it.⁸⁴

3.9.3 Training in Leadership in Pastoral Care The ecumenical training specification in *Shaping the Future* anticipates that initial training will introduce all readers to basic issues of managing confidentiality, listening without being judgmental, recognising where people are emotionally and spiritually, and handling conflict. Training in greater depth is needed to develop leadership in pastoral care, (3.3.4), including an understanding of national guidelines and recommendations in relation to pastoral ministry with those who may be vulnerable.⁸⁵

3.9.4 Teaching and enabling learning among children One diocese offers a Children's Work training specialism. With increasing concern in our country about the healthy development of children, this ministry is of particular importance; it is one of the areas of work specified in the Canons and for which Readers are specifically licensed.⁸⁶ Readers who are called to a distinctive ministry among children in church, for example in Sunday groups or through the leading of collective worship in schools need specialist training beyond that which is given in initial training (3.2.7; 3.4.8). Work on appropriate training has been suggested in documents such as *Children in the midst*,⁸⁷ and should involve more detailed reflection and training on issues relating to:

- Children's work outside Sundays (e.g. schools work; mid-week and holiday clubs; pram and crib services etc.),
- Children and spirituality,
- Children and the sacraments,
- Preparing children's talks and activities
- Issues relating to pastoral care of children in particular situations (e.g. bereavement; hospital visits; funerals).

Recommendation 15 We recommend that dioceses encourage the ongoing development of Readers in ministry by offering CME modules in specialised areas of

⁸³ *Transforming Worship: Living the New Creation* pp 79-80

⁸⁴ Such training can usefully be planned ecumenically since The Methodist Church permits Local Preachers to take funerals *Living God's Covenant*, 42, p.57

⁸⁵ See *Promoting a Safe Church*, House of Bishops guidelines; 2006.

⁸⁶ Canon E4.2 (a), Annex 2

⁸⁷ *Children in the midst – Theology, principles and curriculum elements for training people to work among children* GS Misc 781

ministry and by providing resources for Readers to engage with appropriate training offered elsewhere. (3.9.1- 3.9.4)

Supporting Action Points

- 18 Wherever possible RTPs or other Reader Training institutions enable Readers to develop specific gifts to meet specific ministry needs with appropriate training. (3.9.1; 3.9.4)
- 19 Dioceses offer CME modules in a variety of specialist ministries which are available for Readers. (3.9.1)
- 20 Courses of training for Readers in funeral ministry are made available in all dioceses, giving consistency across dioceses. (3.9.2)
- 21 Dioceses and incumbents set before Readers, who may or may not themselves be deaf, the important opportunity of ministry to deaf people. (3.9.1)

3.10 Admission, licensing and deployment

3.10.1 **Parish ‘ownership’ of the Reader** It belongs to the care of the Church for every new minister that they should be placed in a context where they can flourish (3.5.3).

3.10.2 **The Licensing Service** It is hoped that the new form of service, agreed by the Central Readers Council and the House of Bishops in January 2007, will be used widely and adapted for local use. It can be found on the website for Readers in the Church of England.⁸⁸ The form of service for the Admission and Licensing of Readers in any diocese is the responsibility of the Diocesan Bishop.

3.10.3 **Licensing to the Deanery** There are several reasons to support the recommendation of this report that most Readers should be licensed to the deanery. Firstly, it gives greater opportunity for an individual Reader to exercise a ministry which flows from their gifts and gives opportunity for their development, giving a clear signal that wider deployment than one parish is to be considered. Secondly, it enables needs for mission and ministry wider than the parish to be addressed; for often ministerial resources are unevenly distributed in a deanery. Furthermore, in their responses to the questionnaire many Readers urged that there should be scope for wider Reader deployment. It would be through regular discussions between Rural or Area Dean, Warden of Readers, the relevant incumbents, the bishop and the Reader themselves that the best arrangements for deployment would be reached.⁸⁹ For accountability and support, however, the Reader needs a ‘home base’ under the care of a particular incumbent. Recognising Readers as an important resource in a deanery will be helped if Readers are often invited to chapter meetings. This will help to build good patterns of collaborative ministry among ministers with the bishop’s licence as well as fostering friendship.

⁸⁸ www.readers.cofe.anglican.org

⁸⁹ This practice could be applied to an archdeaconry, deanery, episcopal area or even to a whole diocese. One diocese has a policy of licensing all Readers to an episcopal area, but with a particular incumbent specified (but not on the licence) for accountability and support

3.10.4 The Ministerial Agreement It is consistent with giving serious attention to Readers that all dioceses ensure that for every active Reader there is a Ministerial Agreement, an agreement which is frequently revisited, and certainly every time the licence is due for renewal. Such an agreement clarifies expectations between incumbent and Reader and guards against misunderstanding, disappointment and resentment. When a Reader begins their ministry the agreement is vital. It should clarify the opportunities for preaching that will be given to them and the number of times when they will be expected to be available in a month. It will specify clearly the location of their ministry and any particular roles and responsibilities in the benefice or wider. Dioceses will need to have in place procedures for supporting the completion of these agreements and their regular reassessment. This report advocates the widening to all licensed lay ministers the encouragement and care that until now been offered in a systematic way only to those in holy orders.

3.10.5 A Deanery Skills Audit In most localities there would be great value in the deanery assembling an inventory of available ministerial skills. Readers would be included in the audit according to the ministries for which they are most gifted: such as preacher, teacher, pastor or evangelist, for example. The audit could be prepared ecumenically with the relevant circuits of the Methodist Church and other churches. It would include, for example, local preachers from the Methodist and URC churches. The Canons offer ways forward for such preachers to be recognised in Anglican churches. Canon B43 offers a clear way for Local Preachers to perform many of the duties taken by Readers.⁹⁰ Correspondingly, there are procedures in other Churches for recognising Anglican lay preachers. A Methodist Superintendant may invite an Anglican Reader to conduct a service on the circuit plan. Should the sharing of ministry become more significant there is a procedure by which a Reader can be 'authorised to serve as a local preacher'.⁹¹ The Second Interim Report, *Living God's Covenant*, includes this recommendation,

"We recommend that our two churches maximise the practical opportunities for the sharing of lay ministry (particularly that of Reader and Local Preacher) that are already legally available under the rules of our churches."⁹²

3.10.6 Itinerant Ministries There are good reasons why gifted teachers should move from church to church when the congregations are small and when good teaching is needed to build up the believers.⁹³ Let Readers who are gifted as evangelists also have a more mobile ministry, taking opportunities to lead people to faith.

3.10.7 Local Pastoral Ministry By contrast, the pastoral ministry needs to be local, since it is the pastor or 'shepherd' who represents the care of Christ, the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep and is known by them, leads his sheep to pasture and whose voice the sheep hear.⁹⁴ As Bishop John Pritchard has put it:

"I think every community needs a 'focal Christian person (persons)' and Readers, having been trained so well, are ideally placed to have this responsibility. The

⁹⁰ See Annex 2

⁹¹ *Living God's Covenant* p. 49,50

⁹² *Living God's Covenant* pp. 8, 65

⁹³ Brian J. Capper, in 'Order and Ministry in the Social Pattern of the New Testament Church', (Chapter 3), argues that I Corinthians 12.28 indicates a peripatetic ministry of teaching (with apostles and prophets) to the congregations meeting in homes. *Order and Ministry*, Gracewing, Leominster, 1996, p.75

⁹⁴ John 10. 14-16

crisis in clergy numbers in the next phase of our life means we have to be much more flexible and light-on-our-feet.”⁹⁵

There are several examples, across the dioceses of the Church of England, where Readers have been entrusted with pastoral care of a particular parish church or congregation, working under the licensed priest. In a multi-parish benefice where the priest has several churches, or in a deanery with far more churches than stipendiary priests, the question must be asked as to how good pastoral care is delivered to all the churches. Appointing a Reader-in-Charge is one way of providing consistent pastoral care and quite possibly also of enabling worship to be at a regular time each Sunday. (3.3.4) Growth in a congregation is more likely to occur when the same pastoral person is present each week rather than when services are staffed by a rota of ministers. There are many parts of the world-wide Anglican Communion where the care of local congregations is largely in the hands of a lay catechist, who is both teacher and pastor to the people.

3.10.8 New Models of Pastoral Care While it is well known that parishioners can have reservations about receiving pastoral care from lay persons, these reservations can be overcome in time if the appointed lay person clearly has pastoral gifts for the task. Without such a development, unrealistic expectations of pastoral care are imposed on the clergy that they cannot fulfil. The old model is still strong in people’s minds, based on the pattern of each parish having its own priest. This model cannot be sustained, and new models of pastoral care, with collaborative teamwork, are vital (3.12).⁹⁶

3.10.9 The Age for Permission to Officiate The practice is not uniform concerning the age at which Readers should cease to be licensed and receive Permission to Officiate (PTO). The Bishops’ Regulations (2000) state 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. This should indicate the area in which they may minister and the duties they are permitted to perform. It should be for a limited period subject to renewal.”⁹⁷

The regulations also state that ‘Readers who have surrendered their written permission to officiate may be given the title Reader Emeritus as an indication of their continuing link with the Reader network, though retired from active ministry’.⁹⁸ As people are increasingly remaining active to an older age and living longer a cut off age set at 70 will seem unsatisfactory. This report proposes that when a Reader is in good health and wishes to continue their active ministry, the licence should continue until age 75. After that, a PTO would be issued with the provisos stated in the regulations. The regulations clearly envisage that the title of Reader Emeritus would be for Readers who are no longer active in ministry.

Recommendation 16 We recommend that Readers are normally licensed to the deanery, although with a designated incumbent specified for accountability and support. (3.10.3)

Recommendation 17 Deaneries regularly invite Readers, as licensed ministers, to chapter meetings, making collaborative ministry more visible and fostering friendship amongst ministers. (3.10.3)

⁹⁵ Email response to a draft of this report, January 19th, 2008

⁹⁶ Some consider that for a Reader to be recognised in such a role in the community they would need to have a clear recognition symbol, similar to the way in which clergy are recognised by the collar.

⁹⁷ *Bishops’ Regulations for Reader Ministry* 2000 4.6 p.12

⁹⁸ *Bishops’ Regulations for Reader Ministry* 2000 4.7 p.12

Supporting Action Points

- 22 Great care is taken over the deployment of Readers and it becomes normal practice for their deployment to be discussed by all interested parties at a deanery level or sometimes wider. (3.10.3)
- 23 Dioceses issue Reader licences up to the age of 75 provided that the Reader is in good health and available for active ministry. (3.10.9)
- 24 Working ecumenically, deaneries are encouraged to prepare an audit of the ministerial resources available to serve the churches in that locality. (3.10.5)
- 25 Careful consideration is given in deaneries as to how the deployment of suitably gifted Readers might assist the need to find pastoral care for congregations. (3.10.7 - 8)
- 26 Deaneries give thought to how Readers with appropriate gifts might exercise a more itinerant ministry making good teaching and preaching available more widely. (3.10.6)
- 27 Dioceses study the service for Admission and Licensing of Readers approved in 2007 and adapt it for local use. (3.10.2)

3.11 A framework for licensed lay ministry in the Church of England

3.11.1 The untidiness of developments in lay ministry over the last four decades has led to a desire for greater consistency across the dioceses, making the transferability of ministry easier when a person moves from one diocese to another. At the same time, dioceses continue to experiment with an increasingly varied range of lay ministry patterns and training, including those developed in response to local contexts and needs. In the light of these variations and developments, the working party offers proposals in two areas.

3.11.2 The first proposal is that there should be a clear distinction throughout the Church of England between lay ministries that are licensed by the bishop according to the Canons and those which are not. Into the latter category would fall the purely diocesan initiatives through which lay ministers are not licensed but authorised, in most cases with appropriate commissions or permissions from the bishop. The ministries of those trained and authorised in this way are not normally transferable from one diocese to another when a person moves.

3.11.3 Correspondingly, it is proposed that all ministries that are licensed should be subject to national accreditation, moderated training, and given diocesan support in ways which are in parallel with the support given to the clergy.⁹⁹ This means the provision of ministerial agreements or job descriptions, regular ministerial review, CME, access to grievance procedure, the nurturing of their on-going vocational journey and systematic pastoral care in the diocese. (3.13.5 - 6) This category need not be restricted to Readers as they currently operate, but would obviously include them. After further consultation and work to develop appropriately benchmarked frameworks, this category might also include

⁹⁹ It is not being proposed that all pastoral workers across the Church of England should be licensed. Dioceses will want to retain flexibility in the specific lay ministries they authorise. However, a national standard of training and accreditation may be helpful for the standing and transferability of some pastoral workers.

Evangelists¹⁰⁰ and Lay Ministers (licensed under Canon E7), and some other ministries such as licensed Pastoral Workers.¹⁰¹ It may be appropriate for those whose gifts are primarily pastoral to follow this course, since this will not preclude them being given permission to preach and share leadership of worship.

3.11.4 The second proposal relates to the title by which Reader ministry is described and known. There is growing unease in several dioceses with the name Reader. It is not easy for those outside the Church to understand this title, and responses to the questionnaires from Readers indicated a considerable body of support for a change of name. While the origin of the name was suited to those who read the service of Morning or Evening prayer, the nature of the ministry has now changed. At the time of writing, the dioceses of Oxford, Bristol and Salisbury have already made a change of name for this reason. The preferred title amongst these three dioceses is Licensed Lay Minister, although the title 'Reader' is retained on the licence. Other dioceses are now discussing future name changes. A consistency of nomenclature nationally, is therefore highly desirable.¹⁰²

3.11.5 The working group judges that the time is now right for a change of name. It is proposed that there should be an overall category for all licensed lay ministry throughout the Church of England, that of Licensed Lay Minister. Under Canon E7 a bishop may licence as a Lay Worker a lay person who has received training to an appropriate level. It is proposed that within this category, and following consultation and detailed work, there could be clear sub-divisions of ministries with different foci: viz. Reader, Evangelist, Pastoral Worker and possibly, in due course, Youth Minister, Pioneer Ministers and others. The licence could include both names, and the lay ministers could be known either as Licensed Lay Ministers or by their focus, e.g. Reader, Evangelist, Pastoral Worker. This would require no immediate change in the Canons. The training would be organised by dioceses and Regional Training Partnerships. If this proposal is taken up, a change of the Canons to reflect it could be made in due course.

3.11.6 Since 2007, those candidates formerly known as Accredited Lay Ministers are no longer being considered by national Bishops' Advisory Panels. This change reflected the tiny number of candidates coming forward; however, it closes the door for a training path to a nationally recognised role of lay minister that is paid for by the Church nationally. On the other hand through the RTPs, Readers now have access to a training of a very high standard. While bishops may continue from time to time to use the canonical provision to license lay ministers who have trained in other ways and with different ministerial foci, the likelihood is that Reader ministry, with its high standard of theological training, will continue to be the usual form of licensed lay ministry available in the Church. Those who formerly became nationally selected Accredited Lay Ministers (stipendiary or non-stipendiary) will be able to follow the path to licensing as Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers) and also be stipendiary if that seemed appropriate to their diocese.

Recommendation 18 We recommend that the name of the office of Reader is changed to Licensed Lay Minister (Reader). (3.11.4 - 5)

¹⁰⁰ The Church Army has its own well-established selection, training and deployment patterns for its evangelists who are nationally accredited and licensed by the bishop according to Canon E7.2

¹⁰¹ It is not being proposed that all pastoral workers should be licensed. However, a national standard of training and accreditation may be helpful for the standing and transferability of some pastoral workers.

¹⁰² Many Readers throughout the Church of England are attached to their current title. There is also a view strongly held by some that any change of name should clearly indicate the core ministry of preaching and teaching the Word.

Recommendation 19 We recommend that all lay ministers licensed by the bishop are known as Licensed Lay Ministers. A working sub-title can be added which may vary according to diocesan practice (e.g. Reader, Pastoral Assistant etc). Careful consideration, with consultation, is given to the possibility of a national framework through which these ministries can be nationally accredited and normally transferable between dioceses. (3.11.1 - 6)

Recommendation 20 We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and that they receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. (1.2.3; 3.11.3 - 7; 3.13.5 – 6; 3.14.3)

3.12 Training in collaborative ministry for incumbents and those relating directly to Readers

3.12.1 Reader Ministry is by its very nature a collaborative one; Readers always minister in partnership, with clergy and lay colleagues and with teams. The importance of collaboration is a repeated theme in many recent writings and reports on Reader ministry. The quinquennial Reader training moderation report *Equipping the Saints* recommends that:

With the growth of local ministry teams, parish staff teams and collaborative styles of working, Readers need to be able to work effectively within different patterns of ministry. Their training should prepare them to work collaboratively not only with their parish priests and with other ministers but also with lay people in their parishes and further afield.”¹⁰³

3.12.2 The significance of a collaborative pattern of ministry is discussed further by Christina Baxter in the collection of essays *Bridging the Gap*.

“We also set our understanding within the framework of a Trinitarian theology which recognises that the unity of God is a call to the church to be united, and the differentiation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit within the Godhead encourages us to see that there can be genuine differences of gifting and tasks which does not destroy unity but enriches and contributes to it.”¹⁰⁴

3.12.3 It has been noted in *Shaping the Future*, that the incumbent is seen as a co-ordinator of range of non-stipendiary ministries, both ordained and lay, and that to develop skills in working collaboratively with all other ministers is among the learning outcomes expected by the time a priest is to be appointed to a post of incumbent status.¹⁰⁵ Those who are to be licensed to a post of incumbent status are now expected to be able to ‘demonstrate effective collaborative leadership and the ability to exercise this in a position of responsibility’, ‘demonstrate ability to supervise and manage others’ and ‘show an integration of authority and obedience, leadership and service that empowers and enables

¹⁰³ Thorpe, W. *Equipping the Saints: The Moderation of Reader Training 1999-2003*; Archbishops' Council; 2003 p.37

¹⁰⁴ *Bridging the Gap*, p.2

¹⁰⁵ Parameters of the curriculum and post-ordination phase of IME in *Shaping the Future*, pp.68-72

others in their leadership and service'.¹⁰⁶ The importance of the incumbent as the coordinator, encourager and enabler of local collaborative ministry between ordained and lay ministers is impossible to overstate, since it is so often lacking. It is crucial to the healthy development of successful patterns of collaborative working that appropriate training for both clergy and lay ministers must be developed and all incumbents with Readers should be expected to undergo such courses, with their Readers. The questionnaire sent to Readers indicated that only half of the respondents knew of some diocesan provision to encourage team or collaborative working. There is an urgent need to help all ministers to develop and repeatedly practice collaborative skills, so that these become habits.

3.12.4 To create an expectation and culture of collaboration involves both 'un-learning' and 're-learning' on the part of many in the church, including clergy and Readers. Healthy collaborative working of lay and ordained sometimes fails to develop through 'benign neglect'. In his book *Ministry in Three Dimensions*, the Bishop of Sheffield, Steven Croft, observes:

"The model of training and deployment for lay ministry in many congregations is higher initial training [especially if provided by Deanery or Diocese] followed by low or non-existent on-going support – the "sink or swim" model. Many clergy pass that model of ministry on to lay people in their congregations because that is exactly what they have experienced themselves."¹⁰⁷

An inherited tradition of a minister as a superior expert and solo operator dates back to a time when the 'clerk in holy orders' may have been the only person in a community with educational qualifications. Some clergy recollect being told during training that numbers of stipendiary clergy and curates would drop, so that 'in future you will be on your own'. Clergy have not always been prepared for the role of oversight, and some do not recognise the significant difference between delegating work to others, and ministering collaboratively alongside them. Readers also may never have experienced leadership modelled by those who enable lay collaborative ministry and are unlikely to have been trained to work in a collaborative way. In the past, Reader training often focussed on particular tasks and skills, rather than on a potential role in the parish as an enabler.

Patterns of collaborative ministry are time consuming. Many stipendiary ministers have increasingly large areas of oversight, either in united benefices, across deaneries or with parochial responsibilities augmented by a range of sector portfolios or diocesan roles. Most stipendiary clergy, as general practitioners, find themselves having to be pastors, worship leaders, initiators of mission, community chaplains, school governors and taking on many other roles. Some may not be accustomed to working with volunteers, whose employment patterns may leave them unable to meet during daytime hours. The very range of demands can militate against the parish clergy being able to step back and reflect upon the shape and management of their ministry.

3.12.6 What does a healthy pattern of collaboration look like between clergy, Readers, lay ministers and groups in parishes? It means good communication, the development of mutual respect, reflective practice, and the recognition of people's particular skills and gifting. If each diocese incorporates the development of collaborative working skills into its

¹⁰⁶ *Shaping the Future* – p 70

¹⁰⁷ Stephen Croft, *Ministry in Three Dimensions, Ordination and Leadership in the Local Church*, London, DLT, 1999 p.178

strategies for leadership development, CME¹⁰⁸ and Ministerial Review, it is to be hoped that developments both at the level of initial training and ongoing training will lead to a change in culture in Anglican ministerial practice which makes truly collaborative practices more achievable.¹⁰⁹ The development of such patterns needs constant reinforcement and support and the help of ongoing group mentors or consultants has worked well in many places. Some dioceses also have programmes to support teams and shared ministry and patterns of developmental review for local ministry teams or collaborative structures.

3.12.7 By virtue of their standing as lay ministers holding the bishop's licence, Readers can play a key role in enabling the successful development of varied patterns of ministry in differing contexts, including local ministry teams and an increasing number of united benefices. They have gifts to offer that will complement and work with those of others in the body of Christ.

Recommendation 21 We recommend that dioceses extensively promote training and support for collaborative ministry which all incumbents with Readers are expected to undergo, as well as Readers and all lay ministers. (3.12.6)

Supporting Action Points

28 RTPs and Reader training institutions show evidence of their intention to develop the effective collaborative attitudes, habits and skills expected by the learning outcomes listed in *Shaping the Future*. (3.12.3)

3.13 Support for Reader ministry

3.13.1 **The incumbent** The support of the Reader's designated incumbent is vital if the ministry of a Reader is to flourish. As a minister given the bishop's licence, a Reader should receive the same quality of attention by the incumbent as would be given to an ordained colleague. This means personal support and supervision as well as the opportunity to share in discussions of the ministerial task. Experienced Readers will be looking for a relationship of partnership in which it is recognised that the ministries of Reader and priest are distinctive but equal. Sadly, it does not always feel this way to the Reader. Furthermore, if the incumbent is the leader of a variety of lay and ordained ministries, then the ministry team across the parish or benefice will be a place where truly collaborative leadership together brings team support to all who exercise a ministry, be it authorised by the bishop or by the parish. (3.12.1 to 3.12.6)

3.13.2 **Diocesan Reader Associations** (or Boards or Councils). The diocesan associations that oversee Reader ministry in most dioceses have an important role to play in monitoring effective diocesan pastoral care and support.¹¹⁰ The association's interests are all the current matters to do with the selection, training and formation of Readers and the future development of Reader ministry. Increasingly these associations

¹⁰⁸ A good proportion of Readers are in employment and need CME provision to be made available in the evenings and on Saturdays, times when stipendiary clergy would probably be least enthusiastic to participate in a training course.

¹⁰⁹ The content of a training programme for collaborative ministry might be: shared purpose and objectives, consultation and shared decision making, group practice and its facilitation, high levels of communication and trust, conflict resolution and appropriate coaching and mentoring skills, and some form of accountability and appraisal for those involved in sharing ministry. For a longer checklist for Good Collaborative Ministry see *Stranger in the Wings* – ABM 1998 p.51

¹¹⁰ They have their own constitutions. They provide diocesan-wide study days, residential conferences, an annual licensing service with the bishop and they hold an AGM. They circulate newsletters and, increasingly, maintain a local website, itself a way of enhancing the diocesan community of Readers.

are linked to the body responsible for all ministry matters in the diocese. Reader ministry, then, is integral to the diocesan lay ministry framework. But there are other dioceses where Reader structures are separate from wider lay ministry schemes.

3.13.3 Diocesan Wardens The bishop appoints the Warden of Readers in each diocese. As well as serving on the Diocesan Reader Association (or its equivalent), it is common for the Warden to:

- advise the bishop on Reader matters and ensure that Reader ministry runs smoothly in the diocese.
- hold a central role in the planning and delivery of vocational awareness, selection, training and life-long learning for Readers.
- work collaboratively with other advisers for vocation and ministerial education in the diocese, and the staff of RTPs and regional courses for ministerial training.
- oversee the process of ministerial agreements and ministerial review for Readers.
- handle complaints by Readers using the national grievance procedure.

The frequency of access of the Warden to the bishop and his staff, and to the bodies where policy is made, will give some indication of how creatively the Reader movement is engaged with ministry development in the diocese. In dioceses where Reader ministry has been 'taken for granted', it is urged that this will now change. But whatever role the Warden plays in the diocesan structures, above all, the warden needs to know all the Readers personally and be readily accessible to them as a point of support and encouragement.¹¹¹

3.13.4 Sub-wardens or Deanery Wardens When appointed, these provide more immediate local advice and support than the Warden can offer. In a geographically large diocese, and liaising with the Rural or Area Dean, they often organise meetings for fellowship and support in a local area. Readers benefit from being in an active community of Readers, just as clergy benefit from their corporate gatherings. A sense of mutuality and shared ministry with clergy is enhanced if there are meetings in a deanery for all ministers, both lay and ordained. On the ecumenical front meetings between Readers and local preachers are to be encouraged. If a deanery audit of the available gifts for ministry is undertaken (3.10.5 and action point 24), this will provide a basis for invitations to ecumenical gatherings of all lay ministers – Readers, local preachers and others.

3.13.5 CME Staff If a comparable level of support is to be given to the Church's Readers as to its clergy, then in each diocese there needs to be a systematic approach to Reader CME for which resources should be made available. A CME adviser for Readers needs to be appointed who understands their needs. In 2003 the Central Readers Council circulated the report of a working group on Reader CME to all the dioceses. If little attention has been paid to the report this is further evidence of the neglect of Reader ministry.

3.13.6 Pastoral Care It is not realistic, given the size of dioceses in the Church of England, for the Bishop to be the main line of pastoral care for its Readers, who, in total throughout the country, outnumber the clergy. Where relationships with the incumbent are good, a Reader will receive pastoral care comparable to that which the incumbent would offer to any member of the congregation. However, for a minister licensed by the Bishop it

¹¹¹ Where the suffragan bishop is the warden, in a matter of discipline there could be confusion of roles. For that reason, and to manage Reader matters on a day to day basis, it is highly desirable that another person is given responsibility for most or all of the functions listed above. This may be the secretary of the diocesan association, who can helpfully share the work of the Warden.

is appropriate to make provision also for pastoral care independent of the Reader's incumbent and this is best offered by the Warden of Readers in the diocese. Readers may feel that they fall between the categories of congregation and clergy and so are easily overlooked. To avoid such situations, wardens and sub-wardens need to be proactive in keeping the pastoral care of the large number of Readers under constant review.

Area/rural deans can be asked to help since they often have a good knowledge of the situation in the benefices in their deanery. A bishop will, however, normally welcome access to him by any who hold his licence and can certainly be a possible way forward for a Reader where other channels have not proved fruitful.

3.13.7 Bishops, archdeacons and area/rural deans The questionnaire to the dioceses appeared to reveal that attitudes to Reader ministry vary greatly amongst the bishops. Some are very enthusiastic about the work of Readers. Some accept them as just there, but concentrate their attention on clergy, seeing the work of ministry as primarily that of the clergy. It would be an enormous help to Readers across the country if the bishops were more uniformly strongly supportive of Reader ministry.

3.13.8 The introduction of a new incumbent Since Reader ministry is predominantly local, and Readers work with a designated incumbent, even if licensed on a wider basis, a Reader is particularly vulnerable when there is a change of incumbent. There are many stories of Readers with flourishing ministries who find that the new incumbent does not favour or make use of Readers. Rejection of a ministry that has previously been well received is a particularly painful experience and difficult for the Reader to understand. When this rejection is because of the Reader's female gender this is a traumatic experience, yet one of which there are a large number of examples. To seek to avoid this damaging experience it is important when appointments are being made to a living to ascertain carefully the attitude and past track record of a candidate towards Readers before the appointment is made. If, as a matter of course, Readers have an opportunity to meet candidates for the incumbent's post and to express their opinion, this will both encourage the Readers in a parish and help to avoid the appointment of an unsuitable incumbent. It is vital that during the appointment process when clergy are appointed to parishes where Readers are serving, they show evidence of collaborative skills that have been developed and demonstrated in their current and previous appointments. (see 3.12.1)

3.13.9 Fees for services There is a division of opinion amongst Readers as to whether or not Readers should receive fees for occasional offices, particularly funerals. The income from such offices has been taken as the income of the benefice, a contribution towards the stipend of the incumbent. However, although non-stipendiary clergy do not receive fees when they officiate, clergy with permission to officiate are entitled to receive fees. A policy paper on the subject is awaited at present, following extensive consultation. Meanwhile two dioceses have proceeded with a decision that fees will be paid to all who take such offices – clergy or Readers.

3.13.10 Reader support for other lay ministries If an outcome of this report is that Readers receive much stronger support for their ministries and their vocational development than hitherto, this report will have achieved its main aim. However, there is a corresponding duty for Readers, namely, to welcome and support those finding their ministry in the various forms of lay ministry which are developing. This includes responding positively to those who, though less fully trained than Readers, may be taking opportunities to discover and develop their gifting in preaching and leading worship.

3.13.11 Reader discipline Readers must expect to receive a CRB clearance in order to hold a licence, and follow appropriate national guidelines for ministry.¹¹² This is the case now for all lay people working under the authority of the Church in roles which could bring them into contact with children or vulnerable adults. The Church has an understanding of how the Christian Faith is to be lived in Christian discipleship and this leads to expectations of those who preach and teach that faith. According to the Canons the bishop may summarily revoke a Reader's licence for a cause which appears to him to be good and reasonable, and after having given the Reader sufficient opportunity of showing reason to the contrary¹¹³ The Reader may then appeal to the archbishop of the province. There is, therefore, a marked contrast between the discipline afforded to Readers and that afforded to clergy through the Clergy Discipline Measure. (CDM) Some of the principles underlying the latter need to be considered in the drafting of a new and acceptable disciplinary procedure for Readers. Clarification is urgently needed from the House of Bishops as to what expectations there are of the conduct of Readers who hold the bishop's licence to lead worship and teach the Faith.

Recommendation 22 We recommend that dioceses ensure that Readers, as licensed ministers, are consulted over the appointments of incumbents and assistant clergy, as a matter of course. (3.13.8)

Recommendation 23 We recommend that all dioceses of the Church of England recognise the value of Reader ministry and actively promote it as the best trained and resourced lay ministry with a wide variety of opportunities. (2.5.6; 3.1.1 - 2; 3.13.7)

Recommendation 24 We recommend that the House of Bishops clarifies what expectations there are of Readers and other Licensed Lay Ministers in view of their role as public representatives and teachers of the Christian Faith as the Church of England sets it forth and the House sets in train the preparation of an acceptable disciplinary procedure for Readers. (3.13.11)

Supporting Action Points

- 29 Bishops and archdeacons take care that when clergy are appointed to parishes where Readers are serving a successful candidate should demonstrate evidence of the necessary attitudes and skills to work well with Readers. (3.13.8)
- 30 Incumbents give personal support and supervision to Readers and all Licensed Lay Ministers in their benefice or for whom they are the designated incumbent on the licence. Where there is a ministry team, the incumbent encourages a culture of mutual support. (3.13.1)
- 31 Pastoral care for Readers in a diocese is shared between the incumbent and the Warden of Readers. (3.13.6)
- 32 Diocesan Associations monitor the pastoral care and provision of support for Readers in the diocese. (3.13.2)

¹¹² eg. *Promoting a Safe Church* - policy for safeguarding adults in the Church of England (House of Bishops 2006)

¹¹³ It may be necessary, legally, for the bishop to show that any invocation of the Christian Faith in discipline is not discriminatory.

- 33 Diocesan Wardens of Readers provide a good link between the bishop and the licensed Readers by having regular meetings with the bishop and being readily accessible to Readers. (3.13.3)
- 34 In a deanery or similar area Readers meet from time to time with Methodist local preachers and on a fully ecumenical basis with all lay ministers. (3.13.4)
- 35 When a diocese is making incumbent level appointments to a parish where a Reader has an acknowledged ministry, care needs to be taken to appoint a priest who is supportive of Reader ministry. (3.13.8)
- 36 Readers positively welcome and support those finding their ministry in the various forms of lay ministry which are developing. (3.13.10)
- 37 Readers must expect that a CRB clearance will be necessary if their licence is to remain. (3.13.11)

3.14 Ongoing review

3.14.1 Regular, reflective and robust review is essential for any professional minister.¹¹⁴ This is a marked shift in culture for many of our Readers of long standing and not one which is easy to adjust to, in spite of its many benefits. Without the careful reflection on one's ministry, the need for CME is easily set aside or becomes simply a matter of pursuing one's own interests. The process of ongoing review needs to take account not only of the Reader's own perception of their ministry, but also the perception of others and, in particular, that of the incumbent. It has many parallels with the line management review which is now normal in most professions and places of work.

3.14.2 The diocesan responses to the questionnaires indicate that on-going ministerial review is not yet an integral part of Reader ministry in the dioceses.¹¹⁵ However, most Reader courses now encourage the Reader in training to engage in serious and review of their learning and of their developing Ministry. This is intended to establish an expectation for engagement in life-long learning, an essential feature of the shift in culture being called for.

3.14.3 Regular review provides the opportunity for the Reader and reviewer to consider the development of gifts and how they are being used. The discussion will also consider the needs of the deanery or diocese for mission. (3.6.1; 3.10.3) The review is the means of both accountability for ministry and encouragement. It provides an occasion for the regular review of the existing Ministry Agreement and the drawing up of a new one, when appropriate. It provides a check on the match of expectations between Reader and incumbent or PCC. The content of the review can cover things as diverse as relationships in a ministry team, collaborative working, spiritual development, use of quiet days and spiritual directors, theological reading, work-life balance and personal health. It can review new openings for mission initiatives beyond the church. The review is an essential part of

¹¹⁴ The report *The Review of Clergy Terms of Service* calls for a culture of regular ministerial review, coupled to ongoing professional development, for which the diocese will make provision and for which each minister, including Readers, will be responsible.

¹¹⁵ Only the minority of respondents gave an unequivocal 'yes'. Strangely, the responses to the individual questionnaire yielded just over 5 in 8 able to participate in a scheme of ministerial review in their diocese, although 1 in 3 of these found it to be of limited value.

an approach to each Reader's ministry which is dynamic and open to vocational growth and change as well as supported by the diocese.

3.14.4 On-going review also provides a vital opportunity for the Reader to reflect on whether or not time is being set aside for daily spiritual disciplines and for equally important opportunities for time on retreat. Just as it is hoped that dioceses will support Readers in accessing training for specific ministries, so it is hoped that through the CME budget dioceses will support times for spiritual refreshment for all their licensed ministers, times when the usual activity of ministry is set aside.

3.14.5 At present it is a matter for each diocese to decide how provision is made for Reader Ministerial Review. The Diocesan Reader Association (or equivalent) is likely to be responsible for it. We need to work to a position where it is as robust and diocesan led as for all clergy, involves all Readers, and indicates the CME needs which are to be addressed. It will give an indication of the health of Reader ministry throughout the diocese. It indicates where there are problems and issues to be addressed, such as poor collaborative working, the need for conflict resolution or the under-use of gifts. It may lead to a Reader taking up wider opportunities in the deanery or being moved to another parish where their gifts may be needed and used.¹¹⁶ In some dioceses a more thorough and formal review is conducted before the renewal of Readers' licences which is usually done around every 5 years. This will give confidence that the renewal of each Reader's licence is appropriate.

3.14.6 At the national level, feedback about Reader ministry from the dioceses will indicate whether or not the current Bishops' Regulations are clear and relevant or in need of revision. Since they were last revised in 2000, and a major shift in culture of Reader ministry is envisaged, it is expected that one outcome of this report will be newly worked Bishops' Regulations.

Recommendation 20 (repeated) We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. (1.2.3; 3.11.3 - 7; 3.13.5 - 6; 3.14.3)

Recommendation 25 We recommend that the House of Bishops requests the Ministry Division to set in train a revision of the Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry. (3.14.6)

Recommendation 26 We recommend that dioceses should encourage Readers and all Licensed Lay Ministers to attend to their own spiritual refreshment and development with times in which they step back from active involvement and by provision of financial support for courses relevant to their vocation. (3.14.4)

3.15 Readers and sacramental ministry

3.15.1 **Administering Baptism** The issue of Readers baptising has been raised on a number of occasions in recent years (Annex 3; 7.3.10). This is an issue on which there are sharply divided views. In preparation for this report, the individual

¹¹⁶ At the time of publication of this amended report, a framework for Ministerial Review Development for Readers, agreed by CRC, and taking note of similar clergy reviews, has been sent to all dioceses.

responses by Readers to the questionnaires recorded that 70% are in favour of Readers having permission to baptise (2.3.4). Since baptism by a lay person is fully accepted when administered in an emergency, such a baptism is not invalid. It is also the practice to accept fully the baptism administered by other churches, without thought as to the ministerial standing of the one baptising. With the support of the Superintendent, Methodist Local Preachers are permitted to baptise¹¹⁷ On the other hand, there are others who argue that baptism is of such significance as the sacrament of initiation into Christian Faith and discipleship that its administration should normally be reserved for those who are ordained and to whom the Church entrusts the guarding and the transmission of the Christian Faith.

3.15.2 Canon B 21 states that baptism in a parish is the responsibility of the minister with the cure of souls. The Canons explicitly permit deaconesses to baptise and the Ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer permits deacons to baptise. In both cases this is 'in the absence of the priest'. On baptism the Canons are silent for Readers and lay workers.¹¹⁸ The Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry in 2000 state, 'Readers may not officiate at the sacrament of baptism except in an emergency situation when it is lawful for a lay person to baptise'.¹¹⁹ In a very few dioceses, bishops, have, however, on rare occasions given permission for a Reader to baptise in Church.¹²⁰ It will be helpful to all Readers if the House of Bishops would consider whether it wishes further to clarify if there are any circumstances under which it might be thought appropriate for a bishop to permit a Reader to baptise.

3.15.3 **Public Services of Communion by Extension** Since these services were approved by the General Synod in 2000, it has been possible for deacons, Readers and other approved lay persons to lead such services on the occasions where they have been authorised by the bishop. The circumstances under which a bishop may give permission for it are clearly stated with the form of service: 'permission should relate to specific pastoral circumstances, thus emphasising the exceptional nature of this ministry'. The Guidelines issued by the House of Bishops state: 'Communion by Extension must always be regarded as exceptional and provisional, looking to circumstances when a priest will be available to preside at a celebration of Holy Communion.'¹²¹ The need for this ministry varies greatly from one part of the country to another and from urban to rural locations. Where there are few retired priests and many smaller congregations, a Public Service of Communion by Extension enables a regular Sunday congregation to receive Holy Communion as well as hear the ministry of the Word when they might not otherwise be able to do so.

3.15.4 Leading Services of Communion by Extension is a ministry for which Readers, with their training and experience in preaching and public worship, are an obvious first choice. Such a ministry is often greatly appreciated because it is offered by someone within the locality and with a settled pastoral relationship to the church. When a Reader is given pastoral responsibility for a church or congregation, then a service of Communion by

¹¹⁷ SO 010A(2) noted in *Living God's Covenant*, Second Interim Report (2007) of the Joint Implementation Commission under the Covenant between The Methodist Church of Great Britain and The Church of England, p.57

¹¹⁸ Canon D1.4(b)

¹¹⁹ *Bishops' Regulations for Ministry*, 2000, 1.4 (a), p.8

¹²⁰ The Bishop's Regulations and Guidelines October 1993 for the Diocese of Winchester state 'Readers may not normally officiate at baptism except 'in extremis' or on an occasion with specific permission of the Bishop. (para.4d2). In the largely rural Lincoln diocese, the Report on Reader Ministry, October 2005, states, 'permission has been given occasionally for Readers to baptise in church' (p.12). This reflects their significant ministry amongst smaller rural congregations.

¹²¹ *Public Worship with Communion by Extension*, Church House Publishing, 2001, pp. v and 33

Extension, on some occasions, fits with the Reader's role of leadership which is pastoral, catechetical and liturgical. However, such an appointment of a Reader would, in the course of time, be likely to raise the question as to whether or not the person would be a suitable candidate for ordination to the diaconate¹²² or to the priesthood.

3.15.5 In order to meet the desire for a eucharistic service led by the priest, there are many multi-parish benefices where the times of the services have been arranged not to suit the local people but to enable the priest to move from church to church taking the services. Services are no longer held weekly. It is better to support regular services and to use Readers where they are available. If public Services of Communion by Extension are not thought to be acceptable, then an alternative is for the Reader to take the role of catechist, with more non-eucharistic services (3.10.7).¹²³

3.15.6 It is easy for Readers to see what fellow Readers may be permitted to do in a different diocese and expect to be given similar opportunities. The frustration that this undoubtedly generates needs to be set alongside the fact that the contexts vary greatly. However, all ministry in the Church is exercised under the authority of those to whom it is committed - bishops or incumbents. Decisions are made as seems good to those who have to make them and need to be respected. The willingness for ministry is an offering we make to God and the Church; it is no-one's right to exercise a particular ministry.

Recommendation 27 We recommend that the House of Bishops decides whether it wishes to clarify further those circumstances under which it might be appropriate for a bishop to permit a Reader, or other Licensed Lay Minister, to baptise. (3.15.2)

Recommendation 28 We recommend that where parishes have permission to hold Public Services of Communion by Extension, Readers, in the light of their training, are considered as the primary choice among lay officiants. The guidelines for this synodically approved ministry should be applied more evenly across the country. (3.15.3 - 6)

3.16 Should Readers become deacons?

3.16.1 The order of deacons goes back to the earliest years of the Church and there is a prima facie case for re-establishing it in a permanent form. A report entitled *For such a time as this* was presented to the General Synod in 2001 arguing the case for a renewed diaconate in the Church of England.¹²⁴ It argues that the strength of the diaconate is not only its historic place in the Church of God, but also its value as a representative sign to the Church of the servant calling of all God's people.¹²⁵ It is aware of the development of the diaconate in other churches and communions.¹²⁶ There is care also in the report to

¹²² As for a 'commissioned task'; Annex 2

¹²³ As in many parts of Africa. By contrast, the Roman Catholic Church is making considerable use of Communion by Extension in order that their people may receive sacramental nurture.

¹²⁴ This followed an earlier report by the House of Bishops in 1988 entitled *'Deacons in the Ministry of the Church'*.

¹²⁵ The report pointed out that historically the diaconate had shown a capacity to be adapted to the changing needs of the Church and society. It argued: 'the need at the present time may well be to find an overarching rationale that brings together the diverse roles – liturgical, pastoral, communal, administrative, catechetical and prophetic – that *diakonia* (diaconal ministry) has taken in the Church's life.'¹²⁵ The report expects most deacons to be voluntary ministers and that the diverse roles cannot be fulfilled by a one year transitional diaconate.

¹²⁶ It is the view of some that as long as those in deacon's orders remain almost indistinguishable in the eyes of the wider community from those in priests' orders, the permanent diaconate will never flourish in this country. This is in contrast to the order of deacons in the predominantly Lutheran churches of Germany and Scandinavia.

recognise the importance of Reader ministry and lay pastoral ministers. The report states that 'Readers may, with specific permission, carry out all the duties assigned to deacons, with the not insignificant exceptions of baptism and officiating at marriages.' However, the Reader, it says, 'is not an 'ecclesial sign' in the same way that ordained ministry is'.¹²⁷

3.16.2 All that Readers do under the leadership of their incumbent has at certain times in history been the province of deacons. Reader ministry is a ministerial task of diaconal character, focused in the office to which Readers are admitted, a commissioned task or diakonia in the service of the gospel. (Annex 6: 6.2.3; 6.5.2) It is not primarily about leadership of the Christian community.

3.16.3 The results of the questionnaire completed by a large number of Readers indicate that around 60% consider that ordination would be an appropriate step for some Readers. (2.3.4) However, for many of them it may well not be the diaconate which is in mind, but the priesthood.¹²⁸ There are indications that a primary cause of this aspiration is to seek to resolve the sense of identity-loss which has arisen as Readers have felt squeezed by the upsurge of new ministries, both ordained and lay, and as opportunities for leadership of non-eucharistic worship have declined. There is a regrettable perception that ordination brings status, usually giving a more significant position in the parish staff. But the issue of Reader identity should not be confused with the issue of vocation to ordained ministry.

3.16.4 This report fully supports the possibility that a Reader might test their vocation to ordained ministry, either to the vocational (or distinctive) diaconate or to priesthood, as has always been the case. Incumbents, Wardens of Readers and bishops have a duty to encourage a dynamic sense of ongoing vocation in Readers; gifts and skills for ministry are always developing. However, since the diaconate has fallen out of fashion, other than as a transitional year before ordination to the priesthood, very few have offered for the permanent diaconate; rather more have offered and been accepted for the priesthood. But the vocation to ordination is something that is distinctive and is discerned by the Church. Any sense by Readers that a natural or easy passage to ordained ministry would be appropriate fails to understand the distinctive value of Reader ministry as well as the distinctive character of ordained ministry.

3.16.5 Ordained and licensed lay ministries are quite distinctive, but equal. For a Reader to enter ordained ministry means both loss and gain for the Church. There is no longer the same possibility of them being a fellow traveller with the laity in the struggles of life, one who is an example to other laity of thoughtful Christian discipleship and one who is authorised by the Church to speak about issues from the experience of being a lay person. This may also be a time in our society when we are better served by a public ministry in which partnership between clergy and laity is emphasised rather than by a further clericalisation of that public ministry. For these reasons this report leaves open the matter of possible ordination to the diaconate rather than pressing for substantial numbers of Readers to follow this route. Were the diaconate to take a new shape, however, as an order of those commissioned to a definitely mission directed task, with a distinctive selection and training, then ordination to the diaconate could serve to focus the role of some of those Readers who are willing to build on their core ministry by exploring ministry beyond the boundaries of the church congregations.

¹²⁷ *For such a time as this*, p.41

¹²⁸ The responses to the questionnaire to the dioceses yielded only two dioceses which favoured the ordination of a significant numbers of Readers as deacons. Interestingly the same responses held that Readers took a similar view which is not entirely born out by the responses to the individual questionnaires.

Recommendation 29 We recommend that on-going support be given in the dioceses for Readers to explore their vocation to ministry and to specific missional tasks, including the possibility of ordained ministry either to the vocational diaconate or the priesthood. (3.16.4 -5)

Recommendation 30 We recommend that bishops who support the ordination of a Reader who is 55 or over take into account the experience of a long-standing Reader when assessing training needs.

Supporting Action Points

- 38 In giving careful attention to the support of their Readers in their vocational journey, Wardens of Readers and incumbents seek to discern those Readers for whom a vocation to ordained ministry might be appropriate, either to the diaconate or to priesthood. (3.16.4)
- 39 Readers take care to reflect on their spiritual and vocational development, with someone to accompany them, renouncing the attraction of status, but recognising that for those who are called there is always the possibility to test a vocation to the diaconate or the priesthood. (3.16.3 to 3.16.5)

3.17 Conclusion

3.17.1 This report is written with the conviction that the time is right for Reader ministry to be strengthened, given clear new directions and to develop its distinctive and important identity in a new national framework for licensed lay ministry. The way forward, we believe, does not lie with seeking to restrict the growth either of non-stipendiary ordained ministry or of local and diocesan lay ministries for which the bishop may give a permission or commission. The morale of Readers will be built up with a clear identity of the exciting range of opportunities ahead of them, in the light of their thorough and quite distinctive training as lay people interpreting and ministering the Word and in leading public worship. If these opportunities are fully embraced, then the potential for 10,000 Readers to advance the Church's mission is enormous.

Annex 1

Summary of recommendations and action points

Arranged according to whom they are addressed

4.1 Addressed to the Bishop, the Diocese and the Warden of Readers

Recommendation 2 We recommend that dioceses encourage Readers to see their core ministry of preaching and teaching and leading worship as both a significant part of the Church's ministry to equip lay disciples for their mission in the world and the opportunity to engage in mission on the boundaries of the Church. (3.1.1- 3; 3.2.1 – 7; 3.4.1; 7.2.4 - 9)

Recommendation 3 We recommend that dioceses strengthen the provision of Reader CME, and in particular the development of the skill of Readers as preachers, catechists and educators enabling them to interpret Christian Faith as it engages with daily life and work. (3.2.1 – 4; Annex 5)

Recommendation 4 We recommend that dioceses indicate their support for Readers as interpreters of the gospel in daily life by encouraging the use of Readers as preachers at the main parish Sunday service of Holy Communion. (3.2.2 - 3)

Recommendation 5 We recommend that dioceses permit their Readers to serve in all aspects of ministry allowed by Canon Law and support them. (3.3.4 - 5)

Recommendation 6 We recommend that dioceses widen their vision to include the possible appointment of a Reader as Reader-in-Charge of a congregation, with the corresponding roles of catechist and of pastoral care, possibly also as a House for Duty appointment and that Readers are also considered for sector minister posts. (3.3.4; 3.4.9; 3.10.7 – 8)

Recommendation 7 We recommend that dioceses encourage the use of Readers with pastoral gifts in bereavement care and funeral ministry, and deaneries strengthen the teams of ministers available for funeral ministry by including Readers. (3.3.4 - 6; 3.3.5; 3.9.2 - 3; 3.10.7 - 8)

Recommendation 8 We recommend that dioceses, deaneries and parishes look for opportunities for Readers to exercise their ministry on the boundaries of the Church, in breaking new ground with "fresh expressions" of church and mission, and in circles where there might otherwise be no representative public ministry of the Church. (3.4.1- 5)

Recommendation 9 We recommend that dioceses and deaneries and parishes should look for opportunities for the appointment of Readers as chaplains both to institutions where chaplains are already recognised and in places where such an appointment breaks new ground. (3.4.6 -7)

Recommendation 10 We recommend that the office of Reader, in keeping with other ministerial categories in the Church, is to be seen as fluid rather than static and part of an ongoing journey of vocation, the nature of which is regularly discerned afresh. To address this, dioceses will need a team of vocations advisers to cover the full range of ministries. (3.5.2; 3.6.5)

Recommendation 11 We recommend that dioceses support parishes in the careful discernment of potential gifts in lay people and certainly prior to them being considered for selection for training as Readers. This is to include the discernment of gifts for the core ministries of preaching and teaching, leading worship and interpreting the faith, by such opportunities being given by incumbents to lay people. (3.6.1 - 8)

Recommendation 14 We recommend that without lowering standards, training programmes for Reader Ministry need to be more flexible. They should be accessible and designed to encourage candidates for ministry, particularly younger candidates. Course design needs to enable this by encouraging varied patterns of engagement and incorporating AP(E)L opportunities for former learning experiences to be recognised. (3.8.9)

Recommendation 15 We recommend that dioceses encourage the ongoing development of Readers in ministry by offering CME modules in specialised areas of ministry and by providing resources for Readers to engage with appropriate training offered elsewhere. (3.9.1- 4)

Recommendation 16 We recommend that Readers are normally licensed to the deanery, although with a designated incumbent specified for accountability and support. (3.10.3)

Recommendation 18 We recommend that the name of the office of Reader is changed to Licensed Lay Minister (Reader). (3.11.4 - 5)

Recommendation 19 We recommend that all lay ministers licensed by the bishop are known as Licensed Lay Ministers. A working sub-title can be added which may vary according to diocesan practice (e.g. Reader, Pastoral Assistant etc). Careful consideration, with consultation, is given to the possibility of a national framework through which these ministries can be nationally accredited and normally transferable between dioceses. (3.11.1 - 6.)

Recommendation 20 We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and that they receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. (1.2.3; 3.11.3 - 7; 3.13.5 -6; 3.14.3)

Recommendation 21 We recommend that dioceses extensively promote training and support for collaborative ministry which all incumbents with Readers are expected to undergo, as well as Readers and all lay ministers. (3.12.6)

Recommendation 22 We recommend that dioceses ensure that Readers, as licensed ministers, are consulted over the appointments of incumbents and assistant clergy, as a matter of course. (3.13.8)

Recommendation 23 We recommend that all dioceses of the Church of England recognise the value of Reader ministry and actively promote it as the best trained and resourced lay ministry with a wide variety of opportunities. (2.5.6; 3.1.1 - 2; 3.13.7)

Recommendation 26 We recommend that dioceses should encourage Readers and all Licensed Lay Ministers to attend to their own spiritual refreshment and development with times in which they step back from active involvement and by provision of financial support for courses relevant to their vocation. (3.14.4)

Recommendation 29 We recommend that on-going support be given in the dioceses for Readers to explore their vocation to ministry and to specific missional tasks, including the possibility of ordained ministry either to the vocational diaconate or the priesthood. (3.16.4 – 5; 3.6.8)

Recommendation 30 We recommend that bishops who support the ordination of a Reader who is 55 or over, take into account the experience of a long-standing Reader when assessing training needs.

Action Points

4. Each deanery and diocese looks for opportunities to use Readers in teaching and training events, according to their gifts. (3.3.1)
5. Dioceses give opportunities for growth in the liturgical skills of Readers and seek to identify those who are able to pass on their skills to others in the diocese. (3.2.6 - 7; 3.4.4; 3.8.4)
7. Incumbents and dioceses encourage appropriate Readers to participate in Mission-Shaped Ministry courses and courses on 'fresh expressions' of church as part of CME in order to reinforce the vision of Reader ministry on the boundary between church and society. (3.9.1)
8. Prior to the selection of a Reader for training, the Warden of Readers in a diocese takes care to ensure that the parish to which the Reader is to be licensed and its incumbent are ready to offer support and encouragement in the development of this new ministry. (3.5.3)
9. Dioceses consider conducting a thorough review of the personal ministerial development of each Reader in order to bring about greater recognition of the ministerial gifts which the Reader has. (3.6.5 - 6)
19. Dioceses offer CME modules in a variety of specialist ministries which are available for Readers. (3.9.1)
20. Courses of training for Readers in funeral ministry are made available in all dioceses, giving consistency across dioceses. (3.9.2)
21. Dioceses and incumbents set before Readers, who may or may not themselves be deaf, the important opportunity of ministry to deaf people. (3.9.1)
23. Dioceses issue Reader licences up to the age of 75 provided that the Reader is in good health and available for active ministry. (3.10.9)
27. Dioceses study the service for Admission and Licensing of Readers approved in 2007 and adapt it for local use. (3.10.2)

29. Bishops and archdeacons take care that when clergy are appointed to parishes where Readers are serving a successful candidate should demonstrate evidence of the necessary attitudes and skills to work well with Readers. (3.13.8)

31. Pastoral care for Readers in a diocese is shared between the incumbent and the Warden of Readers. (3.13.6)

32. Diocesan Associations monitor the pastoral care and provision of support for Readers in the diocese. (3.13.2)

33. Diocesan Wardens of Readers provide a good link between the bishop and the licensed Readers by having regular meetings with the bishop and being readily accessible to Readers. (3.13.3)

35. When a diocese is making incumbent level appointments to a parish where a Reader has an acknowledged ministry, care needs to be taken to appoint a priest who is supportive of Reader ministry. (3.13.8)

38. In giving careful attention to the support of their Readers in their vocational journey, Wardens of Readers and incumbents seek to discern those Readers for whom a vocation to ordained ministry might be appropriate, either to the diaconate or to priesthood. (3.16.4)

4.2 Addressed to Deaneries

Recommendation 7 We recommend that dioceses encourage the use of Readers with pastoral gifts in bereavement care and funeral ministry, and deaneries strengthen the teams of ministers available for funeral ministry by including Readers. (3.3.4; 3.4.9; 3.10.7 - 8)

Recommendation 8 We recommend that dioceses, deaneries and parishes look for opportunities for Readers to exercise their ministry on the boundaries of the Church, in breaking new ground with “fresh expressions” of church and mission, and in circles where there might otherwise be no representative public ministry of the Church. (3.4.1 - 5)

Recommendation 9 We recommend that dioceses and deaneries and parishes should look for opportunities for the appointment of Readers as chaplains both to institutions where chaplains are already recognised and in places where such an appointment breaks new ground. (3.4.6 - 7)

Recommendation 16 We recommend that Readers are normally licensed to the deanery, although with a designated incumbent specified for accountability and support. (3.10.3)

Recommendation 17 Deaneries regularly invite Readers, as licensed ministers, to chapter meetings, making collaborative ministry more visible and fostering friendship amongst ministers. (3.10.3)

Recommendation 20 We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and that they receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. (1.2.3; 3.11.3 - 7; 3.13.5 – 6; 3.14.3)

Action Points

4. Each deanery and diocese looks for opportunities to use Readers in teaching and training events, according to their gifts. (3.3.1)
22. Great care is taken over the deployment of Readers and it becomes normal practice for their deployment to be discussed by all interested parties at a deanery level or sometimes wider. (3.10.3)
24. Working ecumenically, deaneries are encouraged to prepare an audit of the ministerial resources available to serve the churches in that locality. (3.10.5)
25. Careful consideration is given in deaneries as to how the deployment of suitably gifted Readers might assist the need to find pastoral care for congregations. (3.10.7 - 8)
26. Deaneries give thought to how Readers with appropriate gifts might exercise a more itinerant ministry making good teaching and preaching available more widely. (3.10.6)
34. In a deanery or similar area Readers meet from time to time with Methodist local preachers and on a fully ecumenical basis with all lay ministers. (3.13.4)

4.3 Addressed to Incumbents and Parishes

Recommendation 4 We recommend that dioceses indicate their support for Readers as interpreters of the gospel in daily life by encouraging the use of Readers as preachers at the main parish Sunday service of Holy Communion. (3.2.2 - 3)

Recommendation 7 We recommend that dioceses encourage the use of Readers with pastoral gifts in bereavement care and funeral ministry, and deaneries strengthen the teams of ministers available for funeral ministry by including Readers. (3.3.4 - 6; 3.9.2 – 3; 3.10.8)

Recommendation 8 We recommend that dioceses, deaneries and parishes look for opportunities for Readers to exercise their ministry on the boundaries of the Church, in breaking new ground with “fresh expressions” of church and mission, and in circles where there might otherwise be no representative public ministry of the Church. (3.4.1 - 5)

Recommendation 9 We recommend that dioceses and deaneries and parishes should look for opportunities for the appointment of Readers as chaplains both to institutions where chaplains are already recognised and in places where such an appointment breaks new ground. (3.4.6 - 7)

Recommendation 11 We recommend that dioceses support parishes in the careful discernment of potential gifts in lay people and certainly prior to them being considered for selection for training as Readers. This is to include the discernment of gifts for the core ministries of preaching and teaching, leading worship and interpreting the faith, by such opportunities being given by incumbents to lay people. (3.6.1 - 9)

Recommendation 12 We recommend that parishes specifically encourage vocations to Reader ministry, particularly among young adults. (3.6.1; 3.6.8)

Recommendation 20 We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents

and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and that they receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. (1.2.3; 3.11.3 - 7; 3.13.5 - 6; 3.14.3)

Recommendation 21 We recommend that dioceses extensively promote training and support for collaborative ministry which all incumbents with Readers are expected to undergo, as well as Readers and all lay ministers. (3.12.1 to 3.12.7)

Recommendation 28 We recommend that where parishes have permission to hold Public Services of Communion by Extension, Readers, in the light of their training, are considered as the primary choice among lay officiants. The guidelines for this synodically approved ministry should be applied more evenly across the country. (3.15.3 - 6)

Action Points

1. Incumbents give Readers ample opportunity to develop their teaching skills through opportunities for enabling learning in varied ways in the benefice. (3.2.2; 3.3.1; Annex 5)
2. Incumbents give Readers more opportunity to develop their liturgical skills through planning services and leading a variety of worship services. (3.2.6 - 7; 3.4.4)
3. Incumbents use the experience and training of Readers to offer varied ways of leading intercessions and to model good patterns of prayer. (3.2.6)
7. Incumbents and dioceses encourage appropriate Readers to participate in Mission-Shaped Ministry courses and courses on 'fresh expressions' of church as part of CME in order to reinforce the vision of Reader ministry on the boundary between church and society. (3.9.8)
21. Dioceses and incumbents set before Readers, who may or may not themselves be deaf, the important opportunity of ministry to deaf people. (3.9.1)
30. Incumbents give personal support and supervision to Readers and all Licensed Lay Ministers in their benefice or for whom they are the designated incumbent on the licence. Where there is a ministry team, the incumbent encourages a culture of mutual support. (3.13.1)
31. Pastoral care for Readers in a diocese is shared between the incumbent and the Warden of Readers. (3.13.6)
38. In giving careful attention to the support of their Readers in their vocational journey, Wardens of Readers and incumbents seek to discern those Readers for whom a vocation to ordained ministry might be appropriate, either to the diaconate or to priesthood. (3.16.4)

4.4 Addressed to Readers

Recommendation 1 We recommend that Readers keep before them their calling to be examples of those who are bearers and interpreters of the Word in the context of their daily occupation, be it paid or voluntary. (3.1.1 -.3; 3.2.1)

Recommendation 2 We recommend that dioceses encourage Readers to see their core ministry of preaching and teaching and leading worship as both a significant part of the Church's ministry to equip lay disciples for their mission in the world and the

opportunity to engage in mission on the boundaries of the Church. (3.1.1 - 3; 3.2.1 – 7; 3.4.1; 7.2.4 - 9)

Recommendation 3 We recommend that dioceses strengthen the provision of Reader CME, and in particular the development of the skill of Readers as preachers, catechists and educators enabling them to interpret Christian Faith as it engages with daily life and work. (3.2.2 – 4; Annex 5)

Recommendation 4 We recommend that dioceses indicate their support for Readers as interpreters of the gospel in daily life by encouraging the use of Readers as preachers at the main parish Sunday service of Holy Communion. (3.2.2 - 3)

Recommendation 10 We recommend that the office of Reader, in keeping with other ministerial categories in the Church, is to be seen as fluid rather than static and part of an ongoing journey of vocation, the nature of which is regularly discerned afresh. To address this, dioceses will need a team of vocations advisers to cover the full range of ministries. (3.5.2; 3.6.5)

Recommendation 20 We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and that they receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy. (1.2.3; 3.11.3 – 7; 3.13.5 - 6; 3.14.3)

Recommendation 21 We recommend that dioceses extensively promote training and support for collaborative ministry which all incumbents with Readers are expected to undergo, as well as Readers and all lay ministers. (3.12.1 – 7)

Recommendation 22 We recommend that dioceses ensure that Readers, as licensed ministers, are consulted over the appointments of incumbents and assistant clergy, as a matter of course. (3.13.8)

Recommendation 26 We recommend that dioceses should encourage Readers and all Licensed Lay Ministers to attend to their own spiritual refreshment and development with times in which they step back from active involvement and by provision of financial support for courses relevant to their vocation. (3.14.4)

Recommendation 29 We recommend that on-going support be given in the dioceses for Readers to explore their vocation to ministry and to specific missional tasks, including the possibility of ordained ministry either to the vocational diaconate or the priesthood. (3.16.4 – 5; 3.16.8)

Action Points

6. Readers study the theology of work so as to inform their preaching about daily life. (3.2.3)

16. Throughout the formation process Reader candidates are encouraged to reflect with others on their gifts and ministries. (3.10.1)

31. Pastoral care for Readers in a diocese is shared between the incumbent and the Warden of Readers. (3.13.6)

36. Readers positively welcome and support those finding their ministry in the various forms of lay ministry which are developing. (3.13.10)

37. Readers must expect that a CRB clearance will be necessary if their licence is to continue. (3.13.11)

39. Readers take care to reflect on their spiritual and vocational development, with someone to accompany them, renouncing the attraction of status, but recognising that for those who are called there is always the possibility to test a vocation to the diaconate or the priesthood. (3.16.3 - 5)

4.5 Addressed to the Regional Training Partnerships

Recommendation 13 We recommend that Regional Training Partnerships seek to create opportunities for those selected for training as Readers and ordained ministers to train together and ecumenically. (3.8.8)

Recommendation 14 We recommend that without lowering standards, training programmes for Reader Ministry need to be more flexible. They should be accessible and designed to encourage candidates for ministry, particularly younger candidates. Course design needs to enable this by encouraging varied patterns of engagement and incorporating AP(E)L opportunities for former learning experiences to be recognised. (3.8.9)

Action Points

11. Reader Training is designed to develop ministers who are not only theologically articulate, spiritually mature and ministerially skilled, but who also can apply these in flexible and collaborative ways in many contexts. (1.1.3; 3.8.1; 3.8.8)

12. In addressing the core areas of Reader Ministry, the training programme needs to give particular attention to preaching and leading worship within differing contexts, teaching and facilitating learning, and the development of collaborative ministerial habits and skills. (3.8.4; 3.8.8)

13. Reader training needs to be designed using a range of educational methodologies and assessment processes; it needs to be shaped in ways that ensure the integration of theory and practice and that instil a mindset of internalised theological reflection. (3.8.5)

14. Reader Training Programmes should incorporate AP(E)L opportunities for former learning experiences to be recognised. (3.8.9)

15. The ecumenical training specification developed in *Shaping the Future* should be used to encourage increased co-operation in training programmes in RTPs – ecumenically and between dioceses.

16. Throughout the formation process Reader candidates are encouraged to reflect with others on their gifts and ministries. (3.8.8)

17. Towards the end of initial training the RTP or training institution prepares for the diocese a report on each Reader candidate which is agreed by the candidate. (3.8.6)

18. Wherever possible RTPs or other Reader Training institutions enable Readers to develop specific gifts to meet specific ministry needs with appropriate training. (3.9.1; 3.9.4)

28. RTPs and Reader training institutions show evidence of their intention to develop the effective collaborative attitudes, habits and skills expected by the learning outcomes listed in *Shaping the Future*. (3.12.3)

4.6 Addressed to the House of Bishops

Recommendation 24 We recommend that the House of Bishops clarifies what expectations there are of Readers and other Licensed Lay Ministers in view of their role as public representatives and teachers of the Christian Faith as the Church of England sets it forth and the House sets in train the preparation of an acceptable disciplinary procedure for Readers. (3.13.11)

Recommendation 25 We recommend that the House of Bishops requests the Ministry Division to set in train a revision of the Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry. (3.14.6)

Recommendation 27 We recommend that the House of Bishops decides whether it wishes to clarify further those circumstances under which it might be appropriate for a bishop to permit a Reader, or other Licensed Lay Minister, to baptise. (3.15.2)

4.7 Addressed to the Ministry Division or Board of Education

Recommendation 19 We recommend that all lay ministers licensed by the bishop are known as Licensed Lay Ministers. A working sub-title can be added which may vary according to diocesan practice (e.g. Reader, Pastoral Assistant etc). Following consultation and the development of national frameworks, these ministries can be nationally accredited and normally transferable between dioceses. (3.11.1 - 6)

Action Point

10. The Board of Education consider the possibility of developing a national basis for the recognition, development, training and authorisation of gifts for lay ministry.

Annex 2

Relevant Parts of the Canons of the Church of England

B11 Of Morning and Evening Prayer in parish churches

1. Morning and Evening Prayer shall be said or sung in every parish church at least on all Sundays and other principal Feast Days, and also on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Each service shall be said or sung distinctly, reverently, and in an audible voice. Readers, such other lay persons as may be authorised by the bishop of the diocese, or some other suitable lay person, may at the invitation of the minister of the parish or, where the cure is vacant or the minister is incapacitated, at the invitation of the churchwardens say or sing Morning and Evening Prayer (save for the Absolution).

B18 Of sermons in parish churches

2. The sermon shall be preached by a minister, deaconess, reader or lay worker duly authorised in accordance with Canon Law. At the invitation of the minister having the cure of souls another person may preach with the permission of the bishop of the diocese given either in relation to the particular occasion or in accordance with diocesan directions.

3. The preacher shall endeavour with care and sincerity to minister the word of truth, to the glory of God and to the edification of the people.

B43 Of relations with other churches

1. (1) A minister or lay person who is a member in good standing of a Church to which this Canon applies and is a baptized person may, subject to the provisions of this Canon, be invited to perform all or any of the following duties -

- (a) to say or sing Morning or Evening Prayer or the Litany;
- (b) to read the Holy Scriptures at any service;
- (c) to preach at any service;
- (d) to lead the Intercessions at the Holy Communion and to lead prayers at other services;
- (e) to assist at Baptism or the Solemnization of Matrimony or conduct a Funeral Service;
- (f) to assist in the distribution of the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people at the Holy Communion;

if the minister or lay person is authorized to perform a similar duty in his or her own church.

6. Notwithstanding any provision of any Canon, a deaconess, lay worker or reader of the Church of England who receives from a person authorised by a Church to which this Canon applies an invitation to take part in a service may in the course of that service perform any duty assigned to him or her if-

- (a) the duty so assigned is or is similar to a duty which he or she is authorized to perform in the Church of England; and

- (b) he or she has before accepting the invitation obtained the approval of the incumbent of the parish in which the service is to take place and also, in the case of an invitation to take part in a service on a regular basis, the approval of both the bishop of the diocese and the parochial church council of that parish.

E4 Of readers

1. 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 according to the provisions of paragraph 2 of this Canon or which may from time to time be so determined by Act of Synod.

2. It shall be lawful for a reader:

- (a) 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 the bishop may direct;
- (b) 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 (on occasions on which a layman is permitted by the statute law so to do, and in accordance with the requirements of that law), to read the word of God, to preach, to catechize the children, and to receive and present the offerings of the people;
- (c) to distribute the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people.

2A The bishop may also authorise a reader 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 persons responsible and at the invitation of the minister of a parish or an extra-parochial place within the meaning of section 1 of the Deaconesses and Lay Ministry Measure 1972.

E5 Of the nomination and admission of readers

1. A candidate for the office of reader in a parish or district shall be nominated to the bishop by the minister of that parish or district; and a candidate for the said office in a wider area by one of the rural deans or archdeacons after consultation with the minister of his parish or district.

2. The nominator in making such a nomination shall also satisfy the bishop that the said person is of good life, sound in faith, a regular communicant, and well fitted for the work of a reader, and provide all such other information about the said person and the duties which it is desired that he/she should perform as the bishop may require.

3. No person shall be admitted to the office of reader in the Church except it be found on examination, held by the bishop or by competent persons appointed by the bishop for this purpose, that he/she possesses a sufficient knowledge of Holy Scripture and of the doctrine and worship of the Church of England as set forth in *The Book of Common Prayer*, that he/she is able to read the services of the Church plainly, distinctly, audibly, and reverently, and that he/she is capable both of teaching and preaching.

E6 Of the licensing of readers

3. The bishop of a diocese may by notice in writing revoke summarily, and without further process, any licence granted to a reader within his diocese for any cause which seems to him to be good and reasonable, after giving the reader sufficient opportunity of showing reason to the contrary; and the notice shall notify the reader that he/she may, within 28

days from the date on which he/she receives the notice, appeal to the archbishop of the province in which that diocese is situated.

4. No bishop shall license any reader to be a stipendiary in any place until he has satisfied himself that adequate provision has been made for the stipend of the said reader, for his/her insurance against sickness or accident, and for a pension on his/her retirement.

E7 Of lay workers

1. A lay person, whether man or woman, who satisfies the bishop that he or she:

- (a) is baptized and confirmed and a regular communicant of the Church of England.
- (b) has had the proper training; and
- (c) possesses the other necessary qualifications

may be admitted by the bishop as a lay worker of the Church. A lay worker may perform the duties set out in this Canon or any of them, if authorised to do so by licence or permission of the bishop of the diocese in which he or she is to serve.

2. A man or woman admitted to the office of evangelist is thereby admitted as a lay worker of the Church.

3. A lay worker may in the place where he or she is licensed to serve, and under the direction of the minister, lead the people in public worship, exercise pastoral care, evangelize, instruct the people in the Christian faith, and prepare them for the reception of the sacraments.

4. A lay worker may:

- (a) in accordance with Canon B11 be authorised and invited to say or sing Morning or Evening Prayer (save for the Absolution);
- (b) distribute the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people and read the Epistle and the Gospel.

5. The bishop may also authorise a lay worker to perform any of the following duties at the invitation of the minister of a parish or an extra-parochial place within the meaning of section 1 of the Deaconesses and Lay Ministry Measure 1972:

- (a) to preach at divine service;
- (b) to church women
- (c) with the goodwill of the person responsible, to bury the dead or read the burial service before, at or after a cremation;
- (d) to publish banns of marriage at Morning and Evening Prayer (on occasions on which a lay person is permitted by the Statute Law so to do and in accordance with the requirements of that law).

E8 Of the admission and licensing of lay workers

3. Where any person is to be a stipendiary lay worker in any place in a diocese, the bishop shall not license that person as a lay worker unless he is satisfied that adequate provision has been made for his or her salary, appropriate insurance and a pension on retirement.

Annex 3

The Members of the Reader Review Working Party

of the original report *Reader Update!*

The Rt Revd Graham Dow (chair)	Bishop of Carlisle, chair of the Central Readers Council
The Revd Joanna Coney	Warden of Readers, Oxford Diocese
Joanna Cox	National Adviser in Lay Discipleship and Shared Ministry, Education Division
Dr Paula Gooder (until November 2007)	Reader and member of the General Synod
Nigel Holmes	Reader and member of the General Synod
Ven Christopher Lowson	Director of Ministry, Ministry Division
Dr Alan Wakeley	Secretary, Central Readers Council
The RevdCanon Alex Whitehead	Warden of Readers, Lincoln Diocese

and Acknowledgements

The working group acknowledges with gratitude written contributions from the following:

The Bishop of Basingstoke

The Bishop of Blackburn

The Bishop of Chester

The Bishop of Exeter

The Bishop of Guildford with Anthony Metcalfe, Guildford Registrar of Readers

The Bishop of Hereford

The Bishop of London

The Bishop of Maidstone

The Bishop of Oxford

The Bishop of Ripon and Leeds

The Bishop of Rochester

The Bishop of Southwell

The Bishop of Wakefield

The Bishop of Warrington with Nick Daunt, Liverpool Warden of Readers

The Rt Revd Michael Baughen, formerly Bishop of Chester and chair of the CRC

The Rt Revd Christopher Mayfield, formerly Bishop of Manchester and chair of the CRC

Dr Martin Davie Theological Consultant, House of Bishops

Ms Sue Hart Reader, member of the Central Readers Council

Dr Susan Salt Reader, Central Readers Council, Chair of Conferences
Committee

Prof. John Wood Chair Editorial Committee, *The Reader*

The Revd Lynda Barley Head of Research and Statistics

Ms Anna Aprea Asst. Research and Statistics

The Revd Alec George Moderator of Reader Training

The working group acknowledges with gratitude oral contributions from the House of Bishops, the House of Bishops' Theology Group, the Central Readers Council and those attending the Central Readers Council AGM.

Annex 4

The diversity of Reader ministries

The responses to the individual questionnaires revealed a wide range of activities beyond the normal Reader activities of the parish which the respondent regarded as belonging to their ministry as a Reader. This list is a summary of the activities mentioned by Readers as belonging to their ministry.

Arts: hymn writing; organ playing; worship leading; art ministry

Buildings: Clerk of Works

Chaplaincies: airport, deaf and blind, retail, shopping mall; hospital (many - some paid); to the mayor; juvenile secure training centre; Scout District; fire, police and ambulance; university.

Children and School: assemblies; school visits to church; church holiday club; teaching, pastoral; music; nurseries

Christian Education and Training: running diocesan training courses; Confirmation classes for colleagues.

Community activities: hospice trustee; community men's breakfasts.

Counselling: bereavement counsellor

Ecumenical: preaching in other local churches (several mentioned); Lay Preacher in the French Reformed Church; Churches Together groups; ecumenical outreach project

Environment:

Fresh Expressions:

Fund Raising: promoter of house to house and street collections

Health care: para-medical services; HIV/AIDS; various health related groups

Human Rights:

IT: web-site responsibility (eg. church, CRC)

Law: magistrates; probation service

Liturgy: altar server for 40 years

Marriage: marriage preparation

Media: local radio

Missionary bodies: Mission to Seafarers

National Church: Church House Trustee

Politics: local government; town councillors

Prison: visiting

Rural: Rural Officer; pastoral role in the farming community

Social Concern: Winter night shelter; work with the homeless; people with disabilities; nursing and care homes; work with the marginalised

Spirituality: 'Quiet Garden' movement

Stewardship:

Blessing marriages:

Uniformed Organisations: armed forces cadets; youth organisations

Workplace: mentioned by many; trade union

The following are vignettes written by Readers about their ministry.

Encouraging faith

The main emphasis of my ministry is preaching, encouraging faith and being a Christian witness in the community. I take Communion to the sick and housebound, lead intercessions and am involved in the healing team. I am a regular member of the hospital chaplaincy team and help to run the children's summer club. I am beginning to develop fruitful conversations and build friendships with the Muslims in our multicultural suburban parish

Diversity of ministry

I serve in an inner city multicultural parish in a church shared with the Roman Catholics. I lead worship and preach most weeks. I lead a men's group and do baptism preparation and bereavement visiting. I facilitate a group of Readers locally for mutual support. In my daily life I exercise my ministry by being fully involved in the varied communities within the parish of all nationalities, faiths and economic status.

Children and families work

I am a qualified and practising family counsellor in the community. The focus of my Reader ministry is very clearly with children and families: I lead worship in schools, run regular parenting classes and do baptism and Confirmation preparation. I only take part in adult services about once a month.

Stores chaplaincy

Early in 1983, when I retired from my previous occupation, at the suggestion of a diocesan adviser, I was guided to a city-centre church and started spending two days a week in a large city-centre store. I was to be there as the representative of the church, to get to know and befriend members of staff. I had the right of access to every part of the store. I would start the day with a visit to the restaurant to chat to people working there. I took lunch in the staff canteen and tea in the snack bar. My wife, also a Reader, joined me and we spent time in the store talking to staff who were not busy. Easter and Christmas services were arranged in the store or the church. There were many pastoral opportunities when staff shared their troubles. We were able to support two women as they got married. When the store went bankrupt we had to comfort some of those in distress. Once the store closed we decided that we could not carry on. We were both over 80!

Media interest

I lead worship and preach every week, but do not take funerals. Beyond the parish I lead men's breakfasts, and when approached I give Christian feedback about TV presentations responding to national and local politics. I am a member of the Lambeth Partnership of Fresh Expressions.

Typical interregnum scene!

At present I am running an interregnum in two parishes. So besides leading worship and preaching every week I am also planning services, dealing with parishioner's issues, going into schools and taking assemblies, doing many funerals and generally trying to keep the show on the road with the help of the wardens. At other times my ministry is predominantly one of prayer and spiritual direction, both of which I teach locally and for the Diocesan Training Programme.

Fire and Rescue Service chaplaincy

Most of my ministry is with the general public as Chaplain to the County Fire and Rescue Services where I serve the professional and volunteer workers and often do follow-up care with victims as well. This overflows into informal hospital chaplaincy. I am firmly based in my local church where I occasionally lead worship and preach.

Rail system chaplaincy

With Nexus the Chaplain's duties are clearly to the staff. Should there be any incidents involving passengers or the general public then my duty would be to do whatever I could to help by ascertaining their immediate needs. I would use my contact system to call in other people, family, chaplains, parish priests or ministers if I was asked. My responsibility would then be keeping out of the way of police, fire services and medics and looking after people as they came out. Incident involvement, and the training requirement for it, helps in showing that the chaplain is part of the whole structure and there for everybody. The people who work at Nexus are familiar with the concept of a chaplain. That means that the contact in many cases is very positive and the banter at times very amusing. I am approached by members of staff resulting in some very useful and constructive discussions.

Community projects and the legal profession

I have served for over 30 years in an inner city parish involved in many community projects. Now as a High Court Judge my principal focus is ministry in the legal profession and in particular the teasing out of the relationship between faith and work especially in the context of personal, medical and family law and ethics.

Opportunities as an authorised lay person

When I was first admitted as a Reader in 1970 – one of the first in the diocese, as this ministry only became opened to women in 1969 – it involved leading services and preaching. Being a Reader meant that people could not say things like “Who does she think she is to stand up at the front of church to lead and preach?” I was there because I had been authorised, not only by the local clergy, but nationally, by the Church of England, after training and with PCC approval. Later, having moved to another area, I was part of the parish staff team and attended staff meetings. When we started to have two evening services instead of one, I was given responsibility for the more formal, choral service. I think that some people might have found that hard to accept had I not been a Reader. I have considered ordination from time to time, but have felt it right to remain lay. I feel that in the transferable nature of Reader ministry, the Church is recognising that lay people, as well as clergy, have the gifts to make a worthwhile contribution, not only to practical and pastoral tasks and to teaching children, but also to the church's ministry of spiritual teaching, preaching and leadership among adults. For some, the very fact that the Reader is not a professional minister makes what they

say seem more accessible and realistic, because the Reader has to live it in “the world out there”, just as they do.

Now as the Spirituality Adviser for the diocese where I live, the authority given by my Readership assists my role in leadership.

Chaplain in palliative care

As well as ministry in my parish I am the part-time Chaplain at the London Bridge Hospital. I minister to palliative and dying patients, in particular, and occasionally conduct their funerals. I inaugurated the Annual Memorial Service at Southwark Cathedral and the Christmas Carols Service for patients and staff at the hospital.

Bereavement Officer

Although I am fully involved in all aspects of parish ministry, my employment as a Bereavement Officer at the Princess Royal University Hospital is really important to me. There are moments when I perceive that our loving God is so desperately needed at these most difficult times, times which affect each one of us.

Bringing a faith perspective

I became a Reader in my 20s and have a strong belief in the importance of the Reader living at the interface of the Church and secular worlds. I have worked in five government departments and held three Director General posts in Government. I now coach at Chief Executive and Board level in the private, public and voluntary sectors. I have written books at the interface of leadership and spirituality. I believe strongly in the distinctive Reader ministry where as a lay person I can encourage, stretch and challenge the thinking and actions of both Christians and those who do not bring a faith perspective.

Science, technology and Christian Faith

My job description states that I should “focus my ministry on the work place and on issues related to research and the development of scientific and public policy”. This I do as an academic leading one of the best engineering faculties worldwide. I exercise this ministry by speaking on the relationship between future science and technology policy and my Christian faith, encouraging other academics from a wide range of universities world-wide who feel isolated within their local fellowship and being a recognisable beacon to students. I am currently an adviser to the European Commission in developing the European Research Area according to the Lisbon Agenda and am particularly exercised in stabilising the research and innovation base in new member states. I preach at my local church about four times a year and am currently leading study groups looking at current and future technological scenarios including the issue of “what is truth in a digital age?”

Involvement in diocesan training

Apart from my responsibilities within my local parish which keep me quite busy I am increasingly involved in areas within the diocese. I am a Reader companion to new Readers once they are licensed, and I am also a Ministry Leadership Team Mentor to a multi-benefice church. In addition I have been responsible for some training within the diocese particularly on the funeral course and the preaching course for Readers. I have visited other parishes to help. It is good to be involved in areas outside the local church.

Work focus

I am a young and newly licensed Reader. I lead worship and preach in my parish occasionally; I run the youth group and lead Lent groups. But the main focus of my ministry is in my work place – I am a professional environmental scientist. At work I lead a prayer group and find myself doing a great

deal of pastoral care. I am often approached to talk to a large variety of groups on environmental ethics.

Stores chaplaincy

I see my chaplaincy at ASDA as making God's love known to the world where people are, and of being one of the most important ways of bringing the Church into the real world. I approach things quietly and steadily, being careful not to overdo the religious bit. Most people were friendly although some wondered what chaplains did and why they were needed. Prayer and patience seem the way to deal with it, waiting for the time when God will open the door of opportunity and something happens which changes the situation.

I meander round the store, chatting to customers, helping old ladies get things off the top shelf and as time goes by there are occasions when they feel able to come with a problem or just ask for a prayer. This applies to both customers and staff and makes it all worthwhile. Judging the situation carefully can lead to a discussion on prayer or faith and an opening up of questions about Christianity, which need to be answered in a way which is not patronising and is acceptable to the individual. We sometimes never know the good we do.

Half-time Stipendiary Reader

I exercise my stipendiary half-time Reader ministry through working a "job-share" with the vicar of our team of 6 rural churches. We aim to model effective lay and ordained leadership of our churches in our partnership. This involves working closely together to ensure that the full range of parish ministry is sustained between us. My part comprises preaching, teaching and leading worship, children's and youth ministry, and many of the practical and administrative tasks, which enables my ordained colleague to concentrate on the pastoral and sacramental aspects of ministry. Discerning strategy and vision, mission and prayer we do together. The combined gifts of two people provide a much richer ministry than either of us ever could alone.

Discernment of gifts

A new incumbent of a city centre parish inherited a Reader who had for some years taken services of Morning and Evening Prayer and assisted at services of Holy Communion. Also, from the church office in the city centre, he had met couples seeking weddings, made the arrangements, conducted the rehearsal and was the main point of pastoral contact between the church and the couples. In order to use the Reader where his pastoral gifts lay the new incumbent successfully introduced the Reader both to taking funerals and home communions. Subsequently he moved to a very rural benefice in another part of the country where because of the pastoral and liturgical experience he had gained in the city, he was able to manage an interregnum which covered several rural parishes.

Discernment of gifts

During a series of Sunday morning services in the 1980s entitled 'My Work as God's Work', an incumbent invited the warden of a hostel for ex-alcoholics to give a brief account of his work. The account was so well put together that the gift of speaking in public was immediately recognised. The young man concerned was given opportunities to preach at the smaller services. Subsequently he sensed a call to ordained ministry and is now an incumbent.

Prison chaplaincy

My ministry as a prison chaplain was first indicated when I was on holiday in Normandy at a Christian centre. In prayer with the owners a prophetic picture was shared with me: it was of a strong tower, itself set in a walled city with gates, and my ministry would be one of prayer. For many months it was hard to understand what the picture might mean. Over a year later the words, 'I was in prison and you visited me' struck me during the Sunday service. This led me to make links with the chaplain

at Strangeways and to join a prayer group which supported prison ministry. Then through the group came an invitation to assist the chaplain at a nearby privately-run prison.

On my second visit, I realised that this closely fitted the picture I had been given. The prison was walled, had a 'strong tower' within it, and many gates which had to be unlocked and locked as we moved about in the prison. As well as leading evening bible studies, my husband (also a Reader) and I do a full day on different days, visiting men in their cells, making calls on their behalf to their family and, from time to time, sharing the love of Jesus with someone who is at one of the lowest points of their life and praying with them. The other members of the chaplaincy team have been extremely friendly, helpful and understanding. What a difference it makes to remember that it was God himself who called us into this.

Pastoral and funeral ministry

My ministry focus is with the sick and bereaved. I do a lot of visiting, take the healing service and am just setting up a centre for healing in the community. I take a lot of funerals – usually for people whom I have been accompanying. I run the bereavement visiting team which covers not only the parish but also the local hospital.

Specialist ministry to deaf people

I am a Reader in the local Deaf Church – although I am not deaf myself. I lead worship (signing) and occasionally preach, but the main focus of my ministry is pastoral and being an advocate for deaf people in a hearing world.

Prison Chaplaincy

'I was in prison and you visited me'. I was seeking God's direction for my ministry and studying theology at St. John's Nottingham. After hearing this gospel read I made contact with the Chaplain at a local prison and I began as a part-time Assistant Prison Chaplain and trained as a Reader. Licensed as a Chaplain, I worked in Nottingham prison with those serving life sentences. After seven years I moved to another prison working with skilled specialist officers and sex offenders. I set up a choir and guitar club. I preached in the prison and on the local Methodist circuit. I took placement students from St. John's and was active in my local Nottingham parish.

Since then I have moved to another diocese and part of the country, working in a prison with 685 men and a staff team of 300. The chaplaincy team share the gospel, give bibles, teach, pastor and guide. Offenders come from many ethnic and faith groups and each has its own chaplain. I have learnt a great deal whilst facilitating the teaching and worship groups of the various world faith chaplains. In all three prisons we have benefitted from the superb support from the bishops, and enjoyed Carol services, Christmas and Easter days working with them. I have grown as a Christian and joyfully go to work, where I am expected to speak about faith in Jesus Christ to everyone I meet.

Welcoming the stranger

I belong to an organisation which cares for seafarers throughout the world. Employment contracts can be from two to twelve months away from home and families. Life at sea is lonely and dangerous. Time in port can be anything from forty minutes for a container ship to two or three days for general cargo. The mission station provides a 'safe' place for seafarers to relax and keep in touch with their loved ones by cheap international calls or the internet. I am there to welcome seafarers to listen, to offer help and to respond to questions such as "Where can I get a haircut?", "Will you pray for my family?", "Can I have a telephone card?" It is a way of showing the love of God for the stranger in our midst.

An on-going development of ministry

I was, and still am, passionate about lay leadership in the church; so when I first began to experience God's call to leadership it was naturally to lay leadership that I turned. Throughout my Reader

training and ministry it was a privilege to preach and teach from within the congregation, to be truly part of "the priesthood of all believers", to be able to bring the perspective of the ordinary person in the pews into the pulpit.

Through doing this there developed a strong sense that this was just the beginning, that God wanted to take my passion for lay leadership into the priesthood, to use all my training and experience as the foundation to further journeys. My time as a Reader was a sure and certain foundation on which my future ordained ministry is being built, a ministry that will, I hope, be used to build and develop the lay ministry of the church in the years to come.

Prayer and spiritual direction

My ministry is of contemplative prayer and spiritual direction so in the parish it is therefore largely not a public ministry. However I lay on hands with prayer for healing at healing services and after communion services on Sundays. Beyond the parish, I speak at Cursillo weekends nationwide.

A safe haven of friendship

A Phillipino seafarer recently went home after a three-month convalescence in Middlesbrough. Daniel was badly injured onboard his ship, and had to be airlifted to hospital for urgent medical treatment to his leg and head. After successful surgery, Daniel was befriended by the local branch of The Mission to Seafarers. Most nights, Daniel would visit the centre to telephone home and chat with staff and volunteers. For over 150 years, seafarers have come to recognise the flying angel logo as a safe haven of friendship and support. Many seafarers come from the poorest, most disadvantaged parts of the world and through our work, have learnt to trust The Mission as the strong shoulder of support they need. As a chaplain at Teesport I visit seafarers on their ships offering help and assistance; I also offer support to all port workers.

Opportunities in a college for students with special needs

I worked on the staff of a special College of Further Education for people with physical and sensory disabilities. The majority of the students were aged 16 to 22. After I had been there two or three years, I realised that due to their low resistance to infections, or in some cases to their degenerative disability (eg muscular dystrophy) a small number of students sadly died. The pastoral needs of both fellow students and staff in bereavement were often mishandled or overlooked.

I was able gradually to set about meeting their emotional and spiritual needs by bringing in bereavement counselling courses and introducing weekly group meetings in which there was the chance, in a very relaxed way, to explore the Christian Gospel, I also held weekly services for staff and students, leading these as a Reader and paving the way for the eventual creation of a part-time chaplain's post. The college wanted an ordained person and after she arrived, although we worked as a team together, I felt that my contribution was less valued and diminished.

Ministerial assistance

I share with the incumbent in a large urban church the work of evangelism, pastoring and discipling. I lead midweek groups - Alpha and Bible Study - and am the coordinator for all the midweek groups in the parish. I am one of five people constituting an informal eldership to pray and plan strategy with the incumbent. I lead worship in church and in the local hospital and preach every three or four weeks.

Diaconal ministry: supporting the ministry of the sacraments

As a teacher I advise on assemblies and delivery of the RE requirements of the National Curriculum. I also teach the background for and then implement both the regular services of Communion by Extension and the ministry of home communions, preparing and supporting lay assistants in this work. In my rural setting I lead worship or preach at least once every Sunday. I take funerals and help with preparation for baptism and Confirmation

Consultant in palliative medicine

I have the privilege of looking after people who are approaching the end of their lives. I work with the caring team to manage distressing symptoms, provide accurate and understandable information about the patient's illness and the problems they are facing and to support both patient and family on the longest and loneliest journey any of us have to face. My ministry is not overt in terms of being a Reader, but my training has given me a theological and spiritual dimension and a confidence around both liturgy and pastoral care. As a patient put it the day before she died, 'I know that you don't know everything that is happening to me, and I know that you can't make things better, but somehow that's OK, because I know you won't walk away, no matter how bad it gets.' I have become more comfortable with mystery, I witness the peace which passes human understanding and which many of the people I care for find at some point in their journey, and I sense the presence of God in the midst of overwhelming suffering. All this helps me when I preach and when I am simply alongside the people I meet.

Leading the people of God in discipleship and mission

I am on the wider leadership team of our church and I lead services and preach regularly. I am also involved in much that is not clearly 'Reader' ministry: our work with children and young people, visiting and encouraging people, leading small groups, prayer, hospitality, organising events etc.. Being a Reader has given me training, authority and responsibility to share in leading the people of God in discipleship and mission - that we all might use the gifts He gives us for His service

Pastoral care and chaplaincy

I serve in a rural group of six congregations, leading worship and preaching in all of them as required. I occasionally take funerals and services of Communion by Extension. I facilitate the pastoral care group that covers the whole benefice. I lead the choir for special services, the prayer group and help with Confirmation preparation. Beyond the benefice I am part of the chaplaincy team for the local young offenders institution.

Local presence in a very rural situation

I minister in a very rural group of nine parishes. As clergy are few and very stretched, I try to be the 'Church' presence in the village where I live and to bring together the secular and the spiritual. I lead worship and preach frequently as part of the ministry team, as we endeavour to bring regular weekly worship to each village each week. I lead a small lay ministry team in my own village as well as being active in the Benefice 'think tank'. I take two school assemblies each week and lead Bible-study, prayer and Lent groups as required. I take communion to the housebound and occasionally take funerals.

Earthed sermons

I have been licensed in three dioceses and parishes in Manchester, Durham and Cambridge, as well as leading worship and preaching as a member of staff in two theological colleges. I consider it a great privilege to have been a Reader. I love the discipline of preparing sermons and then preaching them. It gives practical expression to my academic discipline of ethics. As people who are often working in the secular world or immersed in local communities, Readers have a particular responsibility to ensure that preaching is well 'earthed' and in touch with what is going on in the lives of their congregations. I found that the fact that I was preaching a little less often than the clergy meant that I had more time to research sermons and focus them. Readers can also make a valuable contribution through widening the scope of intercessory prayer

Annex 5

The Reader as lay educator

by the Rt Revd John Pritchard, Bishop of Oxford

5.1 Supply and demand: the opportunities for a lay educator

5.1.1 The Reader/LLM has a particular opportunity in ministry which is open, in the main, only to those with theological qualifications. Readers are in an ideal position to offer themselves for the task of lay education. The appropriateness of this role comes both from the supply side and the demand side.

5.1.2 **Supply.** On the supply side it's clear that the three year training of most Readers gives them both a theological *framework* and also a considerable degree of theological *content* which can be invaluable in lay education. Indeed, the only other purpose of such a thorough-going preparation for ministry is to enable intelligent and informed preaching. The teaching role is therefore a primary intention of the training process. HE Levels One and Two (the usual extent of initial Reader training) should provide a solid grounding for much lay educational activity in the spheres of biblical studies, doctrine, worship, ethics, and possibly pastoral care, church history and theological reflection.

5.1.3 Also on the supply side Readers have the advantage that their usual world is that of the lay Christian who either works or used to work in the everyday world where discipleship is most under pressure. They can incarnate a different theology, a lay theology, which grows out of the conversation between the Christian tradition and the daily world of work and school, office and leisure centre, ethical choice and employment vulnerability. Clergy know these worlds too, but from a different perspective. Readers are able to demonstrate the practicality and applicability of Christian discipleship through the workaday week. At their best, Readers will have been thinking theologically about their Monday to Saturday world for a long time; it's been their instinct to bring their faith to bear on the everyday that has been one of the clues that evidenced their fitness for Reader training. They will now be able to demonstrate that thinking Christianly about everyday life and action is a central plank of discipleship, and that we are all practical theologians with one degree of sophistication or another. Theology is not an esoteric clerical activity but the possession and privilege of every Christian, and Readers are well placed to make that plain.

5.1.4 **Demand.** On the demand side of the equation, there is a clear and burning need for enhancing the educational diet of the Church. The level of Christian knowledge and understanding in our society is now alarmingly low. Polls demonstrate that at least half the population do not know what happened on Good Friday. More people consult their horoscopes than go to church. The Christian story is disappearing from our schools and from our culture. The Church is therefore skating on very thin ice, with a lot of very cold water only inches below the surface.

5.1.5 The other side of this bleak picture is that many church-goers become excited when they encounter good Christian education. There is a sense of joyful discovery, of pennies dropping, of genuine hunger. When a course explains how the Bible came to be written and how it can be understood; when the history, shape and meaning of the eucharist is opened up to people who have just taken it all for granted; when Christian methods of ethical thinking about current dilemmas are laid out and examined in case studies; when courses like these are offered and experienced, there is rejoicing not just in heaven but also on earth. Readers are ideally placed to offer their theological training in these educational contexts. They either have the expertise or they know how to acquire it, and hopefully, they are still in touch with the genuine questions lay people have.

5.1.6 Allied to this 'demand' is another: the need for good apologetics in a world that is increasingly unaware of what Christianity holds to be true, or increasingly sceptical of it. Unless Christians are equipped with some basic apologetic thinking to help them face the hard questions, they may be fearful of engaging their faith with their everyday context of life and work, with the consequent temptation of privatising their faith, limiting it to the realms of family, home and leisure. The cultural wallpaper is secular if not hostile, and a framework of Christian thinking about belief in God, evil and suffering, science and faith, relations with other faiths, alternative spiritualities – all these are becoming essential tools for daily discipleship. Again, Readers are wonderfully positioned to tackle that interpretative task. They know the sharpness of the questions and the frozen fear of answering them, but they also have some of the tools for offering answers and approaches.

5.1.7 Behind the need for more education in the faith and more equipping in apologetics, is a further factor – the discovery by churches that they are prime learning communities. Informal life-long learning is always going on in the local church. People are being shaped by the rough and tumble of community life, testing behaviour, listening and learning, worshipping and trying to pray, arguing and being reconciled, serving and stumbling. But in addition to that informal learning is the intentional role of the local church as a learning community, a 'school' of faith and practical theology. The reality of this role has been dawning on the Church for some years and is now embraced with conviction. In any case, (non-church) schools cannot be expected to take on this role any more. The Church has to take responsibility for its own.

5.2 Implementing a policy of lay education

5.2.1 **Other conditions** However, having a clear supply of theologically able 'teachers' and a clear demand in a society of 'thin' Christian knowledge, isn't enough in itself to make the role of Readers as lay educators obvious. Other factors need to be present as well – a clear educational policy, clergy who are willing to deploy Readers in this way, and Readers who are educationally as well as theologically adept.

5.2.2 Lay education works when there is a clearly thought-through *nurture and education policy* in a church. The days when television was a novelty, life-choices were limited, and the internet was not even a twinkle in some scientist's eye; and when extra education was offered chiefly by the churches, the WEA and the University of the Third Age - those days are long gone. Busy people increasingly want to know what 'added-value' they will get from going on a course. 'Putting on a course' is not enough; it has to have a place and a purpose in the church's mission and ministry. Readers, therefore, need to be aware of the need for a proper context for any educational activity in which they may be involved.

5.2.3 Moreover, Readers need to be *trusted by their clerical colleagues* as adequate for the task and a gift to the church. Good relationships and honest discussion of gifts and needs are the necessary precursor to a ministry of lay education. There is no substitute for collaborative planning based on mutual trust and respect. This develops from both ends. Clergy and Readers need to enjoy their complementarity.

5.2.4 Finally, Readers need to be *competent in educational method* as well as the content of the faith. In other words, they need some skill in adult educational methods. Most of these are reasonably straight-forward. Different learning styles need to be understood – not everyone learns in the same way. People learn best by being able to identify their own questions and participate in their own learning. Imaginations need to be engaged; input needs to be offered in small packages; work needs to be undertaken in pairs or small groups; visual material needs to reinforce the spoken word (DVD clips, paintings, powerpoint); problem solving and case-studies involve people more intimately with issues – and so on. These are basic skills but they make all the difference, and Readers have to realise that the occasions on which they can give an old-fashioned lecture are very limited.

5.2.5 Readers have a unique gift to offer the Church as lay educators. They are theologically trained, locally based, and in touch with the lay perspective. There is a clear missional need: a low level of Christian understanding in both society and the church, and an urgent apologetic imperative. Given the right context of policy, trust and educational competence, Readers are wonderfully placed to exercise a crucial ministry in and on the edge of our churches as learning communities.

Annex 6

Insights from scripture

(Chapter 2, sections 2.1 to 2.5 in the full report)

6.1 Introduction to the exploration of New Testament insights

6.1.1 What then can the New Testament offer us in terms of inspiration, nurture and challenge as we explore Reader ministry? This question is made more acute by the fact that a similar exercise done for ordained ministry appears to be very much more straightforward, as the Greek words *episcopos*, *presbuteros* and *diakonos* which are translated into English as bishop, priest (or presbyter) and deacon respectively can be found at least occasionally in the pages of the New Testament. In contrast, there are no apparent roots for Reader ministry within the writings of the New Testament.

6.1.2 In order to answer this question we need to attempt to discover the nature of the earliest Christian communities and what ministry was exercised within that context. From there we can begin to discern what ministry in general was and how Reader ministry in particular might fit into the context of the earliest Christians.

6.1.3 Before we do that, however, it is worth noting that although ordained ministry appears to have a New Testament pedigree, we are mistaken if we believe that modern patterns of ordination and order can be lifted directly from the pages of the New Testament. There are undoubtedly descriptions of *episcopoi* (overseers), *presbuteroi* (elders) and *diakonoi* (servants) in New Testament communities, but there are some crucial differences between their New Testament functions and the role of bishop, priest and deacon today. For example, the concept of moniscopacy (the idea that there is a single bishop in each area) does not seem to have developed until the time of St. Ignatius in the second century.¹²⁹ Likewise the word *diakonos* (deacon) is used more often to refer to people who are clearly not being 'deacons' in the church in the sense of the ordained diaconate, than it is used to refer to those who are 'deacons' in the three-fold order of ministry. What we find in the pages of the New Testament are seeds, out of which the trees of church order grow in subsequent centuries. The task of recovering the inspiration and origins of a three-fold order of ministry is far from straightforward. The task of exploring the New Testament origins of ordained ministry may appear on the surface to be easier than it is for lay ministry but in reality it is as complex, but in a different way.

¹²⁹ Maier, H.O. *The Social Setting of the Ministry as Reflected in the Writing of Hermas, Clement and Ignatius Waterloo*: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2002, pp. 177ff.

6.2 Ministry in the New Testament

6.2.1 One of the most confusing factors affecting study of ministry in the New Testament period is the fact that our English translations struggle to translate the relevant Greek words. So, for example, the English word ministry translates two Greek words (*diakonia* and *leitourgia*)¹³⁰, though by far the most common word behind the English word ministry is *diakonia*; but *diakonia* itself can also be translated as service (1 Cor 12.5), relief (Acts 11.29), mission (Acts 12.25), task (Luke 10.40) and even daily distribution of food (Acts 6.1), though service and ministry are the most common translations.¹³¹ The difficulty that the translators have in giving a consistent translation for the word indicates that ministry in the earliest Christian communities is hard to tie down and ranges from quite vague all-encompassing notions (eg. mission) to very specific activities (eg. waiting at table).

6.2.2 What then did 'ministry' mean in the New Testament communities? For many years scholars were convinced that 'ministry' meant acts of menial service. So, for example, in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Beyer, the author of the article on this word can say that it 'has the special quality of indicating very personally the service rendered to another'.¹³² This traditional interpretation of the word ministry has provided additional problems for Readers whose primary ministerial focus is not generally pastoral.

6.2.3 In recent years, however, there has been a shift of emphasis on what ministry might mean. This shift is largely due to the work of J.N. Collins who in 1980 published a book *Diakonia*¹³³ in which he argued that, although the word does mean many different things at different times, the major focus of the word is commissioned agency. In other words 'ministry' is as much about being sent to do a task as it is about caring for one's neighbour. Of course this does not mean that one ought not to care for one's neighbour (this is the expectation on all disciples of Jesus), nor that one's commissioned agency cannot include care, simply that the focus of the word is much more on being sent than it is on what is done.¹³⁴

6.2.4 The impact of this is that Reader 'ministry' is relocated to the centre of any definition of ministry in that it has national recognition and involves a service of admission and licensing. Reader ministry is a lay ministry par excellence that is defined by being commissioned. If Collins' proposed shift in the focus of meaning of the word ministry is accepted then Reader 'ministry' illustrates something important about the nature of a ministry that is called, selected and commissioned.

6.2.5 Another of the impacts of Collins' work has been a revived discussion of who does ministry. In a somewhat controversial second book, Collins posed the question of whether all people do ministry, to which he gives a resounding no.¹³⁵ Instead Collins identifies the work of ministry as being the terrain of deacons and argues that lay ministers like Readers should be ordained deacon. Others, however, oppose his work vehemently arguing that it

¹³⁰ One of the most confusing examples here is 2 Corinthians 9:12 which literally reads 'for the ministry (*diakonia*) of this ministry (*leitourgia*) not only provides for what the saints lack....'

¹³¹ For a full discussion of this see *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church*, GS Misc 854, 2007, pp. 8-9.

¹³² H.W. Beyer, 'Diakoneo, Diakonia, Diakonos', in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, Vol. II 1964, p. 81.

¹³³ John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-Interpreting the Ancient Sources*. New York and Oxford: OUP, 1990.

¹³⁴ For a full discussion of this see P. Gooder, 'Diakonia in the New Testament. A Dialogue with John N. Collins,' *Ecclesiology*, 2006; and *Mission and Ministry*, pp. 7-26.

¹³⁵ John N. Collins, *Are All Christians Ministers?* Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 1992, 1.

is baptism and baptism alone that qualifies a person for ministry.¹³⁶ Coming from a Roman Catholic perspective, it appears that Collins is looking for the development of a non-priestly yet high profile ministry engaged in the Church's tasks. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Lancaster has recently argued for an extensive extension of the diaconate to address the many forms of poverty in our society.¹³⁷ Debate in this area continues and is far from resolved (see 4.16).

6.2.6 In some ways this discussion cuts right to the heart of the current crisis in Reader ministry. On the one hand are those whose vision for 'every member ministry' appears to dilute the definition of ministry to such an extent that anything done as a Christian is defined as ministry; so much so that existing patterns of ministry, like Reader ministry, seem swamped by the many forms of 'new ministry' that are arising. On the other hand are those whose vision is to define ministry much more tightly, often restricting it to the threefold order of bishops, priests and deacons and cutting out the role of 'Reader' as they do so. Although Collins' himself adopts this latter approach, his theory does not necessarily demand this. Another option is to recognise ministry as 'commissioned service', which widens it beyond ordained ministry but restricts its compass a little. This does not undermine in any way the expectation of involvement by all baptised Christians whose discipleship of Christ expects that they follow his example in word and deed. Self-sacrificial action is expected of all disciples and should be valued as such; ministry becomes instead that specifically commissioned by the Church.

6.3 Early Christian communities and patterns of ministry

6.3.1 Although the earliest Christian communities were disparate and varied, we can tell some things about them. The evidence that we can glean from the list of greetings at the end of Paul's epistles is that these communities met in houses. Wayne Meeks notes the importance of private households as the location for early Christian communities.¹³⁸ Romans 16 is particularly important for giving us an insight into the different 'houses' that hosted early Christian gatherings. It is also important to recognise that there is evidence for more than one community in large cities. So for example at Corinth we read of gatherings at the house of Crispus (Acts 18.8) and at the house of Gaius (Romans 16.23)¹³⁹, as well as a gathering at Cenchreae of which Phoebe was a member (Romans 16.1). In addition to this the size of Roman houses would make it difficult for each gathering to be much more than 20 or 30 strong.

6.3.2 In due course gatherings in homes were replaced by larger congregations of several hundred persons. Brian Capper points out that the size of the communities must have had an impact on patterns of ministry. In particular he notes that it would be much easier to expect each member of a gathering of 30 people to be engaged in ministry than it would be to expect all members of much larger gatherings to contribute equally to worship:

¹³⁶ See discussion in James Monroe Barnett, *The Diaconate--a Full and Equal Order : A Comprehensive and Critical Study of the Origin, Development, and Decline of the Diaconate in the Context of the Church's Total Ministry and a Proposal for Renewal*, New York, Seabury Press, 1981, pp. 4-42.

¹³⁷ Patrick O'Donoghue, 'Towards a New Vision of the Permanent Diaconate', *The Pastoral Review*, Vol 4, 1, January/February 2008, pp. 38-43

¹³⁸ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians : The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 75-77.

¹³⁹ Though the reference here might be to Gaius' ability to accommodate all the Corinthian communities when they came together.

In the household gathering of two dozen, Paul's vision that every believer had a contribution – a contribution of *ministry* – to make to the community could be realised in practice...In a gathering of several hundred souls, the Bishop could preside, and one or two elders would speak.¹⁴⁰

In other words, a restriction on ministry exercised in leading worship is the natural effect of a larger congregation. In the early period, when congregations were small, there was a broader and more fluid understanding of ministry that slowly narrowed due to, among other things, practical consideration of size.¹⁴¹

6.3.3 Indeed, an examination of Paul's epistles does not point to a single ordering into three clear offices. Instead, Paul's exploration of involvement in the body of Christ is much more fluid than this. In his writings Paul gives various lists of 'gifts'. In 1 Corinthians 12 there are two lists: in verses 8-11 he gives nine examples, but later in 12.28 only eight, some of which overlap and some of which do not. In Romans 12.3-8 another list is given containing this time seven gifts, again some overlapping with those in the other passages and others not. Ephesians 4.11-12 has a much shorter list of just four or five¹⁴². The interesting feature of these differing lists is that some 'gifts' seem to refer to more formal roles in the church (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherd and teacher), while others are more informal (giving, encouraging, having compassion). It is not even clear whether Paul considers these lists to be lists of ministry, not least because 'ministry' is listed as one of the gifts in Romans 12.3-8. Rather than being lists of 'ministry' as they are often regarded, these lists consist of recognition of the multi-faceted and glorious spirit-given talents that exist within Christian communities.

6.3.4 The only indication that any gifts were valued more than others is 1 Corinthians 12.28 which lists: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers after which he moves on to listing the gifts as then...then... The fact that these three are repeated again in Ephesians 4.11, alongside evangelists and pastors, points to their relative importance within the early Christian community. Despite this, the Pauline expectation seems to have been that there were many and varied gifts within the communities – so many in fact that the lists are only examples which may have been chosen to fit the point being made¹⁴³ – and that all gifts from 'being encouraging' to 'being an apostle' are to be fostered and valued within God's people.

6.3.5 Of course, as Capper points out, the contribution of all within the Christian community is much easier when the congregation is small. When the gatherings of Christians became much bigger it was easier to turn to a few 'leaders' to exercise their gifts. As Capper says: 'the ordinary believer's active participation in the public gathering was effectively excluded.'¹⁴⁴ We can see this development taking place even within the New Testament itself. The Pastoral epistles display a much clearer and defined view of a 'bishop/overseer' and a 'deacon' than we find in other New Testament texts. 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 lay out the characteristics of a person undertaking this task as though the role was much more defined than it had been in earlier epistles.

¹⁴⁰ Brian Capper, 'Order and Ministry in the Social Pattern of the New Testament Church' in C. Hall and Robert Hannaford eds. *Order and Ministry*. Leominster, Gracewing, 1996, p.67.

¹⁴¹ Factors other than the size of the congregations also affected the ministry of the early Christian community. There was the need to guard against heresy and the need for order in a rapidly growing Church.

¹⁴² This depends on whether 'pastors and teachers' is counted as one or two.

¹⁴³ Spiritual manifestations I Cor 12.4-11; variety Rom 12.3-8 and I Cor 12.28; the building up of the Church Eph.4.11-13

¹⁴⁴ Brian J. Capper *Order and Ministry*. p.68

6.3.6 The challenge to larger congregations is how to maintain the emphasis on the gifts of all found in the New Testament texts while ordering a much larger and more varied gathering. What has happened over time is that the demands of larger gatherings have drowned out the discernment and recognition of the varied gifts of the Spirit. One of the insights the early church can offer to our current situation is the essential character of these gifts for the thriving of the body.

6.3.7 Another possible root in the New Testament for the subsequent ministry of Readers is the importance given to the reading of apostolic letters and prophecy. In Colossians 4.16, Paul instructs that his letter be read not only to the church congregation in Colossae, to which he is writing, but also in the church of the Laodiceans. Furthermore, the letter to the Laodiceans is to be read at Colossae. The Revelation of St. John opens with a blessing on 'the one who reads the words of this prophecy and on those who hear it and take it to heart' (Rev.1.3). The implication is that it is to be read to the recipient seven churches. Some scholars believe that the Revelation is written to be read in six instalments at the eucharist.¹⁴⁵ Both the Colossians and Revelation references suggest the development of an important role in public reading.

6.4 The priesthood of all believers?

6.4.1 One of the familiar phrases used in the discussion of the ministry of all is 'the priesthood of all believers'. This phrase has become so common that it comes as something of a surprise to discover that it is not biblical; but the concept, if not the exact wording, comes from Martin Luther¹⁴⁶. Its origins are, however, biblical and can be found reflected in passages such as 1 Peter 2.4-9 and Revelation 1.4-6¹⁴⁷ which speak of the call upon all Christians to be a holy priesthood (1 Peter) and priests serving God (Revelation). The Revelation passages particularly reflect Old Testament thinking in Exodus 19.6¹⁴⁸

6.4.2 This vision is radical in nature but not in the way it is sometimes understood. This phrase is sometimes understood to mean that we are all priests (as in bishops, priests and deacons). In the New Testament context this cannot be the case. The word that is used here is not *presbuteros* but various forms of *hierous*, the word that is more usually used to denote the Old Testament priesthood.¹⁴⁹ The point made by both the authors of 1 Peter and Revelation is that the old elite priesthood defined by birth has now become so broad that all Christians are now included within its remit. This vision, which widened the calling to serve God to the whole people of God, through worship and proclamation, runs very much in line with Paul's expectation that each member of the body will have gifts given by the Spirit to share with the whole body.

6.4.3 It is worth noting, however, that the emphasis on being a royal priesthood that we find in 1 Peter and Revelation concerns not so much the service of the church, as the

¹⁴⁵ Alan Garrow *Revelation* London, Routledge, 1997, p.4

¹⁴⁶ Martin Luther wrote in *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation in 1520*:

As St. Paul says (1 Cor:12) we are all one body, though each member does its own work, to serve the others, This is because we have one baptism, one Gospel, one faith, and are all ... Thus we are all consecrated as priests by baptism, as St. Peter says: 'Ye are a royal priesthood, a holy nation' (1 Peter 2:9) and in the book of Revelation: 'and hast made us unto our God (by Thy blood) kings and priests' (Rev 5:10)

in ed. J.H. Robinson, *Readings in European History* (Boston: Ginn, 1906), 2:

¹⁴⁷ It can also be found more implicitly in various passages in Hebrews such as Hebrews 13:15 which talk of 'us' offering a sacrifice of praise to God.

¹⁴⁸ 'you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' RSV

¹⁴⁹ This illustrates the real complexity of the term 'priest' which draws both on Old Testament categories and on New Testament images of 'eldership'.

service of God in corporate worship and proclamation of his wonderful deeds. The impact of these statements is that each member of the Christian community is now expected to dedicate themselves both to the worship of God in their own right and not to rely on an elite to facilitate the worship for them, and to the proclamation of the acts of God. It means that all people are now able to encounter and withstand the awesome holiness of God. Being a royal priesthood calls therefore on every member of the community to be as dedicated in worship and service of God, as were the priests of the temple who dedicated the whole of their lives to it.

6.5 The implications of the New Testament insights

6.5.1 The New Testament offers various insights into the question of lay ministry and its role in the church today. The first is that the New Testament writers had a vision for the all-embracing nature of Christian community that valued and fostered the gifts and worship of all its members. There can be no doubt that in the earliest Christian communities everyone was expected to contribute to the welfare of the whole gathering.

6.5.2 Gifts and ministry, however, are not the same thing. At no point in his list of gifts does Paul call them ministry; instead ministry is listed as one of the gifts in Romans 12. This seems to indicate that while everyone's gifts are to be recognised and cherished, ministry has a more specific focus, which, if J.N.Collins is correct, is focussed on commissioning. Ministry arises out of our spirit-filled gifts but is defined more closely as carrying out the task or tasks commissioned by the church¹⁵⁰.

6.5.3 As time went by and the Christian communities grew, there may well have been a retreat from a reality in which all members of the community contributed out of the gifts they brought to one in which a smaller number of people facilitated the worship and service of the people of God. As a result leadership, ministry and gifts began to merge and mean something similar. In the New Testament these three seem much further apart. Leadership denoted either the day-to-day practical running of the local congregation or the more itinerant apostolic role of people like Peter. Ministry seems more connected to commissioned activity on behalf of the community and gifts to be what all people brought. In other words the leaders were not the only ones to do ministry or to bring gifts.

¹⁵⁰ The idea of ministry as involving the tasks commissioned by the church is discussed in more detail in *Mission and Ministry* GC Misc 854, pp. 61-66

Annex 7

Insights from tradition and the history of Reader ministry

(slightly abridged from chapter 2, sections 2.6 to 2.9 in the full report)

7.1 Glimpses of Reader or Lector ministry over the centuries

7.1.1 Building on what has already been observed in Annex 2 about the growing importance of the role of public reading in New Testament times, Justin, in his First Apology, explicitly refers to the Reader in the context of the Sunday assembly and celebration of the Lord's Supper. First the Reader (Lector) would both read and expound the context of what had been read and then the bishop would preach.¹⁵¹ By this means the Church met the need for persons who were educated and able to read the books of the Church. Subsequently Cyprian appointed a Reader with the laying on of hands, calling this an 'ordination'. Hippolytus, however, provides for a simple enrolment of the Lector with the giving of a Bible. One of the Western Canons of the sixth century gives forms for all ordinations of those in minor orders. In the order for the Lector there is no laying on of hands; rather the ordination into the minor order is with prayer and the giving of the scriptures¹⁵².

7.1.2 George King, a former Honorary Secretary of the Central Readers Board and one of the few to write about the development of Readers, comments

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 deacons...From this position of high importance and of being the highest branch of the lay ministry the Readership seems gradually to have declined, until by the end of the fifth century Readers were of little importance, and had become members of a minor order, and that minor order was given the lowest possible classification in the orders of precedence, and was placed even below the minor orders of acolytes and exorcists.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ The Jewish pattern for the synagogue, from which the pattern of early Christian worship developed, allowed a person in the assembly, even a visitor, to read the scriptures and comment on them, as Jesus did (Luke 4.16-20) and as Paul and his companions did. (Acts 13.13-14.1)

¹⁵² 'When a lector is ordained let the bishop speak about him to the people, pointing out his faith and life and skill. After this, while the people look on, let him give the book from which he is to read, saying to him: "Receive this and be the spokesman of the word of God and you shall have, if you do your work faithfully and usefully, a part with those who have administered the Word of God"' See footnote 63 below.

¹⁵³ T.G.King, *Readers: A Pioneer Ministry*, London, Central Readers Board, 1973, pp. 54-55

King further cites John Wordsworth, Bishop of Salisbury who wrote in 1901, 'This elevation of ritual and disciplinary officers at the expense of an order of men who had the great duty of reading Holy Scriptures to the people, is a development of a retrograde character.'¹⁵⁴ Readers or Lectors continued into the medieval church as a 'minor order'. They remain in both the Orthodox and Roman Churches; in the latter they are those who read the scriptures; only they do not read the gospel at the mass.¹⁵⁵

7.1.3 One of the most significant offices which can be traced right back to the earliest times of the English Church was that of the parish clerk. Originally ordained into a minor order, but non-celibate, their role was to assist the priest. Gradually they took on functions such as reading the Epistle. By the fourteenth century there were parish clerks who were not ordained; gradually it became normal for this to be a lay ministry, along with other lay ministries such as sextons.

7.2 A brief history of Reader ministry – its revival post-Reformation and again in the 19th century

7.2.1 In England, in response to a shortage of ordained clergy,¹⁵⁶ the first post-Reformation references to the office of Reader occur in 1560. It was Archbishop Matthew Parker who said that 'a deacon or else some sober, honest and grave layman who as lector or Reader shall...read the order of service appointed'. Bishop Meyrick of Bangor is recorded as having 'ordained' five Readers in Bow Church, London, that January.¹⁵⁷ According to *Reader-Preacher* by G. Lawton, Readers in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I ministered in poorer parishes 'destitute of incumbents'¹⁵⁸. They were allowed to read the appointed service 'playnlie, distinctlie, and audiblie' but not to preach or interpret the scriptures. They were permitted to bury the dead and purify women after childbirth but not to administer the sacraments or 'other public rites of the Church'. They were to keep the registers¹⁵⁹.

7.2.2 In their personal lives the Readers were to be sober in apparel, especially in church, to read a chapter of the Old and New Testaments daily and to 'move men to quiet and concord, and not give them cause for offence'.¹⁶⁰ This was at a time when many of those ordained were far from remarkable for their godliness or devotion. When livings were held in plurality, tasks, such as burial, could be delegated to Readers. They were paid and could minister throughout a diocese. However, they did not keep their appointments when an incumbent was appointed and did not minister alongside incumbents as is the case today. The report *The Mission and Ministry of the Whole Church* comments

It seems probable that the reason why it was Readers who were employed in this way was that the bishops were aware that the fact that office of Reader was one that had existed in the early days of the Church. As in the case of its pattern of

¹⁵⁴ John Wordsworth, *The Ministry of Grace*, London, Longmans, 1901, cited by King, *Readers*, p. 60

¹⁵⁵ These facts and those in paragraph 2.6.1 are noted by Michael Nazir-Ali in *Shapes of the Church to Come* Eastbourne, Kingsway, 2001, p.164-5. He refers to Joseph Lienhard SJ, *Ministry, Message of the Fathers of the Church* Wilmington, Michael Glazier, 1984, pp. 37,42,132

¹⁵⁶ Several of the points in this section are made in *Mission and Ministry* GS Misc. 854, p.33.

¹⁵⁷ Reference to the actions of Archbishop Parker and Bishop Meyrick can be found in T.G.King *Readers: A Pioneer Ministry*, London, Central Readers Board, 1973, pp. 67-68

¹⁵⁸ G.Lawton *Reader-Preacher* London, Churchman, 1989, ch.9 cited by Rhoda Hiscox *Celebrating Reader Ministry*, London, Mowbray, p.12

¹⁵⁹ *Mission and Ministry* GS Misc 854 p. 33

¹⁶⁰ G. Lawton *Reader-Preacher*, ch.9, cited Rhoda Hiscox, *Celebrating Reader Ministry*, p.12

ordained ministry, the Church of England was seeking to build on ancient precedent¹⁶¹.

7.2.3 Readers were never very numerous but there is evidence that the office persisted until the reign of King George II, when it was resolved that no one should officiate who was not in deacon's orders. The existing Readers, amongst whom, in the Diocese of Carlisle, for example, were a clogger, a tailor and a butter-print maker, were 'ordained' without examination.¹⁶²

7.2.4 The office of Reader was revived a second time in the following century at a meeting of Archbishops and Bishops at Lambeth Palace on Ascension Day, 1866, following calls during the preceding 25 years or so for greater service from the laity, even in the sanctuary. The reasons for its revival lie neither with needing assistance with regular parish church services, nor with a vision for developing the gifts and ministries of members of the congregations. The driving motivation came from the need to extend the effectiveness of the traditional parochial system to new pioneering work on the boundaries between church and world. Mission congregations were established and there were assemblies, for example in prisons or in steelworks. Bishops recognised that the parish churches in their diocese did not serve the working classes well. In some measure this could be redressed by the encouragement of other places of meeting and worship. The licensing of Readers enabled these services to be provided under the authority of the Church.¹⁶³

7.2.5 The church realised its inability to cater for the growing population: it grew from 9 million in 1801 to 20 million in 1861, with a concentration increasingly in cities. The greatest shortage of clergy was in the industrialized North. The debate centred not on the need for ministers but on their role. Titles discussed included lay agents, sub-deacons, lay deacons, lay teachers or Readers. As the Bishop of London put it, 'Every day convinces me more and more that some such organisation is necessary to reach the great mass of our people'.

7.2.6 In some Dioceses there was great enthusiasm for the development of Reader and other lay ministry. For example, in the Durham Diocese there was a significant development in large bands of parish district visitors, Sunday school teachers, and organisers of women's and men's societies. 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'.¹⁶⁴

7.2.7 The first English Reader in recent times was J.D.T. Niblett of Standish who in 1866 was admitted in the palace of the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol¹⁶⁵. Niblett and his early fellow Readers were instrumental in breaking down the social barriers which existed in the Church, either directly, like the Earl Nelson who only agreed to become a Reader if 'every

¹⁶¹ *Mission and Ministry* GS Misc 854 p. 33

¹⁶² Richard S. Ferguson *Diocesan Histories – Carlisle*, SPCK, 1889 p.174

¹⁶³ Because at first Readers were not allowed to preach when a priest was present or required for the maintenance of the main diet of Sunday worship in parish churches, they found themselves located at the 'cutting edge' of mission and ministry. They would assist by leading or contributing to worship in mission rooms, purpose built mission churches, and cottage meetings, 'in the open air' and among both the industrial and rural poor. See Rhoda Hiscox *Celebrating Reader Ministry: 125 Years of Lay Ministry in the Church of England*, London, Mowbray, 1991, pp. 13 – 19

¹⁶⁴ 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

¹⁶⁵ T.G.King, *Readers*, p.83

grade in society' might also become Readers, or indirectly, like the Town Clerk of Louth, who preached regularly to a large group of navvies every Sunday afternoon. These early Readers were teachers and catechists working in Sunday Schools and organising activities for young people. They also lectured to adults and ran Bible classes and would appear as leaders of worship in mission halls or in the open air. Although the Diocesan Readers came from the professions, the Parochial Readers were described as 'the better educated from among the uneducated'! The bishops were nervous of the success of the non-conformists, who employed lay local preachers. As John Wesley had put it a century earlier, 'Use talent and you have talent'.

7.2.8 Even though the first Reader Diocesan Association had been formed in Durham in 1880, the Convocation of the Province of York, meeting four years later really wanted instead a form of 'extended diaconate'. At a joint meeting with the Convocation of Canterbury the latter favoured an extension of the system of Readers, a development that would involve their being allowed to conduct worship and preach in unconsecrated buildings.¹⁶⁶

7.2.9 In Lincoln in 1891, with the personal encouragement of Bishop Edward King, the Diocesan Lay Readers' Guild was formed 'to give help to clergymen and others in the direction of mission work', and over the next ten years, by invitation, the small but growing band of Guild members held regular Services in mission rooms in five city parishes and twenty two rural parishes, as well as providing worship, catechesis and other services for five branches of the Deaf and Dumb Mission, Lincoln Prison, Girls Home, the Railway Guild, Westgate Institute, Seaman's Institute, Boys Brigade, the mission to men and boys and the Union Workhouse.¹⁶⁷ The leading of worship, catechesis and evangelism were all an important part of the mission of the Guild, providing front line ministry to the marginalised and the poor.

7.2.10 By May 19th 1906, The Times Newspaper reported that the Bishop of London had designated three forms of Reader - the Parochial, the Marine and the Diocesan. The core work of all these Readers was visiting, Sunday school teaching, open air preaching, leading services in unconsecrated buildings and assisting with portions of Morning and Evening Prayer and the Litany in parish churches. Diocesan Readers might preach after the third collect at Evening Prayer. The marine Readers were opening up new ministry and ordinary Readers had the missionary task of preaching in public places and leading worship in mission rooms for the poor.

7.2.11 Readers were often itinerant, preaching and leading worship in many parish churches. Mr. W. Reay-Smith, licensed in 1906, gave 41 years' active service to the Diocese of Newcastle during which he ministered in no fewer than 100 churches, which in those days would have offered a wealth of services of Morning or Evening Prayer.

7.2.12 However, such developments were sometimes cautiously received. Frances Knight observes that:

"In the week-night cottage meeting or evening lecture, which typically consisted of Bible readings, a short address and extempore prayer, the rigid social hierarchy that prevailed when the community assembled in the parish church could (theoretically at least) be temporarily suspended, and worship not be subject to the constraints of the Book of Common Prayer. It was also hoped to attract those who might feel ashamed to attend the parish church on Sunday because of the state of

¹⁶⁶ T.G.King, *Readers*, pp.90, 91, 110

¹⁶⁷ The Minute Books of Lincoln Diocesan Lay Readers' Guild, Diocese of Lincoln Archives

their clothes. The use of cottages and other unlicensed premises, and the frequent absence of the Prayer Book, tended to provoke episcopal censure, and as a result, cottage meetings were usually seen as a hallmark of Evangelism.”¹⁶⁸

7.2.13 Yet, despite and sometimes because of the reservations of the more cautious bishops and church structures, Readers and many other local lay people were involved in pioneer ministry within their local communities, institutions and places of work, generating a measure of the energy for outreach and mission typical of the later Victorian and Edwardian era. At that time, the development of Reader Ministry was one of several examples of increasing lay leadership. Alongside formal developments such as the Church Army and the vocation to religious orders of nuns and monks, there were a whole range of other examples involving lay leadership include Sunday School teachers, numerous lady visitors, the emerging structures of the Mothers’ Union, the establishment of bible classes, men’s societies, the appointment of organists and choirmasters, the leadership of Boys and Girls Brigades, Church Lads’ Brigades and the scouting movement.

7.2.14 As a result of a private initiative in 1904, the 2,375 Readers at that time had the chance to subscribe to their own magazine called *The Reader and Lay Worker*. A century later the print run is 10,000.

7.3 A brief history of Reader ministry – continuing historical debate about the appropriate forms of authorisation for Reader ministry

7.3.1 Debate over Readers as lay or ordained was behind the establishment in 1903 of a committee chaired by the Bishop of Salisbury, John Wordsworth, who had studied the history of ministry. The terms of reference were ‘to consider the question of restoring an Order of Readers or Sub-deacons in the Church’. Its report the following year, *Readers and Sub-deacons*,¹⁶⁹ was considered to be of such significance that it remained in print for sixty years. The Committee noted the shortfall in ordinands particularly ‘of candidates possessed of anything like large private incomes!’ They felt it was not the time to revive minor orders and so recommended extending and regulating the Office of Reader, permitting these laymen to preach in church and take specified parts of Morning and Evening Prayer and of the Litany. They said that whilst they did not consider that this would require a Bill in Parliament or a change to Canon Law, were either of those to prove necessary it should be enacted. They emphasised order and control saying that those authorised to take services should hold a bishop’s licence and be trained. They abolished the distinction in relation to lay ministry between what was permissible in consecrated and unconsecrated buildings, but the pulpit, they maintained, belonged ‘to the bishop and his colleagues of the presbytery’. The description ‘Reader’ was affirmed and was to be the subject of debate in the ensuing century.

7.3.2 In contrast to the recent introduction of a range of ministerial categories in the Church of England, one hundred years ago Reader ministry was then seen as the umbrella for all lay ministries. The Convocations’ Regulations of 1905 commissioned all those then called Evangelist, Catechist, Teacher, Preacher, Scriptural Reader and Lay Worker as

¹⁶⁸ F Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church and English Society*, Cambridge, 1995, p.41

¹⁶⁹ Readers and Sub-deacons (Convocation of Canterbury no.383)

Reader and some dioceses began to license all their Church Army Officers as Readers. Until 1952 most Church Army Officers were also Readers.

7.3.3 From the end of the nineteenth century most dioceses had two classes of Reader - Diocesan and Parochial.¹⁷⁰ The former were 'commissioned' whilst the latter were 'licensed' – a distinction, it seems, between officers and other ranks. A significant number at that time was stipendiary. The better-educated Diocesan Readers were permitted to preach their own sermons in the church building itself, a right not granted to Parochial Readers until 1921. The Regulations of that year emphasised that admission was for life and in that respect comparable to ordination. Not long afterwards, in the 1930s, there was a plea for a national service of admission, which took until 2005, 75 years later, (see 4.10.2), to materialise in draft form. The 1930 Regulations also pointed towards the creation of the Central Readers' Board, the idea for which had first been floated in *The Lay Reader* in 1907. The first Annual Conference on Readers' Work was held in 1908 and by 1914 a national office for Readers was opened in Dean's Yard, Westminster, in London. The Board itself was established in 1922, while the magazine proved invaluable for giving the movement a strong identity in this country and indeed overseas.

7.3.4 The Central Readers' Board encouraged each diocese to establish its own committee. Training began to be emphasised and standards were raised. The 1921 Annual Conference on Readers' Work proposed, for the first time, uniform standards for selection and training. Readers were becoming increasingly numerous but were not universally appreciated. In January 1921 a Southwell Reader wrote to the magazine:

“Lay Readers in theory are a necessity, in practice they are not wanted by bishop, clergy or congregation...In most parishes the wealthy layman has priority over any licensed Reader...Lay Readers have done the greatest service during war difficulties...they are waiting to do more, much more if permitted, to help in the greater need of these troubled days.”¹⁷¹

A second letter from a vicar in Leicester, with a very different perspective, appeared in the June issue. Readers had helped whilst he had been ill for six months. 'From the congregation I have heard nothing but praise, and their appreciation of the excellent and practical sermons has been very great and real.' He continued, 'Many priests in the diocese owe much "to the unselfish and most efficient work of this body of Lay Readers"¹⁷².

7.3.5 A major debate on Readers and the diaconate took place at the time of the revision of the Regulations in 1930. The Lambeth Conference that year and the Commission of the Church Assembly published a paper entitled *The Staffing of Parishes*¹⁷³ which speculated on the possibility of men being able to be ordained yet earn their livings elsewhere.

7.3.6 The other issue of the day was whether Readers should be allowed to administer the chalice. That great character and catalyst of the Reader movement for more than half a century, Canon John Murray, was a great proponent of these changes. As the Master of Selwyn College, Cambridge, from 1909 to 1928, on retirement he became Organizing Secretary of the Central Readers' Board until his death in 1944. As Rhoda Hiscox notes,

¹⁷⁰ T.G.King *Readers*, pp.101, 112-113

¹⁷¹ Rhoda Hiscox, *Celebrating*, p.22, citing *The Lay Reader*, xviii, January 1921

¹⁷² Rhoda Hiscox, *Celebrating*, p.22 citing *The Lay Reader*, xviii June 1921

¹⁷³ *The Staffing of Parishes* (Church Assembly)

as early as 1923 the *Church Family Newspaper* described him as ‘the heart and brains of the whole movement.... the inspiring force’¹⁷⁴.

7.3.7 At a meeting of the Central Readers’ Board in January 1931, Canon Murray said,

“we should authorize them [Readers] to administer the chalice. But if we are to do that, surely the simplest and most effective plan is to ordain them outright as deacons, even though this must carry with it a relaxation of the traditional role forbidding them to engage in secular employment which.... has been and is being again and again relaxed, even in regard to the Priesthood.”

Murray maintained that for half a century Readers had responded to a call

“to do the work which, in our ordinal, is the distinctive work of the Diaconate – leading the devotions of the faithful, and preaching and expounding the Word of God in mission rooms and churches...And yet the rank and file of Churchmen are barely conscious of their existence.”

Some speakers wanted to go further as they favoured a voluntary priesthood, but that was a step too far for the majority who passed the following motion,

“That the principle of the appointment of Voluntary Clergy be accepted – so far as it applies to the Diaconate – and that the Bishops be invited to ordain as Deacons men who have given proof of their spiritual and intellectual capacity by faithful service in the Office of Reader.”¹⁷⁵

Canon Murray then wrote to all diocesan bishops and secretaries of Readers’ Boards outlining the Board’s proposals.

7.3.8 During World War II, in 1941, the committee reviewing the Regulations proposed the ending of the two categories, Diocesan and Parochial. From this point Readers could read the epistle but not the gospel, administer the chalice but not the paten and preach at Morning and Evening Prayer but not during Holy Communion. Over the years the range of tasks Readers have been permitted to perform has increased, but slowly. In 1962 the Central Readers’ Board asked that Readers be placed on a par with deacons, so being allowed all the non-sacerdotal functions in church – baptizing, burying and conducting services after childbirth.

7.3.9 In the Canon Law revision of 1969 the reading of the Gospel and the administering of the bread at Holy Communion were opened not just to Readers but also to other lay people. Readers were permitted to preach at Holy Communion; but the biggest changes of all were that Readers were recognised in the Canons and women were to be permitted to join their ranks. This was the first occasion that accredited ministry had been opened to women on equal terms.

7.3.10 The General Synod was born in 1970 and debated the Deaconesses and Lay Ministry Measure during its early years. This measure was designed to pave the way for further developments, and ‘to enable further provision to be made by Canon with respect to the ministry of deaconesses, licensed lay workers, Readers and other lay persons’ so that these people would be able to perform duties including burials, ‘with the goodwill of the persons responsible’ and baptisms ‘in the absence of the minister’.¹⁷⁶ In 1990, Bishop Michael Baughen, then chairman of the Central Readers’ Council, wrote, ‘The demand for

¹⁷⁴ Rhoda Hiscox, *Celebrating*, p.73

¹⁷⁵ *The Lay Reader* 1931

¹⁷⁶ Deaconesses and Lay Ministry Measure 1972

Readers to be allowed to baptize must be agreed soon by the Church'. He also said at that time, 'What saddens me...is to see how desperately slowly changes have taken place, and there are some strong lessons here for the whole Church. The deep opposition to lay ministry... still lingers on'.¹⁷⁷ In her book *Celebrating Reader Ministry*, Rhoda Hiscox reflects on this: 'For the whole people of God, Readers and clergy and laypeople, disappointment has alternated with hope, tension with trust, frustration with fulfilment'. She quoted the statement of the Central Readers' Board at the time it lost some of its independence to ACCM in 1970 – 'We suffer everywhere from prejudice to Readers and much ill-informed criticism' – and commented herself that 'The national Church was grudging in its recognition of Readers and dilatory in extending their duties despite proven pastoral need. While paying lip service to the priesthood of all believers, it discouraged it when it showed signs of emerging in the lay ministry of Readers'.¹⁷⁸

7.3.11 It was a former Bishop of Newcastle, Alec Graham, then Chairman of the Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, who in 1984 said that Readers should become 'the Church's lay theologians, thinking, well-informed, articulate.... theological resource people'.¹⁷⁹ He was pointing to resources that Readers bring to a world in which Christianity appears to be dying through ignorance rather than informed rejection. Exactly a century earlier, in 1884, the Bishop of Bangor wanted 'Christian men who can bridge the gap between the different classes of society; who, being in close communication with the clergyman on the one hand and the industrious masses on the other, can interpret each to each'.¹⁸⁰ In 1904 Bishop Yeatman-Biggs of Southwark envisaged 'a field of happy, holy usefulness and activity'.¹⁸¹ It was not always so. The stipendiary Readers were paid relatively little and life could be anything but happy. Of a Reader in Wales it was said, that at no time did he receive a wage equal to that of a road sweeper. In later years a Stipendiary Readers' Fund was established to help those in need. There was a touching letter from a poor old man who was nearly blind in *The Reader* of February, 1956: 'I am now in my 83rd year and God is very good. I wish to thank you and the brethren for their kindness in the grant which keeps me from debt.' This deserving individual had just led five services in two months during an interregnum in Cheshire and as he put it "I did it all from memory"!

7.4 Signs of change in Reader ministry

7.4.1 Both Canon King, Honorary Secretary of the Central Readers' Board, in 1973, and Canon Tiller, Chief Secretary, Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, in 1983, foresaw the growth in the voluntary ordained ministry at the expense of Readers. Canon King wrote that with a 'changing habit of worship [there is an] increasing need in the Church for ministers who are authorised to celebrate the Holy Communion.' He envisaged 'recruitment on a vast scale to the voluntary ordained ministry and many Readers would undoubtedly feel called to ordination as voluntary priests'.¹⁸² In his Report *A strategy for the Church's Ministry*, Canon Tiller developed this theme, 'Those men and women who are at present encouraged to train for Reader ministry.... might be candidates for the local priesthood; others would be included as lay pastors in the eldership. It has been pointed out that where there is a suitable Reader already trained to preach the Word and proven to

¹⁷⁷ In the foreword to Rhoda Hiscox *Celebrating*, p.vii.

¹⁷⁸ Rhoda Hiscox *Celebrating*, p.2

¹⁷⁹ cited Rhoda Hiscox *Celebrating*, p. 2

¹⁸⁰ cited Rhoda Hiscox *Celebrating*, p.14

¹⁸¹ *Lay Work and the Office of Reader* Longmans 1904, cited Hiscox, *Celebrating*, p.17

¹⁸² T.G.King *Readers*, p. 163

be an acceptable pastor, there is a strong case for calling such a person to a local sacramental ministry as well.’¹⁸³ Bishop Robert Martineau, himself originally a Reader, also foresaw the Church ‘encouraging an auxiliary priesthood’ from amongst Readers. ‘These men have just the qualities which a Selection Panel would look for in an auxiliary priest.’¹⁸⁴

7.4.2 *A Strategy for the Church’s Ministry* also said, ‘Readers [who did not seek ordination] would not continue to be a separate quasi-order nationally but would be merged into the local ministry’.¹⁸⁵ At the time of the above Report, the Central Readers’ Council, in its own submission, was open to change. They saw the need ‘to ask not how the Reader will fit into this development and/or future pattern, but what pattern of ministry the Church needs to develop and is there a place for the Reader within it?’¹⁸⁶

7.4.3 80 years ago the Archbishop of York, Cosmo Gordon Lang, said, ‘What local preachers have done for Wesleyanism, the Diocesan Readers ought to be able to do for the Church of England.’ Yet in 2005, whilst the 9,000 Methodist Local Preachers in England, Scotland and Wales led and preached at about two services out of three, Readers are much less involved in that way. *The Ministerial Review Survey* by the Diocese of Lincoln in 2005 was probably the most thorough ever conducted into Reader ministry.¹⁸⁷ Only 57% of Readers led worship once a month or more frequently. This is in stark contrast to a survey conducted in the Dioceses of Ely and Liverpool – one rural, one urban – in 1970. At that time, on average, Readers took part in leading worship on three Sundays out of four and preached on half the Sundays of the year. What was equally significant was that one-third of those sermons were preached outside the benefice to which the Reader was licensed. These two categories, Readers and Local Preachers, are broadly comparable in number yet different in function¹⁸⁸. Yet there is a major difference in Church culture: virtually all Methodist ministers were first Local Preachers and greatly valued that ministry of the Word; and their congregations do not expect weekly Communion¹⁸⁹.

7.4.4 As this historical survey shows, Reader ministry has always changed to meet the mission and ministry needs of its time. But in this review it is argued that with flexibility as a key principle, there are remarkable opportunities for Readers in 2009 and future years.

¹⁸³ John Tiller *A Strategy for the Church’s Ministry*, London, CIO, 1983 p.130

¹⁸⁴ Robert Martineau *The Office and Work of a Reader*, London, Mowbray, 1970 pp.5,6

¹⁸⁵ John Tiller *A Strategy for the Church’s Ministry* p.130

¹⁸⁶ Central Readers Council *Strategy for Ministry*, CRC 1982

¹⁸⁷ *The Quinquennial Report on Reader Ministry in the Diocese of Lincoln*, Lincoln Diocese, 2005

¹⁸⁸ *Living God’s Covenant*, Second Interim Report (2007) of the Joint Implementation Commission, Peterborough, Methodist Publishing House, 2007 pp. 57-63

¹⁸⁹ In the Church of England there has been a decline in services of Morning and Evening Prayer and also Non-stipendiary Ministers would seem to be taking services previously led by Readers.