

## Part 2

# A vision for good practice in Reader/Preacher training

A report of the  
implementation task group



## Section 1

# Starting points

## The goals of *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church*

### Training in context

*Formation for Ministry within in a Learning Church* (2003) placed its review of ministerial education and formation of the clergy in the context of ‘the Church’s total provision for ministerial training, lay training and formal lay adult education (*Formation for Ministry within in a Learning Church*, Summary, p. 2). The Reader Task Group was formed to explore further one part of that broader context. Our focus has been on the training of Readers, but throughout we have been mindful of how that training needs to relate well to lay education and to training for ordained ministry. The original report advocates such a relationship between these strands of education and training.

### Partnerships

Regional partnerships will be able to draw together people from ‘diocesan training establishments, theological colleges and courses in collaboration both with other churches and UK higher education’ (Summary, p. 12). The Reader Task Group itself has been an expression of such partnerships. Our proposals in this ‘Vision for good practice’ give expression to the report’s purposes for regional partnerships:

- To contribute to the initial training of Readers and other lay ministers;
- To contribute to continuing ministerial education for all ministries;
- To contribute to the formal theological education of the laity.

### Learning pathways

As people move within and across strands of education and training, so there is a need that their previous learning and experience is acknowledged in a way that enables fresh learning and the development of new skills. The Reader Task Group encourages open access to training provision which invites students to enrich their discipleship and explore their calling to ministry. We appreciate also that for some, the accreditation of courses by higher education will offer rigour and recognition to their learning and development. There is a creative tension here for regional partnerships to explore with training providers in order to offer appropriate learning pathways for all students.

## Reader Task Group aim

The aim of the Reader Task Group has been to use the goals of the original report that impinge on Reader training to produce 'A vision for good practice' which clarifies the advantages of working in partnerships:

- with other dioceses;
- with other churches;
- with ministerial training institutions;
- with Higher Education (HE) institutions.

That aim remains, strengthened by the responses from dioceses and partner churches during the consultation period in early 2005. The Reader Task Group thanks all who contributed to that consultation. The report has been welcomed by most, so alterations have been minor. Even so, the responses have caused us to discuss issues further. Among the issues raised have been:

- the encouragement of a single training programme (with flexibility) for each regional partnership;
- the degree of similarity and difference between Reader and Preacher roles;
- issues of cost that regional partnerships will need to face;
- accreditation issues for students, regional partnerships and partner churches.

Other matters raised by the consultation have also been heeded. This revised report seeks to clarify these issues at appropriate points and begins by clarifying the implications for its 'Vision for good practice' that stem from the Reader Task Group aim.

## Implications

### Think regionally

Members of the Reader Task Group have come from several dioceses and from the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. We have recognized that all of us have had to adjust our perspectives (diocesan and national) to a new regional focus. We have had to take account of those different, apparently conflicting perspectives and interests, but increasingly we have found advantages in thinking regionally. These advantages include:

- effective use of resources, especially human resources;
- a larger client group when developing a working relationship with an accrediting body;
- efficient and effective training provision in terms of location of centres, viability of group sizes and quality of teaching and assessment;
- keeping open appropriate opportunities for Readers/Preachers to train alongside ordinands and/or other lay people.

### Think ecumenically

The Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church have been partners throughout the review process. The Reader Task Group's ecumenical basis has been helped by:

- the similarity between the numbers of Church of England Readers in training and Preachers in training in the partner churches;

- the similarity between all three denominations in objectives for Reader/Preacher training;
- the similarities of role for Readers and Preachers that people in these ministries acknowledge already;
- the similar vision that all three churches have for the further development of Reader/Preacher roles.

These similarities came as something of a surprise to us. They encouraged us to be equal partners in the process and to propose a single set of guidelines for the training of Readers and Preachers. We see value in members of RTPs working ecumenically as equal partners and enabling regional provision for Readers, Local Preachers and Lay Preachers to train together. All these considerations have led us to use the phrase Reader/Preacher in this paper.

The high degree of common ground for Readers/Preachers has helped us frame an ecumenical training specification. Within that framework we specify essential learning outcomes to help clarify our goals for Readers/Preachers. There is still some work for partner churches to do to amplify these outcomes to indicate how Reader/Preacher training:

- is properly related to ordination training;
- is distinct from ordination training;
- has a sense of progression through initial training and through continuing development.

## Think Higher Education

At present, there is no common approach to the accreditation of Reader/Preacher training across dioceses or across denominations. We recommend the accreditation of training provision by a Higher Education (HE) institution because it gives an assurance of quality in terms of:

- the provision itself;
- the assessment of individual students;
- consistency in provision across regions.

Open access to accredited training programmes demands that delivery is sensitive and responsive to students' individual needs. Some students, including those who are possibly looking towards ordination, will need accreditation not only of their Reader/Preacher training, but also of their previous learning and experience. It will be essential for each regional partnership to have good working relationships with an HE institution if training provision is to meet:

- the training needs of individuals;
- the training requirements of the denominations;
- the accreditation requirements of an HE institution.

The goals set out in *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* as outlined here present an exciting and challenging opportunity to all involved in Reader/Preacher training. In this 'Vision for good practice' we paint a picture with broad brush strokes, inviting others to develop works of art that enrich their own situations. To that end, we:

- provide regional partnerships with a single, yet flexible, specification for Reader/Preacher training (in Section 2);
- outline the value of playing a full part in a regional partnership (in Section 3);
- offer a possible way of supporting the continuing development of Readers/Preachers (in Section 4);

- consider how some are already taking steps towards this 'Vision' and how denominational partners envisage transition management (in Section 5).

## Section 2

# Training specifications

## A national and ecumenical specification for the education and training of Readers/Preachers

### Context of this specification

All our three churches, the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, have accredited lay ministries which involve leading worship and preaching. Often people carrying out these roles also have a teaching ministry, for example in leading house groups or preparing people for church membership. In recent years these ministries have had an increasing role in the sacraments of the Church – with particular authorization as appropriate. All these ministries require pastoral understanding and pastoral sensitivity.

It has been encouraging to note how similar in practice are the ministries of Readers in the Church of England, Lay Preachers in the United Reformed Church and Local Preachers in the Methodist Church. Readers and preachers used to be the only authorized lay ministries, but now there is greater multiplicity of lay ministries, varying from church to church. There is every sign that this trend will continue as we explore new expressions of being Church in practice and structure. This specification seeks to embrace such diversity and to prepare for emerging ministries rather than simply perpetuating existing forms of ministries.

### Scope of this specification

Our purpose has been to provide Church-wide criteria for Reader/Preacher training which are common to all three denominations. The criteria are for use by regional partnerships as they devise ecumenical training for Readers/Preachers. They are also a means whereby all three denominations together can measure the quality of a regional partnership's proposed education and training provision and its subsequent implementation.

It is recognized that the decision to admit a person to Reader/Preacher ministry rests with their denomination and not with a regional partnership.

This specification has to be more than merely a specification for the initial training of Readers/Preachers. The original report of 2003 is clear that initial training is part of a continuum of education and training which draws on previous experience and learning. It is also clear that, whether people remain as Preachers/Readers or move into another kind of ministry, they need to continue to learn and develop. There is therefore an expectation that regional partnerships will integrate provision for Education for Discipleship and Continuing Ministerial Education with Reader/Preacher training. Our concern is for the learners, so that their previous

experience and learning is valued and built on, and that they continue to grow as their ministries develop.

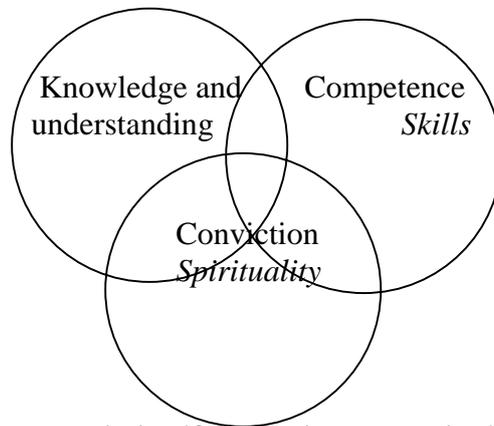
## Underlying principles of this specification

Essential principles for Reader/Preacher education and training are:

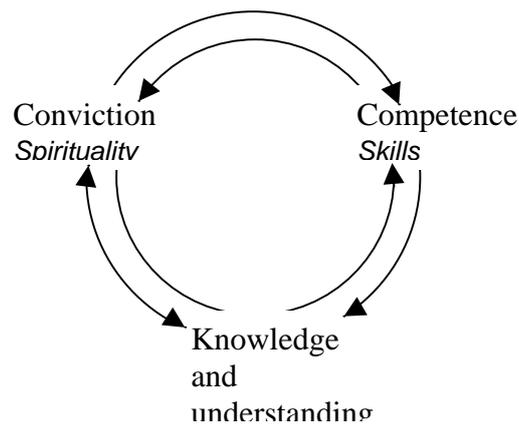
- to make maximum use of **ecumenical** resources and opportunities, to appreciate the gifts and strengths of our ecumenical partners and to value our own tradition;
- to promote and reflect on **collaborative** working, at all levels, whether it be:
  - o ecumenical;
  - o within the education and training provision itself;
  - o among the learners;
  - o in local situations;
  - o between ministries;
  - o with congregations (e.g. shared planning, participation in worship);
- to promote an **enabling** ministry which fosters learning and growth
  - o within the education and training provision itself;
  - o among the learners;
  - o in local situations and with congregations;
- to provide learning opportunities **accessible** to the broadest possible range of people:
  - o encouraging imaginative ways of acknowledging previous experience and learning;
  - o offering introductory preparation and support (e.g. through an Education for Discipleship programme, taster courses and/or use of learning advisers);
  - o stretching people beyond their current capabilities by including depth as well as breadth;
  - o making learning fun;
  - o assessing imaginatively rather than by examination;
  - o ensuring that no one testing their call to Reader/Preacher ministry is denied access for financial reasons;
- to provide **reflective** learning opportunities by:
  - o requiring regular self-appraisal by learners;
  - o requiring theological reflection on the everyday, current affairs, contemporary culture;
  - o relating academic theology, Bible study and the here-and-now.

# Education and training framework

The training of Readers/Preachers involves Knowledge and Understanding, Competence and Conviction:



While each area is important in itself, formation occurs in their dynamic interaction.



Together, in balance, they shape the life and ministry of a Preacher/Reader.

## 1 Knowledge and understanding

In order to contribute to the ministry of the Church and to witness to the faith in the world, it is essential that Readers/Preachers acquire good grounding in theology and Christian doctrine. Essential learning outcomes are:

A working knowledge of the Bible

- understanding different views about the truth and authority of the Bible and its continuing application today, and coming to a reasoned, reflective commitment to a personal view;
- engaging with Bible passages for oneself;
- exploring the methods and insights of biblical criticism and interpretation and showing their relevance for contemporary worship, preaching and mission.

## A basic understanding of Christian doctrine

- reflecting on major statements of faith held by Christians, and demonstrating their application to contemporary issues;
- reflecting on the traditions and histories of the Church, denominational emphases and expectations of Readers/Preachers;
- reflecting on the nature of the Church and its mission.

**An exploration and appreciation of the theology of worship**, the diversity of worship and liturgy in our denominations and their significance for the contemporary Church;

- recognizing the pattern of the Church Year, theological themes and wide use of the Bible in the Revised Common Lectionary;
- exploring traditional and contemporary expressions of spirituality in the Christian Church and beyond.

## Critical reflection on issues

- considering contemporary theological issues;
- reflecting theologically on contemporary moral, ethical and social justice issues;
- evaluating ways that theology might be expressed to people outside the Church.

## 2 Competence

In order to encourage lively, inclusive, worshipping communities in a variety of contexts, it is essential that Readers/Preachers acquire skills in leading worship, in preaching, in enabling learning, communication and mission and in pastoral sensitivity. Essential learning outcomes are:

### Worship-leading skills

In order to empower people to worship within the church and outside of it (workplace, home etc.), it is essential that training for worship leading develops skills in:

- reading the Bible clearly and in an appropriate manner;
- leading prayers and meditations with sensitivity;
- the use of denominational and other liturgical resources;
- choosing appropriate hymns / songs;
- working collaboratively with worship leaders, musicians and others;
- using the arts and new technology (as appropriate and as available);
- devising and leading a variety of services such as all-age worship;
- evaluating what has been prepared against accepted liturgies.

### Preaching skills

In order to proclaim (in a variety of contexts) the challenging and comforting good news of God's love in Christ, it is essential that training for preaching develops skills in:

- handling biblical passages appropriately and imaginatively;
- setting Bible passages and stories in their wider context;
- using commentaries and other tools;
- relating Bible exegesis and contemporary experience;
- articulating faith and theology in an informed and accessible way;
- developing a variety of styles of preaching appropriate to different groups and different settings, including the use of the arts and new technology (as appropriate and as available);

- choosing and organizing other activities that could function as a sermon, including collaborative ventures;
- addressing a range of moral and ethical issues.

### Skills to enable learning, communication and mission

In order to help people communicate faith in the Church and in the world, it is essential that Readers/Preachers develop skills in:

- gauging where people are and how they might develop;
- appreciating that people learn in a variety of ways;
- using varied and appropriate styles that help people learn;
- fostering collaborative ways of working and learning;
- evaluating how well people have learned / grown.

### Pastoral skills

In order to develop pastoral sensitivity in a variety of settings, it is essential that Readers/Preachers develop skills in:

- gauging where people are emotionally and spiritually;
- listening without being judgemental;
- managing confidentiality;
- handling conflict;
- encouraging others in discipleship, ministry and faith-sharing.

## 3. Conviction and spirituality

### Formation

In order to nurture their Christian life, it is essential that Readers/Preachers are meeting with God as they continue to test their calling throughout their training and ministry. Who they are, as people; their spirituality, attitudes, qualities and maturity, in their home church community and in the wider world, are as important as their knowledge and competence.

To nurture their Christian life and ministry, it is essential that Readers/Preachers:

- are developing, reflecting on and evaluating their personal discipline of prayer, worship and thoughtful study of the Bible;
- are aware of, and are exploring the resources available for spiritual growth;
- are reflecting on God in other experiences;
- explore their understanding of, and participation in God's mission;
- appreciate the spirituality of their own and others' traditions (ecclesial, cultural, etc.);
- experience, and reflect on, the worship and spiritual life of different congregations.

### Continuing development

Continuing development is a fresh exploration of new areas as well as a refreshing and up-dating of existing knowledge, skills and spirituality. The underlying principles of this specification (ecumenical, collaborative, enabling, accessible, reflective) and the overlap and balance of Knowledge, Competence and Conviction are equally essential in the devising of continuing development provision.

The ideal for Continuing Development provision is:

- ecumenical, centrally agreed resource materials with study guides;
- regional activities, resources and events;
- scope for local ecumenical support;
- annual points of completion and achievement for each individual's development portfolio;

- an overlap between provision of continuing development for Readers/Preachers and CME;
- cost-effective, funded as much as possible by denominations.

One possible approach to this provision is outlined in section 4 of this report.

## How initial training and continuing development are delivered

It is essential that the ways in which Reader/Preacher training (initial training and continuing development) is delivered reflect the underlying principles (ecumenical, collaborative, enabling, accessible, reflective). Therefore, there is an expectation that the teaching and tutoring model these qualities and demonstrate the competences expected of Readers/Preachers.

Other essential features are:

- the acknowledgement, valuing and use of each learner's previous experience and learning;
- an appropriate mix of input and experiential work;
- an appropriate mix of individual and group settings;
- an appropriate range of learning methods (e.g. distance learning, locally supported learning, seminar work, computer interactive working, practical experience);
- imagination, creativity and fun;
- assessment which is moderated to the satisfaction of the participating denominations;
- provision of an HE accredited training programme, which allows students engaging in a common programme either to work for HE credits or not;
- reflection on and evaluation of the learning experience by learners, teachers, tutors and mentors.

Much of this specification is relevant to the formation of other lay ministries and, indeed, ordained ministries. We have aimed to express it in ways that encourage cross-referencing, further development and appropriate application. Our main sources for this section have been *Reader Ministry and Training 2000 and Beyond, What makes a Local Preacher?* and TLS 2003-4 Course Handbooks.

Section 3

# Partnership to deliver the training specification

Each regional partnership will need to explore a way forward that works in its own set of circumstances as it responds to the Training Specification. Regional partnerships will differ in size, geography, the communities they serve and the traditions of the partner institutions themselves.

In terms of Reader/Preacher training, each regional partnership will need to address many issues, some of which are outlined here.

## One programme for the region

At present, each diocese has its own training scheme for Readers which responds to the local socio-economic needs, ministry needs and each student's needs. In a few cases, two or more dioceses already share a common course. Many courses are already accredited by an HE institution. Methodist Local Preachers and United Reformed Church Lay Preachers have national schemes of training (using open learning approaches). There are three pilot schemes where Readers and Local Preachers share the same training course. Despite this varied provision, there is already some movement drawing dioceses and denominations closer together.

The partners in an RTP bring considerable expertise in designing and delivering high quality Reader/Preacher training. In order to draw closer together regionally, this wealth of expertise and experience should inform and enrich a region's training programme. Partners will need to recognize and value the merits (often hard won) of each other's existing provision. Equally, partners will need to accept some unravelling of existing provision (national and diocesan) in order to weave a new regional training programme. We have discovered these features of partnership in the Reader Task Group while working on what has become a single Training Specification.

## . . . with flexibility

The ready way in which we formulated a single Specification leads us to recommend movement towards a single training programme for each region. The Specification itself has room for manoeuvre and flexibility, so it embraces the possibility of variation to meet denominational needs and local circumstances within one programme. Examples of appropriate variations could include: urban, rural and ethnic contexts and commonalities with training for other lay ministries. Thus there will need to be 'variations on the theme', but also there will be plenty of opportunities for dioceses and denominations to unite with one voice. We believe that the adoption

of a single, flexible training programme for Readers/Preachers in a region has the following advantages:

- The sharing of the task can reduce staff time needed to set up and review training provision.
- One partnership with a larger number of students can attract an HE institution to join the partnership.
- Teaching staff and tutors can be used more efficiently and effectively.
- Students can have more colleagues to support and encourage their own learning.
- There can be wider opportunities for learning, training and development within existing administration and staffing costs.
- There is scope to develop Reader/Preacher ministries as Partners learn from each other's contexts, forms (and applications) of ministry and exercise of ministry education.

All training in all regions will need to meet the Training Specification. As each region explores how best to adopt the specification, the goal should be to work towards a single training programme with a strong common core and appropriate variation which enables flexible approaches to local delivery that serve well Readers/Preachers in training.

## Programme delivery

At present, diocesan and other denominational boundaries, training centres and tutor support provision may not always relate well to centres of population or to work / leisure travelling patterns. A review of how and where training is offered across a region can enable partners to:

- think afresh about training programme delivery, including the use of open learning methods and new technology (Internet, DVD, CD-ROM, telephone conferencing etc.) to make training opportunities more accessible and flexible;
- check what approaches to delivery may be offered within a region;
- reconsider suitability of existing places for programme delivery (including diocesan centres and colleges) and make appropriate and imaginative changes;
- explore ways to take training programme delivery to where students are (rather than vice versa).

## Learning together

At present, some Reader/Preacher training is carried out alongside training of other people, for example those taking part in Education for Discipleship. Some Readers/Preachers train alongside ordinands for part of their training (at times on a regional ordination course). Some have diocesan schemes where Readers and Ordained Local Ministers are trained together.

We encourage regional partnerships in such developments, not only in initial training but also in their support for continuing development of Readers/Preachers because they:

- allow a sharing of ideas between Readers/Preachers, other lay people and those who are to become ordained ministers;
- encourage better understanding of different perspectives and roles in the local church setting;

- offer considerable scope for ecumenical benefits, especially in areas where students and teachers/tutors in individual denominations are few and far between.

Training with others is particularly helpful when it promotes collaborative ministry and prepares Readers/Preachers for collaborative ministry. Learning together with candidates for other ministries (lay and ordained) is not always appropriate, however, so consideration will need to be given to how far it is desirable and/or possible. An appropriate mix of training together and ministry-specific training should be a feature of the flexibility of a single regional training programme.

## Modular approach

Higher Education institutions are familiar with modular approaches to training provision, so a regional partnership may choose a modular approach. Where this is the case, we would encourage a cross-referencing of modules so that what is learned in one module is not hermetically sealed from what is learned in others. For a modular programme to be of most value for Reader/Preacher purposes, it should enable;

- important areas of learning to be explored in more depth in other contexts (e.g. when revisiting an area of study and applying it);
- connections to be made to promote integrated learning and Reader formation;
- a coherent whole in the overall pattern of training that properly equips Readers/Preachers for their ministry.

When using a modular approach, it is also important that all permutations of modules combine in a way that meets the Training Specification.

## Resources

The recruitment of teachers, tutors and assessors is becoming increasingly difficult in all our churches. Those who are currently engaged in aspects of Reader/Preacher training are often working with quite small numbers of students. A regional approach opens up the possibility of more effective use of teachers and tutors. It allows training providers to access the wealth of knowledge and skills brought by teachers and tutors across the region. Also, it enables better provision of support for and development of teachers and tutors than is currently available in any of our denominations.

It is important that students, teachers and tutors should have access to extensive and up-to-date library facilities. We invite regional partnerships to:

- carry out an audit of existing resources (not just books and journals, but also audio, visual, creative arts, IT etc.) within the region;
- review provision of resources so that it meets the needs of students, teachers and tutors in terms of content and location;
- check on how accessible resources are to those who need them and, if necessary, negotiate access;
- ensure that students know what resources are available and how they can access them.

## Quality

The three partner churches will need assurance that all Reader/Preacher training programmes are appropriate for the purposes the churches specify and of a good standard. To that end, regional partnerships will need to demonstrate how any student's training is guided and directed so that it:

- equips them for the ministry of a Reader/Preacher as specified by each of the partner churches and dioceses;
- fulfils the ecumenical training specification in this report;
- takes account of each student's prior experience and learning;
- enables students who move from one part of the country to another to continue their training and development as Readers/Preachers.

In order to ensure that formational purposes are served effectively by Reader/Preacher training programmes and given consistent oversight by partner churches, we recommend the establishment of a single ecumenical process for quality and accountability (rather than having separate processes for each partner church). The form of this process will need to be worked out by our churches following the work of the Hind task group on quality and accountability due to report in 2006.

## Accreditation

We anticipate that a training programme would develop in students the kinds of skills and approaches to learning that are associated with HE level 1 and 2. We believe that the time has come for all Reader/Preacher training programmes to be accredited by an HE institution. As we stated in section 1, there are advantages to sponsors and to students. Accreditation enables:

- assurance that the programme is of an appropriate educational standard;
- approaches to learning associated with HE levels 1 and 2 which equip people well for Reader/Preacher ministry;
- assurance that the assessment of individual students is consistent, thorough and fair;
- consistency of education and training provision across regions;
- access to an HE institution's resources and expertise;
- individual students to gain HE credits for reasons which could be personal, work-related or vocational.

Our emphasis is on the educational accreditation of training programmes. This keeps options open for individual students to gauge whether it is appropriate or not for them to work towards gaining HE credits.

In developing a Reader/Preacher programme, regional partnerships will need to note the following points:

- An existing HE certificate course will not necessarily meet the initial training needs of Readers/Preachers. The specification in this paper clarifies what is expected by partner denominations of Reader/ Preacher training.
- Training programmes should be comprehensive, satisfying all the requirements of the Training Specification and catering for students who are seeking to earn HE credits as well as those who are not. The gaining of HE credits is not the prime aim of Reader/Preacher training. However, we owe it to students to enable them to gain credits if they so wish.

- Training programmes should be cost-effective. The delivery and administration of any programme has costs. The real costs of current provision (how they are paid for and by whom) can be overlooked all too easily. However, there is evidence already that when delivery, administration and accreditation of a training programme is developed and negotiated with a sympathetic HE institution, many benefits accrue. Imaginative training can go hand-in-hand with provision that is not only cost-effective but also takes full advantage of regional and current financial opportunities.
- 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.

Regional partnerships will benefit from the experience of gaining accreditation from institutions of Higher Education which is available from ministerial training institutions and some Reader/Preacher training programmes.

As a result of these considerations, for Reader/Preacher training (and, indeed, for other training) it will be important for regional partnerships to consider:

- how they select an appropriate HE partner;
- how to exercise the client role with an HE partner;
- how to enable easy day-to-day liaison with HE partner;
- how to establish and exercise an educational monitoring process.

## Section 4

# Continuing development

A suggested strategy to support the continuing development of lay and ordained preachers and worship leaders.

Continuing development can be a product of:

- individual activity
- small group (2–3 people) activity (denominational or ecumenical)
- larger group activity (denominational or ecumenical)

all at a very local level.

Continuing development can also be supported by:

- regional events (denominational or ecumenical)
- resources in regional libraries (at theological resource centres).

At present, denominations are not providing training resources for continuing development to the same extent that they resource initial training. In some denominations, evidence of continuing development is necessary for a Reader/Preacher to continue serving in that ministry, but even there, appropriate resources are not always specified. The following ecumenical strategy could be a helpful way forward:

A small ecumenical group to:

- 1 draw up a specification for resource materials that:
  - promote use of the support mechanisms listed above
  - are accessible and user-friendly
  - challenge Readers/Preachers to think for themselves
  - use existing publications (book, DVD etc.) as its basis e.g.:
    - a theological resource
    - a devotional resource
    - a practical worship/preaching resource
    - a novel / current affairs/DVD resource(s)
  - address through accompanying study guides:
    - spiritual development
    - the practicalities of leading worship and preaching
    - theological reflection
    - as well as
    - knowledge and understanding from further study (whatever the main focus of the resource itself)
  - would represent 2 hours per week over 9 months (i.e. between 6 and 12 months)
  
- 2 commission study guides funded ecumenically for publication on a web-site, to 'wrap around' the four existing and readily available publications (as above) specified each year that build a rolling collection of resources for continuing development thus:

- 4 resources to choose from in year 1
  - 8 resources to choose from in year 2
  - 12 resources to choose from in year 3
  - then in year 4, the shelf-life of the first 4 would end as the next 4 were introduced. This way at the local level, the publication (book/DVD etc) could be shared from one preacher to another from one year to another.
- 3** invite regional partnerships to offer regional ecumenical events and library access related to some of the resource materials in the rolling collection
- 4** publish an attractive, annual log-book/journal which enables participants to reflect and record their development (which could contribute to evidence of development required by some denominations) and to give an annual point for completion and starting afresh (avoiding that never-ending distant-horizon feel that Continuing Development so easily has).

This strategy is cost-effective (and cheap!) to run and maintain. It is nationwide in concept, but has local and regional applications. It allows different emphases and focal points in different years. It enables a low-key start to pilot the venture. From the third year of operation it can offer a wide range of resources that could entice more people to take part.

## Section 5

# Ways forward

## Change

To achieve the kind of training we envisage is going to involve change for everyone involved. At present the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church both train their Preachers through national programmes, while the Church of England trains Readers through diocesan programmes. All these programmes have been (or are still being) changed and refined, each seeking to provide a more effective and efficient programme for those who are training to be Readers/Preachers. This is our common driving force for change. We recognize weaknesses in current provision, agree where improvements need to be made and then consider how best to improve effectiveness (including cost-effectiveness) and efficiency.

‘A vision for good practice’ is a key contribution to such discussion and agreement in regional partnerships. The nature and extent of change is in the hands of each regional partnership, as are the ways in which the transition is made from current provision to the new.

The following paragraphs aim to inform transition management by indicating how partner denominations are likely to view change to regional provision.

## A view from the Church of England

### A National Scheme to diocesan schemes

Until 1990 the Church of England provided a national programme. However, dioceses had increasingly devised their own schemes and abandoned the national one. In 1989 ACCM Occasional Paper 32, *The Training of Readers* required every dioceses to provide its own training scheme and brought in the present moderation system.

### Moderation

Moderation was designed to ensure that diocesan schemes meet national criteria. It is supervised by the Ministry Division’s Reader Education Panel and a national moderator. It operates through a system of regional groups. In the light of the move towards regional partnerships which will include various forms of training, there will be a review (due to start in November 2005) of the various schemes for moderation and inspection operating in our churches.

### The current scene

The current scene is marked by considerable variety. In different parts of England there are:

- dioceses where Readers do their training entirely on their own;
- dioceses where Reader undertake training alongside other lay people, locally acknowledged lay ministers and ordinands;
- dioceses where Readers and OLMs train together, and a few where Readers, OLMs and other clergy train together;
- dioceses which collaborate with each other in the training of Readers, as of clergy;
- a diocese, an archdeaconry and a new town where Reader/Preacher training is delivered ecumenically;
- dioceses whose Reader training programmes are accredited with HE institutions;
- dioceses whose Reader training programmes are not accredited, including some that used to be.

## Issues of concern

*Equipping the Saints*, the 2003 report on Reader Training, rejoiced in a continuing improvement of standards in Reader training nationally, but also noted the following issues of concern in diocesan programmes:

- It is possible for a diocese to introduce a new Reader training programme without any consultation to ensure that it meets the national criteria.
- Dioceses whose programmes have been accredited by HE institutions may have been accredited at level 1 or at level 2.
- Low numbers of Readers in training in some areas seriously affect the quality of training.
- In dioceses where there are other episcopally licensed lay ministers Reader training tends to be more narrowly focused, and as a result may not meet the national criteria.
- Many dioceses rely too heavily on one person for the oversight and delivery of training. Directors of Training often have additional and disparate responsibilities.

We would add to these:

- It is often difficult, especially when numbers are low, to meet the needs of the less academically able candidate at the same time as stretching those who are academically very able, possibly having a degree in theology.
- There is little consistency about the status of those who have been trained in a sister church. In some dioceses a Methodist or URC Preacher is warmly welcomed and given minimal training before admission as a Reader. In others such people are expected to do 3 years' training.
- Accreditation with an HE institution can be costly in terms of both money and time. This prevents some dioceses from seeking accreditation. Others are deterred by a sense that the HE institution wants to 'move the goal posts'.

## A view from the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church

Implementation of *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* only has an impact on the development of ecumenical training of Lay Preachers / Local Preachers in England. In Scotland and Wales, ecumenical developments are happening at different paces. As a result, the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church will need to keep their existing national provision operating outside England for longer periods than inside England.

National training bodies in the two denominations will need to endorse the Training Specification. When this is done, they will need to:

- take part in ecumenical discussions about moderation and quality arrangements;
- take part in the initial approval of each regional partnership's programme;
- specify safeguards to ensure an orderly transition from national provision to regional provision;
- consider how and when each denomination can move from national provision to regional programmes without causing decreasing national cohorts and increasing overheads and staff resources;
- be part of an ecumenical moderation and review procedure to monitor each region's provision and to provide quality assurance of initial training for the two denominations.

## Some examples from current collaborations

### Readers and clergy

Faced in 1990 with the need to devise a new programme for training Readers one diocese chose to train them alongside ordinands on the local course – 'piggy-backing'. The first Moderation report, while full of praise for many excellent features, noted that the Reader candidates felt like second-class citizens, and there was little in the way of Reader formation. In a number of dioceses Readers now share part of their training with ordinands (most often candidates for OLM).

### Two dioceses

When Readers from two dioceses train together it tends to be through using the same course. In one case the initial prompt came through the local HE institution. Diocesan officers discovered that the local course was in the process of submitting a new programme which included Readers. The two dioceses were already training clergy on the same course, so that training their Readers together was a natural development. Both dioceses brought their particular strengths to the partnership.

### Ecumenical training

There are three areas where Readers/Preachers are already training together, ranging from a whole diocese to a large town. In two cases, two churches are involved in the training, but in the third, four churches are involved. The moderators had much praise for the programme which they looked at, and believed it could be a model for other areas. There has been no single reason for working ecumenically. It has been a response to a gospel imperative as well as a response to relatively small numbers.

## HE institutions

There are many partnerships between diocese and HE institutions. Not all are equally happy. Those that work best are with institutions that regard the diocese as a true partner.

## Lessons learned

Partnerships founder or are unhappy, when one party feels:

- their needs are not heard;
- their resources and strengths are not appreciated;
- like a second class citizen.

Partnerships succeed when each member:

- feels themselves to be a valued contributor;
- has a good understanding of their own resources, strengths and weaknesses;
- appreciates the resources and strengths of the other partners.

Section 6

# Action for change

## Partner churches finding a collaborative way forward

We recommend that partner churches amplify the learning outcomes implied in the training specification to indicate how Reader/Preacher training:

- is properly related to ordination training;
- is distinct from ordination training;
- has a sense of progression through initial training and through continuing development.

We recommend that partner churches set up a single ecumenical process for quality and accountability for Reader/Preacher training programmes.

## Regional partnerships finding your own collaborative ways forward

1. Talk within your own diocese / denomination about your current provision, its strengths, weaknesses and how it is managed.
2. Listen to regional partners at all levels describe their provision in order to understand viewpoints, emphases, concerns and hopes.
3. Study and discuss the Training Specification.
4. Evaluate as partners the current forms of provision in the light of the Training Specification.
5. Consider how current forms of provision can contribute to a new regional programme that meets the Training Specification.
6. Establish a process for designing the new regional programme.
7. Ensure that proposed regional developments are acceptable to dioceses and denominations, and have been worked through with ministerial training and HE institutions.
8. Contribute to ecumenical negotiations about quality procedures.
9. Agree a process and a timescale for an orderly transition from existing forms of provision to the new regional programme.

10. Do it and review it!

The Reader Task Group does not under estimate the issues and concerns that regional partnerships face in developing Reader/Preacher training, but we hope that our own happy experience of:

- working together as a Task Group,
- building goodwill between partners,
- being honest with each other about our situations and concerns,
- sharing commitment to a common goal,
- finding practical and realistic ways forward,

makes it easier for your regional partnership to develop your own Reader/Preacher training programme.

## Appendix

# Membership

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>The Reader Task Group</b> | <p>was formed in January 2004;</p> <p>held nine meetings during its 15-month life and one 24-hour residential by 3 of its members;</p> <p>held one joint meeting with the Education for Discipleship Task Group;</p> <p>received 25 responses on its proposals;</p> <p>has been a positive and encouraging experience in diocesan and ecumenical partnership.</p> |
| Mr Geoff Budd                | (chair) Chair of Diocese of Wakefield Reader Training Steering Group and moderator of Reader training   |
| Mrs Margaret Baxter          | Chair of the Reader Education Panel, Ministry Division  |
| Mrs Margaret Hounsham        | Director of Reader Training, Portsmouth Diocese (member of the group until summer 2004)   |
| Revd David Jenkins           | United Reformed Church; until August 2004, Programme Co-ordinator, Training for Learning and Serving  |
| Mr Peter Relf                | Methodist Church, Connexional Secretary for Local Preachers   |
| Dr David Way                 | Theological Education Secretary, Ministry Division  |
| Revd Alec George             | (secretary) National Moderator of Reader Training, Ministry Division  |