



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  

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BIRMINGHAM

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**READER MINISTRY IN  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
BIRMINGHAM**

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November 2023

## WHAT IS A READER?

Readers are lay people who have been selected and trained for a particular licensed ministry in the Church of England. They are authorised by the Bishop to preach and teach, offer pastoral care and lead public worship. The new vision for Reader ministry identifies three strands:

- Teaching faith
- Enabling mission
- Leading in Church and Society

Readers are licensed to work in a particular parish and may also preach and lead worship in other parishes on request. As well as through preaching, they are likely to nurture the faith of others by leading or assisting in bible studies, home groups and Christian basics groups. They may also be involved in teaching in Sunday children's groups and confirmation classes, working with young people and leading youth work. As members of the ministry team they often assist in pastoral care, comforting the bereaved and taking funerals and thus showing the love and care of God and the church to those in need.

Readers are men and women who sense that God is calling them to serve the Church in some of these ways. Readers come from a wide range of occupations and backgrounds and bring the rich experience of their work and life in the community to the teaching, worship and missional life of the church. Their experience of the secular world enables them to be in touch with, and sympathetic to, the situations which arise in everyday life.

The strength and uniqueness of a Reader's ministry stems from their lay status. As lay people, trained in biblical and theological studies, Readers have their own particular contribution to make. They are not a supplementary ministry, ready to step in when the Priest is absent, but have a distinct ministry of their own. Reader ministry is a ministry of word not sacrament. Reader ministry is not a back door to ordination. Many Readers serve as Chaplains in the wider community: in industry and commerce, or in the health services. Readers exercise a complementary ministry and, in a parish or group, they form part of the ministry team together with others both ordained and lay.

## IS THIS FOR ME?

Are you

- a confirmed and regular communicant member of the Church of England?
- keen to communicate your Christian faith?
- willing to train as a licensed lay minister?

If you believe that God may be calling you to Reader ministry, it is important to explore this sense of calling with others. You will need to consider prayerfully the gifts that you have been given, the opportunities you have to serve, and the needs within your own Parish.

You should discuss all this with your Vicar at an early stage. You may also wish to talk to another Reader, your 3D tutor or Way of Discipleship Group facilitator, and your friends and family. (Reader training and ministry would have huge implications for them too).

If you decide to explore this call, you will need to apply for selection for training. The Vicar and PCC of your church will be asked to confirm that they support you in your application.

### **SAFEGUARDING**

The Church of England – Birmingham is committed to promoting a safer environment and culture by responding promptly to concerns and allegations, the safer recruitment, training and support of all who have contact with vulnerable people and caring pastorally for those who have been, or are being, affected by abuse and neglect.

Two Referees are required to complete the Safeguarding Declaration which forms an integral part of the application process. One of the referees must be able to comment on your ability to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults; one must be outside your local church, and one must have known you for three years. Those embarking on the Reader Training Programme must have satisfactorily completed the necessary check with the Disclosure and Barring Service before training commences. Any questions regarding Safeguarding should be addressed to the Warden of Readers.

## THE SELECTION AND DISCERNMENT PROCESS

There is a 'Reader Exploration Evening' every January which those interested in finding out more can attend with their Incumbents. In 2024 this will take place on Wed 17<sup>th</sup> January.

The Assistant Warden of Readers (Vocation and Discernment) is always glad to hear from those starting to explore Reader ministry and there are also other Readers available across the Diocese who can meet with those who want to explore more.

There is an annual Discernment and Selection Day each year, preceded by a conversation with the Warden, usually on Zoom. This year the day will take place on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2024, at John Cadbury House, B4 6QD.

The Reader Training Programme in Birmingham falls into three parts; Foundation, Phase 1 (IME1) and Phase 2 (IME2). Everyone who applies for the Reader Training Programme must have completed a 'Foundation' course such as the 3D course or its equivalent, or have a degree or diploma in Theology. The Head of Ministry Formation can provide more information for those who have not completed 3D or Way of Discipleship in the period 2017-2023.

Application packs will be available in December. The pack includes:

<b>Application Form</b>	Completed by candidate
<b>Incumbent's Nomination</b>	Completed by Incumbent
<b>Role Description</b>	The Incumbent indicates the shape of this possible ministry within the Parish.
<b>Lay person's reference</b>	A lay person (who is not a member of the ministry team) from the local church
<b>Tutor's reference</b>	Completed by 3D/WoD tutor or equivalent
<b>PCC Statement</b>	There is a specific resolution that a PCC must pass.

All forms must be completed and sent in by 10<sup>th</sup> March 2024. In addition to the Nomination and two references above each candidate must provide two Safeguarding References.

## **CRITERIA FOR SELECTION**

### **The Panels of Selectors will be looking for someone who:**

- can speak of their own sense of calling to ministry and mission.
- has a personal commitment to Christ, wishes to deepen their understanding and wants to share the Gospel with others.
- has a regular pattern of corporate and individual prayer and worship to sustain them in their daily lives.
- is able to offer leadership in the church community and beyond, and fulfil the demanding role of a minister within the local church.
- has a willingness to cooperate with other ministers and to work within a team, and can form strong appropriate relationships within the community they serve.
- is willing to engage in a method of training which is participatory, reflective, imaginative, and creative.

The Church of England has identified the following qualities which are sought in all those who are candidates for public representative ministry; Love for God, Call to Ministry, Love for People, Wisdom, Fruitfulness and Potential.

Each candidate at the Discernment and Selection Day has three conversations with a panel of selectors (some are Readers and some are Clergy). There will be two further exercises to complete, one as a group and one individually. Unlike other recruitment exercises, candidates are not in competition with each other, nor is there an artificial limit on the training places available. The panels will make their decision at the end of the Day and candidates will be notified of the outcome within a fortnight.

'The Bridge' is a short course that everyone is required to take part in as the final element of the 'Foundation' phase. This follows the Discernment and Selection Day in June/July. It is designed to enable students preparing for Licensed Reader Minister Training to grow in confidence in handling the Bible. On The Bridge we will explore the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament) and the New Testament writings with themes which arc through the whole of the Bible in a way that unifies these extraordinary texts and point to Jesus Christ.

## **Following the Discernment & Selection Day ad ‘The Bridge’ successful candidates begin Phase 1 of the READER TRAINING PROGRAMME.**

Phase 1 (IME1) begins in October and lasts for twelve months.

The training includes:

- Biblical and theological study
- Practical skills for preaching, teaching, leading worship, encouraging others in mission and for leadership
- Space to grow into a skilled teacher of faith, enabler of mission and leader in both church and wider society

Above all, it is a time for formation for a new role in representative ministry on behalf of the Church

**THE COURSE** meets in a blend of sessions. You can connect from home on Wednesday evenings (using online platforms) three times a month and an in-person day on a Saturday each month. There will also be two residential training weekends (Saturday morning - Sunday tea time).

**IN THE LOCAL CHURCH**, those on the course preach three sermons on the Lectionary readings for the appointed dates. There is also an expectation that each course member will lead worship at least once in her/his own church.

**IN A PLACEMENT CHURCH** During four weeks in June-July, course members undertake a placement in a church other than their home church, to learn about the parish and their policies for ministry and mission and to practise some ministerial skills, including preaching one sermon.

Each course member has the guidance of a Tutor as well as their Incumbent or a supervising minister (if in interregnum) as well as the supervisor in the placement church. They work closely together to support the course member and to give feedback on progress. Course members are each part of a small tutorial group, for support, prayer and group reflection.

## WHAT WOULD THIS MEAN FOR ME?

Phase 1 or INITIAL READER TRAINING IS A FULL YEAR and everyone who embarks on it needs to plan carefully how they will be able to do it alongside their other commitments.

- Your Church will be asked to release you from other responsibilities so that you can give enough time and energy to your training (and if you are a Church Warden, you must give up this office before you **begin** the Reader Training Programme). The training will also affect your family and colleagues, and you should talk with them about their expectations and your plans.
- The course begins in early January and runs right through to the following early November, with short breaks for Easter and a longer break in July and August. You will be expected to attend all the training sessions. The Wednesday evenings run on Zoom (mostly) from 7-9.30pm. The Saturdays are mainly 9am-2pm, though there are a couple of fuller day-long Saturdays, and two residential weekends.
- You will also need, on average, 5 hours a week of study time at home. During the summer break this extra study time is needed to complete your placement and a brief report that you will write about it.
- There are no exams or written tests, but there is a continuous process of assessment in which you and your Tutor, and eventually your Incumbent and the Director of the course, together discern how you are growing into this new role. After the last meeting of the course in mid- October there is a final assessment process which takes a couple of months, and no-one can be presented to the Bishop for admission and licensing as a Reader until it is agreed that he/she is ready.
- You or your parish will need to allow for some travelling expenses, and the cost of some books.
- The Reader Training Programme is provided free of charge. You or your parish will need to allow for some travelling expenses, and the cost of some books.

## **WHAT IS ADMISSION AND LICENSING?**

There is a service at the Cathedral in the first few months of each year, when those who have successfully completed the training are Admitted to the Office of Reader in the Church of England and receive their licences from the Bishop. The Reader's Licence gives you authority from the Bishop to undertake active ministry, as part of the ministerial team in a particular parish.

## **WORKING AND LEARNING AGREEMENT**

In order to enable a clear collaborative arrangement for the practice and development of ministry as a Reader, we now offer an outline 'Working and Learning Agreement'. The intention is that Reader and Incumbent (or, in a chaplaincy, the Lead Chaplain) sit down together to describe the shape of the Reader's ministry and their understanding of it. Through the discussion and drafting of the Agreement, expectations are clarified and training needs are more specifically set out. Frequency of meetings, expectations about time and commitment in parish and place of work, expenses paid and so on can all be included. Those who have successfully completed Initial Training are required to complete a Working and Learning Agreement with their Incumbent prior to Admission and Licensing. For those already licensed as Readers, application for this outline is made to the Warden of Readers, who is also able to discuss details.

## **THE BIRMINGHAM READERS' ASSOCIATION**

Each licensed Reader in the Diocese is automatically a member of the Birmingham Readers' Association. The Association provides a forum for consultation and discussion on the practice of Reader Ministry, and offers a supportive community to Readers, in which Readers can provide help and share wisdom with one another.



## **THE FINAL STAGE OF THE THREE YEAR PROGRAMME**

### **Phase 2 (IME2) – the third element of the three year Reader Training Course**

Once a Reader is Admitted and Licensed, they are required to undertake the IME2 (previously called 'NEXT') programme of further training and reflective learning, which is designed as an adjunct to learning in practice: drawing from experience of ministry and feeding back into it. The 12 month programme has a core of reflective learning. Students keep a reflective journal and submit brief monthly reflections to the course tutor on which feedback is given. The group meets every month either for specific training, or for cohort members to reflect together on their ministry to date and sense of direction. The programme is designed to encourage the continuing development of each Reader's individual ministry through practice and study, in a supportive environment and build the tools and mindset for lifelong learning. It is assessed through a number of submitted pieces of work and, as a whole, through a portfolio. All Readers must demonstrate that they have completed both the parts and the whole successfully.

### **ONGOING TRAINING**

Regular training days are offered to all Readers in the diocesan CME programme.

### **HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?**

3D Course/ Way of Discipleship	September – June
Application Packs available	December 2023 onwards
Completion of forms	January - February 2024
Closing date for applications	10 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
Discernment Day	11 <sup>th</sup> May 2024
Reader Training Programme Phase 1 (IME1)	October 2024 – Sept 2025
Assessment & Discernment	October 2025
Admission & Licensing	Feb 2026
Phase 2 (IME2) Programme	Feb 2026 – March 2027

## **WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?**

For details of the application process please contact the Assistant Warden (Selection, Admission & IME)

For questions relating to the Selection criteria or for the opportunity to discuss your situation with an experienced Reader, please contact the Assistant Warden of Readers (Vocation & Discernment)

For questions about any aspect of the three year training programme, please contact the Head of Ministry Formation (who is also the Director of Reader Training) – Revd Paul Hinton

For queries specifically about Phase 2 (IME2) programme please contact the Programme Coordinator – Revd Sam Gibson



## The Five Guiding Principles

In July 2014 legislation was passed to enable women to be consecrated to the episcopate in the Church of England. This means that the Church of England is now fully committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender. The Church of England also remains committed to ensuring that those who cannot receive the ministry of women priests or bishops are able to flourish. The House of Bishops has therefore agreed *Five Guiding Principles* as the basis for this mutual flourishing. The House of Bishops confirm that the *Principles* need to be read 'one with the other and held in tension, rather than being applied selectively.' The *Five Guiding Principles* are:

- Now that legislation has been passed to enable women to become bishops the Church of England is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience;
- Anyone who ministers within the Church of England must be prepared to acknowledge that the Church of England has reached a clear decision on the matter;
- Since it continues to share the historic episcopate with other Churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and those provinces of the Anglican Communion which continue to ordain only men as priests or bishops, the Church of England acknowledges that its own clear decision on ministry and gender is set within a broader process of discernment within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church of God;
- Since those within the Church of England who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion, the Church of England remains committed to enabling them to flourish within its life and structures; and
- Pastoral and sacramental provision for the minority within the Church of England will be made without specifying a limit of time and in a way that maintains the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church of England.

As with those training for ordination, we ask that those offering for Reader Ministry within Church of England, Birmingham also confirm that they assent to all five of these *Principles*. Please sign in the relevant place on your application papers to confirm that you do assent to all five *Principles*.

You will be asked again for your assent to these *Principles* by the Director of Reader Training when you come to the end of your training. This is asked for in order to provide an assurance for your Bishop.

**Adapted from Guidance for Candidates for Ordination in the Church of England issued by Ministry Division Stephen Ferns November 2014**

## **USEFUL CONTACTS**

### **Warden of Readers**

The Revd Canon Catherine Grylls  
Email: [readers@cofebirmingham.com](mailto:readers@cofebirmingham.com)  
Tel: 0121 443 1371

### **Assistant Warden (Selection, Admission & IME)**

The Revd Ian Crockford  
Email: [ReaderSelection@cofebirmingham.com](mailto:ReaderSelection@cofebirmingham.com)  
Tel: 0121 777 2890

### **Assistant Warden (Vocation & Discernment)**

Mrs Maggie Forknell  
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Tel: 0121 439 9324

### **Assistant Warden (Continuing Ministerial Development)**

Mrs Michelle Grannell  
Email: [ReaderDevelopment@cofebirmingham.com](mailto:ReaderDevelopment@cofebirmingham.com)

### **Head of Ministry Formation (Director of Reader Training)**

The Revd Paul Hinton  
Email: [paulh@cofebirmingham.com](mailto:paulh@cofebirmingham.com)  
Tel: 0121 426 0431

### **IME2 Programme Coordinators**

The Revd Dr Sam Gibson & The Revd Dr Jenni Crewes  
Email: [SamG@cofebirmingham.com](mailto:SamG@cofebirmingham.com)

### **Reader Registrar & Secretary of the Birmingham Readers' Association**

Mr Michael Lynch  
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