
READER MINISTRY IN CHURCH OF ENGLAND BIRMINGHAM



INTRODUCTION

Readers in the Diocese of Birmingham share in ministry in a variety of different situations from parish to workplace chaplaincy, and bring an extraordinary range of gifts into ministry in Christ's name: preaching the Gospel, leading study groups, assisting in pastoral ministry, connecting a world of work and social need with our worship, drawing on insights from daily life and many realms of experience.

In 2019 the Central Readers' Council published 'Resourcing Sunday to Saturday Faith', a discussion document laying out a renewed vision for Reader Ministry in the Church of England. This vision proposes three key themes for the future; teaching the faith, enabling mission in the everyday, and leading in church and society. The booklet can be downloaded from

[Publications/Handbooks - Transforming Ministry Magazine](#)

Over 200 Readers are licensed by the Bishop in this Diocese for a ministry of 'preaching and teaching in a pastoral context', as defined by the Bishops' Regulations (2000). We hope to see Reader ministry develop even more among all age groups and with people from as broad an experience of life as possible, so as to be truly representative of Birmingham and the surrounding region.

We continue to seek men and women of all ages - we are hoping for more young Readers in particular - who come, supported by their incumbent or chaplain, and PCC or equivalent chaplaincy body, with some sense that they are called by God and show a degree of self-understanding, capacity to learn, potential to develop qualities of leadership, and above all, are faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

THE SELECTION AND DISCERNMENT PROCESS

There is a 'Reader Exploration Evening' every January for those interested in finding out more, with their Incumbents. The Warden of Readers is always glad to hear from those starting to explore Reader ministry and there are Readers available across the Diocese who can meet with those who want to explore more.

The annual application process for selection for Initial Reader Training begins in January of each year. Applications must be received by the end of April. All applicants must receive a nomination from their PCC or equivalent chaplaincy body, so this discussion usually needs to take place before Easter. The Discernment and Selection Day takes place during the summer.

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 public representative minister within the local church.
- has a willingness to cooperate with other ministers, to work within a team, and can form strong pastoral relationships within the community they serve.
- is willing to engage in a method of training which is participatory, reflective, imaginative, and creative.

Each candidate at the Discernment and Selection Day has three interviews with Selectors (some are Readers and some are Clergy). There is a written pastoral exercise to do during the day, and a group conversation.

Reader Training in Birmingham falls into three parts; Foundation, Phase 1, and Phase 2. Everyone who applies for Initial Reader Training must have completed a 'Foundation' course, the 3D course or 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 in the last five years.

ANNUAL ADMISSION AND LICENSING SERVICE

Those who have recently completed the Phase 1 Training Course are Admitted and Licensed at a service in the Cathedral in January or February each year. This is also the occasion on which those moving to PTO (Permission to Officiate) because they have reached the age of 70, or renewing their PTO (required every three years), receive their new parchments.

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 Phase 1 Reader Training are required to complete a Working and Learning Agreement with their Incumbent prior to Admission and Licensing, as are those seeking to take up a new licence or to renew PTO.

ANNUAL REVIEWS

Every year in January each Reader is asked to complete an 'annual return'. This is an electronic form. Each Incumbent (Area Dean during a vacancy) is asked to meet with each Reader (this can be done as a group if all agree) to review ministry over the year, and to review the Working and Learning Agreement that should already be in place between each Reader and Incumbent. Copies of the outline agreement are available from the Warden of Readers (readers@cofebirmingham.com). The Reader submits the Annual Return online (or by post on request). A signed copy of the Working & Learning Agreement should be sent by the Reader to the Warden of Readers, either by email or by post if significant changes have been made to it.

MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

It is hoped that a scheme will be introduced at some point, using reviewers from amongst the Reader community, who have been trained for this role. Readers will be offered a review every₃three years.

CONTINUING MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT

Paul Hinton, with a team of Readers (Reader CME Steering Group), organize an excellent and varied programme of training days, usually on Saturdays in May and October. Readers are now also invited to participate in Bishops' Study Days.

SAFEGUARDING

Readers must undertake DBS checks, through the Safeguarding Team at 1 Colmore Row, every three years. Readers must participate in Leadership Safeguarding training and Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse training every three years. Since 2019 new Readers have been required to participate in Practising Safely as part of Initial Training.

DEANERY WARDENS

The Warden oversees a team of Deanery Wardens, who have been commissioned by the Bishop. Deanery Wardens are alert to the pastoral needs (such as illness) of Readers within each Deanery, and make contact as appropriate, keeping the Warden of Readers informed. They may also bring to the notice of the Area Dean matters concerning Reader ministry.

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, through which Readers can provide help and share wisdom with one another.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Reader pages on the Diocesan website [Diocese of Birmingham | Clergy & Authorised Lay Ministry \(cofebirmingham.com\)](https://www.cofebirmingham.com) provide a wide range of information and resources.

For more information on any of the above, or on any other matters concerning Reader ministry in the Diocese please do be in touch

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