

Readers – a renewed vision

The future of Reader ministry is a subject which is being discussed across England and Wales, and the Central Readers Council is currently addressing this as well.

We as Lay Readers are in a totally different context in our congregations and society to say 30 years ago, or even 10 years ago. In our congregations we need to learn to tell our faith story once again, help others to find their place in the story, and enable them to live the every day – faith, prayer and witness. And enable new Christians to be incorporated into the body of Christ. In society we are in a new kind of missional context, with the need to actively re-imagine our ministry in many parts of the country – and our liturgical and teaching ministry means we have many creative opportunities to enable others in mission.

50 years ago we might have been the only lay people in our congregations, now we are a significant minority in a lay ministry context. As Readers, we could feel threatened, we could feel marginalised, we could feel we are within an archaic and out of touch ministry. And so the Central Readers Council recognised an urgent challenge to review Reader ministry.

As many of you may be aware, in 2017-18 Bishop Martyn, Chair of the Central Readers Council, conducted national consultation meetings on Reader Ministry and its future. During these consultations three unique strands of Reader Ministry emerged: Readers as Teachers of the Faith; Readers as enablers of mission and Readers as Leaders in Church and Society. The outcome was that the CRC then asked the following questions:

Could the CRC provide specialised training to help current Readers develop as 21st century teachers? How do we enable Readers to think through the mission challenges of today? Could the CRC develop training to help Readers develop their leadership roles, and also develop their mentoring skills?

Bishop Martyn has written a booklet entitled 'Resourcing Sunday to Saturday faith' which you will receive with your May 2019 copy of the Reader magazine. Please read it, and be inspired about an exciting future for our Reader ministry based on the three strands as outlined above. And when you have read it, show it to your incumbent, talk about it at your PCC and discuss it with other Readers.

In September 2018 I was appointed by the Central Readers Council as Reader Training Project Manager, focussing on Continuous Ministerial Development for Readers *"to enable the renewal of Reader/Licensed Lay Minister ministry across the Church of England by shaping a culture of lifelong learning, and through new and existing training resources focused on teaching the faith, enabling mission and leading in church and society"*. This is a three year fixed term post with, as I see it, the remit of moving Reader Ministry forward into the 21st century. It's an exciting and sometimes daunting challenge! I am going to develop blended learning modules which will help us all as Readers in our 21st century ministry; rebrand Reader ministry; develop a new website; and expand our social media presence.

Look out for the booklet when your magazine arrives – it's not an insert for recycling!

Ruth Haldane
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Reader Training Project Manager, CRC