



# READERS' ASSOCIATION DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM NEWSLETTER August 2006

## THE WARDEN WRITES

### The Future of Reader Ministry

This has been the subject of a General Synod debate, which will be followed up by a national working party. Why now? Possibly it is because some Readers feel insecure in that on the one hand some colleagues have become ordained, self-supporting ministers and on the other there are lay people, who are not Readers, leading worship and preaching in some Anglican churches.

No doubt all sorts of improvements could be made as a working party will discover but the value of Reader ministry seems to me unimpaired. I cannot see any reason for restricting the right to preach at a church service to an ordained person; in principal it should be possible for any lay person, provided that he or she has the appropriate talents, convictions and training. For that reason this diocese holds a selection day in June each year, after which selected candidates are trained and, if successful, licensed. At selection we try hard to ensure that only those candidates genuinely ready go forward.

Part of readiness is not having any untested vocation to the ordained ministry. We only want candidates who see themselves as Readers for the foreseeable future, say the next five years, although in the long term none of us can set limits to what God can do.

It is true that in some parishes lay people preach who are not Readers and some Bishops do not seem to stop them but there is a difference between preaching on isolated occasions under the supervision of an Incumbent, maybe to test out a gift, and preaching regularly, say three times a year or more, and unsupervised. Even those Bishops who do allow more frequent preaching by lay people, not Readers, are usually careful that they do so only within their own parish, with some training and under supervision.

Readers remain the principal lay people preaching within the Church of England; once licensed they can preach anywhere in their diocese, unsupervised and by arrangement they can preach in other diocese too. Here is a ministry to cherish.

Yours sincerely,

*John Nightingale*

## **The Secretary writes ....**

Congratulations to Paula Gooder (St Francis of Assisi, Bournville) and Paul Wilson (SS Nicholas & Peter ad Vincula, Curdworth) who were amongst 9 new Honorary Canons appointed by Archbishop Sentamu when he was still Episcopal Commissary in Birmingham last November. Paula was one of two Canon Theologians appointed in recognition of her work as a lecturer in New Testament Studies at the Queens Foundation and a freelance lecturer. Paula also represents our diocese on General Synod. Paul was one of four Lay Canons appointed. He is deputy Diocesan Secretary (Finance) and in that capacity sits on many diocesan committees.

We say good-bye to Caroline George (St Peter, Hall Green), Pat Johnston (St David, Shenley Green), John Kennedy (St Peter, Harborne), Kathleen Lloyd-Roberts (All Saints, Kings Heath) and Helen Wheeler (Bishop Latimer, Winson Green) who will have been ordained Deacon by the time this newsletter reaches you. They will welcome our prayers as they begin their new ministry. We are confident that they will take with them a warm appreciation of their time as Readers in our diocese.

We also say good-bye to Jean Weller (St Edburgha, Yardley) and Richard Harding (St Agnes, Moseley) who have left the diocese and both coincidentally are living in Bristol. Also to Christine Ford who has moved to Alfreton in the Derby diocese. All three report that they are happily settled and intend to take up their Reader ministry in their new dioceses.

### **Celebration**

David Browning (Holy Trinity, Sutton Coldfield) will in September become another of our Readers to celebrate 50 years in Reader ministry. He was Engagement Secretary for 13 years until he retired in 2004. He joins Tom Ledger, Eric Downing and John Botterill who have already celebrated this milestone. Eric led the intercessions at our annual service this summer at St Editha, Polesworth, which preceded the AGM.

David was in charge of the Cemeteries and Crematorium department of the City of Birmingham for 40 years and there is a plaque at Yardley Crematorium honouring his long service. He tells us that he was the first Reader in the country to be licensed to take funerals in 1960. His wife Barbara tells us that when they were engaged he took her with him to St Luke's, Bristol Street where he preached his first sermon. She was asked to sit on the back row and wave her handkerchief if she couldn't hear him!

Note. Since writing this we have learnt that David is in the Woodlands hospital having extensive knee reconstruction surgery. He will be there for six weeks following the first operation and will return later in the year for further surgery. They have warned him there is a high risk that infection during this time could result in amputation so he needs our prayers.

Roger Jones (Christ Church, Burney Lane) and his Christian Music Ministries team have taken their latest Christian musical Jail Break on a third tour, this time in the South-West, and concluded the tour with celebration performances in Symphony Hall on July 22.

During last year John Billam (St Alphege, Solihull) and Sheila Wyld (The Resurrection, Smethwick) celebrated their 70<sup>th</sup> birthdays and applied for and were given Bishop's Permission to Officiate. Neville Benyon (St Peter, Maney) has chosen to become Reader Emeritus.

### **Candidates selected for training.**

On June 24 we held our Reader Selection Conference. Praise be, we received 18 applications this year and after a good day with 16 of the applicants they were all selected for training. Two candidates were unable to attend on the selection day and were interviewed and recommended by a selection panel earlier in the week. Our new candidates are:

<b>Carolyn Baker</b>	St Editha, Polesworth
<b>Jacqueline Burton</b>	St James, Aston
<b>David Child</b>	St Stephen Selly Park
<b>Linda Donovan</b>	St Mary & St Bart., Hampton-in-Arden
<b>Robert Dolton</b>	The Cathedral church of St Philip
<b>Catherine Hawker</b>	St Peter, Hall Green
<b>Stephanie Hayton</b>	Christ Church, Selly Park
<b>Gillian James</b>	St Bart. & St Chad, Rubery
<b>Valerie King</b>	Holy Cross, Billesley
<b>Timothy Parker</b>	Holy Trinity, Lickey
<b>Adrian Platt</b>	St Bart. & St Chad, Rubery
<b>Nicholas Ross</b>	St Mary, Warley
<b>Brian Scotcher</b>	St Chad, Sutton Coldfield
<b>Jeanne Shaw</b>	St Cyprian, Hay Mills
<b>John Sullivan</b>	St Paul & St Barnabas, Quinton
<b>Roger Taylor</b>	St Gabriel, Weoley Castle
<b>Rebecca Teague</b>	St Leonard, Marston Green

Please pray for these candidates as they prepare for Reader training.

The annual Licensing Service will take place on Saturday January 13, 2007 at 11.0am in the Cathedral.

## **Annual Service and Annual General Meeting.**

This took place on a delightful summer evening in the beautiful church of St Editha, Polesworth (the Abbey Church). In welcoming us the incumbent, Revd Philip Wells, gave us a brief history of this ancient and historic church. At the AGM which followed we elected two new officers. Philip Bellingham (St Philip, Dorridge) retired as Secretary and Registrar after seven years in office having reached 70 earlier in the year. He was succeeded by Michael Lynch (St Philip & St James, Hodge Hill) who has been our Initial Training Secretary for the last seven years. David Pycock (St Mary, Selly Oak) has been looking for a successor as Continuing Ministerial Education (CME) Secretary since he accepted the office of Assistant Warden. Carole Christensen (St Paul, Blackheath) was willing to take on this role and she was duly elected.

We were unable to elect Mike's successor as Initial Training Secretary at the meeting but following it Marion Woodward has been appointed to replace Mike. We received four nominations for the committee and all were elected. We welcome Juliet Bakker (St Peter & St Paul, Coleshill), Clive Fane De Salis (St Paul & St Barnabas, Quinton) and Ann Peate (St Michael, Boldmere) as new members to the committee.

Philip Bellingham

## **'IT'S BEEN A PRIVILEGE'**

**Our retiring Secretary writes.** "It has been a privilege to serve the Readers' Association as your Secretary and Registrar for the last seven years. I joined the committee as Treasurer many years ago and during that period we had two outstanding Secretaries - Tom Wilson and the late Kathleen Higgs. It has been a daunting challenge to try to continue their good work. I had agreed to succeed Kathleen during her final year in office which sadly she never completed before succumbing to her terminal illness.

During my years as secretary I have met most of you and come particularly close to the candidates when, around the period they complete their training, some of us would meet them on four occasions. It has been a pleasure to witness at close hand the mounting excitement and joy with which they have approached their licensing and the close bond they have formed with their group in training.

The role of secretary has brought me into contact with many delightful people both within the diocese and beyond whom I would not have otherwise met. I

have been lucky to serve on the committee under four Wardens (one our Dean) who have given Reader ministry a high priority and I thank them all for that. Our officers and committees have been people of diverse and interesting backgrounds from all over this diocese. I have gained a lot from them, and all of you, and thank you sincerely. I anticipate meeting many of you at future Reader occasions within our diocese. I wish Mike Lynch every success in this role.”

## ***Be with me....***

With this *Newsletter* you will have received a copy of ‘*Be with me....*’, a generous gift from the Mothers’ Union in Birmingham of its newly printed prayer book, which contains prayers and reflections for all occasions, the majority of which have been written by MU members.

The book, which has been commended by both the Rt.Rev. Gordon Mursell, Bishop of Stafford, and Margaret Sentamu, is on sale from the Mothers’ Union Office, price £4.

Claire Laland, Mothers Union President, says: “We are delighted with the response to our prayer book and offer it as a resource to Readers and in recognition of the valuable service they give. We trust they will find it of use.”

## **[www.ReadersBirmingham.org.uk](http://www.ReadersBirmingham.org.uk)**

There are plans to extend the Readers web site with book lists. The idea is not to list any books that we have heard of but books that are know to be good. We also still need photographs of Readers doing things other than “normal” Reader duties for the web page. Please send material for the web page to David Pycock at [David.Pycock@Blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:David.Pycock@Blueyonder.co.uk).

If there is any one out there with HTML CSS or even XML skills who can spare some time to help maintain the web pages that would be much appreciated.

Recently I conducted an experiment with a user maintained email distribution list (for Readers in the Edgbaston Deanery). It quickly became clear that those into IT understood the process but too many were confused by the messages that were issued automatically. It therefore looks as though it will be necessary to resort to an email and contact list in Outlook that is manually maintained. Assistance with this work would be appreciated.

David Pycock

## **Younger Readers' Conference**

*Richard Huss (St Nicholas, Elmdon) and Mandy Butler (St Luke, Birmingham) represented our Diocese at the national conference for Younger Readers, organised by the Central Readers' Council, at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney in June. Richard reports on the weekend event.*

Around 100 younger Readers from across England took part, along with a few from further afield – Wales and France were also represented.

“Younger” was defined as under 45 (the initial aim of setting the limit at 40 having been thwarted by difficulty finding sufficient Readers under that age). Each diocese had been asked to nominate two younger Readers.

It was a great encouragement to be among so many other younger people, all also involved in Reader ministry, gathered together in the same place to worship, to study and to share our experiences. Finding this newly-forged community of younger Readers (including, encouragingly, some distinctly younger than myself!), and that it was quite normal to be a young(er) person involved in licensed ministry, was the highlight of the weekend.

The Rt. Revd. Graham Dow, Bishop of Carlisle and chair of the Central Readers' Council, was present throughout, chatting with delegates, and preached at the closing Eucharist. The keynote speaker was the Rt. Revd. Carl Cooper, Bishop of St. Davids and, at 45, just on the edge of the age range for attendees. His talks explored the question of what constitutes a healthy ministry, under the headings of Authenticity and Authority, Quality and Quantity, Mission and Maintenance.

Bishop Carl encouraged us to see that authenticity in our ministry – a ministry based on our own discipleship before anything else – is the only basis for any authority in what we do. Growth will come only through offering worship and teaching of quality, worship that is accessible, that itself evangelises and converts. Mission, in ways that respect those we are working among, is what will give the resources to maintain the church of God. Many of these ideas are explored in more detail in “From the Abundance of the Heart: Catholic Evangelism for all Christians” by Stephen Cottrell (Bishop of Reading), Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006, ISBN 0-232-52636-2.

Bible study and morning worship took place in regional groups, with our group containing Readers from Leicester through to Worcester and Gloucester dioceses, and provided a good forum for sharing experiences; we have remained in touch since the conference.

So who are the younger Readers in the Church of England today and what are they doing? We were a pretty monochrome group, subjectively it appeared we were mostly professional and married (i.e. those who can afford to train – both financially and in other ways). Almost all had a University education. A large proportion was from the more rural dioceses, where ‘demand’ for Reader ministry may be more obvious. An evangelical/charismatic background was evident in many of those present. There were, of course, exceptions to all of these observations.

The Revd. Alex Whitehead, Warden of Readers in Lincoln diocese, recently ran a survey in that diocese as part of their quinquennial review of Reader ministry, and was present throughout the weekend repeating his survey among the younger Readers present. His more quantitative findings will be released in due course, along with a further report on the weekend in the pages of a forthcoming issue of *The Reader* magazine.

Our thanks to the Readers’ Association in Birmingham for paying for us to attend, and to our families and parishes for letting us go.

## **RAISING READER MORALE**

Raising morale among Readers was the theme of the address to the Central Readers Council annual meeting in April by the chairman, the Rt. Rev. Graham Dow, Bishop of Carlisle.

His remarks followed the General Synod debate on Reader Ministry which resulted in a decision to form a Bishops’ Committee for Ministry working party to look at developing the ministry and enabling Readers to become more fully and effectively deployed.

Bishop Graham said that in contrast with the clergy, not enough work has been done on discerning and developing Readers’ gifts for ministry. “Authorised ministry must always follow gifting. A satisfied 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 gifting, the result is dissatisfaction - dissatisfaction on the part of those who are receiving the ministry, and this, in turn, leads to less use of the ministry and disappointment.

“Let the Readers who are gifted preachers preach and let them make the links with daily working life or community life. On the other hand where the gifting is still undeveloped let the incumbent help them with regular supervision.”

He called on the clergy to become more discerning of Readers gifts and use their ministry. “Let those Readers who preach well preach regularly at the

eucharist as well as at non-eucharistic services. Let them take some of the load of yet another sermon. Let them also be available as itinerant preachers, visiting a variety of churches, bringing their teaching insights to nourish faith.

“I wish that deaneries would do an inventory of available gifts: for preaching it should include the gifted Methodist local preachers who could well preach more in Anglican churches.”

Bishop Graham also encouraged Readers who are gifted as evangelists also to have an itinerant ministry, the pastorally gifted to be encouraged to take funerals, and in parishes where there are several places of worship to be the pastor or ‘shepherd’ to one of the congregations.

He spoke of the need to make imaginative use of people trained for public ministry in such capacities as chaplains - in stores, shopping malls, hospitals, care homes, uniformed organisations etc. At the same time there needed to be better mutual understanding of Readers and other lay ministries.

“Reader ministry is distinctive because Readers are highly trained theologically and for public ministry. Their ministry is transferable. They have the Bishop’s licence and they belong to a national order. I believe that Readers have no reason to object to the ministry of those who learn to preach or lead worship more as an apprenticeship, under supervision from their incumbent.”

He stressed that tensions would arise far less if Readers themselves are fulfilled in what they are doing and this would happen, with the full support of others, if they are using and developing their gifting.

In conclusion, Bishop Graham looked to Readers playing a part in the wave of ‘fresh expressions’ of Church. “Reader training, like clergy training, needs to put a vision in front of people for a different style of Church, a church which people will find relevant, contemporary, accessible and is reasonably in their own life shape.

“St Paul said that he became all things to all people that he might by all means win some for the Kingdom. Following the recently agreed criteria for those called to Pioneer Ordained Ministries, I hope that similar criteria will be developed for Readers who are similarly gifted and called.”

## **PORTUGUESE INTERPRETER REQUIRED**

Donald Fripp (St Mary, Selly Oak) asks for help from anyone who can speak Portuguese who can assist him to speak to a distant relative, Lenoar Antonio Fripp, on their Skype/Telephone system. Please contact Donald. His telephone number is 0121 604 3843.

# Forthcoming Training Opportunities

## Autumn Workshops

### Theological Reflection

9:30 am – 3:15 pm

Wednesday, 4 October, The Trinity Centre, Sutton Coldfield.

Saturday, 7 October, St Philip's Church Centre, Dorridge.

### Workshops:

- Beyond 'What Would Jesus Do?': Doing Theology for Daily Life.  
Alistair Barrett
- Listening and Hearing in a Busy World.  
Sue Clegg
- Godly Play.  
Jo Musson, Sue Chandler and Margaret Jones

### Additional workshop on 7 October:

- Leading a Small Group.  
Gloria James and Caroline George

## Being Church in Today's Culture: Give us a clue

9:30 am - 4:00 pm (approx.)

Saturday, 11 November, St James Hill, Sutton Coldfield

Joint Reader and Methodist Lay Preacher training day

## Study Days

Thursday, 22 February, 2007

Saturday, 10 March, 2007

Saturday, 31 March, 2007

Led by Canon Dr Paula Gooder

Further details shortly ....

## Funeral Training

June, 2007

Diocesan Office

## For further information

Contact Andrea Stevens:

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