



# READERS' ASSOCIATION DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM NEWSLETTER December 2006

## THE WARDEN WRITES

### READERS OPENING THE DOOR FOR OTHERS

Ever felt excluded – from society, power or information? Ever felt included by being brought into a circle, which gives you these things?

Gentiles who first heard the New Testament writings knew what it was like to be kept waiting in the house of a big and powerful 'godfather' for whose favour they would have to beg or send some one else to plead on their behalf. Jews had to wait upon the high priest who would go into the holy of holies to pray to God for them. Hence the importance of the achievement of Christ Jesus: "So he came and proclaimed the good news: peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near by; for through him we both alike have **access** to the Father in the one Spirit." (Ephesians 2: 17 – 18 NEB)

One book about St Luke's Gospel recently recommended to me is "The Hospitality of God" by Brendan Byrne published by The Liturgical Press, Minnesota. It stresses Luke shows God reaching out to the poor, marginalized and excluded so that they too can become generous hosts in their turn: Mary and the shepherds are the first examples.

One of the things that pleases me most about training for Reader ministry in this diocese is that there is a real attempt to make it **accessible**. Anyone with the support of their parish priest can get onto the 3D course and any one who has completed the 3D course can apply for Reader Training. At Reader selection conferences we are looking at people's calling and capacity rather than simply their qualifications.

Of course there is still much to learn: understanding Scripture, responding to its message, sharing it with others both before and after people are licensed as Readers.

But there should be as few barriers as possible to us getting started.

Then there is a further question: How, in our Reader ministry, can we open the door for others, especially those previously excluded, so that they too can reach Jesus for themselves?

Yours sincerely,

*John Nightingale*

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

I would like to begin by recording my thanks to my predecessor Philip Bellingham for his service to the association both as Secretary and before that as Treasurer.

Philip has been showing me the ropes of the secretary role and hopefully as yet I haven't missed anything important. I have made contact with Central Readers' Council in London. And have been keeping the Readers' database up to date.

Don't forget to contact me if you change your address so I can amend both the database details and also alter your Reader magazine subscription details.

Since the last newsletter in June we have said goodbye to James Webster a Reader at St. Nicholas Curdworth, and a member of the CME committee who has moved to Dorset.

### **YOUR CHANCE TO MEET THE BISHOP**

The licensing service in the Cathedral on Saturday, January 13 looks like being a memorable occasion. Bishop David is keen to meet as many of the current licensed Readers as possible.

Hopefully, you should have already received an invitation to the service from the Bishop. Readers are all going to be robed and will be seated on one side of the cathedral.

When the new candidates are licensed they will move from one side of the cathedral to the side where the robed Readers are seated as a symbolic start to their new ministry.

Please try to attend the licensing service if you are able, as it is good to meet for fellowship but also our presence in the cathedral will be a powerful visual representation of the strength, vitality and importance of Reader ministry within the diocese.

**Mike Lynch**

## Readers to be licensed

<b>Sarah Cooper</b>	<b>St Peter, Harborne</b>
<b>Margaret Douglas</b>	<b>St Benedict, Bordesley</b>
<b>Eureka Drayton</b>	<b>St Andrew, Chelmsley Wood</b>
<b>Alan Glenn</b>	<b>St Giles, Sheldon</b>
<b>Josephine Henry</b>	<b>St John, Sparkhill</b>
<b>Amanda Nayak</b>	<b>St Francis, Bournville</b>
<b>Pauline Norris</b>	<b>St Chad, Sutton Coldfield</b>
<b>Ruth Snashall</b>	<b>St Nicholas, Kings Norton</b>
<b>Alison Thorne</b>	<b>St Andrew, Handsworth</b>
<b>Claire Wesley</b>	<b>All Saints, Kings Heath</b>
<b>Kevin Wiggins</b>	<b>St Giles, Sheldon</b>
<b>Ian Wright</b>	<b>St Clement, Castle Bromwich</b>

## Obituary

### **John Bruce 1929 -2006.**

John Bruce, who died in November, was licensed as a Reader at Lichfield Cathedral in 1994 and worshipped at St Luke, Walsall. He transferred his licence to Birmingham in 1999 and served at St Michael, Solihull, where he was a member of the church council, and from where he was elected to the Deanery and Diocesan Synods.

John was very involved in Scouting and rose to become District Commissioner for Walsall. He had been a refrigeration engineer and in retirement became a keen member of the Knowle Art Group where painting and theological discussion went hand in hand.

He and his wife, Sue, were also keen members of the RSPB and the National Trust. In his later years John lived with kidney failure and was on regular dialysis. Tragically his son, Robert, who had been suffering with leukaemia, died just a few days after John.

It was appropriate that John's Reader colleague and friend, Paul Smith, gave the address at his funeral service.

### **Philip Bellingham**

## **ALL READERS HAVE TO BE CRB CHECKED**

Since CRB checks came in, all new Readers have been checked at the point of initial licensing, and all Readers who have come into the diocese have been checked.

The diocese is now in the process of checking all those who were already in post when CRB commenced. This is retrospective checking. They are doing this deanery by deanery. Polesworth and Edgbaston are underway. They should pick up on the Readers in this way.

Every parish in a deanery being checked is receiving a list of those who have already been checked so that it is clear which Readers still need to be checked.

The CRB has asked the diocese NOT to do repeat checks or periodic re-checks so they are not.

So for some existing Readers, checks may be imminent but others may not be asked for another 12 or 18 months.

It has, of course, always been possible for an individual Reader to make a special application for a check if he or she is specifically working with children.

## **Role of a volunteer speaker for The Church of England Children's Society**

It is difficult in a few words to describe the above but the following I hope will give a flavour of what it can help to support.

The Children's Society is a 'home mission' of the Church of England and is supported by the bishops, as vice presidents of the Society. There are 139 parishes with 108 local secretaries collecting 2558 boxes, which last year raised £59,174 in Birmingham Diocese. Within the diocese there are a number of projects in Birmingham dealing with all aspects of children's problems.

As a Reader in Lichfield Diocese I took up the challenge in the summer of 2005 of a volunteer speaker for The Children's Society. I saw more clearly the essential work of the Society as a Christian response to the predicament of many young people in today's society and was able to pass this insight on to inspire others in the church to see the same.

As a speaker you too can make a difference by supporting these local secretaries and inspiring congregations to help this mission. It can take as little or as much of your time as you are able to give but the satisfaction of knowing the difference you make will be the deciding factor as it was for me.

If you want to be part of this mission, please contact me on 01827 897954.

**Allan Baldwin**

Community Fundraising Manager

## **The Privilege of Hospital Chaplaincy**

Readers may have read that a Hospital Trust in Worcester have taken the decision to dispense with professional chaplains as a cost saving measure. It is not the purpose of this article to comment on this lamentable decision but it is a pointer to the prospect of an increasing call for voluntary chaplains in the future. I am aware that a number of Readers already fill this role in hospitals in our diocese and I am sure volunteers would be welcome at any hospital near to you.

When I found myself suddenly in the coronary ward of our local hospital 7 years ago I greatly valued a visit from the chaplain and one of his volunteers. I sensed a strong calling to respond and volunteer my own services and have been doing this work for over 5 years. After an initial chat with the chaplain I joined two other volunteers for 5 training sessions and was then allocated a ward, which I visit for at least a two hour session once per week. Time and day are our own choice but meal and rest times are to be avoided! The chaplaincy team are inter-denominational and at the larger city hospitals it is usually a multi-faith team.

So what does a chaplaincy volunteer do? Let me describe a typical visit. Having been a patient in the heart ward it is not surprising that the chaplain invited me to cover that ward and the coronary care unit (C.C.U.). There are few long-term stays in these wards so I only see most patients once or twice. Sadly some do return again with recurring problems.

I have found it more fruitful to visit in the morning when there is less competition for the patients' attention from their own visitors. On the other hand we have to avoid interfering with doctors' rounds and other medical duties medical such as blood tests. Rightly they must always have priority.

One of the exciting things about the session is the uncertainty of what the morning will bring. It is appropriate that we begin our visits in the Chapel where we sign in and begin with a time of prayer. Sometimes that can be where we find our first customer. They might be a mobile patient, distraught visiting relative or member of staff. It is a matter of judgement (and I hope experience) whether to respect a need for them to be quiet before God; to engage them in conversation; to merely give them a Christian greeting; or

whether some pastoral support and perhaps time of prayer with them is appropriate. On one occasion I found myself drawn into a multi faith discussion between a Muslim patient an R.C. nun and a Hindu patient. We were later joined by a Methodist colleague!

Once on the ward it is a courtesy to ask the Sister (sometimes called Ward Manager) or a staff nurse for permission to visit on the ward. They can be a helpful source of information about some of the patients. We must also be aware that the staff may need some spiritual support although they are usually so busy that they have little time for discussion.

Most wards are split into annexes of six beds with a few single rooms for patients who are disruptive or have an infection. It is usual for each annexe to have people of the same sex but just occasionally with an emergency admission this may not be possible. It can be quite daunting to enter an annexe where all is quiet and six heads look up at you anticipating that you might be a doctor come to visit them, perhaps with the news that they can go home soon. Here a quick general introduction is enough and then I speak with each patient at their bedside.

It soon becomes apparent when the patient is a person of faith and in such cases the discussion that follows can be intimate, revealing, privileged and humbling. We all look much the same in pyjamas or a nightdress and I have found myself talking to priests, retired missionaries and even a nun. I was once asked by a Sikh to go to the Chapel and say a prayer for him. He declined my offer to do so with him at his bedside!

A surprising number of patients tell me that they have no contact with “the church” but confide that they regularly pray to God. (Why can’t our churches attract them into our fellowship?). Seriously ill and terminally ill patients will often share their fears, pain, anger and frustration. They can also reveal a serenity and trust in God that is impressive, moving and humbling. Most of these will appreciate an offer to pray with them. This is where listening skills are tested.

It is soon evident if a patient does not wish to engage in a “faith discussion” but they do warm to a discussion on our common heart problems and their treatment. It is extremely rare to have a hostile reception. Discussion with a deaf or confused patient can be more difficult!

I hope the reader will gather that I have an enthusiasm for the chaplaincy service and regard it as a privilege to share in this work. I suppose you have to be a “people person” but isn’t that what Jesus calls and challenges us to be? If you feel you would like to explore this work you can contact the chaplain at

your local hospital. Those in the Birmingham diocese are listed in the Diocesan Directory.

**Philip Bellingham**

## **Update on the National Working Party**

Dr Paula Gooder, one of our Birmingham Readers, is a member. She says that they are still collecting responses. The questionnaire can be found through the national website: [www.readers.cofe.anglican.org](http://www.readers.cofe.anglican.org)

Paula notices two trends in Reader ministry. One is for some Readers to become ordained, particularly to Self Supporting Ministry. The other, probably the larger trend, is for Readers to be proud of their lay status, and in some cases, such as her own, to wish to develop their own gifts as lay theologians.

God works in many ways, some as yet undreamt of!

**John Nightingale**

# Forthcoming Training Opportunities

## Forgiveness

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2007 10:00 am to 4:00 pm £10

Led by Revd. Susannah Izzard

This workshop will be of interest to those working with individuals in a pastoral context and for those with a preaching and teaching ministry in church communities as they approach Lent. Lunch provided.

## Benefiting from the Ministry of those of Advancing Years

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2007, Temple Balsall

Led by Revd. James Woodward

A training day designed to explore how those of advancing years can enrich the ministry of the church.

## Funeral Training

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> June, Diocesan Office

This day will address the practicalities of funeral arrangements, pastoral care and familiarisation with the order of service. This course must be taken before a Reader is able to take a Funeral Service.

## A Day with the Bishop: Spiritual Growth

Saturday 17 November, 2007, Carrs Lane

A day on Spiritual Growth with Bishop David, facilitated by Revd. John Austin, the Bishop's Advisor on Spirituality, and assisted by others. There will be a registration Fee and lunch will be provided.

For further information please contact Andrea Stevens at the Diocesan Office:

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