



READERS' ASSOCIATION DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM NEWSLETTER May 2005

THE WARDEN WRITES

Reader-Shaped Spaces in God's Changing World

Let me share with you what excites me about this day, which is planned for November 12th 2005.

First of all, it was suggested by Bishop Sentamu himself. He asked us whether we would like to have a conference with him in the centenary year and the Committee said 'yes'. He then asked us to come up with suggestions for the day to which he responded.

Second, the theme chosen is attractive. It starts with the world (not the Church) and with God whose world it is. Though the world may go its own way independent of God, God still loves it and is constantly at work within it, both outside and inside the Church. Readers are often well placed through their life experience to share in God's work in many different ways.

Third, the design of the day will help those taking part work out their individual roles for themselves. Brian Russell will start the day off and who knows better than he how Reader Ministry has been developing in this diocese? Next there will be space for each Reader to share within a small group one example of their own ministry and then have encouragement from others. Then Bishop Sentamu will give his own response to what has emerged and his vision of the road ahead.

Finally, the day will begin with prayer and end with a thanksgiving eucharist: we are to give thanks for the past, look honestly at the present and seek God's guidance for the future.

Though I have never been a Reader I have been delighted that, as representatives of the baptised, Readers have developed and used gifts of preaching and teaching so as to encourage the gifts of others, usually, as in my late wife's case, without any sense of a call to be ordained. The day should affirm and develop these gifts.

Here is a training event that is realistic, personal and spiritual, at which gifts can be shared and vision formed. As Warden I feel I would be missing out not

to attend. The venue, Carrs Lane, is easy to reach so I hope as many Readers can come as possible.

See you there!

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

John Nightingale

The Secretary writes

Farewell to a Long Serving Reader

We say farewell to one of our longest serving Reader. In their older years David Reese and his wife have moved to Hereford to be near to their son who is an incumbent at a parish in the city.

David was licensed in this diocese on May 11, 1948, to the parish of St Peter, Handsworth and when that church was closed in 1970 moved to the neighbouring church of St Andrew. After war service in which he served first with the R.A.M.C. in France and then helped to train allied troops in jungle warfare in India, he taught R.E. and English, first at Perry Barr Junior School and from 1955 at the new Great Barr Comprehensive, where he became the head of the Lower School.

David served our committee as our Engagement Secretary from 1985 to 1991. He tells us that he and his wife worship at the cathedral in Hereford where they have been made most welcome. For those who knew David and wish to maintain contact his new address is: 18, Nightingale Way, Hereford, HR1 2NQ
Tel: 01432-351231.

John Reaches Half Century Milestone

John Botterill celebrated reaching the milestone of 50 years as a Reader on May 14. John was licensed first in the diocese of Blackburn but transferred soon after to this diocese on being appointed a lecturer in the department of Chemical Engineering at The University of Birmingham.

Since 1947 John has been a Reader at The Ascension, Hall Green and was for many years Sub Warden, an office that was a kind of predecessor to that of Assistant Warden. He also served as Vice Chairman of Central Readers Board (later Council) during a period when there were many changes. John continues to be an active Reader at their church.

Change of Name

Congratulations to Karen Skitt who was married in April. She is now Karen Matthews and continues to live in and serve in the parish of St Nicholas, Elmdon.

‘Mrs Fix-it’ Retires from Diocesan Office

In April Pam Rhodes retired and was given a memorable send-off at a Buffet Lunch. She had worked for the Board of Ministries for over 25 years and during that time had emerged as “Mrs Fix-it” who knew everyone and could be relied upon to get things done and done well.

It was obvious that all her colleagues had found it a privilege to work with her and many former colleagues returned to say thank you and farewell. She was a welcoming face to all who came onto the Board of Ministries (now Ministries Forum) for the first time and fell to her charm as we were taken under her wing. We Readers have cause to be grateful to Pam for all the help she has given us over those years.

Philip Bellingham

Training Opportunities

Introduction to Theology Courses for 2005 –2006

Have you participated in many of the Introduction to Theology courses over the years and want a new challenge? Or are you someone who has never had the opportunity for further study...until now? Whoever you are, we may have just the course for you in the latest IT brochure, due out at the end of May.

I am delighted with the programme that the diocese, together with the Queen’s Foundation, has been able to put together for the next academic year. Here are just a few of the courses on offer, so I would urge you to look at a brochure in more detail. (As in the past, a University credit is available for those who wish it.)

- A course in Spirituality will run on Wednesday mornings from September to March. Talks about different spiritual traditions, such as Ignatian and Liberation, will be followed by opportunities for participation in and reflection on these traditions in small groups.
- For those interested in liturgy, three different courses are offered, one in every term. For example, Stephen Burns and Gary O’Neill will be leading An Introductory Course to Designing Worship at the Trinity Centre, Sutton Coldfield on a weeknight evening.

- An evening course in the Summer Term on the Person of Jesus will trace the historical development of the church's thinking about Jesus Christ.

To obtain a brochure on the course contact Jenny Harris at the Diocesan Office (0121 426 0400) or e-mail j.harris@birmingham.anglican.org

Funeral Training Day - Still time to Enrol

Each year Readers are given the opportunity to attend a Funeral Training Day which is a requirement before they are authorised to conduct funerals in this diocese.

It is open to all Readers who have been licensed for at least six months. This year's Continuing Ministerial Education (CME) Training Day is on Saturday, 11th June at St Matthew's, Nechells.

There is still time to enrol so contact Andrea Stevens at the Diocesan Office (0121 426 0400) or email: a.stevens@birmingham.anglican.org

Liz Howlett, the Bishop's Adviser for Lay Adult Education and Training, and Derek Case, of V Morton & Sons, funeral directors, Northfield, will lead the day. Ray Skarratt, a Reader, will organise a workshop on Pastoral Care of the Bereaved, which is designed particularly to help anyone who has not taken a funeral before.

The training day is offered free of charge. Anyone wishing to enrol is advised to talk to their incumbent beforehand as Readers may only take funerals if invited to do so by their vicar.

A CELEBRATION OF READER MINISTRY

Reader-shaped Spaces in God's Changing World

Our Warden has already drawn your attention to this important event on 12th November when Bishop Sentamu will join us for the day to celebrate Reader Ministry for the Centenary of the Diocese.

Here are some essential details about the day. The venue is Carrs Lane Church Centre in the centre of Birmingham, which is convenient for people arriving by bus, train or car. Any bus to central Birmingham will leave you close to the church centre, and travellers by train to New Street or Snow Hill will have a relatively short walk.

Car parking is limited in the city centre but there is a multi-storey car park close to Carrs Lane.

The programme begins with Registration at 9.30am followed at 9.50am by the

Welcome and Opening Prayer. Lunch will be provided and is included in the £10 enrolment fee. The day ends at 4.30pm.

Brochures giving fuller details are enclosed with this Newsletter (or will be sent out shortly). Readers are encouraged to book as soon as possible.

Liz Howlett

Readers CME Secretary

We are seeking someone to take on the role of secretary for Readers CME. This is an opportunity to get involved in planning training days. Duties involve liaising with speakers, taking and distributing minutes and attending to practical arrangements on the day with the rest of the Readers CME Committee. Anyone interested in doing this should contact Liz Howlett (Liz@Birmingham.Anglican.org) or the present Secretary, David Pycock (D.Pycock@bham.ac.uk).

READERS LEAD DIOCESAN CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Readers had the honour of launching the diocese's centenary celebrations by holding their annual Admission and Licensing service in the Cathedral just 15 days into 2005.

Welcome to Newly Licensed Readers

At the annual Admission and licensing service we welcomed the following 11 new Readers:

Susan Ashton	St John the Baptist, Knowle
Carole Christensen	St Paul, Blackheath
Robert Cutler	St James, Hill
Clive Fane de Salis	SS Peter & Barnabas within the parish of Christ Church, the Quinton
Fay Fearon	Kings Norton Team Ministry
Fiona Fowles	St Philip, Dorridge
Richard Huss	St Nicholas, Elmdon
Carole Jones	St Andrew, Handsworth
Giyanow Kaur	SS Peter & Paul, Aston
David Parker	SS Peter & Paul, Water Orton
Raymond Stinson	St Margaret, Short Heath

This year the service had an extra dimension as it included the Renewal of Reader Ministry for all those already licensed. This swelled the numbers attending the service, which was also a 'first' in that the cathedral was re-arranged so that everyone sat facing the centre and people could also watch the proceedings via large screens on either side.

The same layout together with large screens was repeated on March 2 for the Diocese's Centenary Service, attended by the Duchess of Gloucester and at which a representative contingent of Readers were present.

Celebrating Reader Ministry was the title of our innovative annual admission and licensing service, which will be long remembered by many.

NATIONAL READERS' AGM

Where do we fit in ?

The role of the Reader is coming under pressure from both the ordained and lay ministries, the Chairman of the Central Readers' Council said in his address at the annual meeting in April, and suggested that now is the time to clearly define the Reader's role in the church.

Jackie Ledbrook and Mike Lynch who represented the Birmingham Diocese at the meeting report that the diversity of lay ministry and the lack of the necessary regulatory background was a topic of concern.

It was stressed that this is not a matter of taking a legalistic approach as diversity should be welcomed but there are issues of transferability between dioceses and sometimes within dioceses, plus issues of training, quality control and on-going assessment.

The diversification of ordained ministries has led to some Readers being used less often. Pressure on the role of the Reader is increased by the emerging lay ministries that have permission to preach or lead worship.

This is challenging the church to move away from its hierarchical position (shown in the order of our processions !) to a more variable organic organisation (built together as part of the body). The church has a responsibility to recognise the gifts of individual members and then to lead that person on in their gifted area whether that is to the ordained or lay ministry.

The important thing, the chairman added, is that the ministry of Jesus should go ahead rather than everything being fitted into a neat little box.

The House of Bishops have not had any major discussion on lay ministry in the past five years and perhaps now, with so much diversity between the dioceses, the Bishop's Committee for Ministry should look again at the issue.

Central Readers Council Web Site

Readers are being encouraged to make use of the national website which complements the Reader magazine in supporting the Reader vocation and acting as a channel of information.

The web site has been designed to be flexible so that extra features can be added over time. Details of news and events from dioceses that would be of national interest are welcomed. Reviews of books, CDs, videos etc are also being included.

Under consideration is the development of a chatroom or bulletin board facility. To view the web site go to www.readers.cofe.anglican.org

Also under discussion at the meeting was funeral fees for Readers. Southwark diocese presented a discussion paper, which revealed that there is a wide variety of practices adopted across the country in relation to fees and it was decided to request the Bishops Committee for Ministry to review the current regulations to clarify the current position.

Readers Association of Birmingham Web Site

www.ReadersBirmingham.org.uk

The development of the web site continues. Brochures for Training Days are available on the web site. There are also photographs from the Admission and Licensing Service in January. If you have not taken a look yet give it a try. There is a wealth of information there.

There are links to electronic materials for ministry, the “Sacred Space” Page which daily reflections that can be downloaded to a PDA.

We still need photographs of Readers at work, gardening, washing up, climbing the Eiger ?

Email lists

Now that well over 50% of Readers are on email we are investigating the use of email lists for a number of purposes and hope to launch an electronic prayer list before the Autumn. Those of you not on email – Don’t Panic, we do not plan to abandon snail mail.

Forthcoming Training Opportunities

Helping Hurting People

Saturday 11 June 9:30 am - 5:00 pm

St Johns Church, Walmley

Contact Pete English: Tel.: 0121 689 2912

Email: peteenglish@lineone.net

Funeral Training

Saturday 11th June, St Matthew Nechells

The practicalities of funeral arrangements, pastoral care and familiarisation with the order of service.

Deanery Children's Work Meetings

Tuesday, 5 July, Aston Handsworth & City Centre
Children and Communion

Contact Lillian Marshall: Tel.: 0121 686 2920

Tuesday 19 July, Sutton Deanery

Let's get together – what does the future hold for children in our deanery?

Contact Carole Young: Tel.: 0121 321 1144

Growing Gifts 2005

Saturday 8 October, The Trinity Centre, Sutton Coldfield

Saturday 15 October, St Philip' Church Centre, Dorridge

Workshops on a variety of topics (9:30 am to 3:30 pm).

Enrolment fee £10

Reader Shaped Spaces in God's Changing World

Saturday, 12 November, Carrs Lane Church Centre

A celebration of Reader Ministry for the Centenary of the Diocese. **This is Must for all Readers.** Enrolment £10.

Further details on the above are available from Andrea

Stevens: Tel.: 0121 426 0400

Email: A.Stevens@Birmingham.Anglican.org