

Nationally agreed training standards mean that if a Reader moves to another diocese his or her admission is recognised, and there should be no undue difficulty in being re-licensed in the new diocese.

Admission and licensing

On satisfactory completion of their training Readers are admitted and licensed by the Bishop, usually at the Reader's home church. At this service candidates make their declaration of faith, take their oath of obedience to the Bishop, receive authority for their ministry and are presented with a copy of the New Testament.

Only the beginning...

Licensing is not the end, but the beginning, of becoming a Reader. To preach the word of God, Readers must keep up their private reading and undertake on-going study. There is an expectation that Readers, like all other ministers, will carry on learning. Hereford Diocese provides a range of formal opportunities for Continuing Ministerial Development each year.

Readers are encouraged to take stock of their on-going learning when they complete their annual reports, and also on the occasion of the triennial renewal of their licences. In addition the Central Readers Council puts on periodic national conferences and regional training events, and publishes *The Reader* magazine.

Readers usually continue to serve under licence until they are 70, after which they may receive the Bishop's Permission to Officiate, which is renewable annually.



*To find out more, contact
the Warden of Readers:*

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Revision: 03 August 2018



On Becoming a Reader

What is a Reader?

The office of Reader is one of the oldest in the Church but, in its present form in the Church of England, it was established in 1866. Since then, the growth in Reader ministry has been one of the great success stories in the Church of England and there are now over 10,000 Readers, of whom there are around 80 active in Hereford Diocese.

It is the only lay ministry which is voluntary, nationally accredited, episcopally licensed and governed by Canon. In church, Readers can be distinguished from their ordained colleagues by the distinctive blue Readers' scarf.

Readers exercise what is sometimes called ***a teaching and preaching ministry within a pastoral context***.

They lead worship, teach and preach, and are engaged in a great variety of other roles according to their context - for example: pastoral work, leading Bible study groups, baptism, confirmation and marriage preparation, school assemblies, taking funerals...



They are sometimes described as 'lay theologians': their close contact with everyday situations helping them to interpret the Gospel, and to proclaim Christ's teaching both in the Church and well beyond it. Many are involved in planting new congregations and in building bridges between Church on the one hand and workplace or community on the other.

Sound interesting?

The call to become a Reader may come from within or from an outside source - your Incumbent, a fellow worshipper, or from someone who does not even

attend church but recognises certain qualities in you. Readers can be men or women, almost any age and come from all walks of life.

If you think you may be called to be a Reader, here are some useful questions to ponder and discuss with others:

- *Is the teaching and preaching ministry of the Reader the particular ministry to which I am being called?*
- *Have I the necessary gifts (with training) to carry out this ministry?*
- *What is the pattern of my present discipleship? My daily offering of prayer and Bible study? My worship and witness within the parish? My witness as a Christian at work?*
- *Have I talked over the possibility of Reader ministry with my spouse and family? Would they be ready to support me?*
- *If selected for training, are there commitments in the parish and elsewhere which I would be willing to give up?*
- *Am I a team player, willing to work collaboratively with others, especially my Incumbent (and Local Ministry Development Group if there is one in the benefice)?*
- *Have I brought this before God in prayer – and with what result?*

If you want an informal chat about this, why not contact your Diocesan or Deanery Vocations Advisors? Or your deanery Sub-warden of Readers? They can be contacted via the Warden of Readers (details on the back page).

The next step would be to talk it over with your Incumbent. All candidates for Reader ministry will need the support of their local parish church, must be, or become, confirmed and regular communicant members of the Church of England. They have to be willing to train with others and to explore and communicate their faith.

How does selection work?

How it happens

The diocese operates a selection process which is designed to test the vocation of applicants for Reader ministry, and to assess their potential for serving and developing as a Reader, and their ability to cope with and benefit from training.

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The Warden of Readers for the diocese, acting on behalf of the Bishop, is responsible for appointing appropriate selectors and ensuring that selection is carried out effectively on behalf of the wider Church. The candidate will:

- Be asked to supply the names of two referees
- Be interviewed by the deanery Sub-warden and two others
- Be asked to produce some written work
- Meet with the Warden

The Warden will then take into careful account the information and recommendation from the Incumbent, referees and interviewers, and advise the Bishop accordingly. The candidate is informed of the outcome of the selection process as soon as possible after it is complete.

Selected candidates are recommended for acceptance onto the diocesan training course for Reader ministry. Subsequent admission and licensing as a Reader depends on successful completion of the training programme.

Guidelines & criteria for selection

The Church of England Ministry Division has laid down certain selection guidelines - **see the leaflet, 'Revised National Criteria for Reader Selection 2012'**. These are followed closely during the selection process.



What training would I need to do?

At present Hereford diocese requires Reader candidates to undergo three years of training on the West of England Ministerial Training Course (WEMTC). This involves weekly evening classes during term-time in Ludlow, along with a number of residential events. More flexible pathways may become available in due course.

Alongside the academic training, a Reader candidate receives training in practical and pastoral skills. This includes a placement in another parish to broaden the prospective Reader's experience.