

HEREFORD DIOCESAN READERS' ASSOCIATION

heads-up February 2019

Colleagues,

1. In the recent *Bulletin*, John Daniels wrote about Ruth Haldane's work on the **READER TRAINING PROJECT** for the Central Readers' Council (CRC). We thought you'd be interested in this update, recently received from Ruth, which gives some more of the background thinking – and an indication of a possible way-ahead.

“Over the last two years the CRC has been considering its place amongst Readers/LLMs [Licensed Lay Ministers – the term used in some Dioceses for Reader, *Ed.*] in the 21st century. There is a realisation that the context in which the CRC is working is changing rapidly. We are in a new kind of mission context, becoming more intentional in mission, with a need to catch again a vision of God's mission to the whole of our society in our rapidly changing social and economic environment. We are also recovering a focus on discipleship, looking at how churches teach the faith and enable formation of character in a society where people are unaware of much concerning the Christian Faith.

Emerging changes in lay ministry

These themes of mission and discipleship are now being expressed in another area of change – the increase in a wide variety of recognised and authorised lay ministries across the Church of England. The recent report '*Setting God's People Free*' talks of the diversity of lay ministry, the great numbers involved and the great variety in ministries. It could be said that the greatest shift in the church ministry in recent years has taken place in unelected roles – in other words recognised, authorised and licensed lay ministries such as home group leaders, worship leaders, pioneers, and evangelists. Now Readers are a significant minority. More people are involved in ministry, for example in Fresh Expressions and Messy Church. Readers/LLMs could feel threatened, they could feel marginalised, they could feel they are within an archaic and out of touch ministry.

The CRC, led by Bishop Martyn [Bishop Martyn Snow, Chair of CRC and Bishop of Leicester], agreed there was an urgent challenge to review Reader/LLM ministry and discern what God is saying to the church at this moment in our history. We are aware that across the 42 dioceses, approaches to vocations, training and use of Readers/LLMs varies enormously.

Reader/LLM ministry defined for the 21st century

Following the national consultations last year, three unique strands of Reader ministry for the future emerged: *Teachers – of the Faith*; *Missional – on the Frontline*; and *Leaders – in Church and Society*.

Recently I reminded myself of the selection and formation guidelines for Readers at the end of IME2 [Initial Ministerial Education, year 2]. I was interested to read the following:

- Readers are committed to lifelong learning – enable and inspire others
- Readers continue to devote themselves to the tasks of mission, evangelism and growing disciples – devote themselves to mission
- Readers encourage and enable others to establish and nourish their spirituality through prayer, Bible Reading and study – understand and communicate
- Readers are at ease with themselves, they have a generous capacity to serve others in the wider community as well as in the church
- Readers encourage others in the body of Christ to develop – encourage and develop
- Readers are committed to developing shared leadership and collaboration – encouragers and enablers

- Readers inspire others to develop their vocation - inspirational

Looking at our three strands which we have identified for Readers – *Teachers* of the Faith, *Missional* on the Frontline, *Leaders* in Church and Society – there is much synergy with the IME2 listing.

But I would ask a question: what percentage of Readers attend CMD [Continuing Ministerial Development] in your diocese? In mine it is about 20%. So how can we inspire, challenge and encourage others, in perhaps the middle range of Readers, i.e. not so much those who are newly licensed, who are usually on board anyway, but Readers who have been licensed for some time, who are still in work or newly retired, who are sometimes feeling marginalised and underused in their parishes. They may be looking for inspiration, a new sense of calling, a new sense of vision for ministry in this century.

In our 21st century world, it's not just about preaching and leading services – although many Readers provide a vital service and ministry, particularly in multi-church benefices. It's about communicating with millennials, with the Z generation, as well as with the older generations. It's about recognising that our world has drastically changed in the last century.

Contemporary Christians are looking for teaching and preaching which makes a difference, is honest and has integrity, communicates well and is varied and appropriate with its context. **Café Church, Messy Church, Wild Church, Time-poor 30-year-olds Church** are all developing to meet the needs of the 21st century church – as well as using social media, Twitter, and online church.

The role of CRC and the CMD project

So how can the CRC help Readers to manage change, teach the faith, be missional on the frontline, to develop as leaders and enablers, to become a vital part of the 21st century growing church? What is the future?

I believe that the CRC has a part to play in offering **blended learning** to Readers – available to them at any time, complementing the training for CMD already offered by dioceses. We know that there is already good practice of Reader/LLM IME2 and CMD throughout the country.

We are planning to offer another or additional tool, not in competition, but in recognition of many different ways of learning, and the limited availability of Readers to attend location-based, time-fixed CMD. At the moment **we envisage a Moodle platform**. [What?! Apparently 'Moodle' is an acronym for '**Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment**' – a worldwide Open Source Learning Management System, used to conduct courses online or to support face-to-face teaching, learning and training. OK now?] The platform could be accessed through CRC's website, with online modules that might include some individual study, and also, possibly, gathering together within each Diocese at least once during the module to discuss and apply the learning."

The HDRA Committee will of course be keeping an eye on how this work develops – and John, as he said in *The Bulletin*, is in close touch with the Project's development. In the meantime, if you have thoughts you'd like to contribute, do contact a Committee member (see Suki's recent mailing for details) – or even write in to *The Bulletin*!



2. You'll also be interested to know that we have booked our **GUEST SPEAKER FOR THE 2019 ASSEMBLY ON 28TH SEPTEMBER 2019 AT LEOMINSTER PRIORY**. It will be **Bishop Martyn Snow**, CRC Chair. We will want to make best use of his time with us, after his journey from Leicester, so watch out for a slightly different programme on the 28th September. But, most importantly, **do please keep 28TH SEPTEMBER 2019 free**.

Jonathan Kemp,
HDRA Communications Officer
e: jonathan@jane Kemp.plus.com
t: 01547 530398 m: 07904 294401