The future of Reader ministry

Diocese of Hereford
Readers’ Conference

Martyn Snow
Bishop of Leicester
Chair of Central Readers’ Council

Partnership in ministry

10am Session 1: A theology of partnership
11pm: Session 2: Readers in the (ever widening) ecology of lay ministry
12pm Lunch
2pm Admission Service
Dancing Video 1
Where the hell is Matt 2008
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlfKdbWwruY

“By the indwelling grace of the Holy Spirit, the church is created to be an image of the life in communion of the Triune God.”

*The Church of the Triune God*
International Commission for Anglican Orthodox Dialogue 2006
A theology of partnership

1. Partnership is essential to the very nature of God.
2. Partnership speaks of God’s relationship with humanity.
3. Partnership indicates the true relationship between human beings.

Partnership is essential to the very nature of God.

The bond of love
A theology of partnership

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2 Corinthians 6:1 As God’s fellow workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. For he says, ‘In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.’

Genesis 2:15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.
A theology of partnership

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My Ministry Network

- Me and my ministry
- Vicar & other clergy
- Pastoral Assistants
- Evangelists
- Deanery ministers
- Bishop & diocesan ministers
- Other Readers
- Choir / Music group
- School headteacher / RE coordinator
- Churchwardens
- Children’s ministry leaders
- Youth ministry leaders
- Lunch club leaders
- Coffee shop
An invitation to reflect on your partnerships. Draw your web of connections (ministry partners)... who do you share ministry with...?

A theology of interchange

“The Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through his transcendent love, become what we are, that he might bring us to be even what he is himself”

Irenaeus
A theology of interchange

2 Corinthians 8:9 ‘For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.’

1 Corinthians 9:19-22 I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.
Lewis Hyde

Unlike commodity exchange (e.g. handing over cash at a checkout), gifts create a ‘feeling bond’ between people (e.g. the neighbour bringing round a meal for the mother of a new baby). These connections (both bonding: people like us; and bridging: people unlike us) deepen community as gifts flow and circulate.

Foa’s model of resource classes
Readers working in partnership to serve the body of Christ

1. What gifts can you exchange with other ministers?
2. How might an understanding of our partnership/interchange with God inform our partnership/gift exchange with others?

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READERS
Where are we now?

1. 150 year celebrations

2. A changing context for Christian mission

British Social Attitudes Survey finds 53% of Britons are non-religious

BREAKDOWN

- 53% Non-religious
- 15% Anglican
- 9% Catholic
- 17% Other Christian
- 6% Other

Readers
Where are we now?

1. 150 year celebrations
2. A changing context for Christian mission
3. A changing context for Christian ministry

“Setting God’s People Free”

- Report commissioned by the Archbishops’ Council
- Working Group chaired by Matthew Frost, former CEO of Tearfund; new Programme Director Nick Shepherd
- Report enthusiastically endorsed to General Synod in February 2017
Local faith groups deliver 220,000 social action projects; serve 48 million beneficiaries, mobilize 3 million volunteers, give over £1.1 billion worth of social support. The vast majority of these initiatives are led by lay people. (The Cinnamon Network, Audit of Faith Action, 2018.)

The Digital Evangelism Report highlights the importance of also focusing on the additional 8% of 'Occasional Anglicans', who attend Church of England churches occasionally, and feel some identity as Anglican.
Gathered church: unelected roles

- 1,300 lay diocesan workers
- 28,000 working with young people (including 2,000 employed)
- 10,000 Readers
- 39% of Fresh Expressions lay led
- 15,000-30,000 Messy Church leaders
- Organists/choir leaders
- Home group leaders
- Prayer ministry leaders
- Administration & Management
- Worship leaders

Sent church: involvement & leadership in church-led community social action

- Street Pastors
- Elderly support
- Parenting/marriage courses
- Job Clubs
- Debt counselling
- Homelessness projects
- Mum’s/Toddlers groups

4,700 CofE Schools employing 135,000 teachers and 22,500 foundation governors serving 1 million children

Local faith groups: deliver 220,000 social action projects, serve 48 million beneficiaries, mobilise 2 million volunteers, give over £3 billion worth of social support. The vast majority of these initiatives are led by lay people. (The Cinnamon Network, Audit of Faith Action, 2016)
“Setting God’s People Free”

This report calls for two shifts in culture and practice that are critical to the flourishing of the Church and the evangelisation of the nation.

1. Until, together, ordained and lay, we form and equip lay people to follow Jesus confidently in every sphere of life in ways that demonstrate the Gospel we will never set God’s people free to evangelise the nation.
“Setting God’s People Free”

2. Until laity and clergy are convinced, based on their baptismal mutuality, that they are equal in worth and status, complementary in gifting and vocation, mutually accountable in discipleship, and equal partners in mission, we will never form Christian communities that can evangelise the nation.

Lay Ministries Advisory Group

- Articulating a clear vision for, and theology of lay ministry
- Grow vocations to lay ministry (current research project)
- Address specific questions e.g. safeguarding
In the light of the huge increase in recognised and authorised lay ministries, what now is the role of Readers?
Readers as Teachers of the Faith

Video: Paula Gooder: Teaching the Faith
https://youtu.be/UEM_QePuw9Y
Readers as Teachers of the Faith

1. How can Readers be involved in teaching the faith? (Have you got practical examples of this?)
2. What particular skills are needed to teach the faith to those new to faith?

Readers as Enablers of Mission
Readers as Enablers of Mission

1. How can Readers enable people in mission ‘on the frontline’? (Have you got practical examples of this?)
2. What particular skills are needed to enable others to live out their Christian faith in the workplace or in their social networks?
Readers as Leaders in Church and Society
1st & 2nd chair leaders: Churchill & Attlee

War Cabinet in Churchill’s absence:

‘When Attlee takes the chair, Cabinet meetings are business-like and efficient, we keep to the agenda, make decisions and get away in reasonable time. When Churchill presides, nothing is decided; we listen enthralled and go home, many hours later, feeling that we have been present at an historic occasion.’

Source: http://media.iwm.org.uk/iwm/mediaLib/18/media-8459/large.jpg Public domain
Three paradoxes for 2\textsuperscript{nd} chair leaders

- Subordinate-leader. How to take action, when you are responsible to someone else.
- Deep-wide. You may have a narrower scope of authority, but need to retain a broad organisational perspective.
- Contentment-dreaming. You need to work where you are, but continue to nurture personal and institutional dreams.

Readers as Leaders in Church and Society

1. What images of leadership have you found helpful?
2. What partnership skills are necessary in your role as leader?
Do you want to learn to dance?

Dancing Video 2
Where the hell is Matt 2012
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pwe-pA6TaZk