



DIOCESE OF
YORK

Reader Training in York Diocese



Following recommendation by the Selection Panel and Bishop, you will begin the journey which leads, in time, to licensing as a Reader and to public ministry in the Diocese. Whilst it is recognised that the expressions of ministry will be many and varied depending upon the gifts of the individual and the context in which they will train and serve, nevertheless much attention has been given in recent years to identifying the distinctive nature of Reader Ministry and ensuring people are adequately prepared to fulfil this calling. The Church of England describes Readers as:

'lay men and women, from a wide diversity of occupations and backgrounds, who recognize a call to serve God and his world through the Church of England. 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 in the world. In collaborative teams with clergy and other church members they work in a variety of situations; in parishes, schools, prisons, hospitals, hospices, factories and shops, among seafarers and in the Armed Forces, with children and young people, the elderly, housebound and bereaved, and with those preparing for baptism, confirmation and marriage.'

The Service for the Admission and Licensing of Readers, in approved 2006, proclaims:

'Readers are called to serve the Church of God and to work together with clergy and other ministers. They are to lead public worship, to preach and teach the word of God, to assist at the Eucharist and to share in pastoral and evangelistic work. As authorised lay ministers they are to encourage the ministries of God's people, as the Spirit distributes gifts among us all. They are called to help the whole Church to participate in God's mission to the world.'

Although the selection and formation criteria for Readers are nationally agreed, there are local variations in how Reader ministry is expressed in each Diocese recognising that it is a ministry which needs to be appropriate for its context. In York Diocese, Reader ministry is interpreted in the context of the Diocesan vision: 'Generous Churches: Making and Nurturing Disciples'. There is an expectation that Readers will model generosity and good discipleship, will help people to grow in Christ-likeness, and will work as part of a ministry team which enables their churches to grow numerically, in influence, in commitment and in partnership. As lay theologians, the distinctive gifting of a Reader in the ministry team is likely to be as a teacher or educator, helping others to learn and grow in faith and understanding of God's Word – disciples who disciple others.

At the heart of Reader Ministry, then, is the call to preach, teach and lead the people in worship and to offer pastoral care, but how these core ministries are used varies from Reader to Reader and parish to parish, depending on gifting and local needs. Any one individual may experience a stronger call to one or more of these roles than to the others but there is an expectation that Readers will exercise all of these gifts at some point in their ministry.

Our approach to Formation for Reader Ministry

Initial Ministerial Education is a term applied to training for both Reader and ordained ministries in the Church of England. We also use the term Reader Studies and more recently have shifted the emphasis towards speaking about Formation for Reader Ministry, which acknowledges that the period of time between selection and licensing and even onwards after licensing, is not simply about providing people with some specific skills, either theological or practical, but rather about helping ministers to grow or to be formed into the likeness of Christ, who is our pattern for ministry. Formation as a term offers a broader concept which encompasses theological, ministerial, spiritual and personal development.

The principles and values which underpin our approach to Formation for Reader Ministry in the diocese are set out in the document *Principles and Values for Reader Formation*. Because the expressions of Reader Ministry are so diverse and also because people come from diverse backgrounds and with varying experience, in York Diocese no 'one size fits all' approach is taken to formation for Reader Ministry and each Reader in training will work with the Director of Reader Studies and their training facilitator to negotiate a programme of study and formation tailored to their experience and context.

We are, however, also firmly committed to the understanding that formation for ministry is most effective when it takes place 'in community' where formation becomes a shared experience as all 'build each other up' and in which there is a sense of accountability and mutual responsibility. To this end there are some aspects of Reader training which are pertinent for everyone and to which all are expected to attend.

What happens after the Discernment Panel?

After receiving your letter from the Bishop recommending you to begin training for Reader ministry, the Director of Reader Studies will contact you to invite you to the annual Formation Weekend at Wydale Hall. During this weekend you will have the opportunity to meet other Readers in training, worship together and take some time to reflect on the new ministry God is calling you to and the shape it will begin to take. There will be a number of specific sessions for those beginning their first year of training in which we:

- Begin to think in more depth about the nature of Reader ministry,
- Consider and begin planning the shape of your parish based training and how you and the parish can handle new expectations,
- Help you to begin to reflect on your experiences and learning
- Introduce you to basic requirements and skills in safeguarding, preaching and leading worship
- Are able to address any immediate questions or concerns that you may have.

The formation plan that you will negotiate with the Director of Reader Studies and your training facilitator will seek to enable you to meet the National 'Phase 1' outcomes for Reader Ministry (these are outlined in the document below). Whilst we noted that each student's programme will be tailored to their experience, context and needs, in broad terms it will encompass three key elements: Theological formation, Ministerial formation and Spiritual and Personal formation. Inevitably these overlap and all the activities and reflections you engage in will address all three, but for ease we describe them separately.

Theological Formation

Is concerned with enabling you to feel confident about modelling and sharing your faith in a wide range of circumstances. We hope the knowledge and understanding you gain will help you to talk about God with those you meet and minister to.

Reader trainees will enrol with the York School of Ministry and for the majority, some or all, of the Diploma in Theology, Mission and Ministry, which runs at our three Hubs in Beverley, Middlesbrough and York, will form a significant element of their theological formation. In the first couple of years, this offers an opportunity to study the Old and New Testaments, look at the beliefs of the Church and how they developed, consider a Christian approach to pastoral care and ethical decision making and explore understandings of and approaches to worship, mission and ministry. For each we explore how they relate to our individual ministry callings and contexts. In years 3 and 4 there is the opportunity to deepen your knowledge and understanding and apply this foundational learning to more specific ministry contexts: revisiting some of the biblical and doctrine studies at a deeper level, exploring in depth approaches to spiritual development, preaching, pastoral care and leadership. You will also undertake an extended placement in a setting different to your home church.



Students who have already undertaken substantial theological study in the past will work with the Director of Reader Studies to formulate a programme of theological study which updates their knowledge and enables them to reflect upon it in the light of this new phase in their Christian discipleship.

Ministerial Formation

In order for you to feel confident representing the Church as Reader you will need to develop further your current ministry skills and develop some new ones. These include leading worship, preaching, assisting with Holy Communion, teaching the faith, offering pastoral support, conducting funerals and acting as a leader in the Church. Much of this learning will take place within the context of your parish or benefice under the guidance of a training facilitator – an experienced minister, who will demonstrate good practice in ministry, be responsible for providing training opportunities and support you in reflecting critically upon your progress.

This can be quite a fluid process and again is different for everybody depending upon your existing skills and the context in which you will minister. To aid the process, Reader trainees negotiate a Ministerial Formation Plan with their incumbent, which lays out over the formation period what experiences you will undertake and when. Each trainee will also receive a Reader File which provides more detailed information about the Reader training programme and guidance about how to reflect on your learning and development in the light of your studies, the feedback you receive and the prayerful attention you give to the process.

During the Formation period you will also have the opportunity to attend training days and weekends which directly address these aspects of ministerial formation and the York School of Ministry modules will also support your learning in this area.

Spiritual and Personal Formation

Formation for ministry is likely to be a period of rapid growth in your understanding of faith, of God, Jesus Christ and the work of the Spirit in your life. You will meet new challenges, both theological and practical and will be called upon to reassess and deepen your relationship with Christ and his call to you to participate in his mission to the world and your local community. This may be at times a little unsettling, but there are plenty of people around to support you through this process and help you to reflect upon it.

The Director of Reader Studies and your training facilitator will be there to guide and support you with any surprises or difficulties you encounter. Trainees undertaking York School of Ministry modules meet regularly and therefore also have ready access to the support of tutors and colleagues. For those following different routes we consider alternative ways to offer such support. In the summer term we meet together for a weekend at Wydale Hall, the Diocesan Retreat House, where we worship, pray, learn and socialise. This is a good opportunity to hear about different experiences, support each other and chat more informally to the Warden and the Director of Reader Studies. In the autumn a Formation Evening, offers a similar opportunity to catch up, mid-year. Trainees are encouraged to meet regularly with their training facilitator discuss their progress and are required to meet formally with their training facilitator at the end of each summer term and with their Sub Warden in each spring term to reflect back on the previous year of training and to identify key area for future development and how they intend to address these. Drawing on the on-going reflections you have been keeping in your Reader training File and the Ministerial Development Plan, will help you to prepare for these meetings.

We also encourage Reader trainees to find and develop a relationship with a Spiritual Director. This is a person whose ministry it is to act as a spiritual guide. They are people with recognised spiritual wisdom and usually many years' experience in the Christian Faith who will help you to reflect upon your on-going relationship with God, your prayer life, your ministry, work and family life. The Director of Reader Studies or your incumbent can advise you how to go about finding a Spiritual Director.

There are details of who currently fulfils the various roles related to Formation for Reader Ministry on the Who's Who page of the Reader section of the Diocesan website