

# Developing Knowledge and Understanding

Many people in the Church will be able to 'do' the practical things Readers do, but not everyone will understand why such things are done or how to change and adapt them as circumstances require. Readers are people who have a wide knowledge and a firm theological grounding, which enables them to preach, teach and act as a theological resource to others.



In York Diocese most people gain this by studying with the York School of Ministry, following the Diploma in Theology, Mission and Ministry programme which is validated by Durham University. This course was developed especially with Reader training in mind and is taught at our regional Hubs in York, Middlesbrough and Beverley. Students learn about theology and ministry by bringing together their experiences in the parish with those gained in taught sessions, through discussions, fieldwork and placement experiences. Learning is assessed through written and practical assignments. More information about the Diploma in Theology, Mission and Ministry Programme is available on the extra sheet, but students generally follow the first 3 years of the course before being licensed and complete the final year as part of their continuing ministerial development.

This programme may not be appropriate for everyone, depending on your previous academic achievements. The Director of Reader Studies will negotiate with you what particular theological study you need to engage in to address your training needs.

# Ongoing Development or Continuing Ministerial Education (CME)

Formation for ministry doesn't stop at licensing as clearly it isn't possible to learn everything you will want to know about ministry and theology in the initial training period. Nowadays most people recognise that learning is life-long and Readers, like Clergy, are encouraged and expected to engage in ongoing study and development. The fourth year of the Foundation Degree offers you a good start here, but there will be many other opportunities in your deanery, archdeaconry, diocese and ecumenically to keep your knowledge, understanding, skills and spiritual life fresh and up to date. The Director of Reader Studies will manage some of this and be able to help you know which might be most helpful for you when you get to that stage, but for now it is important to realise that formation for Reader Ministry is a life long affair.

## Can I do all this?

This may sound rather daunting and some people worry that it is too much to expect Readers, who are voluntary lay ministers, to undertake all this formation and study. We think that our Readers are some of the best trained in the country and the national moderators have agreed with this. Most people who have completed Reader training in the last few years tell us that they found the experience very rewarding, even though it was hard work and they faced some ups and downs. They have appreciated the teaching and learning, the fellowship and the support, all of which has helped them grow in confidence in their service of Christ and his mission and ministry in the world. Don't forget that your programme of training will be tailored to meet your needs and there is a lot of help available. So take heart, if God has called you to Reader ministry then he will equip you with the time, energy, understanding and commitment needed to undertake the training.



# Training for Reader Ministry in York Diocese

**Your training for Reader ministry will have already begun. Throughout life God is forming and equipping all his people for a role within his mission to the world. Once you have been selected for Reader training, however, this process of forming and equipping is more focussed on preparing you to take on a public role in Christian ministry. To do this you will need to develop, both as a Christian and in the role of a Reader, learning new skills and knowledge, but also being transformed into the person God wants you to be within his Church.**

# Formation for Ministry

Much of the learning that occurs will take place in your normal life and church setting, meeting, worshipping and working with the people who recognised your gifts and put you forward for Reader ministry. During your training you will be encouraged to extend your experiences: worshipping in other churches and contexts, meeting people with different understandings of the faith and different approaches to mission and ministry, learning to pray and engage with scripture in new and challenging ways. We call this process Formation for Ministry and it has been described as going on a journey, with all the experiences, excitement and challenges that can open up to us. It is a journey that begins with selection and continues throughout life.

# Negotiating a programme of Study

This process of formation is helped by a number of things and people. After selection the Director of Reader Studies will meet with you to discuss your individual development needs and will negotiate a package of training suited to you. This will depend upon your experiences in the wider Church and your academic abilities.

The normal initial training programme lasts for three years and is funded by the diocese, although you will be expected to pay for transport and books. Reader trainees may, however, follow a variety of other routes.



# The Wydale Weekends

During initial training all Readers will attend an annual residential weekend at Wydale Hall, the diocesan retreat centre near Scarborough, where you have the opportunity to meet and worship with others in training across the diocese, as well as those responsible for your Reader development – the Director of Reader Studies and the Warden of Readers. In the first year this will consist of an induction programme, whilst those in the second and third years will focus on a particular aspect of Reader ministry. Trainees tell us they find this a very helpful and significant part of their training.



# Spiritual Formation

It is your living faith, grounded in Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit which enlivens your worship, informs your preaching and pastoral care and which points others to God. As your initial training progresses you are encouraged to reflect upon your ongoing journey with God, your prayer life and personal spirituality as a disciple of Christ and a minister in his Church.

Trainees are given a Reader File, which outlines all aspects of training and offers space for recording your experiences in Church, study, work and everyday life and for formal reflection on those experiences. The file serves as a way of assessing how your personal spiritual journey is following the route the Church has identified as appropriate for its Readers. At the end of each year you will meet with your Sub-Warden to talk about the file and work through any issues which may have arisen. You may also seek guidance and help from the Director of Reader Studies or the Centre Tutor at your training centre.

# Developing Skills and Competencies

Much of your training will take place in your home parish or the context in which you will serve. From the beginning you are encouraged to gain a wide range of ministerial experiences so that by the time you are licensed you feel confident in preaching and teaching God's word and leading public worship, as well as the pastoral and leadership roles you are likely to undertake in your ministry. Developing the skills of ministry is a gradual process, which comes with time and experience. Your incumbent and other experienced ministers and lay people in the Church will give guidance and feedback, so that you can reflect upon your developing competences and identify areas for further development.

