The Reader: an exploration of the history and present place of Reader ministry in the Church of England

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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[1] http://www.futurechurchsouthcoast.com/index.htm

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ABSTRACT

A substantial part of the Church of England ministry is provided by Readers, but little information is available about their past or present position in the church. This thesis addresses this absence of knowledge by the exploration of Reader history and its contemporary expression.

History is examined using primary and secondary sources. The contemporary place of the Reader is researched through a survey of diocesan Reader Officers and by a longitudinal study of student Readers. Interviews with Readers and clergy from varied backgrounds provide a check on my findings.

Reader ministry is identified as a resource used primarily in crises. When there is no obvious need, the church, unclear as to how to use Reader ministry, is ambivalent and expresses this in the uncertain place it accords to the Reader.

I suggest that living in uncertainty is the natural environment for the church. From this I argue that the ambivalence of the church to Reader ministry may be a symptom of this uncertainty. The Reader therefore has to be trained for and function in an unpredictable context and the Reader's effective actualization of this role provided and provides an essential contribution to the ministry of the Church of England.

I conclude that the Reader represents a trained and available ministerial resource able to work and live with uncertainty and to respond when specific needs arise. Consequently the Reader may be described as holding a unique and vital place in the Church of England, essential for its wellbeing and for its future ministry.

This fresh understanding of Reader ministry provides an opportunity for a reassessment within the church of the place at present ascribed to Readers, together with the identification of appropriate education and training patterns.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

Note: throughout this thesis 'Reader' is used for the Office of Reader; 'reader' is used for all other meanings of the word

ABM	Advisory Board of Ministry
ACCM	Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning: credit given for formally tested prior learning in a recognized education institution (sometimes known as 'prior certificated learning')
APCL	Accreditation of Prior Certified Learning (the same as APL)
APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning: credit given for formally tested prior learning in a recognized educational institution and for professional and life experience where it is relevant to the proposed future course of studies ('prior experiential learning')
CME/CMD	Continuing Ministerial Education/Continuing Ministerial Development
CofE	Church of England
CRB	Central Readers' Board
CRC	Central Readers' Council
GS	General Synod of the Church of England
IME	Initial Ministerial Education
LH	Lower House of Canterbury or York Convocation
LOM	Local Ordained Minister. A priest who is not paid and may be in secular employment and who is licensed specifically to his or her home parish
MSE	Minister in secular employment. The priest or Reader who sees his or her primary ministry within their place of work and who is licensed specifically to this ministry
NSM	Non-Stipendiary Minister. A deacon or priest who is not paid and may be in secular employment and who at the same time is licensed to a parish or a special post in the church.

OLM	Ordained Local Minister, the same as L.O.M
PCC	Parochial Church Council.
PTO	Permission to Officiate. Usually clergy and Readers are not Licensed to a parish or to a specific post in the church after the age of 70, but the bishop issues 'Permission to Officiate' which authorizes them to function as a priest or Reader wherever and whenever they are invited to do so in the diocese
RCC	Representative Church Council. Formed in 1903 as a representative and deliberative body. This body prepared the way for the Enabling Act of 1919 and the formation of the Church Assembly
RTP	Regional Training Partnership. The grouping of dioceses, whereby in each group the number of training courses and colleges are limited to a small number of viable units. Where appropriate, combined clergy, Reader and Local Preacher training is provided for the Church of England and Methodist Churches (and possibly the United Reformed Church)
UH	Upper House of Canterbury or York Convocation

INTRODUCTION

Reader ministry today occupies a numerically strong place in the ministry of the Church of England. The latest available figures at the time of writing this introduction show that Readers account for 40% of the total Licensed and Authorized ministry of the Church of England which includes Stipendiary, part-time and non-Stipendiary clergy, Ordained Local Ministers, Readers and Church Army Evangelists.[2]

Despite this significant numerical place in the ministry of the church, there is a wide variation in the use and distribution of Readers across the dioceses of the Church of England. For example there are parishes where Readers rarely assist in the Sunday worship or in parish work, and there are parishes where they are fully involved in every aspect of ministry, apart from that which is legally the preserve of the priest. Occasionally a Reader is appointed as minister-in-charge of a parish. This variation in Reader ministry is reflected in the place accorded to Readers in diocesan policies and structures. (Archbishops' Council 2008b p. 10, Thorpe 2003 p. 49)

Hiscox describes the work of Readers as, a 'Kaleidoscope' (Hiscox 1991 p. 3), and supports this by describing situations where Readers are underworked, or have a regular ministry, or where they work in hospital, prison or industrial settings. She also notes that 'Readers were sometimes a focus of mistrust and resentment from both laity and clergy' (Ibid p. 34) but she states that by the time of the 1966 centenary of the re-introduction of Readers.

> Readers in general had moved on from a stop-gap ministry to a lay ministry in its own right, working in partnership with clergy and laity in the service of God. (Hiscox 1991 pp. 3-5 and 34)

This study confirms the breadth of Reader ministry in church and community but it also shows that Hiscox was over optimistic in stating that Readers had moved on and

[2] Based on the figures supplied for 2006 in the Church of England Year Book 2008 pp. xliii – xlvi. The *Reader Upbeat* Report (Archbishops' Council 2008) gives a figure of 36% but this includes retired but active clergy and Readers (Ibid p. 13)

were 'working in partnership with clergy and laity' because, although there may be many in that situation, there are those who do not have this experience of shared ministry.

My own understanding of the work of Readers and their place in the church has developed through contact with Readers over a long period of time in which I have met men and women Readers ministering in church, hospital, school or prison, at times rarely used, at other times over-used, frequently finding themselves in the undefined area between clergy and laity and at times bearing evidence for Carr's suggestion that, 'this ministry (Reader ministry) is used as a sump into which unresolved questions may be poured'. (Carr 1985 p. 110)

My first experience of working with a Reader as a colleague was very positive. Philip Riley's reflections on his scientific industrial background and his personal faith enriched his sermons and contributed to the understanding of the congregation, and his willingness to speak with a lay voice to me, his incumbent and colleague, frequently brought me down-to-earth and contributed to my understanding of our shared work on a large London Council Housing Estate.

This contribution by a Reader to our shared ministry was an experience that was to be repeated in a number of the parishes where I worked as a parish priest but then, as I had the opportunity to widen my ministry, I met situations where the Reader was kept in the background, or his or her contribution to the life of the local church or deanery was undervalued. I also met clergy who claimed to know nothing about Reader ministry or who thought that it was of no real value. This mixed response was confirmed when I worked across diocesan boundaries, looking in particular at the education and training provided for student Readers. The church appeared to be undecided how to use Reader ministry and expressed this indecision in its ambivalent approach and through the uncertain place it accorded to the Reader in the church.

These experiences led to the question, 'what is the place of the Reader in the church?' I found the legal answer in the Canons E 4-6 of the Church of England (Appendix Two of this study) and in the Bishops' Regulations (Appendix Three). These

Canons and Regulations made clear the division between Reader and clerical ministries and the many other lay ministries of the church together with the requirements for admission as a Reader and the work he or she may or may not do. Canon Law governs both clergy and Readers and Admission to the Office of Reader is for life as is Ordination to the Priesthood although the exercise of each of their ministries is dependent on a bishop's licence. [3]

Although these legal and Episcopal documents provided a framework for Reader ministry they did not explain the uncertainty about the place and practice of Reader ministry that was my concern. I discovered from published moderation reports (ABM 1994, Archbishops' Council 1999 , Thorpe 2003) and from personal experience, that the training courses offered by the 44 dioceses of the Church of England varied in content and approach, the majority exhibiting a lack of clarity about the task for which the students were being prepared. This variation could be of little importance, simply reflecting the variety that is an essential part of the character of the Church of England (Sykes 1995 p. 224). However, the number of Readers in the ministry of the Church of England, their individual commitment and the breadth of their ministry, suggested a disjunction between the importance of this ministry in the national church and the varied approach adopted by the individual dioceses.

Further to this a literature search produced very little information about Reader ministry when compared with the extensive and available literature about priesthood and, to a lesser degree, that which was available about the ministry of the laity. I was therefore led to the conclusion, from this initial search and from my own experience that Reader ministry represented a gap in the understanding of the total ministry of the Church of England for which there was no clear explanation.

[3] To officially withdraw from the priesthood or from the Office of Reader both require a lengthy legal process although the Priest or the Reader can both be deposed 'by a bishop on sufficiently grave cause'. (re priests – Halisbury 1957 p. 186). The Clergy Disciplinary Measure or CDM, as its name indicates is concerned only with clergy. There is no comparable Measure for Readers although a Reader could find himself or herself in a situation of being accused of financial, sexual or relationship problems, which could bring 'scandal' to church and community or which could be shown to have no basis in fact.

This lack of information about Readers, the varied educational approach between dioceses, the policy, deliberate or by default, of using and of ignoring the work of the Reader and my initial literature search which showed Readers appearing, disappearing and then reappearing over time, all contributed to the motivation for my exploration of the place of the Reader in the Church of England.

If this exploration was to be of use to the contemporary church it would require a rigorous approach and so I sought and obtained support to pursue further research on a part-time degree basis within the School of Education and the Department of Theology and Religious Studies in the University of Leeds.

Following my observation of the apparently ill-defined place of the Reader within the church, three questions emerged as a base for research. First, 'what is the significance of the changing relationship of the Reader and Reader ministry with the Church of England's national, local and theological position over time?' Secondly, 'what is the place of Reader education in this relationship; is it important and how far does it reflect the understanding of Reader ministry held by the church?' Thirdly, 'what is the significance of the continuing commitment of Readers to their ministry within an uncertain and ambivalent setting?'

Initially I expected that the answers to these three questions would provide a clear definition of the place of the Reader in the church. However very soon into the research, my reading and my continued reflection on previous experience led me to recognise two important elements in this exploration. The first was that any definition that emerged would have to be continually reshaped as I explored the episodic nature of Reader ministry within the wider ministry of the church. The second was that there appeared to be an underlying sense of continuity in the response of the Reader to the varied demands made on him or her by the church.

The consequence of the recognition of these factors was that it became clear that this study would not follow a logical step-by-step development of Reader ministry but would pursue a changing or fluid line through time and into the contemporary situation. It was therefore unlikely that the emerging pattern of episodic

development and fluidity would provide any definitive answers to the research questions or to the basic question of 'what is the place of the Reader and Reader ministry in the Church of England?'

However the three research questions, whilst not necessarily producing direct answers, represent areas of ministry in the church that have not previously been tackled. They could therefore produce information and a fresh understanding of the Reader and Reader ministry in the church that would provide a basis for future research and application.

Despite the caveats I have listed about the value of the research questions in themselves I have used them as guiding lines for the study.

For the first question I took an historical approach, examining what Readers were doing, or not doing, in those periods of time when they occupied an authorized place in the church's ministry, with the important corollary, 'how was the church using Readers at these times?' The history of Reader ministry, from its earliest days to the present, provides a major component of this thesis and I suggest that it is basic to any understanding of the place of the Reader in the church, particularly because it shows the non-sequential episodical nature of Reader ministry. Primary and secondary historical and contemporary, literary and archival sources provided the evidence for this section of the thesis.

My second question depends on the understanding that the education of a Reader at any time indicates the role and task the Reader is expected to hold and fulfil in the church. Literary and archival sources provided an historical understanding of this question and the contemporary scene was explored by a questionnaire sent to the Wardens of Readers and Directors of Training in every diocese of the Church of England. Interviews with a cohort of Reader Students provided further insights into Reader education and expectations.

The third question recognized the commitment of Readers to their ministry even when there was a lack of clarity about their role and task. Addressing this question

exposed the personal factor in Reader ministry and raised questions about lay and clerical authority in the church. This question was present to a lesser or greater degree in each chapter of the thesis.

From the beginning I recognized that I was researching and writing about a lay office from the standpoint of an ordained minister, although my role was strictly that of a researcher. This issue came to the fore in interviews with Reader students (chapter 5) when it was necessary to negotiate appropriate boundaries. Recognition of my position as an ordained person was essential because the lay-clergy divide regularly surfaced as an issue during the research process.

My initial research, arising partially from my own role in Reader training, focused on the uncertainty in the training process and on the educational aspects of the preparation for Reader ministry,[4] but in a short time I recognized that this research raised institutional and historical questions that directly affected Reader ministry and training. I therefore identified the need to consider the context for Reader ministry, namely the Church of England.

My understanding of the Church of England, as an institution, is that it has changed through time but it remains the established church in law, and responds to the needs of the nation when asked to do so. Its buildings and liturgy reflect elements of the history and traditional values of society and it engages in a prophetic ministry when it draws attention to injustice and need. (Bion 1961 p. 156 ff) It is this institution in which Readers are trained and on behalf of which they exercise their ministry.

The complicated relationship between individual members, Readers in this case, and an institution was spelt out by Bruce Reed almost 30 years ago.

[4] I first defined the purpose of the research as 'to develop an appropriate learning and training pattern for Readers based on an examination of the issues relating to Reader selection, training and work'.

> An institution is thus constituted by a shared idea, held in the minds of individuals, whose idea includes a reference to their own position with respect to the institution, as members or non-members, owners, employees, consumers, competitors or merely observers. Whilst institutions are constituted by ideas, this does not mean that they are hallucinations which are dismissed as easily as the court of the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland.* They impinge upon us through the behaviour of those who hold them to exist, and on occasions through the agents of law which legitimate their existence. (Reed 1978 p. 43)

My application of this understanding of an institution to this study and to the answer of the three research questions was to see the changing role of the Church of England in the life of the nation, at local and national level, as a major factor in the uncertainty of the place of the Reader in the church. Obholzer observes the effect of changes in the context of an institution or organization on the structures and goals of its members.

> ... at a time of change, the basic structure of the organization, its task, its changes and risk to the workers, the hopes and expectations of the founders, and so on, have to be recovered or rediscovered and unconscious matters dealt with before the organization is in a fit state to move to the next phase of its existence ... My experience is that the pressure for change is almost invariably a pressure from 'outside' – thus, a pressure from the other side of the institutional boundary is perceived. (Obholzer 2004 p. 27)

For this study I viewed the church as an institution within the nation and I was aware that in Obholzer's terms, 'the other side of the institutional boundary' was a multi-cultural, multi-faith society within which, amongst other factors, there was a growth in individualism, in disillusion with established leadership, in the rapid development of information technology and in the displacement of authority and power to the international scene. To this could be added a small but active militant fundamentalism and Perry writes that, 'the delicate balance between the religious and the secular has, in the space of a generation, tilted sharply in favour of the secular' (Perry 2004 p. 107). It is in this changing church and national context that Readers are trained and minister.[5]

As the research continued the relationship of the Reader and the national church in which she or he works emerged as a complex process leading to my describing the 'official' (Episcopal and Synodical) church's response to Reader ministry and training

[5] An excellent description and theological consideration of the response of the Church of England to these changes as it affects different aspects of ministry can be found in Gordon Kuhrt 2001. *Mapping the trends, Ministry issues for the Church of England*.

as ‘ambivalent’ (“the co-existence in one person’s mind of opposing feelings”. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1990 p. 34) This concept of ambivalence appears throughout the study as a major factor in understanding the place of the Reader in the church. I show that it is seen in the process by which the church uses Readers at times of crisis but then rejects or displaces them when the particular need has been met and also in the progressive authorization of Readers to take on many of the functions previously the prerogative of the clergy.

During the research I recognized from my own experience, and from evidence produced by the Wardens and students, that there are those who see no value in Reader ministry. However the evidence also suggested that the official church and many church members wish to retain Readers as part of the authorized ministry of the church despite the ambivalence outlined above.

This varied response, plus further consideration of the complex relationship between the church as an institution and Reader ministry as part of that institution, led me to consider the proposition that Readers provided a unique and valuable, but unacknowledged and often hidden ministry, for the church. The hallmark of this ministry was the Reader’s willingness to live and work with ambivalence and uncertainty, and, in the process, to hold unresolved problems on behalf of the wider church. (Carr 1985 p. 110) This response of Readers, set against difficulties the wider church might be facing, can be observed at several stages of this thesis.

In support of this, the late Dick Herrick, Provost of Chelmsford Cathedral and a Tavistock Institute Consultant, often defined faith as ‘living with uncertainty’. If this is true of the outworking of the task of the church, and therefore of its component parts, I recognised that the outcome of this thesis will not be a suggested resolution of the ambivalence of the church to Reader ministry but rather the acceptance of ambivalence as an essential part of the institution. This allows Readers to see their ministry as a flexible one which can live with uncertainty and enables them to respond to changing and fluctuating demands at a local level, thereby freeing the institution of the church to respond to wider contextual issues.

Shapiro identifies another possible factor in the ambivalence of the church towards Reader ministry, the fear of conflict.

> In the Church, the desire to avoid conflict both in parochial matters and in relationships in the diocese can often be a recipe for atrophy. (Shapiro 2004 p. 118)

I accept this as a further dynamic in the church that makes it very difficult for the church to openly face the questions posed by Reader ministry because it is possible that the clergy-lay division may be experienced as conflict.

Faced with a growing awareness of the complexity of the developing study and in response to the research questions I engaged with the exploration of the place of the Reader in the church through a multi-perspective approach. First an historical investigation addressed the first question using literature and archives which provided information about the sequential historical background to Reader ministry and its interaction with and on behalf of its parent institution, the church. Secondly a survey, in the form of a questionnaire, addressed to those responsible for Reader ministry and training in the dioceses of the Church of England produced a contemporary picture of the place of Reader ministry and Reader education in the church. Finally a longitudinal study of a cohort of 11 Reader students, over the three years of their training course provided, through individual annual interviews, information about their experience of the learning process together with their perceptions and understanding of Reader ministry. Both the survey and the interviews addressed questions two and three which were about Reader education and individual commitment.

I inserted two additional chapters in this thesis. The first is 'Testing the Themes' in which I considered the information and viewpoints put forward in a limited number of interviews with men and women who have contact with Reader ministry in a variety of ways, academic, organizational, from another church and as a Reader. I then examined the extent to which their responses confirmed or modified the themes that I had identified at that stage in the research. Because the structure of the Church of England ministry is in the process of considerable change I have also

included an 'update' chapter in which I describe contemporary changes and scrutinise them in the light of the findings of this thesis.
In the final chapter I outline some of the questions raised in this thesis that warrant further research. This is followed by a summary of the argument of the thesis and my conclusions.

The thesis starts with a major section on Reader history, spread over two chapters. In the first of these two chapters I examine the written evidence for the place of Readers in the church and draw attention to the absence of any reference to Readers in many of the standard books on ministry; I argue that this is an indication of the ambivalent attitude of the church to Reader ministry.

In the second chapter I develop an historical account of Reader ministry, particularly in relation to the place of the Reader in the Church. In conjunction with this the *Timeline for Reader Ministry* in Appendix One provides an outline of Reader ministry within its political and social setting from the pre-Christian era to the 21st century.

As part of this historical account I examine some of the ways in which the needs of church and society have been met by Readers and the way they have been used to engage with major problems at the local level, freeing the church leadership to develop longer lasting strategies.

I start this historical journey with the identification and evaluation of the roots of Reader ministry in the Synagogue and the early church and then move onto the study of the introduction and the re-introduction, the disappearance and the changing terms of reference of the Office of the Reader in Elizabethan times, in Victorian times and in the 20th and 21st centuries.

I believe that this historical exploration contributes to an understanding of the place of the Reader in the church of today and it provides the foundation for the rest of the study.

The analysis of the returns to the survey from the principal Reader officers in the dioceses in the Church of England follows and provides a contemporary picture of Reader ministry and training, showing the different approaches that exist across the dioceses. From this I identify a number of the elements that further contribute to the ambivalent place of the Reader in the church.

The third major section of this thesis is based on a series of interviews with student Readers. These provided information about the knowledge and skills the church expects of those in training together with the students' personal assessments of the place of the Reader in the church. This material revealed a dissonance between the task of the Reader as indicated by the training content and delivery, and the task for which the students believed they were being trained.

I also looked at the different responses of the individuals to the course over the three years and at changes in the cohort as a group and in its members. These changes showed how the student Readers operated in a functional role for the church but at the same time they were conscious of fulfilling personal vocations.

These interviews exposed some of the problems that can arise when an episcopally authorized lay ministry works alongside the ordained ministry. They also made very clear the ongoing commitment of the individual student Reader, 'come what may'!

The chapter that follows the cohort study analyses interviews with a small cross section of individuals involved in Reader ministry. These meetings suggested that a number of Readers exercised their ministry primarily within the work place or the community providing a bridge between the everyday world and the church. This role had already emerged as the thesis developed and those interviewed also confirmed the reality of several other identified themes. In particular most of the interviewees reflected on the difficulty the church experiences in fitting Reader ministry into its organization and theology.

The final chapter in this thesis, prior to the Conclusion, provides an update on Reader ministry. The update shows a move into modern educational theory in Reader

training, Readers taking over more of the functions previously the prerogative of the clergy and the need and the opportunity for the Reader to be the persona, or minister representative of the church, in a village or community. However there was no observable evidence in the contemporary reports and discussions that the boundaries between the ministry of clergy, Readers and other laity had been examined in any depth within the contemporary situation. Neither could I find any indication that Readers were seen to be handling certain issues on behalf of the church, although this is shown, in the thesis, to be frequently the case.

The identification of the unwillingness of the church to face the ontological question of Priesthood and Laity, highlighted by the presence of Readers in the church, may have part of its source in Percy's comment that 'ministerial identity' so often imagines itself to be of a different *species* to the laity'. (Percy 2006 p. 182)

Prior to my conclusions to the study I draw attention to questions that have emerged in process of the research but which I have been unable to tackle. I suggest that work on these and similar issues could throw further light on the place of Reader ministry in the church.

A summary of the study then follows leading into my conclusions. In the conclusions I show that lay men and women are prepared to accept an authorized and public leadership role in the life of the church whenever the church calls on them, a step that in recent years and today may require a considerable commitment to training. I show that the recourse by the church at such times to Reader minister is either the result of a decision that its clergy are not effective in certain areas or that the church is understaffed or that it feels threatened. The corollary to this is an essential part of this thesis, namely that the church has great difficulty in coming to terms with Reader ministry when it is not overtly needed.

I suggest however that the church's indefinite response to Readers and Reader ministry may be directly related to the concept that the church's function includes that of living with uncertainty and ambivalence within society. The Reader is therefore also being asked to live with uncertainty and ambivalence and to provide a

ministerial local resource that is available, adaptable and trained for any need that might be presented.

I conclude with the recognition that this thesis, which examined the episodic yet fluid line of Reader ministry in the church, has only touched the surface of the complex inter-relationship of the church's various forms of ministry. However I have explored, and to a degree clarified, one particular and largely unexplored area of ministry, that is the ministry provided by Readers.

The willingness of Readers to respond as needed and to enter unknown zones perhaps justifies the description provided by one interviewee who suggested that Readers are 'The Territorials of the church.'

CHAPTER ONE
ENGAGING WITH THE HISTORY OF READER MINISTRY

I have already indicated that an understanding of the history of Readers and Reader ministry is essential in addressing the issues raised by the research questions. However my search for information about the history of Readers and Reader ministry produced two puzzling results. The first of these was the limited number of literary sources that dealt directly with Reader ministry and the second was the absence of any reference to Readers in a large number of authoritative books on ministry and on church history.

Amongst the limited literature that referred directly to Readers, Wordsworth (1901), *Ministry of Grace* included a major section about Readers, and two publications in the 1930s dealt specifically with Reader ministry, Williams 1932, *A History of the Reader Movement in the Church of England* and Williams 1934, *The Case for Lay Ministry in the Church of England*. A further six publications from 1964 to 2002 dealt with Reader ministry from various standpoints. (Jack 1964, King 1973, Martineau 1980, Hiscox 1991, Usher 1999 and Kuhrt and Nappin 2002.) Further information was provided in a number of reports and papers produced from the 1860s to the present, and from 1904 Readers had their own magazine.

The Timeline, (Appendix One) correlates significant dates in the history of Reader ministry with church and national events and with Reader related publications. For example Wordsworth's book, with its academic rooting of Reader ministry in history, was published at a time when Reader ministry was being regularized and recognized as part of the ministerial provision of the Church of England. There was therefore a need to confirm its historical provenance, something that is important within the ethos of the Church of England. Williams' two books came at a time when the role of the Reader was seen as simply that of assistant to the clergy. Here the need was to assert the importance and breadth of Reader ministry, and its existence within every diocese of the Church of England.

It could be argued that limited literary sources simply reflect the fact that Reader ministry was important only at certain times in the history of the church, and then only for those directly involved with Readers, otherwise it was of no consequence in the life of the church. Alternatively Readers could be seen as representing a pragmatic response to particular needs and because Reader ministry by its nature raised questions about authority and the clergy-lay divide, there was a reluctance to engage in print with issues that could be divisive in the church.

However I do not consider that either of these explanations to be adequate and this study will show that although the place of the Reader in the church is different at different times, the Reader's availability and response was, and is, essential in enabling the church deal with specific issues as they arise. Nevertheless, there appears to be a reticence in the church, having appointed Readers when needed, to engage with the implications of having introduced this particular lay authorized ministry.

Further to the book search the internet provided a contemporary source of direct information about Readers and the search for relevant theses and dissertations produced three that were of interest.

As the research progressed it became evident that the national and ecclesiastical context within which Reader ministry operated and now operates was a major factor in determining the place of the Reader in the church. This wider context was also a key contributory element to the episodical nature of Reader ministry. Because of this I consulted a number of publications that engage with history in general and the history of the ministry of the church in particular.

THE LITERATURE

As I have already indicated there are few literary sources devoted specifically to the history of Reader ministry from its earliest days, although information is available about the political, social and church background within which Reader ministry functioned. King, whose book *Readers: A Pioneer Ministry* (1973) has been used by

many as the definitive source for the history of Reader ministry, commented on this lack of data.

> It probably seems a bold and astonishing assertion to make, that many of the leading authorities on the history of the ministry of the Church have completely ignored one important branch of that ministry (Readers), perhaps even its oldest branch. (King 1973 p. 45)

King substantiated this claim by reference to a number of recognised authoritative works on church history and ministry which ignored Reader ministry – Lightfoot (1885), Swete (1918 but reference to Readers after the 3rd century), Headlem (1937) and Kirk (1946 but passing references to Readers in fourth and 16th centuries) and more recently Frend (1965) and Henry Chadwick (1967). I would add to this list Russell (1980), Carr (1985 passing reference), Macquarrie (1986), Melinsky (1992 passing reference) and Ward (2000).

A number of reports relating to Reader ministry have been published over the last 150 years and these, together with 19th and 20th century manuscripts kept in the Lambeth Palace Library Archives, provided primary sources for research.

The literature that I eventually used to build up a picture of Reader ministry is detailed below; first that which gives an overall picture of the history of Reader ministry and then the material available for each separate historical section. Inevitably there is some overlap between these two sections.

<u>A comprehensive Reader history, from the Jewish Synagogue to the 20th century</u>

Three books fall into this category, two by W.S.Williams, a London Diocesan Reader who was a member of the Central Readers' Board and Hon. Secretary to the London Readers' Board and one by Canon T.G.King, a parish priest and Honorary Secretary of the Central Readers' Board.

A History of the Reader Movement ("Lay Readers") in the Church of England (in the Provinces of Canterbury, York and Wales) by Williams was published in 1932. Williams devotes two and a half pages to the period from the Primitive Church to

1866, 25 pages from 1866 to 1932, 57 pages to Diocesan Histories in this latter period and four pages on the future. The Diocesan Histories clearly show the variation in the understanding of Reader ministry that was present in the Church of England in the late 1920s. In his second book, *The Case for the Lay Ministry of the Church of England*, published in 1934, Williams amplifies his history of Readers and his references and footnotes make this a helpful source. Many of Williams' references quote John Strype (1643-1737), an Anglican priest who had access to many earlier manuscripts and who arranged these manuscripts into a series of biographies and accounts of the church in the 16th and 17th century, including "The life and acts of Matthew Parker".[6] This history of Archbishop Matthew Parker was published in three volumes in 1821 and it is this edition that is quoted by most commentators.

As I have already indicated, it can be seen from the Timeline (Appendix One) that Williams published his books when Reader ministry had a low profile in the country. His introduction to his second volume may represent a felt need to establish the identity of the Reader but his comments resonate in many ways with the conclusions of this study.

> From my knowledge and experience I feel strongly that what needs to be established is the fact that the Lay Ministry of the Church of England is a real and catholic ministry differing only in degree and not in kind from the ordained ministry; that it is, in fact, a vital part of the Church's organization, and that the Church will never fulfil her mission until she recognises her Lay Ministry (Readers) to the full. (Williams 1934 Introd.)

The third book that covers the whole history of Reader Ministry is King's, *Readers: A Pioneer Ministry*, published in 1973. King's opening chapter is headed 'What is a Reader?' and to answer this he goes back to the Synagogue and the primitive church and then through the centuries to the 1970s and in the process describes a situation which confirms the ambivalence of the established church to the Reader (pp72-75, 84,85). King's treatment of the history of Readers is exhaustive and enlightening and, as already indicated, he is quoted frequently by recent writers but he does not always give references for his sources and therefore it proved difficult to follow up some of his arguments.

[6] Matthew Parker was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury by Queen Elizabeth I and in 1559/60 was responsible for the reintroduction of Readers as a Lay Office into the Church of England.

I now move on to look at some of the literature that explores specific stages in the history of Readers and Reader ministry, Chadwick 1967, Cross and Livingstone 1997, Jones, Wainwright and Yarnold 1978, MacLean 1910, Neibuhr and Williams 1956, Smith 1984, Swete 1918, Wand 1949, Williams 1934, and, Wordsworth 1901.

The Synagogue and the Primitive church to the 18th century

Synagogue worship and the Primitive church are considered by Williams in *The Case for the Lay Ministry of the Church of England* (1934). His treatment of this period of time, giving all sources, is at a greater depth than in his publication of 1932. Williams does not claim more for the influence of the synagogue than 'the Christian Church inherited and for a time adopted the Jewish practice of reading in the congregation by laymen.' (Williams 1934 p. 4). Nevertheless the case is made for the practice of a layperson taking a leading role in the worship and, because the early church based much of its liturgy on synagogue worship (Jones, Wainwright and Yarnold 1978 p. 39), I suggest that the place of the lay leadership in Synagogue services may be a contributory factor in the introduction of Readers in the early church.

Not having access to original manuscripts and lacking the necessary linguistic skills, for many of the early church references I have used *New Eusebius* (Stevenson 1987). This provides translations of many early documents including a number that refer to Readers or Lectors (Latin: lector = reader). There are also direct or passing references to Readers or Lectors in MacLean (1910), Neibuhr and Williams (1956), Swete (1918), Cross and Livingstone (1997). There can be no question that Readers were part of the ministry provision of the early church and in chapter two of this study their part in the life of that early church is spelt out in some detail.

John Wordsworth, Bishop of Salisbury, collated and re-wrote a series of addresses he delivered to Clergy and Churchwardens in his fifth visitation of his diocese in 1900. The resulting book, *The Ministry of Grace (*1901) provides a comprehensive study of Christian ministry, including a number of references to Readers, usually using primary

sources. He established that the Office of Reader was a specific office within the structures of the early church but also noted its eventual demise as a lay office.
Other books consulted for this period provided background material although they make few direct references to Readers. These include, Chadwick, H (1967), Jones, Wainwright and Yarnold (1978), Smith(1984), Wand (1949).

Williams (1934) and King (1973) describe the reintroduction of lay Readers at the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth I and their descriptions suggest that this reintroduction was because of national as well as ecclesiastical needs. I therefore looked for background material to this period of time and the books I consulted included Bindoff (1950), Dickens (1967), Doran (2003), Duffy (1992, 2001), Edwards (1983), Palliser (1983), Rosman (2003), Tittler and Jones (2004) and Trevalyn (1944). All of these authors provided a documented description of a rapidly changing society with religion being used to bring stability and uniformity within the nation, although the inter-relationship of religion and other factors was dependent on the author's interpretation of the available evidence.

Direct references to Readers were found in Kennedy's (1908) biography of Archbishop Parker and Collinson's (1979) biography of Archbishop Grindal. Collinson noted that Grindal was not enamoured of Readers and England was putting up with 'readers instead of teachers' (Collinson 1979 p. 113) but he also provided a picture of Readers who were manning parishes single-handed.[7]

Kennedy seeks to correct inaccuracies in Strype's volume on Parker by referring to earlier manuscripts and at the same time to provide a book that 'would appeal to the general reader' (Kennedy 1908 p. vii). He places the re-introduction of Reader ministry within the ecclesiastical and political pressures of the time and sees it as a 'temporary necessity' (Ibid p. 116). In both of these biographies it is clear that the Reader ministry was introduced in the 16th century in answer to a shortage of clergy,

[7] 'In London diocese thirty-nine readers were listed in Grindal's primary visitation, almost all of them in Essex, and all but a few were manning parishes single-handed.' (Collinson 1979 p. 113)

and both books clearly spell out the nature of this need and the uncertainties surrounding the introduction of Readers.

Jones (2000) provides an understanding of the place of Readers in the local parish in the Elizabethan period and of their continuation into the early 18th century. Williams (1932, 1934) gives a documented account of Reader ministry in this period and identifies its continuation until the last quarter of the 18th century. Usher, in a paper presented to The Ecclesiastical History Society and published in 1999, provides a detailed examination of 'The Elizabethan Lay Reader'. I found Usher's paper both clear and comprehensive but his work appears to be concentrated on the southern half of the country and shows no awareness of the continuation of Reader ministry in the North; nevertheless his research contributes considerably to our understanding of the place of the Reader in the Elizabethan period.

It is clear in all of the references to Readers in this period that they were regarded initially as an immediate and pragmatic answer to a need in the church and country. The Readers took on the role of a 'holding ministry' whilst the monarchy, the church and political leaders sought to bring stability to church and nation. Usher et al make it clear that when a degree of stability was established and educated clergy were available, Readers were allowed to disappear from the scene.

The re-introduction of the Office of Reader in 1866 through to 1919

There are many relevant publications for this period of time and the books consulted included The Lay Reader magazine (first published as "The Reader and Lay Worker" in January 1904), Green (1996), Edwards (1984), Gore (1889), Hiscox (1991), King (1973), Lawton (1989), McManners (1990), Paul (1973), Robinson (1904), Russell (1980), Williams (1932, 1934), Wilkinson (1978).

The Reader Magazine, under its different titles,[8] provided and continues to provide an insight into how Readers respond to changes within church and nation and to their

[8] 1904 *The Reader and Lay Worker*, 1906 *The Lay Reader*, 1946 *The Reader*

ready reaction to need, a response that was particularly noticeable during both world wars.

King and Williams treat the re-introduction of Reader ministry and its subsequent development in some depth, and the diocesan information included by Williams (1932, pp 30-87) confirms the diversity of training and expectations of Reader ministry throughout the Church of England. Hiscox (1991) gives a clear account of the introduction of Reader ministry but she goes beyond this to describe the background of many of the Readers and their eventual ministry. Unfortunately Wilkinson, despite a very thorough examination of the church and the First World War makes no reference to Readers.

The situation described in these publications, particularly in the earlier part of this period, is of a church that was on the defensive against intellectual attacks and the move for disestablishment and at the same time was out of touch with a large proportion of the populace.

The correspondence of Archbishops Longley, Benson and Davidson, held in Lambeth Palace Library, confirmed that the re-introduction of Reader ministry in the 19th century was in answer to this crisis in the life of the church. The archives provided information about the lead-up to the re-introduction of the Office of Reader and its subsequent development and they also showed that there was uncertainty about this step amongst some clergy. These clergy were anxious about the concept of lay leadership in worship and in preaching and there was also an expressed uncertainty about the role and place of Reader ministry in the structures and organization of the church. (Davidson 1901 72. f92, 1904 95. f304)

The use of Readers to answer liturgical and pastoral needs in both World Wars, evidenced by the Lambeth Palace Archives and the Lay Reader magazine was often by default and not because of any deliberate decision by the established church. Readers frequently responded to a manpower shortage in the church and took on roles previously in the hands of the clergy. Although Paul (1973), Russell (1980), Wilkinson (1978) et al consider the effect of the war on the ministry of the Church of England, it

is significant that none refer to Reader ministry, and I was again faced with the evidence of Readers exercising a valuable role in the life of the church yet somehow remaining invisible. The evidence suggests that the church was willing to use but not to acknowledge the ministry of Readers.

The Enabling Act to 1989

The Enabling Act was introduced in 1920, and in the newly created Church Assembly, the Church of England was able to legislate for itself in many areas, although its measures had still to be approved by Parliament. The Church Assembly consisted of a house of laity, a house of clergy and a house of bishops with most of the membership of the houses of laity and clergy being elected to their office.

The direct effect of these changes on Reader ministry resulted from a series of regulations that were introduced in 1921, but there was also an indirect local effect because other laity, through the Parochial Church Councils, had to agree to the initial application for training by the Reader candidate. Again King (1973), Williams (1932, 1934) and the Lay Reader Magazine are important sources for this period of time. Books also consulted were Edwards (1984), Furlong (2000), Hastings (1991) and Henson (1939). Paul (1973) is very clear in his description of the working of the Enabling Act and the period following but does not refer to Readers.

The Second World War presented manpower problems for the church with many clergy joining the armed forces either as combatants or as chaplains. Readers took on major responsibilities at home and a number became chaplains to the forces. I was able to obtain information about this period of time in the Archives at Lambeth Palace, in the pages of 'The Lay Reader' magazine and from an autobiographical account by a Reader (Keiser, 1995). Keiser's description of being placed in sole charge of a church and parish as a Reader with virtually no training, showed clearly the church's pragmatic use of a Reader in order to answer a particular crisis.

In 1970 Robert Martineau, published *The Office and Work of a Reader.* This was written primarily for Readers but Martineau engaged with the many factors that were

affecting the total ministry of the church at that time and spells out the resulting patterns of ministry and training in the pairs that were emerging, eg 'Whole-time ministers and 'part-time ministers'; 'A highly trained ministry and a ministry less highly trained'. He then examined each of his 13 pairings with reference to the present and possible ministry of Readers. The picture of Reader ministry that emerged from this work was of a ministry that was essentially lay, that depended on a 'calling', that was a resource for the church and that frequently operated in a bridge position between church, community and work, and between clergy and laity. Martineau devoted the major part of the book that follows this introduction to the practicalities of being a Reader, the opportunities for various styles of ministry and the Reader's continued learning and spiritual life.

Martineau also provided an Appendix that gives an overview of the place and work of Readers in other provinces of the Anglican Church at that time and which varied from limited assistance for the priest to being the 'minister' in a community. The comprehensive picture of Reader ministry and its potential provided by Martineau, later to be the Bishop of Blackburn, received a wide circulation, requiring a second edition and a revised edition in 1980 and in its content Martineau refers to or addresses many of the issues that affect Reader ministry at this time.

1987 saw the production of a report on *Education for the Church's Ministry.* (ACCM 22, 1987), but Reader ministry and training were not mentioned unless they were included in the general description of laity, '...the Church of England is committed therefore to a ministry of the whole people of God and within that to an ordained ministry.' (ACCM 1987, p28) This may be a further indication of the reticence of the Church of England in identifying the place of the Reader, and with it Reader training, or it may simply represent the accepted definition of 'ministry' as meaning that of the ordained person. However Readers were to have their own report on Training two years later.

1989 to the present

The Report *The Training of Readers* (ACCM occasional paper No 32) published in 1989 provided a framework for the training of Readers and in doing so made a step towards the defining of the task of the Licensed Reader. The Report recognised the importance of training, the role of the Reader in responding to specific needs and the Reader as a resource.

> Within the context of a ministry based on preaching, teaching and liturgy, Readers provide a resource for the Church, a resource for Christian proclamation and service, and a resource for society in general. (ACCM 1989 p. 15)

The Reader as a resource has already been identified as a significant factor in understanding the role and task of the Reader allocated to her or him by the church, either knowingly or by default.

Included in the Report's 25 recommendations, which were all accepted by the House of Bishops, was the recommendation that a national moderation scheme be put in place. The resulting moderation reports played an important part in developing the standard of Reader training but they also confirmed the 'considerable disparity in their (national principles and criteria) implementation'. (Thorpe 2003 p. 2) The moderation reports also showed disparity between the dioceses in the support of Reader ministry and in its place within the structures of each diocese. The varying content and design of the training courses identified by the moderation were all, in one way or another, based on a 'watered-down' version of the training offered to ordinands (clergy in training).

A number of other relevant reports were published in this period of time, including those on 'Selection, Training and Deployment' and two editions of *Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry* (ABM 1991 and The Archbishops' Council 2000). The Introductions (p. 1) to both sets of Regulations are identical and state that 'Readers play an increasingly important part in the ministry of the Church of England' and 'These Regulations... provide a common understanding to be applied in all dioceses'.

In these reports and regulations there is the acknowledgement of a national Reader ministry but it is clear that the acceptance and implementation of any recommendation still depended on the individual diocese and in particular on the individual bishop's decisions. I was not able to assess the impact of these regulations, the only evidence being that provided by the moderation reports which suggested that the take-up of the recommendations was very patchy, which may have been because of its dependence on the response of individual bishops. Each bishop at his consecration promises to be responsible for the doctrine of the church and its ministry in his diocese and therefore the bishop's perception of doctrine as it applies to the nature of priesthood and ministry will influence his approval or otherwise of Reader ministry.

Rhoda Hiscox in *Celebrating Reader Ministry, 125 years of Lay Ministry in the Church of England* published in 1991 provided a comprehensive and well documented history of Reader ministry and training from the re-introduction of the Office of Reader in 1866 through to 1991. In this history she described not only the development of Reader ministry but also some of the tensions that were part of this process: -

> The clergy as a whole showed mixed feelings. Some gave their Readers every encouragement; others were suspicious (occasionally with good cause!) or felt threatened by the gifts of an able Reader. (Hiscox 1991 p. 22)
>
> ... the national Church, through Convocations and Church Assembly, was grudging in its recognition of Readers, and dilatory in extending their duties despite proven pastoral need. (Ibid p. 138)

Hiscox makes clear her conviction that Readers exercised an interpretive ministry that was essentially Lay and one that was faced with challenging opportunities.

> This task (preaching) demands that Readers struggle with the tensions of relating their faith to the whole of life, and the whole of life to their faith ... Readers must always be listening and learning, and interpreting the gospel so that God may be known among all peoples. (Ibid pp. 144,145)

She also provided a valuable stepping stone in understanding Reader ministry as it moved from a time when it had a low profile in the church's structures and strategy to a time when the dioceses of the Church of England had to work with the

consequences of the 1989 report. In many ways she also prepared the way for a growing self-awareness amongst Readers of their unique position within the Church of England.

Hiscox devoted a chapter in her book to the Reader in the Anglican Communion and a chapter to the Ecumenical dimension, both aspects of Reader ministry which I have not been able to pursue in this study but which in themselves indicate the wider importance of Reader ministry in the church. [9]

In this period a number of other books were published that considered the work of the Reader including Kuhrt (2001), *Ministry issues for the Church of England,* and Kuhrt and Mappin (eds) (2002), *Bridging the gap, Reader ministry today*.

Both of these books were descriptive and encouraged Reader ministry, but they also acknowledged its breadth, including the concept of 'Bridge ministry' and of the Reader in the workplace. Kurht, Mappin and all their co-contributors were Readers and I suggest that it is Readers who are aware of, and respond to, needs in the church. The 'official church' subsequently catches up and provides a rationale for the work on which the Readers are engaged. In some cases appropriate training is provided for Readers engaged in particular areas such as the deep rural or inner city or who are chaplains to prisons, hospitals or schools, although government institutions provide their own training schemes for chaplains, clerical or lay, as do the armed forces.

What at first sight appeared to be radical changes proposed for Reader training and ministry are outlined in two more recent reports, *Formation for Ministry within a*

[9] Hiscox (1991) and Martineau (1990) show that Readers held and hold an important role in the ministry of the Anglican Church outside the UK, particularly in Europe, Africa, Australia and America.. In some areas the work of the Reader is vital to the maintenance of local churches. However I could find no references to Readers in the major books about the wider Anglican Church that I consulted. (Jacob 1997 and Ward 2006) This 'invisibility of Readers' duplicates that which I discovered in important books concerning the role of the church in the two World Wars, see Chapter One p. 27. I suggest that this is evidence for a disjunction between stated support for Reader ministry and its recognition in practice.

Learning Church (Archbishops' Council 2003) and *Reader Upbeat* (GS 2008, 1689) which was produced after the General Synod debate of 2006 on Reader Ministry.

The debate and the consultations that took place prior to the publication of the reports provided an opportunity for participation from Readers, students, clergy and other churches. The reports' recommendations and their implementation directly affect the training and ministry of the Reader and of the ordained person, and provide for the involvement of Lay members of the church, but I suggest that they also demonstrate an ambivalent approach to Readers by the suggestion of 'absorbing' Reader ministry into a general licensed lay ministry, and by prescribing a training scheme very similar to that offered to ordinands. These reports are considered in chapter seven, 'An Update'.

WEBSITES

The most helpful website for this research was 'Mike's History of the Reader'. Mike Cranston is a Reader in the South of England who researched Reader History for an MA. He has continued his research and has created an easily accessible and attractive website, www.futurechurchsouthcoast.com. This website provides a clear overview of Reader history and in its references provides gateways into further research.

I found the early history of the Reader to be detailed and well documented in the website 'Catholic Encyclopaedia' www.newadvent.org/cathen/ under the heading of 'Lector'. The references provided were of value both for the early years of Reader ministry and for an understanding of the Reader as a minor clerical order.

A useful and comprehensive overview of Reader history was provided by Nigel Holmes in '2000 Years of Service' to be found on the Church of England Readers – Home Page. www.readers.cofe.anglican.org/resources-details.

INTERPRETING THE HISTORY OF READER MINISTRY

There are many different ways of interpreting and writing history and anything written at this time will inevitably be influenced by 21st century perceptions and values. Mortimer in his examination of 14th century everyday life draws attention to this.

> In traditional history, what we can say about the past is dictated by the selection and interpretation of evidence. Paradoxically, this same evidence imposes a series of boundaries, limiting the research questions we can ask and what we can claim to know about the past. (Mortimer 2008 p. 289)

I was aware of this limitation and therefore, where possible, I have put the history of Reader ministry in its context, which in itself is subject to a 21st century interpretation.

However I recognize that although I was able to access some primary source material, most of my sources have been secondary and therefore dependent on the author's selective use of his or her sources. Noting this limitation I would argue that the accumulation of evidence is sufficient to justify the conclusions that I eventually draw from this historical section.

Iggers (2005 pp. 2-7) provided a useful summary of some possible historical methodologies; he identifies.

i) The traditional narrative which provides a coherent story, but carries with it the danger of including a fictional/imaginative element.
ii) The scientific history, an approach particularly favoured in the 19th century and where 'methodologically controlled research makes objective knowledge possible'.
iii) Event-orientated history using social science orientated forms of research and writing, from concentrating on 'great men and events' through to a broader context.
iv) A move from timeline historical interpretation to time that recognises different speeds and rhythms, overarching structures, gradual changes and the rapid pulse of political history.
v) Different concepts of time, eg those held by clergy and by merchants in the middle ages.

Iggers understands history to be connected more by literature than by science and he sees the historian as a prisoner of the world within which he thinks. (Ibid p. 7) Mortimer (2008 p. 5) however explored the possibility of the historian using his own experience of being human as a means of understanding any particular period in history.

The importance of the history of Readers in understanding the identity and place of the Reader within the church is supported by Igger's development of his perception of history. Whilst recognising that the understanding of history has changed he saw history as important in defining identity.

> Yet the recognition that it is no longer possible to find a grand narrative that gives direction to history does not mean that history, as has often been lamented, has lost all meaning. History continues to be a powerful means by which groups and persons define their identity. In the place of one meaningful process there is now a pluralism of narratives touching on the existential life experiences of many different groups. (Iggers 2005 p. 143)

Before deciding on an approach to Reader ministry and training which could fall into one of the categories Iggers had identified, I had to decide on my starting point in history. One possibility was, with Williams (1934) and King (1973), to start with the Jewish Synagogue and to work through to the present time.

Alternatively, because today's church is well documented and I have personal knowledge of contemporary Reader ministry and training, the present situation provided a solid base from which I could explore backwards in time, identifying the roots of each stage of Reader ministry and training. This 'backwards' process, which continually asks the question 'why are Readers where they are, and doing what they do at this point in time?' required me to start at each stage in history with a snapshot of Reader ministry and then to move from the particular to the general. I suggest that this could deny the sense of continuity or fluidity in the history of Reader ministry that was already beginning to emerge.

Eventually my decision was to use the traditional and chronological method. I chose as my start the Jewish Synagogue and the Early Church with a methodology that was a combination of various approaches particularly that of Iggers. Using his classification, this could be described as a combination of an event orientated methodology and one that recognises the rhythms and changes of history.

To place Reader ministry in context, the Timeline (Appendix One) shows something of the political and social context associated with each stage in the history of Reader ministry and training.

The History chapter, which follows this one, has a primary place in the thesis. My personal journey has been of coming to the history of the Reader from the present confusion about the Reader's place in the church, and in exploring this history, discovering that light was thrown onto the complex relationship of Reader, church and society. This discovery enabled me to return to the present with a greater understanding of Reader ministry and with the means of exploring the present in the light of the past.

My contention therefore is that the themes that emerge in the next chapter, through the exploration of the history of the Reader, and the conclusions I draw from this, all lead to a deeper understanding of the place of the Reader in the church and of Reader ministry in general. I therefore see the history chapter as the foundation for the rest of the thesis.

CONCLUSION

Despite the limitations of available literature the Reader is shown as providing a resource for, and pragmatic response to varying needs in the national church, which itself may be in a complex relationship with the nation and the western world. I would also suggest that the few references to Readers within the literature of the Church of England may indicate a reserved response by the 'official' church to Readers and to Reader ministry.

CHAPTER TWO
READER MINISTRY: A HISTORY

In the Introduction, in order to reach an understanding of the place of the Reader and Reader ministry in the church, I identified the importance of exploring, through time, the changing relationship of the Reader and of Reader ministry with the universal, national, local and theological position of the church and in particular with the Church of England. The Timeline for Reader Ministry in Appendix One illustrates the changing place of the Reader in these relationships from the pre-Christian era to the 21st century.

In chapter one, looking for significance in these relationships, I found that the available literature about Readers and Reader ministry pointed to a significant pattern of the non-sequential episodical use of Readers by the church combined with a ready response to need by Readers.

In this present chapter I set out in more detail the history of Readers and Reader ministry and consider the significance of the pattern outlined above.

The first section of this history covers a period of time for which the limited evidence shows that Readers held a significant lay office in the church. Readers continued as a lay office until three or four centuries later when they become an ordained minor order in the church.

The second major section describes the period when Reader ministry returned from a clerical order to a lay office in the 16th century to their ceasing to exist in the 18th century.

The third section follows from the reintroduction of Readers into England in the 19th century through to the present day.

These three divisions reflect the varying place of the Reader in the church, which is linked to his, and eventually her, usefulness or otherwise to both church and nation. These three historical divisions are outlined below in more detail prior to the exploration of each section.

The Synagogue, and the Early Church to the late middle ages - an overview

The Synagogue: It is possible to see a role similar to that of Reader being exercised in the synagogues at the time of Christ.

The Early Church: Readers or Lectors were included in lists of ministers and some descriptions of their work have been found.

Minor Orders: From possibly the 4th century to 1559 Readers formed one of the 'minor (ordained) orders' of the church and initially were associated with reading, and occasionally expounding, the scriptures; later their role diminished to that of background assistants to the priest.

From the 16th century to the 19th century - an overview

The 16th century: As this century progressed the country was in need of stability and there were not enough clergy to staff the towns and villages. One of the answers was to give authority to selected and educated men to minister as Readers in the parishes of the land.

Unnecessary: As more priests were ordained, Reader ministry was allowed to disappear, although it continued until the 18th century in parts of the north of England.

From the 19th century re-introduction of the Office of Reader to the 21st century – an overview

The church identifies a need: The church felt threatened by disestablishment, was unable to make contact with large sections of the population and had to contain unauthorised but enthusiastic laymen who were preaching and taking services. To answer these needs the Office of Reader was re-established.

Readers at work: Initially a Reader was restricted as to what he could or could not do in church, but he was allowed to teach and preach in other settings. Gradually he, and eventually she, was authorised to take on many of the functions previously the prerogative of the clergy. Training was introduced but varied from diocese to diocese.

The two world wars: These presented the church with manpower problems at home and at the front and Readers responded to these needs.

Training and growth: Readers were numerically significant, new training patterns emerged and attempts were made to put into action a national standard of training.

These overviews show no gradual development of Reader ministry but confirm the episodical and non-sequential nature of the Reader's journey through time. At times Readers were part of the regular ministry of the church, or they were mobilised to meet specific needs in State and Church, or they were dispensed with entirely or they were assigned to background work, or they joined the clergy side of a developing clergy-laity division. I suggest that this fluctuation in status and function is a significant factor in the understanding of the place of Readers in the church. It is also possible to detect a continuity of pragmatic needs in the church and a willing response from Readers, irrespective of the need.

THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE EARLY CHURCH

The Reader today exercises his or her ministry within the Church of England, which understands its history to be a continuum, with roots in the events, poetry and religion of the Old Testament and in the life and practice of the Jewish synagogue of the time of Christ, and then on through the years of the Roman Empire and the early church and through the centuries to the present time. This continuity has been noted by different writers, for example:-

> From the first the Church was deeply conscious of its solidarity with Israel, and of the continuity of God's action in the past with his present activity in Jesus of Nazareth and his followers. (Chadwick 1967 p. 12)

> It (the duty of a Reader) must always be respected by Christians as the one definite public ministry which our Blessed Lord accepted in the Jewish Church. (Wordsworth 1901 p. 197)

It is possible to see a precedent for the present day Reader in the lay member of the local synagogue at the time of Christ, who read from the Scriptures and sometimes expounded them in public worship. The reader in the Synagogue would have to be of a certain educational standard because he had to translate the Hebrew or Aramaic into the vernacular. A case is made by King (1973 p. 48) and Williams (1934 p. 4) for the informal and sometimes recognised office of Reader in the life of the Hebrew nation and religion, but I concur with Williams that there is no evidence that enables this to be taken beyond accepting that present day Reader ministry has the historic Jewish precedent of recognised lay participation in the leadership of worship. My understanding is that the same limits on interpretation must also be applied to the

equating of the readers identified in the New Testament with the Readers of today. (Luke 4:16, 1 Timothy 4:13, Revelation 1:3 etc ... King 1973 p. 49 and Williams 1934 p. 5)

The separation of priest and laity was not clarified until towards the end of the second century (Cross and Livingstone 1997 p. 1325) from where it developed into a very clear division in the middle ages and onwards.

Although the continuum of the present church with the church of the first Christians is important, I suggest that the value attached to it depends on the theological stance of each individual. There are two extremes. At one end the priest is seen as the representative of Christ in the community, and he is expected to lead worship, head the worshipping community and be the arbiter for all doctrinal matters. Therefore the priest sees continuity and the Apostolic Succession[10] as the foundation of his authority. At the other end the priest, who would prefer to describe himself or herself as a minister, and who is governed by the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, recognises as equally valid the contribution of clergy and laity to the worship and life of the church.

In these two extremes, in the first scenario a Reader could be seen as usurping the place of a priest in worship and in the second there is little point in being a Reader because everybody can do everything. I would suggest that most people in the Church of England tend towards a middle position between these two extremes, although the existence of these polarised views contributes to the apparent ambivalence in the church to Reader ministry. Both extremes would play down the importance of the Reader in the early church for very different reasons.

My own understanding of the Reader in the early church is that he (and possibly she) occupied an important place in the church. Although the available evidence is limited, it is nonetheless there and supports this understanding of the place of the Reader.

[10] Apostolic Succession: the method by which the ministry of the church is derived from the first Apostles through an unbroken succession of bishops.

Following the death and resurrection of Jesus it was not long before Readers were mentioned in correspondence including a possible reference to Readers made in the 2nd century by Justin (c150)[11] and then in the following century in correspondence from the historian Eusebius to Pope Fabian (c251).[12] Also in the 3rd century the Didascalia apostolorum, a Syrian manual of Church life, included Readers in the Minor Orders of the church with a financial allowance on parity with the presbyters.[13]

Cyprian (c250) provided an indication of the character required of a Reader and of the practice of consulting with the presbyters and people before authorizing a Reader to exercise his ministry.

> ... if he dispensed with their advice on the ordination of one Aurelius to the office of 'reader' the omission was justified by the high character and repute of the person thus ordained. (Swete 1918 p. 258)

The admission to office in this case refers to 'ordination' but the meaning of this is not clear when the same word is used in the Apostolic Constitutions of the 4th century.

> Vii, xxii tells the bishop to ordain a reader by laying on his hand and saying a prayer, which is given. The derived documents however forbid an imposition of hands. [14]

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[11] And on the day which is called the day of the sun there is an assembly of all who live in the towns or in the country; and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then the reader ceases, and the president speaks ... (Justin Apology l lxvii in Bettenson 1954 pp. 94,95)

[12] The historian Eusebius quotes the following list of ministers for Rome: 46 presbyters,7 deacons, 7 sub-deacons, 42 acolytes, and 52 readers, exorcists, and door-keepers. (Wand 1954, p. 35)

[13] Of the Minor Orders, the Reader is the oldest; (Didascalia ii.28 ff5 in Swete 1918 p. 388)
...if there is a lector, let him too receive (an allowance) like the presbyters. (Didascalia ii.20 in Neibuhr and Williams 1956 p. 35)
Presbyter = Elder and etymologically 'Priest' is derived from the Greek 'Presbuteros' or Elder'.

[14] *New Advent>Catholic Encyclopaedia>L>Lector* . 2009 [online]. [Accessed 11th June 2009]. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09111a.htm>

In the same century Canon 10 of Antioch (330 or 341) sanctioned ordination of Readers by chorepiscopi.[15] (Cross and Livingstone (eds) 1997, p. 963) and there is a reference to a named individual as a Reader.

> The first known reference to a named individual appointed as Reader is Evagrius the Solitary, otherwise known as Evagrios of Pontus. Born in about 345 AD, Evagrios was a disciple of the Cappodocian Fathers ... he was 'ordained' Reader by St Basil the Great though no year is given. He was later ordained Deacon ... never ordained Priest. (Kearns in Reader magazine 2002 p. 9)

Two centuries later in the 6th century a set of canons ascribed to an earlier Council of Carthage gives a form for all ordinations. Canon 8.

> When a reader is ordained let the bishop speak about him (*faciat e illo verbum*) to the people, pointing out his faith and life and skill. After this, while the people look on, let him give the book from which he is to read, saying to him: Receive this, and be the spokesman (*relator*) of the word of God ... [16]

I consider that these few references are sufficient to support my contention that the Reader, in these early years of the church, had an accepted and significant place in the structure of the church.

> There is some evidence that the reader once occupied a very high position ... the reader must be able to instruct or narrate ... At one time, it would appear, the reader expounded as well as read; when his function was limited to the mechanical reading of the Scriptures his position fell. (Maclean 1910 pp. 85,86)

This responsible position of the Reader in the church community is seen dramatically in a description of the Diocletian persecution of 303 as Christian books were sought out for destruction.

> The Readers are pointed to by other Church officers as responsible for the sacred books. One very large copy was found alone in the Church ... Search was then made in the Readers' houses ... with the result that thirty-two more books and four unbound sheets were found. (Wordsworth 1901 p. 189, quoting *Acts of the Spoliation of the Church* of *Cirta.* Monum. ad Donatistarum Hist. p. L.viii. 371)

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[15] A chorepiscopas was a bishop, in full Episcopal orders, of country districts but under the authority of the diocesan bishop. The chorepiscopas had restricted powers and could only ordain to the lower ranks of the clergy. (Cross and Livingstone (eds) 1997 p. 331)

[16] *New Advent>Catholic Encyclopaedia>L>Lector* . 2009 [online]. [Accessed 11th June 2009]. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09111a.htm>

In a footnote, quoting a number of 4th century documents, Maclean suggests that there may have been female Readers at that time (Maclean 1910 p. 86) and Neibuhr and Williams confirm that in the East women held office in the church (Neibuhr and Williams 1956 p. 80).

At its simplest these early references to Readers establish Reader ministry as part of the church's structure in its formational years, although their position in ministry 'rankings' varied over time. However, as I have already indicated, for the Anglican Church these early years are important.[17]

The present day Reader should therefore have no doubt that his or her predecessor was as much a part of the recognized ministry of the church as was the presbyter/ priest. However I recognize that there were many other lay offices exercised in the early church (Wand 1954 p. 35) and there may be those who would see this link with the early years of the church as of little importance, particularly because many of those early lay officers soon disappeared from the scene, but I suggest that this would be to ignore the influence of history on the sense of identity of any institution.

As to the Reader's training in those early years, I could find no evidence except that of the character reference offered by Cyprian and the possibility that the Reader would have had to have a general education to be able to read in the vernacular and perhaps translate from first-century Greek, Aramaic or Latin and, when called upon to do so, expound the scriptures.

[17] Henson, in tracing the history of the Church of England, saw being worked out a 'reasoned case for a version of Anglicanism *that*... rested on the deeper foundations of reason, Scripture, and antiquity' (Henson 1939 p. 32). The importance for the church of 'rooting the present in the past' is exemplified by a pamphlet published in the early years of the 20th century by a parish priest, The Rev.G.G.Nicholson, and entitled *Quotations showing that The Church of England can claim apostolic foundation, unbroken continuity, and scriptural authority as the sole basis of its rule of faith and its form of government.* However Bradley and Muller note that 'The theological assumption that links authority with antiquity has thus had a longstanding, deleterious effect on scientific investigation'. (Bradley and Muller 1944 p. 11)

FROM THE EARLY CHURCH TO THE 19th CENTURY

It was not long before the Reader lost his lay status in the church. With the exception of the growing religious orders, in which ordained and non-ordained were bound by a common commitment, the division between clergy and laity became sharply defined and the Reader was now an ordained person and a member of the minor orders.

There is evidence that eventually the Order of Reader or Lector was seen as an initial step on the progress to the presbyterate (priesthood).

> Pope Zosimus (AD418) had compared the grades of the "saecularia official" with those of the celestial militia, and forbid that laymen should present themselves to the church, and expect ordination forthwith (saltu) to the higher grades: "Let him learn in the camp of the Lord in the grade of lector (Reader) the rudiments of the divine service: nor let him esteem it base to be ordained exorcist, acolyte, subdeacon, and deacon, and this not at a bound, but the times appointed by the ordination of the fathers. Let such a man then approach that summit, the presbyterate, when his age fulfils the conditions which that name implies." (Deanesly 1925 p. 30)

Deanesley puts the age progression from boys ordained lectors at about seven years of age, through the grades until ordination to the presbyterate (priests) at the age of 45.

However Wand applies a pecuniary motive to the move of Reader from laity to clergy,

> Throughout the first three centuries no very clear line of demarcation was drawn between the ordinary life of the clergy and that of the laity. The clergy for the most earned their livelihood at secular trades. But as they began to be paid for their clerical work they withdrew more from the pursuits of the laity until in the fourth century such withdrawal began to be represented as a matter of obligation ... soon minor offices began to grow up in association with the (ordained) ministry and gradually their holders began to claim recognition as clergy. (Wand 1949 p 121)

I have been unable to find any date to ascribe to the change of the Reader from a lay office to a clerical order and Wordsworth does no more than note the decline in the place of the Reader in the church.

> ... the general tendency in the West has been to depress the office of Reader and to exalt the more external side of worship... This elevation of ritual and disciplinary officers, at the expense of an order of men who had the great duty of reading holy Scriptures to the people, is a development of a retrograde character which we ought not to fail to notice. (Wordsworth 1901 p. 190)

I suggest that a major factor in the incorporation of the Reader into the ranks of the clergy was the firming up of the structures of the church, particularly following the embracing of the Christian Faith by Constantine in 312.

> The conversion of Constantine marks a turning-point in the history of the Church and of Europe. It meant much more than the end of persecution. The sovereign autocrat was inevitably and immediately involved in the development of the church, and conversely the Church became more and more implicated in high political decisions. (Chadwick 1967 p. 125)

This intertwining of ecclesiastical and secular authority required a clear definition of where authority lay. Overall it was the authority of the king or emperor that was foremost, but the church would also wish to claim an authority for the Pope and above all a divine authority over the secular that was mediated through the ministers of the church. Therefore any individual who held a ministerial role but was clearly a lay person would not fit into this clerical-lay political pattern and this added further pressure to that suggested above for the Reader to be ordained.

Initially the newly ordained Reader held an important place in the church, but that was to change, in two stages.

> ... firstly, the conversion of the lay Office of Reader into a minor order and placing it as the highest of those orders, and secondly, the demotion of Readership in the scale of minor orders until it was ranked amongst the very lowest. This gives to the operation as having an appearance of craftiness, with a hint of very real hostility to the very name of Reader. (King 1973 p. 55)

Therefore although it initially appeared that the Reader had a responsible part to play in the life and worship of the church, over the years the order of Reader decreased in importance until it simply became a 'stepping stone to major orders, and a memory of early days.'[18] However Usher suggests that these ordained Readers were from time to time used to fill gaps in the provision of ministry.

> In churches or chapels where there is only a very small endowment, and no clergyman will take upon him the charge of cure thereof, it has been usual to admit readers, to the end that divine service in such places might not altogether be neglected. (Usher 1999 p. 185, citing Phillimore, R. 1895. *The Ecclesiastical Law of the Church of England.* Vol. 1 p .450)

[18] *New Advent>Catholic Encyclopaedia > L > Lector* . 2009 [online]. [Accessed 11th June 2009]. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09111a.htm>

Without any further evidence my tentative comment about this period of time is that the Reader was someone who held a background role in the liturgical life of the church but who could take over many of the functions of the local parish priest if necessary. I would therefore classify the Reader in this pre-16th century time as functioning in a quiescent resource role.

In the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553) an Act was passed by Parliament authorising the Bishops to prepare an Ordinal for making "Priests, Deacons and Other Ministers" and this Ordinal contained an office for the admission of Readers. (Williams 1932 p. 2) However this latter service does not appear in the published versions of the two Edward VI Ordinals although Williams refers to Richard Taverner, a layman and translator of the Bible having been given a licence to preach by Edward VI in 1552 (Williams 1934 p. 23). This carries the contradiction that the Edward VI Ordinal would have been about the ordination into a clerical order of the Reader whereas the reference to Taverner is about a lay-person. There is also evidence that the concept of Reader ministry was being considered by others at that time.[19]

Queen Elizabeth I came to the throne in 1558 to find the nation and the church in a state of confusion following the turmoil of the latter years of the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547) when the nation was

> groaning to see its wealth exhausted, its money debased with copper, its abbeys demolished ... and the land embroiled in a war with Scotland. (Palliser 1983 p. 16)

and then in Mary's reign (1553-1558),

> famine and epidemics were mowing down the population at an alarming rate, while prices had soared and the currency was corrupt after years of debasements under Henry and Edward (Edward VI 1547-1553). (Doran 2003 p. 51)

[19] Archbishop Cranmer (1489-1556) had all kinds of plans for the formation of an educated ministry of godly and learned men because so few of the priests of the church ever preached a sermon and the people rarely heard the exposition of the Bible in the parish churches. (Toon 1988, p 219)

During their brief imprisonment together in 1554/5, the proto-martyr John Rogers advised the printer John Day to recommend to the exiled leadership that when the gospel was again freely preached, a superintendent should be appointed for every ten churches, under whom there would be 'faithful readers, such as might be got; so that the popish priests should be clean put out. (Usher 1999 p. 185, quoting John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation*, 4 vols in 7 (Oxford, 1824), I/i, p. 267.)

Despite this there were positive signs in the nation. 'In the last years of Edward VI a real financial reform had begun which Mary continued and Elizabeth carried to fruition.' (Trevelyan 1973 p. 122)

Behind all these many changes in the nation lay movements in the religious allegiance and practice of the nation, dictated by the reigning monarch and influenced by theologians and religious leaders who were based primarily on the continent. These various movements were concerned with the competing or complementary authorities of the Bible and the Church, with church structures, with individual faith and corporate belief and with many other faith and ecclesiological matters. These had all continued from the break with Rome in the reign of Henry VIII, through the few protestant years of Edward VI and the return to Rome with Queen Mary on to the final break with Rome and the long reign of Elizabeth I. These movements and changes can be discerned behind many of the aspects of Reader ministry detailed below.

Elizabeth herself was well educated, being fluent in Italian, French, and Latin and with knowledge of Greek. She studied the Greek New Testament, the Christian Fathers and some contemporary theologians as well as the Greek and Roman Philosophers. (Doran 2003 p. 30)

Amongst the many problems Elizabeth faced at the outset of her reign was the fact that 'Many clergy were ignorant, simple, poverty-stricken, and generally 'unreformed'. (Chadwick 1964 p. 135) Because of her own theological knowledge and religious upbringing and because of the need for stability in a nation where religious allegiance was still problematic, Elizabeth was determined to have educated and able ministers, whether clergy or Readers, leading worship in the churches of the land.[20]

[20] Injunctions given by the Queenes Majestie 1559, Item 53, That all Ministers and Readers of publique Prayers, Chapters, and Homilies, shall be charged to read leasurely, plainly and distinctly, and also such as are but meane Readers, shall peruse over before once or twice the Chapters and Homilies, to the intent they read to the better understanding of the People, and the more encouragement of godliness.' (Canterbury and York Society: Vol XXXVI Fo 301 p. 647)

The importance Elizabeth attached to the education of clergy and Readers in part answers my second question in the introduction which focused on the place of Reader education in the Reader – church relationship. Elizabeth required a strong and stable church and for this she required an educated clergy. Until this could be organized Readers, better educated than many of the remaining parish clergy, were introduced into the nation's and the church's ministerial provision. The process of the introduction of Readers is spelt out as this chapter progresses but at this stage it should be noted that Readers were introduced as men with an acceptable standard of education and as a pragmatic response to a national and ecclesiastical need.

Because of the pressure for education from the Queen the number of graduates amongst the clergy increased during her reign. (Usher 1999 p. 197) This contributed to the demise of Reader ministry as more clergy were available and as the more educated Readers were ordained.

One of the first acts of Elizabeth as Queen was that she caused to be debated and considered in Parliament the Uniformity Bill and the Supremacy Bill, known together as 'The Elizabethan Settlement'. The Uniformity Bill was through by the 28th April 1559 and the Supremacy Bill by the 29th. The first bill gave the Queen the Supreme Headship of the church, although she agreed to be known as the 'Supreme Governor', rather than the 'Supreme Head' of the church and the second bill restored, with a few modifications, the Prayer Book of 1552 as the only authorised liturgy. (Bindoff 1950 pp. 192,193)

The Act of Uniformity refers in several places to 'Parson, vicar, or other whatsoever minister'. It is possible that the 'whatsoever minister' could refer to deacons or it could refer to Readers who had been introduced into the ministry of the church three months previously. (Gee and Hardy, 1896, pp. 460,462,463) The minor or inferior orders of the church at this time were no longer valid because there is no evidence that any man below the rank of deacon was offered the Oath of Supremacy. (Usher 1999 p. 186)

To enforce the measures contained in 'The Elizabethan Settlement' the government sent commissioners to visit every diocese and parish in the country. With one exception the bishops refused to take the Oath of Supremacy, which was part of this 'Settlement' and they were deprived of their sees. (Cross 1987 pp. 131,132) The estimate provided by different historians of the number of clergy who refused to conform and who lost their livings range from 177 to 2,000. (Bindoff 1950 p. 193)

The Elizabethan Settlement may have been seen as a 'political response to the fracturing, bruising nastiness of the 1550s ...' (Tittler and Jones 2004 p. 241) but the removal of the clergy from many of the parishes of the land further added to the crisis of confusion and anxiety faced by Elizabeth when she ascended the throne, plus the unpopularity of the church amongst the ordinary people.

> Between ten and fifteen per cent of livings seem to have been vacant at Elizabeth's accession and in some localities the situation was much worse; some areas of the sees of London and Canterbury, in the most populous parts of the realm, had vacancies in a third of their parishes... The common people in the country universally come ... seldom to common prayer and divine service ... and the indifference or hostility of many men and women towards the Established church. (Smith 1984 pp. 143, 145)

And many of the parish clergy who remained were uncertain about their position.

> ... (many clergy) had learned the most important lesson about Tudor religion – wait a few minutes and it will change. Men of their ilk could not be expected to provide enthusiastic leadership for this latest dispensation. (Tittler and Jones 2004 p. 243)

At the same time there was a developing pressure to provide a 'ministry of the word' that was not restricted to the clergy but came from enthusiastic Protestants.

> It was the desire of the Puritan clergy and laity throughout the country to bring the word of God, adequately expounded from the pulpit, to as wide a cross-section of the population as possible, which led to the development of the office of lecturer. This became a permanent feature in many parishes in the later sixteenth century. Local gentlemen, town corporations or groups of parishioners provided funds for the establishment of lectureships which were conferred on learned men – usually but not always with Puritan sympathies – who then preached regularly in parishes which had been accustomed to only occasionally sermons. These lectureships, of course bypassed the normal channels of ecclesiastical discipline and the later Elizabethan episcopate was generally hostile to them as a challenge to hierarchical authority. (Smith 1984 p. 145)

As I have already suggested the unstable religious, political and social situation in the country was such that it caused the Queen to put a high priority on the role of the church and religion in the stabilizing of the country. From this I would argue that the inter-relationship of political need and religious presence and activity was directly responsible for the revival of a lay Reader Ministry in the Church of England.[21]

This revival of Reader ministry was initiated by Matthew Parker who had been chosen by Queen Elizabeth to be the new Archbishop of Canterbury. He was consecrated and installed on 17th December 1559.

> The archbishop's task was one of colossal difficulty ... Many parishes had no clergyman; and out of the few who administered the sacraments there was scarcely one who was both able and willing to preach the word of God. 'Incredible ignorance and superstition' prevailed among the people. ... Moreover, the church had failed to keep pace with the growth of the population and the shifting of the centres of population. (Black 1959 p. 30)

Almost immediately Parker responded to the crisis and within a week of his consecration 11 men were ordained deacon, one a priest and 10 both deacon and priest on the same day. He later regretted these speedy ordinations since it became obvious that some of the men were not suitable. (Kennedy 1908 p. 116)

Parker took a further step when he authorized the Bishop of Bangor to carry out ordinations in his name at St.Mary-le-Bow on 8th January 1559. Five men were ordained deacon and priest and five ordained Lector (or Reader). (Usher 1999, p 187)

After this date Readers were commissioned, appointed or admitted by licence or 'toleration' of their Ordinary (bishop), not ordained[22].

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[21] The idea, dominant in England since 1689, that religion and politics can be separated, would have seemed dangerous to Tudor men and women of every religious persuasion. (Palliser 1983 p. 380)

[22] Kennedy writes - But this (ordination) disappears later, and they (Readers) were merely appointed by Episcopal authority "to read the order of service appointed with the Litany or Homily in the absence of the principal pastor." Like most provisional arrangements, this required further consideration, as some of the readers went beyond their special work. After this date Readers were commissioned or appointed but not ordained. (Kennedy 1908 p. 115) and see Usher 1999 p. 187

During the first two years of Elizabeth's reign Parker appointed more than 70 Readers and Grindal (Bishop of London and Dean of the Province of Canterbury) in his first visitation lists 39 Readers, almost all of them in Essex, and all but a few were manning parishes single-handed.' (Collinson 1979 p. 113)

The appointment of Readers depended on certain criteria and injunctions; the candidate had to be a sober, honest and grave layman, appointed with the oversight of the Bishop or his Chancellor and with letters testimonial. (Williams 1934 p. 23) Once admitted the Reader would continue his studies, and there is also reference to a regular 'review' –

> The synods ... did constantly examine the licensed Readers how they had profited in learning, by their exercises, which they did as duly exhibit unto the chancellor, archdeacon, etc., as they did their orders or their fees. (Williams 1934 p. 26, quoting Book X of Vaughan's *Life of Dean Jackson*, ch. 51, p. 550). Dean Jackson (1579-1640) was Dean of Peterborough.

I have already argued that Readers were introduced as a pragmatic response to staffing needs, and as a practical method of restricting local religious activities to those which were approved by the monarch, until something better could be set in place. There is also a possible further development of this understanding. This is that as Readers were introduced to deal with a national problem at the local level, through the leading of worship, preaching (homilies authorized by the Queen were provided), teaching and being the persona or representative of the church in each community, they provided a local stability which in turn released the Queen, Parliament, the Archbishops and Bishops to engage with the uncertainties of the time at the national level.

The Bishops issued Injunctions in 1561 or 1562 (King 1973, p. 68) which were confirmed by Convocation in 1563 (Usher 1999 p. 187) and all Readers had to subscribe to these before Admission. It is possible that these injunctions were introduced because there was a need to 'regulate a temporary expedient which had evidently had begun to get out of hand.' (Thompson 1946 p. 404)

The injunctions issued by the Bishops are printed in full below because they give a clear view of both the limitations imposed upon the Reader and of his responsibilities.

Although the introduction of Readers could be seen as a 'stop-gap' measure these injunctions indicate the seriousness attached to the appointment of a Reader to a parish.

> In primis. I shall not preach or interprete, but only read that which is appointed by public authorite.
>
> I shall read the service appointed playnlie, distinctlie, and audiblie, that all the people may heare and understand.
>
> I shall not minister the sacraments nor other public rites of the Church, but burie the dead and purifie women after childbirthe.
>
> I shall keep the register book according to the injunctions. I shall use sobrietie in apparel, and especially in the church at prayers.
>
> I shall move men to be quiet and concord, and not give them cause of offence.
>
> I shall bring to my ordinary (bishop) testimonie of my behaviour from the honest of the parishe, where I dwell, within one half-yere next following.
>
> I shall give place upon convenient warning, so thought by the Ordinarie, if any learned minister shall be placed there, at the sute or the patron of the parishe.
>
> I shall claim no more of the fruits sequestred of such, that I shall serve, but as it shall be thought mete to the wisdom of the Ordinarie.
>
> I shall daylie at the least reade one chapter of the Old Testament, and one other of the New, with good advisement to the increase of my knowledge.
>
> I shall not appoint in my room by reason of my absence, or sickness any other man, but shall leave it to the sute of the parish to the Ordinarie, for assigning some other able man.
>
> I shall not read, but in poorer parishes destitute of incumbents, except in time of sickness, or for other good considerations to be allowed by the Ordinarie. (King 1973 p. 69)

My interpretation of these injunctions is that the Reader was appointed to a position of responsibility that was seen as of importance by those in 'high office' and the Reader was to be a teacher, a preacher, a pastor and an example, and therefore to be what I have described above as the persona for the church in the community in which he lived.

The written evidence however shows variation in the standing of these new Readers in Elizabethan society, but I would suggest that this variety in itself suggests urgency and pressure in the appointment of these lay ministers.

> ... (Readers) appear in some cases to have retained their worldly callings, at least no promise was exacted of them, as of deacons, - to abandon "artificers' occupations." They were mostly illiterate men, but not exclusively so, nor did they always stop short of the regular ministry. (Swete 1866 p. 553, Note 16)

> Though the readers were often of humble birth and not very learned, which exposed them to the derision of the Romanists, they at all events, were men of piety and repute, and superior to the old priests who could hardly mumble their mass. (White 1898 p. 39)

> Readers were not necessarily clerical poor relations ... Jasper Baker ... was a member of the parish's leading family, lords of the manor and patrons of the living ... some were minor magistrates who took on a temporary brief pending the appointment of an ordained man. (Usher 1999 pp. 194, 197)

Bruce shows that the Queen continued to exercise tight control on the ministry of the church [23] and Usher goes further and suggests that the Queen's appointment of Readers carried a political and a holding brief.

> ... there is no reason to assume that men such as these (Readers) were either poor or ignorant, let alone only formally committed to Protestant courses. It is more likely that they are representatives of a deliberate policy of appointing a species of ecclesiastical JP, drawn from the ranks of those whom the new regime had good reason to believe had been holding the fort for reformed churchmanship for years before the accession of Mary.

> But the placing of lay readers also served as a quasi-liturgical *experiment*. Until a reformed university system could begin turning out an educated elite, able to satisfy the minimum demands of reformed churchmanship, what better way to train likely men than by means of practical experience in running a parish? (Usher 1999 p. 195)

I understand this as supporting my contention that Readers were being used to answer a specific need in church and state and by answering this need the Readers freed the political and ecclesiastical leaders of that time for their engagement with the major underlying needs in the nation.

In support of this 'crisis use' of Readers it is clear that the number of Readers, having grown because of a specific need, began to decline (King 1973 p. 73). A contributory fact in this decline could have been the limitation on the role of the Reader. A Reader was not allowed to preside at the Mass and this, in the later medieval period, was seen to be essential for the spiritual wellbeing of the community and the individual

[23] Ten years after the first Readers were 'ordained' Queen Elizabeth I caused her Council to write to Archbishop Parker expressing her concern that 'no small number of her subjects ... are entered either into dangerous errors, or into a manner of life of contempt or liberty ... Of the increase of which lamentable disorders her Majesty conceiveth great grief and offence ... ' The Council instructed Parker to contact all bishops and to check on the number and qualifications of all who were in ministry in their diocese. Two years later Parker also wrote to all lay officers having any responsibility for church, chapel or parish in his province of Canterbury and to check that any parson or minister (curate, deacon or Reader) was licensed and ministered only according to the prescription of the book of Common Prayers and the Queen's Majesty's laws. (Bruce 1853 pp. 355 and 383). This indicates the Queen's ongoing concern for her church and the fact that despite the introduction of Readers all was not well in the provision of ministry.

(Duffy 1992 pp. 89-130, Heal 2003 p. 61) and although the Holy Communion may not have had as strong a connotation at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign it still required the presidency of an ordained person.

However the major cause for the gradual disappearance of Readers was that more men were ordained as clergy, including a number of Readers, (Usher 1999 p. 196) and Readers were not considered as substitutes for curates.[24] Also, as previously noted, the number of educated clergy increased,

> The chief problem before the Elizabethan bishops was the education of the clergy, and several set a praiseworthy example by examinations and other modes of pressure ...In the diocese of Worcester it (proportion of graduates) was nineteen per cent in 1560, twenty-three per cent in 1580, fifty-two per cent in 1620 and eighty-four per cent in 1640. (Dickens 1989 p. 363)

I would also suggest that another factor in the gradual disappearance of Readers may be because, as Usher suggests, in the Elizabethan era there was ambivalence in approach to Readers and to Reader ministry.

> It is true that the hierarchy never publicly defended the office in terms either of its short- or long-term usefulness…… Since as late as 1575 the author of *A Brief Discourse of the Troubles begun at Frankfort* could make the extravagantly pessimistic claim that 'in most places, the Ministry … consists of old Popish Priests, tolerated Readers, and many new-made ministers whose readings … are such that the people cannot be edified,' it was not likely that the hierarchy would rush to the hapless readers' defence. (Usher 1999 pp. 196, 197)
>
> The expression 'tolerated' seems to have been in common use as descriptive of the status of Elizabethan Readers, who were regarded as a necessary, but unsatisfactory makeshift for ordained clergy. The word 'tolerated' seems to have been designedly used as lacking the sound of authority conveyed by the more formal expression, licensed. (The Lay Reader 1921 p. 27)

Despite the increase in clergy numbers and education and the apparent lack of support from the hierarchy, Readers continued to minister in the parishes of the land until well into the 18th century (Hiscox 1991 p. 12) but often in a lesser role.

[24] A group of puritan preachers in Lancashire in the 1590s said that 'The chapels of ease which are three times as many as the parish churches and more, are utterly destitute of curates, many of them supplied with lewd men, and some bare readers. By means whereof most of the people refrain their parish church under pretence of their chapels, and having no service at their chapels come not at all, but many grow into utter atheism and barbarism, many enjoy full security in Popery and all popish practices. (Jones, 2000 p. 142)

> The "reader" ... was an inferior kind of curate who was initially utilized to supplement the inadequate supply of properly beneficed clergy and was later employed in some parishes to read the service so that the preacher could conserve his energies for the sermon. (Neibuhr and Williams 1956 p. 200)

However the move to lose the Office of Reader continued and there is evidence that some were accepted for ordination without attaining the educational standards that were generally expected of the clergy, namely a university degree, or at least time spent at a university. (Russell 1980 p. 19)

> The existing Readers, (in the reign of George II) amongst whom, in the Diocese of Carlisle, for example, were a clogger, a tailor and a butter-print maker, were 'ordained' (as deacons) without examination. (Archbishops' Council 2008 p. 30)

There is no evidence in this period of time of the licensing of new Readers, but there is evidence that Readers from overseas were licensed in England.

> ... its (the Church of England's) bishops were busy licensing 'lecteurs' or Readers, for the French Huguenot Protestant church in England. (Gwynn 2001 p. 127) In his book *Huguenot Heritage*, Dr Robin Gwynn, himself a former Reader in Southwark Diocese, shows that not only were these French-speaking Readers licensed by English bishops, but from 1600 onwards many of the French churches[25] became conformist, using the French version of the Book of Common Prayer originally intended for the Channel Islands. (Gwynn 2001 pp. 122, 126)
>
> An appeal from John de Champs of the French conformist church of the Savoy to the Bishop of London in 1758 says that the three ministers 'should not have to do constantly the painful work of an ordinary Reader' and requests that the Bishop will licence Sieur Massy, already a reader at the French Church of Leicesterfields. (Yearsly 2003 in *The Reader Magazine* p. 21)

Yearsly wondered whether this experience was in the minds of those who proposed the revival of the Church of England Reader ministry in 1866, although the number of French churches in London had declined to eight by 1800 and three by 1900. However this evidence does show that the bishops would not have been dependent solely on the historical records of the 16th century for their knowledge of Reader ministry.

Where Readers continued in office during the Stuart and early Hanoverian years there was sometimes a conflict between the clergy and the Readers because, in

[25] The 16th and 17th centuries saw 40,000 - 50,000 French people come to this country and in 1731 there were 20 French churches in England, many adopting the English Language with the lecteur reading the Anglican Morning and Evening Prayer. (Yearsley 2003 Reader Magazine p. 21)

certain areas of the country, Readers had a better income than curates. The Reader was often paid as the local schoolmaster and he also earned considerable fees from preparing or signing legal documents. (Jones 2000 p. 183)

A further factor that led to the disappearance of Reader ministry was the stabilizing of clerical income[26] with a consequent increase in men coming forward for ordination.

In summary the contribution of Reader ministry to the church in the Elizabethan period was essential. In support of this Williams cites Strype (Annals. I p. 225) and then, writing a century later, Bishop Bramhall (1672).

> Readers, the lowest sort of ministers in the Church, yet very needful now to be made use of, for supply of the churches, that would otherwise have been shut up upon the turn of religion: (Williams 1934 p. 26)
>
> I have heard wise men acknowledge that if it had not been for the Readers in the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign, when preaching was very rare, England had hardly been preserved, as it was, both from Popery and from Atheism. (Williams 1934 p. 26)

More than for any other period of history, the time from the Elizabethan era through to the Hanoverian era confirms my argument that Readers are perceived primarily as a resource that provides emergency cover for the church in answer to a specific need, and in so acting they free the church and the political hierarchy for their engagement with the major issues of the day. This also illustrates the episodic nature of Reader ministry and at the same time shows the ongoing willingness of church members from all walks of life to respond to a need and to be licensed as Readers.

When the crisis passed Readers were no longer wanted and were either absorbed into clerically led local churches or allowed to disappear from the scene altogether.

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[26] Queen Anne's Bounty, a fund established by Queen Anne in 1704 from money previously diverted from the church to the Crown. The fund was initially used to augment the living of the poorer clergy but was broadened in its scope by an Act of 1715 that virtually assured a minimum income for the poorer clergy. (Cross and Livingstone (eds) 1997 p. 1356)

I would suggest that the pattern described in the last two paragraphs can be seen in as applicable in a number of ways to the re-introduction of Reader ministry in the 19th century and to its present position in church and nation.

FROM THE 19th CENTURY RE-INTRODUCTION OF THE OFFICE OF READER TO READER MINISTRY IN THE 21st CENTURY

The Re-Introduction of Reader Ministry

In 1866, more than a century after the last recorded reference to a Reader in the post-Elizabethan era, Readers were re-introduced. The task of the Readers this time was to meet a crisis of communication, as an authorized and qualified 'bridge', between the established and clerically led church and the non-churched and often anti-church people of the land. Readers then continued as an authorized ministry through times when they simply provided background support for the clergy and through times when they responded to crises facing church and nation. Today Readers are numerically strong but task-wise uncertain.

As in the Elizabethan era, it was the political and social situation in church and nation that led the church to consider the reintroduction of Reader ministry in the 19th century. The church was faced with a series of problems. First there was the threat of disestablishment, initially fired by the injustices felt by Nonconformists and supported by The Liberation Society[27] and by a number of MPs; (Rosman 2003 p. 198 and Pugh 1994 p. 80) then there was a national growth in lay members teaching and preaching without authority. (Williams 1932 p. 67) To these problems can be added anti-clericalism in different sections of society (Edwards 1984 p.159, Russell 1980, pp. 104, 128) and the recognition that there were large areas of the country where the church had little or no influence.

> In the central areas of the biggest cities it is doubtful if 10 per cent attended church with any regularity. Ministers frequently gave up the unequal struggle of trying to catch the teeming, impermanent, migrant population attracted by prospects of casual work. The civilising influences of organised religion did not touch the 'dangerous classes' ... In the rural areas the

[27] an 'Anti-State Church Association' founded in 1844 (Rosman 2003 p. 198)

> oppressively hierarchical nature of religious observance could alienate folk with any independence of spirit ... (Evans 1983 p. 380)

The separation of church and people is well illustrated by a letter from Dr.Hook of Leeds, written on the 5th July 1843 to Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.

> They (the working class) consider the Church to belong to the Party of their oppressors; hence they hate it, and consider a man of the working classes who is a Churchman to be a traitor to his Party or Order, - he is outlawed in the society in which he moves. Paupers and persons in need may go to church on the principle of living on the enemy; but woe to the young man in health and strength who proclaims himself a Churchman. (Neill 1958 p. 251)

Snape drew attention to the inadequacy of the clergy when faced by these many pressures.

> Certainly as a body, the parish clergy were not capable of offsetting the problems posed by population growth and by the waning appeal and control of the Church of England. Thinking stretched, effectively untrained and justly wary of confronting lay attitudes and prescriptions, the clergy as a body failed to make any real contribution towards reversing the decline of the Church of England's fortunes. (Snape 2003 p. 197)

My understanding of this is that the church responded to this unsatisfactory situation, as in the Elizabethan era, by turning to the laity and there was a growth in Councils and Committees involving laity[28]. Thomson links this growth with the church's response to its perceived attack upon its life and work,

> ... the growth and structure of the various councils and conferences which appeared between 1850 and 1890 were not determined by any agreed theory of the Church. Rather, they were shaped by the defensive stand which the Church had to make against external attack whilst rent internally by party divisions. (Thomson 1970 p. 91)

The consideration of the introduction of Readers into the ministry of the church can be seen as part of this defensive pattern, but also as a positive move by church leaders, as the church sought to make contact with a large section of the population that was disenchanted with the church. Davidson describes something of the process as he looked back in a memorandum of 1901 arising out of a discussion on Lay co-operation in the Church and the question of the Extension of the Diaconate.

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[28] Annual Church Congresses were established and met regularly from the 1860s attracting many clergy and laity. From 1866 Diocesan Conferences came into being and Voluntary Parish Councils emerged to become in the 1890s the parochial church council of today. (Furlong 2000 p. 90) In 1859 the Church Institution was founded 'for defensive and general purposes' (Edwards 1984 p. 234) and Church Defence Committees were also established in many parishes.

> The Report on the Extension of the Diaconate, L.H.Feb 9, 1859, recommends a "new Agency," and advises the restoration of the Order of Readers ... Committee report of 1864 suggests name 'Lay Reader' ... this house (LH), recognising the importance of encouraging Lay Agency, is of the opinion that the wants of the Church would be most effectually met by the constitution of a distinct office, such as that of Subdeacon or Reader, as auxiliary to the sacred ministry of the Church (LH May 3, 1866) (May 16 – both Houses of Canterbury – agreed).[29] (Davidson 1901 72. f95)

Ascension Day, 10th May 1866 saw the bishops[30] meeting at Lambeth Palace and there they agreed the following resolutions.

> That it is not expedient to alter the statute of common law with a view to extending the diaconate to persons engaged in Professions or business.
>
> That it is desirable to institute the Office of Reader, and the form of admission there to be by prayer and delivery of the New Testament by the Bishop without the imposition of hands; and that it be held until the Bishop shall, by an Instrument under his hand, remove the holder therefrom.
>
> That the office be exercised in any particular Parish or District under the Bishop's licence, issued with the written consent of the incumbent, revocable at the discretion of the Bishop, either 'mero mortu' or at the written agreement of the incumbent.
>
> That the office be unpaid.
>
> That the licence of the Bishop empower a Reader: To render general aid to the clergy in all ministrations not strictly requiring the service of one in Holy Orders.
>
> To read the lessons in Church.
>
> To read prayers and Holy Scripture, and to explain the same in such places as the Bishop's licence shall define ... (Longley 1866 5. f32)

On that same day the bishops agreed a Form of Commission. This is in Archbishop's Longley's own hand (Longley 1866, 5 f33) and is particularly interesting in that he uses the word 'Commission' rather than 'Licence'. The former has a sense of direction, the latter of permission and this may represent Longley's own perception of the importance of the role of this newly created Order of Readers.[31]

> Charles Thomas by Divine Providence Archbishop of Canterbury to our well beloved in Christ - --- of the Parish of --- in our Diocese of Canterbury, greeting –

[29] Note: May 16th was six days after the bishops' resolutions re Readers.

[30] Archbishops of Canterbury, York and Armagh, Bishops of Winchester, St.David's, Oxford, St.Asaph, Llandaff, Lincoln, Ripon, Bangor, Rochester, Gloucester and Bristol, Peterborough, Ely, Sodor and Mann, Derry and Raphoe, Grahamstown, Brisbane, Sierra Leone. (Longley 1866 5. f32)

[31] Although Longley uses the title 'Lay Reader, a title generally used by congregations and clergy up to the last years of the 20th century, 'Reader' remained the official title.

> Whereas we are duly informed of your desire to assist in the Partial administration of your Parish by undertaking the work of a Lay Reader amongst the people, and under the direction of the Parish Priest thereof.
>
> We do hereby give you our Orderings, Authority and commission to execute such office of a Lay Reader in the District to be assigned to you in the said Parish and subject to the Rule in that (text illegible) behalf (text illegible) and approved by us.
>
> Given under our hand and seal this – day of – one thousand eight hundred and –
>
> Signature (Longley1866 5. f33)

Lawton (1989) suggests that although the resolutions of the bishops were unanimous there were mixed feelings about this step,

> … their Lordships were not enthusiastic about the office they were reviving … they were not motivated by thoughts of liturgical participation or enrichment … the notion of a licence to read lessons in Church was more than anything a sop to the clericalists.
> … since shortage of clergy was not alleged as a reason for resort to Readers, there was a genuine desire to increase lay participation in worship, … a few years after the Reader renewal, "lay-agency" as it was termed, broke out, especially in industrial centres, in a multiplicity of guilds, societies, brotherhoods and the like prosecuting evangelistic, social, and educational work. (Lawton 1989 p. 52)

This latter point is illustrated by the diocese of Ripon. Here the Bishop explicitly supported the establishing of the Office of Reader, as a means of bringing some order and control over laymen, who were leading and teaching groups of laity in 'cottage meetings'. (Williams 1932, p. 67)

The years that followed the introduction of the Office of Reader present a varied and complicated picture of the place of the Reader in the church. It is clear that Readers were introduced to enable the church leadership to engage with major issues of authority, establishment and communication within the nation, and to provide a vehicle for the spiritual enthusiasm of many laymen. It was also clear that the use of the Reader in ministry depended, to a great extent, on each individual diocesan bishop, and not all clergy and not all laity were in favour of an authorized and Episcopally appointed lay ministry.

The following pages sketch out some of this confusion about the place of the Reader in the church, but at the same time they show the gradual development of Reader

ministry, but in a way that has contributed to the blurring of the boundary between clergy and lay.

Following the re- introduction of the Office, Readers were limited in their ministry to non-church and 'outreach' settings, which was where the church felt that it was facing a particular need, although within a few years they were authorized to be more active within the church. This development was to continue until, in the early years of the 21st century, Readers can do everything that a clergyperson can do, except conduct weddings, baptize, give absolution, give the blessing and celebrate at the Holy Communion, although they have now been given authority to conduct the service of Extended Communion'.[32] In a limited number of cases Readers hold the post of Reader-in-Charge of a parish.

The picture of the Reader in those early years can be built up from a variety of sources, some of which are presented below.

A report of the Joint Committee on the Functions, Qualifications and Mode of Admission of Lay Readers, which was appointed on February 16th 1882 recommended that Lay Readers should, 1) Teach in schools, 2) Visit the sick and poor, 3) Read and explain the Scriptures in private households and to exhort and pray therein and to take part in services as permitted and aid to the clergy. (Davidson 1901 72. f95)

Although the introduction of Reader ministry was in part a response to the non-communication of the church with the 'industrious masses' and the majority of Readers worked in urban areas, those living in rural areas soon saw the value of the Reader ministry,

> At Fineshade Abbey in Northamptonshire the Squire's house was two miles from the nearest church and he found that in winter no one went to church; so he fitted up a room above the stables and got the bishop to license him as a lay reader.
> (Chadwick 1970, p 152, quoting Church Congress Reports, 1887, 86)

and

[32] Extended Communion: a service of Holy Communion conducted by an authorized Reader in a church but using Bread and Wine that has been previously consecrated at a service conducted by a priest elsewhere in the parish.

> … the (Anglican) pastors of the country were quick to see his (the Reader's) utility. Little hamlets now got chapels of the size and cheapness of a nonconformist chapel, which in such hamlets were normally served by lay preacher. But the Anglicans were suspicious of laymen taking services in churches.
> (Chadwick 1970 p. 163, quoting Church Congress Reports, 1872, 171)
>
> When 'lay readers' came in, from the end of the sixties, they were useful in mission rooms of remote hamlets, and we know of several squires who allowed themselves to be used in this way. (Chadwick 1970 p. 152)

The work undertaken by these Readers, and its limitations, is illustrated by Davidson when as Bishop of Winchester he collected information and made notes about Readers in the Province of Canterbury for Archbishop Benson; part of his notes for three dioceses are given below.

London	Preach in Unconsecrated Buildings and in the Open Air …
Bath and Wells	Where Special Permission is given to preach in Consecrated Buildings the Sermon must not be delivered from the Pulpit …
Norwich	Addresses may be given by Lay Readers provided the following instructions are observed:-
	(i) It must be announced that the address is given with the Bishop's special permission.
	(ii) It must not take the place of either of the two sermons required of the incumbent.
	(iii) Before the Address there should be a sufficient pause to allow any of the Congregation to leave that wish to. (Davidson 1903 84. f193)

The limitations on the ministry of the Reader, and the instruction that when a Reader was preaching there should be time for any of the congregation who wished to leave to do so, suggest that the introduction of Reader ministry was not welcomed by everyone, a response that is noted elsewhere in this chapter.

Within the limitations cited, a Reader was allowed to do a great deal, but it was made very clear that the barrier between lay and clergy must be kept, although there was an understanding that the Reader might have a 'bridging ministry' between the church and society. The Bishop of Bangor, speaking in Convocation in 1884, wanted,

> "Christian men who can bridge over the gap between the different classes of society: who, being in close communication with the clergyman on the one hand and the industrious masses on the other, can interpret each to each." They were to be men with strong, earnest minds, who knew their Bibles, possessed a ready power of vigorous speech, and who could be a source of new strength to the Church. (Hiscox 1991 p. 14)

An insight into the background of the men who responded to the call to Reader ministry and the work on which they were engaged was provided for Archbishop Benson in answer to his request for information about the occupation of Readers and their work in Rochester diocese.

> Occupation Generals and inferior officers in army (no sailors), Barristers, solicitors, merchants, Clerks, Publishers, National School Masters, tradesmen, artisans, potters, miners, captains in Church Army.
> Work Lay preachers almost every case working in parish in which resident (Benson 1888 73. 276)

The breadth of the Readers' backgrounds appears to challenge the expectations of some of the Bishops.

> To bring in laymen did not necessarily mean a wider social grade, not at least in the country. The first lay readers were required to possess education before the diocese could reconcile itself to their preaching. The Bishop of Salisbury asked one of his eminent churchmen, Earl Nelson, to become a reader. Nelson replied that he would only do so if some of every grade of society became readers. (Chadwick 1970 p. 165, quoting Church Congress Reports 1972, 76)

This suggests that there was an expectation in the church that Readers should have the same standard of education as clergy. This highlights a contradiction in the understanding of the place of the Reader in the church. Originally the bishops introduced Reader ministry in order to make contact with the large number of unchurched in the country, but, according to Chadwick, some bishops expected Readers to have the same social standing as clergy, despite the fact that the social gap was one of the factors that hindered the church in its attempt to engage with a large section of the population.

It is clear that in this period of time the place of Readers in the church varied from diocese to diocese, that they came from a wide variety of backgrounds, that there were those who did not approve of this lay ministry and that Readers were seen as exercising a 'bridge ministry'.

Perhaps because of the 'social grade' problem referred to above, Readers at a very early stage were divided into four categories, diocesan Reader, parochial Reader, stipendiary or voluntary.

The diocesan Reader had a 'commission' and he could minister in all parishes in the diocese and was also licensed to his home parish, but he had to pass 'such examinations as shall satisfy the bishop.' (Williams 1934 p. 39). The parochial Reader exercised his ministry solely in his own home church and parish unless specifically authorized to minister elsewhere on a special occasion.

Robinson provided a detailed list of admission, examination and training in 1888 in the dioceses, including.

> Examinations for Readers were not then held ... it was impossible to hold any formal examinations for candidates drawn from all ranks of society with the widest variety of education,
> a recommendation from an incumbent, countersigned by the Rural Dean and two trustworthy laymen ... sufficient qualification'
> examinations and nominations signed by 3 lay communicants. (Robinson 1904 pp. 40-77)

This suggests that although Reader ministry was established across the country, there were varied understandings of what qualifications were required of Reader applicants, and therefore of what was expected of their ministry. Even at this early stage in the re-introduction of Reader ministry into the church there was evidence of an ambivalence and uncertainty about the role and task of the Reader.

In particular the stipendiary Readers experienced something of this uncertainty or ambivalence of the official church. Davidson, as Bishop of Winchester, wrote to Archbishop Benson concerning an application from Winchester stipendiary Readers to form an Association, an application he supported except for one reservation.

> The point which seems to me to need caution is that they hope to obtain provision for old and infirm members – I have explained to them the impossibility of any scheme of pensions and I think all they can do is to whip round for one another in times of distress. (Davidson 1901 72. f92)

Stipendiary Readers held a licensed office in the church for which they received a stipend, but it appears that the church was unwilling to recognize a responsibility for them when they could no longer function as active Readers. I would argue that this is an example of the uncertain place of the Reader in the church at that time, although it must be recognized that the provision of pensions for clergy was itself inadequate,

which explains why many clergy at that time stayed in post into their eighties and nineties.

In my introduction I identified the importance of exploring the significance of the continuing commitment of Readers to their ministry within an uncertain and ambivalent setting, and part of my argument has been the readiness of men and women to offer themselves for service and ministry when this is needed. A letter from the Bishop of Southwark received by Davidson supports this argument.

> ... there are now hundreds of zealous earnest men who expect recognition, and whom we cannot lose … (Yeatman-Biggs 1904a)

However Davidson himself appeared to show a degree of ambivalence in his perception of the place of the Reader in the church.

> Lay Readers, paid and unpaid, are a very vaguely defined body, and thousands of Church Workers who are not formally admitted as Lay Readers are doing almost precisely similar work to that which Lay Readers do. (Davidson 1904 72. f14)

This was the same question that had been raised 16 years earlier. E.H.Ford of the Readers' Training Council in the Diocese of London wrote to one of Archbishop Benson's staff

> The office (of Reader) is not properly valued or sought because it is so unreal. If a licensed layman can do no more than an unlicensed layman why should he take any trouble to acquire the licence? And more than that, is it desirable that he should be admitted to an office by a solemn service which is almost an ordination when a very slight change of circumstances may at any moment prevent him from continuing to exercise the office and may require him to relinquish his licence? (Benson 1888 97. f338-341)

This was an argument, and now is an argument in the church, as to whether lay ministry requires the selection, training (or educational requirements) and the licence required of and for Readers.

My counter argument would be that limited preparation for lay ministry may be appropriate when the church is in a quiescent period and clerically well staffed but there are times when a committed, educated, trained and able body of men and women is invaluable as an available resource to meet specific needs as they arise, for

example in the war years or with the present lack of clergy and the grouping of parishes.

However at this period of time, the late 19th century, early 20th century, the major part of the work of the Reader, certainly in urban areas, was outside the mainstream of church worship and was often in areas where the clergy had little direct contact. King draws on a book *Lay Work and the Office of Reader*. (London: Longmans) written in 1904 by Dr Huyshe Yeatman-Biggs, Suffragan Bishop of Southwark.

> Dr.Yeatman-Biggs wished to use Readers for social and welfare work, which the clergy of that time found very demanding of their time and energy. … Dr.Yeatman-Biggs saw in his day little need for Readers to conduct services and preach – there were plenty of clergy for those duties – he did want Readers to be able to proclaim the Gospel, and especially to the working classes, (King 1973 p. 102)

This understanding of the task of the Reader was acknowledged in a handbook for the clergy, 'Lay work and the Office of Reader' published in 1904.

> The late Bishop of St.Alban's, in a report to Convocations, used these words: "It will be generally admitted that a very large number of the people of this country, … are out of touch with the Church… An ordained ministry, drawn almost exclusively from the educated classes, seems to need supplementing for evangelistic effort by a lay ministry which, from actual experience of the manner of life of the working classes, is able to enter fully into their thoughts, their difficulties, and their requirements. (Robinson 1904 p. 46)

This expresses an understanding of the primary task of the Reader at that time, namely, making contact with a large section of the population with whom the clergy appeared to have little contact. It was again asking the Reader to function to meet a need of the church and to act in a bridging role.

The growing self-consciousness of Readers as a distinctive ministry in the church was evidenced by the publication in January 1904 of their own magazine, *The Reader and Lay Worker*, later to be known as *The Lay Reader* and then as *The Reader*. Two clergy and two laity were the first Joint Editors and they gave the objective of the magazine as, 'to bring all who are actively engaged as laymen in any form of Church work in any part of The Empire into closer touch with one another on the ground of their common work'.

The chief Editor, J.H.Grieg, wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

> All the work done in connection with The Reader is honorary, and our sole desire is to foster, and if it may be, help to unify, the Reader movement which is growing so rapidly in every part of the Anglican Communion; all of which is set forth in the first leader on page 11. I and those who are working with me, will value immensely the assurance of your approval. (Davidson 1904 95. f281)

The first issue of the magazine drew attention to the theme that is emerging in this study, that is, the uncertain place of the Reader in the church. Bishop Barry wrote.

> The conditions of work are so different in different parts of the country that we feel it would be a great service to set down plainly and authoritatively what is permitted and what is not. (The Reader and Layworker 1904 p. 1)

The April edition of the same magazine contained an article on a debate in the Upper House of the York Convocation on "An Order of Lay Readers" and this also suggested an ambivalence and uncertainty about the place of the Reader in the church.

> one cannot help feeling that their lordships are quite as much alarmed as pleased by the Reader movement *(but on a more positive note, quoting the Bishop of Wakefield)* … "we should make it quite clear that there is room for a layman, without becoming a cleric, to exercise a great part of the functions exercised by the ordained ministry, but let them do it as a laymen, and with the feeling that they can do it without becoming half a clergyman." (The Reader and Layworker 1904 pp. 65,66)

Prior to the publication of *The Reader and Layworker* magazine, it was obvious that the two Archbishops were aware of the pending publication, and in response to the suggestion from William Maclagan, Archbishop of York that this matter should be brought before the bishops of the Church of England at their next meeting on 28th January, Davidson replied that

> … it (The Reader and Layworker magazine) ought to have some sanction from the Bishops generally. (Davidson 1904 95. f282)

The implications of this are first, the recognition that Readers are part of the structures of the church, and secondly, Reader ministry should be subject to Episcopal authority. However Davidson's use of the word 'ought', appears to suggest a coming to terms with the implications of Reader ministry as an intrinsic part of the church's structures, and a reluctance about the development of the Reader ministry.

The magazine, once launched, provided a useful vehicle over the years for communicating national changes in the church and in Reader ministry, but also as a place where teaching could be provided and opinions expressed. Bishop Yeatman-Biggs, in his article in the first issue of 'The Reader and Layworker' magazine, wrote that Reader ministry was an 'unguided movement', and that dioceses ran their own courses for Readers because there was 'no higher guidance'. He also referred to the growing usefulness of Lay Readers and a 'wholesome self-consciousness – appreciation being given not always so much from the Clergy as from audiences of working men and from districts of artisan families'. (Yeatman-Biggs 1904b p. 4) He continued in this same article to ask for 'more recognition of status (for Readers) in Diocesan gatherings and in the church at large'. In this same first issue of *The Reader and Lay Worker* magazine its editor drew attention to the uncertain response to Readers from other bishops and later in his editorial in November 1904 made the point that 'It is well to face the fact that at present their (Readers) office and position does not command very much general respect or regard.' (Grieg 1904 p. 220)

The picture of uncertainty expressed in the magazine in 1904 appears to have been substantiated the following year, when all the bishops gathered on July 6th 1905 for a special meeting. Following disagreements as to whether Reader ministry was an Order or an Office,[33] and whether the Reader was admitted into the diocese or into the Church of God, the Bishop of Oxford proposed that 'admission confers no permanent status or character but any Bishop be left free to repeat or not to repeat admission'. Fourteen bishops voted in favour of this proposal and three against. (Davidson 1905 108. f276) So, it could be said, the status of the Reader and his place in the church was left in a state of limbo, entirely dependent on the approach to Reader ministry held by each diocesan bishop.

An article in *The Lay* Reader in 1907 in preparation for the Annual Readers' Conference drew attention to perceived Episcopal reservations about Readers.

[33] Within the Church of England 'Order' depends on ordination by a bishop through the laying on of hands and has a sacramental base, i.e. all clergy. 'Office' depends on authority given by the bishop through admission into a particular Office and has a ministerial base, i.e. Readers. All, whether in an Order or an Office, require a licence from the bishop before they can function in either order or office.

> There are still, we cannot doubt, some Bishops who regard the whole Reader movement with more fear than sympathy. They think that if it is to be a force it is rather a dangerous one that must be checked, confined, and very firmly regulated. They do not really desire to see any growth of lay ministrations in either consecrated or unconsecrated buildings, and they look upon the London and Southwark and Worcester attitude towards Readers (*supportive and encouraging*) as a dangerous precedent, as ecclesiastical measles, which shall not, as long as they remain Bishops, be allowed to spread into their dioceses. (The Lay Reader 1907 p. 273)

This leads to my understanding that in the early years of the 20th century, there was clearly an uncertainty within the church at all levels about the place of the Reader in the Church, and this was expressed in where they were seated at meetings, what they could and could not do in liturgy and in the work of the church, and the lack of organization nationally. I would suggest that underneath these issues lay theological questions about priesthood, laity and authority. However in response to the limiting regulations applied to Reader ministry there were others who, with Yeatman-Biggs, regarded the place of Reader ministry in the church as of great importance. W.C.Bishop an academic and Parish Priest sent a paper to Davidson.

> … is it wise or statesmanlike, at the present time, to throw cold water upon the faithful laymen who are ready to assist in maintaining services, by imposing unnecessary restrictions … In country places the almost universal demand is for laymen of the Church to conduct Services … (Davidson 1905 108. f208)

Despite the apparent uncertainty about Reader ministry the numbers continued to grow.[34] This was possibly one of the factors that led to the need for regulations for Readers, plus the growing confusion and frustration in the church arising from the wide variety of forms of lay ministry, and the fact that each diocese followed its own style of ministry.

A committee was appointed in 1903 by a Joint Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury to consider the question of restoring a clerical order of Readers or sub-deacons because of the problems presented by the rapid growth in the population in one area and its rapid diminution in another area plus a further problem.

[34] 2,375 in 1903 (Lay Readers HQ 1915, p. 49) to 7,429 in 1988, of whom 1,565 were women (ACCM32 1989 p. 9) to 10,220 active Readers in 2006 (Church of England Year Book 2008 p. xlvi).

> … the difficulty of providing stipends for priests and deacons, the diminution of the number of candidates for holy orders, especially of candidates possessed of anything like large private incomes. (Williams 1934 p. 42)

Again Reader ministry was understood to be part of an answer to the difficulties experienced by the national Church, albeit as an order not an office. However the committee recommended that Readers remain as a lay office and it identified 'a call to increase the fullness of life in the Church, to recognize and develop the spiritual gifts of many of her members who are not called to holy orders.' (Ibid p. 42) This resonates with my identification in this study that there are men and women who are willing to respond to a call to minister as lay persons in the church, if the opportunities are provided.

The *Regulations Respecting Readers and Other Lay Ministers*, in Appendix Two of the report were signed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 1905 and came into immediate use. Readers were allowed to take services in consecrated buildings, and Diocesan Readers were permitted to read their own sermons in consecrated buildings, but these were not to be delivered during any appointed service of the church and the Reader was not allowed to preach from the pulpit[35]. Parochial Readers were to be licensed and Diocesan Readers commissioned. King's comment on this point showed Reader ministry reflecting the social strata of 1905.

> This snobbish distinction reflected the difference between officers and "other ranks" in the armed forces, and also reveals that Parochial Readers were regarded very much as emergency ministers, inadequately educated, and fitted to minister only in poorer churches, which would not object to ministers of inferior quality, while the Diocesan Readers were regarded as being men of adequate education, or who had been professionally trained for Readership, and so would be acceptable to all congregations. (Ibid p. 113)

The Reader had to Assent to the 39 Articles of Religion, a requirement for all clergy, and he was also authorized for a variety of pastoral and teaching roles. (Williams 1932 p. 14) The regulations followed a narrow path, on the one hand making it clear that the Reader had an authority to minister more than the rest of the lay church

[35] Davidson's notes in preparation for the Regulations state that 'The proper place of ministry for such a Reader is the reading desk, prayer desk, litany desk, or lectern. He should not be admitted to the pulpit.' (Davidson 1905 108. f358) This suggests that the difference between the incumbent and the Reader, amongst other things, is about the sole authority of the clergy to preach within the liturgy of the church. Is this a theological point about preaching or is it about the comparative status of the clergy and the Reader?

members, and on the other hand ensuring that he did not encroach too much onto the preserves of the clergy. In following this path these regulations confirmed the place of the Reader between clergy and laity, although he remained a non-ordained person. These regulations were only advisory, although legal arguments were entered into both for and against the participation by the Reader in the offices of the church (Williams 1934 pp. 50-62), and King suggested that those in authority felt that out of consideration for church members they would have to tread warily.

> At last the Church had central Regulations that led the way for the dioceses, but at the same time were not so daring as to offend and upset congregations and so hinder rather than help the spread of lay ministry. (King 1973 p. 113)

And so the uncertainty of the clergy, congregation, Reader relationship continued.

> By June 1914, correspondents in the *Church Family Newspaper* reflect a wide range of attitudes towards the selection of Readers. Clergy were afraid to use Readers lest the laity thought they were slacking. The laity resented the ministry of other laity. (Hiscox 1991 p 36)

But there was a growing recognition of the bridging role of the Reader, expressed in an article by T.Edgar Underhill MD FRS.

> Readers are like the deacons of old, except that they do not receive the imposition of hands, and their place is to head up the people and to act as a connecting link between them and the priesthood, but in no way to be a substitute for the latter. (The Lay Reader 1907 p. 209)

Although there was this uncertainty about the place of the Reader in the church and there were questions about the inter-relationship of laity, Readers and clergy, the Readers themselves appeared to be in the process of establishing a self-identity.

Following a national conference in 1912 of Diocesan Readers' Associations, which considered Readers' work and was attended by Readers and clergy, the Hon. Secretary to the Conference wrote to all the Bishops in the Church of England.

> My Lord Bishop,
>
> At the Conference held in London June 4th, 1912, the following Resolutions were adopted which I am asked to communicate to your Lordship:-

1. "That this Conference hopes that the Regulation of the Archbishops and Bishops to the effect that 'Admission to the office of a Reader should be after examination in the Holy Scriptures, and in the doctrine and practice of the Church as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer' will be enforced in all cases."

2. "That the List of Books prepared by the Sub-Committee be recommended to the approval of the Bishops for the guidance of candidates for Licence as Readers."
   I herewith enclose the list of Books.

   May I also ask that your Lordship will be so good as to send me the names of three Representatives who shall represent your Diocese for the ensuing three years. The Committee ask that you will nominate a Clergyman, together with two Readers, whose names shall if possible, have been submitted to you by the Readers of your Lordship's Diocese.

   For your convenience I give below the names of those who have served in this capacity up to now, in order that you may either nominate them or appoint others in their place.
   I shall be grateful if I can receive the names of your Representatives at your earliest convenience.

   I am my Lord Bishop, Your obedient servant, Austin Thompson, honorary Secretary,
   St Peter's Vicarage, Ealing W. October 1912. (Davidson 1912 178. f334)

I have quoted this letter in full, because it demonstrates a confidence in the manner in which the episcopacy is addressed. Although there may have been uncertainty about the place of Readers in the church, those who were Readers and the clergy who supported them, had no question about their right to be heard by those in authority.

This is also significant in considering the commitment of Readers to their ministry even when in an uncertain or ambivalent setting. It could suggest that the lay person can see his or her authority as derived directly from a personal relationship with God with no need for a dependence on the authority structures of the church. This is an issue that is addressed in the Student Cohort chapter in which the students consider where their authority can be found.

Readers themselves took a further step towards a Reader identity and organization in the Church of England, when on January 12th 1914 a central office for Readers was opened. This office, which became known as The Lay Readers' Headquarters, was a rented back room at No.7, Deans Yard, Westminster. This step was almost entirely due to the initiative and enthusiasm of one Diocesan Reader, Mr. Arthur Nott. (Williams 1932 p. 18) Williams details the purposes for this office:

> (1) the collection of information respecting Readers' work throughout the world;
> (2) to serve as the editorial offices of "The Lay Reader" magazine;
> (3) so that there might be a place where Readers coming to London could meet and find a welcome;
> (4) where a library could be formed of works on the office of Reader and of books useful to Readers in their work;
> (5) where a file of Readers in the Anglican communion could be kept; and
> (6) as a centre for the summoning of an annual meeting of diocesan secretaries (preceding the annual conference) to discuss diocesan procedure and the co-ordination of diocesan practices. Other useful purposes were afterwards added:
> (7) the establishment of an employment bureau for stipendiary Readers;
> (8) a place where letters of Readers visiting London could be addressed. (Ibid p. 19)

Prior to the establishment of this office the only 'coming together' of Readers was at an annual conference, established in 1908, for clergy and laity nominated by the individual dioceses. The establishment of the central office for Readers, as described by Williams above, was the result of the recognition by Readers, and not by church leaders, of a need for a national focus and resource for Readers. It could be argued that the provision of this central focus for Reader ministry was simply part of the gradual development of Reader ministry in the Church of England. I would suggest however that, because it was Readers who initiated and pursued this step, it is possible that there was an unwillingness or hesitation to actively encourage Reader ministry amongst those who were responsible for the church's ministry and mission.

The First World War

The interconnection of the church's ministry and its place in the nation came to the fore with the onset of the First World War on 4th August 1914, when the church faced a manpower need. Many clergy were going to the Front as chaplains, and Readers in their parishes were faced with a dilemma, spelt out in a letter from C. J. Beresford, Warden of the Church Training College for Lay Workers to Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury.

> A large number of our former students are asking me whether they ought to enlist in the Army. They feel the Call to Serve, but they feel also that, though not in Holy Orders, they have given themselves to the work of the Church as their life work, and they are not sure whether they ought to leave it … I should add that a large number of Lay Readers, including some forty-five of our own men, have already enlisted with the result that the demand from parishes is greater than we can meet … College all but emptied of Students. (Davidson 1915 342. f297)

Davidson replied that he could not give the same reasons for Readers as for the clergy about not enlisting, but it was up to the individual, who should also discuss this with others. Davidson's prevarication reflects the continuing uncertain place of the Reader in the ministry of the church, but it could also be seen as a tacit recognition that Readers presented a special case, neither clergy nor simply lay members of the church.

Looking back from the uncertainties of the post-First World War, a Southwell Reader wrote.

> Lay Readers in theory are a necessity, in practice they are not wanted by the Bishop, clergy or congregation … In most parishes the wealthy layman has priority over any licensed Reader … Lay Readers have done the greatest service during war difficulties … they are waiting to do more, much more if permitted, to help in the greater need of these troublous days. (Hiscox 1991 p. 22)

As this letter suggests and Beresford showed, Readers were in demand in the First World War.

The Lay Reader magazine gave many examples of Readers standing in for the clergy or taking on new duties, for example a letter received by a London Diocesan Reader from the Chaplain of the Brompton Hospital of Consumption.

> ... acknowledge most warmly the valuable help which you and your colleagues are rendering to the Hospital and Sanatorium and also here (when I am visiting the Sanatorium)'. It appears that the Boardroom was filled with communicants at 8.00am, largely due to the influence of 'your good work.' (The Lay Reader 1916 p. 128)

Readers who enlisted were also discovering that they had a ministry. It was reported that the Bishop of London received a request from a Prisoner of War in Berlin.

> Sgt.W.Moody (Parochial Reader, St Francis, Dollis Hill) … Readers … could be useful to other men and fellow prisoners in the camp by conducting and looking after the services. (The Lay Reader 1916 p. 139)

At the same time some of the men in the forces were considering studying to be Readers. A request was received from a Reservist of the RNVR, interned in Holland,

for chaplains to help in the learning of Greek and Latin, and a request for particulars of Readers' Licences in London. (The Lay Reader 1916 p. 146)

In that same year a Reader writes of his service on the Home Front….

> I am here on War Work and we are kept very busy almost night and day. Every troop train that comes through here, night and day, is met, and we give the men hot tea and rolls. A few nights back we had 7,000 men to see to. When you've finished you almost wonder where your legs are. Still it's worth it all for they are so thankful for the hot tea. I'm appointed Lay Chaplain to No.2 Hospital here. I love taking the Services in the wards, and meeting our dear wounded brothers. I've never heard a grumble yet. God does give them His strength, for some are almost blown to bits. It made me feel bad at first, I'm getting used to it now, and they themselves give me so much help. (The Lay Reader 1916 p. 54).

The First World War therefore saw Readers responding to a variety of needs, but it appears that this was primarily of their own volition. I have found no suggestion anywhere that the church leadership sought to mobilize Readers as an available and authorized ministry and, as mentioned elsewhere, there is no reference to Readers in the books that have been published about the church and the Great War. I would suggest that one possible explanation of this 'Reader invisibility' is that the nature of Reader ministry, whilst of use, raises issues about the laity and clergy divide which no one wants to face, or it is even possible that for many, ministry simply means clergy and therefore Readers are irrelevant when considering the church and the war.

Between the Wars

One particular result of the war was significant for the place of Readers in the church. The clergy chaplains returned with a new understanding of the way 'ordinary' men and women thought, and with many questions about the task of their church and their ministry. One response was to see the need for more teaching.

> The reports received from Messengers and Workers in the National Mission, and from Chaplains at the Front, all agree in pressing upon us the need for teaching. It is humiliating to be told of the ignorance of the fundamentals of religion among men and women born and bred in this Christian land. (The Lay Reader 1917 p. 17)

It also meant that many clergy had to rethink the place of the church and their clerical role in the nation.

> The popular unease created by the jingoistic attitude to the war of many prominent churchmen, coupled with the erosion of many of the social conventions which had previously sustained church attendance among the middle classes, notably 'the English Sunday', left the Church in the post-war years in a weakened situation. If the generality of the clergy could remain unaware of their growing marginality in the life of the nation, the 3030 clergy commissioned as chaplains in the First World War were forced to confront this reality. (Russell 1984 p. 251)

The demobbed serviceman himself was a different person to the villager or townsman of the pre-war years –

> He (the demobbed serviceman) had been uprooted as never before. His sense of deference to the local hierarchy, to squire, vicar and factory owner, to Tory or Liberal MP, had been gravely weakened by the sheer dreadfulness of what they had drummed into him in the trenches of Flanders. (Hastings 1991 p. 20)

G.A.Studdert Kennedy, 'Woodbine Willie', was a chaplain who perhaps more than any other re-assessed his role and came to have a deep understanding of those he served. In his poem, 'Truth's Betrayal' he writes of long discussions but ends by seeing that it is –

> Not to the wise, O Lord, nor to the prudent,
> Dost Thou reveal Thyself, nor to the art
> Of the logician keen, and coldly student,
> But to the patience of the pure in heart.
> Low is the lintel of Thy Truth, and lowly
> Mortals must bend who fain would see Thy face.
> Slow from the darkness dawns the day, and slowly
> Sinners ascend into Thy Dwelling-place . (Kennedy 1927 p. 31)

This and the final verse of the poem 'Woodbine Willie', which reflects on the nickname given him by the troops, indicate something of the feeling that was creeping into the war and post-war church, namely that the people must be heard and that the church is not the prerogative of the ordained and the professional classes.

> Their name! Let me hear it – the symbol
> Of unpaid – unpayable debt,
> For the men to who I owed God's Peace,
> I put off with a cigarette. (Kennedy 1927 p. 1)

This again put Readers in the 'bridging' position for which Reader ministry was re-introduced in 1866. A gap between the church and many in the populace had been identified by the returning chaplains, and the Reader was someone who was a member of the laity and local community, and he therefore could act as a bridge

between the church and the ordinary person. However there is no evidence to suggest that in this post-war period Readers were seen in this bridging role.

The evidence suggests that there was now a step back to the pre-war years for Reader ministry. A possible explanation is that a more active and responsible role for the Reader would raise the question of his place in the church between clergy and laity, or it could have been because of the non-acceptance of Reader ministry in some areas by clergy and laity. (Hiscox 1991 p. 22) It could also be that the church was still associated with the 'status quo' and Readers, holding office in the church, were not associated with the wide changes taking place in the structures of society at that time. My own assessment would be that when necessity does not press then there is a swing to the security of a clear clergy-lay division with Readers simply assistants to the clergy.

The 1905 regulations for Reader ministry, subject to the interpretation of the individual bishops, were still in use until 1921 when a new set was produced following the Enabling Act. The Enabling Act, or 'Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919' was a legislative response to extensive lay and clerical pressure, and to a report produced by a committee set up on July 4, 1913 by The Representative Church Council (a national body formed in 1903 but with no legislative power)[36]. One of the appendices of this report, a memorandum on 'the Church in its relations to Lay Feeling as evinced among Wage-earners ... and among Students', makes the point that.

> To the ordinary layman, the Church seems almost to consist of the clergy themselves and a few clerically minded laymen; and it is hardly realised by these two classes how deeply this is felt by the mass of the laity, to whom "the Church" means in the first instance a profession like law or medicine. (Selbourne 1917 p. 249)

This suggests that the perceived distance between the church and the 'mass of the laity', that motivated the re-establishment of Reader ministry in 1866, was still

[36] The Representative Church Council ... was a consultative, not an executive body ... but through its agency diocesan conferences had been formed, and parochial church councils existed in many parishes ... if there had been no Representative Church Council, there would certainly have been no Enabling Act in 1919. (Lloyd 1946 p. 248)

present in the nation as the First World War drew to a close, brought to the fore by the many changes created by the war. A major change was the place of class divisions in the nation, already noted in the change of attitude in the men, and in the chaplains, returning from the war, Cannadine writes.

> Along with the undermining of hierarchy in the British Isles went a corresponding undermining of the obsequious states of mind on which hierarchy had depended and which it had served to inculcate. Indeed, this change in attitudes was the most pronounced consequence of the First World War, as ordinary people no longer saw their society hierarchically, nor their place within it deferentially. (Cannadine 1998 p. 128)

In this changing society church life was affected.

> As the most articulate men moved into socialist organisations, so the best women began Sunday work. As Sunday became like any other day, families ceased to worship, or even to pray, together. (Green 1996 p.374)

I have already noted Russell's reference to the awareness, by the chaplains, of changes in attitude amongst the returning forces (Russell 1984, p. 251), and Wilkinson (1978 p. 274) identified the unrest among chaplains in the First World War as an important factor in the movement of opinion which led to the Enabling Act. At the front the chaplains had discovered how pastorally ineffective was the Church of England.

However there appeared to be little obvious response to these changes in society by the church, and the absence of evidence suggests that the Reader in the parish, having had an important role to play during the Great War, moved back into his previous place as assistant to the clergy, a move that was to be emulated following the War of '39-46'. Williams in an article with the title 'Why does not the Church make more use of her Readers?' quoted the annual report to the Bishop of London by the London Readers' Board.

> … (Readers give) services and addresses in consecrated and unconsecrated buildings, hospitals, workhouses, common-lodging houses, prisons and the like, as well as on merchant ships and in the open air. Much has also been done to assist specified causes such as temperance, purity, brigades, scouts, clubs and guilds……It is, however, with much regret that the conclusion has been arrived at by the Board (Central Readers Board) that the services of Reader, except in comparatively isolated instances, have not been utilized by the clergy so much as might have been expected (The Lay Reader 1921 p. 163)

Williams continued with his own comments,

> … it must be acknowledged that there is a prejudice on the part of certain clergy against lay ministerial help, especially in consecrated buildings, as something which encroaches upon their own prerogative … On the other hand it is sometimes said that it is from the laity rather than from the clergy that objections to lay preaching in churches emanate ... (Ibid p 163)

Apart from the occasional article as above, which points to the uncertain place of the Reader in the church, and Williams' books of 1932 and 1934, which I have quoted with some frequency, there is a singular lack of evidence for the work and status of Readers at this time. I suggest that this, in itself, supports the thesis that Readers were seen to be of no great importance for the ministry of the church, but were there in the background to be mobilized when needed.

On a broader front there was an important movement within the church during the years of the First World War. A concern for the work of the church in a changing society had surfaced and a National Mission was initiated and led by the Archbishops of York and Canterbury in the October and November of 1916. (Bell 1935 p. 768) Although the Mission fell short of expectations it gave rise to the birth of the 'Life and Liberty' movement. (Lockhart 1949 p. 255)

> The Life and Liberty Movement was one of the most remarkable fellowships which have ever changed a Church's history. For this – nothing less- was what they did: without their enthusiasm the Enabling Act would not have been passed. (Lloyd 1946 p. 248)

The pressure that was exerted by this group focussed on the recommendations of the Report of the Archbishops' Committee on Church and State which was published in 1917, referred to above, and which proposed that the church be given more legislative autonomy. (Selborne 1917 p. 39)

The 1920 Enabling Act, already referred to on page 79, gave to the church a legal lay and clerical voice of its own in the nation and was to produce regulations which would directly affect the ministry of Readers. The Act was first presented as a Bill in 1919 and the Second Reading in the House or Lords was introduced by the Archbishop of Canterbury with the words, "My Lords, I ask your Lordships to give a Second Reading to a Bill to enable the Church of England to do its work properly." He

begged the House to remember that they were not dealing at all with deeper spiritual things but only with the framework, "the outer secular rules within which our work has to be done". (Bell 1935 p. 975)

This represented a pragmatic approach to the bill, which left unresolved lay-clergy-Episcopal relationships and authority, and did not address the underlying theological issues.

My understanding, from the evidence so far considered, is that the use by the church of Reader ministry, from the 16th century to the present, is that it is seen by the church leadership as a pragmatic matter, and one which does not raise any questions about the nature of the church or of its ministry. However William Temple saw the Enabling Act, 'as a charter that laid down the sacred duty of co-operation between the clerical and lay members as partners in the work of the one Body', (Iremonger 1948 p. 275) but Iremonger continued

> … no effort has been made – to give the laity any statutory right to a voice in the management of services in their parish church which would not infringe the deeply rooted authority of the clerical Order to decide on all forms of worship. (Ibid p. 278)

Although the Enabling Act was a major step forward in enabling the Church of England to take responsibility for much of its legislative work, providing a Lay voice in this process, including developments in Reader ministry, it left unresolved issues of representation, of clerical-lay relationships and of the inter-relationship of clergy, laity and Readers. Enoch Powell saw the Church Assembly as seriously flawed, with three components in the Assembly, the bishops, an elected house of clergy and an elected house of laity, which would be drawn from those who could afford the time and money to attend meetings, and whose qualification was that of being on a church electoral roll, rather than that of being a baptized member of the Church of England. (Dark 1942 p. 25)

> The most fundamental defect however lies in the nature of the underlying electorate itself: the persons on the parish electoral roll….are those persons, in the necessary sense, the people – the laos – of the Church of England? .. the electorate which underlies the indirect, pyramidal election of the House of Laity of the General Synod is too narrow and partial to

> sustain a claim by that body to represent the Church of England for the purpose of consenting to changes in its law. (Powell 1986 p. 124)

In all of this the Reader stood in his special relation with the clergy, but very definitely of the laity of the church. Enoch Powell's point was that the laity was not truly represented in the Synodical system. The Church of England remained a clerically dominated church, and the evidence that appears elsewhere in this study, suggests that Readers sometimes were perceived as a threat to this domination. Nevertheless the regulations for Reader Ministry that followed in 1921 provided a structure for Reader ministry much of which remains in place today.

> The Admission of a Reader in one diocese was recognized throughout the world and was not to be repeated should a Reader transfer to another diocese, where he would be relicensed … the bishop was required to keep a list of all licensed (parochial) and commissioned (diocesan) Readers … Parochial Readers were permitted to take services and preach in consecrated buildings, but only in cases of necessity and with the special permission of the bishop … Readers' Boards or Committees, with representation from the Readers themselves, were to be set up in every diocese …A Central Readers' Board was to be established to co-ordinate the organization in the diocese, and to maintain and develop the work of Readers generally … proposed 'a voluntary examination for a diploma for Lay Readers'. (Hiscox 1991 p. 21)

Williams also notes the change in the place of the Reader within the parish, from 'an assistant to the incumbent' to a member of the parish staff.

> Words added in 1921 (to the 1905 Regulations): "He (the Reader) has a share in the life and work of the parish as a member of its staff of workers" (Williams 1932 p. 8)

There were also some negative regulations. A Reader must not take part in the administration of Holy Communion, Public Baptism, Read the Burial Service, publish Banns, read the Absolution or Benediction, enter the Sanctuary, receive Alms, give a Blessing or to officiate at the Thanksgiving after Childbirth.

As can be seen from the time line, a number of these restrictions were relaxed as the years passed. Many of the functions that were the total responsibility of the clergy were gradually shared with Readers, leaving as unanswered the question posed by these changing regulations, 'what criteria were being used to separate the ordained person from the priesthood of the whole church?' (1Peter 2:5,9)

Because historically the distinction between Readers and clergy within the Church of England had been determined by liturgical and pastoral function, rather than by the nature of the Order or Office, there was a built in freedom to gradually allow many functions, previously the prerogative of the clergy, to be shared with authorized laity, namely the Readers. Nevertheless these functions, whilst not linked with the nature of the office or order, were perceived by some as reflections of clerical status and authority and therefore there were those who did not accept the sharing of ministry and responsibility by clergy with Readers, or generally were not happy with the whole concept of Reader ministry. This is a response that is still with us.
(Russell 1980 p. 300)

As a result of the Enabling Act the church moved to a shared Episcopal - Synodical system of authority and governance and the Reader encountered this sharing as he (and later, she) was recommended by the incumbent, with the agreement of the laity represented by the Parochial Church Council, and Admitted and Licensed by the bishop.

Further general regulations for training followed in 1941, 1969, 1991 and 2000 (Appendix Two) and these gradually extended the ministry of Readers, although the application of the regulations varied between the dioceses.

The methods of selection for Reader training also showed considerable variation and Williams (1932) gives a detailed description of the procedures for selection in every diocese in the Church of England. To illustrate the breadth of approach to selection adopted by the different dioceses, which varied from the very basic to the seriously demanding, I have chosen four of Williams' descriptions.

> Blackburn …Nominations for parochial licences (for Readers) must be signed by an incumbent and supported by the churchwardens, and those for diocesan commissions by the incumbent, archdeacon or Rural Dean...They are expected to attend the meetings of the groups, and to read under supervision for their examination.
>
> Durham … Diocesan Readers are nominated by the Lay Helpers' Committee of their deanery, and as a rule are required to serve two years on probation, and to satisfy the Committee, by examination or otherwise, that by practical experience and intellectual attainments they are suitable for the work. A course of study extending over two years is laid down for the guidance of probationers, and the standard of attainment required is that of the Archbishops' examination for students in Church of England Training Colleges. Parochial Readers are

> required to serve for a year on probation, to attend a course of lectures, or to pass an examination.
>
> Monmouth … Candidates are tested in reading and speaking in a parish church.
>
> Norwich …In this diocese there is only one general class of "Reader." Candidates, who must be over 21 year of age, must have resided for at least six months in the parish for which they are nominated, and must be regular communicants. They are examined in Bible, Prayer Book and English Church History. (Williams 1932 pp. 34-70)

It will be seen in the next chapter that variation in selection and training between the dioceses remains the norm, although in every case the final decision rests with the bishop.

Where there were two designations for Readers, the age, training and educational achievements expected of a Diocesan Reader were higher than those for the Parochial Reader. Although most of the dioceses used examinations there is no reference in Williams or in other publications of the standard expected in these examinations, except in Durham diocese. The examiner was usually the Bishop's chaplain or a person appointed by the bishop but there is no indication as to who was responsible for the training prior to the examination. The evidence is that up to 1989 the pattern of nomination and training continued to vary diocese to diocese with only about 25% of Readers admitted having completed the General Readers' Certificate (introduced in 1975) as part of their training and with some dioceses not offering any specific training. (ACCM 1989, pp. 19-23) This variation in the approach to training underlines the diocesan base for Reader ministry at that time with the resulting differences in expectations and in the place of Readers in the diocese.

The Second World War

The Second World War again brought Readers forward as a resource for the church when faced by a particular need. The Editor of the Reader Magazine wrote at the outbreak of the war.

> As the time passes and there is a call for clergy to act as Army Chaplains, the burden laid upon Readers will be severe, and our responsibility great.' (The Lay Reader 1939, p. 153)

The editorial continued by suggesting that Readers act as ARP wardens and become attached to other auxiliary forces, and that the clergy train the laity (Readers) to

minister at the point of death. This article identified the fact that Readers would be facing fresh responsibilities in a time of manpower shortage, including the possibility of having to minister to the dying when required to do so, previously a clergy role.

Generally it appears that the initiative for new work had to come from the Readers, because there was no national church policy to either use Readers as a ministerial resource or to provide them with extra training to deal with their increased liturgical and pastoral roles. Nevertheless there are instances of bishops using Readers to fill ministerial gaps in the staffing of a diocese, as described by Jack Keiser.

Jack Keiser, a Mechanical Engineer, in answer to a direct appeal for help from his bishop, took over responsibility for a church and parish

> I was propelled abruptly into the job of Reader in January 1944 and what's more I was immediately put in charge of St Columba's church, Forest Hall …the vicar was an ill man, the curate was in the Forces, there was a shortage of clergy. The alternative to my taking on the job was to shut the church down. The Bishop took a risk in appointing me and looking back I cannot help feeling that I took a big risk in taking on the job without any prior training. But I never regretted it. (Keiser 1995 p.1)

Don Woodhouse recalls, in an interview recorded by the Church Army, how he was in charge of a Yorkshire parish as a Stipendiary Reader during the war years. He thoroughly enjoyed this work and expected to continue in post, but then he decided to move from his post as a Stipendiary Reader into the Church Army and was commissioned as a Church Army Officer in 1948.[37]

As the war progressed, it became clear that Readers were able to function effectively as ministers in their own right within many fields, overseas and at home. In 1940 one correspondent wrote about the Searchlight and Anti-Aircraft Camps in his area, where those stationed in these camps had occasional visits from a chaplain to the forces or from the local incumbent, but where their regular personal contact was with the local Reader. The Reader concerned visited the camps for 'services and chats' every week, and he experienced army and RAF personnel coming to him with their personal problems. (The Lay Reader 1940, p52)

[37] www.churcharmy.org.uk CD 'Ethos' accessed 19.10.10.

It was soon realized by senior members of the armed forces that Readers were needed for chaplaincy service in the Army and the RAF (The Lay Reader 1941, p 123). The Royal Navy already had an Order of Readers that operated independently of the Central Readers' Board. The use of Readers as chaplains opened up a further recognition of Readers as authorized ministers of the church. Here the church was using Readers to meet the 'crisis' of the lack of suitably qualified manpower.

The Home Front also supplied further examples of the 'crisis role' of Readers.
Mr D.H.Smith, a Reader chaplain wrote to the Reader magazine about his duties at RAF stations and nearby churches.

> It has been, and still is, a great joy to me that among all ranks (R.A.F. and W.A.A.F.) there is an increasing demand for services additional to the usual church parade. (The Lay Reader 1942 p. 29)

Mr C.F.Shepherd of Llandaff found himself ministering to men attached to camps and wayside sites and to the bereaved. (The Lay Reader 1942 p. 26) Another Reader (not named) wrote of having to travel to services on foot whilst bombing was happening and on one occasion being strafed from a plane. He was also up all night with the auxiliary services, then at work during the day – and he had to fit his preparation for services into this! (The Lay Reader 1945 p. 49)

D.G.C.Gifford contributed an article to The Reader magazine describing the role played by Readers in Guernsey in the war years in the extreme crisis situation of occupation. The number of clergy was depleted and only two of the Guernsey Readers were resident. The Dean of Guernsey licensed a further eight Readers and all the Readers played a very active part in the ministry to the island under occupation, in churches, hospital and prison. (The Lay Reader 1945 p. 95)

Another role for the Reader that has already appeared in this study, that of exercising a bridging ministry, emerged in the war years and was the subject of a letter from Douglas Earl, serving as a Reader Chaplain with the army in the Far East.

> ... a Reader with the Army gets to know his fellow-men in a real way. Religion is a subject often under discussion, but there is still a tendency on the part of a great many men to retire into their shells when the padre is around. This is where the Reader can help the padre's work, for he can discuss Spiritual things freely with the men, and is accepted by them as one of themselves. (The Lay Reader 1945 p. 39)

However not all those in the forces had such a good opinion of the Reader Chaplains.

> Most men take a fancy to the Chaplain, but it does not by any means follow that men like a layman who pretends to be half a parson – in fact such a man is sometimes unpopular. (The Lay Reader 1941 p. 111)

It can be argued that little more should be read into the work of Readers in the war than that they were lay members of the churches with a limited experience in leading worship, but who were willing to be of service when they were required. Also, as I indicated in the opening chapter of this study, despite the considerable amount of available literature about the Church of England in the war years there appear to be no references to the role of Readers in the war except in their own magazine, a Church Army CD and in Keiser (1995). However my understanding of the situation is that Readers held a significant place in the work of the church throughout the Second World War.

At one level the evidence appears to suggest that the Reader was perceived as carrying something of the separateness and the role of the clergy whilst remaining a lay person. Also, because of his licence with its delegated authority from the bishop, the Reader himself could feel that he had been placed, by the church, in a different position to the rest of the laity.

Further to this as I have shown above, the evidence gathered from *The Lay Reader* magazine, from the Lambeth Palace Archives, from Keiser (1995) and from the Church Army CD suggests that Readers, as authorized ministers of the church, were responsible for the liturgical and pastoral work of many parishes, that they were welcomed as ministers and representatives of the church by the forces in the UK and that they were officially appointed as chaplains in the armed forces. The evidence also showed that Readers were prepared to take on this additional work as their personal commitment to the church in the crisis years of the war. Certainly the part

played by Readers in the war was far more than that expected of committed lay members of the church.

This response of the Reader to observed needs in the Second World War clearly relates to the third of my questions in the introduction that drew attention to the continuing commitment of Readers to their ministry in an ambivalent setting.

I would also suggest that the Readers' commitment sprang initially from an identification of clear and pressing needs by the Readers themselves, followed by the recognition by church members, local communities and secular bodies that Readers were in a position to respond to these needs. Against this, apart from a few isolated instances, the official church appeared to lag behind in any recognition of the potential wartime ministry of Readers, leaving the local committed Reader to take the initiative.

This response lag raises the question of authority. If the church had trained a body of people as a potential resource to meet needs as they arise it would be expected that it would mobilize this human resource in a time of crisis. I suggest that should the church fail to do this then it must not be surprised when Readers put their training into action without further authorization.

I recognize that behind this lies the theological question as to who holds authority in the church for its mission and work. Is it found within the individual church member and in the local church community, or is it vested in the episcopate or the councils of the church? Conversely this could be viewed purely as a practical problem. Faced with pressing and immediate needs neither the episcopate, as a body, nor the church's councils are designed for immediate response and therefore the response has to be at an individual and local level.

A further consideration is that the apparent silence of the church with regard to the work of Readers in the war years sprang from the challenge presented to its leaders by Readers who, as authorized ministers of the church, were accepted by other laity and by the armed forces in roles that were previously the prerogative of the clergy.

The challenge was therefore about the understanding of the clergy-laity relationship, an issue which it appears the 'official' church was unwilling to address at that time. This issue appears with some frequency in this thesis and may be a major factor in the ambivalence attached to the place of the Reader in the church.

Whilst Readers were involved on the home or overseas front in 1941 a number of regulations were introduced which carefully balanced the clergy-Reader relationship but which gave Readers greater responsibilities in the church and recognised their admission as valid throughout the Anglican Communion. The report of 1938 that led to these regulations also addressed the selection of Readers.

> ....before admission, a potential Reader's knowledge of the faith should be adequately tested, and careful instruction given in the art of reading and the main principles of elocution and voice production. In some places recruits were expected to 'give their witness in their daily lives in the fields and in the factories, in the office and in the school, in the pits and in the workshops'. (Hiscox 1991 p. 37)

It is interesting to note that, although the regulations are generally church based there is recognition of the Reader's place in the world, primarily in a witnessing role. Certainly at the time of these regulations the Reader was frequently engaging with the world in very practical terms both overseas and on the home front.

The second question in the Introduction to the thesis focussed on Education and its place in the relationship of Reader and church. Following the observable but unrecognised place of Readers in the church's task during the war years there was a concern for their education, which could be interpreted as an attempt to bring Readers 'into line' in the church. As part of this response from the national church a common Entrance Examination was instituted for Readers in 1946, but the take up of this in the dioceses was very patchy with Reader applicants staying with the varied training schemes then in existence, either because of the choice of the applicants or because of individual diocesan policies.

There was a further concern for the provision of ongoing training for the Reader once he was licensed and a number of courses were instituted. Archbishop Fisher wrote about these Continuation Courses and Diploma.

> We would stress the importance of continuous study through the years that a Reader is doing the work allowed by his Licence. For "live and learn" implies that if we cease to learn we cease to be living men ...The Reader we have in mind is one who, on account of his daily occupation, can only give limited time and energy to these studies, and has passed the age for examinations of the ordinary scholastic type. Our aim in the Courses suggested has been to encourage a broader outlook by the extension of these fields of intelligent interest, while his own preparation for Addresses, Lectures, etc, will afford him opportunities for more intensive work. (Fisher 1947 26. f 358)

Fisher whilst writing of the need to continue to study appears not to see reflection on the Reader's 'daily occupation' as part of this process.

The role of the Reader in the war years could further be described as the church and the nation using a resource as and where needed, and the evidence is that Readers were happy to be used in this way. However I would suggest that because of the dynamics indicated above the church was uncertain how to use and how to acknowledge Readers as a resource and therefore was not pro-active in matching needs with this available manpower, leaving the Readers themselves to identify needs and, wherever possible, to respond.

Post-War

The crisis of the war years having passed, the Reader returned to a background role, basically as an assistant to the incumbent, but with an awareness of liturgical 'niceties', both roles described in a book produced by the Royal School of Church Music.

> Loyalty to the incumbent is of paramount importance. No Parochial Reader ... should ever introduce what he thinks are improvements in the ordering of worship without prior consultation with the incumbent ... Such action might undermine the influence of the parish priest, and must be avoided at all costs. ... How and where to walk. The Reader when in church should walk rather slowly, each foot being placed nearly in front of the other to avoid swing from side to side. (Spence 1950 pp. 8,13)

The 1960s and 1970s saw a gradual fall in the number of stipendiary clergy with a consequent amalgamation of parishes. This could have meant an increased use of Readers in conducting services, but the move of the church from a worship pattern of Matins and Evensong to the centrality of the Eucharist required the presence of an ordained person at every service. Melinksy picks up this point.

> As the result of the Liturgical Movement, particularly over the last fifty years in Britain, the eucharist has increasingly become the main service on a Sunday morning ... In Anglican ministerial terms it has raised questions about the place of the licensed Reader whose duty was originally conceived in terms of Morning and Evening Prayer rather than of the eucharist... (Melinksy 1992 p. 140)

Therefore the Reader was either superfluous or occupied a background role, but he was rarely needed in a solo role. This however was not the case with the armed forces where the Chaplain-in-Chief wrote to Archbishop Fisher asking for more Lay Reader help, particularly because of the fragmentation of RAF stations. Initially the Reader was issued with a limited licence, following an examination approved by the Bishop-to-the-Forces, and he would then, through postal tuition arranged by the staff of the Chaplains' School, proceed to the final examination of the Central Board of Readers. (Fisher 1956 67. f305) In this case the task for which the Reader was being prepared was clearer than that of the Reader in civilian life. The chaplain occupied a recognized role in all branches of the armed forces, and consequently the Reader would be clear about his place in this specialised ministry of the church, and the training course on which the Reader embarked would have been prepared with a clear task in mind.

In the following decade many Readers gathered, on the 11th May 1966, for a national celebratory service in St Paul's Cathedral, to mark the centenary of the revival of the Office of Reader in the Church of England. Following this service Canon King, the then Secretary of the Central Readers' Board, was able to write to Archbishop Ramsey, the preacher at the service, that more than a quarter of Readers were there and that it was a very successful service and '... as many of them (Readers) carry out their duties in isolation and loneliness they were much encouraged by seeing that they are part of a vast ministry of Readers throughout the land and even the world.' (Ramsey 1966 100. f263)

Three years later the step was taken to admit women as Readers. An Archbishops' Commission published the report 'The Ministry of Women' in 1935 and this included the words 'Lay women should be eligible for such offices and duties in the Church as are open to lay men, including that of Lay Reader'; (Hiscox 1991 p. 90) then in 1956 a group of theologians considered the question of 'The Ministry of Lay Women' and

they stated that the evidence of Scripture 'is so inconclusive as not of itself to bar the possibility of women, with the Church's authorisation, conducting Morning and Evening Prayer and preaching in case of need' (King 1973 pp. 130, 131). Finally on 7th May 1969 new Canons allowing women to be Readers became law.

There was considerable correspondence in The Reader magazine prior to and at the time of the new Canon but the Licensing of women as Readers provoked very little response in the wider church.

> As for the *Church Times*, the only mention of the Canon allowing women to become Readers was tucked away in a column by Rosamund Essex, after two paragraphs on not wearing hats in church. As a former editor of the *Church Times* for ten years, Rosamund Essex's own licensing merited one paragraph of 'Pennyfields' journal under the title of 'Ladies at the Lectern'. (Hiscox 1991 p. 95)

This compares with the considerable and sometimes acrimonious correspondence at the time of the debate on the Ordination of women to the priesthood which received the necessary legislation in November 1992. This comparison is consistent with the picture of a ministry, that of the Reader, that appears to be of little concern to the wider church when compared to the ministry of the clergy.

However there is evidence, that to church members the division between clergy and lay was not a clear one, although the Reader was definitely seen to be on the clerical side!

At first women Readers were regarded with mild curiosity and a clergyman writes about the situation twenty years later.

> When the measure was passed allowing women to be priested, people in the congregation could not understand why only the Deacon was priested, 'after all, were the Readers not doing the same things?' ……The Readers and Ordained Local Ministers had trained together on the same course, and except in terms of eucharistic presiding were interchangeable. If asked the Readers would have said they valued remaining lay, but to the congregations the main distinction within the Ministry Team was that I was full-time (and paid) and the rest were not' (Falkner 2002 pp. 196,197)

Returning to 1969 King notes that 'The first women to be admitted were of unquestionable quality and ability, and proved most acceptable wherever they ministered.' (King 1973 p. 133)

> At first women Readers were regarded with mild curiosity, especially when visiting beyond their own parish.....In some parishes the first women Readers had a hard time. One, the first in her diocese, had the full approval of her vicar and PCC (Parochial Church Council) when she started training, but when she was licensed there was consternation amongst the congregation. (Hiscox 1991 pp. 95,96)

However it is very difficult to judge the reaction from the church, because those clergy who did not want anything to do with Readers could ignore them, male or female, with ease, whereas they would be obliged to work, train and attend meetings with women priests.

The church took an equivocal stance towards Reader ministry, its exercise depending primarily on the attitude of the incumbent and not on any national policy or strategy. One view, which can be construed from the available evidence so far offered, is that for many clergy and church congregations, Reader ministry was perceived simply as an optional add-on to the work of the church.

Many of the issues already referred to were brought to the surface in a watershed report, *The Training of Readers* which was published in 1989. In particular it recognized the variation across the dioceses in the provision of Reader training.

> When we think we do not need training or further training we have begun to decay .....At present, only 25% of Readers admitted after training have completed the General Readers' Certificate. Others vary in training from a Diocesan Scheme, to just a few essays and even no training at all! (ACCM 1989 p. 1)

There was also a positive recognition of the special place of the Reader in the church and community.

> Readers provide a resource for the Church, a resource for Christian proclamation and service, and a resource for society in general. (Ibid p. 15)

The Reader was seen as holding a bridging role between everyday life and the church.

> The particular contribution of Readers as lay people can arise from the insights which they offer about lay discipleship from their experience. The Reader is a representative of the laity who ministers partly on behalf of and with the laity. (Ibid p. 15)

The report recommended national guidelines for training and a national moderating system. All the recommendations were accepted. The moderation process revealed a continuing growth in training standards and in the number of Readers (ABM 1994 p. 2), but it also showed a wide diversity in training courses and in the place of the Reader within the structures and organization of each diocese. (Ibid pp. 5,14)

The nature of the recommended training guidelines made it clear that Readers would come from a variety of backgrounds and should see themselves as part of both his or her local and work community and the church community. In support of the Reader as a person who has an expertise in the secular world the report quotes Etchells, (ACCM 1987a p. 33)

> To be called to lay service is to be called to live fully in the secular world, to be at ease in it, to know its idioms and assumptions, to engage in its arguments and affairs, because one's centre is there … to live in industry or trade or education or politics; to earn one's income from them (or to be unemployed by them), … and there, in that place where one's energies are committed, to engage quite consciously in mission and ministry. (ACCM 1989 p. 14)

I would describe this as the Reader engaging in a bridging ministry between the church and the secular world. The evidence for the need for such a bridge can be found in several commentators. Green argues that the gap between the church and the secular world began to be obvious in the earlier part of the 20th century.

> By mid-century at the latest, the British people had not simply ceased to go to church. They had ceased to respect the Christian churches: institutions, personnel and dogma. (Green 1996 p. 389)

Hastings saw this separation continuing into the closing years of the century, (Hastings 1986 pp. 666,670) but Carr did not see the split between church and society in such clear cut terms as Green or Hastings.

> By many of its most obvious criteria Christianity in general – and the Church of England in particular – might be diagnosed as in a more advanced state of entropy in Britain than anywhere else in the West, with the exception of Scandinavia.....Yet in spite of this, the Church of England seems to continue to play an indispensible role in the life of the nation, a role which should not be lightly abandoned. (Carr 1992 p. 100)

Carr sees the relationship of church and nation as the interweaving of church and society, historically and in the present. He gives examples of individuals, governments and the nation turning to the church when 'crisis fractures the pragmatic assumption of taken-for-granted meaning', (Carr 1992 p.104) and more positively.

> At the same time the church has also been woven into the symbolic structures of identity and belonging which are expressed through the celebratory aspects of meaning. (Carr 1992 p.104)

This interweaving of society and church is one which Hastings partly identifies in this period of time but uses the descriptive phrases of 'folk religion' and 'residual religion' (Hastings 1986 p. 665). The Reader is in the unique position of being able to move freely within this interweaving, into the secular and into the church worlds and, with training, enables one to understand the other.

In this role the Reader will be the recipient of the expectations of church and community, and this will call for theological reflection and a commitment to a taxing ministry. Despite the unique position of the Reader at this time of change in the church, as outlined above, the training recommended, which was duly moderated, was primarily a 'watered down' version of clergy training, with no apparent attempt to prepare the Reader for his or her interpretive, reflective and missionary role in the interweaving described by Carr, and quoted above. The concept of interweaving and the bridging role could be considered further, by comparing the role of the lay Reader and the role of the ordained non-stipendiary priest; both of whom have a foot very clearly in the ecclesiastical and in the secular worlds.

Following the 1989 report there was a positive move forward for Reader ministry in the church, but towards the end of the 20th and into the 21st centuries a negative feeling could be discerned, that was to later surface in the General Synod Debate of 2006. This negative feeling could be seen in a publication of the William Temple Foundation previously quoted when Jack Keiser, an experienced Reader was able to reflect.

> My experience over fifty years as a Reader has left me with the impression that at best the Church of England is ambivalent towards its Readers and at worst completely indifferent toward them ... by and large the Church remains clergy-dominated organisation. (Keiser 1995 p. 26)

The report *Reader Ministry and Training 2000 and Beyond* superseded that of 1989 whilst developing a number of its ideas. Its criteria for initial training included a picture of the place of the Reader in the church.

> The perceived strengths of Readers are that they are theologically trained and that they are lay, in and of the community. They provide role models of lay spirituality and of the ministry of lay Christians in their everyday working lives. They often provide continuity of ministry when stipendiary clergy move on. Ideally, they bring gifts and opportunities that are different from, and complementary to, those of the clergy. (Archbishops Council 2000, p.9)

But there were warnings.

> One of the weaknesses sometimes seen in the ministry of Readers is that it can be over-dependent on the clergy, exemplified by the insecurity felt during a parish vacancy. Another is that the Reader is seen as a second-class minister, or a pale copy. (Ibid p. 9)

The first of these two paragraphs provides a description of the place of the Reader in the ministry of the church, derived from the experience and observations of the compilers of the report, but the second paragraph indicates a continuing uncertain relationship between Reader and clergy. The pictures of the Reader as a pale copy of the clergy, or a second-class minister, are ones that later emerged in the Synod debate of 2006. The report recommends that the implications of the first paragraph above should be applied to Reader training.

> The design of the training should take seriously … (i) the variety of cultural and religious experience within local communities; (ii) the variety of social contexts in which learning takes place, and within which Readers will exercise their ministry, for example, rural/urban, high/low employment; … (vi) the wide variety of starting points, the range of gifts, abilities and experience of the course participants and their different learning styles; … (Ibid p. 26)

The report acknowledged a breadth of Reader ministry, identifying Readers as lay preachers, leaders of worship, pastors and teachers, organizers, spiritual people and exercising ecumenical ministry (Ibid pp. 6,7) Although it recognized the 'bridge' ministry of Readers and their role in the local community and in the workplace (Ibid, pp. 4,5 and Recommendation 8.8, p. 51) it did not pursue the consideration of ministry in the work place or in the local community where many Readers locate their

primary ministry, illustrated by the Etchells quotation in the 1989 report. (ACCM 1989 p.14)

A wide variety of methods of learning was recommended, in order to meet the criteria spelt out in the report, but the evidence from the 1999-2003 moderation is that this depended on the availability and skills of the tutors, the job description for each

Director of Training and the budget allocated by the diocese. (Thorpe 2003 pp. 30,36, 48,49) It is possible that the approach to training, identified in the moderation, indicated that within the dioceses there was a reluctance to recognize the unique ministry of Readers, and simply to provide training that closely resembled that provided for clergy, although frequently at a lower academic level. When problems were identified in meeting the criteria of the report, I would suggest that there had been a failure to address the underlying question 'for what role and task is this diocese training this candidate?' My own assessment, as a moderator, of the response to this question was, and still is, that the question was rarely considered, or was dealt with in a superficial manner.

It could be argued, that the apparently inadequate response to the 2000 report was because the church and its ministry were and are in a state of flux. Whilst the bishops and synod seek to engage with the many challenges the church faces, with regard to its place in the nation, and with the tensions and problems within the church, they can find little or no time to consider the place of Readers in the church, and the training appropriate for this place. Against this I would argue that Readers, because of their unique and authorized position in the church, could provide a resource that, properly recognized and motivated, would enable the church leadership to more effectively engage with the problems faced by the church.

Because of their references to Readers, two other reports in this period must be commented on. One, *For such a time as this*, is about the Diaconate, (men and women who are ordained but remain as deacons and are not priested).

> the office of Reader is not an 'ecclesial sign'[38] in the same way that the ordained ministry is. It is not irrevocable like the orders of deacons, priest and bishops. Holy order is regarded by the Church as 'a sacramental sign' in a way that the office of Reader is not… (GS1407 2001 p. 41)

This underlines a recurring theme in this thesis which is the complication of the clergy-lay relationship created by the existence of the Reader who, whilst clearly lay, often functions in a role frequently seen as belonging to the clergy. This then raises the question of the ontological difference between the ordained church member and the lay church member. The argument, which I put forward elsewhere in this study, is that the church is ambivalent to the Reader, and therefore the Reader finds his or her place in the church an uncertain one, and my proposition is that a major factor in this ambivalence is that the church, for whatever reason, is unwilling to face the question of the specific differentiation between ordained and not-ordained ministry.

However the authors of this report also affirmed Readers.

> Although Readers sometimes feel that their role has been squeezed by the expanding roles of the clergy and of other laity, they remain a distinctive ministerial cadre within the Church of England. Readers have retained their distinct identity as nationally and canonically recognized, theologically trained, liturgically adept, lay people. Their competent contribution in conducting worship and ministering the word is unquestioned. … There is ample work for both Readers and deacons, in their distinctive ways, in the tasks of mission that God has given to the Church. (Ibid p. 42)

It may be reading too much into this quotation but the implication appears to be consistent with evidence offered elsewhere, namely that Readers 'have to be kept in their place'. Their competent contribution in worship and preaching is a limiting description when placed against the work now undertaken by Readers, pastorally and in prisons, hospitals and the community. (See chapter 3)

The second of these reports, *Stranger in the Wings* is about Ordained Local Ministry.

> What is the difference between Readers and local ministers? Why don't we simply ordain Readers? In answer to the last question, Readers will often be members of a Local Ministry Team. Some will be called by the community to minister as priests, and will gladly accept that calling. In that case they will also accept the need for a training which allows them to grow

[38] Ecclesial – defined as 'relating to the church', but in this context it carries the meaning of 'representing the church which itself carries the definition of 'the body of Christ' (Ephesians 4:15,16)

> into that priestly calling. Other Readers feel themselves called to a ministry of preaching and teaching, but know that their distinctive ministry is to be lay.
> (ABM 1998 p. 4)

I read this report as recognizing a complementary relationship between the clergy and the Reader, although there is a sense of 'moving on' to be a priest.

I have included these references, because both of these reports sought to clarify the difference between a trained and competent lay ministry and the ordained ministry, but it is a clarification that appeared to be limited to the Reader having a lesser training than the priest, and not serving as an ecclesial sign. An extreme interpretation of this is that Readers were perceived as exercising a second-class ministry. It could also be argued that both of these reports reflected the sense of a gradation if not a 'pecking order' within the Church of England ministry, rather than the alternative of complementary roles for licensed Lay Minister and licensed Ordained Minister that were part of the 1989 report. Davies et al noted a possible sense of gradation when they interviewed rural stipendiary clergy for a report on *Church and Religion in Rural England* and they observed that –

> ...it could be argued that there is a perceived gradation of priest-lay identity as one moves from ordained parish priest though NSM-LOM, to readers to lay member of congregation. (Davies 1991 p. 160)
>
> A few clergy even questioned whether the office (of Reader) now had a purpose. One Gloucester clergyman regarded readers as belonging to a 'totally redundant Victorian order of things', a Truro incumbent saw readers as 'outmoded' while a Lincoln priest thought readers 'should be abolished'. (Ibid p. 161)

Further reports in this period of time which could be described as 'responding to change' included *Selection for Reader Ministry* (ABM7, 1998), *The Training of Readers* (ABM9, 1994) and *The Deployment of Readers* (ABM20, 1998). This latter report recommended that consideration should be given to the expansion of Reader ministry into the wider world. This suggested that the Reader could see his or her workplace as the place where ministry would be exercised or she or he could be serving the community in hospitals, residential homes, schools or prisons or be taking a more active role in team ministries.

Looking to the first of the questions that I posed in the introduction, which was about the significance of Reader-Church relationships, my understanding is that this report on Reader Deployment argued that the church was making a significant move in church-Reader relationships.

> Gradually the Church is moving away from the concept of Readers 'helping' the clergy in their ministry to a recognition that Readers exercise a God-given ministry … they are uniquely placed among neighbours and colleagues, friends and family … they can be particularly well-placed 'to spread out so as to form a more extended line' and 'bring forces (of the Church) into effective action.' (ABM 1998 p. 9)

This indicates that the authors of the report clearly recognized the unique role of the Reader in the church and in the community. However the findings of the report produced a minimal response in the church.

Nevertheless Readers are now involved in many of the various areas suggested in these reports, and several of the diocesan web sites describe this wider ministry in their description of 'What is a Reader?'

Despite the suggestion in the 1998 report, *The Deployment of Readers* that the Church is moving into a new understanding of the place of the Reader, it should be noted that these new expressions of ministry were and are often the result of the initiative coming from the Reader and not from the church. For example it is the individual Reader who applies to work as a chaplain in a prison, hospital or school; he or she is not seconded or initially recommended by the bishop. This I interpret as another small piece of evidence saying that there is a recognition of the Reader exercising a ministry in his or her own right, but where there is no obvious need then the Reader can be left 'to do her or his own thing'.

A very clear illustration of the difference in the church in its approach to the ordained ministry and to Reader ministry is that provided by an article written by the then Secretary of the Readers' Council on the changing role of this office over the years.

> It is a cause for concern that only two part-time officers (in the Ministry Division of the Church of England) deal with the whole range of Reader ministry – supporting 10,000 Readers and 44 dioceses – whilst most of the work of the Ministry Division is concerned with the selection of

> ordinands. I long for the day when the church values its lay ministers and particularly its trained and authorised Readers and resources them appropriately. (The Reader 2003 p. 6)

The ambivalence of the church towards Reader ministry expressed in much of this historical chapter was brought to the forefront of the church's thinking through a Private Member's Motion at the General Synod of 8th February 2006 moved by Mr Nigel Holmes, a Reader in the Carlisle diocese. After amendment the Motion was put and carried.

> That this Synod, aware that the work of the 10,000 Readers is crucial to the mission of the church, requests the Archbishops' Council to consider how this nationally accredited office should be developed, and Readers more fully and effectively deployed, in the light of the welcome recent introduction of a great variety of patterns of voluntary local ministry, both lay and ordained. (GS 2006 GS Misc 812 A and B, Vol 37, No.1 p. 182)

The debate produced comments and illustrations that confirmed the themes emerging in this thesis of the lack of clarity about the place of Readers in the ministry of the church, the commitment of the Reader and the uncertainty that exists in the clergy-Reader relationship.

> I think that the role of a Reader in the Church of England at the moment is bit messy. (Ms Dana Delap, Ibid p. 195)
>
> Readers are often competent, confident and committed lay ministers in their local church and deanery. They offer a stable and continuing ministry where ordained leadership often comes and goes. (Revd Elizabeth Dyke, Ibid p. 181)
>
> ....We are seen as half-baked clergy and that is something which many Readers feel. (Mr Ian Smith, Ibid pp196)
>
> ...some parish priests having seen Reader training and ministry as a way of somehow 'getting a person started', almost as a preparatory phase for ordinands and not a distinctive vocation in its own right. (Revd Mary-Lou Toop, Ibid p. 187)

The difficulties arising in relation to other laity in ministry in the church were picked up by the Revd Dr James Garrard, a Warden of Readers and Director of Reader Training.

> …the thought that Reader ministry will crumble away because in so many parishes all the things that Readers have traditionally done are now done by people who have not been trained to do so or who have just picked it up in their own parish as they have gone along. (Ibid p. 198)

The result of the debate was the appointment of a Review group to examine Reader ministry and then to report to the General Synod. At the same time re-organization of training for ministry was taking place in the church as the result of the 'Hind report' or *Formation for Ministry within a learning Church*. This report was primarily concerned with the training of ordinands, (candidates accepted for training for the ordained ministry), but the compilers also identified an important issue.

> … considering how to set ministerial education for the clergy within the context of a coordinated provision of adult learning and training in the church – IME (Initial Ministerial Education) and CME (Continuing Ministerial Education) for clergy and Readers, training other lay ministries and formal theological education for lay discipleship. (Archbishops' Council 2003 p. 25)

I would suggest that the problem the compilers faced in seeking to provide a coordinated provision of adult learning, was that there appeared to be very little serious work on the nature of the task each form of ministry was to be asked to perform on behalf of the church, and little consideration of their complementary roles in the church's ministry. The question of 'is there now a need for Reader ministry, with the existence of non-stipendiary ministers and with a growing number of other lay ministries?' was not even considered.

Following the publication of *The Hind Report* several Task Groups were set up to provide 'more detailed guidance on a range of educational and training issues', but not on the place of the Reader in the church. The Task Group with the task of working at 'A vision for good practice in Reader/Preacher training' produced a report which appeared in 2006 as part of *Shaping the Future, new patterns of training for lay and ordained.*[39]

The progress of these reports and their relevance for Reader ministry and training are considered in the 'update' chapter at the end of this study.

[39] 'Preacher' here refers to the Lay Preacher of the Methodist Church and a Methodist representative and United Reformed Church representative were both full members of the Task Group

CONCLUSION

This exploration of the history of the Reader has shown that the roots of Reader ministry lay first in the synagogue, where lay members took a lead in reading and expounding the scriptures, and then in the early church where Readers were amongst the officially appointed lay officers of the church. In the fourth century as State and Church became interdependent and as the division between clergy and laity became clear cut with the weight of authority on the clergy side, Readers became an ordained minor order in the church.

This could be viewed as a natural progression as the church developed but I suggest that the existence of lay persons with liturgical and ministerial roles presented problems for the ecclesiastical-political balance of power and authority at that time, therefore Readers were absorbed into the clerical part of the church. I would further suggest that this was also the beginning of a theological debate about the nature of priesthood, the church and the place of laity.

Both the issue of the balance of power and authority and the theological debate are relevant to the first of the questions that I posed in the Introduction to this thesis. This was the question which referred to the significance of the changing relationship of Readers and Reader ministry to the church.

My understanding is that these questions of the ecclesiastical-political balance of power and the theological import of the clergy-lay relationship continued into the establishing and consequent development of the Church of England and were to prove of major significance in the Reader – church relationship whenever Reader ministry was introduced into the church.

The importance of the ordained Readers decreased until in England minor orders were no longer considered valid after 1559 (Usher 1999 p 186). At the same time in the 16th century the church and nation faced a crisis of ecclesiastical manpower and of stability.

As part of the process of dealing with this crisis and following the abolition of all minor orders in the church, lay Readers were re-introduced, and they continued in office until their ministry was no longer required.

The re-introduction of Readers was far more than a straightforward pragmatic response to the need for more manpower, it was a recognition of an available resource of capable laity who, at a local level, were able to represent the official church, provide teaching and pastoral care and cope with both recusants and extreme protestants, and in the process free the church to work with the monarch at national issues.

Accountability was part of the appointment of the Readers to parishes but the educational standard required appears to be no more than that expected of any reasonably educated layman, which in previous years may have been superior to that of many priests.

Readers then gradually disappeared from the scene, primarily because of the growth in the number of educated clergy. However I would suggest that a further factor in this disappearance could be a possible ambivalence in the 'official' church towards Reader ministry, arising from an uncertainty about lay members exercising a representative role in the parishes and undertaking many of the duties that were the prerogative of the clergy.

However Readers were to reappear in the late 19th century when the church again faced a crisis but this time it was threefold, first the threat of disestablishment, then a lack of communication with a large proportion of the populace and thirdly the need to harness the growth in unauthorised lay ministry.

The Readers, as laity, were able to work and teach in areas where the clergy had little contact, but the training they were offered and the use made of their ministry, varied from diocese to diocese, and depended entirely on the diocesan bishop's acceptance or otherwise of Reader ministry. At the same time some clergy were possessive of their prerogatives in ministry, and it was many years before Readers were allowed

into the Sanctuary or into the pulpit to preach, suggesting that Reader ministry raised questions about authority and about the theology of priesthood and of laity.

Nevertheless the exercise of Reader ministry at a local level allowed the senior clergy to address the major issues that were threatening the church at that time.

Reader ministry did not disappear following the 19th century crisis, but it was allowed to continue in the background until the church faced manpower problems in the two world wars, and Readers responded to a variety of needs. I suggest that the ambivalence which I have earlier noted in the church's response to Readers was expressed from the end of the 19th century onwards by officially recognizing Readers whilst at the same time ignoring their existence unless there was a real need.

The evidence therefore suggests that the use of Readers in times of crisis, and then their removal or displacement into a background role, is one of indications of the ambivalent attitude held by the church towards the place of the Reader in the church. If Readers were not being used when there was no longer a crisis, the argument could be that they were not needed, but I would suggest that their continuation in the 19th and 20th century had two causes. The first was the pressure from many able men who wished to serve in the liturgical, pastoral and interpretive role of the Reader, and secondly the unexpressed realization by the church, that Readers provided a local and available resource, that could be activated to represent the church in the local situation when the need arose, thereby freeing the church leadership to address current needs at a national level.

The training of Readers for their representative, communicating, pastoral and teaching work moved from that expected of any educated person to established training courses, although it was clear that from the 19th century to the present, the training that was provided, even after the introduction of national guidelines, depended on the place of Reader ministry in the structures of each individual diocese and on the decisions of the diocesan bishop.

Woven into this history has been the complex relationship of the ordained church member, the lay church member and the Reader. The Reader who was a lay church member, with full Episcopal authority, undertook many of the functions in church and community that had been, and were seen by many still to be, the exclusive prerogatives of the clergy. This 'fudging' of the boundary between lay church member, Reader and clergy produced an uncertainty about the place of the Reader in church and community, but also facilitated the ministry of the Reader as a bridge between clergy and church members and between the church and the wider community.

In this uncertainty and ambivalence there has been the continuing and positive pattern of the clear willingness of men, and in later years of women, to train to serve the church in an authorized lay post, a position which could require a long and comprehensive training course. Then, having been trained, the licensed Readers were available to be used as a local resource if and when the need arose.

The Reader throughout the major part of this history is seen as a willing, flexible, available and useful resource for the church, an understanding of Reader ministry that is developed further in the ensuing chapters. Because of the Reader's ability to identify needs at the local level and to respond immediately and also to respond to major issues identified by the church leadership, I suggest that 'the fluidity of Reader ministry' is an appropriate description of the nature of the responsive role of the Reader in the church and it is one that I will use elsewhere in this thesis.

However there is a rider to this understanding of Reader ministry. Whilst identifying several themes that include ambivalence, uncertain clergy-lay boundaries, the bridging role of the Reader and the Reader as a latent human and spiritual resource, it has to be recognised that, in any diocese, there have been and are clergy and church congregations totally unaware of Reader ministry, or who do not wish to engage with it in any way.

In the diocese of the student Readers who were interviewed for a longitudinal study, (chapter five) 76 parishes had one or more Reader (s) and 80 did not have a Reader.

This does not remove Readers from their unique position of being the only canonical, national and Episcopally authorized lay ministerial office in the church but I suggest that the Reader-clergy relationship is a non - issue in just over half of the parishes in this particular diocese. My experience as a moderator suggests that similar figures could be produced in other dioceses, so that today, although the number of licensed Readers is almost equivalent to the number of stipendiary clergy in the Church of England, they are much more unevenly distributed.

I would suggest that it is possible that there is an unspoken acceptance in the Church of England that, whilst Readers are a canonical, national and Episcopally authorized lay ministry, they need not be taken into account in any overall ministerial or mission planning. If this is the case it could be that the reasoning behind such a position depends on the assumption that Readers are active in only half of the parishes of the country and the use or not of Readers is dependent on the personal views of Reader ministry held by individual incumbents and bishops. I would suggest also that the uneven distribution of Readers across the country is a further reason for the unwillingness of the church leadership to take Reader ministry into account, when it is considering mission and ministry strategies. The historical evidence has shown that the church leadership is only obviously aware of Readers and their potential for active ministry when specific needs arise.

In the introduction to this thesis I posed a question about the significance of the changing relationship of the Reader and the Church of England. From the evidence of this chapter I suggest that this relationship has been crisis led, the crises usually arising from national needs or pressures on the church and initially outside the control of the church. In response to these crises the church mobilised Reader ministry or authorized Readers who may already have identified and responded to the crisis.

Difficulties then emerged as a crisis passed and the church was left with an active body of able and authorized ministers who were lay but carrying out many of the functions considered the prerogative of the clergy. The church answered this problem in the 17th century by allowing Reader ministry to disappear, in the 20th

century by placing the Reader firmly within the structures of the church as an assistant to the parochial clergy and then in the 21st century with a move to see Readers simply as one form of lay ministry amongst many. The ambivalence of the church towards Reader ministry was made clear because as the church sought to 'relegate' Reader ministry to the place of one amongst many lay ministries, it also required Readers and clergy to share a common course for a major part of their training. The fluid line of Reader ministry through time is illustrated by the continuing willingness of lay church members to offer for this ministry, despite a continuing movement in its expressed and experienced boundaries within the church.

I therefore suggest that this chapter identified Readers as an available ministerial resource for the church. At the same time Readers were seen to be a form of ministry that challenged the church in its theology of the clergy-lay relationship and in the working out of this theology in its structures and mission. Therefore the significance of the changing relationship between Reader and Church exposed in this chapter is that it enabled the church to use an adaptable and committed body of lay members as and when it identified a need, and a body of committed lay people were there to respond to needs identified at 'ground level'. Of further significance was the difficulty of then placing the Reader within the accepted theology of the church.

In the next chapter the present use of Readers, their distribution, the work they actually do in the church and community and the inter-relationship of diocese, clergy and other laity is examined through the eyes and understanding of Wardens for Reader ministry and the Directors of Reader Training. This throws further light on all three of the questions that I posed in the introduction to this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

THE SURVEY: AN OVERVIEW OF READER MINISTRY AND TRAINING

INTRODUCTION

In seeking to discover answers to the questions I posed in the introduction which were about the relationship of Reader ministry and the church, about the education of Readers and about the commitment of Readers, I considered it important to obtain a broad picture, and to understand something of the contemporary place of Reader training and ministry in the Church of England. For this I would need to obtain information from the whole country and from as many of the church's 44 dioceses as possible. To tackle this task I considered the possibility of making extensive use of web-sites, or using the published material of each diocese, or of conducting interviews with individuals in each diocese or of using some form of national survey or questionnaire.

I began by looking at the diocesan websites which provided a readily accessible source of information. However the information offered varied in quantity and quality; some dioceses had very limited sites whereas others were professional and comprehensive, some did not refer to Reader ministry and others gave it a full coverage. It is possible that the websites reflected the IT skills of the dioceses and their commitment to the website as a means of communication, rather than providing a reliable base for a picture of Reader ministry in the national church. Nevertheless the variety of sites and their content did provide evidence of the breadth of understanding of the place of the Reader in the church, and of the varying importance each diocese ascribed to Reader ministry, although they did not provide adequate information for the purposes of this thesis.

As well as the websites, all dioceses produced Reader introductory printed material.[40] These introductions to Reader training and ministry varied from professionally produced pamphlets to one side of an A4 sheet, again demonstrating a variety in approach to Reader ministry, and possibly indicating something of the importance attached to the place of Readers in the structures of each diocese. The wide variation in quality of production and information contained was not sufficient to produce the broad picture of the contemporary place of Readers and Reader ministry in the church that I was seeking.

Two of the other possible sources of information were interviews and a survey. The information that I was seeking was held by the church officers and parishioners of the 16,000 benefices (parishes and united parishes) in the Church of England, by the 10,000 licensed clergy, 10,000 licensed Readers, 1,100 student Readers, 250 senior clergy and 90 Reader officers (all figures are approximate) but to access this directly by written survey or by interviews, even using a 5% sample, was ruled out by cost and time.

The method I eventually used was that of a survey questionnaire, addressed to the Warden for Reader Ministry and the Director of Reader Training in each diocese of the Church of England together with the use of statistics provided by *The Church of England Year Book*[41]. The Warden of Readers has the oversight of Reader Ministry in his or her diocese and the Director of Training for Reader Ministry is responsible for the delivery and monitoring of initial Reader training. A copy of the survey questionnaires can be seen in Appendices Four and Five.

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[40] I had available a recent cross-section of these publications accumulated in my work as a Moderator for Reader Training and a number of Wardens for Readers included published introductory material with their survey responses.

[41] *The Church of England Year Book* is the official Year Book of the Church of England, published by Church House Publishing. It includes selected church statistics, details of diocesan and national structures and information about church organizations. The figures for 2004 can be found in the 2006 Year Book.

I recognize that this method was a compromise, because I did not contact Readers, student Readers and parishioners directly, but those to whom I sent the surveys, Wardens for Readers and Directors of Reader Training, were each a key officer in her or his own diocese. Those I contacted as Wardens and Directors of Training whether clergy, Readers or simply church members were all Episcopally appointed officers accountable directly to the bishop, or in the case of some Directors of Training for Readers to a Diocesan Director of Training who was responsible for all training in the diocese, clergy, Readers and other laity. In most cases these diocesan officers would be in close contact with the bishop and other church officials, have personal contact with clergy and church officials in many of the diocese's parishes and were themselves members of a church and parish.

Many of those who responded to the survey also sent me diocesan publications whether introductory information, training courses, newsletters or regulations. These publications confirmed the variation in quality and content in the printed material produced by dioceses already noted above.

For the analysis of the survey I used available statistical information but depended primarily on the factual information provided by these key diocesan officials together with their perceptions and their experience of Reader training and ministry in their own diocese.

I published an overview of the returns to the survey in *The Reader* magazine (The Reader 2006 p. 6) and this produced in response a number of letters and emails from Readers. I have made reference to some of the correspondence arising from my article in the relevant sections of this chapter.

I piloted the Survey Questionnaire with 12 individuals, five Wardens and five Directors of Training from dioceses drawn from the north and south of England, plus the Secretary of the Readers' Council and the National Moderator for Reader Training.

Following the amendments arising from this exercise the survey questionnaires were distributed between October and December 2004. 51 questionnaires were sent to Wardens of Readers (London works in five areas and there is a warden for each of the armed forces), and 49 to Directors of Training (the Army and the RAF do not have anyone in this category). Completed questionnaires were received from 41 dioceses, either from the Warden or Director of Training or from both. This represents a 93% response taking account of the replies from both the Wardens and the Directors of Training. Looking at the replies from the Wardens and Directors of Training separately, one diocese was without a warden and another warden was seriously ill and so out of a possible 49 returns, 34 wardens returned a questionnaire giving a 69% response and 37 Directors of Training replied from a possible 49 providing a 76% response. Two out of the three Wardens in the Armed Forces returned completed questionnaires as did the one Director of Training.

The questionnaires were designed to include both qualitative and quantitative responses. My aim was to obtain a comprehensive and as accurate as possible picture of Reader ministry and training in the Church of England at this time in order to reach a greater understanding of church and Reader relationships, of the part Reader education played in this and of the actual work on which Readers were engaged. For all of this I required both factual information and personal perceptions.

Clark, Creswell, Green and Shope refer to some of the benefits of this approach.

> The value of a mixed methods approach arises partly from the multiple perspectives that can be included by combining quantitative and qualitative data in a study. ... The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods can also facilitate the incremental building of knowledge. ... Mixed methods incorporate a level of flexibility that facilitates an emergent design. ... Just as a mixed methods research approach offers numerous methodological advantages, it also brings value to a study in terms of its overall persuasiveness and emphasis on practical application. Mixed methods studies can produce more persuasive accounts of the phenomenon of interest because they combine statistical results with qualitative quotes and stories and therefore may appeal to a broader audience.
>
> (Clark, Cresswell, Green and Shope 2008 pp. 365, 366)

Each questionnaire was designed in two sections, the first part was particular to the individual roles of Warden or Director of Training, and the second part covered common ground. This common ground included a response to present educational

moves in the church, diocesan plans for the development of Reader ministry and the respondent's personal 'vision for the future'.

I compared and amplified some of the quantitative information in the first part, with that which can be found in the Church of England Year Book. I also invited the Wardens and Directors of Training to send me any relevant material, and many responded to this with great generosity. I have been able to incorporate evidence from this material in this chapter and in the introduction to the Cohort chapter.

The information provided by the survey gave a broad picture of Reader training and ministry across the dioceses of the Church of England, and to examine this I coded the replies under four main headings, each formulated as a question designed to provide evidence for the place of the Reader in the church, and then into a number of sub-divisions and it is these headings and subheadings that provide the structure for this chapter.

1. Who are the Readers and the Students?
    1) How many?
    2) Ages
    3) Backgrounds

2. Where do Readers work and what do they do?
    1) A varied distribution
    2) A wide-ranging ministry

3. How are Readers perceived?
    1) The diocesan view
    2) The church and community perception
    3) The students' ideas

4. How do Readers learn and train?
    1) The first three years
    2) Continuing Ministerial Education
    3) Recognition of gifts and training

5. What is seen as the future for Readers?
    1) In the diocese
    2) Wardens and Directors of training, their vision

6. Summary and Conclusions

The coding process itself was one of adjustment and readjustment, as links across the responses produced new possibilities of viewing the data. This is consistent with

Coffee and Atkinson (1996, p 28) who suggest that coding can go beyond 'the retrieval of data segments categorised under the same codes.'

> ... we are attaching codes as a way of identifying and reordering data, allowing the data to be thought about in new and different ways. Coding is the mechanics of having ideas and using concepts about the data ... ... it can be used to expand, transform, and reconceptualise data, opening up more diverse analytical possibilities. (Ibid p. 29)

But Maxwell and Miller warn of the danger of losing sight of the context in the process of coding/categorising.

> The categories generated through coding are typically linked into larger patterns ... using connecting techniques only on the categories, rather than the data, results in an aggregate account of contiguity relationships and can never reconstitute the specific contextual connections that were lost during the original categorizing analysis. (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2008 p. 466)

I have noted this danger, part of which arises from the boundaries set by the questions themselves, and part from the fact that the data provided depended on the respondents categorising much of the 'raw data' themselves, before including it in their survey responses. However I was looking for an overall picture of the contemporary Reader training/Reader ministry and, despite the reservations that I have noted, my perception was that the material provided by the diocesan officers was sufficient to provide a realistic picture of the present position of Reader ministry and training in the Church of England.

Throughout the chapter references to the Wardens' responses are prefixed by the letter 'W' followed by the section and number of the question and those for the Directors of training are prefixed by the letter 'D', again followed by the section and number of the question.

WHO ARE THE READERS?

How many?

The wardens provided the numbers of Readers in their diocese in 2004, and I later compared these figures with the 2004 figures published in *The Church of England Year Book* in 2006. The figures provided by the wardens for the survey depended on

their own records (W.A. 1) and I have assumed that the 5% deviation between the Year Book figures and those supplied by the Wardens may have arisen from the different dates of providing the figures, and the effect of retirements, deaths and new Readers.

The Year Book figures which include those for other ministers are –

Stipendiary Clergy:	8,897
Non Stipendiary Ministers: (NSM)	1,855
Ordained Local Ministers: (OLM)	545
Church Army Evangelists:	243
Readers	8,429

The chart illustrates the numerical strength of Readers in the Church of England in relation to the numbers of other licensed ministries.

Licensed Ministers of the Church of England, 2004

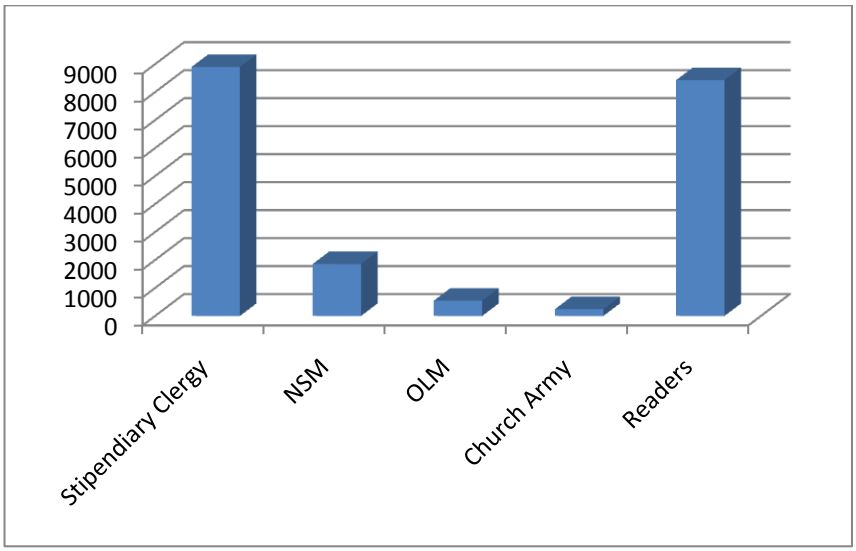
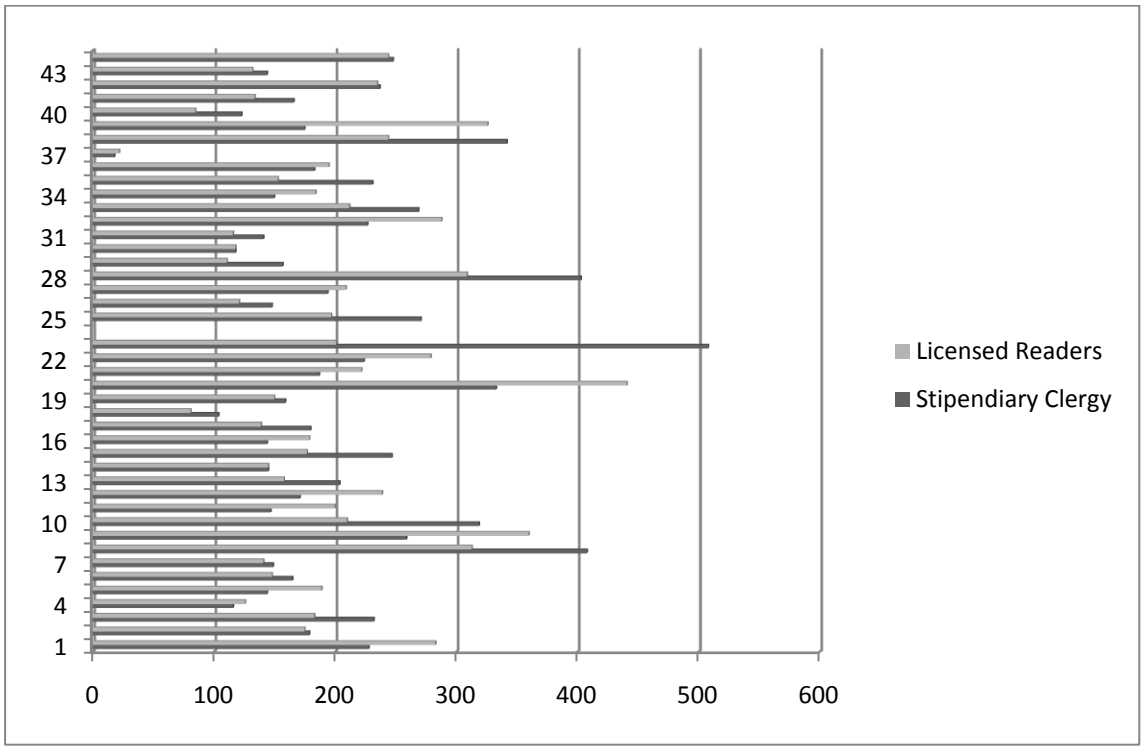


Chart constructed from the figures supplied in The Church of England Year Book 2006, for the year 2004

This shows that Readers formed 42% of the ministerial workforce of the Church of England, and that they therefore held a numerically significant place in the church's ministry. My argument in this study and which I will develop in this chapter is that

the numerically significant place of Readers in the church was not and is not reflected in the church's structures and organisation.

There was also considerable variation in the relative numbers of clergy and Readers across the dioceses as is illustrated by the following chart which places the 44 dioceses of the Church of England on the 'y' axis.



It can be seen that in 10 dioceses the stipendiary clergy significantly outnumber the Readers, and that in 7 dioceses the reverse is true, but for 27 dioceses the numbers are similar. I have not explored this difference but the Directors of Training offered some reasons for these differences (D.A7,A8), and these are given below in the section 'A varied distribution'. The fact of the uneven distribution of Readers suggests an uncertainty about the place of the Reader in the ministry of the church or it may simply reflect the varying theological stances of the majority of clergy and the bishops in each diocese.

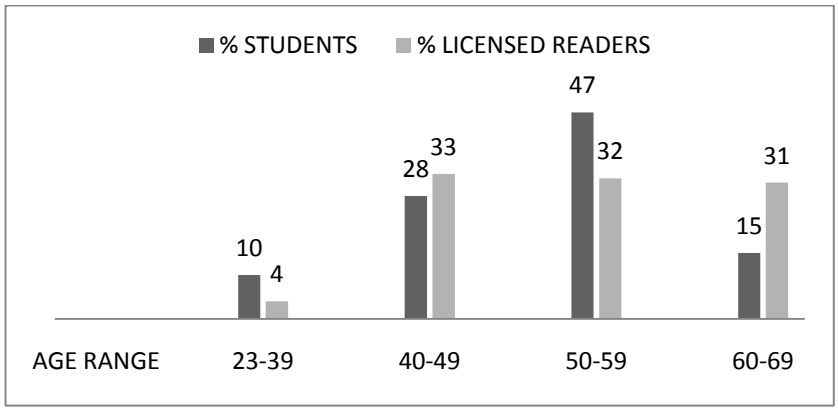
Therefore the consideration of the response to the question about numbers of Readers in the Church of England at the time of this survey indicated that Readers represented a significant percentage of the total authorized ministerial resources of

the church although they were unevenly distributed across the dioceses. Against these findings, information about the extent of Reader participation in the structures and planning for ministry and mission in the dioceses and further consideration of the variation in the clergy- Reader ratio in dioceses could provide strong indicators of the place of the Reader in the contemporary church.

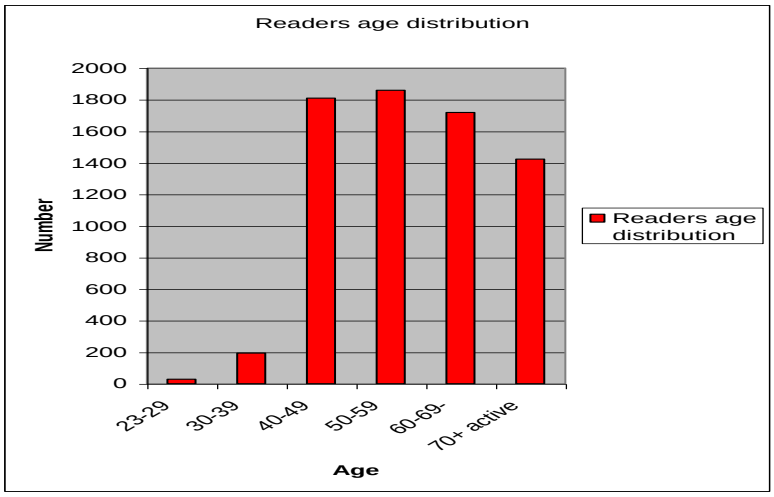
Ages

The breakdown of the ages of active Readers, and of Student Readers (D.A4, W.A2), showed that both were weighted to the older age range, and this is shown clearly in the first of the charts that follow. Although there is no required minimum age for a Reader to be admitted, the figures given by the wardens in the survey indicated that only 4% of Licensed Readers were under the age of 40.[42]

The second chart includes the high percentage of Readers who, having turned the age of 70, no longer hold a licence but are granted 'permission to officiate' (PTO) by the bishop although one bishop allows the Readers in his diocese to continue to hold a licence until they are 75 when they receive PTO and another bishop automatically issues PTO to all Readers over 70. A similar position applies to the ordained ministry with many engaged in active ministry because they have PTO and a limited number holding a full licence in their seventies.



[42] The 1921 regulations stipulated a minimum age of 21 for Parochial Readers and 23-30 for commissions as Diocesan Readers but I was unable to discover any present day regulations for the minimum age for admission as a Reader.



The predominance of an older age range is something that is reflected in the experience of many churches and voluntary organisations. The argument can be made that prior to their late forties men and women are committed to making a career and building a home, and it is only when career, home and family are in a stable condition that commitment to a three-year training course can be considered, even if the candidate had experienced a sense of call to ministry prior to that point in time. This has a positive side in that many candidates for Reader ministry brought previous learning, experience and skills to their training course, and to their ensuing ministry, and they were therefore contributing to the value of their ministry as a resource for the church.

However my evidence at a personal and anecdotal level, derived from experience of diocesan training courses, is that only rarely are student Readers asked to bring their particular skills to the training course, or to reflect on the link between their work and their Reader training. I suggest that this observation indicates that the church finds it difficult to move outside the lay-ordained divide and that the criteria used in developing training for Readers is modelled on that used for clergy where the same problem can be observed.[43] Nevertheless men or women in the older age ranges

[43] Working with curates in their post-ordination 3 year 'Continuing Ministerial Education' course I noted that whilst at theological college they had no opportunity to relate their previous lay experience, skills and knowledge to their new learning and role and therefore found it difficult to relate this

bring, to both Reader and Ordained ministry, a breadth of experience and knowledge which can only enrich the ministry of the church.

The response to this question about age makes it clear that the majority of student and licensed Readers are in the older age range. The implications of this are that the training courses for students and licensed Readers should be geared to a clientele that possesses considerable life experience and who represent a unique resource for the church as it relates to the secular world.

Backgrounds

The experience and knowledge of Reader students was made clear in the survey, as it revealed a wide range of work and educational backgrounds. Of those who entered into training in this period of time, 13% were unwaged, 17% retired and 70% in paid employment; 40% were graduates, 22% held a professional qualification, 20% held a vocational qualification and 18% had life experience only (D.A5, A.6). 87% were therefore in receipt of an income from a pension or work and 82% had received some form of further education. The implication of this broad picture is that there is available for the ministry of the church a valuable resource in terms of experience and knowledge, but it also means that the training courses that are offered for Reader ministry will have to cater for students from a wide range of educational and life-experience backgrounds, as well as of differing ages.

The problems arising when this diversity was not given the necessary consideration were evidenced within 'the Student Cohort, as they wrestled with the content and presentation of different courses (see chapter Five).

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background to their work in the parish. This suggests a theme which I cannot explore within the limitations of this study, namely the importance attached by the church to the maintenance of the divide between lay and ordained to the extent that when a person moves from the laity to either the priesthood or to the bridge ministry of Reader then there is a cut off between the previous lay life and the new church role.

I would add the caveat that it is debatable whether the spread of qualifications and background determines the training offered, or whether the training offered determines those who apply. Possible uncorroborated evidence for this latter point can be seen in the training offered in one diocese, where 14 graduates and 4 'life experience only' were in training and another diocese which offered a different style of training course, where there were 14 'life experience' trainees and 5 graduates. My understanding of this discrepancy is that the training offered to Reader candidates reflects the uncertainty of the place of Reader ministry within the church, because the question being posed in this variation of figures is 'who does the church want as Readers and for what task?'

The breadth of the life experience and the educational achievements of student and licensed Readers were confirmed in the response to this question, again underlining the importance of the ministerial resource for the church represented by student and licensed Readers. If however, as I have suggested, there was a lack of clarity or even an uncertainty about the task asked of Readers and the church was looking to Readers as a resource, then the question remains, 'resource for what?'

WHERE DO READERS WORK AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

A varied distribution

If Reader ministry has in the past come into existence primarily as a resource for the church in a time of need, and the 'History of the Reader' chapter indicates that this is the case, then I suggest that a reasonable expectation is that the hierarchy of the church would seek to place Readers where there is the greatest need. However there is little evidence to show that any notice was taken of the 1998 report, *The Deployment of Readers* (ABM Ministry Paper 20, 1998), which suggested the deployment or secondment of Readers to answer identified needs, and also to enable underused Readers to have an active ministry. (Ibid p. 2) The Bishop of Manchester in the report's preface identified the potential for help presented by the church's Readers.

> ...the Church needs to make the best use of its resources in terms both of buildings and of people. The Readers of the Church of England (now numbering more than 9,000) are one of its major resources, but they are unevenly located round the country. (ABM 1998 p. ii)

The lack of response to the report was possibly because of the problems which the authors identified, and which made deployment difficult, including the 'home-grown and home centred' ethos of Reader ministry (Ibid p. 2) and the difficulties of travelling long distances in the more rural dioceses (a problem also faced by NSM clergy).

The report described a wide variety of approach from the dioceses, some where the Reader was licensed to his or her own parish, some where the licensing was to a group of parishes or to a deanery and several dioceses where the Reader was licensed to the whole diocese. In one diocese, after various consultations, the Area Bishop recommended a suitable parish for the final year student Reader. (Ibid p. 7)

It can be argued that the Reader is a volunteer and therefore he or she can exercise the choice of the area in which to minister, but the Reader is a volunteer in an institution where the bishop is responsible for the distribution and development of ministry in his diocese, and the Reader is in a legally binding relationship with her or his bishop.

Whilst recognizing the importance of a ministerial resource that can be mobilized to meet particular needs, I would also argue that the strength of Reader ministry is its position as a local, available and adaptable resource. However the present uneven national distribution of Readers leads to their regular under or over use and the creation of areas where there are few authorized ministers, lay or clerical.

The evidence of the survey (W.A6) confirmed this picture of an uneven distribution of Readers unrelated to need, whether the need is that of staffing in rural areas, or of communication in those urban areas where the church often has little contact with the local community. The percentage distribution was identified by the Wardens as - Deep Rural 6%, Rural 19%, Market Town 16%, Suburban 34% and Urban 25%. Viewing this as the ratio of Readers per 10,000 of the population, there is a variation from 0.6

in London to 3.6 in a southern rural diocese but if the ratio is seen as number of Readers relating to the number of churches to be staffed in a diocese, rather than to the population, then a 'suburban' diocese has enough Readers to provide one for every church whereas a deeply rural diocese has a ratio of one Reader for six churches. I would suggest that the implication of the apparent acceptance of this disparity is that when the church is not faced by a specific need it is unwilling, or unable, to see Reader ministry as a deployable resource that could meet ministerial, pastoral or mission needs.

The argument for deployment however faces the hypothesis that Readers provide a local and adaptable resource, and therefore it would be sensible for Readers to remain in their own locality which they know and where they are known. This argument and its development, in its turn, leaves out the factor of the individual Reader's personal sense of vocation and his or her wish to be used. If the Reader is in a situation where there are several other Readers, then this sense of calling may not be adequately met. If that Reader could be released to minister elsewhere, then there could be a parish only a few miles away which was desperately looking for teaching, pastoral care and church leadership and which would welcome the ministry of a Reader from another church.

Not only was there a reluctance to actively deploy Readers to areas of need, but the survey supplied evidence of areas with few Readers. The number and distribution of licensed Readers in any diocese depends primarily on the number of candidates coming forward, but my experience in working with Readers had exposed areas in several dioceses where Readers were hardly known. The Directors of training were therefore asked if there were any areas where candidates were a rarity, and if so why? (D.A7, A8)

In response to this the majority of the Directors of Training identified areas where Readers were few and they suggested a range of reasons for this; in 6 dioceses geographical and social constraints, such as deeply rural or inner city, or low levels of educational achievement and self-esteem, and areas of social deprivation, were all cited; for 5 dioceses there was the problem of having to travel long distances to the

training venue; in 5 there was little response from the high Catholic or low Evangelical clergy and parishes, where priests, ministers and people showed 'no great sympathy for Readers'; 3 dioceses had few candidates from certain areas because the clergy had 'little time or understanding for lay ministry'; 3 received no vocational initiatives from their dioceses; in 3 others there was apathy in the diocese towards Reader ministry; 4 noted the absence of Reader ministry role models, with the rider that where there are Readers more candidates come forward; 3 related the lack of candidates in some areas to competition with other ministries, for example in one the growth of the Ordained Local Ministry was favoured, in another potential Reader Candidates were encouraged to train for the Non Stipendiary Ministry and in the third diocese the development of a 'lay elders' ministry required little training and provided a cheap and easy option.

There were other factors, common to all dioceses, which discouraged candidates from coming forward for Reader ministry, and these were given as present day patterns of work, often with short-term contracts, the changing pattern of residential settlements, the limit on the availability of free time for study and the length of time required for the training and its cost.

I suggest that the accumulation of these many factors had contributed to the unequal distribution of candidates for Reader ministry, which in turn contributed to the uneven distribution of licensed Readers and their absence from the ministerial and mission planning of the church. For clergy there is a national pattern of the number of clergy allocated to each diocese and the number of curates they can take, and within a diocese, wherever possible, there is a matching of clergypersons with the needs of appropriate parishes. Also a number of parishes and clergy are designated as training parishes and training incumbents for curates. There was no evidence that any similar pattern of placement and training has been considered for Reader ministry.

It could be argued that this disparate allocation system is reasonable, in that the clergy represent the professional and historical focus for the church's ministry, and it is made clear in the licensing to a parish of an ordained person that he or she is there

as the representative of the bishop. The Reader, although admitted and licensed by a bishop, does not carry such a representational role and therefore can be seen as an add-on to the church's ministry, in post by chance rather than as the result of a carefully thought through appointment.[44]

There is a measure of truth in this argument and I can see that it would be difficult to determine the placing of Readers in the same way as the ordained are allocated to parishes. However such an argument ignores the fact that the bishop is the chief pastor and missioner in a diocese and that Readers are responding primarily to a personal and church-validated call to serve God in his church, not simply to support a local church or incumbent. Therefore I suggest that Readers, who are ipso facto fully trained and authorized ministers within a diocese, should, as a matter of course, be considered in any planning for mission and ministry in their home diocese. To leave Readers as simply an 'add-on' ministry is to ignore the potential of an important and numerically large section of the trained and available ministerial force of the church.

The identification by the respondents to the survey of clergy and parishes, where there was 'no great sympathy for Readers' or 'little time or understanding of lay ministry', confirmed the 'add-on' perception of Reader ministry and indicated that the place of the Reader in the church was frequently dependent on the 'feelings' of individual clergy and parishes rather than on a central ministry policy.

The questions of allocation and distribution have implications for Reader training schemes. If Readers are basically 'home grown' with training provided by part-time courses and at the same time the major need is for further ministerial support in the rural and inner city areas, then candidates must be sought from these areas and the training offered to such candidates must be accessible, geographically and educationally. The background of Reader candidates, outlined by the Directors of

[44] The exception to this is the occasional appointment of a Reader as Reader-in-charge of a parish or the more frequent appointment of a Reader as a Chaplain to hospital, hospice, prison, school, industrial or commercial complex etc.

Training, suggests that very few come from deep rural situations and an even smaller number from the inner city areas. [45]

This raises the further question, 'are Reader training courses tailored to fit the student profile and diocesan task requirements or is the student profile as it is because the courses are educationally, and possibly socially, discriminatory and take little notice of any diocesan task requirements?' I suggest that the evidence supports the second alternative.

This consideration of the response to the survey question about the distribution of Readers throughout the country and across the dioceses exposed a very varied pattern created by geographical, social and theological factors. This variation in distribution is a further factor in the uncertain place of the Reader in the church. It also raised questions for the Reader's personal ministry. Is he or she so committed to the wider church that the phrase 'deployable resource' is applicable or is the focus for the Reader the local church and community? I suggest that the answer to this question will emerge as the place of the Reader in the church is clarified through this study.

A wide ranging ministry

The survey produced a picture of the varied work of the Reader that included much that previously had been the responsibility of the clergy. This change in work pattern may, in some parishes and dioceses, be a factor in their ambivalent response to Reader ministry. However in other parishes the taking-on of these erstwhile clerical tasks may be the direct result of a collaborative ministry policy in which Readers and clergy develop supportive and complementary ministries.

To identify this present and varied work of the Reader I asked the Wardens to let me have copies of the Licenses issued by the diocesan bishop to Readers in his diocese

[45] The continuing amalgamation of parishes in rural areas indicates a staffing need and the pressures experienced by clergy in inner city areas, revealed in stress workshops, point to the need for support from ministerial colleagues and collaborative work patterns.

and then to provide a description of the tasks on which Readers were engaged (W.B1, B2).

26 dioceses sent me copies of the Licenses issued to their Readers and although the work and duties of the Reader are defined in the Canon Law of the Church (see Appendix One) and by the Bishops' Regulations (Archbishops' Council 2000 in Appendix Two), for the individual Reader this is spelt out in the Licence he or she receives at the Admission Service, and then at the triennial renewal of that Licence. Each Licence has a basic six sections.

1. Address from the bishop to the recipient with a greeting.
2. The granting of a Licence to exercise the office of Reader.
3. A geographical boundary for the exercise of this licensed ministry.
4. A time boundary for the validity of the Licence.
5. A commendation to God.
6. The signature and seal of the Licensing bishop.

Three dioceses restricted the Licence to these six sections but the remainder included either variations and/or additions which are listed below.

> The Office was variously defined as: The Office of Reader, the Office of Reader in the Church of England, the Office of Reader in the particular diocese or the Office of Reader in a parish.
>
> To the description of the Licence was added 'without stipend'.
>
> The inclusion of the name and post of a nominating clergyperson.
>
> Varied descriptions of the defined area for the Licence which may be the diocese or a specified area/deanery, or more frequently, a parish or group of parishes.
>
> The use of the word authority either associated with the giving of the Licence or added as authorization to perform certain duties.
>
> A list of (public) duties or authorized tasks.

Eight dioceses expanded the Licence by reference to Canon E4, which defines what 'shall be lawful for a Reader' to do (see Appendix One), 17 described the duties of the Reader as those contained in the Bishop's Regulations for Readers (Archbishops' Council, 2000), three authorized the Reader to conduct funerals, three to undertake pastoral work, two to take communion to the sick, one to work in schools, one to take House Groups, one to conduct Marriage Dedication services and one to operate in an ecumenical setting.

These variations confirm that, although Reader ministry and training may be contained within national guidelines, its parameters are dependent on each diocesan bishop and on the ministry strategy of the Reader's diocese. This varied acceptance of Reader ministry may be found in the following descriptions of the Readers' work given by the Wardens (W.B2), which can be interpreted as supporting my contention that Readers can be a threat to, or at least, blur the division in the church between clerical and lay.

One Warden described the ministry conducted by Readers in his diocese as, 'practically everything done by clergy except sacramental', another wrote that the types of ministry were 'hugely varied – and we place a great emphasis here on ministry 'outside' the church, at workplace etc., as modelling lay ministry' and yet another said that his diocese puts the work of the Reader in the ecumenical setting, and sees his or her work not simply in the parish and Anglican Church but in the wider church in the community.

Three dioceses sent me copies of the review, or record of work, for the previous year that all Readers are expected to send in annually to the Warden of Readers.

One diocese had recently carried out a survey amongst licensed Readers and had identified the percentage of Readers involved in different areas of ministry. The majority led worship and preached on a regular basis, half had a teaching role in leading house groups, a surprising percentage worked outside their own parish and a good number held representative roles in the administration of the church. The following chart shows these figures, with considerable overlap in the percentages.

Area of Ministry	Percentage of Readers
Lead Services: 2-3 times a month	58%
Lead Services: Once a month	80%
Preach: 2-3 times a month	32%
Preach: Once a month	82%
Lead services and preach outside the parish	60%
Conduct Funerals	20%

Take extended Communion[46]	28%
Baptism Preparation	10%
Confirmation Preparation	17%
Children's and Youth Work	17%
Parochial Church Members	75%
Lead House Groups	50%
On the Deanery Synod	25%
Evangelistic Outreach	12%
Pastoral Care	15%
Other Ministry: School, Hospital, Prison chaplaincy, administration, General Synod	No percentage provided

Turning to the collated response to this question the following list gives an indication of the ministry undertaken by Readers. The numbers represent specific references to each particular ministry in the diocesan replies, but it does not give any indication of the number of Readers involved in this ministry in each diocese.

Ministry	Number of references	Percentage of references
Preaching	25	100%
Funerals	24	96%
Worship Leader (in the parish)	24	96%
Pastoral Work	23	92%
Study/House Group Leader	16	64%
Teaching	16	64%
Baptism Preparation	12	48%
House Communions	12	48%
Hospital Chaplain	11	44%
Preparing/Leading Courses	10	40%
Children's Work	10	40%
Administration and Organisation	9	36%
Confirmation Preparation	8	32%
Prison Chaplain	8	32%
School Chaplain	6	24%
Evangelism	5	20%
Extended Communion	5	20%
Residential/Nursing Home Visiting	5	20%
Worship Leader in other parishes	5	20%

[46] Extended Communion: The elements of the Communion Service, the Bread and Wine, can only be consecrated by a Priest and for Extended Communion the Bread and Wine are consecrated by the Priest in a service at a Parish Church and then immediately after the Consecration Prayer or after the service the Reader takes the consecrated elements to another church and conducts the Communion service using the consecrated bread and wine. Some bishops allow this, others are opposed to it and still others will allow it only in a multi-church parish where no other priest is available.

Ministry	Number of references	Percentage of references
Wedding Preparation	5	20%
Youth Work	4	16%
Prayer Ministry	4	16%
Community Work/Action	4	16%
Tutoring	3	12%
Cathedral Chaplain	3	12%
Hospice Chaplain	2	8%

And individual dioceses listed these further areas of ministry -

- Airport Chaplain
- Children's Society Secretary
- College Chaplain
- In charge of a parish (stipendiary)
- Work with the Deaf

These returns confirmed that the pattern of leading worship, teaching and assisting the clergy in pastoral work was still to the fore, although chaplaincy work, which is exercised in a non-church setting, was listed 32 times. The inclusion of extended communion, preparation for baptism, confirmation and communion and the conduct of funerals in the list were significant, because it shows that Readers had moved into areas of ministry that were previously the prerogative of the clergy. The boundary between clergy and lay had in fact been muddied and challenged by Reader ministry, because Readers were being used to answer organizational and pastoral needs.

So far as I could gather, no consideration had been given to the possible theological and ministerial implications of these developments, except in one diocese where reference was made to the blurring of boundaries. This was in a report it had published on possible combined training for Readers and other (diocesan) authorized Lay ministries.

The authors of this report noted.

> The blurring, in recent years, of the 'functional' boundaries between Readers and those who are ordained has had the effect of lessening the distinctiveness of Reader ministry ... In addition, the potential burgeoning of other acknowledged lay ministries ... can raise questions of identity amongst those who exercise Reader ministry. It is, therefore, imperative that those involved in the discernment of vocations and selection of Readers are enabled to develop a clear understanding of this distinctive ministry and that those who are so selected and trained are affirmed in that distinctiveness.

In this particular diocese Readers were affirmed within the diocesan structures by the post of Warden of Readers always being held by a Suffragan Bishop.

One warden sent me a copy of his diocese's Bishop's *Regulations for Readers*; these described liturgical and pastoral duties relating to the Reader's home parish, but included was the acknowledgement that Readers could also be chaplains. Another warden provided a check list for the written work agreement that Readers and their incumbents were expected to complete at the beginning of the Readers' ministry. The check list covered liturgical, pastoral, and educational areas of work and the Readers' place in the structures of the church, plus a section which recognised the ministry of the Reader in his or her workplace and in 'the world at large'. This agreement was subject to annual review.

Other information forwarded with the survey forms provided further insights into the diocesan expectations of Reader ministry. The introductory leaflet for candidates for Reader ministry in one diocese, in its opening section, gives a wide picture of the work of the Reader

> Readers work alongside parish clergy in parishes, hospitals, prisons, Mission to Seafarers and in many other areas. (Leaflet held by the author of this thesis)

Another diocese sent me the Readers' Record of services which showed that in the one year, 273 Readers out of 357 had sent in returns, and between them, they had shared in leading 5,420 services, preached 4,555 sermons, led 3,988 services, taken Communion to the housebound on 1,971 occasions, taken 267 funerals, shared in leading a funeral service on 157 occasions and attended 522 training events.

The deployment of Readers by linking them to more than one benefice was a development in one diocese and another made allowance for the Reader to accept invitations to minister in other denominations.

This information that had been furnished by the Reader officers confirmed the variation of approach to Reader ministry across dioceses, but it made it very clear that the place of the Reader was seen as primarily within the liturgical and pastoral

framework of the parish, with educational work and ministry in the wider world acknowledged by some dioceses, but seen almost as an 'add-on'.

There was no direct reference in the information provided by the survey to the role which features frequently in this study, that of the Reader providing a 'bridge ministry'. I would reason from this that the diocesan expectations of Reader ministry are focussed primarily on the performance of liturgical and pastoral functions within the structures of the local church, but the breadth of the work of the Readers suggests that in fact they engage in an interpretive and bridging role within the church and in the wider community.

From this I would suggest that it is possible that Reader ministry is actively developing 'at the coal face', whether in the church and parish setting or in the secular world, whereas the understanding of the ministry and potential of Readers, held by those in leadership, remains static, perhaps because any conscious expansion of Reader ministry would raise difficult theological questions.

The nature of the ministry exercised by Readers was further developed in the response to questions about the relationship of the Reader with the clergy, and with other developing lay ministries, (W:D4, D:D6). These questions produced the greatest number of extended replies including a plea for Reader ministry to be valued for what it is and not as clergy replacement. There was a common awareness of a fudging between Readers and Priestly ministry, and a blurring of the distinction between Readers and other lay ministers. Nine of those who replied noted the increasing importance of the Reader because of the shortage of clergy, leading to a higher profile for the Reader who was taking on many of the functions previously in the hands of the clergy. In some cases, the Reader became the persona in a parish. There was also a plea for the Reader, because of his or her greater responsibilities, to be integrated more fully into the life of the diocese.

It was difficult to analyse these responses in such a way as to clarify what has been happening, and to discover whether the blurring of clergy-Reader identities, functions and roles, is a result of changing parochial and community patterns, or a lack of

clergy, or the result of a developing self-awareness amongst Readers, or to theological arguments or to a barely acknowledged need of the church to relate to present day society.

My own understanding is that there are major changes in society and in theology that require the church to rethink its task and modus operandi in today's world but it experiences difficulty in engaging with this. Against this many Readers live in the 'secular' world, and in the church world, and they have sensed this change and are responding to it. If there is any truth in this then my understanding is that the broadening of Reader ministry will inevitably result in the blurring or abandoning of boundaries that previously were seen as inviolable and Readers will continue to respond to observed needs as they arise.

HOW ARE READERS PERCEIVED?

To gather further evidence for the place of the Reader in the Church of England I asked for information from the Directors of Training and the Wardens of Readers, about finance (W.A7), provision of support (W.B4; D.D1-4), the authorities' perception of Reader ministry (W.C), the local understanding (W.B3) and the students' perceptions (D.C8).

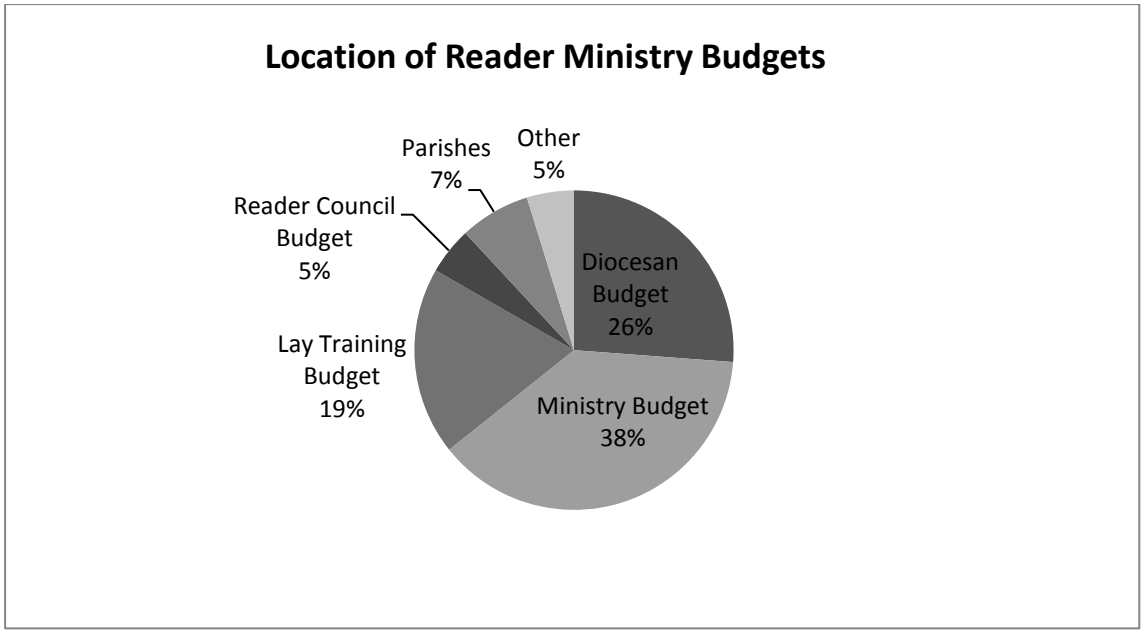
I recognized that an important perception of Readers was the one held by the clergy and the parishes where there was either little knowledge of Reader ministry, or where there was a rejection of their place in the Church of England. To have accessed this information would have meant a further survey, using either an approach to clergy and parochial officers as a percentage national sample, or as a sample of targeted sections of the church who were known to be uncertain about Reader ministry, because of their specific theological positions. Such an approach was beyond the time and financial boundaries of this research and would also have required me to make assumptions about where people stood with regard to Reader ministry. However Reader ministry is a canonical, national and episcopally authorized ministry within the Church of England, and therefore I would argue that the response of those who recognize this fact, provides material that is sufficient and valid for this research, whilst recognizing the non-involvement of a section of the church.

The diocesan view

An understanding of the view of Reader ministry held in each diocese was ascertained through the responses to questions about finance (W.A7: D.D3), the provision of support (W.B4; D.D1-4) and the authorities' perception of Reader ministry (W.C).

There is no national criterion for the funding of Reader ministry and training, and the survey (W.A7) revealed a wide discrepancy in approach. 83% of the Reader and training budgets were placed either in the diocesan, the ministry or the lay training budgets but 5% were covered in the budget of the Readers' Council, 7% were the responsibility of the parishes and 5% were funded from 'other sources'.

Interviews with Directors of Training have indicated that Reader ministry is often perceived as the 'poor relation' in the diocese, and is frequently found to be seriously under-funded.



It can be seen that 17% of the income required for the training and maintenance of Reader ministry came from sources other than diocesan budgets, and one interpretation of this would be, that this represents dioceses where Reader ministry was not seen as essential for the work of the church, and therefore there was little reason to invest in it. Another possible interpretation is that the funding of Reader

ministry has never been questioned or addressed, and a third explanation could be that this matter has been discussed and the diocese was satisfied with leaving the financial support of Reader training and ministry outside the direct control of the diocese. Unfortunately I have no evidence to support any of these or other explanations, and I can only note that this apparent lack of diocesan support raises questions about the place of Reader ministry in the dioceses concerned, as does the level of funding where a diocese takes a financial interest in Reader training and ministry.

Thorpe in the 2003 Moderation Report, *Equipping the Saints*, records the implications of funding for the clergy-lay ministry relationship. She reports that many trainee Readers have to fund their own travel, robes and books.

> 6.20 When OLMs (Ordained Local Ministers) and Readers train together, the difference in approach is remarkable. In some dioceses, OLMs can claim all expenses including travel and books, and have a generous grant for robes. This speaks volumes about the value the Church places respectively on lay and clerical ministry. (Thorpe 2003 p. 31)

Finance for further training (CME or continuing ministerial education) provides a further guide to the importance accorded to the Reader in the ministry of the church. The funding for CME (Readers) (D.D3) is shown in the table below (3 no-answers).

Funding source	Diocese	Reader	Shared - Reader and Diocese	Other source
Number of dioceses	11	5	12	2

This should be compared with clergy CME which is always funded by the diocese for the first three or four years after ordination. Noting that there are 5 dioceses where the Readers have to fund their own ongoing training I suggest that it is possible that in these dioceses the Reader was seen as a volunteer, who helps out in the church, and the diocesan authorities accepted no responsibility for his or her continuing competence.

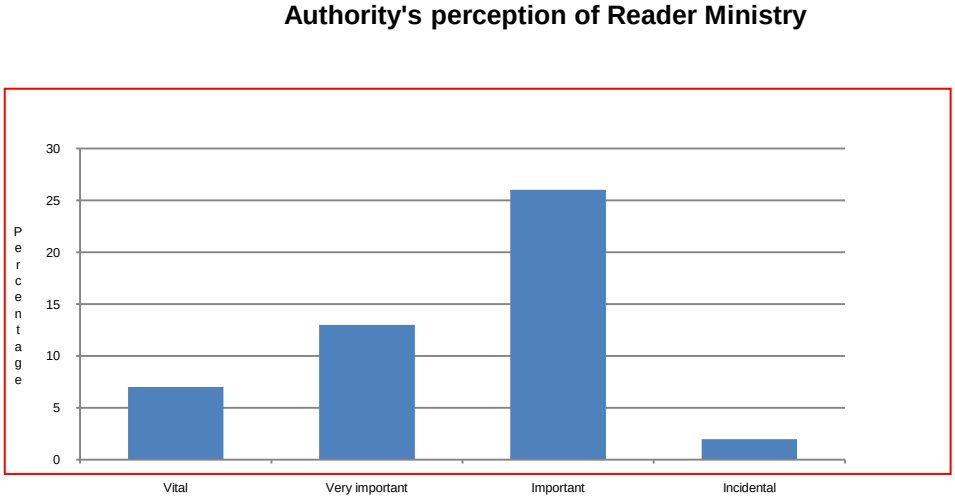
Because I would expect those with diocesan responsibilities to have some thoughts about the place of Readers in their diocese I asked, (W.C1) ‘How important do you

think Reader Ministry is to those in authority in your Diocese?' This is obviously a subjective question that will only give the Warden's perception of the response of those in authority to Reader ministry, but the Warden, because of his or her senior position in the diocese, has regular contact with the diocesan hierarchy. The response to this question therefore has validity in estimating the value placed upon Reader ministry in the various dioceses.

None of the Wardens thought that those in authority considered Reader Ministry to be of no importance. However those in authority in two dioceses were thought to regard Reader Ministry as 'incidental'. Twenty six of the wardens thought that those in authority considered Reader Ministry to be important, 13 registered 'very important' and 7 'vital'. One warden who thought that those in authority considered Reader Ministry to be important added a note.

> Our diocese has some older Readers who are disappointed at not being priests and do not see the potential of a lay ministry. Younger Readers do and are not so "clericalised". The Bishop knows this, but really prefers Clergy.

The following chart outlines the perceived 'value' of Reader ministry held by those in authority.



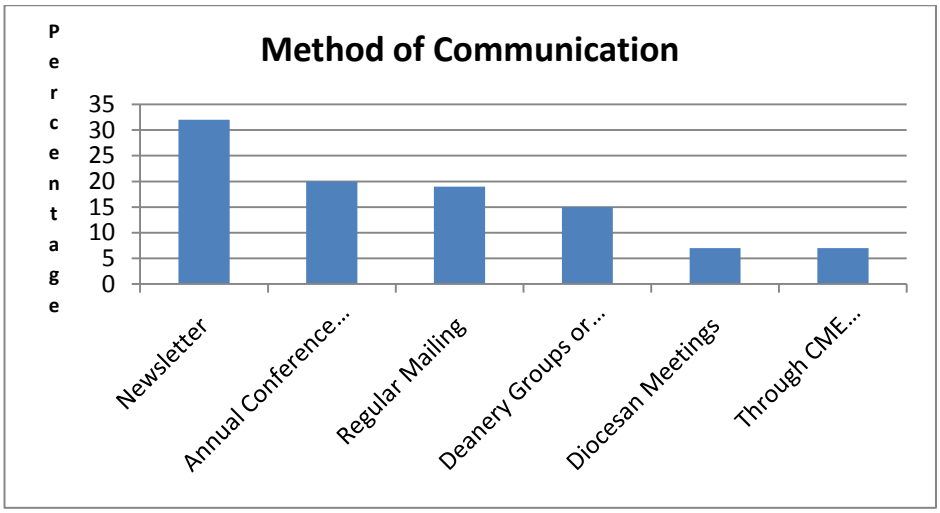
The response to this question is in accord with the data provided by previous questions, and it confirms that there is a variety of attitudes held by the different dioceses, but it also shows an overall positive understanding of Reader ministry by those in authority.

My conclusion is that there is a lack of congruence between the perceived value of Reader ministry held by those in authority, and the role they accord to it within the ministry strategies of the church. This is supported by my own experience across a number of dioceses that what is said is not necessarily what is done.

Another small piece of evidence, pointing to the place of the Reader within the diocese, was provided by the response to the question (D.D1), 'What, if any, regular method of contact is maintained between the bishop and diocesan officers and the individual licensed Readers?' The majority of dioceses have some form of communication between 'the centre' and Readers, but this varies from occasional mailing to a well-structured system. It was pointed out that opportunities arise for the bishop to meet Readers at the Annual Licensing, and most dioceses either arrange for their Readers to receive the Reader magazine or encourage them to take this publication. Meetings, sometimes formal, take place with the Wardens and Sub Wardens, and because some of the Wardens are bishops then there is the automatic contact with 'the centre'. Further to the 11 dioceses who hold Annual Conferences (residential or day), two dioceses arrange annual Quiet Days, and one diocese organises Reader meetings at an Archdeaconry level. Two dioceses organise an annual review for all Readers and one diocese has a five-yearly review for Readers.

The following figures and chart indicate the chosen methods of communication by those dioceses that responded.

Newsletter	17
Annual Conference/Meeting	11
Regular Mailing	10
Deanery groups, meetings	8
Diocesan meetings	4
Through the CME for clergy programme	4



The response to this question, whilst showing regular contact between the diocese and its Readers, also indicated patchiness in communication. There was, and is, no set pattern of organization or communication that will firmly root the Reader ministry within the structures of the church, and that could give to the Reader a sense of 'belonging'. It could be argued that this is not necessary, because each Reader is licensed to work with a particular incumbent or with the Area/Rural Dean, unless he or she works in a secular institution, in which case there is rarely a link with the local church. The link with the incumbent or Area/Rural Dean could be considered as adequate for the passing of information from diocese to Reader.

Further light is thrown on the place of the Reader in a diocese by the fact that in many dioceses there is a printed monthly 'ad clerum' (letter to the clergy) from the bishop distributed to all licensed clergy, and also to many of the PTO (Permission to Officiate) clergy, but there is no equivalent Episcopal communication to Readers, who also hold the bishop's licence. I would therefore argue that this again demonstrates the confused or ambivalent position of the Reader in the structures and strategy of the church.

I viewed the response to a question about training courses, created for Licensed Readers in a diocese, (D.D2) as of major significance in assessing the place of Reader ministry in the structures of the church. This is because the provision of further training could be seen to reflect the commitment to Reader ministry by a diocese.

CME/D is examined in detail in the section, 'How do Readers Learn and Train?' where the place of Reader CME or CMD (Continued Ministerial Education/Development) in the church is examined in more detail.

The introductory material for candidates, provided by a number of respondents to the survey, threw further light on the place of the Reader in the diocese and on the diocesan view of Reader ministry. One diocese provided guidelines for incumbents nominating candidates for training for Reader ministry. The incumbent was asked to discuss a number of matters with the candidate, with the priority of ascertaining that the candidate understood his or her calling to be to a teaching and liturgical ministry, but the incumbent was also to look for evidence of a recognition of a wider church and a willingness to minister 'in that wider ministry'. Three dioceses, in their introductory printed material, whilst clear that 'Readers are primarily called to exercise a preaching and teaching ministry in the Church' noted, in the words of one diocese, that 'Many Readers are able to bring theological resources to people in the communities in which they live and work'. This bridge ministry of the Reader was referred to in one comprehensive diocesan Reader training book.

> Readers may have greater opportunities than the clergy to be bridges between the Church and the rest of the world. Some people are put off by a clerical collar and find it easier to talk and listen to someone whom they feel is nearer their own situation and facing the same problems at work as they do.

In another diocesan training book.

> Readers can serve as bridges between church and community and between clergy and laity, and they need to be team players if they are to exercise this ministry effectively.[47]

One diocese spoke of the Reader developing analytical ability and creative thinking and

another diocese, as part of the training course, required students to consider ethical issues with non-Christian groups. Yet another diocese noted that, in rural situations,

[47] OLMs and NSMs also provide 'bridge ministries' with their major roles also in their place of work or in the community, rather than church focussed as is the case of the stipendiary clergy. However I have not pursued this because the number of OLMs and NSMs is small when compared with the number of Readers – see the chart on page 116)

the Readers would have a wide ministry in helping to provide Sunday worship in scattered communities and in one diocese there was a combined Anglican/Methodist training scheme. These positive responses contrast with the limited expectations outlined in the introductory material produced by some dioceses and referred to in the next chapter.

There was a positive response from a number of dioceses when I asked the Wardens whether there was any official structure for Readers in their diocese other than the Readers' Board or Council. (W.B4) The purpose of this question was to ascertain whether Reader ministry had any corporate identity within the wider body of the diocese.

Thirty-three dioceses replied to this question.

> Twenty-two had an official structure other than the Diocesan Readers' Council.
> Thirteen of the official structures were deanery based with special meetings that sometimes incorporated training.
> Eleven had nothing other than the Council.
> Six had Reader structures located in cluster groups, combined deaneries or areas.
> Associated with these latter structures – and also with deanery organisations, the office of Sub-Warden, Assistant Warden or Chaplain appeared as someone who was officially appointed to provide support for the individual Readers and, in some cases, to organise the meetings.

A number of dioceses had informal Readers' Associations and informal local and diocesan gatherings for social, support or learning purposes. These meetings depended upon initiatives put in place by the Wardens, Chaplains or Directors of Training or occasionally by the Bishop. The following table compares the various forms of meetings.

Type of structure	Official	Deanery	Deanery Cluster Meetings	Informal Readers' Association	Deanery Wardens	Local Advisers	Pastoral Care Meetings	Review of work agreements
Number of dioceses	22	13	6	3	3	3	1	1

From this it appears that in many dioceses the Readers are helped by a variety of structures towards an awareness of themselves, as an identifiable ministry body

within the total licensed ministry of their particular diocese, and hence the work they do is a recognised part of the ministerial structure of the diocese.

This appears to contradict the theme that has been emerging in this study of a church which has difficulty in acknowledging Reader ministry. However a number of these support structures, including the official ones, were initiated by the Readers themselves and it is possible that diocesan support for local groupings could be a way of keeping the Reader ministry 'ticking over', without the necessity of fully integrating it into the structural and ministerial life of the diocese. Another possibility is that the local groupings were brought into being by Readers, and then, once established, the diocese offered its support for the meetings.

It can be seen that there are several ways, positive and negative, of interpreting the existence of these several structures. The only clear conclusion that I can offer, is that the variation between dioceses supports the picture of a church uncertain of the place it should accord to Readers in its life and ministry, but, as a church, it is willing to support Reader ministry to a limited degree.

The church and community perception

The majority of Readers are based in their local parish church, and it is there and in the local community that they exercise their ministry. Although my tentative thesis is that the church as an institution is ambivalent in the place it accords to Readers in its structures, strategies and organization I had no evidence from the 'grass roots' of the parish and so I asked the wardens for their perception of how the local communities saw Readers and their ministry. (W.B3) I offered 5 possible understandings of the work of the Reader plus an opportunity for other ideas.

These were,

1. Assistant to the clergy.
2. Bringing the real world into the church.
3. Interpreter of clergy to laity and laity to clergy.
4. Member of a ministry team.
5. Theological resource person for the PCC and the church
6. Other ...

I chose these categories because they are the ones that have come up most frequently in the past in discussions and interviews with Readers and various congregations and the sixth category allowed for further contributions.

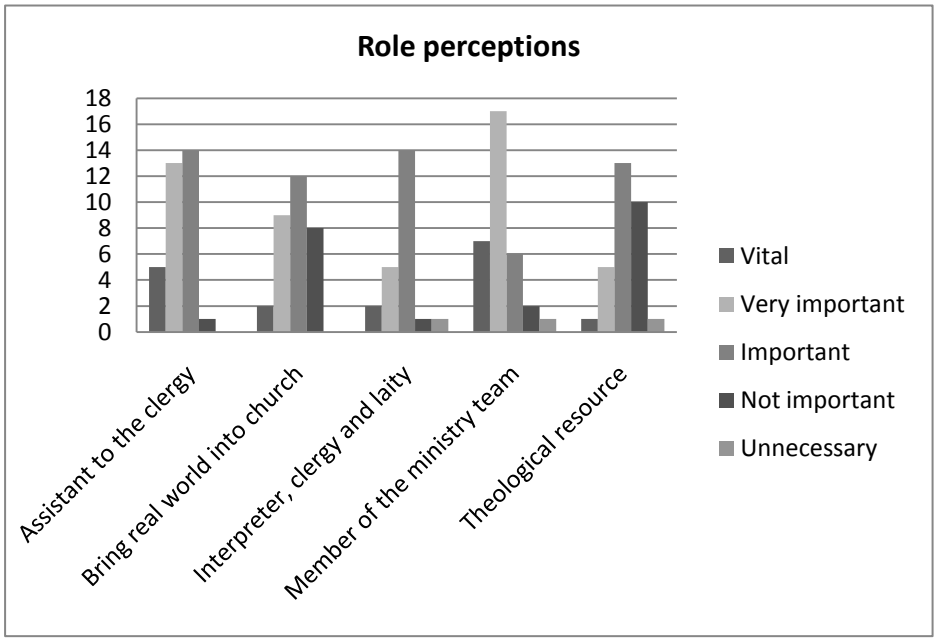
The important word in this question is 'perception'. The Warden of Readers in a diocese moves around the diocese, talks with many Readers and meets parishioners, and so he or she is in a position to make an estimate, albeit a subjective one. A number of Wardens commented on the difficulty of this question; 'It is subjective', 'the response will vary right across the diocese', 'it will depend on each PCC', and some chose not to answer this question because of these difficulties and others answered with the proviso of 'estimate'.

There were two responses in No 6 the 'other answer' category; 1. 'Important resource, yes; not sure that this would be linked to theology' and 2. 'Readers have a unique local role; the unchurched find it easier to discuss faith with them or ask about baptism – often in the supermarkets'. These two answers provided support for the understanding of a Reader as a pragmatic resource and as occupying a bridging role between laity and clergy. I have not included these two answers in the table below, although they could have been included in 'very important' and 'vital' columns.

The following table gives the number of replies for each category.

	Category	**Vital**	**Very important**	**Important**	**Not important**	**Unnecessary**
1	Assistant to the clergy	5	13	14	1	0
2	Bringing the real world into the church	2	9	12	8	0
3	Interpreter of clergy to laity and laity to clergy	2	5	14	1	1
4	Member of a ministry team	7	17	6	2	1
5	Theological resource person for the PCC and the church	1	5	13	10	1

The following chart compares these various responses.



It can be seen from this that an 'assistant to the clergy' carried the highest overall rating followed by 'being a member of the ministry team'; only a few thought these categories not important. Third in the rating was 'bringing the real world into the church', although a number considered this not important. In fourth place the role of the Reader as an 'interpreter between clergy and laity' was thought to be important. Several thought it important for the Reader to be a 'theological resource for the church', but this description attracted the largest number of those who though it was not important.

I recognise that this was purely a subjective assessment of the response of church members to Readers, but it was one that was based on experience and an understanding of the relationship between Readers and congregations. My interpretation of the response of the wardens to this question is that they understood that in the parishes there was a diversity of views of the work of the Reader, but that the majority of church communities saw the Reader rooted in the church where he or she held three major roles. The first of these roles was as an assistant to the clergy, then as part of a ministry team and finally in an interpretive

role or, as described elsewhere, in a 'bridge' situation between clergy and laity, and although the Reader was seen as part of the ministerial structure, he or she was not seen specifically as a lay theological resource person.

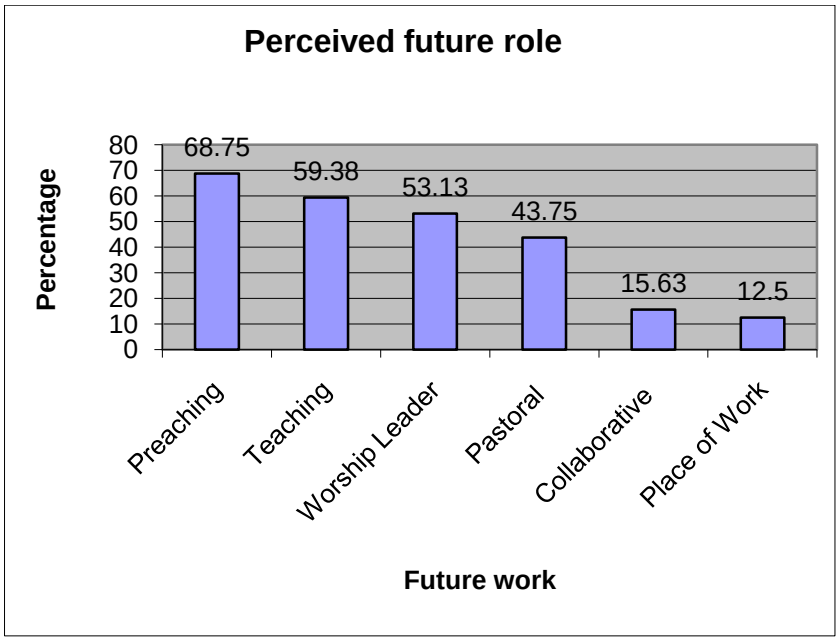
At the local level the wardens did not appear to note any ambivalence in the approach of churches to Reader ministry , but it must be recognised that only PCCs and clergy who were willing to work with Readers would have recommended a member of their congregation for training or would have accepted another Reader on transfer from elsewhere.

The students' ideas

The directors of training were in a position to have an understanding of how students perceived the role of the Reader, and so I asked them, 'From your experience what do you think best describes the trainee's perception of her or his future work as a Licensed Reader?' (D.C8) One replied that students saw their future role as supporting and serving the local church in its work, another that they would be a theological resource person working alongside the clergy. Two others identified focussing on prayer and developing spirituality, at a personal level and in the church, and a further two were far more pragmatic as seeing the task of future Readers as being to 'plug the shortage of clergy' or to be 'ecclesiastical polyfilla'. Five of the directors noted that the expectations and perceptions of the trainee Readers would vary according to the context of their future work, and their own skills and knowledge.

The major areas of work were identified as –

Preaching	22 dioceses
Teaching	19
Leading worship	17
Pastoral work	14
Collaborative ministry	5
Ministry in place of work	4



This is a not a dissimilar response to that of the wardens when asked about the local situation, but with the addition of the place of work category, and the identification of the Reader as 'ecclesiastical polyfilla'.

I suggest that the implication of the perceived responses, given by the wardens and directors of training, is that church members, parishioners and students see Readers as primarily assistants to the clergy, although the evidence provided in the section on the 'work of the Reader' indicated that their work was far more diverse. I would contend that this indicates a disparity between the picture held of Reader ministry by many, and the reality of the work undertaken by Readers. I do not see this as anything more than a lack of awareness on behalf of church communities, because their only contact with the Reader is within the church context, but I would suggest that this will change as Readers are seen taking a much more active role in the ministerial leadership of the church, particularly in rural areas, and as church members meet them in other contexts, such as hospital, college or place of work.

The evidence from the Reader officers to this series of questions was positive. They were in touch with Readers, Reader students, diocesan hierarchy and local parishes, and they perceived the place of Readers in the church, and their ministry, as essential in the present and for the future, but they voiced some uncertainty as to how the

church and, in certain cases, church leaders, accepted Reader ministry. They also saw the work of the Reader developing in a number of areas, as the need for more ministerial resources increased. These responses, whilst confirming some ambivalence in the church's attitude to Readers, underlined what I suggest is becoming clear in this study, and that is the important place Reader ministry holds at present in the church, and the vital role it can play in the future, if it is allowed to develop and take on fresh responsibilities.

However I recognise that Wardens and Directors of training have a personal and professional investment in the development of Reader ministry, and that they are meeting with clergy, church members and students from parishes which support the ministry of Readers, although their returns indicated that there many parishes where there is little knowledge of and little interest in Reader ministry. Whilst accepting this, I would argue that the large percentage of ministers in the Church of England who are Readers, together with the continuing flow of men and women of all educational and social backgrounds offering as candidates for Reader ministry, the growing use of Readers where there is a shortage of clergy, and their growing deployment in secular institutions, all strongly support the positive response made by the Diocesan Reader Officers. The place of the Reader in the church may be uncertain, but there is a conviction amongst Readers, and those that support them, that they do have a place.

HOW DO READERS LEARN AND TRAIN?

The first three years

Reader education was an issue that I identified and questioned in the introduction to this thesis as possibly reflecting something of the understanding of Reader ministry held by the church. In the early years of the church and in the Elizabethan period the limited evidence suggests that the accepted education for the Reader was that expected of any educated male member of society plus knowledge of liturgy and the scriptures. However by the time of this survey a more comprehensive educational

pattern was well established but it varied in content and delivery from diocese to diocese, indicating a possible lack of clarity about the role and the task of the Reader in the Church.

The response to questions addressed to the Directors of Training about Reader Education and Training confirmed this varied approach from the dioceses and the absence of any clear identification of the future role and task awaiting the Student Reader. Despite this men and women from a wide variety of backgrounds applied to train as Readers and were accepted by the church. This suggests a personal commitment held by Reader applicants sufficiently strong to enable them to learn and work in an uncertain and ambivalent context. The strength of this personal commitment is a significant factor in the ongoing commitment of Readers in the church and answers in part the third question that I posed in the introduction about the significance of Reader commitment within an uncertain setting.

The variation between dioceses became obvious at the point when potential Reader candidates began exploring the possibility of Reader ministry. The majority of dioceses (30 out of 36) used some form of introductory material (D.B1) which potential Readers could pick up or obtain. The next stage for a candidate was a discussion, or preliminary interview (D.B2), with diocesan officers before proceeding to selection. 27 dioceses followed this pattern, two did not and five held a discussion sometimes. It was possible in some dioceses to move straight from a discussion with the local incumbent to the Selection meeting/conference, missing out any contact with a diocesan officer.

For those dioceses where a meeting with a diocesan officer was an accepted part of the process, several required the candidate to meet more than one diocesan representative (D.B3).

Number of dioceses	Officer(s) meeting with the candidate
3	Diocesan Director of Ordinands (DDO)
5	Director of Training for Readers
22	Diocesan or Archdeaconry Warden or Sub-Warden of Readers
33	One of the above plus other diocesan officers.

The ‘other diocesan officers’ included Vocational Advisers or Consultants, Reader Selection Secretary, Sub-Wardens, Chaplains, other Readers, and assessors.

One diocese also had a full ‘Vocational Year’, from which the student would move on to selection for ordination or for Reader training or for one of several available lay ministries, or decide that she or he did not wish to pursue any of these options. Readers in another diocese had a ‘Vocational Guidance Unit’, which any would-be candidate attended.

The initial interviews, and the opportunities provided to explore vocation in the majority of dioceses suggested that Reader ministry was taken seriously by these dioceses. In informal meetings with a number of Reader candidates I was given to understand that these meetings were valued, and enabled the potential candidate to explore his or her own feelings and thoughts, and also learn about what was involved in training. It was clear however that there was no common national approach to this, and in seven dioceses the candidate would not have had this ‘official’ opportunity to consider the implications of the step he or she wished to take.

Prior to selection all candidates had to be nominated by both incumbent and the Parochial Church Council of the church he or she attended, or by the Area Dean if the candidate’s incumbent was not in favour of Readers, and all candidates were expected to produce clerical and lay references.

The form of the ‘Selection Conference’ varied considerably (D.B4) as is shown by the following table,

Time given to Selection Conference	**Number of dioceses**
Full Day	20
Half-Day	7
Single Interview	8

However this does not tell the whole story because, as indicated above, two dioceses had an introductory year in which the Selection process began and culminated with interviews and written reviews either two thirds of the way through or at the end of

the year. Two of the dioceses who held a single interview for the selection also expected the candidate to participate in either a presentation or a group exercise. One diocese held residential Selection Conferences for many years but discontinued these in 2007 because of the cost.

It is clear from this that the importance attached to the selection process varied from diocese to diocese, but it was never as thorough as that offered to the clergy. Applicants for ordination (clergy) training have to attend a nationally organised selection conference, with trained interviewers drawn from across the church. In contrast to this selection for Reader ministry depends entirely on the decision of each diocesan bishop and the warden, although there are national guidelines for the Selection of Readers (ABM. 1998) which include a suggestion.

> ... each candidate for selection should be seen by at least three different people separately, preferably at the same place on the same occasion. (ABM 1998 p. 6)

In the same publication there is a considerable list of criteria for selection under the major headings of Vocation, Faith, Spirituality and Worship, Personality and Character, Relationships and Potential for Training. This very full agenda for a single interview was practised in eight dioceses.

The variation in the time devoted to the selection process could be seen as a possible indication of the importance each diocese placed on the ministry of the Reader within the diocese.

It could also be argued that in comparison with the clergy, because the Reader, in the majority of cases, works as an assistant to an incumbent and his or her ministry is of a limited nature, the training criteria that has to be met need not be so taxing as that required of potential clergy. Clergy will often have sole charge of a parish and will be a representative of the church and of the Christian faith in the community. My response to this is that, within the church context, the Reader takes a leading role in teaching, preaching and pastoral work and that more and more she or he may have sole responsibility for a church and be the church's representative in the local community, or she or he could hold a secular post on behalf of the church. I would

therefore argue that the criteria for selection for training for Reader ministry should be much closer to that exercised for potential clergy in standard but not necessarily in content.

The next stage of the preparation for Reader ministry is the Training Course itself, and this survey was undertaken at a time when Reader training within the Church of England was in a state of flux.[48] The evidence from the survey was that Dioceses ran different courses (D.C1,2,3). Eighteen produced their own training scheme with no external validation, 20 had courses validated by a university or College of Higher Education and 4 had their courses validated by a theological college or course. Three dioceses offered the alternative of a diocesan course, or of linking into a university course for part of the training, and three Directors of Training indicated that they were looking to move from a Diocesan course to one validated by a university or theological course.

The evidence therefore is that over half of the training courses were validated by an academic institution, but following the implementation of the Hind report recommendations, this could increase to almost 100%. Although this can be interpreted as gradually increasing the academic standards of Reader ministry, it also makes the assumption that the academic, quasi-clerical path is the appropriate one for Reader ministry. This, I suggest, is a questionable assumption. Reader ministry, because of its lay nature, has as its context the secular world, although the Reader also ministers within the church which provides his or her base for ministry. This is in contrast to the clergy, where the primary context for most priests or deacons remains the church, although there are those who will eventually have their base in the non-church world as chaplains or 'ministers in secular employment'.

The question therefore is what are the skills and knowledge that a Reader will require, not only to function within the church, but also to exercise his or her primary ministry within the secular environment? This may demand a much more 'hands on'

[48] The 'Hind Report' or 'Formation of Ministry within a Learning Church' was being considered nationally and this was the subject of a question in the survey, (D.E1). Uncertainty about the training course was an issue in the first 2 years in the life of A Student Reader Cohort (Chapter 5)

training, so that communication can effectively be made with men and women in industry, commerce and business, in the educational and health services and in the deprived areas or affluent areas of society. This brings the argument back to the need to engage with the question 'what is the task for which Readers are being trained?' I see little evidence that this question has been faced in the reports that are now driving the training of Readers, nor in the response of the Directors of Training and the Wardens to the survey.

An indication of the 'special training needs' that might apply to Readers was provided by the survey response that gave a picture of the membership of the training courses provided by the dioceses for Readers (D.C1). Fourteen dioceses ran courses that were specific to Readers, 10 were open to interested laity, 18 combined the training with that of Non-Stipendiary Clergy, Ordained Local Ministers and Recognised Lay Ministers, two courses were ecumenical and included Methodist Lay Preachers and four courses had a mixture of open modules and modules that were restricted to Readers. As can be seen only one third of the courses were limited solely to Readers. This suggests that although many aspects of ministry are shared with all ministers in the church some dioceses recognise that some aspects of ministry are specific to Readers. To explore this further could provide information as to how the Directors of Training differentiated the training required by Readers from that required by other ministers, and hence provide an indication of the perceived task of the Reader. Unfortunately this was not addressed in the replies to the questions, although the material that I was sent suggested that there was no common corpus of training that was seen as specific
for the Reader.

In the material I received there were references to the training of Readers for a ministry within their place of work and in the community but, this was limited to four dioceses and even there it was not seen as a primary concern. However I recognise what I have described as a quasi-clerical path could simply be a concern to ensure that all Readers are grounded in a solid biblical and doctrinal understanding of life, so they are in a position to teach and preach and to apply theological insights to the secular situation within which they live and work. However there were no indications,

in the responses from the directors of training, that the application of learned theology to practical issues formed any part of the Reader training course curriculum.

I would interpret this section on training as saying that that there is little engagement in the church with the unique position of the Reader, as someone whose primary context is that of the workplace or the local community and its activities, and therefore the church is failing to use this important interpretive resource of Reader ministry in its engagement with the 'everyday world'.

The relationship of the Reader and other authorized ministries was addressed by the Wardens in their 'vision for the future' (W.D4) and they considered integration an important concept in both continuing (CME) and in initial training. Their response can be summarized by the following responses.

> Integrate care and development (for Readers) into the life of the diocese; develop CME (continuing ministerial education) for the first 3 years after licensing ; integrate Reader CME with clergy CME; and integrate Reader training with ordination training.

I identified a tension in the approach to Reader training experienced by those responsible for its delivery. The wardens saw Reader ministry as a special and important ministry in the life of the church but at the same time they sought to support a training that was also suitable for other ministries. This perceived tension again points to a lack of clarity about the task for which Readers are being trained, and about the training needs of the other ministries that are developing in the church. This can be seen as inevitable at this time with the growth of other lay ministries and the reduction in the number of stipendiary clergy, but I would suggest that the differing nature and content of training required for clergy, Readers and other lay ministries is something that should be addressed, although this would first require clarity about the respective tasks of the different forms of ministry.

The Regional Training Partnerships, or RTPs, are now (2010) moving towards an integration of training courses and combined or partially combined courses will be the norm in the future. The theological reasons for this move were not made clear in the published material, but the implications were that such a move was considered to

be an efficient use of educational and financial resources, because a number of institutions, facing financial and numerical pressures were at that time examining the viability of the courses they were providing. I would also suggest that this move, no matter how educationally or financially important, provided a means of dealing with the clergy/Reader relationship by a blurring of the differentiation, as courses were combined and common curricula produced for Readers and clergy. As the RTPs were established there was no evidence that the task of the Reader in the development of the church's ministry was addressed at any depth, and therefore Reader Ministry still occupied an uncertain place in the church.

My understanding of the RTP move to integration is that it could be of great value, provided that the identity, contribution and eventual task of the various authorized ministries are clearly understood and differentiated within the overall task of the church.

The response to a question about the content of courses further confirmed the variation between the dioceses and the uncertainty about the task of the Reader. The pattern of training in use at the time of the survey in each diocese was expected (nationally and by the moderators) to be based on the Criteria produced in 2000 (Archbishops' Council 2000 p. 25ff) and which identified three areas for training, each with a number of sub-divisions. It was recognised that, in practice, these areas overlap and interrelate. (Ibid p. 26)

Knowledge	Theology Ministry
Skills	Preaching Teaching Liturgical Pastoral
Formation	Spirituality Flexibility in managing change Ability to work collaboratively Encouraging others in ministry

To explore the pattern of training in the dioceses I asked the question (D.C5). 'What is your estimate of the percentage of your course curriculum that is academic work,

formational development, practical experience?' Although most directors of training provided answers in these three categories; in two dioceses the point was made that the academic and formational training is delivered within the one setting and they cannot be separated, in another diocese the practical and the formational were treated in the same way and in a further diocese, the formational was seen to be intertwined throughout the course, academic and practical.

The average percentage given to each area of learning in the courses provided for student Readers was –

Academic	50%
Formational development	26%
Practical	24%

However these averages do not show the wide variation between dioceses. These varied from 85% academic with no formational and 15% practical, to a more balanced 40% academic, 40% formational and 20% practical.

This variation may reflect the nature of the course validation, or the adult educational philosophy guiding the diocese, or differing interpretations of the role and task of the Reader. Consequential upon this is the problem that the church has a national moderation scheme operating on national standards but faced with the possibility of 44 definitions of the task and role for which the candidate is being trained, together with up to 44 different adult education philosophies and methods. This exaggerates the case but these results point to the problem that arises when there is a national training scheme that is advisory, a local course delivered according to local criteria and where the final authority lays with an individual, the diocesan bishop. My understanding is that there is a very strong argument for moving to a national prescribed educational and training pattern for Readers carrying the same authority, together with some considerable freedom of movement, as that prescribed for clergy. In the setting of these parallel patterns there would be opportunity for further combined work.

Continuing Ministerial Education

Continuing Ministerial Education (CME) also showed a mixed pattern of delivery and of response from licensed Readers. In answer to a question about training courses created for Licensed Readers in each diocese, (D.D2)

1 diocese had no CME scheme at that time

2 directors of training said that Readers were welcome to go along to Clergy CME meetings if they wished, but one pointed out that these were usually in the day-time when many Readers were not available

6 dioceses had a combined Reader-clergy CME scheme

10 had less intense forms of continuing ministerial education for Readers, from a training session tacked on to the Annual Meeting to up to half a dozen events offered during the course of a year

14 had a very clear and strong Reader only CME programme, including one where the triennial renewal of the Licence was subject to a Reader's attendance at a specified number of training events in the previous 3 years

There were 3 'no answers' to this question.

Also a number of dioceses opened their training to other interested people. (D.D3)

19 included in their overall CME, programme events for Readers only
17 included Reader training events to which interested laity and lay ministers were invited
25 included events in which clergy were invited to participate

It is clear from these responses that CME for Readers is recognized as something which dioceses should acknowledge, but the seriousness with which this is approached varied between the dioceses and this, I again suggest, provided a measure of the importance attached by each diocese to Reader ministry within its overall ministerial provision.

The take up by Readers of training events offered by a diocese also varied.

Percentage of take-up	1-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%
Number of dioceses	9	12	3	6

There were no returns in the 81-100% category and there were 6 'no answers'. It can be seen that the average take-up of training opportunities is less than 50% and from

personal and anecdotal evidence I would suggest that there are 3 possible reasons for this lack of response to further training. (1) A great number of Readers see no need for further training, (2) the courses offered are not seen as relevant to the Reader's ministry and (3) a lack of interest in any diocesan provision. My personal evidence is simply that these are reasons that have been offered to me on several occasions whilst I was working as a diocesan moderator for training, but the 2003 moderation report also picked up two reasons for the limited response from Readers to CME.

> Readers have sometimes complained that training is scheduled at times to suit clergy rather than lay people ... Some Readers have felt overawed and inhibited in participating fully. (Thorpe 2003 p. 40, 41)

However there were some very positive returns, and the content of the CME training was spelt out in some of the additional information sent by Directors of Training. These returns confirmed that the primary place of the Reader was perceived as within the parochial ministry with an emphasis on liturgy and the practical aspects of ministry and theology. However there were also single and multiple units on multi-faith, managing conflict, human sexuality, ethics, leadership and management and the Reader in his or her place of work, showing a broader understanding of the work of the Reader.

One diocese made the renewal of a Reader's licence dependent on the Reader having participated annually in Continuing Ministerial Education/Development events. A professionally produced booklet from another diocese outlined a comprehensive list of combined CME courses and lectures for clergy and Readers, including a conference for potential school chaplains, but it was stated that this particular conference was open only to Clergy. In fact there are Readers who are School Chaplains, and one such Reader was a member of the Cohort that is the subject of the next chapter.

The 2003 Moderation report noted.

> 6.65 ... Some dioceses are providing small but impressive programmes for Readers throughout the year ... 6.67 ... the provision of CME is patchy, and variable in quality. Undoubtedly, there is much good practice, but there is also confusion, under-resourcing, lack of vision ... For many Readers, their CME is poorly resourced, haphazard and inadequate. (Thorpe 2003 pp. 42, 43)

It is clear that CME for Readers is recognized as something which dioceses should acknowledge, but the survey and the additional material have shown that the seriousness with which this is approached varies considerably between the dioceses. This is yet another small piece of evidence for the varied and uncertain place of Reader ministry within the national picture of Reader ministry.

Related to CME is 'Ministerial Review'. In the past not only Readers but many clergy could continue in their ministry with little or no further training after completing their training or curacies, but for clergy this is now being addressed through an annual/biennial or triennial pattern of ministerial review. The same approach is now being applied to Reader ministry in a number of dioceses, but the evidence that I have been able to assemble about this is that its initiation depends on the Readers or Reader officers and not the diocese, although clergy reviews often were started at the instigation of the bishop or senior diocesan officials. However the evidence also shows that once launched Reader ministerial reviews are supported by the diocesan bishops.

My interpretation of the varied approach to CME by dioceses and by Readers is that it again exposed an uncertainty about the task of the Reader but with this there was a recognition of the need to maintain Reader ministry as an effective and trained body within the ministry of the church. This however is basically 'recognition' and falls short of the expectation of in-house training that is an accepted part of most work situations. Most professional organisations have a clear requirement for such further education, and continuous training is frequently required by voluntary organisations. The reluctance of the church to expect this standard of continual learning and development for both clergy and Readers suggests again either an unwillingness to address the task of the church in society or a lack of clarity about the task.

Recognition of gifts and training

Readers come into training from many different backgrounds, and with considerable and varied resources of knowledge, experience and skills. Until comparatively recently these personal resources were not acknowledged as contributing to the

content of the training course, and rarely were Readers on the teaching staff. To examine whether this situation had changed I asked, 'What opportunities are there for Licensed Readers to be involved in the training process?' (D. D5). Also in any vocational learning scheme the student is dependent on role models as well as on given information and so I asked the Directors of Training (D. C4), 'How many members of your Reader Training Team are Readers, Laity (other than Readers) and Clergy?' These questions were designed to provide answers to three underlying questions. First, will a newly licensed Reader be asked at some stage to share in the delivery of Reader training, if he or she has the necessary educational and theological qualifications? Secondly, do the training courses provide any role models of Reader ministry? Thirdly, do Readers hold an understanding of their own ministry which they see as important to be communicated to trainees (as doctors to trainee doctors, lawyers to student lawyers, clergy to ordinands and curates etc.)?

In answer to these questions one diocese employed as many Readers as clergy on the training course staff and in another diocese 52% of the staff were Readers, 42% clergy and 6% other laity. However in other dioceses no Readers were involved or at the most one or two, compared with eight to fourteen clergy. However in some dioceses the incumbent of a student Reader is counted as part of the learning team, and this may have inflated the clerical returns for two or three of the dioceses. Nevertheless the figures provided give a general picture and these show that the percentage of those involved in the training of Readers as –

Laity, other than Readers	13.5%
Readers	28.9%
Clergy	57.6%

The Readers' participation in training varied, nearly half of those replying (48%) indicated that Readers in their dioceses worked as tutors and 28% used Readers as mentors to trainees. In four dioceses special training days and events involved Readers in the design of the day or event, and four used Readers in leadership roles for the training. Two dioceses used Readers as sermon evaluators, two as course designers and in two dioceses the Reader Training Officers were Readers. Two

Directors of Training stated that there were no opportunities for Readers to be involved in the training process. Four Directors of Training added that their dioceses were following the policy of involving Readers more and more in the training process and several made the practical point that the use of Readers depended on the skills and individual expertise that they can offer.

Assuming that the members of the teaching staff were recruited simply on the basis of their academic, ministerial and teaching skills then whether they are Laity, Readers or Clergy should not matter, but if a staff member was also seen as a role model and as someone who contributes to the discovery by the student of his or her identity within the church structures then this becomes a factor that must also be taken into account.

My own experience of one diocese, where it was felt important that as great a proportion of the staff as possible were Readers, was that when the training staff contacted all licensed Readers in the diocese they discovered a number of academically and educationally highly qualified men and women who were willing to join the course staff.

The limited Reader input could be dismissed as of no great importance, provided that the necessary information and skills are delivered, but I would argue that the concept of the role model is important for the identity and future development of the student and there is also the concept, developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) in which the individual learns as a whole person from senior practitioners of the skill, craft or profession, and I suggest that the training course may be the only context in which the student is able to be in an ongoing learning relationship with senior Readers.

My assessment of this group of responses is that they showed a clear division in the selection process between that adopted for clergy and the varied methods used for Readers. Then as the Reader candidates moved on to a two or three year course, the variation in courses suggested an uncertainty about the appropriate training for

Reader ministry, possibly arising from an uncertainty about the task for which the Reader was being trained.[49]

Some of the courses had a sufficient number of Readers on the staff to provide role models, but the major part of the training was in the hands of the clergy, and previous skills held by Reader students were rarely noted or used.

WHAT IS SEEN AS THE FUTURE FOR READERS?

Diocesan plans

In the introduction to the thesis I drew attention to the process the church is going through at the moment in dealing with a variety of reports, and particularly in reorganizing its training pattern in response to the 'Hind' report. This is also referred to in the final section of the history chapter. Although this questionnaire was distributed at the beginning of the process of responding to the Hind report all the Wardens and the Directors of Training were aware of it and would have received a certain amount of relevant information and therefore I was able to ask.

> What impact do you anticipate the implementation of the report, 'Formation of Ministry within a Learning Church' will have on Reader ministry in your diocese? (W.D1, D.E1)

The majority of replies to this question were given at some length and identifiable categories emerged. These were negative, uncertain, positive and 'already doing this'. Some replies fell into more than one category – eg positive but already involved in the work.

Looking at the breakdown of these replies, three responses suggested that not much would happen as a result of this report but 10 were uncertain, recognising that it was still 'early days'. The 6 positive responses ranged from 'significant' to 'a major change in quality and quantity' and 9 dioceses were already engaged on much of the work

[49] The development of RTPs and the use of University courses, including Foundation Degrees has now, in 2010, brought some consistency to the delivery of Reader training, although the content continues to relate primarily to the clergy training model.

that had been recommended. Nine of those who responded thought that the effects of the recommendations could be helpful in the development of Reader ministry, although three were concerned that the proposed training schemes could be too academic, and that there might be unwelcome financial implications as a result of any changes.

The evidence offered by the response to this question is again that of the lack of consistency across the dioceses. However the responses provided evidence of a 'looking forward' for Reader ministry and the acceptance by Reader Officers that change and movement are inevitable.

Because the Wardens of Readers and Directors of Training for Readers are in a position to be aware of what is happening and what is planned for Reader ministry in their own dioceses, I asked about future plans in their diocese and their own vision for the ministry of the Reader. (W:D2,3 and D:E.2,3) Those who replied gave a full response and in many cases went into considerable detail suggesting their personal commitment to Reader ministry and training and, in their replies, confirming the varied response to Reader ministry across the dioceses of the Church of England. Sixteen of the Wardens said that development plans were in hand in their dioceses, three were considering possible developments but 12 dioceses had no plans for the future. Of the Directors of Training 9 did not answer this question but 24 said that plans for the future were in hand and 4 said that there were no plans under consideration. This suggests that development in training is taking place in at least 55% of dioceses, and further Reader training and development in at least 45% of dioceses, but it is possible that at least 27% of dioceses had no plans for the future for Reader ministry.

In those dioceses where development plans were in hand, these included moves in Reader Education such as the use of APL and APEL, developing a course with a formation/journey structure rather than an academic/vocational one, the use of portfolios, the appointment of a full-time officer for training in the diocese with a 'special responsibility for Reader training', integrating some aspects of clergy and lay students' training, the introduction of a review system and the use of peer reviews.

There were plans also to improve the clergy understanding of Reader ministry, to develop Reader recruitment, and to look at the implications of deploying Readers to areas of particular need. Many of the replies showed an awareness of the need for a growth in the number of Readers in the church. The further training of Readers and their support was also in the future plans of some dioceses, one of whom was introducing an external Review System for Readers, another would be implementing a Ministry Review process and a third diocese would be offering its Readers opportunities to retrain in a church and mission context. Three dioceses were introducing combined CME for Readers and Clergy.

Behind these planned developments it was clear that Reader ministry was seen as important and as having a definite place in the future of the church. The following are some of the comments that support this view.

> they (Readers) continue to provide a vital ministry in the diocese
> they (Readers) are becoming increasingly central to the mission of the church
> we are planning for a Reader in every worshipping community
> we plan for at least one Reader in every Benefice
> for the diocese to take the task of ministerial development seriously
> to encourage life-long learning
> to produce resourced, trained personnel
> Readers represent the front line in the Church of England mission strategy for the next 25 years

It should be noted that these positive comments came from both clergy and Reader Wardens and Directors of Training. Again the argument can be put that a number of positive responses could be expected because of the positions those responding held in their respective dioceses. I recognise that these are responses from those with a bias to Readers, but the Wardens and Directors of Training are also men and women who have a deep knowledge of their own dioceses and its needs and opportunities, and therefore their overall picture of the importance of Reader ministry for the future of the church must be taken seriously.

Wardens and Directors of Training, their vision

The opportunity was provided in the survey for the Wardens and Directors of Training to provide an indication of the place they felt that the Readers held or should hold in the church of the future, and the nature of the task of the Readers now and in the coming years. (W:D4, D:E4) The place occupied by the Reader was described as.

> a 'focus' for the parish and ministry
> to become the persona of a parish, particularly in rural areas
> exercising pastoral leadership and a liturgical role
> to serve the church as local theologically trained teachers and preachers

This vision though was spoilt by the evidence that the training and experience of the Readers counted for nothing when occasionally Readers moved into training for the ordained ministry, and they literally had to start from scratch; 'Readers who move on to ordination training are treated often as if they were theologically illiterate'. I would suggest that this clearly reflects the division between Reader and Clergy that has been noted elsewhere, and shows the lack of trust, or awareness the church has in and of the ministerial education that has been provided in its own dioceses.

The Reader was described with some frequency as someone who exercised a bridge ministry. I interpreted this as meaning that he or she occupied a unique facilitating and interpretive role in the church. The following descriptions are taken from these replies.

The Reader ...

> witnesses to and is a link in the workplace
> provides a model for lay Christians in the world
> provides a bridge to the world outside the church culture
> is ideally situated for the work of the church because he or she is rooted in the secular world and is able to bring the Gospel to people in the twenty first century where they are

It is possible that this last comment is attributing a general role to Readers. I interpret this as suggesting that by their training Readers will be reflecting on their work or their community involvement from a theological standpoint. This could mean that the Reader would have something positive to contribute to the effective running of his or her workplace or community. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the pastoral aspect

of Reader ministry surfaces in the workplace. 'Quite a number of the office staff and management came to my admission as a Reader, even though some of them profess to be atheists or agnostics, but they wanted to support me.' The same person then spoke of the way individuals sought him out over personal and domestic problems. Another Reader was specifically asked to take on a staff support role because of his pastoral experience.

For the future there was a desire to correct what was obviously seen as a negative slant. Reader officers looked for.

> ... the same appreciation for Reader ministry by the bishop as that shown to the ordained; and for a more upbeat profile (of Reader ministry) in the Diocese and with laity.

This confirms the uncertain place of the Reader in the structures and strategies of many dioceses, a situation already identified.

The question of the clergy-Reader relationship surfaced very clearly in a number of the responses.

> the need for a clearly defined ministry distinct from ordained colleagues
> Reader ministry to be valued for what it is and not as 'clergy' replacement
> the Reader as a focus for lay ministries. He or she is not a proto-priest
> the need to get away from the concept of the Reader as 'not quite clergy'
> the hope that the view of the Reader as a minor cleric will disappear, Readers are not deacons, they are defiantly lay! *(defiantly was the word used)*
> the church to be enabled to discern more clearly the difference between the ordained and lay ministry as a proper hierarchy of order, where power is shared and understood positively for as something to be used for service
> to lose the 'fudging' between Readers and Priestly ministry and for each to be valued for their own intrinsic worth and work

There was no explanation of why there should be a consciousness of this division, and it could be argued that it starts from Readers who view themselves as pseudo-clergy but are excluded from membership of the professional clergy body. However my understanding, drawn from the returns and from personal experience, is that the majority of Readers view themselves, and wish to continue as, members of the laity.

On the positive side there was a looking forward to ministry teams and collaborative ministry where Readers were part of 'the leadership teams in all parishes', and also a

looking forward to new initiatives for Readers, in chaplaincy work, the taking of the occasional offices, the increased use of extended communion, in evangelism and to be part of the recognized ministry in the Church of England.

The Wardens and Directors of Training outlined the place of the Reader in the Church of England as a man or woman trained and equipped to exercise liturgical, teaching, preaching and pastoral skills in church and community. They also identified the Reader as someone who could be holding the role of the church persona in the community, either by appointment or by common agreement, particularly in multi church and multi parish benefices. The Wardens and the Directors of Training also suggested that the Reader modelled the lay Christian role for the church community and also, because of her or his roots in the secular world, the Reader provided a bridge between the church and the community.

CONCLUSION

The response from the Wardens to the survey questionnaire indicated a commitment to the continuation and strengthening of Reader Ministry in the traditional role of preaching, teaching and leading worship, but they also made clear that any development beyond that was dependant on the policy of the individual dioceses and bishops. The variation across the dioceses in the place of Readers and students in the diocesan structures and in the diocesan perception of ministry can be considered as a contributory factor to the ambivalence of the church to Readers, and at the same time as evidence for this ambivalence.

Where development occurred it was seen to move in two directions. The first was the taking on of more responsibility by Readers for organizational, pastoral and sacramental work and the second was the recognition of the 'foot in two camps' of the licensed Reader, within the world and within the church community and also as a minister in a secular institution such as a prison or hospital.

The picture presented by the returns from the Directors of Training showed a commitment to Reader ministry by those involved in the training process, together with an understanding of this ministry as being of importance for the future work of

the Church of England. However there was a variation in the training in the balance of academic, formational and practical learning which suggested a lack of clarity about the nature of the work for which the student Readers were being prepared. This lack of clarity, I suggest, is further evidence for the ambivalence about Readers and Reader ministry that is beginning to appear in this study and that may be endemic in the Church of England.

Various issues were raised by both Wardens and Directors of Training arising from the relationship of Readers with other lay ministries and with the ordained ministry. One issue was the wide variety of ministerial jobs previously restricted to clergy, but now open to Readers both within the church and in the wider community. There was also an issue of restricted access to training for either educational or geographical reasons.

Areas were identified in a number of dioceses where no candidates for Reader ministry were coming forward. Possible reasons given for this were that Reader ministry was not regarded with favour for theological reasons, because of church tradition, because of an innate clericalism or because of the growth of other types of authorized lay ministry. I suggest that this evidence pointed to the situation where Readers, despite occupying a large percentage of the trained ministerial resources of the Church of England, are not accepted as a 'national resource'. The survey showed that there are areas in the nation where Reader ministry was either not acknowledged or it was seen as not acceptable.

The commitment of the Reader Officers expressed in the responses to this survey and seen alongside the growth of other lay ministries, together with the apparent indifference to Reader ministry from a section of the church, raised the major question as to whether we are witnessing a fight to maintain Reader ministry when the reality is that it is no longer needed. I would suggest that, whether Reader ministry is needed or not, it is a question that should be faced by the church. To answer this question will require clarity about the task and the needs of the church at this time, and the appropriateness of the resources offered by Readers in facilitating the identified task and meeting the perceived needs.

From the evidence so far produced in this study my understanding is that there is a lack of clarity about the church's task, and therefore the need is for a ministry that is flexible, and is able to respond to different aspects of the task as and when they are exposed. Because the needs that were evident in the history section and in the responses to the survey included ones about personnel and communication, my understanding is that the church needed and will need men and women, trained for a broad ministry and available, adaptable and in a position to provide a bridge for communication.

I would suggest that Reader ministry at this time is in the unique position of being able to respond to this ministerial need, and that those entering Reader training carry within themselves a strong sense of vocation to the church's ministry. The evidence also suggested that Readers may identify and understand local needs and respond before the organized church has recognized the presenting problems.

A further factor in the question about the need for Reader ministry is the strength of the unresolved debate, evidenced in the replies to this survey, about the ontological difference between ordained and lay, clergy and laity, which in itself raises issues of the nature of priesthood, of what is meant by 'the church', of what is authority and where is its location. All of these issues are beyond the scope of this study but they represent questions raised by this research.

The survey revealed a variety of approaches to Reader ministry and training that sprang from and was dependent on the place of Readers within the ministerial structures of each diocese, and on the theological and missiological stance of each diocesan bishop. It also exposed ambivalence towards Reader ministry with roots in a lack of clarity around the clergy-Reader-lay boundaries. Nevertheless the overall tone of the replies was positive, and I could discover no suggestion that Reader ministry was thought to be unnecessary for the Anglican Church, although as suggested above, I believe the church must face the question of whether it does or does not want or need Reader ministry. My understanding is that the Wardens and Directors of Training provided ample evidence in this survey to show that Reader ministry was of

value and that it is essential for the future ministry of the Church of England and therefore their answer to 'do we need Readers?' would be a very clear 'yes!'

In summary, the three questions that I posed in the Introduction were each addressed to a lesser or greater degree by the responses to the questionnaire.

The replies to the questionnaire indicated that the significant factors in the relationship of the Reader and of Reader ministry to the Church of England at this particular point in time were first the dependence of Reader ministry in a diocese on the value placed on that ministry by the diocesan Bishop, then the importance of diocesan structures, whether Readers were incorporated in these or on the periphery, then the clergy-laity relationship, which was reflected in part by areas where Readers were very thin on the ground.

The picture of Reader education that emerged was that Readers did not follow a common course, that the majority of courses failed to prepare Readers for any ministry other than a church based one, that it was unclear about the task for which Readers were being prepared and that Directors of Training were faced with the educational challenge of enabling Reader students who had left school at 15 and those who were graduates to learn within the same group. I would suggest that the evidence of the responses to this section of the survey pointed to a church in which Reader education was seen to be important, but because the church was unclear about what it wanted from Reader ministry, it was therefore uncertain as to what it should be providing for those in training to be Readers.

Despite the focus on the Reader in the church the survey revealed that many Readers were involved in a much wider ministry, often of a bridging nature. I would suggest that this was the result of the individual commitment of Readers to their work in parish and community, irrespective of the ambivalence of the church. Readers identified needs 'on the ground' and they were prepared to respond to these needs. I see the significance of this primarily as showing the strength of the sense of calling or vocation experienced by Reader students and Readers despite a lack of support and direction from the church leadership.

Further to this the survey provided an opportunity for Reader Wardens and Directors of Training to express their thoughts about the future. This produced a clear picture of Reader ministry as an active and forward looking ministry, with Readers committed to their calling, despite the ambivalence of the church about Readers and Reader ministry.

CHAPTER FOUR

READER EDUCATION: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDENT COHORT

My tentative conclusions so far, from the consideration of the history and the contemporary situation of Reader ministry and training, can be considered in a series of steps. (1) Readers have a clearly defined task and a recognized and important role in the church in times of crisis, (2) when there is no identified crisis the place of the Reader in the church is uncertain, (3) this uncertainty leads an ambivalence in the church's approach to the place of the Reader in the church, (4) this then results in a lack of clarity about the task of the Reader and therefore the training required has unclear learning aims, objectives and outcomes, (5) because of this lack of clarity, the training process leads to the possibility of an uncertain sense of identity for the licensed Reader,[50] but (6) despite this lack of clarity there is a steady flow of men and women candidates for Reader training, (7) Readers engage in many aspects of ministry in the church, in the community and in secular institutions and frequently take the initiative in engaging in this work with little or no support from the national church and therefore 8) the task of the Reader may be to provide a local, available and adaptable resource for the church as he or she lives with an uncertain and ambivalent place in the church.

The sequence of these conclusions throws light on the three questions I posed in the Introduction about the significance of Reader-church relationships, the place of education in this and the continuing commitment of Readers to their ministry.

The significance of the changing relationship of the Reader and the church is addressed by the first three of my tentative conclusions which identify a contrasting picture of Readers very actively engaged in ministry and then holding an uncertain role, the episodic pattern described elsewhere. This could represent the use of

[50] Through learning, people develop and become. The learning can change aspects of their habitus ... how they see themselves, who they are ... The recognition that outcomes develop throughout any learning experience means that we have to rethink the relationship between learning outcomes and learning processes. (Hodkinson, Biesta and James 2007 p. 18)

Readers by the church facing a crisis alternating with ambivalence about Reader ministry when there is no immediate threat and questions about the clergy/lay divide are allowed to emerge, or it could be seen as a means of maintaining an able and active resource to be called on in times of crisis. I suggest that it may be a mixture of both.

My second question related to the place of education in the changing Reader-church relationship and tentative conclusions four and five intimated that it is possible that education could be a casualty, because when there is no clear task then there can be no clear picture of the education and training required to fulfil that task. An alternative possibility would be to see Reader education and training as providing a broad background for a multitude of tasks, some of which may be crisis orientated.

The significance of the continued commitment of Readers to their ministry was raised by the third question and my sixth and seventh tentative conclusions affirmed this ongoing dedication. I suggest that it is possible that individual vocations or callings are so powerful that they require a response despite reservations about the institution in which the calling will be exercised and they could even at times lead the Reader to take the initiative. An alternative to this is that the Reader recognizes the inevitable ambivalent nature of the church because uncertainty is built into life itself. Therefore the Reader is prepared to live with this uncertainty but ready to respond when needed, whether this need is identified by the organized church or by the Reader himself or herself and this is a possibility I consider as my eighth tentative conclusion. It is this willingness to continue and to respond as and when needed that I have described as the fluidity of Reader ministry.

In this chapter, which looks primarily at the history of Reader education, I have paused to consider my findings so far, to offer some tentative conclusions and to suggest some possible interpretations of the place of the Reader in the church. I have done this because in the following chapter I will be moving from observations and written or printed material, much of it second hand to my understanding of the direct response of student Readers to the education they were receiving and my perception of the picture they were building up of Reader ministry and the church. In my work

with the cohort of student Readers I engaged with men and women who were experiencing much of what I had previously only been able to observe or learn about from a distance. I therefore consider the Student Cohort chapter, to be a pivotal chapter in the thesis.

As preparation for the Student Cohort chapter and in order to further understand the place of Reader education in the church, I explored the history of Reader education and I asked 'how far does Reader training relate to a task identified by the church; how far is it a reflection of the educational norms of the day; and to what extent does Reader training reflect the place of the Reader in the Church of England?' The contemporary response to these questions was addressed in part in chapter three.

READER TRAINING: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

I described in chapter two the possible roots of Reader ministry in the Synagogue and the Primitive church and in both cases I could discover no evidence of any specific training for those functioning in a Reader role. However it would have been necessary for those 'readers' to be educated. (King 1973, pp 52, 53) Most Jews and all Romans of any standing were literate, and education itself was not necessarily related to social position; the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Paul show that slaves were members of the young Christian church and therefore it is feasible that an educated slave could be a Reader.[51] My understanding of the early church is that Reader training was not an 'item' as such but that there were certain requirements, particularly an acceptable standard of education according to the norms of the day (Williams 1934, p12) and a good character (King 1973, p53), so that the Reader possessed the necessary skills for his work and was acceptable to the church community.

When the Readers moved into the ordained orders of the church in the early middle-ages, there was an implicit requirement that they would have received practical

[51] They (slaves) might serve as business managers, overseers, secretaries, clerks, accountants, or school teachers; and great numbers of them were highly skilled artisans. (Salmon 1944, p71)

training in liturgy, if they were to fulfil their duties in preparing for and in assisting at the Mass. The evidence of ordained Readers moving down the scale of responsibility in the church over time (see chapter 2), suggests that they would have then required less training in order to fulfil their duties.

I have found no evidence of training for laity appointed as Readers from 1559 through to the 18th century, but there were certain requirements of candidates before such appointments were made. These are given in detail in chapter two, but they included a suitable demeanour, a standard of literacy, a willingness to study, the acceptance of the authority of the local incumbent and of the bishop. The potential Reader, together with all educated men, would already have an understanding of the liturgy, of church structures and of the scriptures which he would have gained from his schooling, whether in the home, from the local clergy or from one of the many Grammar Schools in the towns of the land, but he would need further instruction with respect to ecclesiastical legalities, the keeping of registers and the witnessing or signing of wills and other documents.

Neither can I find any evidence for the delivery of this extra training for the men selected for this 'stop-gap' ministry and therefore must assume that it was delivered by one of the bishop's officers. It is possible that Readers were better educated than many of the clergy, whose learning was often only to a basic level. As the reign of Queen Elizabeth I continued, so the required educational standard increased from the 'dumb dogs' (Kennedy 1908 p. 138) at the beginning of her reign to an educated and resident clergy. (Usher 1999 p. 197) The clergy, although eventually well educated had no specific training for priesthood and may have learned, possibly from a curacy, but more generally from experience and books. Later, particularly in the 19th century, many books and journals were published that offered guidance to parish priests, (Russell 1982 p. 45) so the lack of specific training for Readers simply mirrored the approach to ministry experienced by the clergy.

The reintroduction of Readers in 1866, as a response to political, social and church pressures, as outlined in chapter two, again depended on those appointed having an acceptable standard of education, a standing in the church and community and the

approval of the bishop. Within a short time a distinction was made between those with educational qualifications, usually a degree, who were appointed as Diocesan Readers and could minister across a diocese, and Parochial Readers, with a more limited educational background, who were restricted to working in their own church and parish. However there is evidence, given in chapter two, that in some areas Parochial Readers were drawn from a wide spectrum of occupation and learning and this compares with the clergy, where the expectation was that they were primarily gentlemen, Oxbridge educated, and usually having attended one of the Oxbridge theological colleges, or one of those attached to a cathedral. Also, at that time, the clergy were seeing themselves more and more as occupying a profession. (Russell 1980 pp. 239,240)

Because of the concern many lay church members had for the mission of the church, together with the multiplication of bible classes, cottage meetings, and missions conducted by laypersons, there was a rapid increase in the number of those offering to work as Readers, or encouraged to take this step by the parish clergy and by the bishops. This led to the establishing from 1881 of annual training courses of ten days to three weeks at Summer Schools in Oxford, Cambridge or Canterbury. (Williams 1932 p. 17) One of these residential courses is described in the 'Fulham Papers' held in Lambeth Palace Library.

> ... this, the 19th Annual Training, was held at Keble College, Oxford from July 29th to August 12th 1899 with 70 members from 22 dioceses, some of the members assisted by grants from their dioceses. There were lectures from Oxford Theologians on Spirituality and Theology and debates on Sunday Observance, work among lads, men's Bible classes, the representation of the laity, foreign missions, the administration of Holy Baptism and elementary education. Requests were made by the members for instruction in elocution and in the composition of addresses but there was only time to include a lecture on elocution. (Creighton 1900 17. f93).

The breadth of the content of the course demonstrates the willingness of Readers at that time to engage with academic and practical topics, and it also shows something of the work of the Reader at the turn of the century. But this opportunity to learn was only accessed by a small proportion of the Reader population at that time when London diocese alone had 270 Readers.

Opportunities for longer periods of training were provided by the founding of a Layworkers' College in Stepney in 1889, by the Church Army in 1892 and by the Lichfield Evangelist Brotherhood in 1894. (Hiscox 1991 pp. 15,16) A number of those completing these courses were licensed as Readers. However the general picture appears to be that examinations in the dioceses were usually in the hands of diocesan clergy appointed by the bishop. (Chapter Two and Robinson 1904 pp. 40-77)

Gradually Reader ministry became established, as regulations were issued and the area of permissible ministry grew, and with this requirements for selection began to be laid down. As in the past, the primary requirements were about the individual's character and his acceptance by the local church, clergy and ultimately by the bishop.

The regulations of 1905 required an examination in the Scriptures and in the doctrine and practice of the Church, as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and a certificate to be produced to this effect, and either the bishop, or his appointee, to test the applicant's capacity for reading, speaking, teaching, catechising and preaching, plus a testimonial of godly behaviour during the period of his training. (Davidson 1905 108. f357, f308) The implementation of these regulations with their implication of some form of training depended on each bishop's perception of Reader ministry. The evidence is that training could be nominal or detailed and this variation in standard continued until after the Second World War.

There is no evidence to show that the education of Readers was treated with the same seriousness as that of the clergy, although a diploma for Readers was introduced after the Enabling Act came into force, (Hiscox 1991 p. 21) and a Common Entrance Examination (CEE) was instituted in 1946 to be renamed in 1951 as the General Readers' Examination. One candidate commented on this examination, which he took in the vicar's study.

> The standard seemed to be about 'O' level and the knowledge required was mainly factual. Although I was working very much full-time as a solicitor, it did not seem much of a burden. (The Reader 2003 p. 12)

In 1975 The General Readers' Certificate was introduced. This was basically an essay scheme but this, with all of the previous national educational projects, only attracted a limited response from the dioceses, many preferring to use their own training courses, or lack of them. A Professor who trained as a Reader under the 1975 scheme experienced a problem, 'I wondered what exactly I was supposed to prove or elucidate ... the course was far too academic. It did not train me to be a pastoral Reader. I was completely unprepared for dealing with situations such as talking to someone who was dying.' (Ibid p. 12)

I would argue from this that the diocesan centred approach, illustrated by the diocese of the Cohort, the subject of the next chapter, led to a lack of clarity about the task of the Reader in the Church of England, with no common-mind about what was required from Reader training, i.e. for what task was the Reader being trained. The variety in the training offered was one of the reasons for the publication of the 1989 report on *The Training of Readers* where the problems presented by a diversity of approach is clearly stated, and showed a decreasing educational gradation from the General Readers Certificate, through diocesan schemes and then through individual tuition to no specific training at all. (ACCM 1989 pp. 21,22)

The recommendations that came from this 1989 report included the application of criteria (ibid pp. 38-42) which covered course content and educational methods, the role and training of tutors, the continuing education of Readers and the introduction of central oversight and guidance, through a system of moderation. Many of these recommendations were implemented, but the moderation reports showed that there remained a wide variety in the content and delivery of training, dependent to a great extent on the place each bishop and diocese afforded to Readers within the diocesan structure and organization and on the expectations of Reader ministry held by bishop, clergy and laity.

It could be argued that the ambivalence of the church towards Reader ministry, exposed by this report on training and by subsequent moderations, was justifiable because Reader ministry was not an essential part of the church but simply an expedient introduced at a time of need. If this was the case and Reader ministry was

to continue, then all that was necessary was for it to be allowed simply to 'tick over', ready to be resurrected if a need should arise.

I can accept part of such an argument because the historical evidence suggests that the primary task of Reader ministry, when it was introduced, was to provide an effective response to a specific need. The argument falls down because there is unpredictability about the occurrence of needs, with the consequent demands they put on human resources, in terms of numbers, availability and necessary skills.

For example, the two world wars, the amalgamation of parishes in rural areas, the drop in stipendiary clergy numbers, and Christianity finding itself as one religion amongst many other faiths in the country, have all presented themselves as needs to a church not particularly prepared to meet any of them. If Readers were simply allowed to 'tick over' as assistants to the priest, or dispensed with in the hope of resurrecting them if needed, then their mobilization would be of an ill prepared, untrained body of men and women. However if Readers had been trained for preaching, teaching and pastoral work, for taking a leadership role, for engaging with the bridging role between lay and clergy and that between the secular norms of everyday life and the life of the church, then they would clearly provide a prepared, accessible, adaptable and trained resource for the church.

My understanding of Reader training throughout the 20th century is that, although I could find little engagement with the defining of the task of the Reader, its real value would have been if, as suggested above, it had succeeded in producing a trained, local, adaptable and available resource for the church, as the church engaged in its task and as it faced major issues as they arose.

In many ways I believe that this requirement was met, inadvertently, but there was little planning involved in this and training continued to depend primarily on the role allocated to it by the individual dioceses and bishops.

THE 21st CENTURY

The report, *Reader Ministry and Training 2000 and Beyond,* published in the year 2000, superseded the 1989 report but showed the same ambivalence to Reader ministry as its predecessor, despite the introduction of new regulations and different training courses, many linked with universities or HE colleges. However the report recognized the need to respond to change, '...training is inevitably dynamic and has to be ready to change in the face of new circumstances and expectations.' (Archbishops' Council 2000 p. iii) Alongside this there was the recognition of the difficulty faced in developing Reader ministry and training.

> In some places, the role of the Reader is seen as little more than a helper for the clergy, while in others, Readers have a significant and independent Christian ministry, both in the parish and in their own workplace. (Archbishops' Council 2000 p. 9)

The pattern of training and its content, in both reports, took note of the varied intake of students (ACCM 1989 p. 27 and Archbishops' Council 2000 p. 26), but the delivery of such courses was usually along the traditional route of tutorials, reading and essays with sometimes a placement. There was little evidence of those responsible for Reader education taking note of developments in adult education. The students themselves also needed to be aware of educational methods and skills.

> In initial training, Readers need to acquire an understanding of how adults learn and to develop skills in leading large and small adult groups. ... They should be confident in using a variety of teaching methods and in selecting the most appropriate for particular situations. ... To achieve all this, trainees need good role models in their own learning. (Thorpe 2003 p. 35)

I would argue that the work of the Reader as outlined in the responses to the survey required a broad ethnographic model of learning, allowing for APEL/APL entrance, but in contrast the 2000 report can be seen as advocating the continuation of the use of the academic and university model for Reader training, indicating that the quasi-clerical model for the Reader still applied. There was no clear indication in the report of any examination of, or engagement with, the task in the CofE of the 21st century for which the student Reader was being trained.

Fieldhouse in looking at the history of British education wrote.

> ... adult education carried into the twentieth century a tradition and a practice which greatly undervalued, if it did not despise, utilitarian, technical, vocational education. It reflected the liberal, humane, non-technical ethos of the ancient universities, which gloried in not being useful ... The spin-off of this was the separation of vocation from non-vocational adult education for much of the twentieth century, and the widely assumed superiority of the latter. (Fieldhouse 1996 p. 44)

This supports my contention that the model used for Reader training in the 20th century, and continuing into this century, is based on the primacy of the non-vocational, academic model of clergy training, over and against the learning of the practical skills necessary for the Reader, as he or she practises Reader ministry in community, work place and church.

CONCLUSION

This brief overview of Reader Education has shown that, possibly in the early years of the church and then definitely in the 16th century, the educational standard required was that of the general educational expectations applied to anyone who had to take a literate role in society, plus in the 16th century an encouragement to continue to study.

In the 19th and 20th centuries there was a broad approach to Reader training, depending on the individuals, and more specifically on the diocese in which the Reader worked. The requirement could be that of a degree, as a guarantee of a certain standard of education, or the attaining of a certificate from a recognised church body, or personal tuition within a diocese, or the acceptance that the applicant had at least a basic education.

During the 20th and 21st centuries attempts were made to set a national standard for Reader training, and there is evidence that the Regional Training Partnerships are producing or using courses acceptable to those responsible for both Reader and clergy training. I would suggest however that the history of Reader training indicates the difficulty the church faces in defining the ontological difference between lay and priest, lay-Reader and clergy.

The question I would wish to raise at this stage and that is directly relevant to my research question about the place of Reader education in the Reader church

relationship, is whether the courses that have been created for, or include Readers, have been designed as the result of clarity about the role and task of the Reader in the ministry and mission of the church in the 21st century or are they a reduced version of the education offered to clergy? The evidence so far in this study suggests that in answer to this question there is uncertainty about, or an unwillingness to address the task for which Readers are being trained, with the result that the Reader training in many ways follows the educational package offered to the clergy. If this is so, then the correlation of Reader and Clergy training could be interpreted as avoidance of the question of the task of Readers and avoidance of the examination of the complementary roles of clergy, Readers and other authorized lay ministers.

Therefore, although there has been a considerable and positive development in Reader training from 1989 to the present there is still, at both national and local levels, a lack of clarity about the aims, objectives and learning outcomes of Reader training. This, I suggest, has its roots in the ambivalence of the church towards Readers and Reader ministry and points to the importance of working with the concept of task so that the training will be appropriate for the task on which the Licensed Reader will be engaged.

A Student Cohort provide the focus for the next chapter and a lack of clarity about task and training may have been one of the factors in the difficulties experienced by members of the Cohort at certain stages of their training course.

CHAPTER FIVE

A STUDENT READER COHORT

The research which contributed to this chapter enabled me to engage with men and women who were experiencing directly the place of the Reader candidate and the Reader in the church at this particular time. Previously I had only a limited number of opportunities to observe at firsthand the interaction of the Reader or the student with the church but never in a schematic way and my learning about this interaction and about Reader education was generally second hand.

I was able to receive from the Cohort firsthand knowledge and experience of Reader ministry and training. Also my understanding was that the education of the Student Readers would prepare them for the task to be asked of them by the church. These two factors engaged with the second question that I posed in the Introduction which was about the place of Reader education in the church-Reader relationship. It was the available firsthand knowledge and the opportunity to identify the Task for which the candidates were being trained that led me to designate this chapter a pivotal one in this thesis.

Before focussing on the one cohort of student Readers I had considered several other ways of examining student Reader experience and expectations other than that reported second hand in the survey (chapter three). These were, (1) interview and/or enter into correspondence with a random sample of students throughout the country; (2) interview a student sample in neighbouring, and therefore accessible, dioceses; (3) interview all the students in the three year course in one diocese; (4) observe tutorials, lectures and placements through a three year training course; (5) identify 2 or 3 individual students and follow their progress through the course by interview and attendance at events; and (6) interview all the students in one year in one diocese annually over the duration of their training.

I rejected the national random sample because of the confidentiality and cost implications, and although identifying a student sample in accessible dioceses was

possible, the number of variables would have increased considerably because of differing courses, structures and expectations, and therefore I chose not to follow that method. Neither of these two options would have allowed me to reach an understanding of the group identity of the students, and its place in Reader identity formation. Interviewing all year three students in one diocese would have provided a 'snap-shot' picture, rather than allowing for an examination of the development in learning, relationships and understanding of Reader ministry over the three years. The observer role would have been of value, if I could have used it as a complementary method to that of interviewing, but the time available precluded this. The fifth option of following one or two students through the course could have raised questions about any generalisation I might make. Hence I chose the sixth option and decided to use a longitudinal study and interview all the students in one year in one diocese annually over the duration of their training.

The chosen method, option six, provided information for the analysis of the relationship of diocese, course staff and students; the processes of the course and its content; the experience of the students and their changing perception of Reader ministry; the observable changes in the relationships within the Cohort, and in the individual students as a 'Reader identity' emerged and the place of Task in the training. From this I was able to draw some conclusions about Reader education and its place in the Reader-church relationship which provided a partial answer to my second Research Question and I was able to give consideration to what this implied about the understanding of Reader ministry held by the church, the focus of my first Research Question. The commitment of the student Readers to the continuation of their training despite experiencing a number of difficulties shed light on the third of the Research Questions.

This analysis depended primarily on the student's perception and interpretation of the process of the training course, and secondly on my observation and consequent interpretation of this response. In the analysis I was working with different categories of information including education, age, context, expectations etc but also with the interconnection of events both internal and external to the Cohort and over a period of time. This approach is dealt with at depth in the distinction in qualitative data

analysis that Maxwell and Miller (in Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2008 pp. 462ff) make between 'similarities and differences', which are used to define categories and to group and compare data by category and 'contiguity'. In my analysis I was aware of this approach and also of the point that Coffey and Atkinson (1996 p. 15) make that because of the uncertainties and ambiguities of social research one cannot impose a single methodological framework. However because of the purpose of this thesis which is about the discovery and exploration of the place of the Reader in the Church of England, I decided to use a thematic approach to the analysis, identifying the themes that emerged in the interviews, relating these to the progress of the students through the three years and, where possible, to the diocesan, parochial, community and work contexts. The concepts of category and contiguity were helpful in identifying the emerging themes.

The questions I used in the interviews which produced the material for this chapter can be found in Appendix Seven.

The Cohort was made up of 11 candidates in a Northern diocese who started a training course in 2003. The Cohort represented only just over one and a half percent of the total number of student Readers in England in 2003,[52] raising the question as to whether this sample would be valid when applied nationally. I would not venture to make any specific generalisations from this particular part of the research, but the experience of the members of the Cohort contributed to the overall picture of Reader ministry in the church that is emerging in this study[53] and provided material for the answers to all three of the Research Questions.

The students' course, despite the problems it faced, was provided within the broad outlines agreed by the national church, and the membership of the Cohort

[52] Based on Church of England Year Book figures

[53] In qualitative interview studies, the number of subjects tends to be either too small or too large. If the number of subjects is too small, it is not possible to make statistical generalizations or to test hypotheses of differences among groups. If the number of subjects is too large, then it is not possible to make penetrating interpretations of the interviews (Kvale 1996 p. 102). Kvale later suggests that to focus on a single or on small numbers does make it possible to 'work out the logic of the relationship between the individual and the situation' (Ibid p. 103)

represented a cross-section of church members and types of churches. Further to this the themes that emerged during the course of the interviews were the same as ones that had been identified in the national moderation reports. (ABM 1994, Archbishops' Council 1999, Thorpe 2003) Therefore my contention is that, whilst I do not claim that the points I make in this chapter can be immediately generalised, the experiences of this particular Cohort contribute to an understanding of the place of Reader ministry and training in the Church of England, and they resonate with the themes that have already emerged in the history and survey chapters.

The first interviews took place in 2003, and over the three-year period of the course I interviewed ten of the members each year, and one member once before his work took him overseas.

The diocese held an annual 'Induction Day' in which the new students met the students and staff already working on the course and they were provided with the necessary information for their first year. The Warden of Readers provided me with the opportunity at this Induction Day to explain to all of the members of the Cohort the purpose of this research, and to obtain their individual agreements to their participation in the interviews. I also obtained the permission of the Diocesan Bishop, the Warden of Readers and the Diocesan Director of Training. Each student, if he or she wished, chose a pseudonym which I could use when quoting their comments.

Initially there was an attempt by some of the members of the Cohort to cross boundaries, and to directly involve me in the problems they were facing, but a working agreement was quickly arrived at and the interviews remained confidential and separate from any other business.

Because of my role in the dioceses of the area I inevitably met the members of the Cohort at a variety of events but there my role was very different and we were able to work and socialise together. Pole and Morrison consider this effect.

> Previous research has demonstrated quite clearly that research informants will respond differently depending upon how they perceive the person asking the question and/or the intent behind the question ... the interviewer may already have become a familiar 'sight' in the research setting. (Pole and Morrison 2003 p. 33)

My diocesan role was on the staff side and I was accountable to the bishop and to the National Moderator for Reader Training and so Kvale's (1996) following observation about research was relevant.

> The *independence of research* can be co-opted from "above" as well as "below", by the funders of a project as well as by its participants. Ties to either group may lead the researcher to ignore some findings and emphasize others to the detriment of as full and unbiased an investigation of the phenomena as possible. (Kvale 1996 p. 118)

I was conscious of this danger of bias, because of my awareness of the effect of uncertainty on the diocesan Reader staff, and of the ambivalence about Readers in the diocese as described in the section 'The Setting' below. This awareness necessitated a rigorous scrutiny of my frequent identification of confusion in the delivery of the training course with the theme of the ambivalence of the church to Readers.

With respect to Reader ministry, the framework from which the student and from which I came were very different. The student's experience and expectations of Reader ministry were to a great extent parish and course based, whereas my experience and expectations were across diocesan boundaries and were influenced by this research. An appropriate picture would be to see each member of the Cohort in a room with other members as they experienced and discussed church, community and course and then every so often the individual Reader would come out into the corridor and describe to me a few of the events and conversations that had taken place in that room and her or his gloss on what had happened. It was these encounters outside the room that provided the material that contributed to this chapter and this thesis.

I was also aware that I was conducting research with lay members of the church whilst I was an ordained member and one of the themes that was emerging in the research was that of the clergy-Reader-lay relationship. Whilst seeking to stay in role as a researcher throughout the interviews with the students, the fact of my being a clergyperson meant that, in the course of my work, I was aware of the differing

attitudes of other clergy towards Readers and Reader ministry and it is therefore possible that I have over emphasized the lay-clergy issue because of my own experience of ministry. However the frequency with which this issue has appeared in this study suggests that it is a major factor in identifying the place of the Reader in the church and not simply a reflection of my own position.

Throughout the period of the interviews, and now, I have been conscious of holding privileged information. This necessitated special care in the interviews and in subsequent meetings. There were also limitations of evidence because I was not present at the tutorials, nor was I able to pick up the interactions that took place in the various settings of the student meetings. (Coffey and Atkinson 1996 p. 19)

These previous paragraphs have outlined the many issues that surrounded these interviews and I sought to meet these in a variety of ways. Where possible I met the student in his or her own home. This meant that I was the guest and the student had control of the boundaries. I appreciated how, wherever possible, the student set up a 'work environment' with minimum interruption and always our meetings started with a welcome cup of tea or coffee. The initial part of the meeting before the interview proper started allowed for general conversation, the allocating of certain issues to other times or places, the picking up of matters that could be raised in the interview and the opportunity for the development of a relaxed but focussed setting for the interview. The basic questions that I used are given in Appendix Seven but for the interviews I depended on a circular question reminder plan which meant that I could enter it at any stage. Also I always responded to any relevant issue that the student wished to examine.

Of the 31 interviews, 27 took place in the individual homes of the members of the Cohort, and because of separate constraints two were held in my home, one in a pub and one at a conference centre. Apart from the Pub interview, where I was dependent on notes, the rest of the interviews were recorded, with the permission of the interviewee, and later transcribed. All 11 members of the Cohort expressed their willingness to participate in this research project, not only in our initial meeting at the Induction Day but also at the beginning of the series of interviews. All the students

responded fully to all of my questions and they were prepared to develop any of their viewpoints or experiences when asked to do so.

The invitation at the end of the interviews to contribute anything further that had not already been covered was accepted by all of the cohort members for the majority of the interviews. This suggested that they had already given thought to the nature of the course and to the place of Reader ministry and training in the church.

The interviews, as already indicated, had as their background the Research Questions and the themes already emerging in this study. In more detail in the first year we were looking at joining issues, the perceptions of Reader ministry held by the student, the response of parish, community and work to the step being taken by the student and his or her experiences of the course to date, plus any other issues the student wished to raise.

For the second year we looked at the positive and negative aspects of the course to date, as experienced by the student, at some of the dynamics involved in the development of the cohort as a group, the experiences of the student as she or he found that they were being treated in a different way by other church members, and sometimes by their local community, and at the student's understanding of the place of the Reader in the church.

In the third and final year of the course there was again a looking at positive and negative aspects of the course but also consideration of the part the student had been playing in parochial ministry and life. The development of the group was also considered as was the change over the three years in the student's perception of Reader ministry. The future work of the student occupied a major part of the interview, including preparation, expectations and possible future training. The ending of the course, of the interviews, of the group were also considered.

All the questions were open-ended in their delivery and the students indicated that the topics raised by the questions were relevant to where they were and in fact they frequently expressed their feelings very forcibly. As already indicated an opportunity

was also provided in each interview for the student to contribute anything else he or she felt to be of importance. As indicated earlier an outline of the questions used can be found in Appendix Seven. During the process of the interviews I was aware of Luker's observation.

> Regardless of whether things happened the way people said they did, what interests us is that people chose to tell us that they happened that way ... I think that interviews are, almost by definition, accurate accounts of the kinds of mental maps that people carry around inside their heads, and that it is this, rather than some videotape of "reality," which is of interest to us. (Luker 2008 p. 167)

In order to analyse the response of the students and to understand both the development of the learning that took place and the move from applicant to student to licensed Reader I coded the interviews so that I could first look at the membership of the cohort and then at the Cohort's diocese which provided the training and in which members of the Cohort would eventually work. I then moved to look at the joining process as experienced by the Cohort members and this led to the major part of the chapter which was the delivery of the course and the students' experience of this. In the next section I looked at different aspects of the development of Reader identity experienced by the Cohort leading to the point of the licensing of its members as Readers. The final section is a summary of the chapter and the conclusions arising from the material provided by the interviews. This pattern is outlined below.

The Cohort: who are the members and why did they apply for Reader training?

The Setting: why does the church need Readers and what is the recent history of Reader training in the Cohort's diocese?

Engagement: information provided for applicants and the selection process

Delivery and Experience over three years:
Year one - uncertainty, Year two - problems of delivery,
Year three - clarification

Discovering Identity: through group awareness, clergy input, church expectations and community response

From student to practitioner: Licensed ministry and future hopes

THE COHORT

The Reader students came from a variety of backgrounds and parishes and the following table provides this information plus the name by which they agreed to be known.

	NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	PARISH
1	Abraham	40+	Customer Services	Rural
2	Adrian	40+	Education	Rural and Suburban
3	Alisa	50+	Education	Rural
4	Craig	50+	Education	Rural
5	Liz	40+	Education	Suburban
6	Magda	60+	Business	Rural
7	Mark	50+	Education	Suburban
8	Mary Rose	50+	Administration	Urban
9	Paul	50+	Profession	Market Town
10	Tom	50+	Business	Rural
11	Victoria	40+	Profession	Suburban

Where a name is ascribed to a quotation, it is followed by the course year of the interview 1, 2 or 3.

Because of their previous training, Paul and Adrian were both 'fast-tracked', and Licensed after one year, and Tom resigned from the course in the third year.

To commit oneself to a three year training course for a voluntary unpaid job, whilst working or whilst heavily involved in church and community activities, suggests a strong motivation, and in my initial interviews with the members of the Cohort I was presented with a variety of reasons as to why each individual decided to apply to train for Reader ministry.

Three of the students had previously considered ordination but now thought that Reader ministry was the right path.

> One of the main things I am called to do, possibly because of my training as a lawyer, is to preach and to teach, which of course are the two primary things which a Reader is called upon to do. (Paul 1)
>
> One possible way forward would be when, after being licensed as a Reader and working as a Reader for some time, to revive the exploration of priestly ministry and see where that takes me, but I'm well aware that may not happen. (Adrian 1)

Both Paul and Adrian were 'fast tracked' because they already had educational and communication skills, and theological qualifications, and both would have a future ministry in specialist institutions, one in the cathedral and one in a school. However from the information I received from the candidates, it was difficult to see that the course designed for them related to their future work but rather it was a 'make-do, fill in' course with some sermon training, some theological reading and sitting in on one or two lectures. The educational motivation behind this shortened course appeared to be simply a question of ensuring that both candidates passed through the minimum necessary academic and liturgical hoops.

These two students said that they would have appreciated a more 'thought-out' input for their one year course but they had already however given some thought to their future roles. Paul saw himself bringing his analytical and communication skills and his experience into his Reader ministry and Adrian would be relating his official role as a Reader to his school chaplaincy work, although he was conscious of an ontological difference between the Reader and the Priest and could see himself possibly eventually moving from one to the other. I would suggest that three of the themes of this thesis were carried in cameo by Paul and Adrian. First they demonstrated the emerging picture of lay members of the church wanting to be active ministers in the church, and to utilise their skills, experience and knowledge for the church, secondly in Adrian's case the diocese used the Reader's Licence to respond to a particular need which was to formalise Adrian's role as a school chaplain, the school having already appointed and described him as such. The third theme was that of the ambivalence of the church.

The pathway into Reader training was different for other members of the Cohort, two of the candidates had the idea put to them 'out of the blue' by other church members and by their incumbents,

> ... the thought of being a Reader wasn't my idea, it was an idea that was suggested to me by a number of people in the parish but including the vicar. (Victoria 1)

> I hadn't thought of doing Reader ministry really until the vicar suggested that "would I think about it" ... I talked quite a bit to people at church and everybody basically said, "yes, and why didn't you do it years ago!" (Liz 1)

Two other candidates had been thinking about Reader ministry for a long time, but were now were able to pursue it because of early retirement, in fact one chose to retire early so that he could train to be a Reader. Two experienced an 'inner niggle' over a long period of time, and this came to the surface via a visiting preacher for one, and through a leaflet on a church table for the other, plus in both cases encouragement from other church members. Another student saw Reader ministry as a natural progression from the work he was already doing in church and parish and one student, following a change in family and business circumstances, found she was able, at last, to respond to pressure from family and friends to take this step towards Reader ministry. The candidate who saw Reader ministry as a natural progression from his present work was in many ways reflecting one of the reasons that Reader ministry was re-introduced in 1866, the legalising of an existing activity for the sake of the church.

> I just felt that it was appropriate, if you are in the Church of England, you should play by the rules ... The Reader is the legitimised bit of the congregation. Others are involved in different ways. (Mark 1)

From this it can be seen that for eight of the students their response was to an inner 'calling' developed over a period of time and for three the suggestion came from other people who must have identified something in the individual that pointed to Reader ministry.

However all the students spoke of a further motivation, awareness that a change in the church's ministry was now essential, and Reader ministry was a possible response to this need. Two students suggested that Reader ministry was necessary for the survival of the local churches.

> I can see that we are moving towards a situation in the Church of England, as in a lot of churches, where it is not going to be possible to provide the full range of services in all the parishes and the choice will then be either a lot of churches will close or be virtually redundant or Readers will have to take on more responsibilities. (Paul, 1)

> We are told that there will be a shortage of incumbents and so you (the Reader) will have to take on the role of a leader where there is no minister in that church. (Mary Rose, 1)

> He or she (The Reader) will be a continuing presence (in the church and community). (Tom 1)

From these responses, the reasons that had led the candidates to apply for Reader ministry training had four elements.

First there was the internal 'niggle' or the sense of 'being called' to a particular sphere of work, secondly there were external pressures from church or family, the third reason was that this step was seen as part of a personal development or journey, and finally there was pressure from the religious system, either with the candidate's experience of obvious needs in the local church or parish or an encounter with a more diffuse sense of uncertainty within the church which required addressing.

As the students described their reasoning prior to their application to start Reader training, they identified several of the themes that have already emerged in this study, including a response to needs in the church, the focussing of a sense of vocation or calling and the calling to a 'bridging ministry'.

> (the Reader) the halfway house between the clergy and the parish. (Victoria 1)
>
> We are middle people. (Abraham 1)

Going through all of this was the common thread of men and women applying to train as Readers because they recognized the need for learning, that is, if they were to be equipped to function at a ministerial leadership level in the church.
It was in the initial series of interviews that a description of the place of Readers in the church was given by Adrian as the 'territorials of the church' and by Abraham as the 'foot-soldiers of the church'. Both of these pointed to the area of my final conclusion about the place of the Reader in the Church.

THE SETTING

Although the willingness of the students to offer themselves for training was clear, it was not clear why the church in this particular diocese wanted more Readers.

In the year that the Cohort began training the staffing position in the diocese was – Stipendiary parochial clergy 127, Non-stipendiary ministers 13, Church Army evangelists 6 and Licensed Readers 108. (Diocesan sources)

With these ministers the diocese was staffing 161 parishes and 264 churches. In urban areas there was usually one Stipendiary Priest for every church whereas in the rural situation one clergyperson could have a responsibility for ten or more places of worship. Therefore in 2003 the diocese needed to have Readers in training if it was to keep the diocesan staffing at a viable level. There was also a national requirement for the diocese, as for all dioceses in the Church of England, that if it were to seek to develop Reader ministry then it would have to conform to a national criteria for initial Reader training as set out in 'Reader Ministry and Training – 2000 and beyond' published by the Archbishops' Council in 2000.

To consider the students' response to the course offered by the diocese it is essential to be aware that they were faced with an uncertain introduction. In the 15 years prior to the 2003 course the diocese had moved from a course dependent on essays, local tutors and the candidate's incumbent to distance learning with a theological college, and the development of skills and formation tutored by the local incumbent, plus a six month placement.

In 1999 the diocese changed to using a local university college for the provision of the academic work. Eventually this connection was dropped because the diocesan training staff thought that the University's thematic approach to the material was not appropriate for those training to be Readers, and the students found this approach very difficult.

In February 2003 those responsible for Reader training in the diocese met and agreed that the formal taught academic content would be put on hold for one year whilst alternative courses were researched, resourced and discussed, and there was also an underlying concern which led to the suggestion that 'the ethos of the diocese with regard to lay ministry, and Reader ministry in particular, might need examining'. There is no evidence that this suggestion was followed up although some work on this came from the Moderation Report of 2003 and from a letter the Cohort sent to the bishop in 2005.

The Student Cohort entered the training scheme in the autumn of 2003. The students were offered the opportunity to delay their academic training for one year, or to continue with sessions organised by the diocese, which was the scheme they opted for. It can be argued that the delay in the provision of a course was not simply about time to consider available possibilities but also reflected the lack of a clear understanding of the task expected of Readers, and therefore the nature of the training and knowledge required.

The response by a student to a staff presentation at the residential meeting for the Cohort at the beginning of their course supports this latter interpretation.

> Well there have been times when I have stood up in front of a class and I have had to wing it and so I can recognise it happening and I think that was happening. And so there was a lot of vague generalisation ... and not a lot of exactly where we are going next. (Mark1)

It was in this uncertain setting that the students began their studies and began their preparation for Reader Ministry.

ENGAGEMENT

Information about Reader ministry and training made available for a potential candidate, prior to his or her making an official application for training, varied across the dioceses. That available in the Cohort's diocese was limited in quantity, quality and information.

> ... there wasn't anything to read ...I didn't actually have any literature or anything. (Magda 1)

> I got something from the Warden who sent me some very sketchy outline information, maybe two sides of A4 about what a Reader is. (Mark 1)

Some students however obtained information about Reader Ministry from Licensed Readers in their own or neighbouring churches, and at least two surfed the net in order to discover what other dioceses were offering, and what was on the national Readers' web site. There was an obvious variation between dioceses in what they offered to potential candidates for Reader ministry, and I would suggest that in the Cohort's diocese the lack of readily available information reflected the peripheral place accorded to Reader ministry at that time.

Whether the students had received information or not prior to starting on the training course, the first interviews revealed that they all felt that they were applying to train for a specific ministry and role within the church.

> ...obviously you have been given (as a Reader) an authority to take services and to preach within the Church of England structures; that is important, that you are given that authority. (Liz 1)

The 11 members of the Cohort attended a residential selection conference[54] held in April 2003, and during the course of the conference the uncertain situation with regard to training was explained to them with the assurance that they would have a course of training in their first year and then they would join an established course in their second year. In response to this uncertainty the candidates expressed concern, but their comments indicated that their wish to enter training depended on personal motivation and on a perceived need in the local and wider church and this meant that they were prepared to live with this uncertainty.

This suggests a theme that is picked up elsewhere in this study, namely that whilst the organized church may be perceived as ambivalent in its approach to Reader ministry and its place in the church, candidates, students and licensed Readers were clear that they had a job to do for the church at that time. One of the significant strengths that Readers bring to the ministry of the church is the ability to live and work with uncertainty and ambivalence, an important strength that I will further develop as a major theme in this study.

In the first set of interviews I asked for the students' reflections on this opening conference. All of the candidates thought that the meeting with others who were taking the same step was important.

[54] The conference was held from Friday evening to Saturday afternoon in a Roman Catholic Conference Centre, chaired by the Chairperson of the Diocesan Readers Council, a Reader, who was also a Diocesan Training Advisor and the Acting Warden for Readers and the conference was staffed by a senior Reader in the diocese, an independent lay person and a diocesan representative who was also the moderator for Reader training. Each applicant had an interview with each of the three staff members who took individual and separate responsibility for specific areas within the guidelines for selection produced by the Advisory Board of Ministry (ABM 1998) and updated in 2003 (see Appendix Six).

I was very nervous as I think the others in the group were. I was delighted; I think the most rewarding part of the conference was to meet the others. (Magda,1).

I understood this response as the first step in the formation of a group identity which during the course became important in the provision of mutual support and in the establishment of the individual's Reader identity.

The candidates also discovered and tentatively explored the differences between the north and the south of the diocese, urban and rural parishes, large and small churches and the variety of their educational backgrounds.

> Some people could not believe that we could run a church with only half a dozen to a dozen worshippers. (Abraham, 1)
>
> ...they can read books and they can understand, but I've got all these experiences as well. I haven't got mine from books, I've got mine from living, living life.' (Mary Rose, 1)

At one level this showed that the Cohort could be seen as representative of the variety of parishes that make up the Church of England, with the consequent breadth of ministry that is required. It also provided an example of contiguity, raising, amongst other issues, the question of course content and delivery for students who would have to minister in widely different situations and who possessed a variety of educational qualifications.

The uncertainty about the future of the course which faced the candidates sprang from a lack of clarity about the task of the Readers within this particular diocese. Against this lack of clarity the response of the men and women at the conference suggested that they each had a sense that in some way Reader ministry was important for the church and that they had a part to play in this ministry.

In these early stages of the three year training course I suggest that there was evidence for the ambivalence of the church towards Reader ministry and of a commitment by lay church members to engage in training that would enable them to answer ministry needs in the church. The candidates also they showed a willingness to work with uncertainty.

As a result of the Selection Conference all 11 candidates were selected for training.

DELIVERY AND EXPERIENCE OVER THREE YEARS

The course offered by the diocese changed in content and delivery over the 3 years, and the experience of the students in this period of time moved from dissatisfaction to acceptance. The course that a diocese provides for Reader training is based on criteria approved by the bishops, and is subject to five-yearly moderation by the ministry division of the Archbishop's Council, with interim assessments by the national moderators' team. The diocesan bishop receives the moderators' report with its recommendations, and it is his decision alone whether or not these are accepted and implemented.

Year One – uncertainty

The 'home-grown' course provided by the diocese for the first year was a mixture of short courses and lectures. The students found this initial year extremely difficult and they described the course as, 'so bad, frustrating, silly, cobbled together' and their experience was that they 'were disappointed, had been strung along' and 'came away with nothing'. As they looked back in the third year their memories remained the same. 'The first year was very much a mish-mash, it was a bit of a drag ... it did not seem to be going anywhere ... there didn't seem to be a plan, it was disturbingly hard, disturbingly unstructured and left us in quite a distraught state.'[55] Alongside this expressed dissatisfaction with the course I observed in this first year a response that suggested a move from an awareness of personal differences to a growing sense of mutual support and an affirmation of one another.

> It has been a big eye-opener meeting other people from other parishes because you tend to think that a lot of churches are like yours whereas obviously it is not the case with the rural, urban divide and also in terms of church size. (Victoria 1)
>
> We get on well and look to each other for support and for lifts to the meetings. We have different levels of ability but it is great, there is an honesty and we can say – " I'm sorry I don't understand" (Abraham 1)

[55] First-year comments from Magda, Liz, Mary-Rose, Paul, Abraham, Ailsa, Tom and Victoria and third – year comments from Victoria, Craig and Magda

Despite the dissatisfaction with the delivery and content of the first year of the course, none of the students attempted to leave. I discerned three possible reasons for this commitment. The first was the investment by the students of their time and to a certain extent their finances, and an investment in them as individuals by their home parishes who (in most cases) had proposed them for this work. Then there was the challenge of moving into the unknown (for most of them) across the lay – clergy areas of knowledge and practice. Finally there was the recognition of the need in the church for Readers, as parishes were amalgamated and church attendance fell, and clergy found themselves stretched as they tried to cope with their work load.

At this stage in the training, I interpreted these dynamics as the commitment to Reader Ministry by the diocese being outweighed by that of the students. This could be seen as mirroring some of the dynamics of the re-introduction of Reader ministry in the 19th century, when in certain areas the church only committed itself to Reader ministry because of the prior active commitment of many laymen. It must also be noted that these were not young students lacking in experience, but mature adult men and women, with considerable experience both secular and church-wise, in fact a number had served as churchwardens in their parishes, and their understanding of the problems facing the church at this time must be recognised as carrying the same validity as that of the course staff.

The end of this first year saw a more settled provision by the diocese, with tutors and course content to which the students felt able to relate and respond. A clergyperson was also appointed with a dual responsibility of a parish and the initial training of Reader students in the diocese.

At the end of the first year the two who were 'fast-tracked' had mixed feelings about their 'tailor-made' courses. They thought that what had been provided had been limited and not very well thought out.

> As far as the actual year of training is concerned, it was of little value, but I regard it as a discipline, so I did not resent turning up. (Adrian 2)

> ... from my own point of view, it is now a case of doing a lot of private study of my own outside the course in order to build up that knowledge which one needs if you are to preach and teach with confidence. (Paul 1)

Both of these students were accepted as having adequate theological qualifications but for their one-year course Adrian was asked to attend a limited number of the tutorials organised for the remainder of the Cohort and Paul had opportunities to preach and have his sermons assessed. Both were provided with some individual tutorials on liturgy. My understanding of Adrian and Paul's experience is that they were provided with a limited learning package that focussed on the Reader as a worship leader. Although this is a major part of the Reader's ministry it is only a part of his or her total ministry. As previously indicated no work was done on either Paul's future ministry in one of the church's cathedrals or on Adrian's then and future ministry in a large school as teacher and chaplain. I suggest that this limited view again reflected the uncertainty in the diocese about the place of the Reader in its ministry provision.

Year Two – problems of delivery

The second year of training was delivered to two groups, one in the rural end of the diocese and the other in the more populated end. The delivery of the course became more regulated under the initial training officer, through the use of academic material from an ecumenical clergy training course, together with the contribution of experienced tutors.

However the voiced experience of the students in the interviews of this year was that they were being asked to engage with something not designed for their needs, and which required knowledge of theological language and thought forms as yet outside their experience.

> They came up with this new course, and when, and I say we, because as a group we took it on board and we were horrified. (Mary Rose, 2)

The experience of the whole Cohort in the first part of this second year was negative, they found the organization and administration terrible, and they felt that no one seemed to care. They thought the course was far too academic, and far above the ability and experience of the group, and even the tutors did not really understand what the course was all about. The whole course was coming at such speed that 'it's just really glancing off you' and the effect was that they felt de-motivated, and some, ones 'least expected to crumble', were in tears. One student felt that the course was pushing them into being vicars rather than Readers, and another that there was a gulf between the course and the ministry they were being trained for.[56] No evidence was offered of the course leaders identifying, energising and using the experience and qualifications of the students.

According to all of the interviewees, it was this dissatisfaction that led to a letter being sent in April from the 'urban group' to the appropriate diocesan officers, expressing the confusion detailed above. In response, those responsible for the course altered the format of the sessions, changed an essay title and offered the students half an hour to discuss their letter at a training day. I was given to understand that the students were not satisfied with this response, and so a letter from the combined urban and rural groups was written and sent to the bishop. The letter carried the students' concern about the content and delivery of the course.

As a result of this letter the bishop met with students and staff in June and from the evidence provided by the students this proved to be a pivotal meeting. A new director for Initial Reader training was appointed who was also an experienced Reader with educational qualifications, and it was agreed to use the foundation degree modules of a local university for academic input, with the diocese meeting formational and practical needs.

From the description of this process, I was given to understand that the initiative that led to the diocese decisively engaging with the problem of Reader training came from the students, lay members of the church. The perception of the students was that up

[56] These second year comments came from Magda, Liz, Mark, Victoria and Tom

to the point of the meeting with the bishop, the church leadership in the diocese was willing to allow the situation to continue in its uncertain state with Reader ministry and training on the periphery of diocesan ministry provision. It is possible that the diocesan leadership was unaware of the seriousness of the situation, as seen by the students, but as soon as the letter was received by the bishop action followed.

This response begs the question, 'that if this interpretation of the sequence of events is correct why was the diocesan leadership unaware of the problems surrounding Reader education?'

One explanation could be that up to the time of this letter Reader training had been allowed to continue in the background in the care of a line of competent clergy. The students who made up this Cohort manifested a dynamic approach to their ministry, furthermore they indicated in the interviews that they expected to be adequately and professionally taught and by raising this issue with the bishop they had put it before the person who was responsible for all ministry in the diocese. There may also have been a hidden but unconscious agenda of an unwillingness by the diocesan leadership to address the issue of what specific task and role the students were eventually expected to address and adopt.

The experience of the students expressed so far in this chapter indicates a lack of engagement in depth with Reader ministry by the church leadership but it also confirms the commitment of the students to Reader ministry as something that is important both to themselves as individuals and to the church, locally and in general.

Year Three – clarification

The final year therefore started with both staff and students having a clearer view of their respective tasks. Four comments from the students, towards the end of the third year, illustrate the change in their feelings about the course,

> I think this year has worked for most people (Liz 3)
> the teaching has been a lot more substantial (Mark 3)
> it (year-three) has been challenging at times but not out of reach (Victoria 3)

> this year I think we have all really enjoyed, there has been some good teaching and consequently some good learning (Craig 3)

The only reservation, expressed by a number of the students, was the size of the class for the foundation degree modules and the knowledge that these modules were not primarily designed for Readers. However several students felt that there was value in meeting and interchanging ideas with those who were considering ordination and with others who were simply interested in faith issues and the academic background to religion. A consequence of the larger class size, noted by some students, was the absence of the support and encouragement of the small group.

The pattern for the end of the second year or the beginning of the third year in previous courses and in the courses that followed this one was for the student to go on a placement for several weeks in another church different from his or her home church in its setting and churchmanship. The response from those on such placements has been positive and their importance bears out the findings of Billett. (2002 pp. 3,8)

> ... rather than suggesting canonical knowledge provides a basis for extending the reach of vocational practice, there is a need to account for some of the range of situational manifestations of the vocational practice. That is, a focus on practice, rather than just the skilful use of individuals' cognitive experienced. ... instruction or deliberate interventions to assist learning might be ideally directed to furnishing the kinds of experiences that will permit practise in different instances of the vocation to be learnt.

The placement was not referred to in any way by the members of the Cohort, and my assumption is that the problems faced in delivering the course meant that the training staff was unable to facilitate this particular aspect of the course.

The experiences of year two had made very clear the uncertain place of Reader ministry in the structures of the church in this diocese, particularly through the problems experienced in the course content and delivery, i.e. for what were the students being trained? The change resulting from the bishop's intervention suggests that prior to that point the place of Readers and their training did not hold a very high place within the structures and thinking of the diocese, and from the available evidence I must note that even after this intervention, and the improvement in the

course delivery, the place of Reader ministry remained undefined. My understanding of the Cohort's experience of the course provided by the diocese is that it reflected and confirmed the ambivalent attitude of the church in this diocese to Reader ministry, an ambivalence expressed through diocesan structures, thinking and organisation. The evidence of the moderation reports and my own experience working in other dioceses is that the experiences of this particular Cohort resonate with those of other dioceses.

DISCOVERING IDENTITY

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines identity as, 'The quality or condition of being a specified person or thing.' The quality or condition of being a specified person, a Reader, is something that could be observed developing for the Cohort through the three years of the course.

This development in identity was the result of the interaction of the students within the Cohort, with other Readers, with the course content and delivery, with incumbents, with the 'official' C of E, with home communities and with home churches. This mixture and effect of mixed contributions is one that is recognised by those engaged in qualitative research.

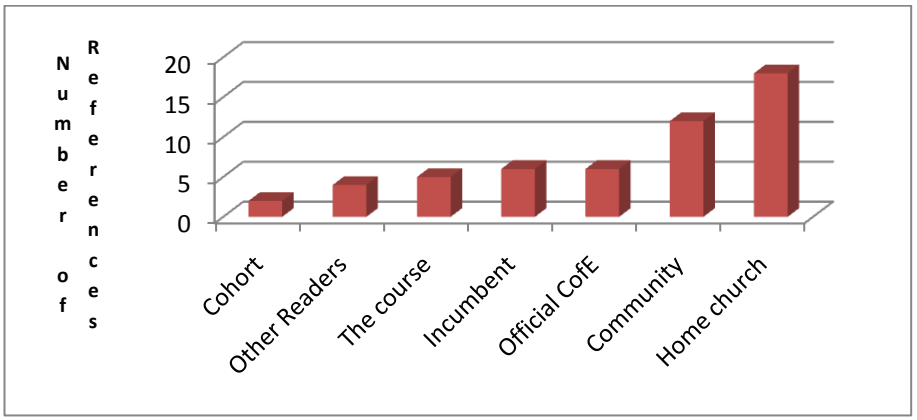
> ... the narration of selves and personal identity in institutional context is mediated by both official and unofficial structures and contingencies. (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2008 p. 254)

Hesse-Biber and Leavey also recognise that social movements can abet and sponsor identity work. (Ibid p. 254) To interpret this, in the setting of the Cohort interviews, meant the recognition of the changing place of the church in society as a possible factor in the development of Reader Identity. To have developed this further at this stage would have necessitated the examination of theological, church and social movements at a level beyond the parameters of this thesis.

My exploration of Reader identity was part of the analysis of the interviews in all three years and the final picture was based on the 53 contributions from the students that were directly associated with their discovery of identity, usually in a positive

mode but occasionally in a negative one. The following chart compares various contributions to the formation of identity.

Influences on Reader identity:



The weighting in this chart shows that that the students discovered their identity as potential Readers primarily from other people, either in their home church or in the community, in other words from the people to whom they ministered.

This chart only represents those particular occasions when the student recognized that Reader ministry was more than just a job and that he or she was taking on a special identity in the church and in the community. However I would contend that the Reader formation actually took place slowly and quietly through the influence of a number of sources

Consideration is now given to these sources and I have grouped them under three areas, 1) Group awareness, 2) Clergy input and 3) Church expectations and community responses.

The Cohort: group awareness

The group was, in the experience of the students, very important to each individual. In the first year the students met as one group, in the second year for most of the lectures they met in two groups, one in the more rural area and one in a

suburban/urban situation and for the third year they came together but joined a much larger group for lectures at the university.

As the first year progressed, and members of the Cohort got to know one another, they sensed the need for more time to develop as a group.

> ... we actually asked the lecturer last week for some time last night, we needed some time to talk because we never had time to talk as a group and it seems to me that that is an absolute –to talk about how they are going on and to share experiences. (Craig 1)

The group become increasingly important to the students in the second year as they grappled with a course which demanded a great deal from the students. The word most frequently used to describe what the Cohort or group offered in this second year was 'support'.

> The good news was that as a group ... we got to know one another well, we got on with each other, and there was a strong sort of group support, sort of Dunkirk spirit. (Mark 2)
>
> I thin**k** the real positive over everything else would be the way we supported each other as a group, because it's been such a traumatic time and so difficult and I think when you face difficulties as a group of people it brings you closer together and you support each other more and more. (Craig 2)

Brookfield writes of adult cognition as a dimension of Lifelong Learning.

> As adults speak of their own critical process they attest to the importance of their belonging to an emotionally sustaining peer learning community – a group of colleagues who were also experiencing dissonance, reinterpreting their practice, challenging old assumptions and falling foul of conservative forces ... it is not surprising to hear adults speak of the store they placed on their membership in a peer support group. (Brookfield 2003 p. 17)

It was in this year that, as previously described, because of dissatisfaction with the course and distress caused to some members, the urban and suburban section of the Cohort wrote to the warden of Readers expressing their concern about the delivery and expectations of the course and then, at a later date and with the rural group, they wrote to the bishop communicating their continued unhappiness with the course. They were able to take these steps, because by this time they could speak as a group of student Readers, with its own identity, rather than as a gathering of individuals.

The lack of organization within the diocese and the commitment of the students' raised the question, 'are individuals recruited as Readers because of a national and diocesan need in the church or as a response to personal or local convictions and decisions?'

The evidence offered in chapter two was that the Office of Reader was introduced in the past as an answer to specific needs in the church and that in the 20th century Readers remained as a resource to be called upon should a need again arise, as it did in both World Wars; in the meantime Readers were allowed to continue as assistants to the clergy. However the increase in numbers of men and women coming forward to train as Readers and the sense of identity amongst themselves, as evidenced by this Cohort, suggests a different approach, namely that the laity of the church may themselves have become aware of a need in the church that had not been fully appreciated by the church's leadership. This suggestion was supported by the reasons offered by the students for their seeking training, and by the breadth of work undertaken by Readers described in chapter three.

In the cameo of Reader training and ministry presented by the Cohort we therefore see illustrated three of the themes of this study, the ambivalence and uncertainty of the church about Reader ministry, men and women willing to offer themselves for service as Readers and Readers proving to be resource for the church, although the need may have been identified by the Readers themselves rather than by the church leadership.

The cohesion and the identity of the Cohort were further strengthened in the third year.

> ...there was a huge amount of peer learning, virtually relied on it in some ways ... people felt able to open and express an opinion knowing that they were not going to be shot down. (Craig 3)
>
> ...it's (the cohort) formed very close bonds and you realise that you can all get together and agree to differ or whatever. (Abraham 3)

The Cohort working as a group was supportive of its individual members, and provided a learning environment, but I would contend that the most important piece

of work that resulted from its sense of identity was the dialogue with the diocese which led to an improved training scheme.

It was clear from the involvement of the bishop that the importance of the place of Reader ministry in the ministry of the diocese had been recognized, but the interviews gave no indication of any attempt to explore or clarify the task for which the students were being prepared. Lacking evidence I can only suggest three possible reasons for this lack of clarity. The first is that there was a lack of knowledge about what Readers could or could not do, secondly, to actually identify the task of Readers in today's church would have raised questions about the lay/clergy divide and thirdly, the church was not interested in Reader ministry because there was no nationally recognised need that might require the mobilisation of Readers as in the 16th and 19th centuries.

Clergy input

Although I have indicated on several occasions in this study, a possible unwillingness in the church leadership to explore the Reader-clergy interaction, it was this interaction that was used by the students to explore the identity of Reader ministry. Before pursuing this further it is important to clarify the clergy-student Reader relationship.

The relationship between the clergy and a student Reader differs from that between the clergy and a Licensed Reader. In the former case the clergy provide part of the 'learning package', but after Licensing the Reader stands with the clergy as Episcopally appointed and canonically recognised, and as part of the ministry team in a parish, or as a representative of the church in a chaplaincy role in a variety of secular and religious institutions. Therefore the relationship between the student Reader and the clergy produced, in the interviews, a picture of how student Reader, clergyperson and Reader perceived one another and hence provided an indication of the possible place of the Reader in the church.

The students had opportunity for contact with a number of clergy. The course staff included clergy, and the students would have had contact with clergy in their own churches and deanery. Every member of the Cohort would also have had the written agreement of her or his incumbent before applying for training. This last requirement may have resulted in the non-involvement of clergy who were not happy with the concept of Readers, because they would see no point in recommending a member of their congregation for training. One student had experience of this.

> ... the vicar made absolutely clear he had no time for Readers at all, he did not see any point in them. (Adrian 3)

In this case, because of the incumbent's unwillingness to recommend an applicant for training, the diocese linked this student with an incumbent who recognised and valued Reader ministry.

Because there were clergy who were not interested in Reader ministry, my view of the total Reader-clergy picture within this diocese was limited. Although this does not negate the value of the available material, it has to be recognised that I was working with a only a partial view of the Reader-clergy relationship because, as the survey showed, there were clergy in the church who either were not interested in Reader ministry or who rejected its validity.

The clergyperson most directly involved in the clergy-Reader relationship was the incumbent of the student. Their relationship followed a four stage process; initially the candidate would have discussed his or her thoughts about Reader ministry with the incumbent, and he or she, together with the church's PCC would have recommended the candidate to the Warden of Readers then, for the majority of courses used in the Church of England, each student's incumbent would be expected to take on a responsibility for much of the practical, formational and liturgical training of the student; in the final year of a course a working agreement would be drawn up between the student Reader and the incumbent outlining future work and responsibilities; and finally the Reader would be licensed to his or her incumbent, although licenses varied from diocese to diocese (chapter three).

This four-stage pattern was followed in the Cohort's diocese, and the incumbents of all the students were expected to take on an educative role. Annual training sessions for clergy with Reader students were provided by the diocese although there was never a 100 percent attendance at these sessions, and there was evidence that some of the incumbents were unsure of their role.

> I don't think my incumbent knew what he had to do with me, because the course has been so higgledy piggledy, and he hasn't been involved in learning what he is doing. (Mary Rose 1)
>
> ... the poor incumbents don't know what is expected. If they haven't had a Reader before they don't really know what is expected so they cannot really give you that kind of support, you know. They are learning alongside you, in fact in some ways we know more than they do. (Craig 1)

The experience of the Cohort with the clergy varied from very positive, with the incumbent meeting regularly with the student and providing opportunities for learning and for reflecting on her or his work and experience, to a situation where the incumbent did not want to know anything about the student's course and where there were no opportunities for meetings or for practical experience. In this latter case the diocese made arrangements for the student to have the support of another incumbent and of a senior Licensed Reader.

One student found in her first year that she was already being treated as part of the multi-church ministry team of clergy and Readers but she realised that she was fortunate.

> The Rector has great faith in me, he just leaves me to get on so I have nobody to say, "is this right, is that right, am I alright doing this, can I say that, can I say this?" ... talking to the other Readers on the course, they have not had the opportunity that I have had. (Ailsa 1)

Another student, in her second year, did not have such a positive experience.

> ...I don't really get any guidance from our vicar. When I hear how others are meeting with their vicar and doing all sorts of things, but he does not come when I am taking a service and preaching ... He will let me do as many evensongs as I like because he likes to go off. (Magda, 2)

The problems about academic pressure that were present in the second year led to some students asking, "who is this course designed for?"

> the teaching is aimed for vicars and ordinands rather than for the ordinary sort of Readers. We are constantly told that we are not vicars and ordinands, we are Readers which is different. Nobody goes too deeply into the difference. (Abraham 2)

Here the student had picked up the apparent reluctance to address the distinctive tasks and roles the diocese wished clergy, and Readers, to take on. Although clergy and Reader training was being discussed nationally whilst the Cohort was in training I saw no evidence that this debate had filtered down to diocesan level.

In the third year the Cohort looked forward to standing alongside the clergy as Licensed Readers and generally there was a noticeable change in the perception of the Reader-clergy relationship. The students and their incumbents were expected to discuss the drawing up of a working agreement, and although most incumbents and students approached this as a serious matter, there were those who did not. In one case the discussion amounted to a very short interview in which the incumbent went through the form ticking or crossing out items that he had decided the student would or would not be doing once Licenced.

In this final year two students faced problems in their relationship with their incumbents. In any parish where Readers were part of the ministry team those interviewing a potential new incumbent made certain that he or she would be willing to work with the Reader(s). This however did not preclude a different approach to Reader ministry from the new incumbent and one of the students discovered this, having had an excellent working and study pattern with the previous incumbent, she found that it was different with the new priest.

> ... it's been a bit tricky really, in fact I have had to request meetings but it always seems to be on a very practical level about what's happening and when, rather than having much time for reflection, a bit difficult really. (Victoria 3)

The second student was working with a new incumbent, who he felt kept his distance from the church members.

> ... I don't feel a particularly strong kinship with the vicar in the day to day ... So in this situation there is a distance between the vicar and the church so I feel more strongly called to the parish and a certain loyalty to the good old CofE in the broader field. (Mark 3)

These Reader-clergy relationship difficulties may have been inevitable because the Readers were, and are, the permanent persons in a parish and congregation and clergy are 'transient incomers'. At the same time this reflected a deeper problem that, whereas in the church the relationship between incumbents and curates was taken seriously by diocesan officers, that between clergy and Readers was left to chance, unless there was a very serious problem to be dealt with. Furthermore whatever the working agreement, the role of the Reader in a church was, and is, entirely dependent on the incumbent's interpretation of that role.

> ... it does not seem fair that we have done 3 years and we are at the behest of an incumbent, if they don't want us, they don't use us. (Mary Rose 3)

My understanding, from papers produced in the Cohort's diocese, is that this problem is being addressed, with the Warden for Readers actively engaged in educating clergy and parishes about Reader ministry and its present and potential role in the work of the church.

This consideration of the clergy-Reader relationship as experienced by the Cohort was one more piece of evidence at the local level that pointed to the uncertain place of the Reader in the church. It is also possible that this may have reflected an uncertainty about the task of the church experienced by many of the clergy themselves.

Church expectations and community response

Generally the members of the Cohort spoke of experiencing a positive response towards their taking the step of Reader candidature and training, even to the extent expressed by one parishioner.

> ... because our incumbent is due to retire next April, this chap said, "well we don't really need anyone, we have got you." (Abraham 3)

One student had to write a regular article about his training for the parish magazine, several had to make regular reports to their PCCs, and most found that people from the church and the community wanted regular updates on the progress of the

training, including the atheist friends of two of the students. They were all looking forward to the licensing of the students when they could then take up their role as a Reader in church and community. The only student who did not experience this support, was in a parish where the incumbent very rarely referred to her training or future role, either personally or at church meetings. But again on the positive side many of the students were being looked at in a new way by church members.

> ... if there is anything on the television about religion, then I am the person on the spot who will be called to answer, in a gentle way no doubt, but nevertheless I am to a certain extent expected to give a view. (Abraham 2)

However the comments from the students suggested that there was a lack of clarity in the perception and experience of the role of the clergy and the Reader in the parish, as evidenced by Abraham's quotation above, which suggested that the parish did not need an ordained person if the Reader was present. I would suggest that this echoes the lack of clarity around role and task definition within the wider church. The anecdotal evidence for this is the number of times Readers, and student Readers, have spoken to me about members of the congregation, leaving a service they have conducted and saying, 'thank you vicar for the service/sermon'. However in this final year the bridge concept of Reader ministry had become part of the student's understanding of his or her identity, but it was an understanding that brought with it a fresh sense of responsibility within the church.

> I see it (Reader ministry) as a liaison I think between the Laity and the Priest, a privileged position. (Magda 3)

> ...I'm in a different position than I was in before I started the Reader training, but I am finding that people are coming to me with various issues ... so often they glibly say, "oh, you're halfway between the parish and the clergy." (Victoria 3)

Therefore, as the student Reader moved on to be a Licensed Reader, he or she was confirmed in his or her ministry by the local community, but it was a confirmation that at times could show a lack of awareness by individuals of the complementary roles of priest and Reader.

This separation from their previous place, simply as a lay member of a church and community, was of concern to all those interviewed. They experienced this change,

to a lesser or greater degree, as a move into a lonely place, where they were no longer just a worshipper or church member, but neither were they ordained with all that meant in terms of real and ascribed authority, knowledge and skills. It was a change in role that had made itself felt over the full three years, and therefore was something that the students 'grew into' and that was ascribed to them rather than something that they deliberately sought. However the Cohort recognised this as a privileged position which had to be used with great care and wisdom.

FROM STUDENT TO PRACTITIONER

As the students looked forward to their licensing they considered their future work. They accepted the work outlined in the working agreement between incumbent and Reader, which for most included preaching, teaching, leading worship and pastoral ministry, and for some work in schools and with young people and baptism and confirmation preparation, but they also looked forward and saw themselves taking on greater responsibilities.

> I think Reader Ministry has shifted to become a more important facet of the church's life; I think they have realised that they are going to have to perhaps rely much more on Readers to take the brunt of the loss of clergy and everything else. (Magda 3)
>
> In the rural community the Readers are going to be left holding the church together to a large extent. (Victoria 3)

These two comments represent the thoughts expressed by all the members of the Cohort, who were individually aware of the problems the church faces, particularly those of staffing and of communication. In the history chapter I showed that in the past Reader ministry has been used to meet specific needs in the life of the church and here, at this point in time, the Cohort appeared to be saying that there was once again an identifiable need that could be met by Readers. Against this I have no evidence that the church, through its councils and hierarchy, recognises Reader ministry as a resource ready to be deployed to meet present concerns. I suggest that there are possible reasons for this lack of recognition by the church of Readers as a resource, and I have briefly outlined these reasons below, because they throw light on the response of the Cohort, although the consideration of the questions that may arise from these explanations lies outside the bounds of this study.

First, the church is experiencing difficulty in accepting changes in its role and in identifying its place in the nation at this time and therefore there is no clear picture of how Readers could be used. Secondly the ontological difference between the ordained person and the theologically informed, liturgically skilled, but lay, Reader raises questions about the traditional balance between lay and ordained. Thirdly, the consideration of the lay-ordained relationship then raises theological and pragmatic questions about the nature of the church itself.

These underlying questions could be seen as 'rocking the boat' at a time when the church is living with uncertainty. They supply a reason for not delving too deeply into the existence and activities of Readers and added to this is the possibility of the avoidance of the underlying question of where authority lies in the church. Is it solely with the bishops, or is it found with laity, clergy and bishops in synod, or is it in the hearts and minds of individuals as they experience a call to serve God? This latter question encapsulates a conflict between the individual and the institution that has been expressed in different ways throughout the history of the church and of society. I suggest that the balance between individual and institutional identification of need and personal vocation is exposed today by the evidence that many lay men and women are offering for service in the church in answer to an inner call rather than to an appeal from the institutional church. Many of those responding to this inner call go on to enter Reader Ministry.

This was confirmed in the interviews. When I raised the question of the student's authority in ministry with the Cohort, none of the students saw it as depending on the bishop but a number saw it as coming from their own awareness of God and others from the consent of the local church membership. Again there are echoes of the re-introduction of Reader ministry in the 19th century when lay church members were actively involved in teaching, preaching and pastoral work without Episcopal authority. The students certainly made me aware of the strength of their feelings about the reality of needs in the church which could, and would have to be, met by Readers.

As they looked to the future the students were also conscious of moving into a 'bridge ministry', a description which has already occurred with some frequency in this study.

Within their first year most of the students became aware of holding a place between the clergy, the church and the community. The comments of 3 of the students illustrate this.

> The priest is set apart ... as Readers we are 'middle people' (Magda 1)
>
> ... the Reader is part of the congregation but also part of the clergy (Abraham 1)
>
> ... you have got a foot in both camps. (Ailsa 1)

In the second year, as church members became more aware of the course the students were pursuing and saw them participating in the leading of liturgy and heard them preaching, the students further confirmed their awareness of their in-between role.

> The regular workers who are in secular employment ... they can be preaching the gospel in all sorts of everyday ways. (Adrian, 2)
>
> I just feel that the reader is obviously part way between, the link almost between the parishioner and the ordained minister. (Victoria 2)

At the same time some of the students were aware that there was a feeling that they were second-class substitutes for the clergy.

> A bishop was there and someone said, "it's an open secret that we (Readers) are used as a source of cheap labour', and he (the bishop) said, "there's no secret about it." (Adrian, 2)
>
> I always thought of a Reader as being part of the congregation and part of the church ... available to the people and someone who can work in cooperation with the clergy, not instead of; because we are not cheap vicars. (Ailsa, 2)

In the third year the bridge concept of Reader ministry was further confirmed and seen as a privilege, but bringing with it some problems.

> I found that there was recognition of the fact that I'm in a different position than I was in before I started the Reader training, but I am finding that people are coming to me with various issues ... so often they glibly say, "oh, you're halfway between the parish and the clergy". I can very much feel that now and think it is quite difficult sometimes just discerning how to handle the information. (Victoria, 3)

> Well I am very much looked on as the church (the responsible incumbent lives in another village) ... so my being sort of on the spot at the church every week and involved with the pastoral team, people are ringing me as a sort of an in-between. (Ailsa, 3)

This bridging role could be no more than the result of the lack of clergy in the community and the greater visibility of the Reader, or it could also be the legacy of clergy viewed as a different species, who have little knowledge of 'the real world' and at this time are unclear as to their place in society. (Percy 2006, p 163) I consider that both of these reasons contribute to the putting of the Reader in this place in church and community, but 'the Reader as a bridge' is such a consistent description that I suggest that this in-between role and function is thought and felt to be necessary for the church at this time. However the evidence provided by the Cohort is that this 'bridging role' is seen as important more by those entering into Reader ministry, and by church and community members, than by those with responsibility for the development and structuring of the ministry of the church.

SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

At the induction conference held in September 2003 for those students selected in the previous April, the students were faced with uncertainty about the training course, and therefore about the task and role for which they were being prepared. Nevertheless the sense of vocation or call held by the students at that stage remained strong, and they saw themselves as eventually taking on an important job in the church. Over the period of the three years it was observable that this conviction of a vocation was strengthened despite the students' dissatisfaction with the first two years of the course.

The changes in the content and presentation of the course presented problems to both staff and students, and there was no satisfactory solution until the meeting of the students with the bishop. From that point, education for Reader ministry in the diocese appeared to take on a more stable structure and effective delivery. The fact that until that meeting the bishop appeared not to have been aware of the depth of the problems faced in the educational section of Reader ministry suggests that Reader ministry was peripheral to the ministerial policy of the diocese, again pointing to the uncertain or ambivalent place of Reader ministry in the church.

This meeting with the bishop was the culmination of a growth in the cohesiveness of the group and it strengthened the sense of calling in its members. The group as a supportive, affirming and learning body proved to be very important to all of the members of the Cohort.

When the students talked about their perception of their future role as a Reader, they re-affirmed the priority of their personal vocation and showed an awareness of the needs of the local and the wider church. The students identified the importance of Reader ministry in responding to these needs and they felt that they were being trained to be part of an essential ministerial resource. Over the three years the students also discovered that they were being asked to exercise a bridge ministry in their local churches and communities and they considered this to be a further important aspect of their ministry and one that would be of continuing significance after Licensing.

Although there might be a lack of certainty about the role of the Reader in the institutional church, at ground level the students revealed an understanding of their future role and place in the church.

Interwoven through all the interviews was the question of identity. What is the identity of the Reader? This was examined from a variety of angles and although no clear answers came out, it was possible to build up an identity which members of the Cohort were prepared to work with, which was that of an authorized ministry within a diocese fulfilling a liturgical, preaching, teaching and pastoral role in and for the church, and also exercising a bridging ministry in the community. At the same time the student Readers showed that they were prepared to live with the ambivalence of the church towards Reader ministry.

The consideration of the relationship of the students and the clergy showed a varied picture across the parishes, with some clergy unwilling to take on the required

training role. The interviews indicated that the relationship of students and clergy reflected the uncertainty that some clergy have about Reader ministry.[57]

Another interesting window into this clerical uncertainty can be found in Pearce's examination of the possibility for problems between a paid employee and a volunteer both working in the same organization.

> The tension that can exist between volunteer and employee co-workers remains one of the unpleasant secrets of non-profit organizations... ... volunteers and employees, by the very nature of their different relationship to the organization, tend to undermine each other's legitimacy. Employees have higher professional and expertise based status while undermining the legitimacy for volunteer "sacrifice" by taking salaries for their work. Volunteers give themselves to the organization, yet undermine the professionalism of employees... ... relations are more successful when volunteers become more employee-like. (Pearce 1993 p. 177)

The handling of the difficulties arising from the delivery of the course, at the beginning of the Cohort's training, could be understood in Pearce's terms by seeing the volunteer students giving themselves to the organisation, whilst those organising the course were seeking to keep to a certain standard of professionalism. It should be noted that the difficulties in the course were eventually resolved when those responsible for the delivery of the training were Licensed Readers and volunteers themselves, whereas previously the delivery of the training had been in the hands of clergy.

As has already been suggested, this could be explored at much greater depth with a full examination of the theology of priesthood and of laity, and of the nature of ministry today. Also the role of the volunteer in organisations would provide an important field of research in itself in the church setting. However these topics can

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[57] Over 20 years ago Carr picked up some of this uncertainty or ambivalence – '...it (Reader ministry) seems to become a repository for anxieties about the ordering of ministry in general. The discussions on whether readers should be deacons or lay, about their relationship with the non-stipendiary ministry, questions about their administering the sacraments – all seem to suggest that this ministry is used as a sump into which unresolved questions may be poured.' (Carr 1985, p.110)

The suggestion that Reader ministry is used 'as a sump' is referred to in the Introduction to the thesis, page 10.

only be touched upon as possible contributory factors, amongst others, to the problems presented by the uncertain place of Reader ministry in the church at this time.[58].

During the three years of the course it was the local church, and in some cases the wider community, which appeared to contribute most to the Readers' sense of identity. They were ascribed with a role and with an identity even whilst still a student, and certainly in the rural situation they were accorded a representational role. For some of the students, their identity and the identity of the Reader is that of someone who represents the church and the faith that lies behind it, both within the church and in local community, and for two of the students, within their work situation. Identity as a practising Lay Theologian was also seen to have some credence, although some of the students were wary of being regarded as a theologian.

At the beginning of this chapter I showed that the diocese had a need for Reader ministry, but at the same time there was no evidence of an overall policy about the place of Readers within the ministry of the diocese. Although there were significant changes in the course over the three years of the Cohort's training, there was no evidence of a resulting distinct policy for Reader ministry within this diocese.
Apart from a few exceptions, this also was the picture presented in the diocesan responses to the national questionnaire that I sent out (Chapter Three) and supports the thesis that the Church of England is ambivalent in its understanding and use of Reader ministry. However I do not see this ambivalence as a negative stance, because it is possible that it reflects a reality within the institution of the Church of England, and in its place in the life of the country. This can be explained crudely as, the church

[58] Kendall, J and Knapp, M. 1996. *The Voluntary Sector in the UK.* Manchester: Manchester University Press. p1 '... religion has remained at the heart of much voluntary action'. In their mapping of voluntary work Kendall and Knapp do not address the question of volunteers working within an employing institution, ie the TA, Special Constables or Readers. Pearce, J. 1993 p. 177, previously quoted, and Russell reflect on the full-time, part-time issue, '... no professional can view with equanimity the implication that its functions can be adequately performed either on a part-time basis or as a hobby.' (Russell 1989 pp. 286,287) Many of the books on volunteering are specific to areas of interest, eg tourism, sport, major events, youth work, museums, charity organisations, but I am unaware of any books that address voluntary work in a church setting.

holds continuity when the context is about change; holds community when the context is the individual; and lives with uncertainty when the context is the pressure for attainable clarity. This given holding role puts pressure on the total church, which leads it to identify itself as an institution that can hold within itself these tensions. I suggest that the church has handled this by investing this given role, primarily into the group of church members who are experienced as between the clergy and the laity, and who live and work in both the ecclesiastical and secular worlds, namely Readers.

Despite the above summary, it could be argued that this chapter is simply an expanded description of the experiences of a Cohort of students through the three years of their training, and it could be seen, as I have already suggested, as an account of their experiencing and responding to many of the issues that all students face. Whilst agreeing that the student Readers held much in common with all students, I would argue that they were in a special position because throughout their course they were part of and were being prepared to work within a complex and ambivalent relationship within and on the boundary of the institution of the church.

Although writing in general terms about the process of learning Hodkinson (2007 p. 1) makes a point that suggests one of the factors that made the learning process one of difficulty for the Student Cohort. He writes that 'The recognition that outcomes develop throughout any learning experience means that we have to rethink the relationship between learning outcomes and learning processes.' (Hodkinson 2007 p. 18) My understanding is that this reflects one of the causes of the difficulties the cohort faced during the three years of their Reader Training Course. Attention was not paid to the relationship between learning processes and learning outcomes because of an uncertainty about the required outcomes and the failure to address the outcomes that the students had identified.

However my contention is that the importance of this chapter is that it reveals something of the dynamics that are defining the ministry of the church at this time and it provides an insight into the place of the Reader in this present church and his or her possible place in the future church. The evidence presented in the first year by

the students was that there was uncertainty in the management, content and delivery of the course, and the course staff members were left to handle this without any clear direction until, in the second year, the bishop responded to a letter from the students and the course took on a new and positive direction.

This process clearly reflected the peripheral position held by Readers in the ministerial and mission strategy of the diocese, together with a lack of clarity about the task for which the students were being prepared. Against this the students, who, it is important to recognize, were all adult mature church members, clearly identified staffing, communication and leadership needs in the church prior to and during their training. The students were prepared to have a part in the response to these needs, even if it meant living with the uncertainty of their task, and accepting the ambivalent attitude of the church to Reader ministry, almost as an undisclosed part of their job description.

This chapter therefore points to the possibility that the ambivalence of the church towards Reader ministry, whatever its source, is not something that requires a dramatic change, but it is a reality that should be accepted. It is reflected in the role and task that Readers are being asked to take on at any time, as men and women who can live with uncertainty, and who are ready to respond at the local level to whatever ministerial and community needs might arise.

Some of these findings are 'tested' in the chapter that follows as I describe interviews conducted with a number of men and women who each had a long experience of authorized lay ministry.

CHAPTER SIX

TESTING THE THEMES

The history of Reader Ministry, the survey of Wardens and Directors of Training, the longitudinal Cohort study and the consideration of the research questions in each chapter, produced evidence which led me to several conclusions. The first of these was that the Church of England used Readers as a resource when faced with specific needs, leading to the recognition of the episodic role of Readers in the ongoing life of the church. Secondly, because of the clear legal, historical and praxis division built into the Church of England between clergy and laity, the church experienced difficulty in placing Reader Ministry in its structures and theology when there was no pressing need. Thirdly lay men and women exhibited a commitment which resulted in their willingness to train and serve as Readers, often with an unclear status in an uncertain environment. The basic theme that is emerging in this thesis is the need for the Reader to live with uncertainty because his or her task is to be able to respond to any need, irrespective of whether it was identified by the church leadership or by the Reader himself or herself.

To test these conclusions outside the main research areas, I interviewed six Readers and three Clergy with an interest in Reader training and ministry, a process advised by Luker, 'to see if your theoretical insights hold up'. (Luker 2008 p. 104) This was not a scientific sampling of opinions but a series of meetings with individuals who represented a wide range of Reader involvement. I chose the interviewees because they had between them a broad experience of Reader ministry and they were all placed within comparatively easy reach of the centre of my work.

I also received several letters and emails from Readers following the publication in 'The Reader' magazine of a summary of the responses to the Survey Questionnaire and I have taken note of this correspondence here, as in the survey chapter.

The individual interviewees are identified by initials -

Clergy:

Anglican priest, also an academic	ca
Methodist Minister, tutor for Methodist Local Preacher Courses[59] and a minister in an Anglican Cathedral	cm
Anglican Priest, office-holder in the College of Readers - (Readers opposed to the ordination of women priests)	cw

Readers:

University lecturer	ra
Academic, also a diocesan Reader ministry officer	rao
Reader working part-time in a rural benefice and part-time as a stipendiary prison chaplain	rc
Ex-national moderator	rm
Reader, still employed in business and with 'Permission to Officiate'	rp
Diocesan Warden for Readers	rw
Correspondents: References and quotations from mail or email correspondents.	cor

The interviews and correspondence covered a variety of areas of concern, of experience and of reflection. I coded the interview responses under four headings.

1. Reader Relationships: clergy, church leaders, church members, the community.
2. Being a Reader.
3. Reader education and training.
4. Individual commitment.

[59] Local Preacher – Methodist equivalent of the Anglican Reader, but ministry more restricted to preaching, teaching and the conduct of worship. The majority of services in the Methodist church are conducted by Local Preachers, particularly in rural areas.

READER RELATIONSHIPS

The Clergy

This was the area on which most of the interviewees concentrated, and in doing so confirmed my understanding that the church finds it difficult to engage with the clergy-lay divide.

One interviewee drew attention to the physical division between the priest and the Reader in the recent past, 'Readers were kept in their place, we sat outside the Sanctuary.'(ra) The same interviewee picked up the clergy perception of the 'second-class' place of the Reader.

> There are good relations with clergy but at meetings there is the assumption that, because Readers are laity, they are therefore less informed and the clergy feel that they have to explain ideas to them. (ra)

The Reader who experienced this response has a degree in theology and is now researching a doctorate. There were also references to Readers being underused, disillusioned, taken for granted and wondering why they went through all this training when no notice was taken of their viewpoint. (ra, rao, rm, rc, ca, cor)

Two possible explanations were offered for the sometimes negative response of clergy to Readers, the first was that clergy felt threatened by Readers (ca, ra, rm) and the second was that clergy simply did not know what Reader ministry was about (rw). The Reader as a threat to the clergy was thought to be because Readers performed a number of functions previously the prerogative of the clergy and sometimes the Reader was better qualified theologically and academically than the priest. Another interviewee perceived the uncertainty about the place of Readers in the church to be primarily a 'clergy thing' where the clergy were concerned about how Readers fitted into a theology of ministry, whereas the Readers 'just got on with the job required', although she said that there was a great commitment to their lay status.(rm) Two interviewees suggested that Readers and Local Preachers were 'becoming clericalised', (ra and cm) an interpretation that appeared to arise from the Readers

and Local Preachers perception of themselves and their acceptance of the role attributed to them by their congregations.

A further contributory factor in this suggested 'clericalisation' could be the difficulty of maintaining the bridge position between the clergy and the laity and the pull to accept the clerical designation. A confirmation of this suggestion was the creation of an Episcopally sponsored structure for Readers opposed to the ordination of women to the Priesthood, equivalent to that which existed for priests, rather than leave the Readers to respond as lay members of a church congregation.(cw) It was also suggested that the increase of authorized lay ministries other than Readers and the increase in NSMs and OLMs, all unpaid workers in the church, led to a further blurring of the lay-clergy division. (rm)

The apparent division between lay and clerical, focussed on the Reader, again raises historical and theological questions about the church, priesthood and ministry which are beyond the scope of this study, except to identify it as a prime cause for the ambivalence of the church to the place of Readers in the church. I suggest that this uncertain background to Reader ministry within the whole church was a major factor behind the observation of one Reviewee.

> In the recent books published on the Anglican church and ministry there is no mention of Readers. (ca)

This was a fact to which I drew attention in chapter one.

This same interviewee in an email he sent in response to the Reader article saw this uncertain area of laity and priesthood as a sign of the validity of Reader ministry.

> You needed quite a thick skin to be a Reader (still do but to a lesser extent) and could be 'put down' by both clergy and congregations. However, that always struck me as a sign of the validity of Reader ministry, as it challenged preconceptions on both sides, concern for status (as opposed to function) from some clergy and a 'Father knows best' dependence by many laity. (cor)

My understanding of this problem, as it is emerging in this thesis, is that it is primarily a clergy problem which can hinder the work of the Reader and of the local church. It can only be addressed by the conscious incorporation of Reader ministry into

diocesan strategies and structures, so that the complementary roles of laity, Readers and clergy can be fully explored and used in the ministry of the church, although, as I have already suggested the role of the Reader might be to live with uncertainty and ambivalence, for the sake of the church.

These interviews confirmed the problematic issue of the lay-Reader-clergy relationship, already identified in this study as of major significance in the consideration of the place of the Reader in the Church.

Church Leaders

I asked those I interviewed for their experience of any awareness of Readers, as a corporate body, shown by the bishops and church authorities in their own home dioceses. Most of the interviewees were unaware of any specific interest or awareness by diocesan leaders, but the ex-national moderator had worked with every diocesan bishop and in every diocese in the Church of England, and she described a very varied response. I have quoted her response in some detail because it highlights the importance of the diocesan bishop in determining the place of Reader Ministry in the Church of England.

> (Reader ministry)... there is an awareness in some quarters, not in others. Those who have experience of the Central Readers' Council (wardens, secretaries of Readers' Boards, some bishops) are strongly aware of it. ... Some bishops and senior clergy think that they know best and therefore have ignored a report (quinquennial moderation report) if they do not agree with it or if they are persuaded by a strong director of training to ignore it. ... but some bishops and directors of training are very committed to training. ... The root cause is that bishops do not have training about Readers ... They need to be told ... It's no wonder that they have little understanding of the great resource now available to them, nor the extent of training and the importance of continually improving it. (rm)

The variation between dioceses was also underlined by two responses to the magazine article. One diocese was commended for having a formal review process and many known routes for help, but, having moved into a new diocese another respondent had

> ..Just one contact with the Warden structure, one questionnaire in 10 years on what we thought of the way our Ministry was being exercised and no feedback from that single process. (cor)

The respondents, either through interview or the written word identified two major factors in the apparent uncertainty about the place of Reader ministry in the church; first its dependence on the attitude held and expressed in each diocese by its bishop and secondly the level of attention given in each diocese to its structures for Reader training, support and development.

My understanding of these responses is that the interviewees were confirming the ambivalence of the church towards Reader ministry and the lack of any effective and appropriate national strategy for Readers, but they also highlighted the vital role of the bishop in determining the place of the Reader in the church.

Church members

When I asked questions about the Reader in his or her church, the experience of those I interviewed was that Readers were marginalised in policy decision making in the parish but were seen as a resource for pastoral work and hospital visiting, and they introduced secular skills and understanding into the church's ministry. They were also seen as a lay role model within the church community and, in a rural setting, a Reader was often the 'persona' in a parish, leaving clergy to hold the oversight. (ca, ra) The Methodist minister in his reply echoed the response of the student cohort.

> I don't see the Local Preacher as seeing himself or herself very different (from other church members) but I suspect that the person in the pew would tend to look at the Local Preacher in the way they look at the minister... (cm)

These perceptions of the response of church members to Readers provide further evidence for my contention that Reader ministry blurs, or at least questions, the lay-clergy division. Church members appeared to have an understanding of their fellow lay members who are Readers as, in some ways, quasi-clergy and they were also aware that Readers were doing many jobs that were previously the sole responsibility of the clergy. The Reader was also identified as a 'bridge' in the church setting; for example one interviewee together with other Readers in their church, had identified 20 to 30 elderly church members who 'felt forgotten' by the church. These Readers

initiated a lunch club which, amongst other benefits of the scheme, re-integrated folk who had previously felt marginalised.

The community

One of the major reasons for re-introducing Reader ministry in the 19th century, was that Readers would be able to communicate more effectively with people outside and on the fringe of the church than could the clergy, (chapter two), and this 'bridge ministry' of the Reader is a concept that has occurred with some frequency in this study. My understanding of 'bridge ministry' is that it is has arisen because of a perceived lack of clarity about the place of the Reader in the church, is he or she still a layperson or is he or she now a sort of clergyperson? My experience and research show that Readers have no doubts that they are very definitely laypersons, but people in church and community respond to them as if they are akin to the clergy in some special way, and whilst this contributes to the blurring of the clergy-lay division it also provides an opportunity for the Reader to act as a bridge between clergy, church members and the community.

This particular group of interviewees and several of the respondents referred to this bridge ministry and saw the Reader as having a definite place in the community, being 'used more in the parish context and therefore less visible in church' (ra) and 'they (Local Preachers) are representatives of the church in the places where they live and work ... (they have) some theological insights' (cm); but they were not sure whether the place of the Reader in the community was appreciated by the church. ca asked 'Are Readers trained for or aware of their MSE (minister in secular employment) calling?' A correspondent wrote.

> Reader ministry being a 'bridge ministry' between the church and the world can only happen if it is allowed to happen. My training experience, indeed my post-training experience, is that there is little or no context for exploring different forms of church and allowing these bridges to be built. Indeed, training in mission and evangelism seems conspicuous by its absence in both dioceses (where he had worked). (cor)

These interviews produced an understanding of the Reader as someone who saw his or her primary ministry as being in the place of work or in the local community. The

picture given by the interviewees was of the Reader as someone who had an understanding of some of the dynamics of community and of the workplace and was able to share and use insights from his or her theological, pastoral, communication and organisational training across the boundaries of church, community and workplace. This could be described as the Reader providing a bridge ministry in the various areas where he or she lived, worked and worshipped.

Some of the interviewees however reported resistance to this understanding, not from the community but from the church, where clergy may have been working with Readers who possessed a deeper understanding of the world than they possessed, but instead of recognizing this as a valuable resource in the church's work some clergy felt that their role was being usurped and their authority challenged. It is possible that developing the concept of MSE (Minister in Secular Employment), for both clergy and Readers, with its provision of a bridging ministry, may have been seen as a 'step too far' by those clergy who were unwilling to explore and examine priesthood and ministry in the contemporary situation, or who were very hesitant about this because of the changes that might then be required of their ministry. In another context I experienced direct evidence for this reluctance to recognise MSE for clergy when a clergyperson was appointed and licensed specifically as a Minister in Secular Employment, but his post in the Diocesan Directory was simply described as that of Curate in his home parish.

There was evidence that Readers themselves had no hesitation in acknowledging their work as MSE and those I interviewed for this section of the thesis drew my attention to those Readers who, on their own initiatives, moved into MSE.

> An undertaker who regards his work as his main ministry, a vet who takes his holiday in Mongolia teaching the herdsmen to look after their animals better and giving bible study tutorials to them at night, a businesswoman who set up a small business club during the recession to help small businesses to survive - all Readers. (rm)

This small group of experienced Readers and clergy powerfully underlined the bridge ministry understanding of the place of the Reader in the church, and identified him or her as a resource for the church within the contemporary world. However, although some Readers see their primary role in the workplace and many others see this as an

important part of their ministry I did not receive evidence to indicate that preparation for this work was included in any training scheme. I would suggest that this is a further example of a possible disjunction between the place accorded to Reader ministry by the church, and the exercise of this ministry by its practitioners. This could also be seen as the Reader being, perhaps inadvertently, ascribed an uncertain role by the church, but a valid role because, in many ways, it freed her or him to respond to specific and local needs in the community and workplace as they arose.

BEING A READER

The wide variety of approaches to Reader ministry and work that was part of the impetus for this study, was demonstrated clearly in this round of interviews and correspondence. There were situations where the Reader was underused.

> ...there is a greater lay participation in the services, readers of the lessons, Eucharistic assistants, and intercessors. Therefore the Reader has a limited role, he/she only preaches occasionally. (ra)

Or regularly used.

> We had three churches ... and some Sundays it was a case of getting in your car and chasing everybody about from one place to another. (rc)

Or given even more responsibility.

> The Archdeacon offered me the chance to run the church (in a neighbouring parish) with the help of visiting priests of course, and I had a wonderful 18 months. (cor)

And of being appreciated.

> 'bringing a lay perspective to preaching from a secular angle' (ca)

This variation can be contrasted with the work of the Methodist Local Preacher, where four or five of every seven services in the Methodist church are taken by Local Preachers(cm), and therefore there is a consistency in the use made of their ministry. This is relevant because nationally there is a move to link the training for Readers and Local Preachers as well as that for Anglican and Methodist ordinands.

The concept of the 'bridge' ministry was developed by the reviewees as possibly arising because of the boundary position of the Reader, as he or she met with and talked to both clergy and people, 'on the boundary and understanding of both, laity and clergy'. (ra) However the suggestion was made, by this same interviewee, that the Reader was often on the boundary because he or she was perceived as being 'clericalised laity'.

It is possible to dismiss this as of little importance because it simply arises from the fact that in the conduct of worship Readers wear almost the same 'uniform' as the clergy, take major sections of the liturgy, or sometimes the whole service, and engage in pastoral work and conduct funerals. It is not surprising that the boundary between Reader and clergy is barely discernable to many worshippers and members of the community. However the comments from this group of interviewees and respondents suggested that, for the clergy, the boundary between clergy and lay was very clear and both clergy and Readers saw the Reader as definitely lay.

The perceived uncertain Reader-clergy boundary may be part of the uncertain and ambivalent position in which Readers have to operate, if they are to hold the available and adaptable resource role which it appears the church is asking them to hold, but I would also suggest that it is a question of authority. For the church members and the community, the authority of the ministry of the Reader derives from his or her official church appointment, and the ability to respond to the task that they are asking of the Reader; from the clergy and Readers point of view their authority derives from their 'status' within the church and from the ontological difference between priest and people.

The secular slant on this argument emerged in the interviews with the Reader who was a prison chaplain, and who, in the secular environment of the prison, often had to act as a 'bridge' in her ministry as part of the prison chaplaincy team, where she worked alongside a full-time chaplain who was an Anglican priest, and the part-time chaplains, a Roman Catholic priest, Free Church minister, Salvation Army Officer, Muslim Imam and a Jewish Rabbi. On occasion the chaplains had to 'stand in' for one another when a crisis arose in the prison, and the chaplain would find himself or

herself acting as a temporary bridge between a prisoner and the chaplain of his particular faith. This same interviewee also threw further light on the secular understanding of the place of the Reader in the church. The application form for the post of a prison chaplain stated that, a person could only apply if he or she held a recognized position in their church, and for the Church of England this was defined as 'curate, Reader or a priest'. This is evidence at a formal level of the local 'placing' of the Reader as interchangeable with the clergy, an understanding which was also illustrated by the response of village and parish members to the Student Reader Cohort.

The developing picture of the Reader having to live with uncertainty was supported by the Reader academic who described the job of the Reader as 'to hold ambiguity, to hold ambivalence'.(ra) The clergy academic, looking to the future, suggested that Readers could be the personae in the parishes whilst the ordained clergy held the role of oversight and enablement. In fact this is already the situation in many rural areas and I would suggest that this is a realistic move in the direction of identifying the task of the Reader and of the clergy in the church of today.

READER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

One respondent had moved during training and his experience confirmed the variety of training available in the Church of England.

> An independent observer would be hard-put to recognise that both courses resulted in the same position in the Church of England. My feeling was that one course was more focussed on the 'raw material' of ministry (Old and New Testament, doctrine etc) without worrying too much about application while the other course concentrated on application without worrying too much about the raw material. Neither seemed fully satisfactory. (cor)

Despite this, as I have shown in chapter four, Reader training has developed since the training described by one correspondent and by a reviewee.

> In the 1970s I wrote three essays, attended a few meetings of local Readers, and was then admitted. (cor)

> I wrote 16 essays under a tutor. The incumbent had nothing to do with the training but was supportive. (ra)

This latter interviewee in an email responding to the Reader article made reference to these essays.

> I had studied theology for four years in my first degree and would have gained greater benefit in training from concentrating on less familiar areas such as pastoral theology and liturgy. It seemed rather arid to be writing similar essays to those I was setting for my 'O' and 'A' level students at the time. (ra)

These respondents and interviewees confirmed some of my conclusions in the brief history of Reader education (chapter four) and also confirmed the lack of congruence between the courses provided and the tasks on which Readers were to be engaged once they were licensed.

The clergy academic picked this up by asking whether an apprenticeship training scheme would not be more appropriate for Reader ministry, a suggestion that was also looked at in chapter four and considered alongside Lave and Wenger (1991). Although I have commented on the development of Reader education as a copy of that offered to clergy, an important difference does emerge after ordination for the clergy and admission for the Reader. The clergyperson moves into an apprentice type relationship with his or her incumbent, learning so that she or he can eventually take on a similar role; the Reader however has little opportunity to enter into a similar relationship with a senior Reader, but serves his or her apprenticeship period under the guidance of a clergyperson whose role he or she can never occupy.

The development in the training offered to Local Preachers in the Methodist Church also has changed over the years. At one time no academic qualifications were required but candidates were expected to engage in some form of study.

> ... (the student had to) cope with a course of study which was quite intensive. ... but I remember once years ago being asked to go and conduct an oral examination with a prospective Local Preacher who found great difficulty in putting his words down on paper. (the candidate passed.) (cm)

Today the examination system in the Methodist Church is designed nationally, delivered by the local circuit, and depends on continuous assessment, but as Readers

and Local Preachers train together there will have to be an exploration of the roles occupied by both in their respective churches and then the designing of courses which will answer the needs of both.

The incumbent of the student Reader has always been part of the training team, but it was clear from one response that this role was not always understood.

> ...it gets frustrating when a paid worker never has time for a volunteer. I encouraged the incumbents to give proper feedback for work done, and to be willing to give some time to the planning. (rw)

However this same interviewee thought that clergy with student Readers recognised that they have a role to play in the educational process, but it was clear that they were uncertain as to what this was, and they recognized the need for guidance and advice. I would suggest that this could mean that the clergy would also have to accept the possibility that they too had to live with uncertainty, and to be accessible and adaptable when faced with changing needs, that is if they were to be effective in enabling the Reader to fulfil his or her role in the parish and community.

The argument that I have put forward with some frequency in this study has been that the church is unclear about the task for which it is preparing the Reader students and this argument was supported by the response to these interviews and from the correspondence. Suggestions were made that APL/APEL and reflective practice should be used more, and consideration given to an apprenticeship scheme for Reader ministry. It was noted that 'lip service' is paid to the 'Reader in the community' but the training is church-based, and additional training is needed to equip student Readers for such roles as hospital chaplaincy. (ra, rao, rm, ca) One interviewee questioned whether Readers were being trained for, or even aware of their calling to 'ministry in secular employment' (MSE). (ca) The appointment of a Reader mentor to every student Reader in one diocese was seen by an interviewee as being of value for the personal development of each student. (cm) I would interpret this as a step in the direction of acknowledging that insights into Reader ministry might be more effectively provided by senior Readers than by the clergy.

Support was given for a further argument that is a major part of this thesis, namely that the church is unwilling to recognise and use Reader Ministry as a resource, unless there is a major crisis, a perception that was present in these interviews.

> There is a lack of awareness of the considerable training Readers now undertake ... a valuable resource is not being properly used. (rm)

INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENT

Individual commitment is something that I have noted in previous chapters, and an awareness of this was part and parcel of the observations made by some of the interviewees and respondents. Readers were described, as already quoted, as just wanting to 'get on with the job required' and they usually had a great commitment to their lay-status. (rm) 'I am also one of those Readers who are 'defiantly lay''. (cor) This could be seen simply as frustration with the lack of direction coming from the church, or it could be, as I have suggested elsewhere, that, at this time, it is the Readers in the local situation and holding a bridging role, who are able to identify and respond to local and sometimes wider needs, thus releasing the church leaders to engage with the major issues facing the church at this time.

CONCLUSION

These few interviews, and this limited correspondence, confirmed my argument that although the Church of England uses Readers as a resource when faced with specific needs, because of the clear division it holds between clergy and laity, it experiences difficulty in accommodating Reader Ministry in its organization and theology. Nevertheless there are many lay men and women who are willing to take liturgical, pastoral, educational and mission roles in the church, when required to do so, and are willing to receive the necessary training. Of greater significance in the search to discover the place of the Reader in the Church, is the developing picture of the Reader accepting that his or her place is to work in an uncertain and unpredictable situation, so that the wider church will be free to engage with the greater picture.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AN UPDATE

A major factor that led to this research into the place of the Reader in the Church of England was the variation in Reader training courses and in the practice of Reader ministry across the church, when compared with the common pattern of clergy training and ministry. This has now been recognised and in a report published in 2003 this disparity was recognized.

> ... a fault line... between pre-ordination training and other forms of adult learning in the Church – training for Reader and other lay ministries ... Initial training for ordination is nationally supervised ... (but) Reader and other lay training ... are basically a diocesan responsibility ... this provision is complicated and lacks coherence. It understandably leads to great local variation and quality of practice. (Archbishops' Council 2003 p. 16)

Another factor that has now been acknowledged is the 'bridging' function of the Reader between other laity, clergy and the wider secular society. This recognition was noted a report published in 2008.

> ... Firstly there are new opportunities on the boundary of the Church, as was the reason why Reader ministry was reintroduced in the 19th century. Secondly the future lies with putting to work the thorough theological training that Readers have in the tasks of lay education, and also in preaching and teaching which address the questions of daily life which exercise their fellow laity. Readers are uniquely qualified to bring the word of God into issues of working life, voluntary work, leisure and relationships. Thirdly where Readers have pastoral as well as catechetical gifts, there are opportunities for them to be given pastoral care of parish communities within benefices. (Archbishops' Council 2008b p. 3)

These two reports are arguably the most important publications relating to Reader ministry that have appeared in the first decade of the 21st century and many of the issues addressed reflect ones that have emerged in this study.

The first of these, *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church*, also known as *The Hind Report*, was the report of a working party commissioned by the Archbishops' Council to examine the structure and funding of ordination training, and published in March 2003; the second, *Reader Upbeat*, was published in 2008, and is the final report of the working group which was set up by the Archbishops' Council to review Reader ministry in response to a General Synod motion in 2006.

Both of these reports address a range of issues including those of human resources, financial pressures and recent developments in adult education. For example *The Hind Report* faced up to the difficulty of maintaining and staffing 23 colleges and courses for ordinands with a student membership between 12 and 88 for each college.

> ... we have looked at the key drivers of the costs ... the major impact of the cost of maintenance of ordinands, and their families, in college-type training; (Archbishops' Council 2003 p. 90) ...
>
> we assume a saving of 7.5% of administrative and academic costs through the creation of the regional training partnership (RTPs). (Ibid p. 93)
>
> While it is beyond the task set us to produce a full theology of Church and ministry, it is clear that our work needs to develop a theological approach that can elicit widespread assent in a Church that contains a diversity of approaches. (Ibid p. 14)

Initially concerned only with Ordinands, following a strong response to the interim report, the working party added formation to the previous narrow academic curriculum and also acknowledged Reader ministry as part of the ministerial provision of the church.

The second report, *Reader Upbeat* was the result of the initiative of an individual Reader, Mr Nigel Holmes, who was successful in introducing a private bill into the General Synod of the Church of England. The debate provided the first opportunity for many years for the church to be faced with the reality of the importance of Reader ministry, and to recognise the previously unacknowledged ambivalent attitude in the church to Readers and to Reader ministry.

> Readers have been taken for granted, and now they find themselves at the bottom of the pile in mission and ministry in this national Church ... (Readers and their ministry) should be within the structures and status of the Church of England, not on the fringes, not as an appendage, not as add-on when all else fails, but at the centre. (Archbishops' Council 2008b p. 11 quoting the Synod Debate of 2006)

These two reports show a church, in its hierarchy and in its membership, aware of a number of pressures to which it is seeking to respond. It could be argued that this is a case of an institution finding itself in a changed and threatened position in society, and dealing with this in the bureaucratic way of producing reports and making internal organizational adjustments. Whilst accepting that there is some justification

for this, my understanding is that these two reports represent a movement in the contemporary church that is both positive and creative, and for this I would cite the speed with which there has been a response to the recommendation from the *Hind* report to create 'Regional Training Partnerships' and the increasing responsibilities being taken on by Readers in parishes and in secular institutions.

The place of the Reader in these changes is not new. The present day context described in *The Hind Report* has something of the features facing the church in the 16th and 19th centuries. '... we have been encouraged to look from the perspective of the considerable challenges and possibilities facing the Church in the area of training in the early decades of the twenty-first century.' (Archbishops' Council 2003 p. 1) I assume that the challenges and possibilities referred to are wider than those presented by a changing educational methodology, but are those faced by the church as a whole, which will affect training in all its aspects. The challenges and possibilities that faced the church in the 16th and 19th centuries included those of staffing, lack of teaching, the need for stability, communication difficulties and threats to the existence of the church (see chapter two for the expansion of these). In both of these periods of time, part of the church's response to these challenges was the re-introduction of lay Reader ministry.

However there is a major difference between the present situation and that being presented in the 16th and in the 19th centuries, because in the 16th century many of the clergy were ill-educated and unable to teach effectively, and in the 19th century many of the clergy were drawn from a different social class than the major part of the population. Today all clergy have to reach a prescribed level of education, and the intake for clergy training is from all strata of society. Nevertheless the actual challenges to the church remain remarkably similar, and Readers now, in many areas, are part of the church's response to the destabilising factors that threaten the existence and work of the church.

Because of their importance for the contemporary scene and the 'mixed message' that is presented with respect to Reader ministry, there is value in looking in more detail at both reports. *The Hind Report* recognised that Readers and clergy have

many training needs in common. In support of this the agenda for the writers of the report included the consideration of co-ordinated provision of IME and CME for clergy and Readers. (Archbishops' Council 2003 p. 25) Nevertheless my reading of the report is that it still reflects a lack of clarity about the respective ministries of Readers and clergy. It is made clear that in terms of learning the clergy and Readers have much that they can share, but I have to query one statement.

> *We make proposals to provide high quality training for the clergy that will equip them to offer vibrant and collaborative spiritual leadership and to empower a vocationally motivated laity – and, thereby, to promote and serve God's mission in the world.* (Ibid p. 2 italics part of the text)

Whereas this clearly lays down a task that will govern the nature of the training offered to ordinands and clergy, I would suggest that this can be seen as inadvertently raising the question that 'because Readers are laity do they depend on being empowered by the clergy?' My understanding of Reader ministry is that, like the clergy, Readers are a trained and empowered body of men and women that also have the task of empowering other laity. I would suggest that this is a minor instant of what I believe can be described as, the 'subconscious ignoring' of Readers as part of the church's authorized and licensed ministry.

A major proposal in the report, already referred to, was the establishment of Regional Training Partnerships (RTPs). These, in their initial stages, facilitated the provision of better qualified tutors and in a number of cases a combined student body of Church of England and Methodist ordinands and student Readers. However one aspect of this was the moving of Reader ministry further in the direction of academic qualifications without asking the prior question of, 'what is the appropriate form of training for a Reader?'

The church engaged with the recommendations of this report through a number of Task Groups including one on Reader/Preacher training. The report of this Task Group was included in the follow up report to the Hind Report, *Shaping the Future, New patterns of training for lay and ordained*, published in 2006. This report considered the possibility of shared training with the Methodist Church and a training programme linked with universities or HE institutions, but it broadened the approach

to training. Although the academic content of any course was seen as basic, there was expected to be experiential input, the use of a variety of learning methods and recognition of previous experience and education (APL and APEL). My understanding of this report is that, although it acknowledged the place of Reader ministry within the church, very little work was done on the distinctive nature of this place, and therefore the training suggested could be described as an updated clerical model, rather than one appropriate for the task of the Reader in today's church. Also because Reader ministry remains under the aegis of each diocesan bishop, it is possible, and has already been observed, for a diocese to ignore, supplement or complement the training offered by the RTPs.

It can be argued that because this report was primarily concerned with the training of clergy it is unrealistic to expect any detailed work on Reader training. This is true to a certain degree but the report came to the point where it recognised the common factors in clerical and Reader ministry, and therefore saw the reality of sharing in some aspects of training. The task group on Reader/Preacher training, having accepted the common clerical/Reader/Preacher content moved on to consider more applicable forms of learning, which were particularly relevant to Readers and Local Preachers with their very broad educational and social intake.

The second report, *Reader Upbeat* produced 30 recommendations (Appendix Eight) and offered these, with accompanying Action Points to different sectors of the church's ministry;[60] the writers of the report sought to ensure that all sections of the church considered the report.

In its first nine recommendations the Report envisaged a developing ministry for Readers including 'Reader in charge of a Congregation' (Recommendation 6) and it distinguishes Reader ministry from 'the many burgeoning lay ministries in parishes and dioceses' (Recommendation 19).

[60] These sectors (clearly presented abstracts from the report) were addressed to; 1) Bishop, Diocese and Warden of Readers; 2) Deaneries; 3) Incumbents and Parishes; 4) Readers; 5) Regional Training Partnership; 6) The House of Bishops; 7) The Ministry Division or The Board of Education.

Recommendation 19 however also recommends that 'all lay workers licensed by the bishop are known as Licensed Lay Ministers' with a working sub-title that can then be added, eg Reader, Pastoral Assistant etc.. I suggest that this particular recommendation provides a way for the church to handle Reader ministry when it is no longer needed as an answer to a specific need, or when it raises uncomfortable questions about the lay-clergy division. The implementation of this recommendation could lead to Reader ministry being absorbed into a wider licensed lay ministry where the training provided would be less in both time and in theological input than that at present provided for Readers. It could also mean that the church would no longer be faced with the question of the lay-clerical divide, and Reader ministry would simply become part of a general lay provision for clergy support.

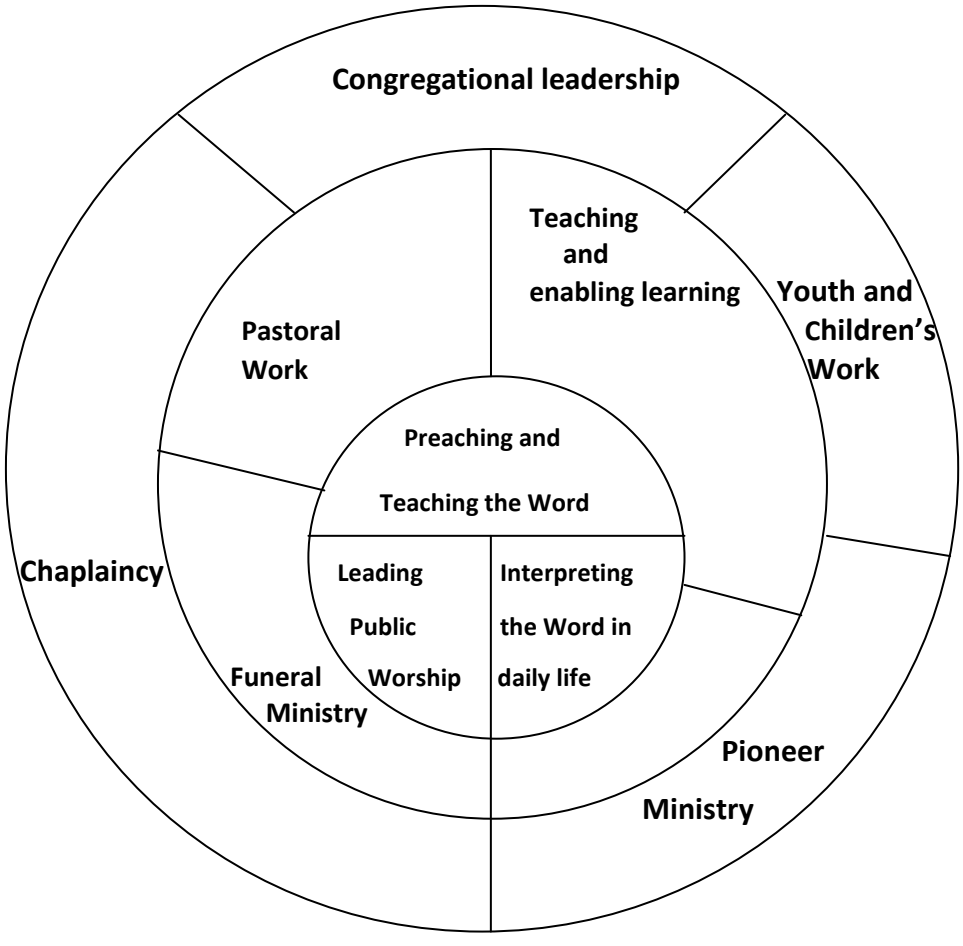
This possible absorbing of Reader ministry into a more general lay ministry ignores a number of differences between Reader ministry and other lay ministry. Although the Canon Law of the Church of England, which is part of the general law of England (Dale 1989 p. 1) allows the Ordination and Licensing of clergy (C1,3-15) the Admission and Licensing of Readers (E4-6) and the Admission and Licensing of Lay Workers (E7,8), it distinguishes between the Orders of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, the Office of Reader and the admission of a person as a lay worker. Clergy and Readers are subject to national criteria for training and ministry whereas lay workers are subject only to their respective diocesan bishops, with the exclusion of the Church Army which has its own accepted organization. Readers also claim a history of ministry in the church which goes back to the early years of the church.

I would suggest therefore that their history and canonical status places Readers in a special ministerial position in the Church of England and the absence of any reference to the unique position of the Reader in the recommendations of the report may possibly be associated with the church's unwillingness to face the theological and ontological dilemma presented by the place of the Reader in the church. This unwillingness, as I have already suggested, may be a major factor in the uncertain place of the Reader in the church and in the church's ambivalence to Reader ministry.

There is the further and more important reason for discounting this recommendation and that is that the Reader provides a nationally available, flexible and adaptable resource for the church and its leadership whenever needed, and therefore to allow Reader ministry to lose its unique position in the church and to become one amongst many lay ministries would be to lose this aspect of a major resource.

The working group that presented the report commissioned a survey which was distributed through "The Reader" magazine and posted on the Reader Website. There were 1057 completed questionnaires (825 from the magazine and 232 from the web) and about a tenth of the returned questionnaires from each source were randomly selected and analysed. These responses confirmed the responses given by wardens and directors of training in the survey detailed in chapter three of this study. Leading public worship, preaching, teaching and pastoral work headed the list of work undertaken by Readers but then there was 'a wide range of activities beyond the normal Reader activities of the parish which the respondents regarded as belonging to their ministry as a Reader.' (Archbishops' Council 2008b pp. 95,105)

The wider work of the Reader was illustrated in the report by the following diagram (Ibid p. 48)



This comprehensive illustration of Reader ministry shows that it is nearer to the ministry of the ordained person, in content and necessary training, than it is to the many other more prescribed ministries now being developed in the church.

The response to the questionnaire made it clear that there was still variation in the training offered by different dioceses but there was a more positive picture of this training than that noted in this study.

However an uncertainty about the place of the Reader in the church's ministry could be deduced from the negative responses to the effects of NSM and OLM ministries on the ministry of Readers and the equal number of positive and negative comments concerning the effects of other lay ministries. Over half of those responding were unable to comment on diocesan programmes to help them engage in collaborative ministry, and this may suggest a possible lack of communication between the diocese and the local Reader. A number of Readers reported difficulties when there was a change in incumbent, but a majority felt that their gifts were adequately used. One of the problems exposed in this thesis was the difficulty in using Readers as a resource by deploying them outside their home parish but the report states that 'Nearly all the Readers felt that they should be deployable outside their home parish.' (Ibid p. 102)

Over half of the Readers responding saw a positive role for Reader ministry in the future, summarised by one respondent as 'more important as ministers decrease' and just under half felt that there should be changes, including Readers becoming part of an Ordained Ministry. It could be that a primary cause of this aspiration was the desire to seek to resolve the sense of identity-loss which has arisen as Readers have felt squeezed by the upsurge of new ministries, both ordained and lay, and as opportunities for leadership of non-Eucharistic worship have declined.

When Readers were re-introduced in 1866, serious consideration had been given by the bishops to the idea of introducing a specific Order of Deacons (ordained persons) but they rejected this in favour of the creation of the lay office of Reader primarily because of the access to other laity by laity. I would suggest that the idea of Readers

being ordained may also indicate that, as well as clergy and parishioners having difficulty in distinguishing between trained and authorized clerical and lay ministry, Readers also may face the same confusion. A further interpretation of this is that it is possible that Reader ministry is no longer thought to be necessary for the fulfilment of the task of the church, but this possibility is not considered in the report, although I would argue that it is inherent in some of the recommendations. (Appendix Eight, 18, 19)

In *The Hind Report* (2005), *Shaping the Future* (2006) and *Reader Upbeat* (2008) training occupies an important place. In the 2006 report this was broadened by recommending that the training scheme be available for all church members, as well as for clergy and Readers, and at the same time, as indicated above, there was a clear move to take on board some modern educational thinking and to apply this to the learning process.

Both the 2006 and 2008 reports move to the broader picture of the place of the Reader who is definitely lay but who is expected to fulfil many functions previously those of the clergy. These reports reflect the developing situation where the Reader is regarded as the persona of the church (and possibly of faith) in a community, and in her or his ministry exercises a bridging and interpretive role between clergy, laity, the secular world and the church community.

The concept of a Reader as the persona in a church and community was supported in the *The Reader* Magazine by Canon Alan Amos, from a background of parish ministry and ordination training, who suggests that the Reader is now the 'person in place'.

> One of the strengths of Reader ministry in the Church of England is that often it goes along with long-term service in one place ...In the past it was incumbents who frequently spent the majority of their lives in one parish, and regarded this as a calling rather than a failure. They were then truly the parson, the 'person in place' ...Today, there is far more pressure on clergy to move on, and staying put may bring criticism. But Readers often outlast several incumbents ... (The Reader 2005 p. 13)

A further stage in the development of Reader ministry has been appointment of a Reader-in-Charge. Falkner in a thesis on lay ministry drew attention to one particular appointment in the North of the country.

> She (the Reader) is part-time, stipendiary, and of course lay. She fulfils most of the functions of a traditional incumbent, including leading non-eucharistic worship. She writes: 'As Reader-in-Charge, I see a positive influence through lay leadership ... I seem to be able to get alongside folk, without the formality and piety engendered with the dog collar.' (Falkner 2002 p. 219)

Falkner picks up the legal anomaly that whilst the Reader has charge of the parish a neighbouring priest has had to be appointed as 'priest-in-charge' and he, with about ten visiting clergy, covers the sacramental requirements of this particular parish. The Reader is the 'accepted leader of her congregation but she cannot preside at their Holy Communion but has to hand over at this key point to an outsider.' (Ibid p. 219)

CONCLUSION

Any 'update' of Reader ministry is likely to be out of date as soon as it is written because the church is in the ongoing process of responding to the reports considered above and, at the same time, evidence continues to emerge of Readers responding of their own volition to needs and opportunities at the local level within the church and within the wider secular community.

It could be argued that the lack of syncretization between the national process and the local praxis is simply a reflection of an institution which has no clear direction, with its differing parts creating their own programmes. However I would argue that the work resulting from these reports together with the independent initiatives at a local level is recognition by the church of the need to examine its ministry, and to formulate patterns that will be appropriate for the 21st century, and that will enable it to exercise within society a questioning and interpretive role.

Despite this positive interpretation of the reports I could discover no evidence that the church has defined the task for which it is preparing Readers, nor was there any in depth exploration of the nature of the resource they represented, nor of the implications of possible changes in the lay/Reader/clergy relationship. However what was evident in the reports, survey, discussions and meetings was the suggestion of a culture which acknowledged and recognized Readers publicly but ignored them in the

preparation of policies and the development of new structures. It appears almost as if the church is trapped into an ambivalent position in relation to Readers.

Nevertheless it is possible to consider this in another way; I understand that part of the task of the church is to live with uncertainty which requires of it a great flexibility and the ability to change. This may at times give a picture of a lack of direction but this is where I understand Reader ministry comes in. Readers represent a large percentage of the trained and authorized ministry of the Church of England and by their ability to provide a flexible, adaptable and available resource they not only free the church leadership to engage with change at the national level, they also provide a model for ministry for all members of the church. The further implication of this is that Readers, by the very nature of their place in the church, may have to continue to live with mixed and often limited recognition.

This conclusion to the 'Update' chapter addresses the first of my research questions which asked 'What is the significance of the changing relationship of the Reader and Reader ministry with the Church of England's national, local and theological position over time?' The significance is that, yes there remain unresolved issues of clergy-lay relationships, but the changing relationship of Reader and church is the inevitable result of the church being true to its task of living with and through uncertainty and the Readers' ministerial resource role varying in syncretization with this.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Before moving to the summary and conclusions of this thesis I must express a deep sense of gratitude to a number of authors whose writings provided both historical and contemporary information about Readers. In particular I acknowledge my dependence on the major input into the description and exercise of Reader ministry by Wordsworth (1901), Williams (1932, 1934), King (1973), Martineau (1970), Hiscox (1991), Usher (1999) and Khurt and Nappin (2002).

The research and insights of these authors, together with that of many others whose published works I consulted, provided the background which enabled me to move on into new areas of study. The result of this further work is that this study provides a fresh understanding of Reader ministry.

An important aspect of the thesis is that I was able to gather into one place much of the available, but widely dispersed, historical information relating to Readers and Reader ministry. This descriptive information exposed the non-sequential episodic nature of Reader ministry through time and the continuing and adaptable commitment of individual Readers. I have described the result of the combination of these two factors as the fluidity of Reader Ministry.

Further to the historical description of Reader ministry I moved on to new ground as I explored the inter-relationship of Readers, church and society. This produced a fresh understanding of the unique nature of Reader ministry. At an early stage of the exploration of this inter-relationship, I discovered that Readers and their ministry were and are sometimes denied or ignored by the church. I recognise and accept that any new understanding of Readers and Reader ministry may also be subject to a similar response.

During the course of the thesis a number of issues were raised and questions identified which I was only able to address in a superficial manner or simply note. These included the theology of the inter-relationship of priest and lay person, the

concept of the church as an institution within the wider society, the voluntary nature of church membership and ministry, authority in the church, a detailed examination of the role of the Reader within secular institutions, further research into the history of Readers and the consideration of the most suitable educational models for Reader ministry. Other issues were also touched on deliberately or inadvertently.

I recognise that many of these issues and questions have been addressed by individual writers and researchers but I suggest that they also represent potential areas open to further exploration and research.

One of these potential areas for further work, and one which bears directly on the understanding of Reader ministry, is that of authority in the church. It is the church that admits and authorizes the Reader and the legalities of the service make clear the accountability of the Reader to the Church of England and to the Diocesan Bishop. In the service the Reader candidate is admitted to be a Reader in the Church of God (i.e. the world church not just the Church of England). However the Student Cohort when asked individually where, once they had been admitted and Licensed as a Reader, did they see the source of their authority replied either 'God' or 'the local church' (p 214); neither bishops nor national church councils featured in any of the replies.

Percy (1998) writes about the report *Working as One Body*, also known as the *Turnbull Report.* (Archbishops' Council, 1996)

> It is interesting to note that the notion of the location of 'governing power' seems to have shifted from theologians to bishops, and wherever the main theological resourcing for the Church of England is coming from. Of course, this radically robs the plebs Dei of their right to power, since power is constantly concentrated, never dispersed. (Percy 1998 p. 130)

Recognizing the historical and etymological link between authority and power this suggestion of a shift in the location of governing power opens up the possibility that Readers have frequently by their presence, ministry and frequent 'bridging role' asserted the importance of the plebs Dei and their authority and 'right to power'. I would suggest that the authority held by the total lay membership of the church and the role of Readers in supporting and activating this offers an important further field for research.

THE SUMMARY

In the Introduction to this thesis, as I addressed what I understood to be the ill-defined place of the Reader in the Church of England, I formulated three questions which encapsulated the issues that were emerging. The first question was, 'what is the significance of the changing relationship of the Reader and Reader ministry with the Church of England's national, local and theological position over time?' Then I asked, 'what is the place of Reader education in this relationship; is it important and how far does it reflect the understanding of Reader ministry held by the church?' Finally, aware of the ongoing ministry of Readers I asked, 'what is the significance of the continuing commitment of Readers to their ministry within an uncertain and ambivalent setting?'

The consideration of these questions, as the research developed, led eventually to the recognition of the episodic, but non-sequential nature of Reader ministry and the fluidity of its progression in the life of committed men and women through time and in its present form. This progression, with the background awareness of the three research questions, links all the chapters of the thesis and leads to the conclusions spelt out in this chapter.

A search for literary sources, covered in chapter one, produced limited results. This raised the question at the beginning of the study as to why so little had been written about an authorized body of men (and later men and women) that played an important role in the church on several occasions, and at the time of writing represented a significant percentage of the church's active ministry. I suggested that one possible answer was that the existence of Readers raised questions about the clergy-lay divide and about authority, and that the church experienced difficulty in addressing these issues.

In chapter two I showed that Reader ministry had a varied history and I identified the non-sequential episodic nature of their place in the church. Readers, whilst remaining lay persons, were originally part of the ministerial provision of the church but then, as the church became more structured, they were ordained into a minor clerical order.

In England in both the 16th and 19th centuries, Readers were again lay and were used to provide an authorized ministerial resource when church and national needs arose. Once these needs had been met there was then no place for Readers in the structure of the church with its historic ministry of bishops, priests and deacons and they disappeared or took on a background role.

The pragmatic use of Readers is a significant factor in the Reader-church relationship, showing Readers being used as a resource when the church faced a crisis. However the disappearance of Readers or their relegation to a clergy-support role was also significant in that it showed the ambivalence of the church to Reader ministry. I suggested that this ambivalence could have its roots in the challenge Readers bring to a clear cut clergy-lay divide in the church.

When needed there appeared to be no problem in attracting Reader candidates. Readers themselves appeared to be clear about their roles, particularly that of being a bridge between clergy and other laity, church and community and church and society, with, in recent years, many Readers taking up roles as chaplains in secular institutions.

I concluded that the Reader, throughout the major part of the history of Reader ministry was seen as a willing, available and useful resource for the church, prepared to work in an uncertain and ambivalent church environment.

I also noted in this chapter that many parishes have little or no contact with Readers. Although Readers occupy a legally constituted and authorized Office in the church, their place in the church may not be recognized by many clergy and lay members. This possibly adds to the uncertainty of the place of the Reader in the church and to the ambivalence of the church leadership to Reader ministry.

The Survey that followed in chapter three provided evidence of variation in support from the church authorities. It also identified different training schemes, a lack of clarity about the task required of the Reader and varying job descriptions.

Uncertainty about the relation between Readers and other lay and clerical ministries was also exposed.

At the same time the survey confirmed my earlier statement that there were men and women willing to come forward for training and for ministry with a very definite commitment to the office of Reader. There was also further confirmation that Readers provided a readily available reserve of human resources and skills for the church. The wide variety of work undertaken by Readers, and detailed in the survey, supported this together with evidence that Readers were willing to explore fresh avenues of ministry in church and community, thus demonstrating a responsible flexibility.

My submission in this chapter was that the variation across the dioceses in training and support and the duplication of roles taken by Readers and clergy, showed a lack of clarity about the Reader's place in the church. The ambivalence of the church to Reader ministry and the flexibility of Readers in responding to need were noted particularly the provision of a 'bridge ministry' by Readers between the clergy and the church community and the church and the secular world. The possibility was beginning to emerge in this chapter that living with uncertainty was the natural state of both church and Reader.

Individual interviews with members of The Reader Student Cohort, chapters four and five, exposed the difficulties experienced by the church in defining the place of the Reader in the church and in establishing the task for which the Reader students were being prepared. This further supported my contention that the church was unclear about the place of Reader ministry in its structures and mission.

I also suggested that because the students frequently did not see their course as very different from that offered to those training for the ordained ministry, they had in fact identified the problem experienced by church leaders which was one of defining the task of the Reader. The description of Reader ministry by one student as 'a pale copy of the ordained ministry' appeared to confirm this. I suggested that the response to the second question I posed in the introduction concerning Reader education was that the education being offered to student Readers reflected the

ambivalent response of the church to Readers and Reader ministry, with little attempt to define task or learning outcomes.

This chapter also pointed to the possibility that the ambivalence shown by the church to Readers and Reader ministry is a reality that must be accepted, because part of the nature of the church and of Reader ministry is to live with uncertainty.

In chapter six, the consideration of the responses of the clergy and Readers that I interviewed or from whom I received correspondence further confirmed the themes of ambivalence and lack of clarity on the boundaries between the various ministries of the church. The responses outlined in this chapter also helped to underline the commitment of Readers and Student Readers to Reader ministry whilst living and working with the uncertainty of their place in the Church of England.

Chapter seven was an update chapter and in this contemporary look at Readers and Reader ministry most of the themes identified in this thesis appeared. I considered the possible conclusion to the update chapter was that it showed that the church was trapped in its ambivalence about Reader ministry. Further to this, despite seeking to grasp the implications of the need to respond to a changing society, the church was unable to examine what a major section of its authorized ministry that of the Licensed Readers, could contribute to its engagement with today's world.

However I drew a further conclusion to chapter seven and one that I believe to be more accurate. This was that if the task of the church is to live with uncertainty and to speak to uncertainty in the community then it will need to be flexible and to possess the ability to change and Readers could have a vital role to play in this. Readers, representing a large percentage of the trained and authorized ministry of the Church of England, by their ability to provide a flexible, adaptable, trained and available resource and at the same time to live with uncertainty can respond to needs as they arise or as they are identified by the church. In doing this they not only free the church leadership to engage with change at national level, they also provide a model for ministry for all members of the church.

From this I would see the significance of the changing relationship of Reader and church, which was the first question I posed in the Introduction, to be about the complementary roles of the organized, established church and Reader ministry, where Readers by their ability to live with and respond to uncertainty enable the church to be free to consider and respond to whatever uncertainty or challenge might arise – whenever. This possible conclusion is the one to which I believe this thesis has been leading and in the Conclusion that follows I spell out in six sections the building blocks of reasoning that have led to this.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions that can be drawn from this research, whilst not providing clear cut answers, address the questions that I posed at the beginning of this study. These questions were –

1. *What is the significance of the changing relationship of the Reader and Reader ministry with the Church of England's national, local and theological position over time?*

2. *What is the place of Reader education in this relationship; is it important and how far does it reflect the understanding of Reader ministry held by the church?*

3. *What is the significance of the continuing commitment of Readers to their ministry within an uncertain and ambivalent setting?*

The significance of the changing relationships between the Reader, the clergy and the church, question one, is spelt out in the first four sections below. The place of education in Reader ministry, question two, is clarified in section five. In section six the significance of the commitment of Readers and their willingness to work in an uncertain situation, question three, is addressed. These six sections lead to the final conclusion of this thesis.

1. I established that the Reader has his or her roots firmly placed in the beginning of the Christian Church together with bishops, priests and deacons, and is consequently a successor to the ministerial provision of the early church. The Reader therefore can claim an historical and distinctive place in the church, not to be

confused with either clerical or other lay forms of ministry. I also identified the ongoing difficulty that this distinctive place of the Reader was frequently not fully acknowledged in the Church of England and there was and is an accompanying reticence to face or explore the place and the task of the Reader in the church's ministry and mission.

2. Readers, I was able to show, were rediscovered, authorized and then used to enable the church make a pragmatic response to crises as they arose at the national level. When not needed as this resource, Readers were removed from the ministerial provision of the church, or moved into a support role for the clergy and for parishes. In this latter mode the recognition and use of Readers could vary according to the theological stance of clergy and bishops.

3. I found confirmed my understanding that the Reader frequently exercised a bridging position between priest and congregation, the church and the community, the religious and secular worlds. The recognition by many Readers of this bridging role as a major part of their vocation, was accepted and welcomed by church and community members, and acknowledged by some, but not all clergy.

4. I was able to establish that the ambivalent attitude to Readers, which I discovered to be a constant factor in the Reader-church relationship, arose primarily from the unwillingness of the church to address the theological and practical questions raised by Readers. These questions about the divide between clerical and lay ministry and about authority were exacerbated because Readers, particularly at times of crisis, ministered in areas previously the prerogative of the clergy.
The existence of Readers provides a challenge to the church to re-examine its theology and interpretation of priesthood and laity.

5. I recognized that the education and training of Readers depended on the expectations of the episcopacy and the laity of the church and that it varied over time. I worked on the assumption that the primary motivation for any form of education or training was to prepare the student for his or her future work. However I showed that, particularly in the period from the reintroduction of the Office of

Reader to the present, the delivery, content and depth of Reader education and training lacked consistency. This I equated with the difficulty I experienced in identifying the work for which the Reader was being prepared. There was a lack of a clear definition of the primary task of the training coupled with my perception that the church itself had no clear picture of the task for which it wished to train the Reader. This related directly to the lack of clarity and ambivalence in the church about the place of the Reader in its structures and ministry.

6. Despite the lack of clarity about Reader ministry in the church men and women are prepared to come forward as candidates for Reader ministry. My interpretation of the evidence offered is that vocation to Reader ministry in the church carries the same validity as of that of vocation to clerical ministry. One is not aping the other but they occupy complementary roles in the overall ministry of the church. The Reader's ministry carries with it in particular the ability to live with and to minister in uncertainty, providing an essential human resource for the church.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

My research into Reader ministry and the church focussed primarily on contextual and internal institutional behaviour but much of this behaviour was faith motivated, and has implications for an understanding of the Christian faith in history and in the present.

At the institutional level I assumed when I started the research for this thesis that I would be able to reach clarity about the place of the Reader in the Church of England, together with a clear definition of the identity of the Reader and an understanding of the educational requirements for the task of Reader. Instead I reached an understanding of the church's response to Readers which was one of ambivalence and ambiguity, I found the Reader's identity to be - available when needed, living with uncertainty and frequently invisible to the rest of the church, and education was a variable, and only occasionally, task orientated activity.

Much of this could be regarded as negative but it represents the reality that faith is not a tidy attribute that can be calibrated or put into boxes. Availability implies an uncertainty as to when and where needs may arise, invisibility suggests problems with status and ambivalence and ambiguity imply a variety of understandings, interpretations and outcomes for any one issue. I suggest however that uncertainty, ambivalence etc. reflect the true nature of the church of Christ in a changing world and the Reader is in the unique position of living and working in both the church and the inconsistent world. The Reader therefore finds himself or herself at the cutting edge of the Christian community as it seeks to live out its calling and its mission in the world.

The time line and chapter two made it clear that a major factor in the ongoing ministry of the Reader has been its episodic and non-sequential nature. This could be seen as the result of the pragmatic response of the church to changing circumstances, particularly when these challenged the church of the day. By mobilising suitable members of the church's laity the church leadership effectively responded to the challenge to the church's place and role in the nation.

I do not doubt that this particular dynamic was part of the reintroduction of Reader ministry but something of far more importance was happening in this process. The church, either consciously or subconsciously, was recognizing that God is not a tidy God and he does not organize the world for the benefit of his followers but allows challenges, needs and mistakes to happen with little warning. When these unexpected events or happenings have occurred the church, on occasion, instead of waiting for prolonged meetings and resolutions, has allowed itself to be guided by the Holy Spirit and responded rapidly, taking the risk of appointing lay church members as Readers.

When the challenge or need passed the church reverted to its old pattern of clear boundaries and a comfortable faith but then had to face the question, "What do we do with these Readers now we do not need them?" In the 16th century the answer was to allow Readers to gradually disappear but in the 19th century the answer was to

move Readers into liturgical, and occasionally pastoral, authorized roles as lay assistants to the local incumbent.

The flexibility and the willingness to cross what were previously inviolate boundaries in the reintroduction of lay Reader ministry led to ambivalence and ambiguity in the ranks of the church leadership. It was nevertheless a recognition that there are times when the church is called by God to minister to men and women in a new way even if it contradicts people's expectation of the established church as a body that always keeps within fixed and safe boundaries.

Because Readers can be used and are willing to be available in this episodic fashion they provide a special expression of ministry for the church being actively located within the organized church and at the same time firmly set in the world with its mixture of faiths and no faith. The Reader is therefore inevitably in the forefront of the church's mission.

The mission of the church as it responds to the changing needs of the world depends on its members answering the call to mission, whether that call comes inwardly as a call from God or through the mediation of the church. In this study I have traced changes in the place of the church in the world and the response of men and women to the call to ministry and mission and although 'mission' was not specifically referred to, various aspects of mission were addressed in each chapter.

My own understanding of mission is that the missionary imperative is an integral part of the Christian Faith and finds its base in Matthew 28:19, 20, the Acts of the Apostles and many of Paul's letters. However what 'mission' means has varied over the ages and if a general phrase such as 'the spread of the good news of Jesus Christ' is used then its implementation has varied from physical coercion to the acceptance of a non-differentiated universalism.

I would suggest a broad definition of the mission of the church as that which facilitates the interaction of God, revealed in Jesus, and men, women and children. This will mean looking at the church in its place in the world, the nation and society.

Montefiore (1992, p.4) wrote "It ill behoves the Christian Church to despise the culture in which it finds itself. It is within this culture that the Christian life must be lived." [61]

There is a direct link between the episodic and non-sequential appearances of Reader ministry and the mission of the church, illustrated particularly in the history chapter (chapter two). Here I described how in the 16th century the Church of England was challenged by a lack of manpower, of teaching and of representation in the parishes of the land and seeing a need it responded by episcopally appointing and authorizing lay members of the church as Readers. Although there were political overtones to this response the church was acting in a manner that was consistent with its mission in the world, ensuring that people would hear the gospel and would have someone, the Reader, to lead the local Christian community. In answering this need the church overcame its traditional boundaries between clerical and lay, mission coming before traditional structures. However, when the need had been met, the church realized what it had done and Readers were allowed to gradually disappear from the scene.

Later in chapter two the situation in the 19th century was described in which the church felt itself threatened and also recognized that it was not communicating with a large section of the populace. Again there was quick response and the office of Reader was revived ensuring leadership in the parishes as the faith was defended and Readers went out to preach, teach and live the gospel in many of the industrial and deeply rural areas of the country. A need was being met and the enthusiasm and commitment of those coming forward as Readers was remarked on by different commentators.

This could be described as the Holy Spirit working in the church or it could be seen as people listening and looking and finding themselves being challenged to bring the Gospel of love and justice and care to, in many cases, a deprived world – but this is simply the same activity of God described in different ways. However once the

[61] The contributors to Montefiore 1992. *The Gospel and Conemporary Culture* were all senior academics who, in their own speciality, examined the relationship of the Gospel and Culture in history, arts, knowledge, economics, education, health and the mass media.

objectives of communication and of stability had been met the church sought to restore the clear clerical-lay division by bringing Readers into the role of assistants to the clergy, primarily within the church setting. Nevertheless one aspect of the Reader's identity was now established, that of always being available and of being prepared to enter into difficult and sometimes dangerous situations.

Moving to the contemporary scene, described at the end of chapter two and in chapter seven, the church again faces challenges, first of manpower and then of a culture which is described as secular and can be vocally and politically antagonistic. This time however there has been little evidence of the church deliberately empowering Readers to respond to this, but rather the delivery of a mixed message of clericalising Readers through shared training with clergy or of seeing them simply as one of the many diverse lay ministries now emerging in the church.

However the report *Mission-shaped church* (2004) recognized the changed context in which the church works. "A network and consumer society presents a particular challenge to Christian mission." (p 10) This report included in its recommendations 'fresh expressions of church' (p 146) and this was taken up in many places and it encouraged, amongst other approaches, 'the imaginative use of the local church'. This is about engaging with people within the parameters of their way of life and then taking them beyond this. This reflects the earthly ministry of Jesus and the Reader who is part of a local community has a great deal to contribute to such mission developments through his local and secular experience and his theological training and reflection.

The 'rooting' of the Reader in the secular world combined with an authorized ministerial role in the church is one of the most important aspects of the Reader's role to have emerged in this study. I have regularly described this as a bridging ministry with the Reader having his feet very securely in two communities, that of the world and that of the church, interpreting one to the other and also representing the church in village, community, work place and institution. As well as coming to the fore when the church is challenged, the Reader remains constantly in a mission role with the result that, on occasion, because of the Reader's position in the church and

the secular society he or she will identify and respond to needs before the 'official church' is aware of either a particular challenge or call for help. In many ways this replicates our Lord's earthly ministry. Although Jesus worshipped in temple and synagogue he spent the greater part of his ministry in field and town and amongst the working people bringing an understanding and a revelation of the Godhead into the material world.

Despite the Reader's public ministry, I have referred to the strange phenomenon of the Reader and her or his ministry as being 'invisible'. The evidence for this was in the survey, chapter three, which revealed areas where there were few Readers and I have also personally recorded many incidents of an event or a step forward in mission in which Readers have been involved, but as far as the church was concerned they were invisible.[62]

In some ways this may represent the church's way of handling a ministry that obviously has been used by God but that challenges the accepted structures and divisions of the church and that could be parodied as– "if it presents too many problems and raises too many questions, then ignore it, or even deny its validity". The important point however is that the Readers are usually content to be invisible because they see their calling as serving Jesus Christ wherever there is a need, be it teaching, spiritual guidance, pastoral care or evangelism. I would describe this as simply following our Lord's command, "let the greatest among you become as the youngest and the leader as one who serves." (Luke 22:26)

In considering what happened when Readers were given a public role in the life of the church or when they become involved in mission it became clear that boundaries were being challenged and crossed. The boundaries included those of tradition – "who does what and where", of expectations – "the laity do not do this or that", even of authority – "that is the clergy's job not the Reader's".

[62]For example, a senior clergyman spoke of having had little experience of Readers in his diocese and he thought that they were few in number. The actual figures recorded in the Church of England Year Book were, Stipendiary Clergy – 183, Licensed Readers – 195.

Sometimes the boundaries were crossed at the invitation of the official church but at other times because it seemed right to the Reader to respond in the name of Christ, for example in the two world wars (chapter two). Today Readers are crossing boundaries to work and witness in prisons, hospitals, colleges, shopping centres and factories and acting as chaplains in schools and police stations, as well as ensuring that worship continues in the parish churches that would otherwise not have a regular ministry.

In this aspect of their ministry Readers are following in our Lord's footsteps as he crossed boundaries of ethnicity, gender and religious regulations. This perhaps is part of the calling of the Reader, for rooted in the secular world he or she is aware of needs and it may be easier for the Reader to respond to these needs than for the clergy with their many church orientated commitments and who may feel that they are caught behind unwelcome and unnecessary boundaries. However to take the step of responding to need the Reader has to be very clear about his or her calling as a minister and to have a deep awareness of the presence of Christ in the step being taken.

The consideration of boundaries also raises questions about the nature of the church itself. The church, whenever it becomes fixed in its self understanding, with boundaries that are immoveable, is extremely vulnerable to social, economic and political pressures, because the world does not stand still and God cannot be contained in man-made structures. Here I would suggest that the Reader may be the first to hear what God is saying to his church at such times.

The church, from the time of Constantine, developed a clearly defined structure with authority held at different levels but most particularly by the bishops. It can be viewed as an institution with distinct boundaries and with a complex internal organization but to see the church as an institution is only one useful way of looking at the church. The picture of the church presented in the New Testament is of an organic body (1 Corinthians 12), the body of Christ in which all members have a place and importance is attached to all and all look to the head, Jesus Christ who motivates, empowers and guides. It is possible that the church has in many places moved away

from the concept of the church as the Body of Christ in the world and therefore may be deaf to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and does not hear what God is saying through Readers and Reader ministry.

I am particularly aware of this now as from time to time I hear Reader ministry being strongly supported by bishops and clergy in addresses and at Admission services but totally ignored in practice. The puzzling thing is that those who support and then ignore Readers are totally unaware of what they have done. This suggests a deep inbuilt rejection of Reader ministry and perhaps a fear of the freedom to move into new areas of being the church that would come with a fresh recognition of the church as the body of Christ. The Reader presents a challenge to the church leadership to consider the nature of the church and God's calling to the church at this time.

It is not only the leadership of the church that may be uncertain about Reader ministry but throughout the study there were frequent reminders that the clergy-Reader-laity relationship presented problems.

The Reader could not and cannot celebrate the Mass, Eucharist or Holy Communion and therefore worshippers could feel deprived. Laity sometimes did not welcome other laity in the pulpit, clergy could be jealous of Readers who hold higher theological qualifications than they do or who are better preachers and clergy could resent Readers taking on more and more of their ministerial functions. At the same time Readers may not be happy with clergy who treat them as second class clergy or who are unwilling to share their ministry. (Chapters two, three and five)

It would be easy to spend a lot of time exploring this but I suggest that it is a symptom of a lack of clarity in the church about ministry. In the trio of clergy, Reader and laity, each with their own sense of serving God, the Reader finds himself or herself often cast into the priestly role, whether at the folk level of the local 'holy man' or 'holy woman', or as one who can hear 'confessions' – "I can speak to you because I know you will not tell anyone else", or as one who can perform the appropriate religious rites, as at funerals. At the same time, the local church, community or work place will see the Reader as 'one of us' and definitely not clergy. I

suggest that it is also possible that the Reader models the calling of all Christians to live out the priesthood of all believers in the life and mission of the church in the world. (1Peter 2:9)

Although this thesis explores the place of the Reader in the church I consider that the questions raised indicate the value of a much deeper theological exploration. Although the Reader may be seen as an unnecessary intrusion into the church's ministry there is something unique about a ministry that can be perceived as holding certain priestly qualities and at the same time remaining very definitely lay. Certainly the theology of the priesthood and of the laity could be explored further; there are at this time very few books on the theology of the laity and many of those on the priesthood concentrate on functions of priesthood most of which are now also in the remit of the Reader.

There is a further contentious area in the clergy, Reader, laity relationship. When responding to its call to mission in the nation, the church sees the clergy as the ones who can most effectively identify needs, who possess the theological knowledge to discern God's response to these needs, and who are in the best position to lead the church in this work.

This may be true in some cases but my understanding is that often the Reader is better placed to identify needs, and may have an equivalent theological knowledge to that of many clergy. In the development of mission the leadership should be that exercised by the individual best suited for the job, Priest, Reader or Lay.

Bishop David Young was known to say, "Whilst a bishop, I remain a priest, whilst a priest I remain a deacon, whilst a deacon I remain a lay person." I interpreted this as saying that my primary status in the kingdom of God is as a baptized member of the body of Christ. Within this living body some individuals experience a specific vocation from God which comes through a personal and inner call or through the discernment of the church. The response to this calling does not negate or embellish the basic God – individual relationship expressed through baptism.

However within the commonality of the body of Christ the clerical orders of Bishop, Priest and Deacon over time developed their own, frequently diverse, definitions of role, function and ontology. Personal vocation or calling was and is seen primarily to relate to the clerical ministry or to Religious Orders. How then does the church handle the vocation of non-clerical individuals who either are clear that they have a call from God to serve in a ministerial role, or, because of a particular need, are discerned by the church to have a vocation to Reader ministry?

The answer to this question is that the church is uncertain as to how to respond to the vocation of men and women who remain 'defiantly' lay and I would suggest that issues of authority, control and tradition very easily mask what God may be saying to the church through those called to be Readers.

Despite this, I have shown in this study that having responded to a personal or discerned calling Readers contribute significantly to the life and mission of the church in their God-given and God-directed ministry. It is clear that God speaks to the hearts and minds of individuals, whether as prospective ministers or in the discernment of vocation in another person, irrespective of the strictures of a formalized ecclesiastical organization.

Certainly deeper consideration of the complementary roles of laity, Readers and clergy in the work of the kingdom of God could result in more appropriate training schemes and a deeper self- awareness of the common and the unique ministries of laity, Readers and clergy.

As can be seen the clergy-Reader-laity relationship and the nature of vocation both showed a sense of ambiguity within the church and one of the earliest discoveries in the research, on a wider scale, was the ambivalent and ambiguous approach of the Church of England generally to Reader ministry, historically and in the present day. This varied between dioceses but was expressed through church structures and finance and by the contrast observed between the support offered in principle and the invisibility of the Reader in practice.

Ambiguity and ambivalence arise from a variety of causes including the difficulty of fitting the Reader into a hierarchical and structured organization and from the Lay-Clerical divide both which I have already addressed. I suggest that they also arise from the basic question, 'Which has the priority, the kingdom or the church?'

Jesus came to establish a new kingdom on earth that relates directly to the kingdom of heaven, (Mathew 4:17, 6:10, Luke 17:21, John 18:36, 37). This kingdom recognizes the ultimate authority of God and enables the living of the lives of its members in accord with the pattern portrayed by Jesus in his teaching, actions, death and resurrection.

To enable the church to function in the nation it has to be regarded as an institution but its boundaries are not coterminous with those of the kingdom, which lay within the knowledge of God not of man. I suggest therefore that the kingdom or the rule of Christ in the hearts and minds of individuals and in the formation and life of communities may be made explicit within the organized church but it cannot be restricted to this.[63]

The Reader is in the unique position of being able to identify non-church areas in society where the kingdom is present and growing, or places where the Christian has to live the kingdom in an alien or non-comprehending environment. Despite this the work of making known and establishing the kingdom on earth is often seen as primarily the responsibility of the ordained minister, yet the priest is frequently tied into the structured local church whereas the Reader is more open to the opportunities that are present in today's world. Ambivalence then enters the scene because the church may recognize the position of Readers in the world but chooses not to listen to what they may have to say about God's presence and work in the world with direct, not second–hand experience. The failure to address the similarities

[63] Ward, K. 2000. *Religion and Community* p. 356 ff. Notes the historical idea of an imperial church that has "Characterized some of Christian history", but he sees the church called to "disclose in the life, passion, and resurrection of Jesus the paradigmatic clue to the compassionate love and liberating activity of God throughout the whole human world."

in clergy, Reader and lay ministries and their complementary roles also leads to ambiguity and ambivalence.

Although ambiguity and ambivalence obscure the unique ministerial resource provided by Readers there is an important corollary. The recognition and acceptance of ambiguity and ambivalence will strengthen the church in its life and ministry because it is always there in one form or another, simply because the work of the church and of the individual Christian is always open to the Holy Spirit whose modus operandi is like that of the wind (John 3:8), not that of following fixed railway lines. Therefore I see ambiguity and ambivalence as an implicit part of the nature of the church.

Allied to ambiguity and ambivalence is the concept of uncertainty. As the thesis progressed I raised the concept of uncertainty arising from the episodic and non-sequential pattern of Reader ministry and the lack of clarity about task in Reader education. From these uncertainties and from the Reader's positive and adaptable response I identified the acceptance of uncertainty as an essential part of the ministry of the Reader.

Against 'uncertainty' as a reality of life and of the church, for the Christian there is an underlying certainty based on the revelation of God in Christ. This certainty is part of the individual's faith and is expressed in the life and worship of the church. At the same time we all live with the uncertainty arising from the limitation of our knowledge of the world and of the universe(s), from the instability of the earth's crust, from the frailty of the human body and mind, from the evil that can possess some people and from our own 'instability', "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do the things I want, but I do the very things I hate." (Romans 7:15).

Coupled with uncertainty there is a basic dependency in all of us, one that was necessary in childhood for survival. This can develop into an immature dependency by institutions or individuals on other individuals and/or organizations such as the benevolent dictator, a state that will provide everything, the 'father knows best'

priest, the individualistic literal interpretation of the scriptures or a scientific, economic or sociological theory elevated to the place of proven fact.

In the Church of England immature dependence is found in the maintenance of unquestioned tradition or in viewing the local church as a safe ark in the dangerous seas of life. In both cases the view is inwards and mission becomes the bringing of people into this tradition or this ark rather than going out to live and experience faith in the uncertainties of life. The Reader in his or her place in the uncertain world and the church challenges this immature dependency in favour of a mature dependency on God in the reality of life.

Further to this I see the reality of uncertainty as a major ingredient in the revelation of God in Jesus. He was born into an unsettled political situation, was misunderstood by friends and hated by enemies, then came the cry on the cross, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" This speaks to me of a point of reality, the experiencing of uncertainty at a depth that destroys the false dependency that religion can so easily foster and that expresses more than anything else the complete humanity of Jesus. This entering into uncertainty is surely part of 'being crucified with Christ'. (Galatians 2:20)

It may be possible that the lack of support for or interest in Reader ministry shown in some sections of the church stems from the Reader's ability to live with uncertainty in contrast to others who might prefer to avoid the unanswered questions of life.

The Reader offers to the church a depth of understanding about the uncertainty that is an essential ingredient of life because he or she, whilst holding a recognized office in the church also lives in the uncertainties of the workaday world and has learned to engage with and to reflect on his or her contextual experience.

The Reader is therefore in a position to minister to the church with insight into God's purposes and will for the church in today's world and to minister to the world the love and the truths of Jesus Christ in the language of the secular society.

A FINAL CONCLUSION

My own understanding of life and work is that ambivalence and uncertainty are necessary accompaniments of living with and facing reality. In this study I have shown that the Reader provided and provides a local, authorized, trained, available, committed and motivated human resource able to live with ambivalence and uncertainty. This is the place of the Reader in the church.

I have also shown that the occupation of this role by part of its membership both in the past and in the present gave and gives to the Church of England a necessary strength, freeing its leadership to work on its boundaries as it engages with the ministry and mission of the church in an uncertain world. The Reader therefore occupies a unique and vital place in the Church of England.

However I also showed that the church found and finds it very difficult to engage with this concept resulting in an ongoing contradiction between the acknowledged importance of Reader ministry, stated by the church leadership, and the frequent ignoring of this ministry in practice.

I recognize the complexity of the Church of England, created through its history and structures, its place within the nation and within the wider Anglican Communion, and through the differing expectations it carries for many sections of society. However from the research I have conducted and the conclusions I have listed above, I consider that it is of utmost importance that the Church of England recognizes the nature and strength of the unique resource provided by Readers. This will mean facing and engaging with the church's reluctance to address, at theological and organizational levels, the distinctive tasks and places in the church of the priest, the Reader, the lay minister and the lay majority.

If this engagement does take place and Reader ministry is recognized and serviced as the powerful, available and adaptable resource that it is, then the church will find itself rediscovering a unique resource and the Readers themselves will know that their vocation and calling is being honoured.

For the church to lose Reader ministry or to let it be absorbed into a general lay ministry, valid as that is, will be to lose one of its greatest assets and in the process ignore the reality of the calling felt by many of its members.

My intention and my hope is that this thesis will contribute to a positive re-thinking of the active and potential role of Readers in the ministry of the Church of England.

APPENDIX ONE

Reader Ministry - A Timeline

DATE	*POLITICAL & SOCIAL BACKGROUND*	*READER MINISTRY & CHURCH DEVELOPMENTS*
Pre-Christian	*Pax Romana*	Reader, a Lay Minister in the Synagogue
Primitive Church	*Persecution*	Read and occasionally expound Scriptures
1st and 2nd centuries AD		Possible references, Colossians 4:16 etc
c 150		Reference in Justin's Apologies
c 251		Eusebius includes Readers in list requested by Pope Fabian
4th century	*Emperor Constantine Religious freedom, Christianity favoured*	Ordination of Readers described in the Apostolic Constitutions Possibly women Readers in the Eastern church
5th – 16th century		Readers, a Minor Order, one of the five inferior orders of the Roman church
16th century	*English Reformation*	
1548 – 1522	*Edward VI (1547-1553)*	Preparation of an Ordinal which included an Office for the Admission of Readers
5th January 1559	*Elizabeth I (1558-1603)*	Archbishop Parker authorized the Bishop of Bangor to ordain 5 Lectores (Readers) at St.Mary-le-Bow, London

DATE	*POLITICAL & SOCIAL BACKGROUND*	*READER MINISTRY & CHURCH DEVELOPMENTS*
1561		The bishops issued injunctions to which Readers had to subscribe before admission. Readers allowed to read services and sermons, bury the dead, 'church' women and 'move men to quiet and concord'
16th century		Two books of Homilies (sermons) produced to be used by Readers and by some clergy
Second half of 16th century	*Growth of merchant class* *Elizabeth I strict control over church.* *Clergy education improved*	Readers no longer needed
1745	*George II (1727-1760)*	Readers still working in the Lake District
1848	*Victoria* (1837 – 1901)	Establishment of the 'Church Union for Defence against Aggression'
1852		Convocations revived
1859		Church Defence Institution established
1862	*In large areas of the country the church had no contact with the population.* *Lay church members were taking 'unauthorised' services*	Adoption of Report to examine 'The Restoration of the 'Ancient Order of Readers'
1864		Report recommending introduction of the Lay Reader as a 'New Agency' to meet the needs of the growing industrial population

DATE	*POLITICAL & SOCIAL BACKGROUND*	*READER MINISTRY & CHURCH DEVELOPMENTS*
10th May 1866		Reader ministry approved at a meeting of the bishops in Lambeth Palace
1880		Diocesan Association of Readers set up in Durham diocese, other dioceses followed
1883, 1884		York and Canterbury Convocations agreed that a Reader could read services approved by the diocesan bishop, including Morning and Evening Prayer, visit the sick and perform other duties agreed by incumbent and preach and teach in unconsecrated buildings The incumbent to certify that a Reader candidate should be fit for the task with knowledge of the Scriptures and a sound faith
1884		Reader to be Admitted by the presentation of a New Testament by the Bishop Diocesan Readers (wider remit than Parochial Readers) approved in York province. Canterbury in 1891
1886		House of Laymen established
1889		SPCK College for the training of Stipendiary Readers founded (continued until 1924) Reader candidates required to pass examination acceptable to bishop Diocesan Licence introduced
1890		First Diocesan Readers' Board set up in diocese of London
1898		Revival of the Office of Lay Evangelist (with Reader Licence) in Canterbury

DATE	*POLITICAL & SOCIAL BACKGROUND*	*READER MINISTRY & CHURCH DEVELOPMENTS*
1901	*Edward VII (1901-1910)*	John Wordsworth, Bishop of Salisbury devotes 16 pages to the Reader in the early church in *Ministry of Grace, Studies of Early Church History with Reference to Present Problems*
1903		Church Representative Council created
1904		First issue of *The Reader and Lay Worker* magazine. Title changed to *The Lay Reader* in 1906 and to *The Reader* in 1946
1904		Report on Readers and other minor ministries. Restoration of the Order of Sub-deacons rejected. Office of Reader incorporates Lay Evangelists and Catechists. Assent to 39 Articles required (as for clergy). Recommendation that Preaching and Teaching be Permitted in consecrated Buildings but not at Communion Services or from the pulpit
1905		Standard Regulations issued for Readers. Common form of Admission Service, therefore national recognition of the Office. Candidates examined in knowledge of Scriptures, doctrine and practice of the Church of England and tested on reading, speaking, teaching, catechising and preaching. Preaching and Teaching permitted in consecrated buildings, but not at Holy Communion or from the pulpit
	George V (1910 – 1936)	
1914 -1917	*The First World War*	Readers filling gaps left by clergy who had enlisted as chaplains. Reference to a Reader appointed as a Lay Chaplain to a Military Hospital

DATE	*POLITICAL & SOCIAL BACKGROUND*	*READER MINISTRY & CHURCH DEVELOPMENTS*
January 12 1914		Opening of Lay Reader Headquarters (one room in Dean's Yard, Westminster)
1920		Royal Assent given to the Enabling Act which included Canon Law affecting Readers. New regulations followed for Readers: Readers' Board and Warden required in each diocese, Central Readers' Board established, voluntary diploma for Readers. Admission should be recognised throughout the world and not repeated on transfer between dioceses, but Readers must not - take part in the administration of Holy Communion, Baptise, read the Burial Service, Publish Banns, enter Sanctuary, receive Alms. Practical testing on Reading, preaching, speaking etc for candidates and examinations in the Scriptures and the doctrine contained in the Book of Common Prayer. Bishop to keep Diocesan list of Readers. Readers should be nominated by Laymen as well as by the Incumbent
1932		Publication of *A History of the Reader Movement in the Church of England* by W.S.Williams
1934		Publication of *The Case for the Lay Ministry of the Church of England* by W.S.Williams
	George VI (1936-1952)	
1939-1946	*Second World War*	Readers appointed as Chaplains in the Armed Forces. Running parishes on the 'Home Front'

DATE	*POLITICAL & SOCIAL BACKGROUND*	*READER MINISTRY & CHURCH DEVELOPMENTS*
1941		Readers allowed to publish Banns, receive offerings, read epistle, administer chalice, preach in consecrated buildings, but not at Holy Communion, permitted into pulpit. Readers admitted into 'Church of God', therefore Admission valid worldwide Distinction between Diocesan and Parochial Licence removed Readers to wear for services – Cassock, Surplice, Badge of Office and Hood of Degree, where appropriate
	Elizabeth II (1952 -)	
11th May 1966		National Celebratory Service for Readers in St Paul's Cathedral to mark the centenary of the revival of the Office of Reader
7th May 1969		Revised Canon Law opened the Office of Reader to women
1969		Readers allowed to administer paten as well as chalice, present Offerings, read the Gospel and to preach at Holy Communion The Blue Scarf introduced instead of the Reader's Badge. Optional use
1973		Publication of *Readers: A Pioneer Ministry* by T.G.King
1975		The General Readers Certificate introduced
1979		Authorized to bury the dead and to 'Church' women
1980		Publication of *The Office and Work of a Reader* by R.Martineau

DATE	*POLITICAL & SOCIAL BACKGROUND*	*READER MINISTRY & CHURCH DEVELOPMENTS*
1988		Allowed to assist at Holy Communion by virtue of their office and Licence
1989		Licence covers the same duties in other denominations. Report on *The Training of Readers* published – criteria for training, Moderation scheme introduced
1991		Publication of *Celebrating Reader Ministry* by R.Hiscox
2000		Report *Reader Ministry and Training, 2000 and Beyond* – national criteria for training, possible integrated lay and clergy training
December 2000		Communion by Extension allowed
2002		Publication of *Bridging the gap, Reader ministry today* by G.W.Kuhrt and P. Nappin
8th February 2006		General Synod debate on Reader Ministry, Review Group appointed
July 2008		*Reader Upbeat,* final report of the Review group: 30 recommendations

APPENDIX TWO

Relevant Parts of the Canons of the Church of England

B 11 Of Morning and Evening Prayer in parish churches

1. Morning and Evening Prayer shall be said or sung in every parish church at least on all Sundays and other principal Feast Days, and also on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Each service shall be said or sung distinctly, reverently, and in an audible voice. Readers, such other lay persons as may be authorized by the bishop of the diocese, or some other suitable lay person, may, at the invitation of the minister of the parish or, where the cure is vacant or the minister is incapacitated, at the invitation of the churchwardens say or sing Morning and Evening Prayer (save for the Absolution).

B 18 Of sermons in parish churches

2. The sermon shall be preached by a minister, deaconess, reader or lay worker duly authorized in accordance with Canon Law. At the invitation of the minister having the cure of souls another person may preach with the permission of the bishop of the diocese given either in relation to the particular occasion or in accordance with diocesan directions.

B 43 Of relations with other Churches

1. (1) A minister or lay person who is a member in good standing of a Church to which this Canon applies and is a baptized person may, subject to the provisions of this Canon, be invited to perform all or any of the following duties-

(a) to say or sing Morning or Evening Prayer or the Litany;

(b) to read the Holy Scriptures at any service;

(c) to preach at any service;

(d) to lead the Intercessions at the Holy Communion and to lead prayers at other services;

(e) to assist at Baptism or the Solemnization of Matrimony or conduct a Funeral Service;

(f) to assist in the distribution of the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people at the Holy Communion;

if the minister or lay person is authorized to perform a similar duty in his or her own Church.

6. Notwithstanding any provision of any Canon, a deaconess, lay worker or reader of the Church of England who receives from a person authorized by a Church to which this Canon applies an invitation to take part in a service may in the course of that service perform any duty assigned to him or her if –

(a) the duty so assigned is or is similar to a duty which he or she is authorized to perform in the Church of England; and

(b) he or she has before accepting the invitation obtained the approval of the incumbent of the parish in which the service is to take place and also, in the case of an invitation to take part in a service on a regular basis, the approval of both the bishop of the diocese and the parochial church council of that parish.

E 4 Of readers

1. A lay person, whether man or woman, who is baptized and confirmed and who satisfies the bishop that he is a regular communicant of the Church of England may be admitted by the bishop of the diocese to the office of reader in the Church and licensed by him to perform the duties which may lawfully be performed by a reader according to the provisions of paragraph 2 of this Canon or which may from time to time be so determined by Act of Synod.

2. It shall be lawful for a reader:

(a) to visit the sick, to read and pray with them, to teach in Sunday school and elsewhere, and generally to undertake such pastoral and educational work and to give such assistance to any minister as the bishop may direct;

(b) during the time of divine service to read Morning and Evening Prayer (save for the Absolution), to publish banns or marriage at Morning and Evening Prayer (on occasions on which a layman is permitted by the statute law so to do, and in accordance with the requirements of that law), to read the word of God, to preach, to catechize the children, and to receive and present the offerings of the people;

(c) to distribute the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people.

2A The bishop may also authorize a reader to bury the dead or read the burial service before, at or after a cremation but only, in each case, with the goodwill of the persons responsible and at the invitation of the minister of a parish or an extra-parochial place within the meaning of section 1 of the Deaconesses and Lay Ministry Measure 1972.

When a cure is vacant the reference in this paragraph to the minister of a parish shall be construed as a reference to the rural dean.

3. The bishop of every diocese shall keep a register book wherein shall be entered the names of every person whom he has either admitted to the office of reader or licensed to exercise that office in any place.

E 5 Of the nomination and admission of readers

1. A candidate for the office of reader in a parish or district shall be nominated to the bishop by the minister of that parish or district; and a candidate for the said office in a wider area by one of the rural deans or archdeacons after consultation with the minister of his parish or district.

2. The nominator in making such nomination shall also satisfy the bishop that the said person is of good life, sound in faith, a regular communicant, and well fitted for the work of a reader, and provide all such other information about the said person and the duties which it is desired that he should perform as the bishop may require.

3. No person shall be admitted to the office of reader in the Church except it be found on examination, held by the bishop or by competent persons appointed by the

bishop for this purpose, that he possesses a sufficient knowledge of Holy Scripture and of the doctrine and worship of the Church of England as set forth in *The Book of Common Prayer,* that he is able to read the services of the Church plainly, distinctly, audibly, and reverently, and that he is capable both of teaching and preaching.

4. Every person who is to be admitted to the office of reader shall first, in the presence of the bishop by whom he is to be so admitted or of the bishop's commissary, make the declarations set out below, the preface which precedes the Declaration of Assent in paragraph 1 (1) of Canon C 15 (with the appropriate adaptations) having first been spoken by the bishop of commissary:

> I, A B, do so affirm, and accordingly declare my belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness; and in public prayer I will use only the forms of service which are authorized or allowed by Canon.
>
> I, A B, will give due obedience to the Lord Bishop of C and his successors in all things lawful and honest.

5. The bishop shall admit a person to the office of reader by the delivery of the New Testament, but without imposition of hands.

6. The bishop shall give to the newly admitted reader a certificate of his admission to the office; and the admission shall not be repeated if the reader shall move to another diocese.

E 6 Of the licensing of readers

1. No person who has been admitted to the office of reader shall exercise his office in any diocese until he has been licensed so to do by the bishop thereof: Provided that, when any reader is to exercise his office temporarily in any diocese, the written permission of the bishop shall suffice.

1A. A licence authorizing a reader to serve in a benefice in respect of which a team ministry is established may be in a form which specifies the term of years for which the licence shall have effect.

2. Every reader who is to be licensed to exercise his office in any diocese shall first, in the presence of the bishop by whom he is to be licensed, or of the commissary of such bishop, (a) make the declarations of assent and of obedience in the form and manner prescribed by paragraph 4 of Canon E 5; (b) make and subscribe the declaration following:

> I, A B, about to be licensed to exercise his office of reader in the parish (or diocese) of C, do hereby promise to endeavour, as far as in me lies, to promote peace and unity, and to conduct myself as becomes a worker for Christ, for the good of his Church, and for the spiritual welfare of all people. I will give due obedience to the Bishop of C and his successors and the minister in whose cure I may serve, in all things lawful and honest.

If the declarations of assent and of obedience have been made on the same occasion in pursuance of paragraph 4 of Canon E 5 it shall not be necessary to repeat them in pursuance of this paragraph and in the declaration set out above the words 'the Bishop C and his successors and ' may be omitted.

3. The bishop of a diocese may by notice in writing revoke summarily, and without further process, any licence granted to a reader within his diocese for any cause which appears to him to be good and reasonable, after having given the reader sufficient opportunity of showing reason to the contrary; and the notice shall notify the reader that he may, within 28 days from the date on which he receives the notice, appeal to the archbishop of the province in which that diocese is situated.

On such an appeal the archbishop may either hear the appeal himself or appoint a person holding the office of diocesan bishop or suffragan bishop in his province (otherwise than in the diocese concerned) to hear the appeal in his place; and, after hearing the appeal or, if he has appointed a bishop to hear the appeal in his place, after receiving a report in writing from that bishop, the archbishop may confirm, vary

or cancel the revocation of the licence as he considers just and proper, and there shall be no appeal from the decision or the archbishop.

Where the see of the archbishop is vacant or the archbishop is also the bishop of the diocese concerned, any reference in the preceding provisions of this paragraph to the archbishop of the province shall be construed as a reference to the archbishop of the other province, but any bishop appointed by the archbishop of the other province by virtue of this paragraph shall be a bishop serving in the province which contains the diocese concerned.

Any appeal under this paragraph shall be conducted in accordance with rules approved by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York; and any such rules may provide for the appointment of one or more persons to advise the archbishop or bishop hearing such an appeal on any question of law arising in the course thereof.

3A Where a bishop has granted a licence to a reader to serve in his diocese for a term of years specified in the licence, the bishop may revoke that licence under paragraph 3 of this Canon before the expiration of that term, and where he does so that reader shall have the like right of appeal as any other reader whose licence if revoked under that paragraph.

4 No bishop shall license any reader to be a stipendiary in any place until he has satisfied himself that adequate provision has been make for the stipend of the said reader, for his insurance against sickness or accident, and for a pension on his retirement.

APPENDIX THREE

Regulations and Recommendations

The Regulations of 1905: the first four are omitted because they refer to the decision not to restore Readers or sub-deacons as a minor Order within the Church of England.

The resolutions continue.

V. That no Diocesan or Parochial Reader, Catechist, Evangelist, or other Lay Officer of the Church, or any other person, should be permitted to read any part of Divine Service (except the Lessons) or to preach or give an address in consecrated or licensed Churches without the licence or permission of the Ordinary; and that the same rule should apply to the appointed services of the Church publicly performed in other buildings.

VI That such licence or permissions should not be granted without –

(A) Adequate testimony to character, proved fitness for the ministry to which the Lay Officer is licensed, commissioned, or otherwise appointed, evidence of soundness in the faith, and sufficient knowledge of the Scriptures and of the Book of Common Prayer;

(B) Written assent to the doctrine of the Church of England as contained in the Book of Common Prayer and of the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, as being agreeable to the Word of God;

(C) A written promise to conform in his ministry to such regulations as are or may be laid down by the Bishop of the Diocese, to act in obedience to the Incumbent of any parish in which he ministers, and to give up the form of licence if required to do so by the Bishop.

VII That licence to preach in consecrated buildings should not be granted without the same assent to the Thirty-nine Articles of religion, as is required of the Clergy, in accordance with the Act of Uniformity of 1662, and the Clerical Subscription Act of 1865, and Canon 36 as amended in the same year.

VIII That admission to all these offices be in the same form, and that the difference between the duties of the offices be Evangelists respectively, the term “commission” being restricted to the case of Diocesan Readers, Catechists, and Evangelists.

IX That a common form of admission be prepared and prescribed consisting chiefly of appropriate questions and prayers, with a delivery of the New Testament, as a sign of admission to the office, but without any imposition of hands.

X That it is expedient that these Resolutions, in the form in which they are accepted by Convocation, should be communicated to the Representative Church Council for its consideration, so that the representatives of both Provinces may, if possible, come to some united decision on the subject at no distant date.

(Lay Readers Headquarters, 1915 p104)

The Regulations of 1921: A summary

Bishops to keep diocesan lists of Readers

Readers Board to be set up in each diocese

Warden of Readers to represent Readers in each diocese

Central Readers Board established
Voluntary Diploma for Readers

World recognition of Admission (ie no need for fresh Admission if moving to another diocese or country)

Examination in the Scriptures and the doctrine contained in the Book of Common Prayer
Specimen Licence introduced

Practical testing on reading, speaking, teaching, catechising and preaching
(King, 1973 p.113ff)

The Regulations of 2000: A summary

Canons E4, E5 and E6 printed in full

Duties of Readers – preaching, teaching and leading worship, and funerals
Readers may not officiate at Baptisms (except in emergency), officiate at a marriage service, pronounce the Absolution or give a Blessing
They may accept invitations to take part in services in a church of another denomination, undertake duties in a local ecumenical project and partnership, officiate in other dioceses, provided that the necessary approvals have been obtained from the relevant persons or authorities in each case.

Selection for Reader ministry is the responsibility of the diocese. The criteria for selection are set out in detail agreed with the House of Bishops in ABM Policy Paper No 7 *Selection for Reader Ministry* (January 1998) under the following areas: vocation, faith, spirituality and worship, personality and character, relationships and potential for training.

Each diocese is responsible for providing a course of training at no cost to the trainee and those who satisfactorily complete a diocesan course which is moderated nationally are awarded the Church of England Readers' Certificate. Dioceses should require licensed Readers to undertake post-admission training and Continual Ministerial Education and should provide financial help for them to do so

All Readers in active ministry under the age of 70 must hold a bishop's licence which is subject to regular review, normally every three or five years. On reaching the age of 70 Readers who wish to remain in active ministry should apply for the bishop's written permission to officiate.
Reader should make a written agreement with their incumbent or minister over the duties to be undertaken by the Reader. Periodically Readers should undergo a formal in-depth review of their ministry.

Readers are voluntary and unpaid ministers and do not accept fees for their services but should be reimbursed for travelling and other expenses.
In appropriate circumstances Readers may be seconded or redeployed to new areas of ministry.
(Archbishops' Council 2000)

APPENDIX FOUR

Survey Form for Wardens of Readers

For the purpose of this Appendix the spacing allowed for each question and the space between questions has been considerably reduced

READER MINISTRY

A Perspective from the point of view of
The Warden of Readers

READER TRAINING AND MINISTRY

DIOCESE OF ……

Please tick the appropriate box or enter the appropriate number for each question

A. BACKGROUND

1 The number of Licensed Readers in your Diocese ☐

2 Your estimate of the number of licensed Readers in each age range

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69

3 Your estimate of the number of Readers aged 70 or over in your Diocese and not licensed ☐

4 Your estimate of the number of Readers aged 70 or over in your Diocese who have 'Permission to Officiate' ☐

5 The number of parishes in your diocese ☐

6 Your estimate of the distribution of licensed Readers in your diocese in the following types of parishes

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
urban	suburban	market town	rural	deep rural

B.. READERS IN THE DIOCESE

1 Please outline the work detailed on the licence issued to Readers in the diocese; *(or if possible a copy of the licence would be very helpful)*

2 From your experience please list the various types of ministry exercised by Readers in your diocese.

3 From your experience please 'rate' how you think church communities in your diocese perceive Readers and their work.

1 = vital, 2 = very important, 3 = important, 4 = not important, 5 = unnecessary

Assistant to the clergy

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Bringing the real world into the church

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Interpreter of clergy to laity and laity to clergy

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Member of a ministry team

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Theological resource person for the PCC and the church

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

or ……

4 Is there any official structure for all Readers in your diocese other than the Readers' Board or Council? eg Chapters etc

Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, please give a broad outline of this structure.

C. YOUR PERCEPTION OF READER MINISTRY IN YOUR DIOCESE

How important do you think Reader Ministry is to those in authority in your diocese?

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vital	Very Important	Important	Incidental	Of no Importance

D. THE FUTURE

1 What impact do you anticipate the implementation of the report, 'Formation of Ministry within a Learning Church' will have on Reader ministry in your diocese?

2 Are there any planned developments of Reader ministry in your diocese, whether related to the above report or not ?

☐	☐
Yes	No

3 If you are free to describe these planned developments please give some indication of what is planned.

4 What is your own vision for the ministry of the Reader in the coming years?

FURTHER COMMENTS: If there any other points that you think I should look at or any comments you wish to make please add these on a separate sheet of paper. With very many thanks for your help with this project.

APPENDIX FIVE

Survey Form for Directors of Reader Training

For the purpose of this Appendix the spacing allowed for each question and the space between questions has been considerably reduced

READER TRAINING

A perspective from the point of view of the Director of Reader Training

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READER TRAINING AND MINISTRY

DIOCESE OF ……

Please tick the appropriate box or enter the appropriate number for each question

A. BACKGROUND

1 The number in training now in

☐ Year One ☐ Year Two ☐ Year Three ☐ Shortened Course

2 The number of women candidates in training

3 The number of men candidates in training ☐

4 What is your estimate of the number of trainee Readers in each age range?

☐ 23-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60-70

5 What is your estimate of the number of present trainees in each of the following categories?

☐ In receipt of a wage ☐ Retired ☐ Unwaged

6 What is your estimate of the number of present trainees in each of the following categories?

☐ Graduates ☐ Professional Qualification ☐ Vocational Qualification ☐ Life experience only

5 Are there any areas/deaneries in your diocese that rarely send candidates for training?

Yes ☐ No ☐

6 If the answer to the above is 'yes', what do think is the reason for this?

B. SELECTION

1 Are enquirers about Reader ministry provided with introductory material?
(Copies of leaflets would be appreciated)

Yes ☐ No ☐

2 Does a potential candidate discuss Reader ministry with a diocesan officer or representative before the Selection Conference/Interview?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes ☐

3 If the answer to the above is 'yes' or 'sometimes', whom does the candidate meet?

☐ DDO ☐ Warden of Readers ☐ Director of Training ☐ Appointed Reader

Other. ……..

4 Is the Selection Conference confined to –

☐ A Single Interview? ☐ Half a day? ☐ Full Day? ☐ Residential?

C. TRAINING

1 Is the training course –

☐ Specific to Readers? ☐ Open to other interested Laity? ☐ Combined with NSM/OLM/ Lay Ministers?

2 If it is a combined course, is it -

☐ Combined for one year? ☐ Combined for the whole course? ☐ Combined only for individual subjects?

3 Is the training course that you use in your diocese -

☐ A Diocesan Scheme, Scheme, no external validation? ☐ Validated by a University/ H.E.College ☐ Validated by a Theological course/college?

4 How many members of your Reader Training Team are

☐ Readers ☐ Laity (other than Readers) ☐ Clergy

5 What is your estimate of the percentage of your course curriculum that is -

☐ % Academic Work? ☐ % Formational development? ☐ % Practical experience?

6 Is an opportunity provided for the trainee Readers to evaluate the course?

Yes ☐ No ☐

7 If the answer is 'yes' to the above please outline the opportunities that are provided for evaluation

8 From your experience what do you think best describes the trainee's perception of her or his future work as a Licensed Reader?

D. LICENSED READERS

1 What, if any, regular method of contact is maintained between the bishop and diocesan officers and the individual licensed Readers? eg Newsletter, chapter meetings, diocesan meetings, no contact etc.

2 What training courses are offered to Licensed Readers by or through the diocese?

3 Are these courses –

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For Readers only?	Open to Readers and other Lay Ministers?	Open to Readers and clergy?	Financed by the diocese?	Financed by participants?

4 What is your estimate of the average take up of courses offered to Licensed Readers in the diocese?

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-100%

7 What opportunities are there for Licensed Readers to be involved in the training process?

8 Is the renewal of the individual Reader's Licence dependent on attendance at a fixed number of training events?

Yes ☐ No ☐

E. THE FUTURE

1 What impact do you anticipate the implementation of the report, 'Formation of Ministry within a Learning Church' will have on Reader ministry in your diocese?

2 Are there any planned developments of Reader ministry in your diocese, whether related to the above report or not ?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3 If you are free to describe these please give some indication of what is planned.

4 What is your own vision for the ministry of the Reader in the coming years?

FURTHER COMMENTS: *If there any other points that you think I should look at or any comments you wish to make please add these on the reverse of this page or on a separate sheet of paper. With very many thanks for your help with this project.*

APPENDIX SIX

ABM GUIDELINES FOR SELECTION FOR READER MINISTRY

(ABM Policy Paper No. 7 January 1998. *Selection for Reader Ministry.* p 7)

SUMMARY OF SELECTION CRITERIA

9.1 Vocation

How has the individual's sense of vocation grown and affected his/her life and work?

What evidence is there:

- Sense of vocation led to deepening of spiritual life, reflection, reading, pastoral awareness?
- A ministry already begun?
- Local congregation recognise and support candidate's call to ministry?
- Appropriate personal qualities and gifts?
- Reader ministry is the most appropriate calling?
- The motives for seeking admission to the office of Reader are appropriate?

What is the candidate's attitude to the possibility of being deployed elsewhere?

9.2 Faith

What evidence is there:

- Of a mature personal faith?
- Of openness to God, to others and to new ideas and insights?
- Of willingness to minister in different traditions or ecumenical contexts?
- Able to cope with the challenge posed by critical study and theological questioning?
- Able to accept and to bear authority as a representative of the Church?
- Strong sense of the loving and saving purpose of God for the world and a desire to share this?
- Of appropriate commitment to the Church of England?
- An understanding and acceptance of Church order and the authority of the Bishop?

9.3 Spirituality and Worship

What part does prayer play in the candidate's life?

What has been the nature and extent of the candidate's involvement in public worship?

What evidence is there:

- That bible reading is taken seriously?
- Prayer and bible reading have led to greater spiritual understanding?
- Appreciates the need for theological study to be supported by prayer?
- The connections between individual prayer and public worship?
- That prayer and worship relate to work, leisure and home life?

9.4 Personality and Character

What positive attributes would the candidate bring to word as a Reader?

What is exciting about this person becoming a Reader?

What evidence is there:

- Perceives and acknowledges personal strengths and weaknesses and can face criticism?
- Capacity to understand, accept others and relate to pastorally and appropriately?
- Able to handle change and conflict in mature and creative ways?
- Self awareness and stability to cope with the painful feelings of others?
- Understands importance of tolerance, acceptance and forgiveness?
- Can avoid being misled by false expressions of appreciation?
- Desire and capacity to reflect on discipleship in the contemporary world?
- Makes a serious attempt to live out a commitment to the Gospel?
- Shows balance and proportion in activities involved in?

9.5 Relationships

What evidence is there:

- Ability to work harmoniously and collaboratively with others in a team?
- Sufficiently mature and stable to sustain a demanding ministry?
- Has the capacity to lead and accept leadership of others?
- Ability and willingness to listen to others?
- Leads a stable and reliable personal life?
- Considered the needs and interests of his/her family in offering for training
- Would receive support from members of her/his family

9.6 Potential for Training

What evidence is there:

- Of an open and enquiring mind and prepared to engage with participatory, reflective, imaginative and creative training?
- Ability to follow an argument and comment on it?
- Ability to grasp and draw ideas expressed by others?
- Lively and intelligent interest in theological questions and contemporary wider issues?
- Ability to communicate views and ideas clearly? To keep an independent line of thought?
- Keenness and ability to study and develop communication skills?
- Potential which might be released and developed in training?
- Willing to continue with education and training after licensing?

What strengths would the candidate bring to his peer group?

What knowledge and skills does he/ she already have?

What particular areas of knowledge and skills does she/he need to develop?

APPENDIX SEVEN

THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE STUDENT READER COHORT

The basic questions I used in the interviews are listed below. The way in which the questions were presented and their sequence varied, depending on whether the interviewee had identified topics that were at the forefront of his or her mind prior to recording the interview. I used a circular plan of the questions enabling entry at any point or the identification of areas not addressed. A number of the responses elicited supplementary questions for clarification or for amplification.

Year 1

1. How did you come to consider Reader ministry and why?
2. What information about Reader ministry did you receive from the diocese?
3. How do you see the job of the Reader?
4. What were your feelings about the selection conference?

5. You have now started into the training. How does this feel?
6. What did you want in the training?

7. How do you see the difference between the clergy and the Reader?
8. What do you see as the relationship of the Reader with the congregation and with the local community?
9. What are your expectations of yourself as a licensed Reader?
10. What do you think will be the expectations of the church members and the local community of you as a Reader?
11. Have you noticed any difference in the response to you from church members and from the community because it is known that you are training to be a Reader, and if so how has this been expressed?

12. In what way is your incumbent involved in your training?
13. What support have your received in your training, and from whom?
14. What are your thoughts and feelings about the group with whom you are training?

15. What do you see as the future role of the Reader in the church?
16. What do you think is the future role of the church?

17. Are there any other areas that I may have missed or that you would like to look at; if so please tell me your thoughts about these?

Year 2

Not all of the following questions were raised with the student who had been fast-tracked but we spent time looking at his new role in school and parish and the response of the different communities to this role. Another student was in a vacancy (waiting for a new incumbent) and I asked questions which allowed her to spend time looking at the expectations put on her in the absence of an incumbent and at what this said about the place of the Reader in the church. I also brought into another interview an opportunity for the student to describe his experience of the response to and support offered when he was ill.

1. What, for you, have been the positive and what have been the negative aspects of the course over this past year?
2. Have you been able to discuss your thoughts and feelings about the course with anyone and if so with whom and in what ways were you able to use this?

3. Thinking of the group of which you are a member, how do you think others think of you?
4. Last year two of the members were 'fast-tracked'. What were your feelings about this and how do you think the group reacted?

5. What has been your experience in this year of the church, your parish clergy, and the bishops?
6. What has been your experience of meeting with some of the licensed Readers?

7. What support have you received this year and from what source and how have you felt about this?

8. How do you respond to a definition of Reader training that is given as, 'training is about being shaped for ministry'?
9. How do you respond to a further definition of Reader training as being 'trained to be a practitioner theologian.'?

10. In what ways do you feel that you have grown and developed in this past year?
11. What do you see as the future for your ministry once you are licensed?
12. What do you see as the future ministry of the Reader?

13. Are there any other areas that I may have missed or that you would like to look at; if so please tell me your thoughts about these?

Year 3

I again interviewed the student who had been fast tracked. He had gained further experience in role as a licensed Reader and the questions were framed to allow him to explore this. The student who had been ill had come out of the training scheme and I asked him a series of questions relating to his feelings about this, what it was that led to his leaving and how he experienced the response of the diocesan staff to this change. The questions below are the ones that I used for the rest of the students and in part for the two students mentioned above.

1. Looking back over the 3 years what have been some of the positive and some of the negative things that you have experienced?
2. What do you understand as being the purpose of this training?

3. In what way in these 3 years, if at all, has your perception of Reader ministry changed?
4. In the course of these 3 years have you experienced any change in your own faith and if so how would you describe this change?
5. How has the response of the church community and the congregation to you changed, if at all, in these 3 years?

6. In what ways has the group been important to you throughout this course?

7. What do you now see as your work as a Reader in your church following the Licensing?

8. What do you see as necessary for you or what would want to do in the way of training in the future?

9. Are there any other areas that I may have missed or that you would like to look at; if so please tell me your thoughts about these?

APPENDIX EIGHT

READER UPBEAT REPORT: RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend that Readers keep before them their calling to be examples of those who are bearers and interpreters of the Word in the context of their daily occupation, be it paid or voluntary.

2. We recommend that dioceses encourage Readers to see their core ministry of preaching and teaching and leading worship as both a significant part of the Church's ministry to equip lay disciples for their mission in the world and the opportunity to engage in mission on the boundaries of the Church.

3. We recommend that dioceses strengthen the provision of Reader CME, and in particular the development of the skill of Readers as preachers, catechists and educators enabling them to interpret Christian Faith as it engages with daily life and work.

4. We recommend that dioceses indicate their support for Readers as interpreters of the gospel in daily life by encouraging the use of Readers as preachers at the main parish Sunday service of Holy Communion.

5. We recommend that dioceses permit their Readers to serve in all aspects of ministry allowed by Canon Law and support them.

6. We recommend that dioceses widen their vision to include the possible appointment of a Reader as Reader-in-Charge of a congregation, with the corresponding roles of catechist and of pastoral care, possibly also as a House for Duty appointment. Readers are also considered for sector minister posts.

7. We recommend that dioceses encourage the use of Readers with pastoral gifts in bereavement care and funeral ministry, and deaneries strengthen the teams of ministers available for funeral ministry by including Readers.

8. We recommend that dioceses, deaneries and parishes look for opportunities for Readers to exercise their ministry on the boundaries of the Church, in breaking new ground with "fresh expressions" of church and mission, and in circles where there might otherwise be no representative public ministry of the Church.

9. We recommend that dioceses and deaneries and parishes should look for opportunities for the appointment of Readers as chaplains both to institutions where chaplains are already recognised and in places where such an appointment breaks new ground.

10. We recommend that the office of Reader, in keeping with other ministerial categories in the Church, is to be seen as fluid rather than static and part of an ongoing journey of vocation, the nature of which is regularly discerned afresh. To address this, dioceses will need a team of vocations advisers to cover the full range of ministries.

11. We recommend that dioceses support parishes in the careful discernment of potential gifts in lay people and certainly prior to them being considered for selection for training as Readers. This is to include the discernment of gifts for the core

ministries of preaching and teaching, leading worship and interpreting the faith, by such opportunities being given by incumbents to lay people.

12. We recommend that parishes specifically encourage vocations to Reader ministry, particularly among young adults.

13. We recommend that Regional Training Partnerships seek to create opportunities for those selected for training as Readers and ordained ministers to train together and ecumenically.

14. We recommend that without lowering standards, training programmes for Reader Ministry need to be more flexible. They should be accessible and designed to encourage candidates for ministry, particularly younger candidates. Course design needs to enable this by encouraging varied patterns of engagement and incorporating AP(E)L opportunities for former learning experiences to be recognised.

15. We recommend that dioceses encourage the ongoing development of Readers in ministry by offering CME modules in specialised areas of ministry and by providing resources for Readers to engage with appropriate training offered elsewhere.

16. We recommend that Readers are normally licensed to the deanery, although with a designated incumbent specified for accountability and support.

17. We recommend that Deaneries regularly invite Readers, as licensed ministers, to chapter meetings, making collaborative ministry more visible and fostering friendship amongst ministers.

18. We recommend that the name of the office of Reader is changed to Licensed Lay Minister (Reader).

19. We recommend that all lay ministers licensed by the bishop are known as Licensed Lay Ministers. A working sub-title can be added which may vary according to diocesan practice (e.g. Reader, Pastoral Assistant etc). Careful consideration, with consultation, is given to the possibility of a national framework through which these ministries can be nationally accredited and normally transferable between dioceses.

20. We recommend that Readers, as licensed ministers, and in a similar way to ordained ministers, have working agreements with their incumbents and deanery, regular ministerial review and appraisal, the provision of pastoral care other than their incumbent, access to grievance procedure and that they receive the regular communications in the diocese that are received by clergy.

21. We recommend that dioceses extensively promote training and support for collaborative ministry which all incumbents with Readers are expected to undergo, as well as Readers and all lay ministers.

22. We recommend that dioceses ensure that Readers, as licensed ministers, are consulted over the appointments of incumbents and assistant clergy, as a matter of course.

23. We recommend that all dioceses of the Church of England recognise the value of Reader ministry and actively promote it as the best trained and resourced lay ministry with a wide variety of opportunities.

24. We recommend that the House of Bishops clarifies what expectations there are of Readers and other Licensed Lay Ministers in view of their role as public representatives and teachers of the Christian Faith as the Church of England sets it forth and the House sets in train the preparation of an acceptable disciplinary procedure for Readers.

25. We recommend that the House of Bishops requests the Ministry Division to set in train a revision of the Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry.

26. We recommend that dioceses should encourage Readers and all Licensed Lay Ministers to attend to their own spiritual refreshment and development with times in which they step back from active involvement and by provision of financial support for courses relevant to their vocation.

27. We recommend that the House of Bishops decides whether it wishes to clarify further those circumstances under which it might be appropriate for a bishop to permit a Reader, or other Licensed Lay Minister, to baptise.

28. We recommend that where parishes have permission to hold Public Services of Communion by Extension, Readers, in the light of their training, are considered as the primary choice among lay officiants. The guidelines for this synodically approved ministry should be applied more evenly across the country.

29. We recommend that on-going support be given in the dioceses for Readers to explore their vocation to ministry and to specific missional tasks, including the possibility of ordained ministry either to the vocational diaconate or the priesthood.

30. We recommend that bishops who support the ordination of a Reader who is 55 or over, take into account the experience of a long-standing Reader when assessing training needs.

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