



# THE DIOCESE OF LONDON

## Reader Ministry



# *Bishop's Regulations and Guidelines*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Reader ministry is an ancient office of the Church, which is derived from the Lector of the Early Church. The House of Bishops revived it in 1866.

At the time of Admission to that Office by a Bishop each Reader makes the declaration of assent and obedience set out in paragraph 4 of canon E5. These declarations are renewed at the time of licensing or relicensing except when licensing follows immediately after Admission.

The Reader ministry is primarily a ministry of communication. The role of the Reader is to be a communicator of the faith. This will include among other activities, teaching, preaching and catechising, as well as leading or participating in conducting worship. The provisions governing Reader ministry are laid down in current Canon E4, E5 and E6. (Reproduced in the Appendix of this document.)

The Reader is a member of staff of their parish and assists in the pastoral and liturgical work of the churches. They are normally licensed to the Incumbent or Priest in Charge of their parish to work there and in the relevant deanery.

## 2 STRUCTURE WITHIN THE DIOCESE OF LONDON

The Officers with diocesan wide responsibility for Reader ministry are The Warden of Readers, The Secretary for Readers and The Moderator of Reader Training.

Each Area Bishop appoints an Area Warden of Readers to whom, in the first instance enquiries about Reader ministry should be referred.

These officers are listed in the London Diocesan Year Book and on the website.

## 3 THE DUTIES OF READERS

A Reader is permitted by Canon:

- to visit the sick, to read and pray with them
- to teach in Sunday School and elsewhere
- to undertake generally such pastoral and educational work and to give such assistance to any minister as the bishop may direct.

A Reader is authorised:

- to read Morning and Evening Prayer (omitting the Absolution); most authorised forms of service indicate the alternatives to the Absolution that are appropriate.
- to publish banns of marriage in accordance with the requirements of statute law
- to read the Word of God; this includes the Old Testament, the Epistle and the Gospel at Holy Communion
- to preach, including at Holy Communion and at Morning and Evening Prayer
- to catechise
- to receive and present the offerings of the people.

They are permitted by right of their licence to distribute the Eucharistic elements. The general authorisation includes Extended Communion, e.g. to the sick or housebound, immediately after a celebration of the Eucharist. Additional specific permission from the Bishop is required in all other circumstances, including for administration of Holy Communion from the Reserved Sacrament.

They are authorised, provided they have received specific training, to bury the dead or read the burial service before, at or after a cremation but only with the goodwill of the persons responsible and at the invitation of the minister of the parish or place. The necessary training may be arranged by the Area Warden in conjunction with the Incumbent or Priest in Charge.

#### **4 SELECTION**

Parishes are encouraged to nominate for consideration and training for Reader ministry those lay persons who show potential for this important ministry. Candidates must be baptised and confirmed Anglicans who are regular communicants. Candidates for Reader ministry should normally be in the age range 25 to 65 at the time of their Admission.

An Incumbent or Priest in Charge who wishes to nominate a candidate for training as a Reader should contact the Area Warden of Readers, who will send them the appropriate forms. At this stage it is sensible to review with the candidate other forms of authorised lay ministry as well as Reader ministry so that the appropriate choice is made. Before formal consideration can be given to the nomination, it must be discussed with the PCC; such discussion should include the way in which the Reader will exercise their ministry, especially where there has been no previous experience of Reader ministry in the parish. The PCC must pass a resolution in support of the nomination. The Incumbent or Priest in Charge and the PCC thus commit themselves to the support of the candidate during training and on successful completion it is anticipated that the candidate will be licensed to the Incumbent or Priest in Charge for work within the Deanery.

Following completion of all preliminary processes the Area Warden of Readers arranges such interviews as are local custom in the Area and at some stage submits the papers and a recommendation to the Area Bishop, who may arrange to meet the candidate. He will decide whether or not to accept the candidate for training.

#### **5 INITIAL TRAINING**

The training of Readers is designed to give both the theological background and the practical skills required for the work and office of a Reader. It is reviewed to meet both national guidelines and the needs of this diocese and its mission to the people of London.

The training of Readers is moderated nationally under the auspices of the Advisory Board of Ministry. The Area Warden is responsible for meeting the candidate and, subject to the wishes of the Area Bishop, organising a suitable programme of initial training. The programme, usually for three years, will accord with the Diocesan Scheme and be tailored to the needs of the candidate, taking into account previous educational profile and the specific needs of their parish and Area.

During training, candidates are allowed to preach under the supervision of their Incumbent or Priest in Charge, or of a Tutor, as part of the training process.

On successful completion of their initial training, Readers receive a national certificate; this ensures that their training is acceptable to other dioceses, but does not confer automatically the right to be admitted and/or licensed. The decision to admit and license a Reader rests with the Area Bishop.

Parishes are expected to make a realistic contribution to the cost of training and preparation for ministry e.g. books, robes, conferences etc. and associated expenses, including travel costs.

#### **6 ADMISSION AND LICENSING**

##### **Admission**

Before admission the Reader must make the declarations of assent and obedience as prescribed in canon. A Reader is admitted to the Office of Reader by a Bishop and receives a New Testament as a token of the Office and a Certificate of Admission. Normally there will be one Service of Admission held each year. Admission is performed only once and is not repeated e.g. on moving to another diocese.

### **Licensing**

Before exercising their office, a Reader must hold a current licence or written permission to officiate from the Diocesan or Area Bishop. It is usual for the Reader to be licensed to the Incumbent or Priest in Charge of a Parish and for work in the appropriate Deanery. Usually the licence is issued for up to five years and must be submitted for renewal prior to the Quinquennial Relicensing of Readers.

During an interregnum all references to the Incumbent or Priest in Charge are assumed to refer to the Area Dean. A licence must be renewed when a new Incumbent or Priest in Charge is appointed. The new Incumbent or Priest in Charge returns the Reader's licence to the Area Warden of Readers and requests that the Reader be re-licensed, after discussion with and the agreement of the PCC. This should be within six months of the new appointment. If at this time the Incumbent or Priest in Charge and Reader have not agreed on renewal then this should be discussed with the Area Warden of Readers.

It is normal for Readers to retire at 70. However, Readers may be granted continuing permission to officiate on a quinquennial basis at the discretion of the Bishop, on the application of the Incumbent or Priest in Charge and the PCC.

Ill health or other change in personal circumstances may lead a Reader, after discussion with the Incumbent or Priest in Charge and Area Warden, when appropriate, to surrender their licence or permission to officiate.

After retirement or surrender of licence or of permission to officiate, the title of Reader Emeritus may be conferred by the appropriate Bishop as a mark of official recognition of previous service and as a continuing link with Reader Ministry in the Diocese.

Readers may not be licensed in this diocese whilst holding a licence in another Diocese. They may, however, receive permission to officiate in writing from a Bishop of this Diocese.

Readers must surrender their licence or permission to officiate if it is revoked by the Diocesan Bishop. This should be a very rare event and in these circumstances the Reader does have the right of appeal to the Archbishop of Canterbury. However, this step should not be taken until the Reader has discussed the issues with the Diocesan Warden of Readers.

Readers and Incumbents or Priests in Charge are encouraged to meet regularly to ensure that they build up good relationships for the benefit of God's ministry. When it appears that this is not happening, either the Reader or the Incumbent or Priest in Charge, preferably both, should discuss matters with the Area Warden of Readers.

Incumbents or Priests in Charge and their Readers are encouraged to meet each year for a structured review of the Reader's ministry during the previous year and to identify strengths and also areas for development. Records of these reviews will be useful when completing the formal application for quinquennial relicensing.

## **7 CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

Parishes should be fully aware of their responsibilities to their Reader. It is important that this process begins when a candidate is nominated for Reader training and that the support given by the PCC is prayerful as well as tangible.

Readers and their Incumbent or Priest in Charge should have a clear agreement over the duties to be undertaken by the Reader, taking into account:

- the particular expression of the individual's ministry
- the role of the Reader in the local ministry team and in relation to the PCC
- the arrangements for continuing training and development
- the balance between their ministry commitments, other church activities, domestic life, work and leisure
- the arrangements for reimbursement of expenses incurred through performance of the Reader's duties, including loss of earnings.

This agreement must be regularly reviewed and will form the basis for the quinquennial report. Readers are encouraged to keep records of the duties they have undertaken and of their continuing formal and informal ministerial development.

Readers should consult their Incumbent or Priest in Charge before accepting engagements outside their parish or of an ecumenical nature.

Readers are expected to continue their training and development throughout their Reader Ministry. This should include attendance at In Service Training Events organised by Areas and the Diocese. They are encouraged to consider undertaking work towards the Archbishops' Diploma for Readers or other recognised qualifications or awards.

As a member of staff of the Parish, Readers should attend staff meetings as appropriate.

Readers are not automatically members of the PCC of the parish where they serve. It is for the Annual Parochial Church meeting to decide whether all or any of the Readers of the parish should be members of the PCC in that capacity. Alternatively, a Reader may be elected as one of the lay representatives or co-opted. It is desirable that the interests of Readers should be represented on the PCC.

The formal vesture of a Reader is cassock, surplice, blue scarf and academic hood (where appropriate). The scarf should be plain and not embroidered or otherwise decorated. This is the correct dress for such occasions when clergy also wear formal vesture. Local custom may suggest variations on other occasions, for instance when it is more appropriate for a Reader to wear an alb.

## **8 FINANCE**

The initial registration and annual capitation fee for each Reader payable to the Central Readers Council, and the cost of the magazine "The Reader" are met from diocesan funds.

Readers are voluntary and unpaid and should not accept a fee for their services. However, they should be reimbursed for travelling and other expenses, including loss of earnings, incurred through the performance of their duties, especially outside their parish.

When Readers conduct a funeral they may not retain the fee. The fee should be handed to the Incumbent or Priest in Charge, who should arrange to reimburse the Reader's expenses, or during an inter-regnum to the PCC Treasurer.

Car mileage may be reimbursed at the rate indicated in the current London Diocesan Year Book as appropriate for those undertaking occasional duty.

## **9 TRANSFER OR REDEPLOYMENT**

When a Reader moves to another parish in the Area, the Incumbent or Priest in Charge, with the agreement of the PCC, may apply to the Area Warden for a new licence to be issued. Under normal circumstances a minimum period of six months should lapse before such an application.

When a Reader moves to a parish in another Area, the Reader should inform both Area Wardens. The new licence should then be applied for, as described above.

If a Reader moves from another diocese then it would be helpful if the Diocesan Warden of Readers were informed. After an appropriate interval, the procedure for issuing a new licence should be initiated by the Incumbent or Priest in Charge.

The Diocesan Warden of Readers will be responsible for obtaining confirmation from the other area or diocese as appropriate.

Local pastoral requirements may make it appropriate for a Reader to exercise a long-term ministry in another parish in the appropriate deanery at the request of the Area Dean and with the agreement of the Incumbents or Priests in Charge and PCCs.

When a Reader surrenders their licence, it is to be returned to the Bishop via the Area Warden.

If the Reader is moving to another diocese, it is also good practice to inform the Warden of Readers in that diocese as well as advising their present Bishop, via the Area Warden.

## **10 APPENDIX - THE CANONS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

### **E4 OF READERS**

1. A lay person, whether man or woman, who is baptised 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 any duty or 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 of 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 catechise 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 authorise 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.

### **E5 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 or 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 authorised 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.

### **E6 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 authorising 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 the declaration following:

“I, A B, about to be licensed to exercise the 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 my fellow men. 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 of 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 twenty-eight 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 of 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 is 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 made for the stipend of the said reader, for his insurance against sickness or accident, and for a pension on his retirement.

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