

BISHOPS' REGULATIONS FOR READER MINISTRY

As issued by the Bishop of Exeter May 2001



**Main text as issued by the Archbishops' Council for national use.
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INTRODUCTION

The House of Bishops have accepted these Regulations for Reader Ministry and authorised their publication to be used in all dioceses.

Readers play an increasingly important part in the ministry of the Church of England. Their significant contribution is acknowledged in the publication of these Regulations which are intended to provide an agreed framework for further growth and development. Readers bear considerable responsibility in the Church as lay ministers authorised by Canon with a preaching, teaching and liturgical ministry in a pastoral context. These Regulations clarify the basis of their duties and the practice of their ministry, and provide a common understanding to be applied in all dioceses.

On behalf of the House of Bishops we commend these Regulations to the Church

Chairman - Ministry Division of
The Archbishops' Council

+ Michael Dunelm

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+ Christopher Manchester

January 2000

DEFINITIONS

Dioceses have different structures and use different terminology for the people responsible for the organisation, oversight and pastoral care of Readers and Readers in training.

In this paper the term **Warden (of Readers)** should be understood as referring to the person appointed by the Bishop to have overall responsibility (however this may be delegated) for Readers in the diocese and includes Bishop's Advisers, Deans of Reader Ministry etc. **Readers' Board** also includes Committee and Council.

In the same way, recognising that the ministry of many Readers is in a chaplaincy situation (in hospital, hospice, prison, the armed forces, school, or among people with a disability) the words **incumbent, parish and PCC** are used to include the sponsoring clergy, area of ministry and responsible authority respectively. In a parochial situation **incumbent** includes team rector, (team vicar), priest-in-charge or other minister with responsibility for a parish.

CANON 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 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 of marriage at Morning or Evening Prayer (on occasions on which a layman is permitted by the statute law so to do, and in accordance with the provisions 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 the 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 who he has either admitted to the office of Reader or licensed to exercise that office in any place.

CANON 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 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 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 preceded the Declaration of assent in paragraph 1(1) of Canon C15 (with the appropriate adaptations) having first been spoken by the bishop or commissary.

I, AB, 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, AB, 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 office; and the admission shall not be repeated if the Reader shall move to another diocese.

CANON 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 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 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 the 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 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 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 the Reader shall have the like right of appeal as any other Reader whose licence is revoked under that paragraph.

4. No bishop shall licence 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.

1 THE DUTIES OF READERS

The ministry of Readers in the Church of England is governed by Canons E4, E5 and E6 (as in force at 30th September 1999) which are printed on pages 3 to 6.

- 1.1 The primary duties of Readers are **to preach and teach, and to conduct or assist in conducting worship.**
- 1.2 Readers assist in the pastoral, evangelistic and liturgical work of the Church in the parish or area where they are licensed or have the bishop's written permission to officiate in so far as their licence or written permission allows, and in accordance with what is agreed with the minister to whom they are responsible.
- 1.3 The lawful duties of a Reader as set out in Canon E4 are as follows:
 - a. **to preach at any service**
 - b. **to lead worship** including Morning and Evening Prayer, appropriate parts of the Holy Communion service, and such other services as may be authorised or allowed by the Canons of the Church of England or approved by the bishop, including a service with Communion by Extension.

Diocese of Exeter.

A Reader may lead a service of Public Worship with Communion by Extension, using the approved order of service, but only after receiving explicit written authority from the relevant suffragan bishop on the application of the Readers' incumbent or supervising minister. An agreed course of preparation for this ministry will be required by the bishop and applications will not normally be accepted for a Reader with less than three years' post-admission experience.

- c. to read the Old or New Testament readings, Epistle or Gospel at any service, to lead intercessions, to receive and present the offerings of the people, to distribute the consecrated bread and wine to the people, to take Communion to the sick and housebound and to publish banns of marriage in the absence of a priest. A Reader who publishes banns

should sign the Banns Book but not the Certificate of Banns, which must be signed by a clerk in holy orders, normally the incumbent,

- d. to officiate at funeral services (but only with the good will of the persons responsible) provided that the Reader is authorised by the bishop to do so, and is invited by the minister of the parish or place (or, during a vacancy, the rural dean) (See Regulation 6.4 about the procedure for funeral fees).

Diocese of Exeter.

Readers may officiate at funeral services, but only after receiving explicit written authority from the relevant suffragan bishop on the application of the Readers' incumbent or supervising minister. An agreed course of preparation for this ministry will be required by the bishop and applications will not normally be accepted for a Reader with less than two years' post-admission experience.

- e. to undertake pastoral and educational work
- f. to give such other assistance to any minister as the bishop may direct

1.4 Readers may not

- a. officiate at the sacrament of baptism except in an emergency situation when it is lawful for a lay person to baptise,
- b. officiate at a marriage service,
- c. pronounce the Absolution or give a Blessing but should use an authorised alternative form of words.

1.5 Readers may accept invitations to take part in services in a church of another denomination to which the Church of England (Ecumenical Relations) Measure 1988 applies provided that the duties they undertake in the service are the same as or similar to those they are authorised to perform in the Church of England. Readers should obtain the approval of the incumbent of the parish where the service is to take place or, where they intend to participate regularly in such a service, of the bishop of the diocese and the PCC of the parish where the service is to take place.

- 1.6 In local ecumenical projects and partnerships [LEPs], Readers may, with the permission of the bishop (given after consultation with the PCC) undertake such duties in the area covered by the project as the bishop may specify.
- 1.7 Readers' licences authorise them to minister in their own dioceses. Invitations to preach or officiate (including at a funeral service) in a different diocese should be referred to the bishop of that diocese, normally through the Warden of Readers of that diocese.

2 SELECTION

Regulations on procedure for selection, as agreed with the House of Bishops, are set out in ABM Policy Paper No 7 *Selection for Reader Ministry* (January 1998)

- 2.1 Candidates for Reader ministry should normally be nominated to the Bishop by the incumbent of the parish or the minister of the place where they intend to minister, with the agreement of the PCC of the parish, or its equivalent in other contexts.

Diocese of Exeter.

Candidates for Reader ministry should normally be nominated to the Archdeaconry Warden of Readers by the incumbent of the parish or the minister of the place where they intend to minister, with the agreement of the PCC of the parish, or its equivalent in other contexts.

- 2.2 The selection of candidates for Reader ministry is the responsibility of the diocese, exercised usually through a panel of selectors appointed by the Bishop in consultation with the Warden. The process of selection should be thorough and rigorous.
- 2.3 The criteria for selection are set out in detail in ABM Policy Paper 7 under the following areas: vocation, faith, spirituality and worship, personality and character, relationships, potential for training. The summary provided by Paper 7 should be photocopied and circulated to potential candidates and their clergy.

Diocese of Exeter.

Applicants who are remarried after divorce or who have married a divorced person may not be admitted to training unless the Diocesan Bishop grants a dispensation to enable them to do so. Such applicants will be interviewed by the Chairman of the Board of Readers or other person designated by the Diocesan Bishop. Following the interview, the application will be referred to the Diocesan Bishop for his decision.

- 2.4 Care must be taken at an early stage that those who are interviewed are eligible to serve as Readers: candidates must be baptised and episcopally confirmed

and be regular communicants of the Church of England, and be familiar with its traditions and practices.

- 2.5 The current House of Bishops' Policy on Child Protection requires a candidate for ministry to complete a confidential statement. The diocese will arrange for this to be checked against the Index of the Department of Health Consultancy Service, which is a service for checking the suitability of candidates for appointment to posts which may involve unsupervised contact with children. Candidates must complete the necessary disclosure statement in connection with this policy before undergoing the diocesan selection procedure.
- 2.6 The process of selection should include adequate contact between the candidate and the Warden, sufficient interviews with diocesan selectors and the consultation of referees. References should be supplied by several referees who know the candidate well, including the incumbent. The Parochial Church Council (or equivalent) in the place where the candidate would serve must express its approval and a copy of the minute recording that approval should be made available by the PCC Secretary. A selection report should be written for each candidate. In the case of those selected for training, a copy of the report should be sent to those overseeing their training.
- 2.7 The diocese should ensure that appropriate pastoral care is provided for candidates who are not recommended for Reader training.
- 2.8 Dioceses should ensure that the selection and training for potential Readers is accessible without discrimination to all eligible members of the Church. This will necessitate the choice of suitable premises with facilities such as ramps, lifts, a loop system, appropriate toilets and when necessary the provision of sign language interpreters.

3 TRAINING

- 3.1 Each diocese should provide a course of training which appropriately prepares potential Readers for the exercise of a preaching, teaching and liturgical ministry in a pastoral context. The course should have due regard for the development of potential Readers in knowledge and understanding, skills, spirituality and personal witness sufficient for their admission to the office of Reader. Training should be financed by the diocese or parish. i.e. at no cost to the trainee.

Diocese of Exeter.

The training programme for any candidate will be agreed by and remain under the oversight of the Archdeaconry Warden. The training period is normally three years.

- 3.2 The diocesan courses are subject to inter-diocesan consultation, and national moderation which is the responsibility of the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council in liaison with the Central Readers' Council.
- 3.3 The national scope of Reader ministry is reflected in the provision of the Church of England Readers' Certificate to registered trainees who satisfactorily complete a diocesan course which is moderated nationally. The award of the certificate is administered by the Ministry Division. Bishops should ensure that candidates for admission as Readers have been awarded the certificate.
- 3.4 Dioceses should require licensed Readers to undertake post-admission training and Continuing Ministerial Education and provide financial help for them to do so; where appropriate such training should be held in conjunction with other ministers, lay and ordained. To assist in this the Central Readers Council arranges regular national conferences, and an annual study course at Selwyn College Cambridge.

4. ADMISSION AND LICENSING

4.1 Before exercising their office, Readers must

- a. be admitted to office by a bishop and
- b. hold a current licence or written permission to officiate from the bishop in the diocese in which they intend to minister.

4.2 Candidates for admission must be baptised and episcopally confirmed and be regular communicants of the Church of England. The bishop, in consultation with the Warden and those responsible for diocesan selection and training, should be satisfied that those to be admitted are nominated in accordance with Canon E5 and are suitable in faith, learning and personal life as described in Canon E5.2 and 3. (See section 3.3 above) At **admission** a Reader must make the declaration of assent and obedience as prescribed in Canon E5.4 and receives a certificate of admission and a copy of the New Testament. Admission is not repeated when the Reader moves to a new parish or diocese. (See also section 7 “Deployment and Transfer”).

4.3 All Readers in active ministry under the age of 70 must hold a bishop’s licence which should be subject to regular renewal, normally every three or five years. The licence should indicate the area in which they may minister and the duties they are permitted to perform. Readers must seek permission from the bishop before exceeding the terms of their licence. Before being **licensed** the Reader is required to make the declarations as prescribed in Canons E5.4 and E6.2.

Diocese of Exeter.

The bishop’s licence will be subject to renewal every three years from Michaelmas 2000. Readers will be licensed to a parish or benefice, but in exceptional circumstances and with the consent of the licensing bishop a Reader may be licensed to a deanery or archdeaconry.

4.4 Readers may only minister in a diocese other than that in which they are licensed with permission to officiate from the bishop of the diocese concerned.

4.5 Readers invited to conduct a service or to preach outside their own diocese should ask permission from the Bishop of the diocese concerned, normally through the Warden of Readers of that diocese.

- 4.6 On reaching the age of 70 Readers who wish to remain in active ministry should apply for a bishop's written permission to officiate. This should indicate the area in which they may minister and the duties they are permitted to perform. It should be for a limited period subject to renewal.

Diocese of Exeter.

A permission to officiate will be subject to renewal every three years from Michaelmas 2000.

- 4.7 Readers who have surrendered their written permission to officiate may be given the title Reader Emeritus as an indication of their continuing link with the Reader network, though retired from active ministry.
- 4.8 During a clergy vacancy it is normally appropriate for the Reader's ministry to continue with supervision and support from the Rural Dean and churchwardens. A potential incumbent should be made aware of any existing Readers in the parish and declare acceptance of the principles and practice of Reader ministry.
- 4.9 At a suitable time after the end of the vacancy the new incumbent (priest in charge etc.) in consultation with the PCC should re-nominate the Reader to the Bishop for the licence to be updated. If at the end of, say, six months the new incumbent or the Reader cannot agree to re-nomination the matter should be considered by the Bishop in consultation with the Rural Dean and the Warden of Readers.

Diocese of Exeter.

After the ending of a vacancy a Readers' licence to a parish or benefice will continue unless, within six months of taking up that post, the new incumbent (or equivalent) asks for the licence to be revoked. Such a request must be made to the relevant suffragan bishop who will decide the matter. The Readers' Licence remains in force pending the bishop's decision.

- 4.10 Readers must surrender their licence or permission to officiate if it is revoked by the bishop. Sufficient opportunity should be given to the Reader to show reasons to the contrary. Where a licence is revoked summarily, the Reader should be notified in writing of the revocation and of the right of appeal to the Archbishop as laid down in Canon E6 paragraph 3.

4.11 A register of all Readers holding a licence or written permission to officiate should be kept in each diocese by the Bishop, Warden or Registrar. It should contain the Reader's date of birth, full name and address, dates of admission and first and subsequent licensing, and details of the parish or context in which the ministry is exercised.

5 CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

- 5.1 Readers, clergy, and those among whom the Readers are to minister should be clearly informed by the Warden of the duties, rights and obligations of Readers in the exercise of their ministry, through the provision by the diocese of a copy of the Bishops' Regulations for Readers and any relevant diocesan statement, regulations or guidelines.
- 5.2 Readers should make a written agreement with their incumbent or minister over the duties to be undertaken by the Reader, taking into account:
- a. the particular expression of the individual's ministry;
 - b. the role of the Reader in the local ministerial team and in relation to the PCC;
 - c. the arrangements for post-admission training and regular attendance at Reader meetings;
 - d. the balance between their commitments as Readers and the requirements of their family, work and leisure;
 - e. the arrangements for reimbursement of expenses incurred through Performance of the Reader's duties;
 - f. the arrangements for regular meetings between Reader, clergy and other staff.

This agreement should be regularly reviewed by Reader and incumbent together, normally once a year, and at the time of the renewal of licence.

- 5.3 Readers should keep a record of services led, sermons preached, training attended and other ministry exercised, and, when requested, report to the Warden or an appointed delegate. The report should be discussed with the incumbent who should be asked to countersign it and add appropriate comments.

- 5.4 Periodically Readers should undergo a formal in-depth review of their ministry; dioceses will vary in their requirement but it is recommended that such a review take place every three or five years paying attention to areas of fulfilment and satisfaction, noting opportunities for expansion of ministry or re-deployment, and needs for refreshment or retraining. The review may be conducted by a member of the diocesan Reader organisation or by another approved person, using either a system such as PROFILES (provide by Central Readers Council) or ABM Ministry Paper No 19 “*Servants and Shepherds*” (November 1998), or a specially devised diocesan scheme. Subject to issues of confidentiality, a brief summary should be placed in the Reader’s records.
- 5.5 As a matter of courtesy Readers should consult their incumbent or minister before accepting engagements outside their own parish or district.
- 5.6 Readers are not automatically *ex officio* members of the PCC; each parish should decide at an Annual Parochial Church Meeting its policy for Readers as regards membership of the PCC. Readers may be *ex officio* or co-opted members (or, where there are several Readers one or two may represent the others) or may be elected by the APCM as one of the parochial representatives.

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There are particular opportunities available to Readers in the benefices of formal team ministries, largely through the provisions of the Team and Group Ministries Measure 1995. A summary (*as revised February 1998*) of the provisions is available from the Chairman or Secretary of the Diocesan Board of Readers.

- 5.7 The normal dress of Readers for liturgical duties is cassock, surplice, hood of degree (where appropriate) and plain blue scarf. A cassock alb may be worn at the Holy Communion if this is the custom of the parish.

6 FINANCE

- 6.1 Readers are voluntary and unpaid ministers and do not accept fees for their services.
- 6.2 Readers should be reimbursed for travelling and other expenses incurred through the performance of their duties. In the case of expenses relating to duties undertaken in the parish where the Reader is licensed, arrangements for their payment should be clearly indicated in the written agreement over duties (see Regulation 5.2e). Mileage should be paid by the parish at the diocesan rate, unless there is a diocesan scheme for reimbursement by the diocesan Readers Board. In the case of expenses incurred through serving elsewhere, the parish using the services of Readers should ensure that they are fully reimbursed.
- 6.3 In some dioceses the parishes (or places where the Readers exercise their ministry) pay an annual retaining fee to the Diocesan Readers Board. In such places a fee is also usually payable by, or a donation is invited from, parishes which use the services of a Reader from another parish, especially in an interregnum
- 6.4 When Readers conduct a funeral, they may not retain the fee. It is normal for Readers to collect the fee payable in respect of the service and to pass this to the incumbent or PCC treasurer. They may receive reimbursement from the undertaker or incumbent for loss of earnings and expenses incurred through conducting the service and providing the related pastoral care for the bereaved family. In a vacancy the incumbent's fee should be paid to the Diocesan Board of Finance or in accordance with its directions. The incumbent and Board should agree to the Reader retaining a sum for expenses and loss of earnings from the fee. . In particular circumstances where Readers are heavily involved in funerals but are not in a position to be reimbursed for loss of earnings, the Warden, after consultation with the appropriate diocesan body, may agree to the payment of an honorarium by the PCC.

7. DEPLOYMENT & TRANSFER

- 7.1 In appropriate circumstances Readers may be seconded or redeployed to new areas of ministry, either in a different parish or parishes or to a specialised (sector) ministry. ABM Ministry Paper No. 20 *The Deployment of Readers* (November 1998) considers in some detail the possibility of Readers exercising their ministry in parishes other than their home parish, and provides a suitable code of practice.
- 7.2 It is good practice for Readers who are moving to a new area or diocese to contact the Warden concerned as soon as possible and to discuss where they might most usefully be deployed.
- 7.3 When Readers move to another parish or place within the same diocese they should inform the Warden or designated officer. After a sufficient period, normally of six months, the incumbent of the parish or minister in charge of the place where the Reader worships, in consultation with the Reader and with the agreement of the PCC, should contact the Warden to ask that the Reader's licence be transferred, or a new licence prepared.
- 7.4 When Readers move to another diocese the following procedure should be followed:
- i The Reader notifies the Warden of the move to another diocese, in advance if possible.
 - ii On arrival in the new diocese, the Reader should contact the incumbent or minister in charge of the parish where he or she intends to worship regularly.
 - iii After the Reader has worshipped at the new location for a sufficient period, normally six months, the incumbent or minister should apply to the Warden of the diocese, in consultation with the Reader and with the agreement of the PCC to ask that the Reader be licensed.
 - iv The Warden of the diocese to which the Reader has moved should contact the Warden of the diocese which the Reader has left asking if the Reader is in good standing or if there is any reason why a new licence should not be given.