

Association of Lincoln Readers
Warden's report 2020-2021

This time last year there was a level of anticipation. We were hearing that COVID vaccines would be rolled out over the winter and spring and there was the promise from government that there would be no more lockdowns.

Well, now we know! Or at least we know that COVID is less of a threat because of the vaccines. We also know that life is still not back to normal. And maybe we know, more than ever in most of our lifetimes, that thinking we can plan anything with absolute certainty that it will happen as we expect it to is a luxury that we cannot rely on.

We also know that, despite all of the uncertainty, the work of ministry continues. God is still calling people to ministry across the country and in our diocese. Sonia Barron (Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Vocations) has a group of around 25 people exploring vocations which includes quite a few looking at the possibility of Reader ministry. 9 new Readers and 1 person transferring from another diocese were licensed this morning. We welcome them into the Reader Association of this diocese and look forward to getting to know them and benefiting from their many and varied gifts over the years to come.

Time to Change - Together (Resourcing Sustainable Church) is a process that asks us to consider a number of cultural shifts, from the emphasis on generous living and covenanted giving to the way we categorize our churches and offer ministry within our communities. The emphasis on lay ministry and collaborative team working has already seen a significant rise in enquiries about ALM training and resourcing. A number of deaneries have continued to offer the *To Love and Serve the Lord* course and initial training in areas of ministry for ALMs online throughout lockdowns and uncertainty about meeting in person.

Lay ministers, both Readers and ALMs have taken significant roles in leading worship online; both in the offering of liturgies (live-streamed and recorded) and by providing technological expertise. Thank you to everyone who has worked so hard to advance the worshipping life of our parishes and to maintain pastoral contact and relationships with those who would otherwise have been isolated and even more vulnerable than they have been this past 18 months.

The national picture for lay ministry is also encouraging. Carrie Myers (National Lay Ministries Officer) has led on a number of projects, ranging from gathering people in lay ministry diocesan roles on a regular basis online to heading up the team working on the new Licensed Lay Ministry/Reader discernment and formation frameworks. These frameworks are beginning to be adopted nationally and we are sharing insights across dioceses as we develop new selection processes and embed the new, characteristics-based, frameworks into the formation of those in training now. The anticipated outcome of these frameworks is that the discernment and training processes will lead to the development of people in lay ministry roles who have a deep understanding of their own calling and are equipped to take on the leadership roles that will be expected of everyone with a bishop's licence as we inhabit new ways of being church.

Training events in 2021-2022 will be offered to meet the needs of the Time to Change Together aims. These will be developed in partnership with Jackie Johnson (Wellbeing and CMD Officer) and others who will form the College of St Hugh team. Please do watch out for these events and take every opportunity you can to be part of the changing culture of our diocese. This is a key moment for the church in our diocese and lay voices are being encouraged and heard in a way that has not always been the case. This is probably a once in a lifetime opportunity to be part of such significant change.

Many of us are tired as a result of the past 18 months. We need to look after ourselves and our families as well as offering ourselves in ministry. It is therefore really important that we pray and talk about what the emphasis of our ministries should be now, which may be something different from what we are in the habit of offering. Over the next few months there will be the opportunity

to meet with me or a member of the Reader Board Standing Committee for a vocational conversation. These conversations will be rolled out first to Readers with full licences, followed by those with PTO. Please do engage creatively with these conversations as they will allow us to gain a picture of lay ministry across the diocese and to offer appropriate resourcing and training. They will also be a time to explore areas of ministry that you may have felt called to but not yet been able to exercise. But most importantly they will provide time and space with someone to talk about the joys, sorrows, excitements and stress points of your life and ministry and then to ponder how all of this relates to your sense of vocation at this time.

Finally, I want to say a huge thank you to everyone for the ministry that has been offered over the past year and particularly to the Reader Board for their enthusiasm, energy and promotion of lay ministry in these often confusing, and always changing, times.

Dr Sally Buck
Warden of Lay Ministry
September 2021