

“Love the Lord your God; walk in all his ways”

Joshua 22:5

We have just welcomed five new Readers and two transferring from other dioceses. Please pray for them as they begin their ministry in this diocese. As last year I would ask that you also pray for people you know who show interest in faith and have the skills to communicate that faith both inside and outside the church. Most people report personal contact and relationships as being the beginning of their interest and understanding of their own vocation to lay ministry. You may just be that key person in someone's vocational journey.

This has been a year of consideration of ways in which we in this diocese might interpret the definition of Readers as Lay Theologians. November 2016's ecumenical study day led by Helen Dearnley from Prison Chaplaincy encouraged us to think about the theology of captivity and freedom. Helen's honesty and transparency challenged all who were present to consider our own ministries in new ways. 2017 began with a whole day meeting of the Governing Body at which Bishop Nicholas met with us in the morning. He encouraged us to consider ways in which Readers might take on board the ideas expressed by Jeff Astley in his work on *Ordinary Theology*. To know the world in which we live and minister, to know what those amongst whom we live and work think of God and faith (what their ordinary theology is and how they express it) and then to bring that into the community of the church in the light of our training as lay theologians is something that Readers very particularly offer to the Church. This theme was further developed at the Bishop's study day when Bishop Nicholas again challenged us to see ourselves as the lay theologians of the diocese.

I would like to record officially my thanks to Bishop Nicholas for his support and challenge of us in our licensed lay ministry roles. I would also like to thank John Marshall for his continued work as Chair of the Reader Governing Body and Shirley Keyes for taking on the Secretary General role and to all members of the Governing Body for all the work that they have put into education, pastoral care and governance of Readers across the diocese during this 12 month period. Special thanks to Linda Wass for making all of the events of the year happen and for keeping me in order!

During 2018 Central Readers Council are organising a number of consultation events, the result of which will be a clearer understanding of the role CRC and Ministry Division play in the support and resourcing of Reader ministry. Results of this consultation period will be shared once they have been made public some time later in 2018.

Here in Lincoln, it has been decided that from October 2017 until October 2018 will be a year in which lay ministry (both authorised and lay) is promoted in the diocese. Crosslinks will carry articles and stories of lay ministry and Deanery Chapters and Synods will be addressed. Please pray for this process and for the preparations for next year's annual service which will be a culmination of this promotional year and a celebration of lay ministries.

With my heartfelt thanks for the ministry being offered by every Reader in this diocese.

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)