



Diocese of Worcester Reader newsletter Easter 2021

The Warden writes...

I am writing this the day after the anniversary of the first death in the UK in 2020 from Coronavirus. So we have now had a whole year of daily listening to death totals across our nation. And of course, we aren't yet out of the metaphorical woods either.

Clergy leaders though, from the Archbishop of Canterbury down, are urging us to reflect on what we have learned and what we want to do differently after the pandemic.



Now, it may be because I shall be ending my Parish Ministry on Easter Sunday and finishing as Warden of Readers on May 9th, but I think it's all a bit premature to be thinking these kinds of things. I think it will take time for lessons to be learned, old habits to die out, real change to come in.... for all that some changes will be made whether we like them or not, and at a rate, whether it's to our taste or not. Surely there's a place for lament, for being kind to ourselves, being Jesus in our encounters whether online or in real time? Getting back to a Jesus based life?

In my Parish I'm leading a Lent Course, on Zoom, on the 'Imitation of Christ'. It is a spiritual classic, written by a then newish style of monk of the Devotio Moderna formation; and Thomas A Kempis, the author, (most likely), joined in 1392. That date is significant, for all that it is so long ago. The Brotherhood of the Common Life, which Thomas entered at the age of twelve, was a loosely formed organisation created in 1374, for the purpose of living as closely as possible in the style of the early Christians.

Thomas was born within a generation of the outbreak of bubonic plague, the Black Death that killed a third of our UK population. Furthermore, it was a continuous reality through his long life. So too was the warfare raging outside the monastery walls, the Hundred Years War, 1337-1453, between the English and French. The unrest spread through Europe. And too, there was conflict within the Church, then all Roman Catholic. After the times when there were two Pope's, one in Rome one in Avignon, France, the beginnings of a conflict began that would end with Luther's beginning of the break with Rome we call the Reformation.

That kind and level of civil disturbance, I hope and pray we shall not see, nor our successors. But we do face big issues:
plague / continuing coronavirus,
warfare / the threat of terrorism,
contumely in the church / persecution in many parts,
climate issues / and climate deniers,
refugees / political and economic;
and whilst perhaps not as extreme, we may think as 600 years ago, who knows how history will see things?

I didn't set out to be quite so teacherly. I never have been a teacher! But I don't like being made to make plans for something that may not happen, nor for how things turn out. It's not my Vocation. Not what God is calling me to do... until I retire and afterwards. At present I am supporting my parishioners by telephone and email, Zoom Meetings and online and real time services. And for Readers / LLMs, supporting you as appropriate, planning the Annual Discernment Day for the next cohort of LLM trainees and launching the accountability process so long on the books, The Ministerial Review Process, details separately. You will now all have completed your Annual Review. Thank you.

But I want to say something about my leaving. We had made plans for a Holland House Weekend last year; and now this year too, all the planning for Holland House has been changed. It will be on Zoom only. And at it I shall say farewell and formally cease to be your Warden. I shall though later in the year, when we hope that our pandemic is over and not as enduring as the one 600 years ago, I hope to see many of you again, not as your Warden but as someone who cares for and about you and your ministry. Bishop John intends thanking me for my ministry as Warden on September 18th when there is the planned Reader Celebration Service at the Cathedral. I hope to see many of you then. And hear how my legacy is working out....

My legacy: Now is the time to get the Ministerial Review process going before I finish. I have played but a small part. Many have been the labourers for far longer than me. But I really believe in this. I think it will strengthen relationships in parishes and affirm you . So, let this be my legacy to you, whom I love so much. I have rejoiced to serve you and know that the LLMs of this Diocese will long be on my heart and in my prayers. Thank you , for all you are and do. Thank you for all the support you gave me when I was so sick and for everything you do, in following the call of Jesus Christ and living in Imitation of Him.

Love and prayers

Canon Sue

Please read the important article with regard to
Ministerial Review on page 3!

The Ministerial Review process

Shortly, after Easter, a third of ALL current LLMs/Readers will be sent out from the Bishop's Office, to be returned within a month, **to** the Bishop's Office.

Most of that paperwork is:-

- An overview
- Prompts for reflection
- Various appendices (on one sheet of paper)
- Worked out examples

All that is background, please don't be overwhelmed nor put off. It is there to help.

Ministry Review (MR) is founded on the assumption that all in licensed ministry, whether ordained or lay, are responsible to God for the ministry entrusted to them and that they are accountable to the Church and to one another for the way in which it is exercised and the opportunities taken. Ministry is a gift and a trust for which each individual holds account.

Reviewing this ministry is about affirmation, celebration and encouragement as well as challenge.

MR provides a structure for accountability to God, to the parish, benefice or chaplaincy, to the Bishop whose licence we hold, and to the wider Church and society. It also reminds us of our shared responsibility with our colleagues in ministry and our responsibility to ourselves.

As ministers in the Diocese of Worcester we recognise that we are called to be people of the Kingdom and that this invitation is affirmed in our baptism. The role of a Reader (Licensed Lay Minister) is therefore set in the context of our continuing discipleship where we respond to the invitation to learn, grow and journey onward with Christ.

MR enables us to reflect on where we are in our God-given ministry and how we are continuing to respond to his call. The process of review should affirm people in their ministry and encourage a culture where we can take responsibility for our continuing development by providing a supportive framework for reflection and planning.

And when you have digested all that, prayed, discussed and met with colleagues, you complete with the minister with whom you work what may be

- A single sheet of Priorities
- But it can be expanded if necessary
- It is the single sheet (or more) that you return to the Bishop's office within a month.

This is advance notification. It really isn't anything to be troubled by. In time, I shall hear my successor saying that it is as routine as the Annual Review. But whereas we need **that** for doing a return to the Central Readers Council and for planning, The Ministerial Review is for YOU and the future relationship with the person with whom you work alongside, usually your vicar.

I have worked alongside Colleague Readers and members, including Canon Doug Chaplin, of the Ministry and Discipleship Team at the Old Palace, the Bishop's Office and the Archdeaconry Wardens, Kath Davis and Canon Nick Wright, then Rev'd Rob Farmer. All of people have looked at it and we have piloted it in two of the old Deaneries, Bromsgrove and Redditch, and Stourbridge. It has been tweaked and tweaked and tweaked. It's good to go.

Bless you and thank you to all those that contributed to this process. And I commend it heartily to you.

Prayers and Blessings
Canon Sue



READER WEEKEND
HOLLAND HOUSE. 7th & 8th May 2021

Always be prepared to give an answer (1 Peter 3: 15)
Exploring Apologetics in today's society

Speakers: Bishop John Pritchard

Friday 7th May

7.00 p.m. On-line admission
7.20 p.m. **Opening Prayer**
7.30 p.m. **AGM**
9 p.m. **Compline**
9.30 p.m. Online sign off and close

Saturday 8th May

9.00 a.m. On-line admission
9.15 a.m. **Morning Worship**
9.45 a.m. **Welcome to Bishop John Pritchard**
9.50 a.m. **Session 1**
11.15 a.m. Comfort break
11.30 a.m. **Session 2**
12.30 p.m. **Break-out rooms/reflective time**
1.15 p.m. Lunch
2.15 p.m. **Session 3**
3.00 p.m.. **Q&A session and feedback from the day**
Thanks to Bishop John
3.30 p.m. **Farewell to Sue Oliver, Warden of Readers**
4.00 p.m. **Closing Worship**
Led by Sue Oliver with closing reflection
4.45 p.m. Online sign off and close

Reader Weekend on Zoom
Friday 7th May - Saturday 8th May

Theme :Always be prepared to give an answer (1 Peter 3: 15)
Exploring Apologetics in today's society

You are invited to join us for our Reader Weekend on Zoom
PLEASE NOTE YOU NEED TO BOOK A PLACE THROUGH EVENTBRITE

Friday 7th May 7.00pm – 9.30pm

Saturday 8th May 9.00am – 5.00pm

(See opposite page for the full programme)

We welcome Bp John Pritchard, formerly Bishop of Oxford to lead our weekend this year looking at how we explain our faith to those outside the church.

We will also be saying farewell and thank you to Sue Oliver for her years as Warden.

Book for the AGM and social gathering on Friday evening

Book for Bishop John's sessions and Sue's farewell on Saturday.

Here's the link for the event, any problems, please let me know.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/reader-weekend-cmd-tickets-145287511859>

A link to the Zoom meeting will be sent to you on Thursday 6th May
in good time for the gathering

Thank You from the Registrar of Readers

Many thanks to all of you who have completed your Annual Review form and sent to me in good time. For some of you this has been in very difficult circumstances because of Covid 19. There are still some that are outstanding, and because of the current lockdown situation, I have extended the deadline from 28th February until 31st March. If you need help, please get in touch: elaine.voice7@gmail.com or 07747607216.

I would encourage all of you – including those with Permission to Officiate – to make a return so that your ministry can be acknowledged and celebrated with every other Reader in our Diocese.

Elaine Voice (Registrar of Readers)

“The Brick”

***The bricklayer laid a brick on a bed of cement.
Then, with a precise stroke of his trowel, spread another layer
And with a by-your-leave, laid on another brick.***

***The foundations grew visibly,
The building rose tall and strong, to shelter mankind.***

*I thought of that brick Lord, buried in the darkness at the base of that big building.
No one sees it, but it stands firm and accomplishes its task,
and other bricks need it, they rely on it, it is vital to the stability of the whole.*

*So Lord,
What difference whether I am on the roof-top
or in the foundations of your building, your Church,
as long as I stand faithfully, in the right place,
the place where you have called me to be,
humbly serving you as I serve others?*

The above is an extract from a book entitled “Prayers of Life” by Michel Quoist, (with a slight adaptation here and there from me). I offer it as something that may help you, as it has helped me, to put into a perspective that we can understand, the relevance and importance of the little things we do for God that can make a big difference, and exactly where we stand in His building.

Over the years, and especially throughout “Lock Down”, it has grounded my thinking and helped me to understand that we don't have to be seen, to be always doing something, or at the forefront of things, to be important to God and His plan. Quietly lending our support, listening and encouraging those around us is just as important to God and vital to the stability of Church family as a whole.

So, if in this time of Covid you have felt unloved, unnoticed, unappreciated and of no importance to anyone, then read again about the little brick which was completely buried, totally out of sight, ignored by everyone, yet also vital to the stability of that big building; recognise the importance of service in the small, insignificant and unseen areas of ministry.

With all of the above in mind, please consider and let me know whether you would like to join an informal and open discussion/support group, with Rob, myself and Charles Morgan from Halesowen, to be held at 10:30 on Tuesday 13 April 2021, I will send out a Zoom link to those who express an interest. If you are unable to access Zoom but would still like to express your thoughts and feelings, feel free to call me. There is no obligation to join or not, but be assured that all are very welcome.

Thank you for your willingness to be a small brick in God building of His Kingdom.

Kath Davis

Dudley Archdeaconry Warden of Readers

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Calendar for 2021

Friday 26th March		Quiet morning on Zoom led by Ven. Andy Piggott - book by 12 noon Thur 25 March
Tues 13th April		Virtual Discussion/ support Group Contact Kath Davies for further info
Fri 7 May - Sat 8th May		Virtual Reader Weekend on Zoom inc Reader AGM Teaching led by Bp John Pritchard Including Farewell to Canon Sue Oliver, Warden of Readers
Wed 19th May	7:30pm	Everyday Faith in Work
Thur 10th June	7:30pm	Everyday Faith in Work - alternative session
Sat 18th Sept		Reader Celebration Service at The Cathedral

From Liturgy To Life

Many of us took part in the pilot for the new course earlier this year written by Doug Chaplin, to help people make connections between what they pray in church on a Sunday and their daily lives, particularly what we do when we gather together as a church for the Eucharist and our daily lives.



The course materials are available on the [Diocesan website](#).
The course lasts four weeks, and each session should last 90 minutes, with around half the time spent in break out rooms.

Sessions

1. Invited into the life of God (The Gathering).
2. Holy Conversation (The Liturgy of the Word)
3. Transformed with Christ (The Liturgy of the Sacrament).
4. Blessed and Blessing (The Dismissal)

The course has recently been piloted with a group of 30 Readers who said:

"It gave me a lot to think about and digest."

"I got a lot from the course and can see its potential in our parish."

"It's been good and really informative."

"Thought-provoking."

"The course gave me an insight into parts of the liturgy that my mind had slipped over before."

Find the [course materials on the diocesan website](#) or contact [Doug Chaplin](#) for more information.



Everyday Faith in Work

Where: Online

When: Either **May 19 2021, 7.30– 9.00pm**
or **June 10 2021, 7.30 – 9.00pm**

How do your faith and your work connect with each other? A lot of what is said and written about faith in the workplace is about relationships: treating people well, finding opportunities to share appropriately what we believe, bearing witness through our character and behaviour to the difference God makes in our lives.

But what about the nature of the work itself? If we are employees, what are the aims and purposes of the companies we work for? Is the business about making money or making useful products, and where does the balance lie? How does my workplace serve the economy, or build up the common good? How does its structure promote just and equitable treatment of employee and customer alike? How much of a pay differential should there be between CEO and the lowest paid?

Whether I am employed or self-employed, where do I, on a personal level, feel most fulfilled in my work and why? Do I see my work as a vocation to which God has called me? How does my faith help when things go wrong at work? These are more difficult questions, having no cut and dried answers, no obvious connections with what the bible has to say, nor any straightforward moral prescriptions.



This workshop is for people to come together to explore these and other questions, and how they might relate to their own work and workplace. There is no fixed agenda, other than an agreement to meet together and explore these kinds of questions, in the hope such a conversation will be supportive and stimulating. If enough people are interested, there may be opportunity to plan a continuing conversation.

The workshop is convened by Doug Chaplin, Discipleship and Lay Training Officer for the diocese and Dick Johnson, lead chaplain for Faith at Work in Worcestershire and lead chaplain to the Police and Fire Services.

Book via Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/everyday-faith-in-work-tickets-144389941201>

everyday 
faith

Virtual Coffee Break with the lovely Janice Swan

Janice, it is lovely to catch up with you. I remember we first met about nine years ago when you were one of the Tutors on the ALM in Worship Leading course based at Tardebigge. You were so encouraging to us all, and were a great advocate for Reader Ministry.

As we settle down what would your choice of drink and what would accompany it?

For the purpose of this conversation I am going to assume it is early evening, and after a busy day I am going to relax with a glass of wine and a dish of olives.

To get us under way please choose a hymn, song or piece of music and tell us a bit about why you have chosen it.

The music I have chosen is Lark Ascending . This evokes memories of a holiday in Wales when my three boys were small, as we walked through fields to the beach myriads of skylarks were singing their hearts out as they soared into the blue. There is a transcendent quality as one listens to this piece of music, no words are required, simply experience the joy of creation and soar heavenwards for a while.

You live near to the centre of our county, but have you always lived in Worcestershire?

I was born and lived in Bedfordshire – not a county noted for much apart from John Bunyan – moving to Worcestershire in 1972 with my husband and three sons. Researching both sides of my family back to the 18th century, we clearly stayed put, as I seem to be the first to leave the area! One of my great grandmothers was considered to be positively exotic as she hailed from Yorkshire.

How long have you been a Reader and where are you based?

I was licensed as a Reader in 2003 in the parish of Inkberrow. Some years before I, together with ten others in the parish, completed a two year Local Ministry Team course with a view to working collaboratively with the clergy as a team. At the time this was seen to be inspirational and may well have been the springboard for ALM training further down the line.

Looking back can you pinpoint a moment your faith journey began?

When did my faith journey begin? I don't know as it seems to have always been there. I attended Sunday School from the age of four, and from then had a consciousness of God in my life which was so important and this matured and developed and informed my prayers each day. So why did I marry an atheist? The early years of marriage were happy, busy coping with babies, but also challenging as I found it difficult to share my faith at home.



Then one Monday evening returning home from work my husband announced I need to speak to the vicar as I want to be confirmed. Metaphorically he had been thrown from his horse on the Damascus Road. 'Coincidentally' the Bishop just happened to be visiting the village that week, so my husband was confirmed three days later. God works in the most mysterious ways sometimes.

What time in your life was your faith especially important to you?

I do not believe faith to be static – it grows, occasionally diminishes, is ever changing, but wonderfully can be strong and alive. My husband was diagnosed with a terminal illness in 2013, certainly a bolt from the blue, yet faith and trust remained strong. Looking back I marvel how help comes - God given I believe, yet often from those not professing any faith themselves. We were both held, possibly even carried by those showing such practical love. When I began Reader training I was encouraged to keep a Journal and have continued to do so. I see this as a form of prayer and a building up and a strengthening of faith.

If you were to chose a character from the Bible, who would it be and why?

I would choose St Paul. Two years ago I completed a pilgrimage through Greece in the steps of St .Paul. It was at times quite arduous even though we travelled in an air-conditioned luxury coach which clearly he did not. To stand in Philippi, Corinth, and Thessalonica, marvelling at his endurance, indomitable spirit and brilliant communication skills, and wonder how his letters ever reached their destination without modern transportation links. Paul courageously, against all odds, and enduring much suffering, enabled Christ to be known to the world.

I know this is tough, but could you pick one Bible verse for short passage and explain why you chose it?

Being asked to choose one passage from the Bible is akin to being asked to name your favourite child –it cannot be done. However one that has been helpful when life gets tough is NRSV John 10 v 7-10, and v14, 15. It is so positive and encouraging as it talks about abundant life. To have abundant life is about discovering meaning and purpose – it's exciting and it's enriching. When one is facing huge challenge, it is not just getting by, but really living safe in the knowledge that God cares for each one of us. When absolutely at the end of our tether and we admit our weakness then again and again a door seems to open however impossible it may seem.

So again Jesus said to them,
"Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.
All who came before me are thieves and bandits;
but the sheep did not listen to them.
I am the gate.
Whoever enters by me will be saved,
and will come in and go out and find pasture.
The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.
I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.
I am the good shepherd.
I know my own and my own know me,
just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.
And I lay down my life for the sheep.
John 10:7-10 and 14-15. NRSV

As Readers we all have different ministries, what part of your ministry do you find most fulfilling?

I enjoy preaching: the excitement of looking at a text and then finding a way to communicate and help people understand the Gospel. This has proved challenging during the past year as Zooming from my kitchen I have no way of gauging the response of a very scattered congregation. I thank God, however, for modern technology enabling far more people to experience 'church', albeit very differently. Many folk not wishing or used to visiting a church, will happily search you-tube and tune into a service, and I was interested to see for example how many 'hits' the cathedral had – far more than would physically attend I am sure. My focus is to ensure those in the parish without technical resource are regularly contacted and assured they are part of our Church community. I would also mention that I am involved with Spiritual Direction across the Diocese, and it is truly humbling to accompany another seeking the hospitality of God.

As Readers we encounter a vast array of liturgy. If you could choose one prayer, other than the Lord's prayer, what would it be and why?

A prayer of abandonment: Sitting quietly and reflecting on the wonder that we can have an abiding relationship with God.

'Into your hands I commend my spirit. Whatever you do I can trust you, and whatever happens I shall thank you, knowing that you have redeemed it.'

A beautiful prayer by Charles de Foucauld.

Thank you for sharing that very special prayer and your responses to my questions. It has been as always a joy and delight to catch up with you again .

Now before we abandon each other, would you like some more wine to accompany those last few olives?

Prayer of Abandonment

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you:
I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let only your will be done in me,
and in all your creatures –
I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul:
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father.