

THE NEOCASTLE READER

Issue 4



A CHALLENGED CHARTER

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF
HUMAN RIGHTS: 60 YEARS ON

ALSO

Developing Christian Discipleship
Practical Compassion for Destitute Children in the Holy Land
The Future of Reader Ministry and more!



FROM THE EDITORS

This is your editorial team. You've heard of THE PRIESTS, well we are THE READERS.



From left to right: Sue Hart, Lynne Craggs, Adrian Patterson, Olwyn Black, Gloria Cadman, Peter Hindle.

BUILDING ON THE WORK OF OUR FORMER EDITOR, IAN FARRIMOND

The editorial team aims to provide a quality magazine for all Readers in the diocese. Our intention is to explore and support the diverse sorts of work Readers do.

We are all aware of the changes which face us now and in the future and we hope to cover these from various points of view. Comments and suggestions for articles would be most welcome from Readers and from our wider audience.

CONTENTS

4

A CHALLENGED CHARTER: SIXTY YEARS ON

Baroness Caroline Cox considers the impact of the Declaration of Human Rights on Christian communities overseas

6

DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

Alastair Macnaughton, Director of Discipleship Development for the Durham and Newcastle dioceses, talks to the editors

9

PRACTICAL COMPASSION FOR DESTITUTE CHILDREN IN THE HOLY LAND

Muriel Harrison describes a visit to the Holy Land as part of her work for the charity PCDC

10

FACE TO FACE

Two views of coming to faith by Readers Peter Hindle and Gloria Cadman

13

EMERITUS-NOT !!!

Marjorie Wood considers her ministry as a Reader Emeritus

14

THE FUTURE OF READER MINISTRY

David Way of the Archbishops' Council

15

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE NEW WARDEN OF READERS

The Venerable Peter Robinson, Archdeacon of Lindisfarne, greets Newcastle Readers

16

READER MINISTRY IN A MISSION-SHAPED CHURCH

A report on Bishop Paul Richardson's address to Readers at St Mary's Church Monkseaton on 3 October 2009

18

LAST WRITES

Bishop Paul Richardson bids farewell

REGULAR FEATURES

8

Word from South Gosforth

11

Just a Sec

18

Forthcoming Events and Obituary

A CHALLENGED CHARTER

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: 60 YEARS ON

Caroline (Baroness) Cox.

At least 250 million Christians are suffering persecution in the world today. And believers in other faiths also suffer – such as the Bahai's in Iran and Egypt, Muslims in Burma, the long-suffering Buddhists in Tibet and the Falun Gong in China. The main ideologies which are associated with systematic persecution include:

- Residual Communism – in China, North Korea and Cuba;
- Fundamentalist Hinduism – responsible in India for the massacre of 2,000 Muslims in Gujarat in 2005 and the violence against Christians in Orissa in 2008;
- Fundamentalist militant Islam (or Islamism) responsible not only for the terrorism of 9/11 in USA, 7/7 and the Glasgow airport attacks in Britain and a host of other atrocities including those in Bali, Moscow, Beslan, Madrid and Mumbai – but also for systematic military jihad (holy war) in Sudan and northern Nigeria. Islamic traditional beliefs also oppress non-Muslims in many relatively peaceable Islamic countries including extreme forms of discrimination in Saudi Arabia and the insidious disadvantages of 'dhimmi' status (second class citizenship with denial of fundamental rights) in countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Malaysia.

Over 60 years ago, in 1948, in the aftermath of the Second World War, a Charter was signed by many nations. It was designed to promote and protect fundamental rights and freedoms. Article 18 explicitly affirms freedom of religion and belief - and the right to choose and change beliefs and practices.

But the hopes raised by the UNDHR have not been realised. Religious persecution is at an all-time high. As Christians, we are committed to speaking for all victims of oppression: we must have a concern for all who are oppressed and do all we can to offer aid and advocacy for them. However, St Paul in his letter to the church at Corinth reminds us that we also have a particular responsibility for the persecuted church: 'When one part of the Body of Christ suffers, we all suffer.' Do we? Often we do not, as we are preoccupied with many other priorities. Often we may not know about the

persecuted church or the details of persecution. But our small charity, HART [Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust: www.hart-uk.org], focuses on people suffering oppression and persecution, and we spend much of our time with brothers and sisters in some of the most challenging parts of the world. Many are Christians and we always return inspired by their faith, courage, dignity and 'miracles of grace'. We are also always humbled by the joy when they worship, even in the midst of dire tribulations, and by their priority request – which is always for prayer.

As it is easier to pray for people than for statistics, I shall devote the rest of this article to introducing some of our persecuted brothers and sisters and allowing their voices to speak for all the 250 million people whose voices we cannot hear, who are suffering persecution while we enjoy our freedom.

First, please 'meet' Archbishop Benjamin Kwashi, Anglican Archbishop in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. He and his wife Gloria have been attacked by militants at least 3 times. On one occasion they had to flee from their burning home carrying their young children as they ran. More recently, militants went to their home to kill Bishop Ben. As he was not there, they beat one of his sons and inflicted indescribable atrocities on Gloria, leaving her appallingly mutilated and blinded (her sight has since returned). The Bishop immediately returned home. After 24 hours he sent an amazing e-mail, describing how he had just returned from the hospital where his beloved Gloria was able to sit to receive Holy Communion; they had a wonderful time praying and praising God that they had been counted worthy to suffer for His kingdom; and they prayed that God would be able to use all Gloria's pain, humiliation and anguish for His Kingdom, His glory and the strengthening of His church. Next, please come to Sudan in the terrible days of the war waged by the National Islamic Front (NIF) regime in Khartoum against all who opposed it in southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains. Its victims included many moderate Muslims as well as Christians and traditional believers. That war accounted for 2 million dead and



4 million displaced – before a Peace Agreement was signed in 2005 and the next conflict erupted in Darfur. I visited those war-ravaged areas in southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains 30 times, walking through killing fields and lands wiped out in a ruthless scorched earth policy. On one occasion, we landed at a little airstrip in the aftermath of a raid by 2,000 NIF troops in which many people had been massacred and everything had been destroyed: cattle slaughtered and homes and crops burnt. After walking through this contemporary Golgotha we arrived at a little township where we were greeted by a gaunt catechist, Santino Ring, with a warm smile irradiating a face haunted by grief. He told us that he had been elsewhere in the Diocese when the NIF troops came. They killed his brother and other men, took many slaves, including his sister and destroyed all the crops. He wept as he said he now had to care for his sister's children and he only had tamarind seeds as food for them. Then he gave us this unforgettable challenge:

'We Christians here in southern Sudan are trying to hold a frontline of faith for the rest of Christendom. The regime in Khartoum spends a million dollars a day on this war. But we have nothing. You are the only Christians who have ever come to visit us. [Then the words which twisted a knife in my heart]: Doesn't the church want us any more?' That bitter war raged until a Peace Agreement was signed in 2005 and the people of Darfur have since been suffering a similar fate. The war there has attracted virtually all the attention of the media and the aid organisations, leaving the people in the lands devastated by the previous war elsewhere in Sudan in dire conditions. When I visited southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains in January this year, we found that only 17% of the children have immunization against deadly diseases such as TB, polio, diphtheria and measles; there is a whole generation of children who could not have education in the long war years and for many of whom there are still no schools available and the maternal mortality rate is the worst in the world. The leaders are desperate for help. Islamic aid is being poured into many areas – but this is conditional on conversion to Islam, which leaves many vulnerable people with the unenviable choice

between life-saving aid and recanting their Christian faith. Some choose death for themselves and their children. Church leaders are desperate, claiming 'We are losing in peace what we managed to retain in war – at such a terrible cost. Please now 'meet' Pastor Simon, a member of the Karen people in Burma, driven from his homeland and living in the deprivations of an overcrowded refugee camp in Thailand. His 'Living Testimony' is a glorious example of the unique power of the Christian faith to transform desolation into hope, affliction into purpose and tribulation into joy:

*'They call us a displaced people,
But, praise God, we are not misplaced;
They say they see no hope for our future,
But, praise God, our future is as
bright as the promises of God;
They say the life of our people is a misery,
But, praise God, our life is a mystery.
For what they say is what they see –
And what they see is temporal
But ours is the eternal,
All because we put ourselves in the
hands of the God we trust.'*

Such are the stories of indomitable faith, persevering love and miracles of grace we encounter when we visit the persecuted church. The UNDHR is still far from being fulfilled. May we work and pray for the fulfilment of its universal mandate – remembering that from those to whom much is given much is required. We have freedom: let us use our freedom on behalf of all those - of any religion or none - who are denied it. May we also strive to be worthy of the Christian faith which has been handed down to us at such great cost. As Archbishop Ben Kwashi reminded us when we were with him in Nigeria last June: 'If we have a faith worth loving for, it is a faith worth dying for. But do not you (in the West) compromise the faith we are living and dying for.'



DEVELOPING DISCIPLESHIP:

THE EDITORS INTERVIEW ALASTAIR MACNAUGHTON



The Reverend Alastair Macnaughton is the Director of Discipleship Development for the dioceses of Newcastle and Durham. In this interview we get an understanding of the aim of the work and what Readers can do to help develop discipleship.

Editors: What is Discipleship Development all about?

Alistair: Helping people to live and express their faith in their daily life. The focus is on lay people, but every one of us needs to grow in this way.

Eds: What sort of help are you talking about?

A: At the centre we develop courses which leaders – lay or ordained – adapt for local use. Currently we have three types of course:

- We have eight short courses available on a variety of important topics – “Lord, teach us to pray”; “Making sense of the Bible for today”; “Christian calling”; “Christian forgiveness today”; “Struggling with suffering”; “Science and faith”; “Faith and the workplace”. Each course requires 6 sessions which, for example, can be fitted into two Saturdays. The courses are structured to encourage interaction between everyone in the group. This makes them lively with little formality.
- We have a “Faith and Life” course for small groups which is designed to start in September and take 30 sessions through to the next summer. The details of meeting are arranged by the group, but we recommend good breaks around Christmas and Easter. Two Awaydays are available to do some work with others on the course from both dioceses. This course costs £40 for materials.
- There are opportunities for more formal study – for example, “An introduction to the Old Testament” – for those willing to write an essay or two. This type of work is done alongside people in the early stages of Reader or Ordination training. It involves travel to courses, usually in Newcastle or Durham, and a small fee.

Eds: Is there a risk that people will be put off because Church is often academic with long words and difficult ideas?

A: I understand the concern and we are working hard to avoid it, especially with the eight short

courses and the “Faith and Life” course.

I admit that I enjoy more formal study – I read the bible in Greek for preference – but I learned at the very start of my ministry that it is vital to meet people where they are in terms of place, capabilities and experience. That is the pattern of supporting our neighbour that Jesus gave us. Back in the ‘80s, after eight years of university and theological training, I started my first curacy in the Black Country. Diana and I lived in a seventh floor flat for almost four years. The floor in the lift was wet with pee most of the time, and there was often noise from bottles in the waste chute. However the neighbours were really friendly and when Diana was expecting, the women in the queue at the butcher’s down below would tap her on the tummy and say ‘how’s t’bab then?’ I was curate at the church across the road.

Most people could read, but not all. Yet we had some great bible studies, mainly taking short bits of text. People were forthcoming with their views. There was always down-to-earth, lively discussion. One particular confirmation course was based on one side of a small sheet of paper each week - no more - with a member of the congregation keeping each candidate company. Provided things were kept straightforward, and long words avoided, some great sharing took place covering all sorts of real life situations. In big words, it was practical, theological reflection.

A big issue in this parish was people’s self-confidence. As non-readers began to read out aloud in a small group, it hugely increased their self-esteem. Training in diocesan-speak would have been entirely counter-productive. People would have found its associations with literacy and other long-ago cultures very frightening.

I have images like this in my mind whenever I am working. I share them with others to help them to be practical and down-to-earth. Again, this was very much the pattern that Jesus gave us.

Eds: Does this mean that you are dumbing down the bible and our faith?

A: Absolutely not!

One of my greatest joys, in my work as a priest, is seeing people, with and without an academic background, working together and exploring their personal discipleship in greater

depth than before. Some of the best learning groups I have been involved in have had people with no formal qualification working alongside graduates and people with doctorates – all equally important and valid in God’s sight. Whatever our level (and in discipleship we are all equal in Christ anyway) we need to be stretched and to go further. That will look different for different people. Most of the group facilitators have significant learning in bible studies and theology, but I warn them that 95% of what they know on the subject may not be terribly important for the people they are working with. In adult, Christian learning we need to know what issues matter to each individual person and bring the good news of Jesus to bear on those issues in all their practicality and immediacy.

Eds: How are people reacting to the courses?

A: In general we seem to be providing courses that people find engaging and helpful. Of course, even good things can be improved and we are happy to hear about such opportunities.

Some real reactions can illustrate what we are finding:

- One group who had just finished the “Making sense of the Bible for today” course told us, ‘In the past we have studied just one book or letter. Never before have we looked at the broad sweep of scripture in a multi-media way like this.’
- A person in a group doing the “Lord, teach us to pray” course commented, ‘It is good to have something from the diocese which really is just for us and with no strings attached’.
- When the “Faith and Life” course was first advertised in one of our rural deaneries, the general reaction was that ‘It is too long – 30 sessions over 9 months!’ We were given an interesting comparison of life in the country-side with that in towns and cities, being told in no uncertain terms that country people are much busier and stretched. Nevertheless, ten intrepid explorers set out on the journey. Well before they reached the end they were saying that the course was too short and they needed considerably more time to explore all the available avenues.

The greatest thrill for me is the sheer range of people on the various courses throughout the two dioceses. The variety of people’s backgrounds and abilities is breath-taking. They are showing what Jesus taught us – discipleship is a shared, communal experience and is appropriate for all.

Eds: Some parishes may not have enough people interested in a given group; what can they do?

A: Three thoughts:

- There may be people only loosely involved in the parish who would be interested – look beyond the normal suspects; even look beyond the Sunday congregation.
- Join with a neighbouring parish or two or ...
- Make the course ecumenical. This can be a powerful way of building togetherness between churches.

Eds: What can Readers do?

A: Again three things:

- They can be members of any of the groups. That is clearly implied in Jesus’ teaching on the shared nature of discipleship.
- They can point people in the direction of the courses when asked about opportunities for personal growth. They can also bring courses to the attention of people who they think might benefit from one or more of the courses.
- Some can be group leaders or facilitators – already some fifteen Readers are involved in this way and doing a great job. However, not all Readers (or clergy) have the skills to do this work. The biggest challenge is to avoid parading knowledge in a way that turns off others in the group. Yet, the very fact that Readers will almost certainly have done much reflection on discipleship in daily life makes them a very valuable resource that we are eager to employ.

Eds: How can people find out more?

A: Your priests, readers or wardens may be able to help. People can contact me or my assistant at Church House in Newcastle.

Our phone is **0191 234 0371**;
our e-mail addresses are:
macnaughton@btinternet.com and
j.pinnegar@Newcastle.anglican.org.

WORD FROM SOUTH GOSFORTH

Canon Ron Black
Assitant Warden of Readers

As I pen this the sky is dark and brooding, scowling down and threatening to rain. My study is warm; the house still holds an aura reminiscent of Christmas and New Year. Especially the echoes of coughing and sneezing as 2010 jolted into existence with the lurgy as it attacked all within the hallowed portals of domestic bliss.

I listen to the strains of Charles Ives and wonder what he was on then change to a CD of Delius' music- I can understand that, not too taxing on the grey cells but deep and beautiful, as is Ives if that's your tippie. Gazing along the bookshelves I determine to read more, perhaps philosophy or something about the lives of saints. Possibly the new Dan Brown novel; he does seem to upset certain quarters of the church – and other establishments. Don't they know they are just good yarns, just a story.

I have always been wary of book clubs or discussion groups, too many clever people, or am I a bit shy? In many ways I'm an autodidact, seeking assistance on points beyond my comprehension, when necessary. There are those who would be horrified but it got me through most of my life, much spent in the building industry, not the easiest of places.

My journey into faith was long and hard, too many different factions, all claiming to be right, and that's just the church in its many divisions, causing so much pain and devastation; it's not hard to see why sometimes people turn their back on organised religion to seek God in their own way, to find the meaning of life and to discover that Jesus Christ really existed and brought a revolutionary message of the love of God, contrary to the ancient stories of a God full of anger, striking fear into the hearts of everybody. There are those who still preach that fear into people, telling them that if they don't stick to exactly what it says in the scriptures, they are doomed – without even the chance of purgatory. It happens in all denominations and in many divided groups of other faiths.

Can we learn from history? Can we use past experience to calm the present and form the future? Can we not seek the middle road and avoid brow-beating those who won't conform to whatever tenets this or that faction thinks is the way forward – or backward? This column might come across as Ron's rant but, fear ye not, there is hope. There are many good things going on in



the world. It's not all "X Factor" or "I want to be a millionaire". There are so many good people working away quietly behind the centre stage which is often occupied by those my father described as empty barrels, making the most noise but with no substance. We all know people like that.

The Street Pastors in Newcastle go out and about late at night in the boisterous, alcohol-fumed streets caring for people who have become mindlessly drunk on a dubious mix of drinks. They don't preach at people or try to convert them; they make sure they are cared for and kept warm. What they do is highly valued by the police.

"My journey into faith was long and hard, too many different factions, all claiming to be right"

There are many organisations doing practical things across the world, helping poor countries, preserving ways of life, caring for people and animals. It's probably just as well that they do because there are many others who for whatever reason work against good. There's the hype of global warming and great expensive gatherings which seem to have little effect. Is climate change discontinued? We are all accountable to a higher power; many don't find out till it's too late.

The view from my study window begins to lighten up – the sky is showing blue, the clouds are becoming light and fluffy. What's that – a ray of sunshine? God started the whole process and it evolves and develops through endless time. Why don't we grasp that and become good stewards, looking after things now and for the future? Yes a journey to faith is arduous and never ending, but we need to keep searching, asking questions.

Where's that book I was looking for – The Lost Symbol? No, read that. Joanna Lumley's autobiography, Vanstone's "Loves Endeavour, Love's Expense?" Just a minute, the Hairy Bikers are on the television. What do I do? What would you do? Oh well, back to Delius I think.

PCDC PRACTICAL COMPASSION FOR DESTITUTE CHILDREN IN THE HOLY LAND

It is a great privilege to be a member of the group of people who regularly visit the children in Bethlehem, Ramallah, Jerusalem and the surrounding areas on behalf of the many sponsors, supporting 286 needy children and young people wishing to have a Christian education. Each sponsor pays £10 a month towards the school fees of a chosen child, and each child needs two sponsors. Not only do we pay school fees, we also help with health, clothing and books. On each visit we talk with as many children and families as possible, in school and at home. Where there are needs, we do our best to help. On our recent visit we met with one eleven year old whose head leans to one side. As a result he suffers from double vision, and if the situation is not corrected he will suffer permanent damage to the spine by the age of 15. His parents had taken him to the local hospital where they had been told he needed an operation from which there was an 80% chance of him losing the sight in one eye. They wished for a further opinion, but were unable to get an appointment at Hardasseh Hospital in Jerusalem.

"It was thrilling for us to be part of this very happy outing."

Even if an appointment had been granted, a permit would have been needed for his mother to take him, as no adult Palestinian can go through the checkpoints without one. His father could not go, as he has motor-neurone disease and is an invalid. Two PCDC members therefore took the boy to Hardasseh and were given an appointment with the senior eye consultant, who said an alternative operation could be done to weaken a muscle, which would then allow the head to sit correctly. We are now saving for this operation, as there is no free health service for Palestinian patients. A very enjoyable visit we made on our last trip was for two days to the Arab Evangelical School in Ramallah, Here we saw all the children to whom sponsors had sent presents, we worked with the boarders on their studies, enjoyed a concert of singing and dancing they had prepared for us and finished the evening with shared prayer time. The next day was a Friday, a non-school day. We hired the school bus and driver, and went with Sister, who is in charge of the boarders, the housemother and housekeeper, all the boarders and the driver's family (because it was really his day off) to Emmaus. The children were so excited! They had never driven through tunnels before, and there were



whoops of joy as we went through the three tunnels on the way to Emmaus. It was a beautiful place, the fir trees had dropped cones and the pigeons shed feathers – the children gathered these treasures and proudly showed them to us. We visited the Franciscan church where the oldest girl read the story of the road to Emmaus. The children listened in rapt silence. They looked around the church respectfully and then explored the remains of Emmaus centuries ago when there was a monastery and guesthouse, a well and a wine press.

They looked around, guessing what happened in each area. It was thrilling for us to be part of this very happy outing. At the end, two girls came up spontaneously and said to me: "Thank you, Auntie, for bringing us", and "Thank you, Auntie, for a lovely visit. We have enjoyed ourselves." Tears came to my eyes. Such simple things give them so much pleasure. Sister said that she had not been to Emmaus since she was a child. It is so wonderful to visit as a representative of the hundreds of sponsors who contribute, with prayers and money, to the well-being of these children. We come home exhausted but inspired, knowing that the Lord is walking beside us the whole way.

FACE TO FACE

PETER HINDLE

I keep at the forefront of my mind the belief – supported by the historical facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus

A part from the closing hymn, “When I survey the wondrous cross”, that is the only word I remember from the service that winter’s Sunday evening in Leicester in 1961. Hearing that one word deep inside of me transformed the way I, as a 15 year old, thought about life. It was foundational in defining my life-long value system.

I was born into a working class, Lancashire home (between Accrington and Blackburn) just after the end of World War II. My father had been home on leave from Italy in May of the previous year but would not see me until I was 6 months old. He returned to the Post Office where, as a 14 year old, he had started his working life delivering telegrams. Although he and his two brothers were more than intelligent enough to stay on at school and go to college, the financial realities of the ‘30s depression caused my grandfather to decide that, “Since I couldn’t afford for them all to stay in school, none of them would”.

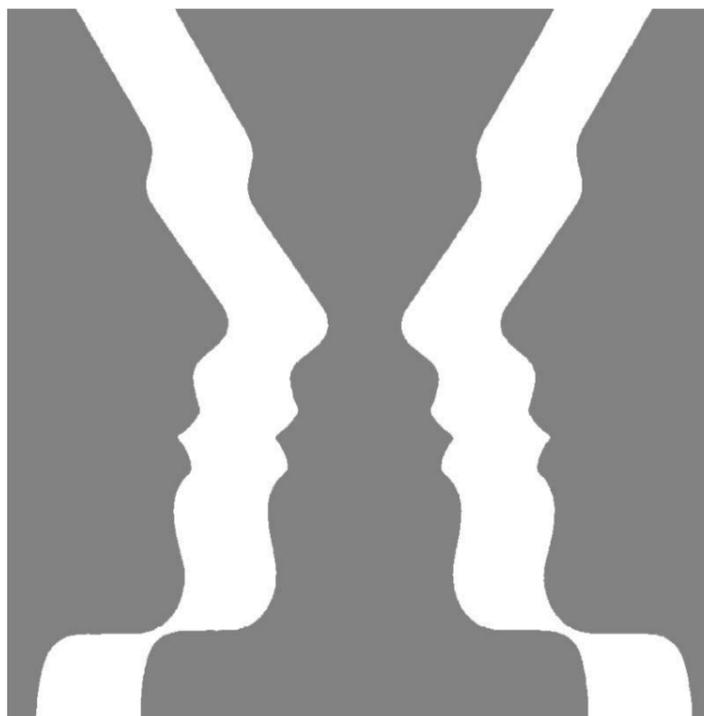
Mother and father had a strong faith; both were Methodist Sunday School teachers; father was a Methodist Lay Preacher. I have always had a rebellious streak; I was not the easiest teenager with whom to live. I make up my own mind and the final decision is always made quickly and firmly. I was torn between the science I was learning about both in and out of school (I read the New Scientist avidly) and the straight-forward religious teaching I imbibed at home and was taught in Church and Sunday School. It seemed to me that there was a clash of reasoning. Although I do not think my parents were literalist, any attempt so to indoctrinate me would have failed.

The Sunday evening service ended a Methodist Association of Youth Clubs weekend. The preacher was George Thomas MP (later speaker of the House of Commons and, later still, Lord Tonyandy). That single word, “You!” tapped in to all the religious thoughts to which I had been exposed, making it all very personal and relevant. I could not resist the urge to go forward with many others, once the invitation was given. Making that move was intuitive; it felt right. For days, I was on cloud 9. But there remained the BIG question that I needed to work on; “How do the various aspects of life all fit together to make a sensible, coherent whole?” What had changed was that I had accepted that God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – was the foundational aspect of my life within which everything else had to fit. Yes, it

was an intuitive decision, but it was real and important. Psychologists might analyse my early years and come to the conclusion that I was ripe for such an experience. I do not doubt it; I do not doubt that scientists will, eventually, be able to pin-point the electrical and chemical make-up of a brain like mine that resulted in me taking such an intuitive step. Such future knowledge will also enable scientists to understand how my brain has worked over the subsequent, almost 50 years, to rationalise and utilise what I did. In so doing, science will uncover some more of the wonderful ways in which God works in and through us; and new light will be shed on scripture.

If there is a God (or whatever noun or phrase we wish to use) – and remember, we cannot prove, in any scientific or philosophical sense, his (or her or its) existence – then that Being surely has the capability to use creation, within its rules, to interact with us. Our scientific understanding gives us a glimpse – a wonderful but clearly partial, and probably pathetically so, glimpse – into the processes that Being uses to prompt, guide, nourish and support us

That being acknowledged, I am happy to let my reason and intuition work to their utmost to deal with the opportunities and challenges with which life presents me. I keep at the forefront of my mind the belief – supported by the historical facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the perceived abiding presence of the Holy Spirit - that God wants the maximum quality of life (spiritual, mental and physical) for all his children. I also believe that our life is gloriously more than the time we spend on earth. This foundational statement is the outpouring of my response to my personal Saviour and my declaration that he “[Must have] my soul, my life, my all.”



FACE TO FACE

GLORIA CADMAN

I prefer to see my gradual conversion as the natural outcome of God’s refusal to let me go.

Benjamin Jowett, a nineteenth century academic, is alleged to have said to an undergraduate, who was trying to excuse himself from attendance at early morning chapel on the plea of loss of faith, “You will find God by tomorrow morning, or leave this college.” Thankfully, by the time I went up to university in the 1960s, the authorities had grown more relaxed in dealing with the uncertain spiritual state of their students, or I would surely have been returning

home. It was not so much that at the age of 18 I had lost my faith, but that I had never really found it. Yet this would have surprised those who knew my background. My parents, both practising Anglicans, took me to be baptized when I was just three weeks old. As I was growing up I went to Sunday school and church and I received a solid Christian education at school, where I actually enjoyed Religious Studies and participation in non-denominational acts of worship. Something was missing, however. When the time came for me to join my contemporaries in confirmation classes, I refused.

This was not an age when children routinely disobeyed parental wishes, yet my mother in particular, felt that this was something I must not be forced to do. Confirmation, after all, is not merely a rite of passage but a binding commitment to God. And so it was that I arrived at university unconfirmed, declaring, when asked, that I was “Church of England”, much in the way that many English people label themselves when feeling obliged to admit to some religious affiliation.

What changed? Well there was no sudden conversion, no experience such as St Paul had on the road to Damascus. At university I found myself studying alongside a Roman Catholic nun. We became, and still are, good friends. It was my relationship with her which led to my spending most of my teaching career in Roman Catholic schools,

first in a girls’ convent school run by her Order, and then in a secular Catholic school. I learned a great deal from that nun and from her sisters in religion, but it was not primarily intellectual; what I learned concerned establishing a personal relationship with Jesus, through whom I would come to know more about God. Emphasis was placed on stillness, on silence, on listening to the voice of God in scripture and in worship, and on praying. Once I came to understand what made those nuns who they were, I felt compelled somehow to find my way to God, not appreciating that I already had, but just did not yet know it.

Anyone reading this is bound to be wondering why I am not now a Roman Catholic rather than a Reader in the Church of England. Just as I found myself alongside Sister Norah at university, so some time later I found that my mother needed me to drive her to church each Sunday or she would not get there. Week by week, rather than leaving her at church and collecting her later, I attended a Sunday Eucharist, a service I was part of but could not participate in fully. I found myself confessing to the priest that I was attending his church for the wrong reason. He did not seem to mind. Gradually I came to feel that this church of ours was where I belonged, and I was confirmed. I cannot trace my decision to be confirmed to a particular moment. It was certainly not precipitated by a latter day Benjamin Jowett telling me I had to or leave. I tend to feel uneasy when people having described their own conversion as a sudden, dramatic encounter with Jesus, ask me about my own.

One can sometimes sense their disappointment when one admits to a more prosaic experience. While their experience must inevitably shake them to their very foundations in a way I can barely understand, why should one’s relationship with God develop any differently from one’s relationship with family and friends? Those relationships progress gradually because they are worked at. A relationship goes nowhere if one party decides to neglect it, to stop persevering. I prefer to see my gradual conversion as the natural outcome of God’s refusal to let me go. As Bishop Hugh Latimer declared in a sermon he preached before King Edward VI at Easter 1549, “The drop of rain maketh a hole in the stone, not by violence, but by oft falling.”



Sue Hart
Hon. Secretary to the
Diocesan Readers' Board

For most of us, being a Reader in our Diocese is a rich and rewarding experience. So I'd like to take the time to celebrate what is good about being a Reader here in Newcastle and update you on things that are happening with the Readers Board. First of all, some of you are very difficult to get hold of –yes, I know you are working in your parish or church, providing pastoral support, working with the bereaved, taking funerals, working between the church and the wider community (and all those other things Readers do, but hardly mention.) I think we've all noticed that where our ministry is shared with clergy and others, the collaborative effort seems to be very successful...after all, we're all working to bring in the same kingdom. It's with that in mind that I want to tell you how your Readers Board Committee is responding to the call for collaborative working, and your Exec isn't work shy either! There are about 20 members of the Readers Exec. All of whom have just begun to work with our new Warden Peter Robinson, who already has the knack of teasing out the important issues. Each member of the Readers Executive is now developing a smaller 'subgroup' to undertake work to improve the lot for everyone.

“For most of us, being a Reader in our Diocese is a rich and rewarding experience”

The Communications sub group. Gloria Cadman, editor of our own Newcastle Reader Magazine, Peter Hindle developing our new diocesan Reader website, Olwyn Black providing positive support by keeping us on track and ensuring sound communications, Adrian Patterson, who we all know has forgotten more than we'll ever know about bringing a design and print job to fruition. Then there's another subgroup, Recruitment and Selection. this is now under the remit of the Readers Board, as Lindisfarne concentrates on the training offered to both Durham and Newcastle Diocese. Roger Lowans has and is acting as coordinator for recruitment and selection and may well be contacting you to be one of a team of 8 mentors for candidates moving into the new selection process. Selection is still a one day event but we will be offering pastoral support to those who have offered themselves

for this ministry of ours. Peter Middlemiss, a recent and most welcome member of the team has already begun a Theological Reading

Group, which is providing not only inspiration, but fellowship and fun for those involved with it. A recent 'theological dinner' in Alnwick, began the debate about the relationship between clergy and laity. Susan Smith and Cynthia Makin, also members of the Executive are working towards offering you 'The class of' contact groups. An opportunity to re-meet your old pals with whom you suffered through training, perhaps for a meal and chance to update each other. Margaret Patterson, Trevor Porteous and others are running Deanery Readers Groups which are better supported in the country than in the town or the suburbs. However, new Deanery Readers Groups are being added, as people offer their services in this way. The new Seminar Group, headed up by Jon Cummins (who also looks after Shepherds Dene) will meet soon to create a professional and exciting days event for April 2011. He is supported by John Carr and Lynn Craggs to name but two.

John Carr continues to work diligently with the Reader data and as long as you continue to send in your Reader returns – then the picture of a lively and rich ministry continues to play a part in developments in our diocese. There's more! Lindisfarne is trialing some new collaborative courses in Thinking for Learning, so if training without essays inspires you, then watch this space. Ron Black is beginning to develop a small Pastoral Care Group and very soon I will be drawing together a team to plan the Annual Licensing Service. What is it that they say? 'Many hands make light work.' I would encourage you all to think about offering your services to the wider community of Readers here in our Diocese. There is much to do and plenty more to develop. Finally, can I encourage all who use email, to contact Adrian Patterson at Church House if you are not in receipt of the Bulletin. If you are not on email, then please make arrangements with someone who is able to access this information. I will be using it where possible to contact everyone in order to be economical with postage and photocopying.

I look forward to hearing from you over the coming months.

“offer yourself, and by God's help, you may well have a much more fulfilling ministry.”

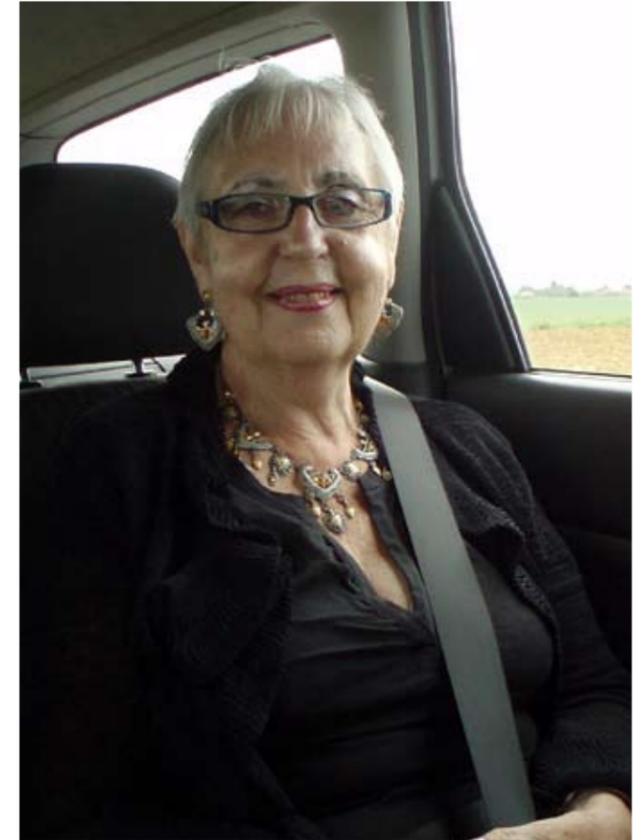
Marjorie Wood
Reader Emeritus
Newcastle Cathedral.

Many of us have gratefully received and eagerly perused Issue 3 of 'The Newcastle Reader'. But like the previous edition, local contributions were not overwhelming! Maybe many are like me and think 'I must write something for the next edition', put that thought aside and get caught up in our everyday lives. However after the A.G.M. at St Mary's Monkseaton, I was challenged to do something about this. Now is the time to 'put my money where my big mouth is'!!

Readers Emeritus/Readers Emeriti/Emeritae – come on Latin scholars get back to me with your corrections! Before I joined the seventies brigade my ministry was jogging along quite nicely. However, I made the mistake of praying 'Here I am Lord, send me!' There have been times when I have almost regretted this prayer, since the Good Lord's vocabulary does not feature the word RETIREMENT!! Nonetheless since I am now a widow, and therefore have more time, many doors have opened into an expanding ministry.

Although these opportunities have been exciting and challenging, if I was perfectly honest, there have been moments of panic, feelings of inadequacy and anxiety. There have been times when I have felt that keeping so many balls in the air at one time was a dangerous position to be in. However so far the balls have stayed airborne, even if I have not!!

Being a Reader at the Cathedral was, as Bishop Kenneth said when I was accepted for training, very different from a parish church and that is true. There can be fewer opportunities to expand a traditional ministry because of the nature of a Cathedral. Recently at a meeting, when the subject of teaching, in its broadest sense, was raised, a clergyman, whom I have great respect for, said, 'It's about offering people in the pews different menus'. And it just may be



that if any Reader feels unfulfilled in their ministry perhaps a good piece of advice is to look outward and beyond. There are plenty of opportunities if one opens up to these possibilities. Just, sometimes, perhaps we need to have the confidence to step out into the unknown and try our best to communicate the Gospel in all its many different facets.

I suppose what I'm really trying to say to all Readers whether you are Emeritus or not don't always wait to be asked to preach or teach – offer yourself, and by God's help, you may well have a much more fulfilling ministry.

As General Synod hedges its bets about Women Bishops, and the amendments to the original decision, are argued over, we as Readers, irrespective of what our feelings are, need to be available to listen to those who are hurting from either entrenched positions. Healing is central to the Gospel. We must be aware not to pour salt on already weeping wounds. There is going to be a huge piece of pastoral ministry in this on-going debate; calling all Readers, are you ready? Emeritus maybe – "Here I am Lord, send me".

THE FUTURE OF READER MINISTRY

Working towards a renewed quality framework

DR DAVID WAY, Theology Secretary to the Archbishops' Council, Westminster



Twenty years ago a small revolution took place in Reader training. Instead of Readers working towards either a national exam or (in more cases) a diocesan course, dioceses were given responsibility for Reader training which was then to be moderated by neighbouring dioceses. A National Moderator was appointed and the dioceses were organised into regional groups so that they could moderate each others' training. This was a bold step as it involved working across diocesan boundaries, which has not always been the Church of England's forte!

After a couple of rounds of Reader moderation – and national reports on the outcomes of them - the system began to bed in. In many places it worked well, giving a profile to Reader training which it had not always enjoyed. After four rounds, both good practice had been developed and the system was beginning to show some weaknesses. The most important of these were:

1. There was no way of ensuring any comparability across regions. Inevitably regional groups of Moderators developed their own practices and standards. The reports could not be compared with each other. And of course Readers are a national ministry.
2. In the meantime, OLM training had come on to the scheme and where Readers and OLMs trained together – as in the North East – the training was subject to a double dose of quality assurance! It was Reader moderated one year, and then later Bishops inspectors would turn up to do it all again.
3. The system did not put enough emphasis on self-evaluation by trainers. It was really an external view, valuable but incomplete. In the light of this, and similar challenges within ordination training, new proposals are being made. These would have a double pole:

Annual self-evaluation - Periodic external review

The idea is to give the first line of responsibility to the trainers themselves and ask them to conduct an annual review of what they have done, celebrating strengths and identifying weaknesses, and of course, creating an action plan to address any weaknesses. This self-evaluation would become a regular part of offering training. Then, every six years there would be an external review – a bit like the old main moderation visit, but not done regionally. Each review team would be set up from scratch and would carry out the review in the light of the self-evaluations from the preceding years. The external review would help to reset goals for the coming years.

One of the key points is that this process would be the same for Reader education and ordination training. Where the two take place together – as at Lindisfarne

“what matters is that Reader students are given the best possible training”

– they would be done together. Lindisfarne would conduct its own annual review and when the time came for its external review, this would be a single event which dealt equally with the two types of training.

This proposal is just that, a proposal. It is still being discussed by the churches and has yet to be agreed. But it seeks to renew the approach to quality in training – building on what has been good about the past and strengthen what needs to be strengthened. Because, at the end of the day, what matters is that Reader students are given the best possible training, to equip them for their ministry in today's and tomorrow's church.

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE NEW WARDEN OF READERS

The Venerable Peter Robinson, Archdeacon of Lindisfarne

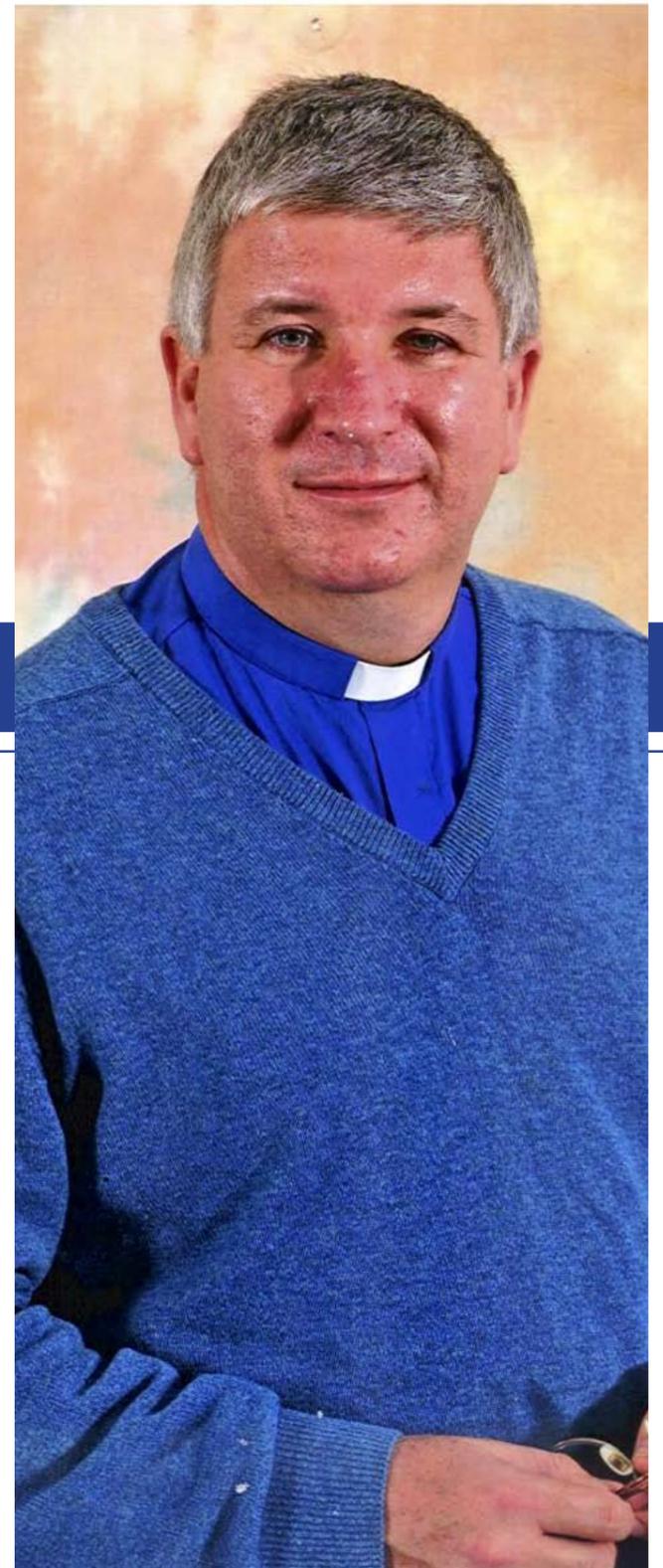
I am very pleased to assume the role of Warden of Readers in Newcastle Diocese. I look forward to getting to know everyone and working with you all, especially with Sue Hart, Canon Ron Black and the Executive.

There are many ways in which the church is seeking to develop its ministry. The major task we have in front of us is together to re-envision Reader Ministry for the challenges that lie ahead. What is a Reader for in today's church? How do we communicate the excitement that so many of us have about this form of authorised public ministry. Where do Readers fit into the church's ministry at every level, including the parish, the deanery and the Diocese? What is the role of a Reader within a local ministry parish?

These are large questions, and we will not get instant answers, but by having the right conversations between ourselves, with others in the Diocese, with the Lindisfarne Regional Training Partnership and with national partners, we are well placed for the task.

I wish to place on record my own gratitude for the work of Bishop Paul as Warden of Readers over the past decade. We all wish him every happiness and fulfilment in his retirement. Bishop Paul's hard work with the Readers' Board has given us an excellent foundation on which to grow.

Thank you for the welcome many of you have already given me as your new Warden. I hope I will be able to support all Readers in the Diocese in their mission and ministry during the years to come.



“Thank you for the welcome many of you have already given me as your new Warden.”

READER MINISTRY IN A MISSION-SHAPED CHURCH

A Report on the seminar which preceded the Readers' Annual General Meeting and Licensing Service on 3 October 2009

Gloria Cadman.

Bishop Paul delivered a dense and thought-provoking address at the opening of the annual seminar. The report which follows is an attempt to record as much as possible of what he said, as accurately as possible, for the benefit of those who were unable to be present but will read this magazine. I take full responsibility for any factual inaccuracy or failure to do justice to what Bishop Paul said.

Bishop Paul began with a reflection on the demanding circumstances in which Readers exercise their ministry. He pointed out the huge missionary challenge the Church of England faces. Sunday attendance is decreasing by 1% every year and the church now baptizes only a small proportion of babies and small children. In addition, the church has responsibility for some 16200 churches, more than 4000 of which are Grade 1 listed. We also live in a country marked by religious pluralism and secular opposition. Citing a work by Callum Brown, *THE DEATH OF CHRISTIAN ENGLAND*, Bishop Paul suggested that the demise had occurred in the 1960s, when church and state ceased to be co-extensive. Casting a searching glance over his audience, Bishop Paul drew attention to the "grey profile" of church membership. In Soviet Russia, where attempts were made to eradicate religion, successive regimes would note cynically that as one grey-haired generation of worshippers died out, another replaced it. He feared that this would not happen in England because those generations born since the 1960s have no understanding of religious terminology, nor experience of corporate acts of worship or the bible study known to those born in earlier times.

The picture was not, however, all gloomy. Christianity is flourishing in some places, London being an example, and, wherever it is, innovation seems to be a factor: thriving Pentecostal churches are an example. There has also been a rise in Christmas and Easter attendance in the Church of England, by 5% and 10% respectively. Religious Education is also becoming a more popular subject in schools. There

are of course varying explanations for these hopeful trends. Grace Davey, a sociologist working at Exeter University, has suggested that people want the church in their community as a public utility. In those parts of Europe where there is a compulsory church tax, the tax is resented by many, but even those not active within the church accept the need to pay it, because they want the church's services; this is a phenomenon identified by Rodney Stark as "believing without belonging". Two journalists working on *THE ECONOMIST*, on the other hand, have concluded in a book entitled *GOD IS BACK* that religion flourishes wherever the American free market model is adopted, while it declines wherever it is linked to the state.

Bishop Paul pointed out that closer examination of American religion suggests that its vitality is actually linked to large numbers of immigrants rather than to the free market economy. Religion is a way of marking one's personal identity, while simultaneously asserting one's American identity. It appears that older immigrant populations in the USA are losing interest in their churches, while new immigrants are demonstrating greater enthusiasm: the Catholic Church in America is losing many of its members from the older Polish and Irish immigrant communities, but recent Hispanic immigrants are taking their places in the pews. These new, largely urban, migrants go to church to meet their fellow nationals. In this country, therefore, it is entirely possible that the Christian population, in what it perceives as challenging times, is marking its own identity by deciding to come to church at Christmas and Easter.

Bishop Paul reflected on the fact that the religious revival of the late 1970s had largely by-passed Western Europe. The Church of England's response to declining attendance had been "fresh expressions of church", a means of regaining contact with contemporary society. "Fresh expressions" might be summed up as a form of church for our changing culture—established for those who are not yet members



of the church—". Bishop Paul welcomed the intention behind "fresh expressions", but he identified two big flaws in the thinking which underpins the initiative:

- downplaying the intellectual challenge of belief, resulting in the rejection of the Christian narrative;
- dependency on a distinction between "form" and "meaning".

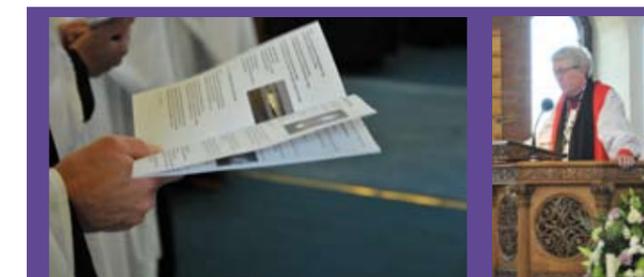
Form, however, conveys meaning, and therefore the two cannot be separated. Bishop Paul gave the example of the church which meets for Bible Study and coffee on a Tuesday afternoon; he pointed out that this cannot replace meeting the risen Christ in the Eucharist on the first day of the week. The Eucharist, the "form", is what gives meaning to Christianity. Therefore Bishop Paul argued that it was essential to keep the "form" while not allowing it to become a "museum piece".

So, what of Reader Ministry in this challenging environment? There are up to 10000 Readers in the Church of England, including those who have reached Emeritus status. 95% of them are over 40 and 45% over 60 years of age. Women outnumber men by three to one. 73% think their gifts are under-used. Readers are being squeezed, Bishop Paul suggested, by "fresh expressions of church" on the one hand and by ordained ministry on the other. He pondered whether "fresh expressions" have a place for Readers? Readers, he pointed out, are distinctive in two ways:

- they are lay people who minister by virtue of their baptism and who are a sign to all lay men and women that the laity are not passive recipients of ministry;
- they are theologically trained.

Readers are also a bulwark against the growing clericalisation of the church. Bishop Paul advocated a model of church based on the Papua New Guinea model which consisted of ordained priests, religious communities and lay catechists. Employing such a model, Readers would be more visible as the church's "lay theologians", a designation often applied

to them by Bishop Alec Graham when he was Bishop of Newcastle. Bishop Paul expressed the hope that Readers would become "theological animators" in their parishes, which was really important where people are reluctant to talk about their faith. Let's face it: one of the greatest faux pas in polite society is to talk about one's faith! Research by Caroline Miley in the diocese of Melbourne revealed how little people talk about their beliefs and how under-developed their spirituality and prayer life are. Yet T S Eliot, himself a lay theologian of some distinction, converted to Anglicanism because he had witnessed so many people on their knees at prayer in the churches of England. Readers were reminded that they have a role to play in developing the spirituality of Christian communities and in leading the laity in a meaningful prayer life.



Bishop Paul concluded his address by urging all churches to know what they are about. He hoped that churches would develop a clearer sense of identity along with a sense of mission. Christians need to be clear about who they are, what they are doing, and why. He hoped, too, that the church would keep its sacramental forms, break with the trend to greater clericalisation (by placing more emphasis upon lay ministry and the consecrated life), and welcome multi-culturalism as a force for renewal. As for Richard Dawkins, Christians should not be too alarmed. After all, Dawkins is keeping religion in the arena of public debate.



“Readers should not aim to replace clergy in this ministry but they can make a huge contribution alongside clergy in fostering intelligent discussion of the meaning of the Christian faith.”

First of all, a word of thanks to everyone who contributed towards my generous leaving present. I was very moved by your kindness. A big “thank you” also to all who have worked hard with me on the Readers’ Board committee over the past nine years. You have been a great team!

There is no doubt that in the current climate Readers are questioning their identity and purpose. On the one hand we see a growth of new forms of lay ministry, many of them associated with fresh expressions of church. On the other hand, we see an expansion of new forms of ordained ministry with OLMs growing rapidly in number.

My final message to Readers is “Do not lose your nerve”. The fact that you are licensed ministers with theological training gives you some unique advantages.

As active lay ministers, you are a sign to all the laity that they are not meant to be passive recipients of ministry in the church. They have their own gifts and charisms, their own vocation and calling.

As lay people with theological training you are a very valuable resource in a church which needs to have the courage to discuss the big questions that people outside the church are seeking but which they often fail to see addressed by the church. Is there a God? What is the nature of the bible? Who was Jesus? What happens when we pray? Does life have a purpose?

One thing that depresses me about the contemporary Church of England is the lack of emphasis on catechesis. Too much energy among the clergy goes into discussing issues of process and management. There is too little emphasis on preaching and teaching.

Readers should not aim to replace clergy in this ministry but they can make a huge contribution alongside clergy in fostering intelligent discussion of the meaning of the Christian faith. Other lay people are impressed when they see teachers, postmen, dentists, or people in business enthusiastically “giving an account of the hope that is in them”.

Readers are now carrying out a whole range of ministries such as hospital chaplains, or chaplains to big stores. Increasingly Readers are working across parish and deanery boundaries. Many Readers are making a big contribution to the ministry of the church by conducting funerals.

I hope that the range of ministries carried out by Readers will continue to grow but I also hope that Readers will see these ministries as an opportunity to reach out with an intelligent presentation of the gospel in whatever form is appropriate. A funeral, for example, is not the time for an evangelistic address but a sensitive sermon on this occasion can help inspire those who hear it to think again about the Christian faith.

To carry out this ministry, Readers also need to be readers-not only readers of theology books, but of novels, newspapers, politics books, books on economics, anything that gives insight into the meaning of Christ for our contemporary world.

As an old Latin tag puts it, CARPE DIEM, make full use of your opportunities.

+Paul

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

SHEPHERD’S DENE WEEKEND: 3RD-5TH

SEPTEMBER 2010.

SPEAKER: Rachel Jordan from the Archbishops’ team for mission-shaped church.

For further details, contact **Jon Cummins** on **01670 761 072**

AGM AND ANNUAL LICENSING: 16th OCTOBER 2010 at ST NICHOLAS’ CATHEDRAL

SEMINAR 2011

The Annual Readers Seminar will be held at St Johns Percy Main on 7th May 2011.

HOW TO BECOME A READER

“All Christians are called by God. He calls us to be disciples of Jesus and to continue his mission in the world. Some will also be called to particular ministries in the church as deacons, priests, bishops, monks, nuns, evangelists, readers, lay Eucharistic ministers and a variety of other ministries. Maybe God is calling you to one of these ministries?” *

We intend to devote a future edition to Reader Ministry. If you have a story to tell, please let me know.

* With acknowledgements to the Church of Wales.

AN UPDATE: JON KIRKWOOD (DESIGNER)

I hope all enjoyed Issue 3, and enjoy issue 4! I’m currently studying for a B.A Honors in Creative Practice which I’m looking to complete in early June. I am also currently at placement at an events management company based in Newcastle called Benchmark helping in the design department. I’m hoping to remain there until I finish my course. It’s been a great learning experience. I’d like to thank the Reader once again for this opportunity.

OBITUARY

Sally Dawson October 20th 1924 – February 12th 2010



Sarah Margaret Dawson, Sally, to all who knew her, was one of those steady, wise people who make excellent Readers. Sally was a teacher by profession and a Reader by calling, roles she played with great effectiveness for many years, but she was also a wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother. It was very evident she was good at all those by the participation of her family on the 22nd February 2010 at St. Cuthbert’s Church, Blyth. Her son Bill delivered an excellent eulogy and a poem written by the young people of her family was read by them. Two grandchildren shared with us some of their memories of their Gran, and a tune, specially composed for Sally, was played on the fiddle. An excerpt from a well-kept record of her sermons was read by another member the family.

There were many Readers present, evidence of the high respect and love in which Sally was held. Sally will be sadly missed, but remembered for all that she stood for and for the influence she had on our lives. Rest in Peace

Canon Ron Black