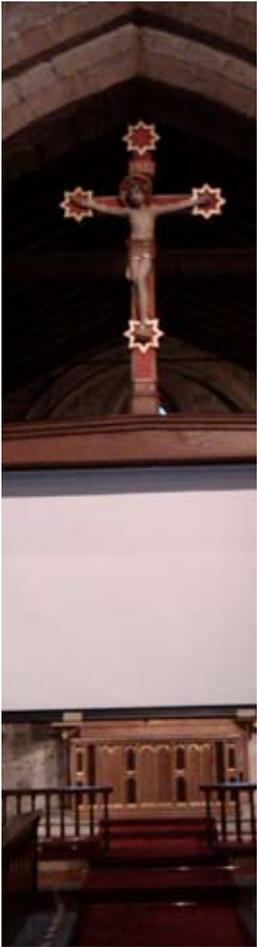


NEOCASTLE READER Issue 5



CELEBRATING 400 YEARS OF THE KING JAMES BIBLE

ALSO

A life in the day of a TV Vicar
One call, many ways to fulfil it
Sensing a call and more!

FROM THE EDITORS

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



The editorial team (from left to right Karen Charman, Olwyn Black, Sue Hart, Gloria Cadman and Adrian Patterson) is shown here making decisions about the content of the current issue of Newcastle Reader. We have welcomed Karen to the group to take on the role of website editor. Work on a website for diocesan Readers was initiated by Peter Hindle and we thank him for the pioneering work which he did. We hope that in the very near future our website will be up and running. It will have links to the websites of our diocese and the Central Readers' Council as well as to the national website of the Church of England. This is an exciting development and we hope that all Readers will find it a useful source of information and indeed support it.

This edition of the magazine was designed once again by Jon Kirkwood. Jon has not only demonstrated his gifts through Newcastle Reader; he has also been responsible for the design work for PRAYING FOR THE EARTH, a well-illustrated prayer book produced through the Environmental Task Group. Jon has just found full time employment and we wish him well, while hoping that he will retain his links with us.

We hope you will enjoy the fifth edition of Newcastle Reader. We look forward to hearing from you with comments and suggestions. The editorial team remains committed to bringing you a lively magazine, but each edition is only as good as the inspiration you provide!

THE NEWCASTLE READER ISSUE 5

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CELEBRATING THE KING

JAMES BIBLE, 1611-2011



There is a certain shyness, when we talk about the significance of the King James Bible. People are ready to grant that it made a great cultural impact as a piece of literature. It has been credited too with a political role – allowing James to appease the hotter sort of churchmen at minimal cost to himself. And of course, as other available translations like the Geneva Bible retired from the field, the King James Bible ended up playing the widest possible social role, as the one text that people encountered whenever the Scriptures were read or heard.

Yet for all its influence in all these ways, this was not the real contribution of the King James Bible. The breadth of its social, political, and cultural impacts was ultimately secondary – the King James Bible’s real contribution must unashamedly be understood as primarily spiritual and religious.

The Translators To The Reader

To mark the anniversary of this 1611 publication, it is useful to look at how the translators themselves saw their work. Of course, they were very limited in the amount of original translation work they needed to do. William Tyndale had done the bulk of this heavy lifting some eighty years previously, as the first to translate into English directly from Hebrew and Greek (rather than indirectly, as Wyclif had, from the Latin Vulgate). What King James’s team ultimately produced was, by choice, less a fresh translation than a revision of existing versions (relying especially heavily on Tyndale’s, although

also making reference to the Great Bible, the popular Geneva Bible, and the rather less popular Bishops’ Bible).

One thing that is often missing in contemporary editions of the King James Bible is a copy of the translators’ own preface, addressed ‘To the Reader’. In this lively 12,000-word document, the translation team examine and rebut criticisms of the translation project, explain some of their technical decisions for rendering the Hebrew and Greek texts into contemporary English, and warmly commend the scriptures to the attention and affection of the reader.

At least as importantly, this document also gives an insight into their underlying principles – the fundamentals, and especially the theological fundamentals, which they took for granted as they worked and which shaped their whole approach to the text of scripture. With all the appropriate adjustments for the distance in time and context between James’s translators and today’s bible readers, a lot remains to be learned from how the 1611 translation team went about their work.

So, 400 years later, it is worth revisiting a couple of the most salient aspects of the religious and spiritual framework which the translators were working in, focusing particularly on the principles which have the most enduring significance.

To start with, it is clear from ‘The Translators To the Reader’ that the key conviction underpinning their work was that Scripture was a revelation directly from God. Its origin is from heaven, they said, not earth – from God, not man. If God had not taken the initiative in speaking or communicating in the first place, they point out, there would be no godliness worthy of the name, and no knowledge of divine truths. Indeed, we are reliant on the written scriptures for certainty about the contents of God’s revelation itself. What piety without truth? What truth (what saving truth) without the Word of God? What Word of God (whereof we may be sure) without the Scripture?

Then, they discourse at length on the benefits of serious personal engagement with the Scriptures. For one thing, readers will benefit to the extent that their approach to the Scriptures coincides with the intent of God in giving it. When God speaks, we must listen – and listen for the same purpose as God speaks. God did not disclose his mind to us in order for us to treat it as a source of abstract philosophising, or a

remote record of events in antiquity. Rather, what he sends us is “the gospel of your salvation.” Correspondingly, readers are exhorted to study it with diligence, taking advantage of its depths and richness, and contenting themselves with its solidity and completeness. If salvation is not the outcome, the fault cannot be attributed to the Scriptures!

At the same time, the translators have very high expectations of what benefits are available for the diligent reader. Salvation from sin is no trivial thing – indeed, the translators see it as the greatest of blessings, and one which brings all sorts of other blessings in its wake. If we be ignorant, [the Scriptures] will instruct us; if out of the way, they will bring us home; if out of order, they will reform us; if in heaviness, comfort us; if dull, quicken us; if cold, inflame us. ... [Scripture] is not only an armour, but also a whole armoury of weapons, both offensive and defensive; whereby we may save ourselves and put the enemy to flight. It is not an herb, but a tree, or rather a whole paradise of trees of life, which bring forth fruit every month, and the fruit thereof is for meat, and the leaves for medicine. The Scriptures are God’s means of providing anything – everything – that the soul of the reader needs.

These three principles – the divine origin of the Scriptures, their role as an instrument in saving souls, and their ability to meet all the needs of the soul – gave a great dignity to the work of translation in the minds of the 1611 translators. This is not to minimise the credit to William Tyndale, whose precise wording found its way in vast swathes into the 1611 publication, but simply to see King James’ team feeling the weight of their responsibility. Publishing the Bible in English was for them an onerous privilege, yet one replete with opportunity to do good to the whole country at large. What, they asked, could be more effectual in helping to save souls than to deliver God’s book unto God’s people in a tongue which they understand?

“These three principles – the divine origin of the Scriptures, their role as an instrument in saving souls, and their ability to meet all the needs of the soul”

Even more, though, these three principles invite us to see the immense dignity of the Scriptures themselves. Our religion and our spirituality are meaningful and effectual more or less exactly in proportion as we recognise their power. The Triune God is a Speaker who, when he speaks, gives a word

of salvation – and then reaches into the experience of human readers, from monarchs to ploughboys, giving ears to hear, and hearts to understand, what his word means for us. “Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

Four hundred years on

Today, it seems, we are both too familiar and not familiar enough with the Scriptures. There is nothing particularly radical now about the ready availability of the Scriptures in a language we can understand. Since the 19th century, in a deluge triggered by the appearance of the 1881 Revised Version (an enterprise headed by BF Westcott and FJA Hort and their new brand of textual criticism), a bewildering multiplicity of versions has been competing for a share of the market, sometimes specifically appealing to niche readerships. Anyone who wants a Bible can find something to suit their tastes in literary quality, their level of interest in detailed bible study, their age, their gender, and even, oddly, their particular doctrinal preferences.

Yet for all this, something is missing. Our relationship with whatever version or versions we read does not always quite match the relationship that might be expected between the communicating God and a listening soul – between this paradise of trees of life and the hungry soul, in the metaphor of the 1611 translators. We dip our toes into oceans they swam in, and flick through pages which they scoured for the very life of their souls.

Four hundred years on, the Translators to the Reader addresses us in passionate terms – O receive not so great things in vain; O despise not so great salvation! If light be come into the world, love not darkness more than light; if food, if clothing, be offered, go not naked, starve not yourselves! ... A blessed thing it is, and will bring us to everlasting blessedness in the end, when God speaketh unto us, to hearken; when He setteth His Word before us, to read it... The Lord work a care and conscience in us to know Him and serve Him, that we may be acknowledged of Him at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the Holy Ghost, be all praise and thanksgiving.

CATHERINE DICKIE graduated from Edinburgh University with a PhD in Linguistics. She has worked as a lecturer and a research assistant on several research projects. She is a member of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

SENSING A CALL

About 8 years ago the diocese sent out a request for people to consider putting themselves forward for Reader training. I remember vaguely hearing about this but had been too concerned with various responsibilities to pay this any more than cursory attention. I had a satisfyingly busy life dealing with a career and family and being involved in voluntary and community work. The only fly in the ointment was that I was also helping to care for my mother who had Alzheimer's disease. This was both distressing, time consuming and emotionally exhausting, especially when all her seven children, all loving our mother dearly, had conflicting ideas about what was best for her.

All in all life was mostly satisfying and fun, so I was surprised to realize that I was jealous when I heard that a couple of my friends had embarked on Reader training. Was I envious because I would like the chance to do the same thing, or was it because I would like the time to do something that would legitimately take me away from the increasingly emotional minefield surrounding my mother's situation? The first part of sensing a call it seems is questioning ones own response and motivations.

After much prayer and thought I realised that I was genuinely experiencing a desire to explore further something I had previously not even considered doing, but when does a call need to be answered? This was a question I struggled with, ultimately understanding that my existing responsibilities had to take priority. They were also God given and I wouldn't be able to give my all to Reader training, should I be selected, if I was feeling guilty about letting people down. This is not to say that I ignored what I was feeling and sensing. Every so often I found myself thinking about becoming a Reader and promised myself that I would explore this at a later date. This "later date" however also meant thinking about my mother's death, something that was both dreaded and desired in equal measure, the result being that, even though thoughts about Reader training kept taking me unawares, I didn't want to examine the future too closely. I accepted however that if this call was still as strong once my mother had died it probably wasn't a displacement activity and I would have to do something about it.

My mother died in January 2006 and I was elected by my brothers and sisters to do one last thing for her: arrange her green, humanist funeral complete with wicker coffin. It was important to us all that we honoured her life and beliefs

rather than impose our own. Later I found myself thinking that there is a fine line between thinking and praying. How do people know when they are praying and how do we help them recognise their spiritual potential? It had taken my mother's funeral, staunch atheist that she was, to help me to realise the call to be a Reader was as strong as ever. Being quite a private person it took me some time to talk to other people about my decision to explore Reader training. Overcoming my shyness was difficult but the people I spoke to were very encouraging and their subsequent support has been very important to me.

When my daughter, my eldest child, went to university, I decided to seize the day. I knew that if I didn't act now my life would fill up again with responsibilities that I would find it hard to disentangle myself from. In September 2009 I found myself sitting in Sue Hart's conservatory talking about Reader training but also about my mother; Sue had been one of her students. The upshot of this meeting was that I decided to enrol on the Lindisfarne Theology and Ministry course as an independent student whilst I explored the possibility of being put forward for Reader training. As Jesus said to the disciples, when they asked where he was staying, "come and see", I decided to do the same. I am now in my second year of the course but my first year as a trainee Reader. Sensing a call is only the beginning: how and when to respond to it we all need to work out for ourselves through prayer and with the support of others.

PAM WALKER IS A READER IN TRAINING IN THE UNITED BENEFICE OF BOLAM WITH WHALTON AND HARTBURN WITH MELDON AND NETHERWITTON



ONE CALL, MANY WAYS TO FULFIL IT



I gave a talk to our Mothers Union group earlier this year: the subject was personality. I used bible references to illustrate my own personality traits and to suggest that they would find reference points for their own human traits in the Good Book. The ladies in the group know me as Christine who serves in church, does the flower arranging with the flower girls and is generally around the village. My daughters know a different person: the mother, teacher and dancer. My daughter the fashion student is constantly trying

to 'dress up' my cassock because she thinks swanky ear rings or sassy shoes might just lift the plain exterior presented to the public. She knows the lively, varied and oft times strange person who lurks under there. My daughter's thoughts were the trigger for my 'personality' talk. I wanted to show our God-given personalities with reverence and humour because He made me that way and He has pushed this person of Christine Ann toward ministry. He is so persistent! I have tried to avoid the pushing and nudging but it is not in my nature to say 'no' and I have found it impossible to say 'no' to the Big Guy, so here I am Lord as you made me with love in my heart for You.

I arrived at the meeting in my cassock to begin the talk, but as I am multi-faceted I had dressed my other personas underneath the black robe and began very sedately to expose my other selves with props, praying that the Holy Spirit would work in my favour to ease the ladies into a confident place. I am a mother, a wife, a housekeeper, a seamstress, a student, a yoga teacher, a primary school teacher, Head Teacher, Bishop's Mentor (that one takes some explaining).....I support head teachers in Church Schools within the Diocese. I can knit, make jam, grow flowers, visit the sick and bereaved and still be a learner in life. The cassock came off to reveal my Tribal Belly dance costume.....Oh yes! now there's a poser for the judgemental in our society, how can she wear a cassock and a

costume that at times shows her belly? Well I do. I lose myself in the music and the dance, and I thank God for the music and the dance which He gave to us. I thank God that the exercise is one I can do with little pain (I have had years of serious back problems, surgery and pain management). The joy of dancing is a celebration of the life I have and it can be seen as a thanksgiving for the gifts that God gives us. Life should be lived fully and with joy.

Mostly, people judge what they first see, I have noticed that when I walk through the village in my cassock, past the pubs and shops there is a shift in the stance and facial expressions of the people I pass and they are weighing me up as a person because of the cassock. When I display belly dancing I am again assessed by those who see me, not the 'me' that God knows but the body of me that is seen. When I wear my suit and visit schools I am looked at differently again, we struggle to see the person behind the costume yet as Christians we have to accept and love every one for their individuality, character and talents, Jesus did and so must we. My belly dancing is a joy, a physical exercise and a link to others who see the dancer before they learn of the Christian Minister and are sometimes thoughtful and questioning about how I can be both. We meet God together when people ask about the dancing, and conversations can lead to my ministry and to God. The Holy Spirit takes me places in the dance costume that might be difficult to access in my cassock and He can present himself in ways that are a surprise and a delight to those who do not know Him.

My friend Beverley and I led a dance workshop at the Staying Alive weekend this year. Beverley plays the organ in church and the Northumbrian pipes at weddings and funerals. She keeps rabbits and giant snails, has a couple of degrees and is a belly dancer. We danced in full costume with the youngsters, tapped and swayed to the rhythm of the music and had a wonderful time. The following day some of the same group and I were cleaning out Acklington church and selling bric a brac for St Lawrence's church. We meet God in every strange and wonderful person, His sense of humour is fabulous, His costumes are colourful and amazing but His heart is total love, complete wrap around, head to toe Love for everyone, even belly dancers.

CHRISTINE SHIELD IS A READER IN TRAINING IN THE UNITED BENEFICE OF WARKWORTH WITH ACKLINGTON

FACE TO FACE



What's it like being a Reader at the Cathedral? is a question I'm often asked. Not really that different to being a Reader anywhere else is usually my reply. There's no such thing as 'typical' Reader ministry, as we all know. We are there to bear witness to the calling of all the baptised to ministry, but each of us gives our own particular expression to it. But the setting does shape what we do in practical terms.

When I was thinking about writing this article, my mind went back to everything I had been involved with the previous Sunday. First, the routine Sunday morning sung Eucharist at the Cathedral: robed, reading a lesson and assisting at the distribution of communion. Although we have what might seem a large ministry team of five clergy and three Readers, I do seem to be on duty on a Sunday morning more often than not and it's a very rare Sunday indeed when there isn't at least one Reader taking part. I don't preach that often - perhaps every couple of months or so - but I don't think I would want to do this more often. Sermons take a lot of preparation, although it's not as frightening as people think to be up there in that big pulpit: it is my 'home ground' after all. The last time I preached was on Boxing Day, to about 35 brave souls who had struggled through the snow, but I do get to perform on the larger stage as well, if not as a preacher, then reading lessons at carols services, and taking part in the Christmas midnight Eucharist and Holy Week and Easter services. Participating in the liturgy is always a privilege, if often a stressful experience as well.



The next service I attended that Sunday was a complete contrast to the formal beauty of a Cathedral sung Eucharist - although beautiful as well in its own way. When I was preparing to be licensed, one of my areas of ministry was discerned as being in maintaining the Cathedral's links with the wider church, and so I was present at a noisy, upbeat service at St Mary's Fawdon for the launch of Newcastle Central Deanery's year of Mission. I've been a member of our Deanery Synod for many years and in recent years, I have also been a representative on Newcastle City Centre Churches Together. Going to meetings may not be glamorous work, but the building up of relationships is an important witness to our common calling and our unity as the Body of Christ.

I was back at the Cathedral that evening, not for the usual service of evensong, but for the Installation of Lay and Honorary Canons, exercising the ministry of welcome by helping with the refreshments. It's not just Diocesan events like this that bring in visitors. Despite not really being a great tourist attraction, we do welcome a great many people from around the country and around the world. Austria, Canada and the Falklands Islands are home to just a few of the people I have spoken to over the years. A lot of 'locals' visit too, some to look round, some looking for help and reassurance, and I've had to answer questions ranging from 'where are the toilets?' to 'do you believe in reincarnation?'. Our regular congregation covers quite a range of different ages, cultures and backgrounds as well, and, although not naturally inclined to pastoral ministry, I am expected, as one of the ministry team, to be involved in caring for them.

My final task that Sunday was to make sure that I was prepared for the 'Faith and Life' study group that I am helping with. I see the work of education as vitally important in equipping all Christians to live out their faith in their day to day lives, in what can be difficult and testing circumstances. Learning from one another by sharing our experiences is something that has enriched and sustained my own faith journey as well - you cannot help others to learn if you are not open to learning yourself.

Not a typical Sunday, thank goodness - I couldn't stand that pace every week - but one that drew on the whole range of my ministry as a Reader. Of course, I then had to get up on Monday morning, and ministry began again in my 'day job' with our two Archdeacons. But that's another story

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Katherine Govier

FACE TO FACE



As well as my work in St Andrew's services, I am a member of the St Andrew's Council and lay-chair of the PCC.

Although I have spoken in other Cramlington churches and some neighbouring churches as a Reader, my involvement at St Andrews' means that I am doing something at church almost every week and around the year 2000 I began to feel the desire to do more with my ability to speak - so I volunteered to be the North East representative for the charity Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF). MAF is an interdenominational Christian charity which uses small aircraft to help churches and charities carry out their work in some of the most remote and difficult places on earth. (You can find out more at <http://www.maf-uk.org>). Until very recently I covered the whole of County Durham, Newcastle and Northumberland - though I now have a colleague in County Durham). Generally, I speak at 12-30 meetings a year - mostly mid-week evening meetings, but a few Sunday services - about the work of MAF. In a typical meeting, I start by giving a general introduction to MAF. It's surprising how few people have heard of MAF, though everyone has heard of the charities that depend on us! Then I give current examples from around the world of the sorts of things MAF is involved in. I usually show a DVD which graphically illustrates the difference the 'plane makes to the lives of ordinary people throughout the world.

Whether it's working with churches to church plant or to bring clergy from remote churches together for a church conference or a Bishop's enthronement, or flying Christian Blind Mission on their fantastic "eye safaris", Wycliffe Bible Translators or TEAR fund, MAF's presence frequently makes the difference between these things happening or not. I am neither a pilot nor a doctor but it's great to be able to do my part towards keeping the planes flying and thereby helping people all over the world.

If you would like me to come and speak to your church about the work of MAF, please contact me on john-brierley@hotmail.co.uk

These two very diverse aspects of my Reader ministry fit together well and allow me to make good use of the gifts my Father has given me in his mercy.

John Brierley

I have been a Reader now for about 15 years and my ministry is probably not typical - if there is such a thing as a "typical" Reader! I have attended St Andrew's church in Cramlington since it started as a church plant, about 17 years ago. In fact, I was on the planting team before that, so I have been a fixture at St Andrew's since day one. St Andrew's was launched to reach those who were not attracted to the traditional church or for whom the trek to the town centre was too difficult. We are committed to taking the gospel to the people we serve and being a "beacon set on a hill".

St Andrew's meets every Sunday morning in Beaconhill Community Centre. We follow the pattern of Common Worship - though our services are friendly and informal. Since we started I have preached regularly - varying from "most weeks", during our two, long inter-regna, to about once a month when we've had more preachers, as now.

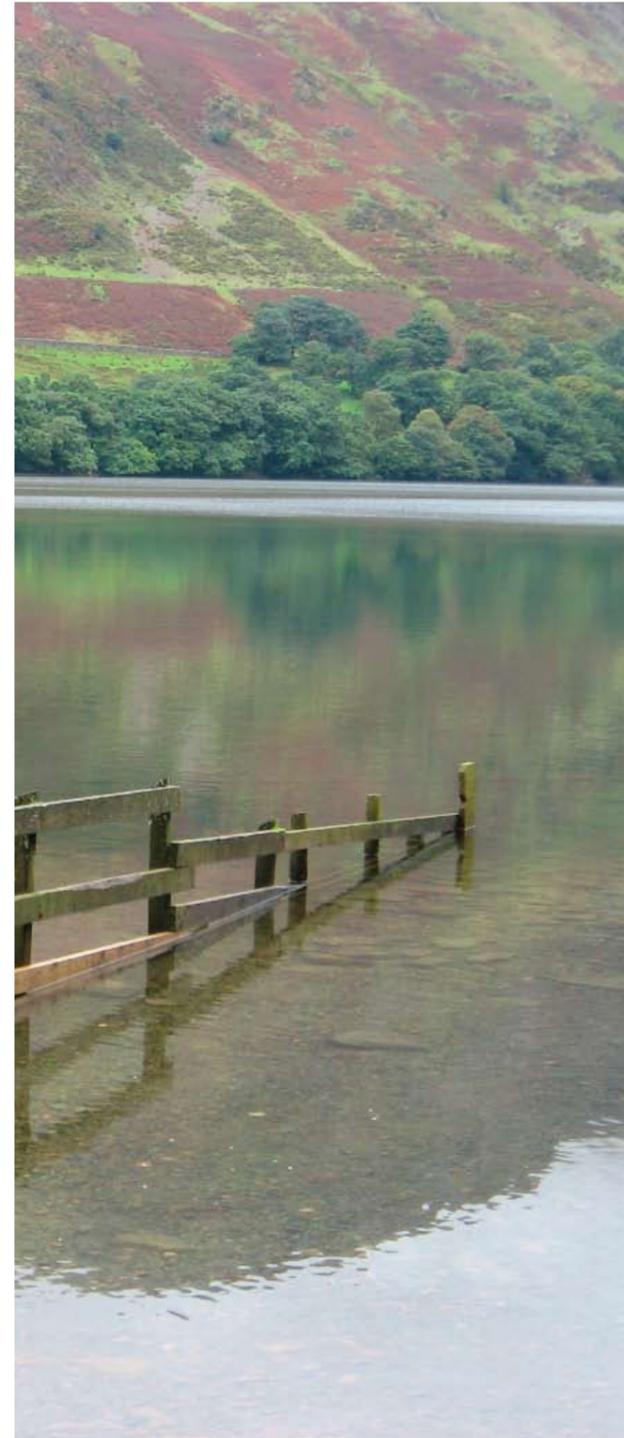
We are blessed to have Stephen Hewitt as our vicar at St Andrew's who is (among his many other virtues) very committed to inclusive ministry and very supportive of me. The same has been true of our previous vicars at St Andrews: Richard Bateman and my friend, the late and very much missed, Tony Pattison whose vision was responsible for St Andrew's creation.

I also regularly lead the service - I must be one of a very few Readers who has led the service from the ranks of the music group ("The Stan Drew Band") while sporting a bass guitar! I also regularly read and lead the intercessions. I see my Ministry very much as a teaching one and I like to think that I have a speaking style that people find interesting. I'm not really a pastoral person and I have no desire to conduct funerals, for example (it would be difficult working full-time anyway) but I believe that I have ability to put over complex theology in ways that everyone (even I!) can understand. I have a degree in Theology so I am supposed to have a basic grasp of the complexities and subtleties of doctrine and scripture.



To be open
and full of colour and life,
to brighten up
all the dark places,
to be carried on the wind
and easily shifted.
Choose me God.

You showed me the way.
You didn't ever say
it was going to be easy.
You just said 'follow me'
So I have and I am.
Help me up the steps Lord
when the going gets tough



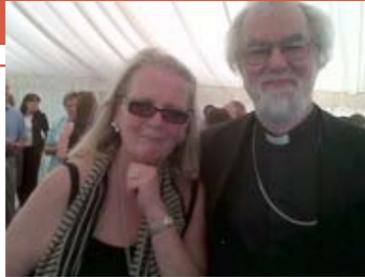
The lake
was full of the shades of
the earth a gentle wind
blended the colours
making new ones.
An ever shifting palette
of God's love

There's something about the
north east sky at night...
the last of the day clinging
to the sky.
If only we could hear you
when you speak to us God.
If only we could see you...



JUST A SEC...

Sue Hart
Hon. Secretary to the
Diocesan Readers' Board



Readers. The web design company is working for us for love not money and we are eternally grateful to Drummond Central for their creative help and support and general good humour with a bunch of oldies (I speak for myself here)

The costs of our diocesan Readers magazine are also supported by local industry, in this case its Shiremoor Press, who continue to help us. I believe we are much blessed by having one foot in the world and one in the church and receive so much help and support from contacts made through our working lives.

The magazine also continues to be a good way to contact potential Readers – or at least people who are feeling the call to some type of ministry 'where they are'. We now have some smart new 'leaflets' produced through the Diocesan Vocations group and I hope they are present and visible in your church. If not – you know where I am!

We continue to crack the whip over your Readers Executive – (actually we have a lot of fun) but everyone is working hard to support the ministry of Readers in our diocese. From recruitment and selection to social and learning activities, we are trying to offer some possibilities to engage your discerning tastes over the next 12 months. I say this every edition, but if you feel drawn to the Readers Exec, do get in touch. Meanwhile, can I encourage everyone to keep the flag flying? We are also working closely with our Warden and Lindisfarne to shape the Reader training course to the needs of the diocese and make sure that our own candidates feel the continued connection with both Lindisfarne and the Readers Board.

I am aware that a few Readers have asked to be included in the Bulletin mailing. If this is the case and you want to be included, the contact to email is Adrian Pattison at Church House.

On word 758, I want to tell you that a small group of us are continuing to work on a discussion paper about redefining Reader ministry in our diocese. It is to be discussed with the Bishop and also with you through a series of consultation dates so I'll be in touch as things progress.

Finally, I did ask for any photos or stories you might have of your work and I'd like to share this one with you. It's from Christine Malvern who is working on a new initiative in

I have so much to tell you and only 750 words to do it in that I don't know where to start. I'm inclined to use bullet points but for the sake of good conversation will resist the urge! First off I think, would be to thank you for your Annual Returns – most were comprehensive, one or two were a bit sparse, but that's life as they say. This year we asked you about Local Ministry teams and the results were interesting. They are not exact, as you will appreciate, but here's your comments:-

- out of 125 replies 41 Readers said quite definitely that there was a Local Ministry Team in their church and that they were part of it.
- A further 19 commented that a team was in the process of being set up.
- 18 Readers said that there was a Local Ministry Team in their church but that they were not part of it
- and a further 47 either said that this development was not happening where they were, or if it was, they had no direct knowledge of it.
- So – to summarise out of the 125 replies, something is happening in 78 places at least. I think this is great news and is indicative of our mission to be generous open and engaged.

Next year the 'Returns Form' may take a different shape – one side asking you to reflect on the previous year and the other asking for some planning and action points for the year ahead. A simple version of staff review if you like – it might just help us all to ensure we're in a working partnership with our clergy and others and all travelling in the same direction.

On another issue: the cost of postage increases every year and I've been trying to avoid writing to you too often – hence the request for email addresses. It's a fine line between staying in touch and spending money. Difficult for me because as a graphic designer in an earlier life – I do like things to look nice! To help improve communications, there is a new Newcastle Readers website under construction. This will link to the Diocesan website, that of the Church of England and other resources that you might find interesting. The work is being overseen by the communications group and in particular Karen Charman a Reader from St Peters at the coast. There is now a Facebook page for Newcastle

Delaval Parish called 'God's Open Doors'. Our editor has just gifted me with an extra page, so here's Christine's story...



Christine had a concern that her church might be of more use in the community if it was open more often, so with the help and support of the Brownie leader Doreen and her husband David, she approached the vicar and the PCC with the idea of 'God's Open Doors'.

'On 8th April 2010', Christine says, OPEN DOORS opened to anyone who would like a cuppa, a chat or visit the church for some peace and quiet or prayer time.' Chris continues: 'John our man of many gifts, especially with wood, made us a board for outside to welcome people in. On our first day there was Doreen, Sheila, David, John, Christine our other Reader, Peter our priest and myself to welcome anyone who came. We had four church members but we were up and running!'

But the story doesn't end there. 'When I look back', says Christine, 'I can say without a doubt HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD, because of all that has been achieved through Open Doors Here are a few things that have made a real difference:- Our church hall was not the tidiest. Over a cuppa at OPEN DOORS we were all dreaming up ideas of what we would like done to the hall, but some ideas were too costly. We consulted our John, and an idea was hatched. With donations we had received, and the blessing of the PCC, we partitioned part of the hall, creating book shelves so that we now have a small library. Boards cover the library when not in use. The chairs were a problem too, but our Brownie pack came up trumps, raised funds and bought us folding chairs which go behind the partition. Again, our untidiness is hidden. Twenty to Twenty Five people use OPEN DOORS now, not always the same people every week. Some come to buy a book or change their books at a reduced rate, but most stay for a cuppa. They may stay for an hour or two or three hours. Even the electricity meter man stays for his lunch and buys his books from us. He says we have a great selection! We now knit squares for blankets for Mityana, our MU link in Uganda, and one of our regulars showed us how to crochet, so now we cross stitch cards. Not only that but we have helped the craft and art group for local children called 'Pop Bottles' to finish their banner which was done with cloth clippings. Some of the children from this group now come to 'OPEN DOORS' during their school holidays. At present we are



knitting prayer shawls and cushions. Doreen makes cards for sale and one of our parishioners makes marmalade to sell. The most amazing thing that God has done in this place is provide a space for everyone. The people who do not come to church are now outnumbering those that do. One of the locals has even changed her washing day because she does not want to miss Open Doors on a Thursday. How powerful our GOD is!

But our greatest compliment is that several people coming through the doors have said that they thought we were having a party! I think that is because we laugh a lot. Anyone reading this article is welcome for a cuppa, so please come, we love visitors!

Christine's story is about what Readers can do. It is one of many I know, so write and share yours with others. Very finally, I have no words left - wherever we are and whoever we meet, let's thank God for the opportunities we are presented with and always remind ourselves to be kind to each other...



“THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VISUAL IN WORSHIP: SEEING GOD IN THE ORDINARY”



Rev Simon White
Priest in Charge of Felton,
Longframlington with
Brinkburn & Diocesan
Youth officer (North).

I seem to find myself constantly apologising for lacking those little grey cells lately. It's not that I'm growing old, although I am! It's just that I have never really had them to begin with. As a clergyman many people assume, wrongly I think, that all clergy should have the intelligence of an Oxford Don, and that we should know everything there is to know about God, the Church and the Universe. Some of my colleagues do have immense wisdom and knowledge and they are needed in the Church or we would be lost in the mire of uncertainty and confusion. Yet, thankfully, I have been given the gift of a simple heart and mind which means that I find God is not as hidden as many seem to think he is. I often find God in the ordinary everyday; personal prayer is not hard because it's part of my routine as I pour a cup of tea, or have my breakfast. A conversation is always taking place in my head with God. As I write this article, God inspires and challenges me with words and concepts. This however does not make me a saint: a quick conversation with my wife or children will soon banish any illusions of saintliness. When



I was a young lad my mother bought me a book called “Mr God this is Anna”. It was a very moving and poignant book about a little girl who had a very real relationship with Mr God. Mr God was her bestest friend and talked to her all the time. I found the book easy to read and understand. Some may say the book was theologically flawed, a bit simplistic: faith is a little more intellectual than that! But why should God be available only to intellectuals?

Worship, I find, can so often be geared to the intellectuals of our society. I have been challenged in my ministry to find ways of being relevant without destroying the rich liturgical heritage we have inherited. Being the Diocesan Youth officer has opened my eyes to alternative forms of worship material and media that make God once more available to all. Some may argue we are just pandering to people's desire for the church to comply with the world, but Jesus engaged with the world he entered using the culture he found around him. So today using media and the arts is a wonderful way of engaging the people God wants his church to engage with. Using films, adverts, You-tube and the web are all 21st century story-telling devices that are God-given. Jesus would have used them all if they had been part of the society he was part of!



“So today using media and the arts is a wonderful way of engaging the people God wants his church to engage with.”

As part of one of our Diocesan youth initiatives, some young people have been coming together to use film as a way of expressing their faith then sharing it with their peers. The idea is that they will upload their work on You-tube and other social network websites, which then can be shared by others; it's a wonderful evangelistic tool the young people just love working with! As a traditional 12th century small parish church, we have recently invested in an electrical projector screen (Oh my goodness, I hear you gasp) and concealed it behind the rood screen. The projector screen drops down electrically and is often used to illustrate the theme of a service, using web clips from the Internet. We have used traditional images and music on our Good Friday reflections which are popular with not only our congregations but also with many in the village who attend with their families. There is even a conversation going on to use the church as a village cinema. “So how can you possibly make God relevant in a cinema”, I hear you ask! Well apart from the fact that

contemporary films have so many references to God, life and the universe (Spiderman 2 has over 100 scriptural references), the cinema brings God into the everyday. It makes the conversations about God and people's faith journeys relevant and interesting. What I'm not saying here is ditch all that we hold dear and go all contemporary but rather I'm asking how we can sensitively and effectively engage with the medium of today in our worship, making God once again visible in the ordinary and everyday.



“TO WASH DISHES AND TO PREACH ARE ALL ONE”

A LIFE IN THE DAY OF A TV VICAR

Here's a theological statement from William Tyndale which informs my understanding of the role of the Reader as theologian. The other useful reminder as we explore the task we have as LAY Readers is from Erasmus, "Every man (and it was "man" in those days) is a theologian, be he a ditch-digger or weaver".

THE THEOLOGICAL TASK

The way I see it, the Reader has a unique role as a bridge between the various places of theological exploration, from the academic, liturgical and ecclesiastical to the intuitive, practical and pastoral. It is also a lay role. All are called and so all can be encouraged to theologise. By that I mean thinking about how we all experience the presence of God in our lives; in our "God-talk" bringing a perspective to our understanding of the good and bad things that happen to us. I was very struck by a cartoon of two people meeting at a party and the clergyman saying "If I didn't know you were a layperson I would have thought what you have said is very profound". Readers are there to give their fellow lay people confidence to connect what they believe to what they experience. Readers who do get ordained often recognise (sometimes with surprise) how they have taken up and dropped different roles as theologisers. The Reader has a special role vis a vis other lay people. So what should Readers be doing to equip themselves for this work?

READING THE BOOKS I DON'T NORMALLY READ

Over the years I have found that colleagues find it easier to read a book perhaps a notch above their usual reading level if they are being accompanied by others set on the same task. Reading Parties when a small group spend a weekend away, reading different current titles are effective ways of doing this. Participants choose a book on Friday night and read it over the weekend, contributing to the discussion which takes place over meals and at coffee and tea breaks. By the end of a weekend I find that I have read a book that benefitted from being read more or less non-stop. I have also "reviewed" half a dozen other books which fellow participants have read. The most interesting part of the weekend is when discussions take place often revealing modern trends in theological writing. A few years ago there was a lot of thinking about

person and the nature of the Trinity. It was very interesting over the next few years to see how this insight was explored in books dealing with very different theological topics. "Temple theology" has been another more recent theme. The latest contribution in that area that I have seen is Nicholas Perrins book *Jesus the Temple* (SPCK 2010).

THEOLOGICAL READING GROUPS

Over recent months four reading groups have met in the Diocese. They meet of an evening for say six weeks and participants discuss together the contents of the book chapter by chapter. (Most recently reading two chapters a week from *Early Christian Thinkers* Ed. Paul Foster SPCK 2010) We have met in a different part of the county each time and I hope that we are gradually building up a group of Diocesan Readers so that enough people can join in wherever we meet. It has become a tradition for some members of the group to meet up earlier before the last meeting to have a meal together.

THEOLOGICAL DINNERS

It feels natural to me as part of our common life to eat and theologise together. A meal table can have several conversations going on at the same time. Someone speaking at the end of the meal can then feed a theological stimulus to the ongoing conversations. We are experimenting with two types of theological dinners:

*For Readers, as they seek to develop their understanding of their task as communicators of the Good News. We hope the next dinner will be early autumn 2011.

*For Readers, their relatives and friends, exploring their understanding of the discipleship to which all are called, be they ditch diggers or weavers, washer-ups or preachers.

Peter Middlemiss

Berwick upon Tweed

Peter is a Reader in the parish of Holy Trinity Berwick. Before coming in retirement to Newcastle Diocese he was a lay University Chaplain, Parish Education Adviser and Warden of two Retreat and Conference Houses.



John Middleton
(Emmerdale's Ashley Thomas)

Lives at: Mulberry Cottage

Works: Vicar at St. Mary's Church

First appearance: 5th December 1996

Key relationships: Laurel Thomas, Sandy Thomas

Vicar Ashley and his wife Laurel are a much loved couple in the village and hold an important place in the community. Ashley is very much in love with Laurel and he'd do anything for her. The couple have had their fair share of tragedy, including losing baby Daniel to cot death. Ashley's always very keen on trying to do the right thing, but is capable of admitting it when he gets things wrong.

hardly got to the end of any of these ceremonies. The scene is set with a congregation that is more herded than gathered together. Someone always knows of a reason why these two people may not lawfully marry and, by the time we get to the vows, the dramatic tension is unbearable. Even if we were to get to the end without the whole thing descending into fisticuffs, we've then got to get through the reception without that becoming a drink-fuelled, expensive, food-fight.

Even at my own wedding to Laurel, we managed to get through the whole day avoiding any of these catastrophes, only to find my own long-lost, drunken, father asleep in the marital bed. God knows what Freud would have made of that but then, seeing as Ashley has been through two churches (fires) and a vicarage (psychotic, axe and paintbrush-wielding stalker), he not only must be a quivering, neurotic wreck, but also his buildings' insurance premiums must be through the roof. That's if he still has one. But then this is one of the most dangerous villages in North Yorkshire. No wonder they all spend most of their time in the Woolpack – the pub whose roof blew off in a violent storm and landed in the bar. Personally I'd move. But please don't tell the writers that.

It has to be said that the rôle of most telly vicars is to be comic and to dish out platitudes (remember 'All Gas and Gaiters'?) Their part in most dramas is to show how disconnected from most people's lives figures of religious authority are. The words they speak at the funeral/ wedding/ baptism fade into the background as the camera focuses on the principal characters to reveal their innermost thoughts in the midst of a hollow show of ceremony.

The great thing about playing Ashley, the vicar in 'Emmerdale', is that the writers can't do this. He is thoroughly part of the village. He knows these people well and they know him. He will have been asked to officiate at whatever rite of passage is taking place and, because of this, if this rite is interrupted, disrupted or stopped, he will get annoyed: sometimes very annoyed. Ashley gets annoyed a lot.

One of the crew asked me the other day how many TV weddings I have conducted and it must be about twenty. I've

LET'S HEAR IT FOR WILLIAM TYNDALE

As I assembled this edition of Newcastle Reader, I was struck by the fact that two of our contributors had drawn attention to William Tyndale. I spent more than 30 years teaching the Reformation and during that time Tyndale became a particular favourite. I imagine many a student nodded off, particularly after lunch, as I waxed lyrical. One generous student (presumably one who listened) actually gave me a copy of Tyndale's 1534 translation of the New Testament at the end of the course.

Tyndale was a man gifted beyond measure (he was fluent in seven languages in addition to his native English) who sacrificed what might have been a secure and comfortable life in order to fulfil what he believed was his mission: to translate the Bible into English so that the laity might have access to it. "I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost" was his angry response to a fellow clergyman whose preference was to keep the Scriptures out of the hands of common people. His decision to follow his calling necessitated self-imposed exile for the last twelve years of his life. To own an English Bible in early sixteenth century England was to lay oneself open to a charge of heresy. As late as 1530, even as his matrimonial and dynastic difficulties were on the point of causing a schism with Rome, Henry VIII ordered the destruction of all English Bibles in his kingdom.

There is little certainty about where Tyndale lived in Europe after he left England in 1524. The continent was scarcely safer for him than his homeland, since the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V was determined to eradicate heresy from the extensive territories under his control. Tyndale lived for many years "on the run" but, in spite of constant danger, he managed to translate the New Testament and much of the Old Testament from the original Greek and Hebrew sources before he was betrayed in 1535, in Antwerp, where he had been living openly for a couple of years. Arrested by the imperial authorities, he was tried, found guilty of heresy and treason and condemned to the stake. His execution took place on 6 October 1536. During his imprisonment, aware that he faced certain death, he continued to ask for the resources which would enable him to continue his work. His

last words are said to be, "O Lord, open the King of England's eyes." Within a year his prayer was answered. Miles Coverdale translated those parts of the Old Testament Tyndale had not completed by 1536 and an entire English Bible was printed with royal permission in 1537. However, to save the king's face this English Bible was published as the "Matthew Bible", depriving Tyndale of the acknowledgement he deserved.

As we've read in Catherine Dickie's article, the 1611 Authorized Version was heavily dependent on Tyndale's work. In fact one might claim that Tyndale was the victim of one of the worst cases of plagiarism ever. In 1611 his importance in the making of the Authorized Version was again played down in order to avoid giving offence to a king. Whereas Henry VIII had had no wish to be associated with a heretic, especially one who had condemned the grounds on which he sought an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, James I would have been angered by the plentiful notes which Tyndale attached to his translation of the text, notes which might be understood as undermining what were held to be the divinely instituted powers of the Crown. James certainly disliked the Geneva Bible (also much influenced by Tyndale's work) for exactly that reason.

Of course the passage of time has seen attitudes to Tyndale change; the Church of England commemorates him each year on 6 October, acknowledging his dedication, self-sacrifice and genius. This year there is further cause to remember him with gratitude. Without the Authorized Version and Tyndale's massive contribution to it, the discipleship of the laity would have been greatly restricted over the last 400 years.

Without an English Bible, the modern office of Reader as "lay theologian" would be unimaginable. I like to think that Tyndale would have approved of Readers who pursue their core tasks of preaching, teaching and service and make "all one".

Let's celebrate the 400th birthday of the Authorized Version but, 475 years after his untimely death, let's hear it also for William Tyndale.

Offering yourself for the ministry of Reader in the Diocese of Newcastle

Roger Lowans who is the Recruitment and Selection Co-ordinator for the Diocese of Newcastle Readers Board describes the process for applicants for Reader ministry.

Called to be a Reader?

Many of us have asked ourselves the question, "Am I called to be a Reader?" at some time or other. Some of us, even when asked if we had thought of becoming a Reader, have laughed it off. I was fortunate because the people who put this question to me were persistent and one said, "Sometimes others recognise your calling before you do." Other Readers have recognised that they have a calling by a feeling inside of them or through prayer or an experience in their life. The way people are called to Reader ministry is as varied as the people who are Readers.

All sorts of people are called to Reader ministry; men and women of all ages and backgrounds, those who are single and those who are busy parents. God calls doctors, accountants, police officers, people working in factories, youth workers, stay at home Mums, those who have just retired and many others.

What do Readers do?

Readers are people who have been trained for ministry and licensed by the Bishop to preach and lead services, to facilitate learning, to develop a supportive ministry for those exploring faith and to encourage others to be drawn to God by all that they do. Readers work mainly in their parish but others work across a diocese and even across dioceses. Readers make an exciting and significant contribution to the ministry of the Church of England. Every week up to 10,000 readers are actively witnessing and ministering throughout the country.

There are Readers in this Diocese who:

- Proclaim and preach the word
- Make sense of the world for others
- Help people to learn and grow as Christians
- Prepare and lead worship
- Facilitate learning about God
- Care for the people they serve
- Lead parents and toddlers' worship services
- Take baptism/ confirmation preparation sessions
- Lead Godly play or Messy Church events
- Run home groups
- Lead Lent or Advent courses
- Serve as chaplains in hospital and shops
- Take funerals and offer ministry to the bereaved
- And much, much more



Like to know more?

If you would like to know more, or feel you are called to this ministry you should get in touch with your vicar or parish priest. This is an exploration stage which allows you to think about and share your feelings about your calling and learn how Readers work. There is often an opportunity at this stage to talk to local Readers and hear their views and experiences of Reader ministry.

Once you have decided to go forward for selection contact me (see below) and I will provide you with application forms and information about the selection process.

Selection Day

Selection Day usually takes place on a Saturday between 9-30a.m. and 4-30p.m. In some ways the day is similar to other selection processes but there are differences. Firstly, when candidates receive an application form they also receive information about the criteria for Reader selection and a set of questions which helps them discern their ministry. It is suggested that you make notes about each question as you will answer similar questions during the selection process and then there will be no surprises. Secondly, candidates are not competing with each other for one post. In theory, if everyone is suitable for Reader ministry, all will be recommended for training.

What about training?

Initial training before you can be considered for licensing takes 3 years.

It is run by the Lindisfarne Regional Training Partnership. It is challenging but most people find it enjoyable. It includes a variety of modules such as Worship and Preaching, Pastoral Care, Christianity and the Arts, Church History, Old Testament and New Testament texts and much more.

One final thought

I would like to add one final thought which I hope will encourage you. My ministry as a Reader has been one of the most fulfilling experiences I have ever had and, if you put yourself forward for Reader ministry, I am sure you will find it a fulfilling vocation.

My contact details

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