

Introduction

In the Diocese of Truro we define Readers/Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs) as “*Community Theologians who preach, teach and enable everyday faith.*”

The Call of God to Reader/Licensed Lay Ministry must be tested out prayerfully and carefully, and must be affirmed by those within the diocese who are responsible for leading and guiding Reader/Licensed Lay Ministry. Canon E5 (Appendix A) provides the details.

Those who believe themselves to be called to this ministry are required to follow a discernment and training pathway similar to that of someone following a call to ordained ministry.

At various stages of the discernment and training pathway, there are decisions to be made by:

- the candidate
- their incumbent or Rural Dean
- the Warden and/or Deputy Warden of Readers with input from members of the Warden’s Committee
- the Licensed Ministry Officer

The attached Reader journey diagram maps out the whole journey.

Initial Discernment

Those sensing a call to Reader/Licensed Lay Ministry should first speak with their Incumbent (or Rural Dean if their benefice is in transition). It is usually suggested that the person apply to attend the Foundations in Christian Ministry Course.

<https://trurodiocese.org.uk/resources/ministry/lay-ministry-readers/foundations/> The Application Form requires two references, one of which should be the Incumbent or Rural Dean.

During the year of attending Foundations in Christian Ministry Course, participants are encouraged to pray and think carefully about their next step, and if the call to Reader Ministry remains strong, then the person is invited to meet with the Deputy Warden of Readers for an initial vocational conversation.

Following the meeting, the Deputy Warden produces a report for the Warden of Readers summarising the conversation and recommending (or not) that the person be invited to complete an Application to train as a Reader/LLM and attend the Reader Discernment Conference.

Acceptance for Training

Following the Reader Discernment Conference a recommendation (or not) is made that the candidate should be accepted to train as a Reader/LLM.

Should the decision be to not recommend, pastoral support is offered to the candidate, together with further vocational support.

Those accepted to train as Readers/LLMs are required to satisfactorily complete a 2 year Certificate of Theology, Ministry & Mission, delivered by SWMTC and validated by Durham University.

At the end of the first year of the Course, the Licensed Ministry Officer (LMO) prepares a report for the Warden of Readers noting the progress achieved, and any academic or other struggles/challenges, noting how these may be addressed in the second year of study, and offering appropriate on-going support.

Completion of Initial Training

At the end of the second year, the Licensed Ministry Officer prepares a further report for the Warden of Readers, assessing the Readers in Training against the national Reader/LLM IME Formation Framework (Appendix B), noting the progress achieved and any academic or other struggles/challenges that have been experienced.

The Report recommends (or not) that the candidate should be licensed. Should the recommendation be to not license, clear reasons for the decision will be given and, where possible, opportunities to meet the missed requirements will be offered.

Each candidate to be licensed will be required to take part in a Learning Needs Assessment which will be used to design and develop their Post-Licensing Training.

Initial Licensing and Post Licencing Training

Readers/LLMs completing their training (including all Safeguarding: Basic, Foundations, Leadership and Domestic Abuse Awareness) and appropriate Enhanced DBS checks, will be licenced for an initial probationary period of 12 months, during which time, they are required to attend a series of Post-Licensing Training Days.

Satisfactory attendance of the days and completion of any work required (reflective journal, evidence portfolio etc.) will be required. The LMO will provide a report to the Warden of Readers recommending (or not) that the full license for 3 years should be confirmed. Should the recommendation be to not award the full 3 year license, clear reasons for the decision will be given and, where possible, opportunities to meet the missed requirements will be offered.

Each Reader/LLM will also be required to develop a Working Agreement with their Incumbent or Rural Dean. A Template can be found on the Diocesan Website:

<https://trurodiocese.org.uk/resources/ministry/lay-ministry-readers/readers/resources-readers/>

Appeal Process

The decision to license (or not) lies with the Bishop. Whilst Readers-in-Training may not appeal the Bishop's decision, they may raise a concern if they believe that the process of assessment throughout their training (before or after licensing) has been in any way unfair, or if the process outlined here has not been followed.

In these circumstances, the appeal should be made, in writing, to the Bishop. The Bishop may ask the Deputy Warden of Readers and/or the Head of Ministry to investigate the issues raised, and to provide a report of their findings.

On-going Learning & Development

Readers/LLMs are strongly encouraged to attend Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) events including the two annual Bishops' Study Days. It is recognised that this may not be possible for Readers/LLMs in full time employment, in which case alternative opportunities should be sought.

Every three years, all Readers/LLMs are required to renew their License to include ensuring their DBS and all Safeguarding Training is up to date.

Readers/LLMs are required to review their Working Agreement with their Incumbent on an annual basis, at which time areas of learning and development should be identified. Both the Reader/LLM and the Incumbent may seek advice from the Licensed Ministry Officer on specific areas of support needed, particularly when there are concerns about a Reader/LLM's performance.

Drawing a Reader/LLM's Ministry to a close

Should an Incumbent/Rural Dean feel that the time has come for a Reader/LLM to 'hang up their blue scarf', they should initially speak with the Reader/LLM themselves to discuss their ministry, and suggest a way of drawing it to a close. The Incumbent/Rural Dean or the Reader/LLM may ask the LMO to be involved in these discussions to provide an independent voice.

Assuming that the Reader/LLM is in agreement, the Incumbent/Rural Dean should notify the Ministry Programmes Co-ordinator who will update the Reader's status to Reader Emeritus on the diocesan database (CMS) and advise the Chaplain to the Readers to provide pastoral support as necessary.

It will be important for the Incumbent/Rural Dean and the relevant parish/benefice to recognise, celebrate and thank the Reader/LLM for all that has been achieved during their ministry.

Should the Reader/LLM not agree, the Incumbent/Rural Dean should contact the Licensed Ministry Officer (LMO) to discuss a way forward, and to seek support for the Reader/LLM. The final decision will always rest with the Bishop.

Appendix A

CANON E5. OF THE NOMINATION AND ADMISSION OF READERS

1. A candidate for the office of reader in a parish or district shall be nominated to the bishop by the minister of that parish or district; and a candidate for the said office in a wider area by one of the rural deans or archdeacons after consultation with the minister of his parish or district.
2. The nominator in making such nomination shall satisfy the bishop that the said person is of good life, sound in faith, a regular communicant, and well fitted for the work of a reader, and provide all such other information about the said person and the duties which it is desired that he should perform as the bishop may require.

3. No person shall be admitted to the office of reader in the Church except it be found on examination, held by the bishop or by competent persons appointed by the bishop for this purpose, that he possesses a sufficient knowledge of Holy Scripture and of the doctrine and worship of the Church of England as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, that he is able to read the services of the Church plainly, distinctly, audibly, and reverently, and that he is capable both of teaching and preaching.

4. Every person who is admitted to the office of reader shall first, in the presence of the bishop by whom he is to be so admitted or of the bishop's commissary, make the declarations set out below, the preface which preceded the Declaration of assent in paragraph 1(1) of Canon Cl 5 (with the appropriate adaptations) having first been spoken by the bishop or commissary. I, AB, do so affirm, and accordingly declare my belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness; and in public prayer I will use only the forms of service which are authorised or allowed by Canon. 1, AB, will give due obedience to the Lord Bishop of C and his successors in all things lawful and honest.

5. The bishop shall admit a person to the office of reader by the delivery of the New Testament but without imposition of hands.

6. The bishop shall give to the newly admitted reader a certificate of his admission to office; and the admission shall not be repeated if the reader shall move to another diocese.