

# Annual General Meeting of the Sheffield Diocesan Readers' Association

Monday June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2025 at St Francis Bramley 7.30pm

## MINUTES

1. Tina Powell-Wiffen, chair welcomed everyone to the AGM.
2. **The Act of Worship and Renewal of Commitment to Ministry** was led by Chris Hall and Toby Hole, Director of Mission and Ministry, who also gave the address. Toby specifically addressed those whose licences had been renewed and those over 70 whose PTO had begun or been renewed.
3. **Apologies** were received from: Yvonne Hayes, Anne Eastwood, Stuart Foweather, Jonathan Williamson, Lynda Starbrook, Roger Ayling, Peter Ashworth, Catherine Burchill, Katharine Boyd, Jonathan Foster, Alison Rodgers, Neil Hayden, John Goodacre, Judith Roberts, Tina Tomlinson, Margaret Hollingsworth, Claire Rose, Peter Fenner, Viv Stubbs, Joan Wragg, Stephanie Aitken, Roland Krain.

27 readers were present.

4. **Approval of Minutes of the AGM 2024**  
These were accepted as an accurate record. No matters were arising.
5. **Distribution of certificates**  
Toby Hole handed out licences to those requiring renewal and certificates to those receiving Permission to Officiate. The Bishop of Sheffield had authorised him to do so.
6. **Reader reviews**  
Assistant warden, Peter Rainford, updated the meeting on the current situation. He thanked the people who have conducted the three-year reviews and explained their importance for all readers.
7. **Safeguarding**  
Toby Hole reminded everyone that the basic, foundation, domestic abuse and safer recruitment modules could all be done online via the CofE safeguarding portal, each take under an hour to complete. (Anyone engaging with recruitment needs to complete the Safe recruitment module.) The safeguarding leadership module requires personal engagement done via Zoom or in person. The PSO in each parish should keep a record to notify any reader of safeguarding training needing to be updated. All this is a requirement of the National church for anyone in a leadership position.

Any reader being reviewed, is now asked how safeguarding is currently working for them and in the parish. Is there anything that makes them feel uncomfortable etc. If

safeguarding issues are identified early, deterrent action can take place before it becomes more serious. Readers applying for Permission to Officiate are contacted for a short conversation with a nominated Parish Safeguarding Officer. Some PSOs have been asked to do this. But more are needed to be involved. Toby requested those present to recommend any PSO they know to volunteer.

#### **8. Report on the SMMIB – Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board**

Toby Hole reported that in February 2025, the Diocese's application to the SMMIB had resulted in two tranches of money coming to the diocese of £35.8m. £14.3m was the first tranche, which would in all likelihood be followed in 2028 by the second. This awaits confirmation.

This is significant for lay ministry with the expectation that it would lead to strengthen pathways people take from being new Christians, to growing in greater confidence in faith leading to serving God and being equipped to do so.

Toby looked forward to the soon to be announced appointment of a Lead Lay Ministry Enabler (LLME), to oversee, strategise and streamline the various expressions of lay ministry. They will also be Warden of readers.

#### **9. Wardens' team reports**

The website has been significantly updated and this report can be found there. Peter Rainford, Beryl Adamson and Giles Morrison, as assistant wardens, urged readers to take part in OMD. They reminded those present that they were there to support any serving reader if issues cropped up in the parish or with other pastoral needs that could not be dealt with in the parish. This included those in transit from one parish to another. Assistant wardens' contact details are on the website.

#### **10. Chair's report**

Tina Powell-Wiffen thanked the Assistant Wardens, Beryl Adamson, (pastoral issues), Giles Morrison (the website) and Peter Rainford (the website, new Bulletin, and functioning of the role of a reader) for their commitment. She thanked Toby Hole for his involvement, support and his earlier address in the service. She thanked the Executive for their commitment to readership ministry in the diocese and Ro Willoughby in her role as secretary. She thanked those present, acknowledging all that readers do day-by-day, week-by-week.

She asked for ideas for the future OMD programme and material for the Bulletin.

#### **11. Treasurer's report**

Jeremy Johnson, Treasurer, presented his report which is also on the website. It was received by the meeting with no abstentions or objections.

At last year's AGM someone had asked if a gift from Readers' funds could be made towards the work of lay ministry in Argentina. Jeremy explained at this meeting that

funds can only be used for work within the Sheffield Diocese. He encouraged everyone to give to lay ministry in Argentina in the plate at the back of the church.

## **12. OMD Report**

Ro Willoughby, Secretary to the Executive committee had been involved with Bill Goodman and Tina in creating the OMD programme, a mixture of in-person and on-line. Ro thanked Suzanna Schofield in helping administer the programme.

The Quiet Day took place in April at Todwick Parish Church Hall. Canon Ian Smith led on the theme of 'Between Warmth and Word'. 20 people came and it was much appreciated.

In May Angie Lauener and Huw Thomas led a very insightful session on 'Facilitating discussion where people disagree', this included insights in the light of the anticipated general election in the autumn. We didn't have to wait that long!

In September a local meeting for readers at St Barts enabled 13 readers to share one resource each that had positively impacted their ministry.

In October, Amanda Barraclough led a valuable session on Women's Well-being arranged by Beryl Adamson, which was also at St Barts.

Ro drew attention to future events, encouraging attendance on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September 1pm in Sheffield Cathedral, the Celebration of Lay Ministries with licensing of 3 new readers; Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> October the Diocesan Development Day at St Thomas Crookes; Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> November a Preaching Day especially for Readers.

## **13. Argentina link**

Rev Mark Brown, Oversight minister at All Saints, Ecclesall had recently visited Argentina. He spoke very positively about the churches he visited.

There have been serious floods in the city of Bahía Blanca, where a lay minister is supported by Andy Lenton, who travels monthly from Buenos Aires, 500 miles away. Churches in Argentina offered support and there has been some church growth.

There are five global representatives on the Crown Nominations Committee recommending the appointment of the new Archbishop of Canterbury. The representative from Latin and Central America is a lay minister from Argentina!

## **14. Election to the Sheffield Diocesan Readers' Association Executive Committee**

Tina Powell-Wiffen and Chris Hall were re-elected, with no other nominations.

## **15. Any Other Business**

Toby Hole encouraged people to join Companions in Prayer based on Ardsley Parish church which is run by two readers, which is a simple online resource which includes prayer for the diocese. It could be valuable for those who are housebound.

Toby Hole closed the meeting in prayer.