

DIOCESE OF SHEFFIELD READERS ASSOCIATION

WARDENS' TEAM REPORT

The Wardens' Team continues to evolve. This year we have welcomed a new Warden of Readers: Beth Burras (Lead Lay Ministry Enabler). She worships at Christ Church, Stannington and her paid role with the Diocese involves oversight of all aspects of Lay Ministry, including Readers. Rachael Williams works alongside Beth and has taken on some of the administrative Reader tasks from Peter Rainford. We also continue to appreciate the support of Dominique Horsfield, PA to Bishop Leah.

We presently have 108 Readers on our records, of whom 51 are male and 57 females. As from the AGM, 48 will be licensed and 60 will have Permission to Officiate (PTO) as they are aged 70 or more. These figures may decrease a little if some invited to reapply decide not to.) A small number of Readers are in-between parishes and therefore in-between licences.

Due to the changes in National Guidance for Reader ministry, this is the last year we will have Readers with PTO and next year all will be licensed.

These changes follow extensive consultation with the dioceses through the Central Readers Council (CRC). Sheffield Diocese is represented by one of the Wardens Team at each Annual Meeting of the CRC, and at the last meeting, in April, the main theme was Fostering Reader Vocations.

We are encouraged by the signs of such vocations in the Diocese and the growth in Reader training at St Hild's College. We were delighted to welcome three new Readers at the Celebration of Lay Ministries service last September – Joanne Mitchell, Julie Sandoval and Caro Staton. Two more are due to be admitted this September and six in 2027. At the time of writing, ten more are currently deciding whether to go forward for discernment leading to admission in 2028. We encourage you to pray for them all.

Can we encourage you to attend the Celebration of Lay Ministries service to welcome our new Reader colleagues? The service will be held on Saturday 26 September 2026 at Sheffield Cathedral and will start at 1pm. Advanced booking is not required.

At the time of writing and since the last AGM, four Readers aged 70 or more have indicated that they were retiring and they will receive Emeritus/a certificates. We especially want to acknowledge the long service of Michael Morton-Thorpe (29 years since admission), James Powell (38 years) and Peter Cockerham (43 years). A small number of others have resigned or not sought relicensing for various reasons.

We were saddened to hear of the deaths of two very long-serving Readers Emeriti, Jim Nuttall, who had served for 43 years when he retired in 2024 and Philip Fawcett, who had served for 58 years when he retired in 2019.

We want to encourage the development of Reader ministry and, of course, that means personal development and formation. 15 licensed Readers are having their reviews this year. We hope that, as your review comes round, you will welcome the opportunity to reflect on how your ministry has been developing and your aspiration for the next three years.

Our programme for Ongoing Ministerial Development is becoming more integrated with training for other lay ministries but we are also keen to meet the distinctive needs of Readers. In this we work closely with the Exec Committee, ably represented by Tina Powell-Wiffen and Ro Willoughby. Last November's Preaching Refresher Day was a highlight. We encourage Readers who would like to explore a call to funeral ministry to look out for the new diocesan training. Readers currently involved in taking funerals will be contacted in the autumn by Beth Burras, when she and the Bishop's office will be compiling the new list of authorised lay funeral ministers to comply with the new national guidance. We and Tina and Ro would be pleased to hear from you about your own training needs.

Our formation as Readers requires our spiritual nourishment and growth, supported by our life of prayer. Those who took part in our annual Quiet Day in May appreciated the time for reflection together. Some Readers with active ministries value having a spiritual accompanier and we would commend this.

We see part of our role as wardens as providing pastoral support to complement that in your parishes. Whilst your own church will be the first line of support, we realise that for various reasons you may need to look outside the parish. If so, we encourage you to make contact with one of us.

We are greatly encouraged by the breadth of experience and the commitment of our Reader community. Thank you for all that you do in Christ's service.

*Beth Burras
Beryl Adamson
Giles Morrison
Peter Rainford*