



Reader Survey

Joseph of Arimathea was sitting quietly on Wearyall Hill, Glastonbury, surveying the Marshes and the scenery all around. He thrust a thorn staff made from the 'Holy Crown of Thorns' worn by Christ into the ground, which immediately took root and is still there today. Joseph and his fellow travellers were tired and enjoying a few moments of peace and quiet.

Imagine their surprise when amongst bright lights and considerable noise, an unidentifiable object suddenly materialised out of the air. Strange lights, strong winds, a strident noise, what on earth was going on? And then out came a woman called Jodie Whittaker. Joseph had actually met William Hartnell some years earlier, so the arrival of Doctor Who in the trade mark 'Reader blue' telephone box was not a complete surprise!

"You've changed, Doctor" was Joseph's rather lame but well intended greeting, to which Jodie responded that it wasn't just the Doctor who had changed, big changes were afoot in politics, society, and even the church! We now have more television channels than any family can watch, we haven't won the football World Cup since 1966 (when William Hartnell was Dr. Who), Europe has united and now the UK is breaking away, we have women Priests and Bishops – and a very good job they're doing too – and Reader ministry continues to evolve.

So, Reader ministry is evolving? Where's it going, but more importantly, where is it now? Ah, the good Doctor replied, the Diocese where we are now, Bath & Wells, conduct an annual survey of what their Readers do, and the results for 2017, which are now available, make some very interesting reading.

There are 315 active Readers active in the Diocese, preaching almost 80 sermons each and every Sunday throughout the year – and on top of that, they lead, or share in the leading of, 262 acts of worship every week, across churches, residential homes, crematoria, schools and colleges. Often thought of as a 'preaching, teaching, leading worship' form of ministry, they also led over 1700 study and bible sessions across the year, expounding the Gospel, and explaining it to those who wanted to learn more.

What is so often overlooked is that Reader involvement extends from schools and pre-school right through to end of life care, being involved in 712 funerals (often conducted solo, some shared) and interment of ashes, invariably taking on much of the associated pastoral care as well.

I'm impressed, said Joseph, also rather lamely, but what about the changes? Well, Jodie replied, I mentioned Reader ministry as being 'preaching, teaching, leading worship'; The Central Readers' Council is beginning to think of Readers as 'enablers of mission, teachers of faith and as leaders in church and society'. But I can tell you that Bath & Wells Readers are truly leaders in the country!

The recent survey provided a staggering list of ministry activities where Readers have looked at their local communities and put themselves forward to instigate or help with activities and initiatives. Being members of the

- PCC, sometimes as an Officer
- Deanery, Diocesan and National Synod,
- Deanery Mission and Pastoral Groups,

and the such like may be expected. But that's just a start!

B&W Readers really are leaders in church and society, being also involved in, or with:

Messy church	After school clubs
South Sudan	Healing prayer
Local radio	Scripture Union
Quiet times for various groups	Local papers
Ecumenical activities	Samaritans
Fellowship activities	Ministry reviews
Prayer teams	Laying on of hands
Agape	Day Centres
Book groups	YMCA
LPA supervision	Food banks
Monastic communities	Women's social hub
Leading Communion by Extension services	Writing sermons for others to deliver
School ethos committees	Holiday Clubs
Chaplaincy	Campfire church
Lunch clubs	Pub outreach
Prison Christian fellowship	Bereavement care
Music, whether as part of groups playing the organ, or singing	School Governors
Baptism preparation	Glastonbury church tent
Mums & Toddlers	Street Pastor
Marriage preparation	Discussion groups
Open the Book	Counselling
Women's World Day of Prayer	Sacristan
Confirmation classes	Gypsies & travellers
Spiritual direction	Alpha
Ukraine	Safeguarding Officer
Mothers' Union	Diocesan World Mission Advisor
Arts & Crafts	Credit Union
	Bath & Wells Show
	Prayer blogs

Sorry Joseph, I must dash, said Jodie; I'll ask the next Doctor to visit when they can.

And with that, amongst the noise and flashing lights, she was off, leaving Joseph to contemplate the enormous role that twenty first century Readers play, not just in this Diocese, but across the country, promoting the Gospel in all that they do.



The full Diocesan results were as follows:

Active Readers (at 31st December 2017)	315			
Number of ...	Own Parish/ Benefice	Other Churches	Total	% change
How many times have you preached during the year? [Enter each time you have preached, even if you have used the same sermon]	3757	350	4107	-1%
How many times have you led Morning or Evening Prayer? [Book of Common Prayer or Common Worship]	1965	229	2194	-9%
How many times have you led a Service of the Word or Family Service?	1214	46	1260	8%
How many times have you led special services [e.g Carol, Memorial, Remembrance]?	577	20	596	-4%
How many times have you shared in the leadership of services? [i.e. leading any part of a service, read a lesson, led intercessions, administered communion]	6028	239	6268	39%
How many times have you taken a funeral in Church or at a Crematorium?	375	50	424	34%
How many times have you shared or taken a funeral?	200	34	234	67%
How many times have you carried out an interment of ashes?	151	14	165	24%
On how many occasions have you taken communion to the housebound? [at their home, in a residential home or in hospital]	1566	23	1589	4%
On how many occasions have you taken a non-communion service in a residential home or hospital?	213	25	238	21%

How many times in your capacity as a Reader have you conducted worship or undertaken other work in a school or college?	562	73	635	5%
How many study / bible sessions have you led during the year?	1690	30	1720	-6%
How many people have you seen for pastoral reasons? Include multiple visits to one person	1904	123	2026	-4%
How many training events have you attended?	683			

