

Code of Conduct for Readers

From time to time difficulties involving Readers arise within pastoral or working relationships, and it is affirming of Reader ministry to have a consistent Diocesan procedure for dealing with these, when local discussions have failed to resolve a contentious situation.

Accordingly the following pack contains:

- a) A Code of Ministerial Practice for Reader Ministry which states the clear and consistent guidelines, expected behaviours and standards of good practice for Readers and those supporting them in their parish settings across the diocese.
- b) The Grievance Procedure for Reader Ministry which sets out clear and consistent guidelines for dealing with grievances relating to the ministry and/or conduct of Readers in their settings across the diocese. This is to ensure that Readers and others are able to pursue grievances without fear of sanction and to promote good working relationships between Readers, clergy, licensed lay workers, AWAs and other members of church communities. A grievance may be brought by a Reader against another person, or by another person against a Reader, and is dealt with through a process of formal mediation by independent nominees, concluding with a report to the Warden of Readers and Diocesan Bishop.
- c) The Disciplinary Procedure for Reader Ministry which sets out clear and consistent guidelines for dealing with disciplinary issues relating to the ministry and/or conduct of Readers in their settings across the diocese. A disciplinary complaint may be brought by a person affected by an alleged breach by a Reader of the Code of Ministerial Practice, and is dealt with through a process of formal investigation by independent nominees. It may result in a range of sanctions.

PART ONE

Code of Ministerial Practice for Readers within the Diocese of Norwich

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this Code of Ministerial Practice is to set out clear and consistent guidelines, expected behaviours, and standards of good practice, for Readers and those supporting them in their parish settings across the Diocese.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This Code of Ministerial Practice applies to Readers holding a Bishop's licence, Readers with Permission to Officiate, and Readers in training.
- 2.2 The Bishops' Regulations for Reader Ministry are obtainable through the Readers' pages of the Church of England web-site. Readers may find these website links useful:
<http://www.readers.cofe.anglican.org/>
http://www.readers.cofe.anglican.org/u_d_lib_pub/p23.pdf

3 Introduction

- 3.1 The Ministry of the Church of England in the Diocese of Norwich involves a great number of people, both lay and ordained. Many Christians respond to the call to serve God and people through the Church. Readers have a publicly recognised ministry and their licences are recognized at both the national and the local level.
- 3.2 The call to ministry is first and foremost a call to the discipleship of our Lord Jesus Christ and the development of that discipleship in the disciplines of prayer, worship, and Bible study, and the giving of time and space to the discernment of the prompting of the Holy Spirit.
- 3.3 Readers as pastors, spiritual guides and representatives of the faith are in a position of trust in their relationships with all in their communities.
- 3.4 It is important that Readers should remain mindful at all times of the power and responsibility that go with their Office, of the call to be servants of Christ who is servant of all.

4 Spiritual life

- 4.1 Readers should recognise the importance of their own devotional life as the foundation of Christian ministry. Spiritual health and discernment can be facilitated by sharing the journey of faith with another person or a team to whom the individual can turn for help or support on a regular basis as a spiritual guide.

- 4.2 Readers should be people of prayer. They should have a daily discipline of prayer and be faithful in attending Sunday worship.
- 4.3 Readers should model the holiness to which all Christ's people are called by their baptism. They should love God and love their neighbour.
- 4.4 Readers must remember that, whatever their personal circumstances, protected time for family, friends, recreation and relaxation is essential. These are part of God's calling, and should be taken as seriously as their ministry.

5 Standards of Behaviour

- 5.1 Readers are reminded that they are required to uphold the highest standards of behaviour and that an aspect of their role is to uphold and enhance the good standing of the Church as the Body of Christ.
- 5.2 Readers are responsible for their continuing training and skill development and for ensuring that their Continuing Ministerial Development is pursued conscientiously and in line with Diocesan policy.
- 5.3 Readers should have an awareness of the conduct that is appropriate in situations where pastoral advice is sought or given. They should act with sensitivity, with competence and in an ethical manner in all pastoral situations.

6 Safeguarding

- 6.1 This Code of Ministerial Practice is explicitly subject to the requirements of the Church of England's safeguarding policy for children, young people and vulnerable adults, and to all additional or supplementary diocesan policies, protocols and guidance.
- 6.2 All Readers have a responsibility to familiarise themselves and to keep up to date with diocesan safeguarding policies, protocols and guidance, and to promote adherence to these within the congregations where they minister.

7 Preaching and Teaching

- 7.1 Readers should aspire to the highest standards of preaching and teaching. Their calling comes from Christ himself. They are to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom and to draw all people to Christ.
- 7.2 Readers must set aside adequate time for reflection on, and preparation of, sermons and other teaching materials and resources.
- 7.3 Readers are encouraged to give the opportunity to others to respond critically to the material they impart (whether implicit or overt) and to engage with criticism appropriately.

7.4 Readers should be prepared to be held accountable for what they teach and preach and to exercise sensitivity with regard to the occasions and settings upon which they do it. They should be particularly careful in handling material that may be deemed radical, reactionary, or liable to give offence. On such occasions it may be appropriate for a Reader to submit a draft text to their incumbent prior to preaching.

8 Leading Worship

8.1 Readers should aspire to the highest standards in leading worship; planning it with great care to be worthy of God and his people.

8.2 Worship should be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Canons of the Church of England and the Bishop of the Diocese.

8.3 When a Reader leads worship in collaboration with others, they should be sensitive at all times to the needs of the community and the faith of the church, and should ensure that people are aware of their roles well in advance with the information they need to prepare properly for participation in leading worship.

8.4 Attire should be appropriate and seemly to the tradition and requirement of the church/worship setting. Readers are expected to know what the Canons require.

9 Pastoral Care

9.1 Readers should act with sensitivity, competence, and in an ethical fashion, in all pastoral situations, with an awareness of the needs of those in their care, remaining vigilant to their own professional boundaries and to legal requirements. They have a duty to make themselves familiar with the guidelines for the pastoral care of children and vulnerable adults.

9.2 In determining boundaries (physical, emotional and psychological), Readers should clarify with those in their care what help is being requested, the range of support that they are able to give, what is confidential and what is not, and remain ever vigilant to potential manipulation. They should be ever mindful of possible compromise in the pastoral relationship.

9.3 Readers should be very mindful of their role in pastoral care, counselling and advice, which they must not confuse with the professional skills of qualified counsellors and therapists – despite inevitable overlaps. They should ensure that they have in place appropriate supervision.

9.4 Readers should discern the right time to bring different phases of pastoral relationships to appropriate conclusions, thus encouraging maturity and growth.

9.5 Readers should be mindful of the appropriate venues, timing and space, for pastoral care to take place. This is not only for individual protection but also for the sake of

the wellbeing of the Church. They should be aware of particular areas of sensitivity; for example:

- arrangements for visiting someone alone, especially late at night, should be avoided or where unavoidable appropriate steps taken to minimise risks
- arrangements for someone visiting a Reader alone, especially late at night should be avoided or where unavoidable appropriate steps taken to minimise risks
- ensuring that there are proper safeguards in place where there is potential for violence or risk to self and others
- appropriate attire

9.6 Readers should be mindful of their actions/body language at all times and be especially aware of behaviour which could be misinterpreted however well intentioned. They should be aware of particular areas of sensitivity; for example:

- inappropriate touching or gestures of affections
- spending time alone with a child/children/vulnerable adult – or away from a group
- allowing the development of a long term pastoral relationship with one person in a partnership, when a significant part of the pastoral care focuses upon difficulties in the marriage/partner relationship (here the Reader should seek to work with the couple wherever possible)
- allowing the development or continuation of a dependent pastoral relationship
- inappropriate use of terms of endearment

9.7 Readers who wish to pursue acquiring professional counselling skills should make themselves fully aware of the appropriate guidelines and undertake the requisite training and supervision.

9.8 Readers should ensure that they have some knowledge of local and national support/specialist agencies which can provide alternative or complementary pastoral advice; and be mindful of when referrals to these agencies are appropriate.

9.9 Readers should be mindful at all times of their own safety, and that of those they are meeting/visiting.

9.10 Readers should seek immediate professional support and advice from their incumbent, Area Sub-Warden or Warden of Readers as a matter of urgency whenever a compromise in pastoral care occurs, or they feel out of their depth.

10 Professional Relationships, Responsibilities & Boundaries

10.1 Readers are an important part of local collaborative ministry arrangements, in which they must work with colleagues, lay and ordained, to develop a growing relationship through shared responsibilities. Within this environment all ministry should be affirmed, and all talents and skills should be acknowledged and nurtured.

- 10.2 The relationship between a Reader and their Incumbent is key. Readers and Incumbents should work together to ensure that there is an appropriately negotiated working agreement in place from the outset of a working relationship. Personal space and relationships should be protected and recognised as part of God's calling and taken seriously as part of ministerial responsibilities. A template for a Working Agreement is attached at Annex A. The Area Sub-Warden may be involved if necessary in the negotiation of this agreement. The Working Agreement should be reviewed at least once every two years in the case of Readers holding the Bishop's licence. It is optional for Readers with Permission to Officiate and its relevance will depend on the frequency and level of involvement of such a Reader in the leading of worship within the benefice.
- 10.3 Readers and Incumbents should meet regularly for support, encouragement and professional development.
- 10.4 Where relationships become strained, or where difficulties become apparent, Readers, in liaison with their Incumbents, should take responsibility for ensuring that the Warden of Readers is aware and that, if necessary, the requirements of the Grievance Procedure for use by Readers are observed.
- 10.5 Readers should be mindful at all times of their professional integrity when dealing with issues of finance and financial resources. They should not infringe the boundaries between church finance and personal money, and they should never seek to receive any personal advantage or gain from a pastoral situation.
- 10.6 Readers may never take fees for conducting funerals or other offices and all appropriate expenses should be reimbursed through local arrangement.

11 Confidentiality

- 11.1 Confidentiality is of great importance at all times in order to develop and maintain trust in pastoral relationships. Confidences should not be extended or shared without the express permission of the individual except in certain circumstances. These circumstances should be made clear at the outset of the pastoral relationship.
- 11.2 Readers will need to exercise careful judgement about when a confidence raises clear concerns and when their role may be compromised – especially remaining vigilant to the legal requirements for disclosure in extreme circumstances, particularly where the safety of children or vulnerable adults is concerned.
- 11.3 Readers should remain mindful that they need to inform those in their pastoral care when the content and process of their pastoral relationship may be shared with certain other people – e.g. an Incumbent, supervisory group, consultant or other involved colleagues; and that they make it clear that this is done to enable the Reader to offer them the best possible care.
- 11.4 Readers may not formally hear confessions or give absolutions.

12 Vacancies

- 12.1 During a vacancy Readers often agree to undertake duties over and above their normal responsibilities; this is much appreciated and valued by the Diocese, and by parishes and local settings, as it allows continuity of parish life.
- 12.2 It is important before any vacancy for a Reader to agree with their PCC and Rural Dean what level of support and (additional) commitment the Reader is able to offer.
- 12.3 Readers should actively participate in the recruitment and selection process of a new incumbent (up to, but not usually including, the formal interview).
- 12.4 Where a Reader's licence is to come up for renewal during a vacancy the Warden of Readers will normally arrange for an extension of the current licence until a new incumbent is in place.
- 12.5 When a new incumbent or other local arrangement changes, after an appropriate settling in period, it is important that there is a revisiting of the Working Agreement and licensing arrangements.

13 Administration

- 13.1 Readers should provide timely and appropriate responses to paperwork and correspondence.
- 13.2 Readers should familiarise themselves with the General Data Protection Regulations and act accordingly.
- 13.3 On reaching the age of 70 a Reader will be asked, together with their Incumbent, whether they wish to assume Permission to Officiate status. If they do not request Permission to Officiate (or if this is withheld) then they will not be able to exercise public ministry after the 1st September following their 70th birthday.

14 Diocesan Support

- 14.1 Readers are encouraged to contact their Incumbent and Area Sub-Warden when they are unwell or experiencing health or other worries.
- 14.2 In some circumstances, the Incumbent or Area Sub-Warden may consult the Warden of Readers as some external support and advice might be available and helpful.
- 14.3 Readers may make use of the Diocesan Counsellor with permission from the Warden of Readers.
- 14.4 Grievance and Disciplinary processes are available to ensure that areas of concern, or other issues, are dealt with consistently, fairly, and with compassion, ensuring due process and the right of appeal.

PART TWO

A Grievance Procedure for Reader Ministry in the Diocese of Norwich

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this Grievance Procedure is to:

- set out clear and consistent guidelines for dealing with grievances relating to the ministry and/or conduct of Readers in their settings across the Diocese
- ensure that Readers are able to pursue grievances without fear of sanction
- promote good working relationships between Readers, clergy, Authorised Worship Assistants and members of church communities

2. Background

2.1 It is important to reflect that Readers are not employees of the church, nor do they have any of the usual employment-related contracts, etc. However, Readers through their vocation, their licences, their dedication to their roles as pastors, spiritual guides, and representatives of the faith, and their training, have a position of trust and privilege in the church and in their communities.

2.2 It is central to the teaching of Jesus that those who are reconciled to God must be open to being reconciled to those who have offended them or those they have offended.

2.3 Reconciliation involves clarification of what has happened, how it is perceived by the other person and acknowledgement of the depth of anger and hurt. Reconciliation, for both parties, involves the rebuilding of damaged relationships.

2.4 Any grievance should be treated seriously because of its significance to the person concerned. In addition no-one should be disadvantaged in relation to new appointments, other opportunities, or access to training by bringing a grievance, or by acting as a friend or colleague to someone who has registered a grievance.

3. Scope

3.1 The scope of this Grievance Procedure is to cover issues of grievances which arise between Readers, other ministers, and members of church communities which do not amount to disciplinary-related misconduct or matters that may lead to criminal charges. It also covers issues about conditions of Reader service. Grievances may be brought by or against a Reader.

3.2 Readers in training are subject to the grievance procedure of ERMIC where the issue arises from attendance at any course events or relationship with staff or other

students. Where an issue arises in the trainee Reader's parish context, this document applies.

- 3.3 The term 'Reader' in this document includes both Readers holding a Bishop's licence and Readers with Permission to Officiate.

4. The Grievance Process

4.1 The Informal Stage

- 4.1.1 Any person who has a grievance with regard to Reader ministry, should, in the first instance, discuss it with the person against whom he or she has a grievance, in order to seek a swift and acceptable resolution.
- 4.1.2 If this is not possible or is unsuccessful, the person should raise the matter with one of the following:
- a. a peer
 - b. the person responsible for his or her ministerial review
 - c. the Area Sub-Warden
 - d. another suitable person
- in order to explore whether, and if so, how, the matter might be resolved informally.

4.2 The Formal Stage

- 4.2.1 If an informal approach proves unsuccessful, the person with the grievance should refer the matter in writing to the Incumbent in the first instance or, if this is not possible (eg during an Interregnum or if the issue involves the Incumbent), to the Warden of Readers, stating the issues and the steps that have been taken to try to resolve the matter informally. Email will be used as the preferred method of communication unless the person with the grievance specifies that they are contactable only by post.
- 4.2.2 The Warden of Readers should, in consultation with the Diocesan Registrar (and Bishop if appropriate), decide whether there is an issue that can properly be dealt with under the Grievance Procedure.
- 4.2.3 If the Warden of Readers, with the Registrar's and the Bishop's advice, considers that the grievance amounts to an allegation of misconduct, and would therefore be more appropriately dealt with as a disciplinary matter, it must not be dealt with under the Grievance Procedure. Instead, it should be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 4.2.4 If the Warden of Readers, after due consultation, decides that no further action should be taken under the formal stage of the Grievance Procedure they should write within 28 days of receiving the letter described in 4.2.1 to the person who has brought the grievance stating the reasons for the decision.

- 4.2.5 The aggrieved person may request the Warden of Readers in writing to reconsider their decision within 14 days of receiving the Warden's letter. Only one such approach to the Warden should be made.
- 4.2.6 If the Warden of Readers, after due consultation, decides that there is an issue that can be dealt with under the Grievance Procedure, then they should not become further involved in dealing with the grievance. Within 28 days of receiving the letter described in 4.2.1 they should nominate two suitably trained people from the Diocesan list ('the Nominees') to explore the matter and make recommendations as appropriate.
- 4.2.7 The Diocesan list of Nominees (previously assembled and maintained by the Bishop) should consist of suitably qualified clergy and lay people, including those with particular expertise in dealing with sensitivities and issues relating to gender, race, sexuality and disability.
- 4.2.8 Nominees on the list should be trained in the understanding and resolution of conflicts and in mediation. They should not deal with more than one grievance at a time.
- 4.2.9 Those involved with the process should respect proper boundaries of confidentiality and only share information with those who genuinely need to know it. The Nominees should not enter discussions relating to the grievance with the parties to the grievance outside the framework of the meetings arranged by the Nominees in accordance with this procedure.
- 4.2.10 Within 14 days of receiving the 4.2.6 nomination, the Nominees should take the following steps:
- i. They should write to the aggrieved person to report their nomination and explain the role of the Nominees.
 - ii. They should write on the same day to the person against whom the grievance has been brought, setting out the name of the aggrieved person and the substance of the grievance, and also reporting their nomination and explaining the role of the Nominees.
 - iii. They should advise both parties that they are entitled to be accompanied at meetings by a friend or colleague who may participate in discussions.
 - iv. They should copy this correspondence to the Bishop and to the Warden of Readers, unless either of them is the subject of the grievance.
- 4.2.11 If either party objects to the choice of the Nominees, that party should, within 7 days of receiving notification of the Nominee's identity, write to the Warden of Readers (sending copies at the same time to the Nominees and to the other party to the grievance) stating their objection and the reason for it.

- 4.2.12 The Warden of Readers should, within 14 days of receiving the letter of objection, write to both parties to the grievance, sending copies at the same time to the Nominees and (unless they are otherwise involved in the proceedings) to the Bishop, stating whether or not the objection is upheld, and, if it is, appointing new Nominees. After due consultation the Warden's decision is final.
- 4.2.13 The Nominees should as soon as practicable, but within 28 days of being accepted as Nominees unless acceptably unavoidable, hold separate meetings with the aggrieved person and the person against whom the grievance has been brought.
- 4.2.14 These meetings will be followed (again as soon as practicable but preferably within 28 days of the meeting referred to in 4.2.13) by a joint meeting between the Nominees and both parties to the grievance. At this joint meeting the Nominees will seek to achieve reconciliation and agreement about a way forward.
- 4.2.15 If, as a result of the joint meeting, the grievance is satisfactorily resolved, the Nominees should record the outcome, including any agreed course of action, and, within 14 days of the date of the joint meeting send copies to both parties, the Warden of Readers and the Bishop.
- 4.2.16 If a consensus cannot be achieved, the Nominees should recommend a course of action to be followed. This may include counselling, more formal mediation, supervision or spiritual direction. Where relationships are deemed to have broken down it may be appropriate to recommend a Reader be transferred elsewhere either temporarily or for an extended period to allow a time for reflection. Both parties to the grievance, the Warden of Readers and the Bishop must be informed of the recommendation in writing within 14 days of the meeting.
- 4.2.17 The Nominees should assume responsibility for a period of up to 12 months, which may be extended after consultation with the Bishop, for checking with both parties that the grievance has been resolved and that the agreed or recommended action has been taken. This period will be specified in writing to the parties, the Warden of Readers and the Bishop.
- 4.2.18 The Nominees will send a final report to the Warden of Readers and the Bishop at the end of the specified period. If the grievance persists, it will be for the Warden of Readers, in consultation with the Bishop to decide whether further action should be taken.

5. Appeals

- 5.1 Both parties to the grievance may appeal in writing to the Warden of Readers about the Nominee's recommendation under paragraph 16 within 28 days of receiving the written record of that recommendation.
- 5.2 The Warden of Readers may (but need not) interview both parties to the grievance. Again, the parties may, if they wish, be accompanied by a friend or colleague.
- 5.3 The Warden of Readers may recommend a new course of action to be followed. The Nominee will have responsibility during the next 12 months for checking whether the action has been taken and the grievance has been resolved.
- 5.4 The Warden's decision on the appeal (which should be agreed with the Bishop of Norwich) will be final and will be given as soon as practicable but preferably within 28 days of receiving the appeal.

6. Recording of Action on Grievances

- 6.1 A written record of actions will be retained by the Warden of Readers on behalf of the Diocesan Bishop under this procedure and will be subject to the provision of the General Data Protection Regulations (including the access rights of data subjects).

7. Grievances procedures where the grievance is made regarding senior clergy

- 7.1 Where a grievance is made regarding the Warden of Readers – the full process (1-6) remains the same, but the grievance should be directed to the Bishop of Norwich, who will nominate another member of the Bishop's Senior Staff to fulfil the role otherwise specified for the Warden of Readers in paragraphs 1-6.
- 7.2 Where a grievance is made regarding a Bishop – the full process (1-6) remains the same with the Archbishop of Canterbury fulfilling the role otherwise specified for the Warden of Readers in paragraphs 1-6. The Archbishop will appoint an appropriate Nominee.

PART THREE

A Disciplinary Procedure for Reader Ministry in the Diocese of Norwich

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this Disciplinary Procedure is to:

- set out clear and consistent guidelines for dealing with disciplinary issues relating to the ministry and/or conduct of Readers in their settings across the Diocese
- promote good working relationships between Readers, clergy, Authorised Worship Assistants and members of church communities

1.2 Where Readers wish to make a formal disciplinary complaint regarding a member of the clergy, they should do this through the appropriate processes set out in the Clergy Discipline Measure.

2. Background

2.1 It is important to reflect that Readers are not employees of the church, nor do they have any of the usual employment-related contracts, etc. However, Readers through their vocation, their licences, their dedication to their roles as pastors, spiritual guides, and representatives of the faith, and their training, have a position of trust and privilege in the church and in their communities.

2.2 It is central to the teaching of Jesus that those who are reconciled to God must be open to being reconciled to those who have offended them or those they have offended.

2.3 Reconciliation involves clarification of what has happened, how it is perceived by the other person and acknowledgement of the depth of anger and hurt. It also may involve the acceptance of appropriate “sanctions”. Reconciliation, for both parties, involves the rebuilding of damaged relationships, which in some exceptional circumstances may take some considerable time and work.

2.4 Any discipline related complaint should be treated seriously because of its significance to the person concerned. In addition no-one should be disadvantaged in relation to new appointments, other opportunities, or access to training by having made a formal discipline related complaint or by acting as a friend or colleague to someone who has been part of a disciplinary process.

3. Scope

- 3.1 The scope of this Disciplinary Procedure is to cover discipline-related issues which arise with respect to the ministry of Readers, but which would not lead to criminal charges.
- 3.2 This Disciplinary Procedure may operate summarily in circumstances of gross misconduct or where a statutory disqualification is imposed. A Reader may be automatically disqualified and their licence/permission to officiate withdrawn in circumstances such as include bankruptcy, conviction for an offence involving dishonesty, sexual misconduct, physical assault or harm, or any disqualification from acting as a charity trustee.
- 3.3 Readers in training are subject to the disciplinary procedure of ERM C where the issue arises from attendance at any course events or relationship with staff or other students. Where an issue arises in the trainee Reader's parish context, this document applies.

4. The Disciplinary Process

4.1 The Informal Stage

- 4.1.1 Any person who has a potential disciplinary complaint with regard to Reader ministry, should, in the first instance, if possible and if appropriate, discuss it with the Reader against whom they have a complaint to clarify the issues and ensure that there has not been any sort of misunderstanding. Where possible there should be an attempt to seek a swift and acceptable resolution.
- 4.1.2 If this is not possible, not appropriate or is unsuccessful, the person making the complaint should raise the matter with one of the following:
 - a) a peer
 - b) their Incumbent or equivalent
 - c) their Area Sub-Warden of Readers
 - d) another suitable person,in order to explore whether, and if so, how, the matter might be resolved informally. These discussions should also involve an exploration of whether the issue is a potential disciplinary matter, or whether it should more properly be dealt with under the grievance procedure.
- 4.1.3 Where information is being passed in writing, the writer should attempt to ensure that only the known facts are referred to and not add any information that could be construed as subjective or based on "gossip" or hearsay.

4.2 The Formal Stage

- 4.2.1 If an informal approach proves unsuccessful, the person making the disciplinary complaint should refer the matter in writing to the Warden of Readers (unless the issue involves the Warden of Readers) stating the issues and the steps that have been taken to try to resolve the matter informally. If the complaint involves the Warden of Readers then the initial referral should be to the Diocesan Bishop, who will then nominate another member of the Bishop's Senior Staff to fulfil the duties of the Warden of Readers set out below. Email will normally be used as the preferred method of communication unless the relevant person specifies that they are contactable only by post.
- 4.2.2 The Warden of Readers will then send a copy to the Reader and request a response within 7 days. The Warden should then arrange to meet the Incumbent (or equivalent) of the Reader or Reader in training to ensure that they are in receipt of all available and appropriate information and to seek clarity as necessary.
- 4.2.2 The Warden of Readers should, in consultation with the Diocesan Registrar (and Bishop if appropriate), decide whether there is an issue that can properly be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure. Consideration should be given to whether the issue could be more appropriately resolved through the use of some other method, eg the Diocesan Grievance Procedure.
- 4.2.3 If the Warden, with the Registrar's and the Bishop's advice, considers that the complaint amounts to an allegation of misconduct, the Warden will contact the Reader concerned and invite them to attend a meeting at which the nature of the issue and the Disciplinary process will be outlined. A copy of the Disciplinary Procedure will be sent to the Reader.
- 4.2.4 The Reader should be made aware that they are entitled to be accompanied at the meeting, and be assured that nothing will be pre-judged, and that due process will be followed.
- 4.2.5 The meeting will be chaired by the appropriate Rural Dean and attended by the Warden of Readers, the Reader and their accompanier. The Rural Dean may request that minutes are taken at this meeting and an appropriate note taker will be identified from the Diocese/DBF. These will be circulated – only to those present - for agreement on matters of fact after the meeting.
- 4.2.6 The Rural Dean may at this stage decide to recommend to the Bishop that the Reader's licence or permission to officiate be temporarily withdrawn to ensure that there is no compromise of role, to allow some space for an investigation to take place, or until the full disciplinary process has run its course.

- 4.2.7 The Bishop will write to the Reader to set out the terms of any temporary cessation of duties/licence, and to assure the Reader of due process and right of appeal. A copy of this letter will be sent to the appropriate senior clergy, the Incumbent, and the Diocesan Registrar. The Warden of Readers will ensure that appropriate pastoral and spiritual support is in place.
- 4.2.8 The Rural Dean at the meeting (4.2.5) will inform the Reader that the matter will be investigated through the framework of the Disciplinary Process by two suitably trained persons from the Diocesan list ('the Nominees').
- 4.2.9 The Diocesan list of Nominees (previously assembled and maintained by the Diocesan Bishop) should consist of suitably qualified clergy and lay people, including those with particular expertise in dealing with issues of great sensitivity. Nominees on the list have a different remit from those who assist in Grievance issues. They should be trained in interviewing skills, active listening skills, and analytical skills. It is not their role to instigate resolution of conflicts or mediation. They should not deal with more than one disciplinary process at a time.
- 4.2.10 Those involved with the process should respect proper boundaries of confidentiality and only share information with those who genuinely need to know it. The Nominees should not enter discussions relating to the process with the parties to the complaint outside the framework of the meetings arranged by the Nominees in accordance with this procedure.
- 4.2.11 Within 14 days of being identified to take up an investigation the Nominees should take the following steps:
- i Write to the individual making the complaint to report their nomination and explain the role of the Nominees.
 - ii Write on the same day to the Reader against whom the complaint has been made:
 - to introduce themselves and the role and remit of Nominees
 - to confirm the substance of the complaint
 - to detail their understanding of what has occurred in the process and circumstances so far
 - to assure the Reader that nothing has been prejudged
 - to assure the Reader that they may be accompanied by a friend or colleague to any meeting arranged and that this person may participate in any of the discussions
- 4.2.12 The Nominees should copy this correspondence to the Warden of Readers who will maintain the case file throughout the process.

- 4.2.13 If either the Reader or the person bringing the complaint objects to the choice of either of the Nominees, that party should, within 7 days of receiving notification of the Nominees' identities write to the Warden of Readers stating their objection and the reason for it.
- 4.2.14 The Warden should, within 14 days of receiving the letter of objection, write to both parties, sending copies at the same time to the Nominees, stating whether or not the objection is upheld, and, if it is, appointing a new Nominee(s). Two further Nominees may be identified in the process, and after due consultation the Warden's decision is final.
- 4.2.15 The Nominees should as soon as practicable - but within 28 days unless acceptably unavoidable, determine the scope of their investigation, identify the individuals concerned, ensure they have all current relevant letters, paperwork etc, and arrange to hold separate meetings with each person they believe is involved in the issue. They then conduct a detailed investigation, bearing in mind the Code of Ministerial Practice for Readers within the Diocese of Norwich.
- 4.2.16 Following a detailed investigation of the issue the Nominees should prepare a full report for the Warden.
- 4.2.17 The report may suggest personal and/or professional views about the circumstances and individuals involved, and should refer to relevant paragraphs of the Code of Ministerial Practice for Readers.
- 4.2.18 The Warden will send a copy of the report to the Rural Dean and the Reader and arrange to convene a meeting with the Rural Dean, the Reader and the Nominees to review the report and ask for any final comments.
- 4.2.19 At this meeting (4.1.18) the Reader may not make any changes to the report, but may append their own comments to it.
- 4.2.20 Within 7 days of the meeting taking place the Warden should write to the Reader clarifying what has occurred during the process and what recommendations are to be made to the Diocesan Bishop.
- 4.2.21 Sanctions/Options may include:
- Acquittal and no further action
 - An apology
 - A letter expressing disappointment and clear expectations for the future
 - A period of review during which only certain tasks within the context of the licence may be undertaken (with supervision where appropriate)
 - A temporary withdrawal/suspension of the licence for a given period of time, with clear grounds upon which the licence will be re-established
 - A permanent withdrawal of the licence

- Where relationships are deemed to have broken down it may be appropriate to recommend a Reader be transferred elsewhere either temporarily or for an extended period to allow a period of separation and/or reflection

4.2.22 Within 7 days of the communication in 4.2.20, the Warden shall send to the Diocesan Bishop the report, any appendices, and a copy of the letter in 4.2.20.

4.2.23 Within 14 days of receipt of the communication in 4.2.22, the Bishop should decide what is the most appropriate course of action to be taken and should communicate this to the Reader along with the acknowledgement of the Reader's right to appeal against the judgement. A copy of this letter should be sent to the Incumbent and appropriate senior clergy, the Rural Dean, the Warden, the Nominees and the Complainant.

5. Appeals

- 5.1 A Reader wishing to appeal against a judgement should write directly to the Diocesan Bishop and set out in writing the reasons for their appeal. A meeting with the Reader should be held by the Bishop within 28 days of receiving the written appeal.
- 5.2 At such meeting the Bishop may interview the Rural Dean, the Warden of Readers, the Reader and the Nominees. Again, the Reader may, if they wish, be accompanied by a friend or colleague.
- 5.3 If the Bishop feels that further information has become evident or that there are mitigating circumstances they may review the written decision on sanctions/options.
- 5.4 The Bishop should formally write to the Reader within 28 days of hearing the appeal with their final judgement against which there is no further right of appeal.
- 5.5 A copy of this final judgement will be sent to the Incumbent and appropriate senior clergy, the Rural Dean, the Warden and the Nominees.

6. Recording of Disciplinary Procedures

- 6.1 A written record of actions taken throughout the process will be maintained and retained by the Warden of Readers on behalf of the Diocesan Bishop. Any information held under this procedure will be subject to the provision of the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (including the access rights of data subjects).

Annex A

READER WORKING AGREEMENT

Reader Ministry is a vocation before God and carries significant responsibilities of service to the people of God. A Reader is a member of a team with her/his incumbent or Priest-in-Charge and any other ministers within the benefice. As such the relationship between Reader and Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge is an important one based on trust, openness and mutual accountability. It is, therefore, appropriate that the Reader's contribution to the ministry of the benefice is carefully thought through; this document is an aid to this so that working patterns and areas of particular responsibility can be agreed and reviewed. Having an agreement does not imply that the nature of a Reader's ministry is fixed, but accepts that there will be a degree of fluidity as a person's ministry develops and personal circumstances change. The agreement assumes the highest degree of trust and confidentiality within a team of ministers and aims to ensure that the ministry of the individual and the benefice as a whole is continually developing.

Benefice:

This agreement is the result of discussion between

Reader:

Incumbent (or Priest-in-Charge):

Date:

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. What other significant responsibilities does the Reader have outside their ministry?
In particular, mention any family or work commitments which may constrain the Reader's availability for ministry.

PUBLIC WORSHIP AND MINISTRY

2. On average, how many hours per week are available for ministry as a Reader? *It is recognised that a degree of flexibility is important.*
3. How often, and at which services, will the Reader preach and/or lead, each month? *(A note should be made of the frequency of preaching on ordinary Sundays and during particular seasons. Also note what other assistance the Reader gives at communion services.)*
4. Other services in which the Reader will be involved (e.g. *Funeral, weekday services*).

5. What are the Reader's pastoral responsibilities?

6. Other areas of involvement (e.g. Bible study groups, children's/school work, baptism/wedding/confirmation preparation).

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

7. Attendance at public worship and pattern of private worship and prayer. *(Comment on the expected balance for the Reader between attending rather than leading services – i.e. the rhythm of receiving and giving. Also details of daily devotion and other aspects of prayer, quiet days, retreats etc.).*

8. With whom does the Reader join in prayer and/or bible study on a regular basis? What areas of spiritual growth are currently being explored and developed? *(Those who seek to minister to others have an obligation to be aware of their own need for spiritual growth and development.)*

SUPERVISION AND MEETINGS

9. How often, and at what times, will the Reader meet with the Incumbent to discuss the Reader's ministry and responsibilities? *(This discussion should range wider than rotas, duties etc.)*

10. What regular parish/deanery meetings will the Reader attend?

11. What arrangements does the Reader have for reimbursement of expenses incurred through performance of their duties?

CONTINUING MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT

12. What CMD did the Reader undertake in the last 2 years? *(Details to be listed e.g. Courses, Bishop's day, etc.)*

13. What further training would develop the Reader's ministry? *(Is the Reader up to date with current good practice in child/vulnerable adult protection?)*.

GENERAL COMMENTS

(To include details of any wider Diocesan responsibilities and also comment on whether the relationship between the Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge and Reader is meeting one another's expectations)

This working agreement will be reviewed as part of a Ministerial Development Review in
time (maximum 2 years).

Signed Incumbent / Priest-in-Charge

Signed Reader

Date

A copy of this agreement should be kept by both Reader and Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge