



Reader Missionary Studentship Association

Founded 1904

Registered Charity No. 1049012

A Brief History

Centenary Edition

2004

*“Sovereignty, glory and kingly power were given him,
so that all peoples and nations of every language should serve him”*

The Reader Missionary Studentship Association

Objective

We are a Registered Charity No. 1049012. Our objective has always been to provide grants to help Readers who are training for the priesthood and who intend to serve the Anglican Church overseas. There are now church and educational grants available in this country for ordination training which did not exist when we were founded in 1904, so we now make grants almost exclusively to Readers in less affluent lands. It is not permitted to make grants to ordained clergy. It is safe to say that without this help most of them could not study simply because of the poverty of their Dioceses. Our grants are paid to assist individual Readers on the recommendation of their Bishops and College principals as far afield as Africa, Burma, India, Papua New Guinea and the West Indies.

Foundation

In 1904 the Readers Refresher Course met at St. Augustine's College Canterbury, which was then a missionary training college. The Warden then was **Dr J.O.F.Murray** who was a staunch supporter of Readers and their work, both then and for many years after as Master of Selwyn College Cambridge. Inspired by his work and example, the Readers at that course decided, as a mark of their gratitude to him, to establish a 'studentship' to enable a Reader to be trained for ordination in order to serve in what was then known as the "mission field".

As may be imagined, the money was raised only after great efforts. There were disappointments in the selection of candidates who were expected to serve overseas for 10 years while health permitted and it was not until 1910 that the first candidate, Ernest Davies, was ordained.

The Refresher Course moved with Dr Murray to Selwyn College Cambridge where it has remained until now. The Rt Reverend George Sinker former CMS missionary in Kandy, Ceylon from 1921 who became Bishop of Nagpur 1949-54 and Provost of Birmingham cathedral until he retired, became President of RMSA. He died in 1986 and was succeeded as our President in 1989 by the Reverend Professor Owen Chadwick OM, then Master of Selwyn, who has been a great friend and supporter of RMSA over the years.

Men have been ordained for service in over 50 Dioceses. They have served in various parts of North, Central and South America; in many dioceses of the West Indies; in many African dioceses from Sudan to Swaziland; in Australia; the East Indies and in India itself. Some of our men have trained in England; many more in the Colleges used by their own churches; this usually means long journeys and often arduous travel to other countries.

Constitution

The earliest Constitution was revised in 1947 when grants were available for ordinands in this country and it remained unchanged until 1995.

The Charities Act 1992 required RMSA to be registered in order to reclaim income tax. We discovered that we could not shelter under the umbrella of Central Readers Board or the Central Board of Finance. So we had to register independently. A visit to the Charity Commission to understand the requirements and careful drafting to meet them allowed us to put a revised Constitution to the Annual Meeting in 1995. Our main objective is the advancement of education by the provision of grants to assist with the training of Licensed Readers for ordination in the church overseas. The form of the Constitution was dictated by the Commission and certain clauses may not be changed without their consent.

Income

Our income comes from a number of sources. Firstly, Diocesan Readers Boards in this country often donate the offerings at their annual admission services, then Parochial Church Councils, grateful for the voluntary service. Personal gifts are given by Readers and their Christian friends, frequently with Gift Aid so as to recover tax, to further our work. Sometimes gifts are sent to mark an anniversary or in thanksgiving upon the death of a Reader.

The Early years

Ernest Davies an Australian from Perth who studied at St. Augustine's Canterbury between 1904-8 went out to Dogura (Papua) New Guinea as a lay worker since a long vacancy in See delayed his ordination. When a new Bishop was appointed and was prepared to ordain him he had discovered how much he was needed in his lay sphere. It was said of him that he was too humble. He served in the Hon. Artillery Company in France during the war and was wounded and later commissioned, only to lose his life on 9th September 1918.

In 1910 our second student William Clarkson, previously a Church Army captain, was ordained to serve in Grand Falls Newfoundland. In 1915 another was ordained to New Westminster in Canada. A year later Harry Tilt went from studying at Selwyn College Cambridge with the Cambridge Mission to Delhi where he served for 6 years.

Another young man Frank Kelly went with a promise of ordination to Guatemala where the death of the bishop left him no time to study. He was made deacon in 1913 by the new bishop who not having the funds to help him to priesthood appealed to RMSA for help. A special gift was raised so that a grant could be given to an ordained man. He became Archdeacon of Central America.

An Oxfordshire man, William Cracknell, went to study in Newfoundland and was ordained in 1914 for service in that country. An Australian from Kalgoorlie named Rolph was ordained in Mauritius and became Archdeacon.

During the Great War Canada was developing westwards and there was much immigration from the British Isles as the great wheatlands of Alberta etc were brought under cultivation. The Canadian National Railway was establishing its lines across the prairies and the Rockies into British Columbia along a more northerly route than that of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

There was so much concern in this country about the spiritual welfare of these pioneers that several men went out to different parts of Canada. One church, St John the Divine Kennington, sponsored one of its own men, whose marblemason father did much of the work on St Pauls cathedral reredos, to go out as a lay worker among the men living and working along two hundred miles of railway on the west side of the Rockies. Samuel Pollinger spent the war years at college in Vancouver and with our help was ordained in 1917. He became Archdeacon and then Bishop of Cariboo in 1942.

A lay missionary in Accra came to Warminster and was ordained to a curacy in Gretna whence he was seconded to Gold Coast for two years. A Wakefield student, John Firth, whose study was interrupted by war service, went as deacon to British Guiana in 1920 and Philip Browning, a teacher in Chichester, who was ordained in 1923, went to Rerak Malasia in 1926.

Alfred Hatch, our first Reader at Codrington College Barbados was ordained in 1923 to serve in Honduras. A clerk from the Colonial Secretary's office in Belize, Albert Usher, came to Canterbury and was ordained in 1924 as a travelling missionary also in Honduras.

A Reader from Richards Harbour Pushthrough in Newfoundland, accessible only by boat in fine weather, studied at Queen's College St Johns and was ordained in 1923. George Camp was posted to remote Bay Island, then to Herring Neck, Upper Island Cove, Topsail and Placenta Bay where he served many small fishing communities, living in dreadful conditions of poverty, hardship and isolation.

Another post war student of St Augustine's, John Bodger, after serving two curacies went to Dogura, New Guinea in the footsteps of our first student. He became sub-dean and canon of the cathedral of St Peter and St Paul.

The first student to go to Australia was Frank Mann, an Essex man, Reader at Danby Yorkshire, who went to Bunbury in 1929. From Leicester in 1935, Bernard Moore, a student, went out to Rabaul New Britain in the Solomon Islands to work with the Melanesian Mission. He died in 1944 during the enemy occupation.

From All Hallows Barking by the Tower there went a scouter and Toc H worker to serve as an S.P.G. missionary 200 miles west of Edmonton Canada, a more arduous enterprise than today when air travel has cut journey times!

Post war years

The Second World War brought a halt to the flow of candidates to the ministry. Our income was then about £300 pa, a third of it from Leicester diocese. After forty years 30 men had received grants, Dr Murray, our founder and several of our priests had died, our name had changed and at the 1947 AGM a new constitution was adopted.

Now several potential candidates came forward; almost all were overseas students due to serve the church in their own countries. By 1972, in 25 years, another 100 candidates had received our grants. Still the pace accelerated as we reached a further 100 by 1990 and 100 more in 1998. Their stories are just as exciting as in the early years.

A man born in Amsterdam tried both Calvinism and Romanism before deciding to become an Anglican. He was licensed as a Reader by the Bishop of Fulham and maintained Anglican services in Amsterdam during the German occupation. Later Gilbert Ridgeway moved to the Dutch West Indies.

In Sarawak there was a native Reader Jaboh Ewiim, who built a church with his own hands, without waiting to tell the Diocese and another whose work was so blessed that his Bishop exclaimed on a visit to this previously heathen area, "It's like the Early Church".

This story could be paralleled elsewhere as in Malawi where a Reader, sent to a pagan district, astonished his Bishop, arriving on an unexpected visit two years later, by presenting him with two churches built of brick (not mud and wattle) and over eighty adults he had prepared for confirmation. No wonder the Bishop wanted to ordain him, though previously he had doubts whether the Reader's English was of the standard required at College where all the teaching and examinations would be in that language. Happily the Reader surmounted all difficulties and was ordained in 1964.

The appointment in 1971 of the Rt. Revd Drexel Gomez as Bishop of Barbados means that one of our former students who was helped while at Codrington College in 1957 and then took a Durham degree, was now seeking our support for students in his own diocese.

One African Reader, formerly a headmaster, spent a year at Chichester as well as training in his own country and represented Tanzania at Toronto. In the winter of 1975 one of our former students, an Eskimo, was lost in a blizzard during a wolf hunt. A search party found him and after weeks in hospital with frost bite he returned to his parish at Whale Cove.

The Archbishop of Canterbury visited Sudan in 1976 to inaugurate a new Province with four Dioceses. The hardships since then, due to drought, persecution and war have brought continuing distress to staff and students at Bishop Gwynne College at Juba as to all the churches of Sudan as another Archbishop of Canterbury visited again in 1994.

In Lesotho many ordinands for non-stipendiary ministry study by correspondence and attend monthly seminars and RMSA received an urgent request in 1981 for theological books from UK publishers. We were able to assist one student, a tailor who runs a small shop selling foodstuffs, who has been a catechist for many years helping several expatriate clergy to find their feet in his parish. Another candidate was teaching in a remote parish on a windy ridge most easily accessible on horseback. His elder brother was already a self supporting priest but he kept his own application for the same priestly work so confidential that he surprised his brother when he joined him at the monthly seminar.

One of our candidates from Madagascar had been for many years an evangelist and catechist and had taken the maximum responsibility and initiative open to a layman. He has nine children, five of whom came with him and his wife to college. A fellow student is one of those lovely people who knows and gets on very well with everybody. He too has a large family one of whom is spastic. Our correspondent writes "this puts enormous strains on the wives. They really need a better diet".

The last 30 years

1986 saw the centenary of the Martyrs of Uganda. Bishop Tucker College, which now has University status and the Uganda Martyrs Seminary at Namugongo have trained many of our Reader candidates. They in their turn have lived through the persecutions of Idi Amin and Milton Obote. The college bursar at Bishop Tucker College was held up at gun point and had his car stolen. Inside it was one of our cheques! Yet the Bishop of Mukono writes "Greetings in the name of the great Saviour Jesus and even the reconciler of the whole world. As you stand to enable us to build manpower, you make roots on which the diocese can grow".

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo many congregations from African independent churches are coming into the Anglican church bringing their beliefs and traditions with them. So the church has organised TEE, "Theological Education by Extension", and classes for pastors and leaders. One young man said "I had no idea we were so lost".

Shocking letters have reached us describing how war came to Bukavu on Christmas Eve 1996. Christians were robbed, vehicles stolen and Churches destroyed. In January 1997 a letter sent to England said "*Zaire's borders were closed so no new supplies came into Bunia. Throughout November shops were open for 7 days only. There were days of conflict, stealing and shooting. From 2-7 December there was massive pillage and destruction in Bunia, all shops were destroyed and burnt, offices and private homes were ransacked, we all fled and stayed in the bush. There was a house to house search for people with money and vehicles. On 24 December at 5.30am when we were near starvation and death, the Tutsi led rebel army entered Bunia and began their battle with the government army. It was very fierce and lasted all day. Many were killed and their bodies lie about even now. We have no money, no food, no medicines and no means to get them*". The situation in Congo remains tense. On

top of this the language for teaching is to be changed from French to English. Neighbouring Rwanda is still in turmoil. Money given for training ordinands in these areas was never better spent.

Bishop Bernard of Swaziland wrote in 1986 of the return home of five ex-patriate priests and the need to replace them with "home grown" priests, "How thankful we are to Almighty God for the continued support you have given towards the training of local ordinands over the years".

In 1991 the new Bishop of Maseno West Diocese wrote, "We have only 40 clergy, about 500 evangelists and Readers. We want to send eight of them for residential training".

Vocation

Our annual reports, which record the number of student grants and the amounts expended, cannot reveal the truly apostolic stories which are the daily lives of our students. Men go to college cheerfully prepared to go without even pocket money in order to fulfil their vocation. Wives are ready to work as nurse or teacher to keep themselves and their children while the father is away at college.

Almost all our overseas students have faced considerable difficulties before they even reach college. There are men from a bewildering variety of occupations; police from the rank of constable to that of Commissioner, farmers, rice growers, actors, orderlies both medical and veterinary, postmen, railwaymen, engineers, ex-soldiers, clerks, teachers, pharmacists, shopkeepers etc. There are men of contrasting varieties of cultural or religious environment, such as the Mesquito Indian who had been brought up as a Moravian but could not accept that church's policy of refusing any native ministry.

All sorts of men and several women, united in their conviction that they are called to serve God in a special vocation, first as Readers then as priests, are patiently laying the foundations of the church that is to be. Some serve in parishes; some in specialised duties such as those of Archdeacon or headmaster; some are in places with long established missions, as in many parts of Africa. Some minister in the rising jungle forests around the head waters of the Essequibo River in Guyana where some of the Amerindian tribes have yet to hear the gospel.

Some live in the industrial townships of the copperbelt, others in lonely bush areas or in little villages in rural India. All need our help.

The history of RMSA was compiled by Harry Barnes a former Hon. Secretary and has been updated from time to time.