

HOB CITI COMMUNICATION TO THE GENERAL SYNOD 2017

The recent Review of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute was conducted as part of planned follow-up to the restructuring of training and formation for ministry of six years ago, and has coincided with the review of the Institute by the state agency, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The results of these separate and independent reviews are overwhelmingly positive; the Director and the staff of the Institute are warmly to be applauded for their work in meeting the expectations of the vision laid down in the Ministry Development Plan.

The bishops have consulted widely with people from within the Church of Ireland; our Methodist Covenant partners; the Roman Catholic tradition and the Porvoo Communion of Churches. The chairperson of the Bishops' Review was a bishop in the Church of England responsible for Theological Education in the Anglican Communion (TEAC) and Reader Training in England. The period of reflection on the work of the Institute has resulted in affirming and constructive submissions from those with a wide range of relevant expertise. Many recommendations of the Bishops' Review and the QQI review have already been acted upon and other key areas have been identified for further exploration. The staff are to be thanked and applauded for such speedy implementation.

Recognition of a strong relationship between the Institute and the University of Dublin, Trinity College is prevalent. A recommendation of the Review is that work be undertaken further to deepen the connections between CITI staff and students and the life and the activities of the university, exploring afresh staff involvement in teaching within the university as well as within the Institute and creating opportunities for involvement of CITI students, particularly in the life of the College Chapel, its worship and activities.

Again, the part played by CITI staff, both academic and administrative, must be emphasised. They continue to have the thanks of the whole Church of Ireland. In line with the recommendations of the reviews, a system of sabbatical leave has been put in place in order to enable academic staff to take periods of time specifically for purposes of research in light of their wide-ranging teaching commitments.

Another area in which adjustments have been made in response to the reviews is that of distance learning. The distance learning option for the Masters in Theology degree will henceforth be delivered in 60% of the time previously allocated to it. The intention behind this change is to achieve greater accessibility to this training for the future and for those for whom residential training is not the suitable pathway.

It is hoped that these changes, others like them and those under consideration for the future, will all contribute to the development of the Institute as a centre of excellence for the Church of Ireland, both for ordained ministry training and formation and lay theological education. The House of Bishops still has much to explore and will continue to work with the Director of CITI and others in respect of the development of the Institute for the future.