

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

REPORT 2022

1. Membership (March 2022)

<i>House of Bishops</i> The Rt Rev David McClay(Chair)	<i>Standing Committee</i> Ven Barry Forde
<i>General Synod - Clerical</i> Ven Elizabeth Cairns Very Rev Paul Draper Rev Rob Jones	<i>Pensions Board</i> Ms Judith Peters
<i>General Synod - Lay</i> Mrs Heather Carson Captain George Newell VACANT	<i>The Representative Church Body</i> Ms Hazel Corrigan Very Rev Nigel Crossey
<i>Director of Theological Institute</i> Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott	<i>Honorary Secretaries</i> Rev Canon Gillian Wharton
<i>Co-opted</i> Mrs Ruth Galbraith Rev Emma Carson	<i>Central Director of Ordinands</i> Very Rev Lynda Peilow
	VACANT

Membership

The Commission was delighted to be able to appoint new clerical members at the 2021 General Synod: Ven Elizabeth Cairns, Very Rev Paul Draper, and Rev Rob Jones, each of whom bring particular knowledge and expertise to the work of the Commission, and have already taken on topics and formed sub-groups to further its projects. The Commission also co-opted Rev Emma Carson, who is a further welcome addition. Two vacancies remain, which the Commission will fill this year. It is hoped that the Commission will have met in person by the time the General Synod takes place, as it has not been able to do so since the Rt Rev David McClay took on its role as Chair, and the Bishop is keen to meet members in person rather than on screen.

Sincere thanks and appreciation are offered from the Commission to Rev Canon David Gillespie, who stepped down as Central Director of Ordinands in 2021. Canon Gillespie's presence at meetings, and contribution to the work of the Commission, were highly valued by all its members, as was the friendship, enthusiasm, dedication and vision that you brought to its work. In particular, his contribution to the revival of the Commission's Vocations Retreat and promotion of material for Vocations Sunday will bear fruit for the Church in the years to come.

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Following her appointment as Central Director of Ordinands, the Commission welcomed the Very Rev Lynda Peilow to its membership.

Report

The following represent some of the topics that the Commission is exploring, and on which it would be glad to hear from members.

Advent retreat

The Commission's fifth Advent retreat, "One Step Too Far Away – One Breath Too Near" was held online on Zoom on 20th September, led by Rev Dr Ruth Patterson of Restoration Ministries. It had 40 attendees, some of whom joined from Canada and the United States, despite this requiring a very early start to the day. As in previous years, it received warm feedback; one attendee wrote that she had signed up on impulse and found that it provided her with the spiritual peace that she needed. Others spoke of the beauty of the reflections and music and the mixture of speech and silence. For enquiries about the 2022 retreat, please contact catherine.smith@rcbdub.org

Nurturing Vocations

As reported last year, the Commission's activities in this area have been necessarily curtailed by the pandemic, but it is hoped that 2022 and 2023 will see a revival in its work on nurturing vocations. The Commission wishes to prompt reflection on the wide and evolving forms of ministry, and to lead people to identify vocations in members of their congregations, or perhaps in themselves. Part of its recent discussions has been the question of how to build momentum around vocation throughout the year, and how to support and encourage women to fulfil their vocations. Regularly raised by commission members was the need for further support for the families of those in training, and the ongoing reality that the Church of Ireland Theological Institute cannot offer family accommodation to families who might want to avail of that possibility. The Commission has also discussed the high numbers of clergy due to reach retirement age in the next decade (c. 170 clergy over the next ten years), which highlights the need for the Church, at every level, especially parish and diocesan level, to nurture vocations in the next few years.

As reported in 2021, the Commission is grateful to the Church Fabric & Development Fund and the Priorities Fund for providing monies for the production of a second Vocations video and further resources, which it hopes to undertake in 2022/3. The Commission also intends to develop social media resources in conjunction with CITI to promote the exploration of vocation and God's call. A second Vocations Retreat, following the first extremely successful one in January 2020, will be held in January 2023. Further details will follow.

Legislation

An anomaly in the Constitution concerning parochial nominations came to light last year with the Commission's presentation of legislation on the topic at General Synod. The Commission thus presents further legislation to address this Constitutional issue.

Rural ministry

The Commission would welcome feedback and responses from members of the General Synod on this topic, which it has decided will form part of its work in 2022 and 2023. While the Commission is aware that many of the issues affecting rural parishes are also significant in urban settings (such as an ageing congregation, financial stress, and a decline in volunteerism), there are particularities to rural life, not least an often-reported sense of being marginalized or overlooked by government agencies, and a lack of infrastructure, from national roads and regular bus services to broadband, the latter having been felt particularly during the pandemic. The Commission is also aware of the many positives of rural mission and ministry, from the great value that the church building and associated graveyards hold for people in the area, to the ministry of presence, with clergy in rural areas usually invited to every local event from ploughing championships to feiseanna to the opening of a supermarket.

The burden of compliance and administration on parishes

As reported in 2021, the Commission is exploring this topic, and the ways in which the parochial unit can be supported to cope with the need to be compliant in areas such as health and safety, GDPR, charity registration, safeguarding and many other topics. Many clergy report that this adds considerably to their stress, and diminishes their joy in their ministry, as they become weighed down by administration. To connect back to the previous topic, rural parishes, in particular, struggle with administrative overload as many do not have a parish office, a secretary, or broadband and an office PC. Discussion of this topic will form a significant part of the Commission's work in 2022 and 2023. The Commission recommends that this administrative burden cannot continually be handed down to parishes or dioceses, but advises that greater support will be required from central Church.

Women in Ministry Sub-Group

Following the referral of the report on women in ministry to the Commission by the Standing Committee, the Commission, in June 2021, drew up a proposed list of members to form a sub-group, and issued invitations. Three members of the Commission are also on the sub-group, so the two bodies are kept informed of each other's work. The report of the sub-group forms an appendix to this report.

Pioneer Ministry

The Commission received a report from the Pioneer Ministry Working Group at its March meeting. Substantial work has been carried out over the past ten years, which has laid the foundation for the development of new pioneer ministries and initiatives across the Church of Ireland. The initiatives are intended to work alongside traditional forms of ministry, and will equip both lay and ordained leaders. In both rural and urban settings, these initiatives will aim to reach new people, while valuing and complementing the existing forms of mission and ministry. Pioneer Ministry will complement other areas of the Commission's work, such as that on nurturing vocations and on rural ministry. The Commission expresses thanks and appreciation to diocesan advocates, to Bishops Alan Abernethy and Patrick Rooke in their chairing of this work, and especially Bishop Patrick Rooke for his tireless work of enabling the Church to see the future value of embracing

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pioneer work and ministry. The Commission also extends a welcome to the Bishop of Down as the new chair of the Pioneer initiative, and thanks him for his work, as well as thanking the other members of the Commission for their presentation on the subject: Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott, Ven Barry Forde, and Rev Rob Jones.

Facilitation Committee recommendations

Several of the Committee's recommendations, approved by the General Synod of 2020, were referred to the Commission by the Standing Committee. It is continuing to explore the role of an archdeacon (tenure, retirement age of 70 as given in the Constitution, and other issues) and will provide a final report to the Standing Committee during 2022.

Thanks

The members offer thanks to Dr Catherine Smith for her work as Secretary, and to Mr Eddie Hallissey (HR Manager, Church House) for his reports to the Commission.

Women in Ministry – Report 2022

Women in Ministry

(a sub-group of the Commission on Ministry)

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1. Membership (March 2022)

Rev Emma Carson	Commission on Ministry/Co-Chair
Mrs Heather Carson	Commission on Ministry
Ven Ruth Elmes	Member
Very Rev Susan Green	Member
Rev Nicola Halford	Representative Church Body
Rt Rev David McClay	Commission on Ministry
Rev Dr Paddy McGlinchy	Church of Ireland Theological Institute
Very Rev Lynda Peilow	Commission on Ministry/Central Director of Ordinands/Co-Chair
Very Rev Niall Sloane	Member

Establishment

On the 30th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood, the House of Bishops set up a focus group to look at the progress of women in ministry in the Church of Ireland. This group presented a report to the Standing Committee in June 2021, which suggested that the Commission on Ministry should be asked to establish a sub-group to take forward the work. The Commission was glad to do so, and the sub-group held its first meeting in October 2021. It also met in November and January. It is co-chaired by Rev Emma Carson and Very Rev Lynda Peilow.

Research and presentations

Report from Ms Emma Purser

At its first meeting, the group heard a presentation by Ms Emma Purser on her research for her Masters degree, which informed the report produced by the House of Bishops' group that led to the setting up of the Women in Ministry sub-group. Ms Purser shared a PowerPoint presentation with the group to outline her research, which included interviews with women in ordained ministry throughout the Church. She noted that 50% of women in ordained ministry responded to her survey. Ms Purser's work explores the experiences of her respondents that they attribute to their gender. These included difficulties in their vocational journey, difficulties in ministry, non-consensual sexual experiences, and bullying. In some cases, theological reasons were presented as an ostensible excuse for the hostile and aggressive behaviour towards women and their ordained ministry. Ms Purser also noted that few women reach the higher levels of ordained ministry, but 30% of female clergy are NSMs (compared to 9% of men).

Report from Mr Eddie Hallissey

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Mr Eddie Hallissey, HR Manager, has updated members on initiatives being discussed by the Stipends Committee, and to speak about HR approaches to addressing gender imbalances. The 2016 collection of Church of Ireland statistics showed that 60% of church-goers are female, and, in the recent MindMatters COI survey, 70% of respondents identified as female. Thus, the Church of Ireland should have greater female representation at higher levels of committees and in ordained ministry to reflect its makeup. Mr Hallissey mentioned various ways in which organisations can address the role of women: it should be made clear that the organisation is actively encouraging women to take part at all levels; barriers to women's participation should be examined and dismantled in whatever way possible (e.g. use of Zoom instead of in-person meetings, as surveys show that women carry a disproportionate share of domestic burdens); and active recruitment of women for membership roles.

Mr Hallissey also provided an update on the work of the Stipends Committee in drafting policies for maternity leave, paternity leave, and adoptive leave for clergy. The group is unanimous in supporting these policies and has engaged with the Commission on Ministry and the Stipends Committee to urge that they should be funded centrally, rather than at diocesan level, to ensure that no implicit bias attends appointments – in particular of women, given the greater length of maternity leave than paternity leave.

Topics under discussion

Part-time ministry

According to the Central Statistics Office in the Republic of Ireland, women are 3 times more likely than men to be in part-time employment. While clergy are not employees, there are more women than men in part-time ministry and in non-stipendiary ministry and ordained local ministry. The report commissioned by the House of Bishops indicates that motherhood is particularly pertinent to how women enter ministry: there is a significant percentage of women who took the NSM route and now take the OLM pathway in order to fit in with family responsibilities, and who pursue part-time ministry for this reason. The Group is concerned to try to provide the support necessary for women to have the option of pursuing full-time stipendiary ministry if they wish to do so, and to ensure that clergy who are in part-time ministry should receive an equitable stipend and adequate time for preparation, reflection, reading and learning.

Supporting women in training for ordained ministry

Rev Dr Paddy McGlinchy has informed the Group of various ways in which the Church of Ireland Theological Institute supports women in training for ordination, as well as their families. All CITI staff are active supporters of women's ministry. Of the academic staff, half are women. There is one female and one male chaplain. The preaching rota of invited guests has a good gender mix. Family involvement is encouraged by inviting families to attend dinner in CITI on Wednesday nights. The Group considers that further support might be provided at diocesan level, for both ordinands and their families.

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Future Work and Recommendations

Having gathered information and heard presentations, the Sub-Group now intends to explore these areas further and to develop recommendations for actions to be taken. The members will agree upon these and report back to the Commission on Ministry, to decide how these actions may be taken further.

Members of General Synod who wish to raise any issues or discuss matters concerning women in ministry should contact Dr Catherine Smith in the first instance at catherine.smith@rcbdub.org

Thanks

The members offer thanks to Dr Catherine Smith for her work as Secretary, to Mr Eddie Hallissey (HR Manager, Church House) for his reports, and to Ms Emma Purser for her presentation on her research and for sharing a recent publication with the Group.