

**APPENDIX P**

**PARISH DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

**REPORT 2008**

Report to the Standing Committee

In 2003, the Standing Committee set up, and authorised the Parish Development Working Group to run, a pilot programme of Parish Development for the Church of Ireland. The Group devised the Church21 programme which commenced in early 2006 and drew to a conclusion at the end of 2007, although some parishes are still working with their Church21 facilitator.

Thirty-four parishes, from all parts of the island and of every shape, shade and size, were accepted after application on the recommendation of the diocesan bishop.

The programme involved:

- A six-session preparation course designed to help the parishes identify their key areas of development;
- A three-day conference offering parishes help to shape and share their vision;
- A year-long period of facilitation with external support and accountability;
- A Follow-up Day for parishes to share their stories and to identify what will help them keep motivated for development.

Feedback was sought at each stage of the process. Of those who responded all were of the opinion that what the programme offered their parish was in the categories of very to mostly helpful.

At the Follow-up Day held in September 2007, there was clear demand for more support for the parishes currently part of the programme, particularly in the area of change management.

Key benefits of the programme were identified as:

- Meeting with other parishes on an all-Ireland basis;
- The opportunity for partnership and twinning;
- Hearing stories of what other parishes have done;
- Encouragement by outside facilitators to devise and implement action plans.

The Standing Committee authorized the Group, with some change of membership, to run a second programme and also to pursue a way of finding a wider base to parish development by looking at ways of linking this area into the new programme for theological formation in the Church of Ireland. The Group has submitted an application to the Priorities Fund for the running of this programme.

The Working Group will be building upon the many positive aspects of what has already taken place and attempting to address the particular issues identified as needing improvement such as communication (e.g. through a regularly produced newssheet and a professionally run website), facilitator training and patterns of leadership.