

**COMMISSION ON MINISTRY**

**REPORT 2008**

**1. MEMBERSHIP**

*House of Bishops*

Rt Rev KR Good, Bishop of Derry and Raphoe  
(Chairman)  
Rt Rev RCA Henderson, Bishop of Tuam

*Standing Committee*

Mr HRJ Totten

*General Synod – clerical*

Ven GL Hastings  
Very Rev SM Patterson

*Pensions Board*

Rev ECJ Woods

*General Synod – lay*

Ms R Handy  
Mr AN McNeile

*Representative Church Body*

Ven DS McLean  
Mrs CH Thomson

*Principal of the Theological College*

Rev Canon CA Empey

*Honorary Secretaries*

Mr SR Harper

*Co-opted*

Rev OMR Donohoe  
Mr G Fromholz

*Consultant Director of Non-Stipendiary  
Ministry*

Rev TW Gordon

Following his episcopal consecration as Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev AF Abernethy was no longer eligible to be an elected clerical member of the Commission. Mrs Andrea Wills resigned from the Commission in February 2008. The Commission records its appreciation of the contribution made by both Bishop Abernethy and Mrs Wills.

Mr Greg Fromholz was co-opted as a member of the Commission.

The Commission has benefited greatly from the administrative support of Mr Derek Phillips over many years and wishes to place on record its gratitude to him, as he will shortly be retiring from his position as Synod Officer. The Commission looks forward to working with his successor, Ms Jenny Polden, and welcomes her to her new post.

**2. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Commission on Ministry was established by the General Synod in 1996. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Commission makes recommendations concerning the Christian Ministry, both lay and ordained. This includes the deployment of stipendiary and non-stipendiary clergy appropriate to the requirements of the Church of Ireland in the future. Matters relating to ministry may be referred to the Commission by the House of Bishops, the Standing Committee and the Representative Church Body.

**3. SUMMARY**

The following were the most significant issues addressed by the Commission:

- Part-Time and Non-Stipendiary Ministry;
- Younger Ordinands;
- Retirement Planning for Clergy;
- Lay Readers.

**4. PURPOSE**

To reflect on and propose changes to ministry training, deployment and support as will assist the Church to achieve its mission and sustain and nurture the clergy already in the Church's care throughout their lifetime.

**5. AIMS FOR 2008 TO MAY 2009**

In the light of the major work going on in introducing new patterns of training for ministry in the new Church of Ireland Theological Institute, the Commission intends to focus on areas outside that remit:

- Assemble a joint small group with the Council for Mission to look at the kind of leadership and training requirements for new church developments including plant, pioneers and restarts;
- Finalise the report on Lay Readers and plan the 2009 convention for the Centenary of Lay Readers;
- Run a further series of the successful course for Retirement Planning for Clergy;
- Produce a DVD that will contain information and encouragement for potential ordinands;
- Finalise a report on Part-Time and Non-Stipendiary Ministry and bring the conclusions to the House of Bishops and to the General Synod of 2009.

**6. THEOLOGICAL TRAINING**

The Commission is following, with interest, the developments in future patterns of training for ministry in the Church of Ireland and welcomes the prospect of a unified approach to the training of stipendiary and non stipendiary clergy. There is

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coherence in the overall training plans and yet flexibility in the residential component of the different modes of training available.

The considerable amount of background and preparatory work, which has been done by a large number of people and committees, is an indication of the immensity and complexity of a project which will serve the Church well and will open up an exciting new era of training for both ordained and (in due course) lay ministry.

As the Church moves to implement these new patterns of training, the Commission wishes to acknowledge the very important contribution to theological education made by the Theological College, by its current Principal, Canon Adrian Empey, by his predecessors and by the college staff, present and past.

### **7. PART-TIME AND NON-STIPENDIARY MINISTRY**

Arising from plans to bring together training for the stipendiary ministry and the non-stipendiary ministry, the House of Bishops requested the Commission to give detailed consideration to the future of part-time stipendiary ministry, as it relates to non-stipendiary ministry.

The Commission noted that many non-stipendiary ministers (NSMs) are working more hours than was originally envisaged and that NSMs and part-time stipendiary Ministers are converging in terms of hours worked.

An interim report was submitted to the Commission by a sub-committee consisting of three non-stipendiary ministers, two incumbents with NSMs, three diocesan secretaries and two staff from Church House. The Commission plans to carry out a survey of NSMs and prepare a final report to the Commission, which will be submitted to the House of Bishops. It is anticipated that a Bill will be submitted to the General Synod in 2009.

### **8. YOUNGER ORDINANDS**

As reported last year, a consultation was held in Dublin in May 2006 entitled *Younger Ordinands and the Church*, which was attended by Directors of Ordinands, national and diocesan youth officers and others responsible for helping young people in the area of vocation. The consultation highlighted the present rather high age profile of ordinands and the need to attract younger candidates.

The Commission plans to produce a DVD that will contain information and encouragement for potential ordinands.

### **9. COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY**

The Commission considered papers entitled *Developing Collaborative Ministry: A Consultation Paper* (Parts I and II) by the Very Rev SM Patterson. These documents are available on request from the General Synod Office.

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Dean Patterson reported that an informal discussion on the papers took place at a meeting of representatives from the western dioceses, where creative ways were suggested for ministry patterns that would work effectively in rural areas.

### **10. RETIREMENT PLANNING FOR CLERGY**

As reported last year, the Commission agreed to run pre-retirement courses for clergy. A two-day course was held in Dublin in March 2007 for clergy approaching retirement age and their spouses. The course covered all aspects of retirement.

The course was very well received and the RCB Stipends Committee secured funding for two further courses; one for clergy retiring from the Republic of Ireland and one for Northern Ireland. The first of these was held in Dublin on 30 March and 1 April 2008. The second course is planned for Northern Ireland on 28/29 April.

It is anticipated that demand for the courses will be higher during the first few years and then level out after that period. It was agreed that there should be no charge to the clergy for the courses and the RCB has borne the cost.

### **11. LAY READERS**

2009 will be the Centenary of Readers in the Church of Ireland. The Wardens of Readers requested the Commission on Ministry to consider in depth, the biblical and theological understanding of the ministry of Reader in the Church of Ireland. The Wardens believe that the time has come for serious consideration to being given to the ministry of Diocesan Reader and that an in-depth study of this ministry should also include the ministry of Parish Reader.

The following questions are being considered by the Commission:

1. What is the foundation of this ministry?
2. What is the essential nature of this ministry?
3. How far does it relate to, and overlap with, diaconal ministry?
4. Is it in fact diaconal ministry, but with another name?
5. How relevant and necessary is such a ministry in the Church of Ireland of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

The Commission is carrying out a survey of Diocesan Readers and plans to hold a convention on the Ministry of Lay Reading to mark the 2009 Centenary. The convention will, in part, be shaped and informed by the findings of the survey.