

## **GENERAL SYNOD 2008**

### **COMMISSION ON MINISTRY REPORT**

**Seconded by Mr Andrew McNeile (Dublin)**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Your Grace, Members of Synod

I am very pleased to second the report of the Commission on Ministry and I share the Proposer's view that the Commission's past work and future aims are tackling key issues in the life of the church.

#### **Scope of Commission**

The birthing of the Ministry Project whilst initially seeming to occupy a certain amount of the previous scope of the Commission has ultimately resulted in a freedom to focus on some other issues with some very positive results – a position that seems set to continue.

#### **Retirement Planning**

I would like to focus initially on item 10 in the report, which the proposer alluded to briefly. It seems to me rare in the church that anything is initiated which meets with virtual unanimous approval – but such seems to be the case with the retirement planning course. As it is not known who attends the course feedback tends to be anecdotal – “I know a friend who knows someone who went on it” – but all of it seems very positive and often along the lines of “this was the first time that something that was done that felt like it was just for me” – a very helpful sense of encouragement and care at a key juncture of life and ministry. It seems to me a very special thanks should go to the team who have organised this Ms. Ruth Handy, Olive Donohue and the Bishop of Derry.

The Commission would like to build on the very real sense of pastoral care that is reflected in some of the feedback and to explore the possibility of other later stage ministry courses that are aimed at providing rest, encouragement and re-envisioning at

this important stage of ministry – for which there are successful models from other parts of Europe.

### **Non-Stipendiary Ministry**

Following on from the debate on this report – and I am now on item 7 – there will be a motion brought by Mr. Wilfred Baker and the Archdeacon of Cork requesting that the House of Bishops and the Commission on Ministry bring a bill to the General Synod of 2009 that would make it possible for the provisions of part time stipendiary ministry to be made available to the Non-Stipendiary Ministry. The Commission recognises that in many parts of the country Non-Stipendiary Ministers are carrying out roles that are much broader in scope than was possibly originally envisaged sometimes even equivalent to a full time incumbent. We therefore agree with Mr. Baker and the Archdeacon that not only does this issue need to be addressed but there needs to be a church wide equity in handling it – and consequently we support this motion and acknowledge the contribution Mr Baker is making in bringing it.

This will raise a number of difficult employment and equity complications which will need thinking through very carefully – so we also agree that this needs some detailed reflection over the next year so that a properly prepared Bill can be brought to General Synod in 2009.

Should it be approved this work will form a key plank of the Commissions work next year

### **DVD Ordinands Production**

Previous publications and events such as ordinands weekends that were arranged by the previous Central Director of Ordinands have traditionally been financed through the Commission on Ministry. The current office holder – Rev Katharine Poulton – is planning to produce a DVD that would encourage and inform potential ordinands – particularly with the second level educational field in mind. Having learnt recently from the Head of Training and Personnel in Austria of the Evangelisch-Lutheran Church that

80% of potential ordinands cite RE teachers at secondary level as primary motivators for ordination this seems to be a good place to focus.

### **Mission and Ministry**

Looking again to the future I am also very pleased that we are linking up with the Council for Mission to look at the kind of training requirements for a wide variety of new kinds of church developments. The starting of any new ministry initiative always involves finding someone to lead it – as I am sure anyone who has tried to start a youth group will be quick to affirm. And equally I am sure we will all agree that for people to be effective in exercising leadership in ministry – training is clearly key.

As there is a growing recognition of the breadth and diversity of the ways in which the Church will conduct its mission, this will mean a breadth and diversity of leaders and consequently the styles and approaches of training. All of this will need careful reflection, planning and integration. I hope members will feel that this not only represents a very healthy joined up thinking across the groups – but also an attempt to make a contribution to the outworking of the Mission and Vision that have been outlined for the church

I hope members of synod that you share our view that some valuable work has been accomplished and that the future focus of the Commission is in line with key priorities of the Church and that resolution of some important issues are clearly in view.

Consequently, your Grace, members of Synod I have great pleasure in seconding the report