

**Report of the Commission on Ministry, pp.339ff.**

**Canon Dr Maurice Elliott (representing Dromore Diocese)**

**Embargoed until Delivery**

In line with its stated terms of reference (p.339) the Commission on Ministry is continuing to make energetic progress and has accomplished a significant workload over the course of this year through a combination of plenary meetings, specialised submissions, collaborative working groups and one residential at Glenstal Abbey.

p.341 - At the autumn meeting the CoM sought to further its engagement with religious life and rhythms of prayer through an extended opportunity with three colleagues who are each in their own way committed to the discipline of religious orders in either the Franciscan or the Benedictine traditions. The CoM places on record at this year's GS its immense gratitude to Canon David Jardine, The Very Revd Paul Draper and The Revd Garth Bunting for their willingness to give of their time and offer such helpful and lived insights. In turn this aspect of the CoM's engagement has stimulated a number of further initiatives. For example, the CoM has now re-branded what members may recall as having formerly been the Mid-Career Ministry Course. p.340 - this is now to be known as the Mid-Career Vocation Programme for Clergy and will carry a new emphasis on the sustaining of vocation through disciplines of personal prayer and retreat. A full two day gathering has been planned at the Theological Institute in Braemor Park during June, an impressive range of high profile facilitators has been organised and there is already a waiting list to attend. This renewal of focus has been a great encouragement to all concerned; it augurs well going into the future and we are excited to anticipate positive outcomes for those who will participate in just under a month from now. Another consequence

of this aspect of the CoM's work will become apparent in the resolution to be proposed by the Bishop of Cashel.

Members may recall that at last year's GS a resolution was adopted seeking that the COM in consultation with the HOB and CITI would continue to identify a process whereby a diocesan-based and locally effective Self-supporting Ministry might be developed. The appointed Group, convened by the Archdeacon of Meath and Kildare, worked assiduously over the course of last autumn. Careful consideration was given to various aspects of current policy, perceived deficit and a range of different possible solutions. A preferred option was brought to the CoM at its January residential and this has since been 'endorsed and enhanced' by consideration of the Archbishops and Bishops. As there are likely to be a cost implications in terms of resourcing the new programme, the Bishops have requested that the proposal now be finally refined between the RCB and CITI and, as mentioned in the report (p.341), the CoM anticipates that further progress on this matter will form a substantial part of its report to next year's GS. The intention is that the new pathway will offer a distinct expression of ordained ministry, which is both accessible to those who may recommended by an appropriate selection process, and effective in providing for the needs of those communities, both rural and urban, that are struggling in the face of sparse population distribution. The necessity for such a form of ministry is considered to be a matter of urgency for the CoM.

p.342 – members will also see that the CoM has met on two occasions with representatives of the RCB Working Group in relation to HR policies. As indicated in the report, this has been of mutual benefit and the CoM is pleased to endorse the

worthy intention of this project which is being brought to this year's GS under the separate bill to provide for a Dignity Charter. Speaking personally, it is my view that the COI owes a great debt to Mr Adrian Clements for his initiation and championing of this process. Church life, and ordained ministry within it, cannot avoid the inevitability of relational breakdown and the difficulty of long term illness. Through taking ownership of this process the COI has an opportunity to put substance on its own gospel-driven values of justice, reconciliation and genuine pastoral care.

In a similar way the intention underlying the proposed pilot project for Ministerial Development Review is that clergy may be able to flourish and grow. This is not a performance appraisal, neither does it invoke sanctions. In line with best practice elsewhere, and not least out of the positive experience of our sister church in England, the purpose is simply to allow for a guided and self-directed reflection in order to enhance awareness and to diminish any sense of either struggle or isolation. The CoM is watching with keen interest as this process is to be piloted across three dioceses.

Finally, in the matter of membership (p.342) we express our gratitude to all those whose service on the CoM has now come to an end – Ven George Davison and in particular Mrs Lorna Gleasure who has represented the RB to the CoM for the past 7 years.