

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

REPORT 2007

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

Rev Canon AF Abernethy
Ven GL Hastings

Pensions Board

Rev ECJ Woods

General Synod – lay

Ms R Handy
Mr AN McNeile
Mrs AJ Wills

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

Consultant Director of Non-Stipendiary Ministry

Rev TW Gordon

In October 2006, the Commission reluctantly accepted the resignation of the Very Rev SR White, due to his difficulty in attending meetings. Members expressed the wish that his expertise in this area would be available to the Commission when the need arose. Following his election as Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev AET Harper resigned from the Commission, which recorded its appreciation of his contribution to the work of the Commission during his membership.

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 Commission has concentrated on clarifying a vision for mobilising lay ministry and the related practical issues, a collaborative approach to the whole body of Christ serving together in ministry, retirement planning for clergy, a re-assessment of the non-stipendiary ministry and part-time stipendiary ministry and attracting younger ordinands.

4. MINISTRY FORMATION

The House of Bishops Planning Group will be presenting a Ministry Formation Project Plan to the Standing Committee in April and to the General Synod in May 2007. Input from the Commission has assisted the group with the formulation of the Project Plan, which is designed to fully equip all members of the Church, ordained and lay, and to fulfil effectively the Church's mission in 21st Century Ireland.

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 is giving this matter further consideration.

A paper on *Training and Formation for Ministry* was delivered to the Commission by the Rt Rev MGStA Jackson.

5. YOUNGER ORDINANDS

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. A report on the consultation, which is included as Appendix A, was presented to the Commission by the Rev Canon AF Abernethy.

The consultation highlighted the present rather high age profile of ordinands and the need to attract younger candidates. It is planned to arrange a day for prospective ordinands to come and meet the Central Director and appropriate bishops and also to produce a high quality document for distribution to prospective ordinands. An application for funding has been made for these projects.

6. MOBILISING MINISTRY

The Commission continued to explore the issue of training, particularly pastoral training, for lay ministry. Bishop Jackson delivered a paper entitled *Ministry Ordained and Lay - some reflections*. Examples of ministry in other Churches were considered in a paper delivered by the Rev ECJ Woods entitled *Wider Perspectives on Ministry*.

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The Commission also noted the various training courses being provided in Connor Diocese and the booklet, prepared for the Diocese, *Towards a Model for Ministry in the 21st Century*.

7. RETIREMENT PLANNING FOR CLERGY

The Commission agreed that the Church of Ireland should be more helpful to clergy preparing for retirement and that pre-retirement courses should be provided. The RCB Stipends Committee has secured funding for a pilot project, on the understanding that the organisation of the project would be undertaken by the Commission on Ministry.

A two-day course was held in Dublin in March 2007 for all clergy approaching normal retirement age, or older, and their spouses. This initial course covered all aspects of retirement.

In the longer term, it was felt that two courses would be necessary; the first about ten years prior to retirement to deal with financial matters and a second close to retirement dealing with life-style change. It was agreed that there should be no charge for the courses to the clergy and that spouses should be invited.

8. LAY READERS

The Wardens of Readers noted that 2009 will be the 100th year of Readers in the Church of Ireland, who play an important role in the worship and ministry of the Church. The meeting 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 following questions are being considered by the Commission and a paper is being prepared:

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 21st Century?

The Wardens of Readers believed 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.

9. DOCUMENTS

The following documents referred to above are available on request from the General Synod Office:

1. *Training and Formation for Ministry* by the Rt Rev MGStA Jackson;
2. *Ministry Ordained and Lay - some reflections* by the Rt Rev MGStA Jackson;
3. *Wider Perspectives on Ministry* by Rev ECJ Woods.

APPENDIX A

YOUNGER ORDINANDS AND THE CHURCH

The Church of Ireland and CPAS

A Consultation

In May 2006 the first ever *Younger Ordinands and the Church* consultation was held in Dublin. Around 60 people were present including Directors of Ordinands, national and diocesan youth officers, and others responsible for helping young people in the area of vocation.

The Aims

- To explore the dynamics and trends among younger leaders ordained and not ordained in the Church of Ireland.
- To listen to the voices of young people and those responsible for youth ministry.
- To discern the issues and how they might be addressed.
- To plan a strategy for the next few years.
- To mark this as a priority issue for the whole Church.

The Event:

- It was planned with the help of CPAS, which had facilitated a number of similar events for the Church of England's Ministry Division.
- The Church of Ireland Priorities Fund generously funded the publicity and the event.
- There were representatives from all over Ireland, including bishops, ordinands, directors of ordinands, youth workers, youth leaders and young people.
- There were contributions from Bishop Ken Clarke, the Rev'd Simon Heathfield, the Revd Paul Hoey and Mr Shane Tucker.
- There were also small group discussions and plenary sessions.

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The Presentations – Some Key Issues:

- There has been a mindset of discouraging younger ordinands until they have gained life experience.
- The need for the passion and vision of younger people.
- There has been no budget or strategy for recruitment, “God will bring who he wants...”
- The average age of acceptance for ordination is much higher than it used to be.
- In 1990 31% of full time clergy in the Church of Ireland were under the age of 40. In 2001 there were 19% under the age of 40.
- Younger clergy tend to grow bigger congregations.
- The biggest self-inflicted wound is the failure to recruit and ordain young adults.
- Younger clergy tend to be less cynical and guarded.
- God is more concerned about who you’re becoming than what you are doing.

The Issues Raised.

Young People

- Younger people can often devote more time and energy in ordained leadership.
- Is there a model for the voice of young people in the Church being heard?
- What models are there in the Church for young people serving in the Church?
- Should there be student councils in the Church? Should there be children’s councils in the Church?
- Young people need to be given more roles in parish life.
- Young people may not always look forward to going to church but they do have a passion for God.
- Young people need space to live with their questions and doubts. The journey is important not the answers.

Local Church

- If young people have no relationship with their rector and/or other clergy and leaders they are likely to go elsewhere.
- Clergy can be instrumental in putting the possibility of ordination before their young people.

Wider Church

- The hierarchy of the Church is mainly male. There are still issues to be resolved around the role of women in the Church.
- The church needs to discuss issues of sexuality especially as this affects those seeking ordination.

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Ministry Issues

- Building team ministry is a priority. Isolation is an issue for many ordained leaders.
- How should men and women function together in team ministry?
- Is there a model for brokenness in ministry rather than success?
- We should ban the use of the term “lay ministry”. Everyone has a ministry.
- There is a need to recognise many forms of ministry and not just the ordained ministry.
- There is the need to discuss the role of team ministries in the Church of Ireland.
- There needs to be more discussion on women in ministry.

Vocation issues

- The Church of Ireland needs to make more widely available information about the process that leads to ordination.
- There is a lack of information regarding the nature of ordination.
- There is a need for proactive recruitment. There is also a need for an appropriate budget.
- A Vocations Sunday would be helpful throughout the Church of Ireland.
- Fellowship of Vocations might benefit from a clearer definition of their role and remit.

Training issues

- How do we select our future leaders?
- The vision for future leaders in the Church of Ireland is fragmentary and diverse.
- Is ordination training an attempt to encourage everybody to be the same?
- Are all being squeezed into the same mould? Is there only one pattern of ministry for all?
- Theological education appears to be irrelevant to the needs of society and people.
- We need courses on growing leaders.

New Models

- There is a need to explore the possibility of pioneer ministries to grow fresh expressions of church appropriate for different cultures in Ireland.
- There is a need to explore and develop pioneer ministries. There is also the need to develop training for these new patterns of ministry.

The Way Forward:

- This document will go to everyone who attended the consultation and a response sought.
- This edited document will be made available to the wider Church.
- To share these ideas with all the diocesan directors of ordinands.

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- To meet with various groups within the Church to further these ideas.
- To set up a strategy group from those who attended the consultation.
- To plan a strategy for the next few years.
- To plan a follow up meeting to continue the process.
- To examine possible ways of obtaining a budget for these critical issues.

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