

GENERAL SYNOD 2007

CHURCH'S MINISTRY OF HEALING

Proposed by Revd Canon David Brown (Down & Dromore)

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

The Report of the Church's Ministry of Healing can be found on page 365.

Coincidentally there are 365 days in a year! And this year for the Church's Ministry of Healing will be a year of change!

The ministry of healing has existed within the Church since its foundation – often practised – sometimes neglected. As the report notes, Canon Noel Waring formally established this ministry in the Church of Ireland 75 years ago, in a very practical and focused way. But nothing stays the same. Indeed, some people might argue, that that is an actual criticism to be made of the Church's Ministry of Healing - that it has remained the same.

Change in any Church of Ireland body, like gathering rain drops on a branch after a fall of rain, drops slow: but for us, this is the year that begins a process of change. Canon Leslie McConachie has been associated with the Church's Ministry of Healing for the past thirty-five years. In more recent years he has chaired the Executive and has brought us to that place where the process of change begins.

Following Leslie's retirement the Archbishops have appointed the Reverend Baden Stanley as our chair. Baden comes as a man who brings, not only affirmation of the Biblical doctrine of this ministry to us, but the experience of the blessing it is in a pastoral role and the experience of the blessing it has been in his personal life. He does not mind that I mention the blessing it was for him, when twelve months ago, he had hands laid on

him for healing of a muscular disorder and was instantly healed. An experience like that means that he takes the chair with the knowledge of Christ's power to heal.

This is a ministry which Christ exercised when he walked this earth - a ministry that he has given to his church to exercise in this our day.

The Executive recognises that there are lessons to be learned from the past; things that we need to put right. But we also come with the determination to envision parishes with the integrity and blessing of this ministry. The Executive is determined that this becomes its priority. The Director and Deputy Director of this ministry share that determination.

With regard to funding, we intend to be independent and self-financing – hands-on rather than hands out! We intend to work towards being a body that is financially independent of central church funds, one that provides blessing to people through healing, while continuing to work at the very heart of the Church.

To date we have been too institutionally focused - we feel we have been too static. Whilst acknowledging the need to have a central body for this ministry we know that that centre has to have a heart - a heart that prayerfully oversees and co-ordinates the changes that we feel are needed. These changes centre on the dioceses of our church. The Executive are committed to having a diocesan focus, with every diocese having a Diocesan Committee that takes on responsibility to encourage their parishes to engage in this ministry. We want the Church's Ministry of Healing to be a resource that gives support right across the church. We need to get back to the foundation of this ministry of Jesus Christ, to what is literally a "hands on" ministry.

The Ministry of Healing continues to have a huge impact on the lives of people in the Church of Ireland and indeed those outside it. Our prayer is that changes initiated during the course of this year will truly be to the blessing of God's people and the lifting up of the name of our Saviour and Healer, the Lord Jesus Christ.