

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

REPORT 2006

1. MEMBERSHIP

House of Bishops

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

Standing Committee

Mr HRJ Totten

General Synod – clerical

Rev Canon AF Abernethy
Rev Canon GL Hastings
Very Rev SR White

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
Rev TW Gordon

*Co-ordinator of Auxiliary Ministry
Training*

Vacant

Following nine years in existence, elections for the membership of the Commission were held at the General Synod in 2005 and the other appointing bodies also reviewed their representation. Several members had served the Commission for the maximum nine year term and had to step down. The Chairman thanks Rt Rev MHG Mayes, Mr RF Palmer, Mr DG Hannon, Mrs A Forrest, the Rev C Lindsay, Lady Sheil and Mr J Richardson for their valuable contribution to the work of the Commission.

2. SUMMARY

The Commission has concentrated on clarifying a vision for mobilising lay ministry and the related practical issues, the training and deployment of clergy, and a collaborative approach to the whole body of Christ serving together in ministry.

3. 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.

4. CLERGY IN-SERVICE TRAINING

A substantial revision of courses for the training of clergy based in the Church of Ireland Theological College is being planned and will emphasise a lifelong approach to clergy training. The new courses are likely to commence in the autumn of 2007.

While still at a developmental stage, we understand that it is envisaged that there will be a foundation year prior to college and an additional 'deacons' year in which curates will be monitored by the Theological College. There will be a centralised programme of in-service training for clergy, which will include the training of rectors to be mentors to their curates.

Issues raised by the Commission relating to the working conditions of clergy included the need for sabbaticals under the direction of the bishop, support teams for bishops and preparation for retirement.

A report on in-service training is included as Appendix A on page 343.

5. MOBILISING MINISTRY

It is emphasised that mobilising ministry is not about clericalising the laity. In some situations there may need to be a change of culture, where the concept of lay ministry, especially in pastoral work, is not always acceptable. Foundational to lay ministry must be the encouragement for church members to grow in their faith and deepen their personal growth and development. For example, there are many lay people who wish to study theology.

Training must be in response to identifiable needs, as there will be disillusionment if lay people are trained for a task that is not required. Lay people volunteering for training should be suitable for the task for which they are trained and professional qualifications must be recognised. Careful thought must be given to on-going support for those engaged in lay ministry.

Differing views have been expressed on whether those involved in lay ministry should be 'commissioned' by the parish for the work that they have been authorised to carry out, in order to bestow public recognition. One view was that commissioning should only take place for any form of pastoral ministry, such as hospital or home visiting.

Commission on Ministry – Report 2006

Courses in lay ministry are available in Maynooth College and in All Hallows College and some dioceses run courses in theology. A database of courses for lay ministry is under consideration.

A report on mobilising ministry is included as Appendix B on page 345.

6. COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY

The Commission studied an example of collaborative ministry in a large suburban parish. In this example, eight key areas were identified and each area was given three goals. After a year of preparation, a parish survey confirmed that the correct areas had been identified. It was noted that the project gave the parish a focus and introduced a sense of responsibility.

It was clear that there is a need for training of both clergy and laity to enable such initiatives to take place. In the example, it was helpful for the priest to have a track record of at least five years in the parish before introducing the project. The model, which succeeded in a large suburban parish, could be scaled down to suit smaller parishes. It is the intention of the Commission to create the conditions in which such experimentation can take place.

7. NON STIPENDIARY MINISTRY

The Commission welcomes the plan that the revised course of training for clergy will also include those training for non-stipendiary ministry and the in-service training for non stipendiary clergy. The proposed course will incorporate a level of training for pastoral ministry not previously available for auxiliary ministers. At the half way stage of training, a Certificate in Higher Education can be awarded and a Diploma in Higher Education can be awarded at the end of the course.

A report on Non-Stipendiary Ministry is included as Appendix C on page 347.

8. OUR UNDERSTANDING OF MISSION

At an overnight meeting held in October 2005 the Commission addressed the key questions:

What is our understanding of the mission to which the Church of God is called and the pattern of Church life and order through which the Church of Ireland responds to that calling?

In the light of that understanding, what are the main characteristics of ordained and other public ministries for which training is required?

Papers entitled *Beware of the Bureaucrats*, by Kenneth Leech and *What Collaborative Ministry Means*, by Tim Belben were studied by the Commission.

9. A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

The Commission acknowledges that the work of the Parish Development Working Group is closely related to some aspects of the work of the Commission on Ministry. In order to ensure that there is communication and liaison between the two bodies, the Chairman of the Parish Development Working Group, the Rev DP Hoey, is invited to meetings of the Commission.

The following three roles were identified that would be instrumental in implementing the views of the Commission:

1. Discerning the promptings of the Holy Spirit in the shaping of ministry by listening, reading and facilitating;
2. Influencing the influencers, which include the General Synod, the House of Bishops and lay people in key positions by reports, websites, etc;
3. Being a catalyst for practical change and highlighting successful projects that are up and running.

10. THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

The purpose of the Commission, as seen by its current members, is stated as follows:

- To be informed about contemporary developments in ministry in the wider church;
- To interpret the relevance and possible application of these developments to the Church of Ireland;
- To facilitate informed debate (in General and Diocesan Synods) about ministry issues and so move forward the understanding and expectations of ministry in the parishes;
- To assist the House of Bishops, when requested, by researching particular issues.

There has been a substantial change in the membership of the Commission over the past year. This has facilitated different thinking in its approach to the ways in which it promotes the mobilisation of lay ministry and the related practical issues, and the training and continuing ministerial development of clergy.

The members of the Commission are aware that there are currently several groups independently working on aspects of the future shape of church life and ministry, i.e. The Parish Development Working Group, the Church of Ireland Council for Mission, the Theological College Council and the House of Bishops. The Commission believes that an important element of its work is to liaise regularly with these bodies so as to minimise unnecessary duplication of work and to facilitate communication between them all.

APPENDIX A

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

The 21st century is probably witnessing some of the greatest changes in people's attitudes and accepted standards of life. As each new area of concern, each new trend comes to the forefront many feel that those in training for the ordained ministry should be taught how to minister in such situations.

This puts an increasing burden on an already heavy area of study which is already under great strain. We have expected our three year training course to include what would normally be covered in four years at University. We are at bursting point. This can not continue!

Radical changes will have to be made. Training for ministry should in future start in the Theological College and continue in the Parish. Curates Assistant should, in their first three years, undergo a continuing course in ministerial education.

We note that some Curates Assistant are placed in parishes where Rectors have only just completed their own curacy days. Other are left to fend for themselves in parishes where there are a number of churches. This should not continue.

The main trainers will be the Rectors who should undergo a week's residential course each year in which

- they might share experiences
- the responsibility of their role would be heightened
- their needs could be explored and serviced
- they would learn how to deal with/manage the bright deacon
- they would learn management skills

All of which would lead to empowering the Rector.

Further, there should be a written understanding between the Rector and the Curate Assistant. If a Rector does not fulfil this training role then no Curate Assistant should be placed with that Rector in future years. At an Institution the Bishop, in delivering the act of institution to the Rector, says '*I confer on you the care of God's people in this parish which is entrusted both to you and to me*' The Curate Assistant shares the Rector's 'job'. The Bishop therefore should have a say in both the welfare of and the training given to the Curate Assistant.

Further, if all Dioceses were to follow the example of some and contribute towards the stipend of the Curate Assistant it would further help to ground their role.

During the first three years of a curacy adequate time should be allowed on a weekly basis for

- Rector – Curate Assistant meeting
- academic work
- theological engagement
- reflection

Commission on Ministry – Report 2006

The Curate Assistant would also attend Diocesan In-Service Training with their fellow Curates Assistant. Such a programme would envisage Post-ordination and Continuing Ministerial Education delivered at diocesan or regional level. It would necessarily require a common curriculum, monitored and validated centrally. It is hoped that elements in such a programme would be validated by a Third-Level institution, allowing, for example an opportunity to undertake an MA or a B.Th. (Hons) course extramurally, building on the foundation of a B.Th. degree.

Parishes would need to be informed of such training and also disciplined in their time use of the Curate Assistant.

RECTORS

All Rectors should undertake regular In-Service Training. There are a number of occasions when this is particularly important.

At the start - on becoming a Rector.

(Here as with the Curate Assistant a system of mentoring should be established.)

In mid career - courses are needed for professional updating. This could take the form of directed sabbaticals. Clergy at this stage in their career need time out for reflection.

A 'stalling point' can occur in ministry. 'What have I achieved?' 'Where am I going?'

'Should I move because I might cope better elsewhere?'

Approaching retirement - clergy would benefit if a course were available for them as they prepare to adjust.

BISHOPS

Bishops would benefit from In-Service Training, especially at the beginning of their Episcopate.

Topics such as

- Exercising authority, be it moral or otherwise, whilst not having executive powers
- Leadership
- Management Skills
- Legal knowledge and skills

would seem to be essential.

Bishops should have Diocesan support teams.

Bishops should have regular formal appraisals of their clergy with regard to how they find their ministry. These would indicate areas for in-service training should they be necessary.

All 12 Dioceses should follow the same practice with regard to In-Service Training.

APPENDIX B
LAY TRAINING

At the outset we feel it important to state:

- 1 Lay Training is NOT about ‘clericalising’ the laity
- 2 Lay Training is NOT undertaken in order to ‘assist the clergy’
- 3 Lay Training is necessary in order that lay people can be helped to fulfil their baptismal call to glorify God to serve others.
- 4 All training is a process and must be available on an ongoing basis.

We have identified three areas where training is needed. These are not exclusive to each other, but the divisions help to clarify different needs.

A person might easily move from one area to another in the course of his/her faith journey.

1 PERSONAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

We all need help and support on our faith journey, we need help to “know ourselves” and recognise God in our lives. A variety of opportunities should be available at local level to help people grow in their faith.

This area of training might well be an end in itself or in some cases it might lead people on to consider moving to either area 2 or possibly 3.

2 EQUIPPING FOR LOCAL MINISTRY

We chose the word ‘equipping’ as the most appropriate word to describe this area of training.

The Church should equip lay people with a greater confidence so that they can effectively share the faith with others and so that they can walk beside others in supporting them on the journey of faith. Equipping people in this area should help people identify their gifts so that they can better use their talents to serve God, the Church and the community and so that their gifts can be developed.

Equipping people in this area will usually be done in order that people can undertake specific tasks in the Church and community. One area where lay people could use their gifts is in the area of the pastoral ministry.

We envisage that under this heading people would offer their services in a voluntary capacity.

Parishes and Dioceses need to be made aware of courses such as “Network” to help people identify particular gifts.

Commission on Ministry – Report 2006

At present the C. of I. Board of Education is setting up a database of courses throughout the Church of Ireland

3 PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Professional training is training which prepares people for full time or part time paid positions. Positions on offer would be at National, Diocesan or Parish level. These positions would include hospital chaplains, youth workers, school chaplains, counsellors, organists and administrators. In the majority of these situations training courses are already available and these should be fully recognised (eg CPE Course).

The Church must give people who are professionally qualified recognition of their work. Structures should be put in place to facilitate the employment and remuneration of suitably qualified professional persons - both lay and clerical.

For tasks involving pastoral care we feel that there should be some Episcopal commissioning of people for the work they are undertaking. People might be commissioned to serve for an initial period of say three years, allowing for the fact that there must be flexibility.

In addition to the training of lay readers and parish readers there should also be opportunities to equip people to assist in worship and to help in the preparation of worship alongside the clergy.

We believe that clergy have a special role and function within the life of the Church but if they are to work alongside lay people then both clergy and laity will need to experience some joint training.

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APPENDIX C

NON-STIPENDIARY MINISTRY

Methodology

The working party considered the questionnaires completed by Auxiliary Ministers, by Bishops, and by Archdeacons.

Basic Principles /Theology

The ministry, is the ministry, is the ministry, i.e. there is one single indivisible ordained ministry. The call to ministry is just that. The terms under which that ministry, whether stipendiary or auxiliary is exercised will depend on practicalities such as availability, other work, time etc. The only differences will be in terms of deployment. There should be common entry standards, training and conditions for all involved in ministry.

Once this theology of ministry is accepted then the various “problem” areas that were highlighted by the questionnaires should in the main be eliminated

However there are a number of remaining areas of difficulty:

1. Conditions of employment - there are very wide differences in remuneration for those in the Auxiliary Ministry. We recommend that the allowances for taking duty and for mileage should be standardised across and between dioceses and should be the same whether for retired Clergy or Auxiliary Ministers or lay readers.
2. Where an Auxiliary Minister is in charge of a parish there is a need to standardise allowances within and between dioceses. These allowances should properly recognise the extent of the duties involved.
3. Rules and status. There are areas of confusion or inconsistency in current practice. For example there is considerable doubt among Auxiliary Ministers as to whether they can be members of cathedral chapters. There is no reason why they cannot and this has been illustrated by an increasing number of examples in recent years. Another concern is whether Auxiliary Ministers can serve in their own parish. We view that they should although it is not an ideal position and should only obviously be permitted with the permission of the Bishop and should not be permitted within the first five years of ministry.

Training

Currently training for the Auxiliary Ministry, including academic, pastoral and liturgical training, is over three years. Each year involves attendance at six weekends and each year two modules each involving some seven or eight assessments of the St. John's Nottingham course have to be completed. Further pastoral training is provided within dioceses, but this is not monitored. The current programme is widely recognised as being significantly better than the previous model but it does need upgrading and deepening.

Commission on Ministry – Report 2006

particularly in the pastoral area, and needs to be much more closely integrated with the training for the full time ministry.

Consistent with our overall approach to the ministry there should be a common philosophy of training. Availability for training (clearly a critical factor for many in the Auxiliary Ministry) will affect the delivery of that training. The core syllabus common to all, may be achieved in different ways for example by residential training, by distance learning or other modern means of training and development. Over time and in different ways all will complete the same syllabus.

In practice for those in the Auxiliary Ministry this will involve greater periods of residential training. These will clearly enhance collegiality and mutual interaction which is such a critical part of the learning process and will help to create greater mutual appreciation and understanding by those in full time residential training and those in part time non-residential training.

Transfer to full-time Stipendiary Ministry

Once this basic approach is accepted then in time current difficulties or uncertainties regarding the transfer to full time Stipendiary Ministry will disappear.

In the meantime the following “guidelines” should apply:

- a) Completion of training as an Auxiliary Minister
- b) Completion of a minimum of five years in the Auxiliary Ministry
- c) No transfer to the FTSM under the age of 35. Previous service in the Auxiliary Ministry would not count for pension purposes
- d) Subject to recommendation by candidate’s own Bishop
- e) Subject to interview with the Principal of the Theological College
- f) Completion of two terms in the Theological College
- g) Selection to be based on a meeting with two Bishops, other than the candidates own Bishop
- h) Those who transfer to the FTSM will agree to serve anywhere in the Church of Ireland
- i) The expectation is that those transferring to FTSM would serve a curacy for a minimum period of two years before becoming an incumbent or else their initial incumbency would be subject to the supervision of another incumbent.