

Big ministry training changes planned; College may be replaced

In a communiqué issued last week, the House of Bishops has announced what it describes as “a number of important developments” following the recommendations of a Theological College review.

The review was carried out by an independent inspection team, established in June 2004, consisting of the Central Director of Ordinands; the Archdeacon of Lindisfarne; the Professor of Education, Uppsala University; the Professor of Mathematics, Queen's University, Belfast; and the Head of the Department of Education and Vice-President, University College, Cork. The bishops had called for “a root and branch review of the training system”.

After written and oral submissions from those most directly involved (staff, students, House of Bishops, recently ordained clergy, Theological College Council), and following a week-long visit to the College, the inspection team delivered its report and recommendations to the House of Bishops in May of last year.

The following are the principal recommendations of the inspection team:

1. The House of Bishops invite the key stakeholders (staff, students, College Council, RCB, etc.) to articulate a statement of Aims and Objectives;

2. Appropriate structures of

governance to be put in place to ensure delivery of agreed aims and objectives;

3. Carry out a thorough audit of buildings and resources;

4. Draw up a Community Covenant to govern daily life and relationships within the College;

5. Focus of training programme to move from content to formation;

6. Appoint an educational consultant to assist with designing appropriate content and method for the training course;

7. Establish a regular pattern of staff meetings to include not only teaching staff but all staff responsible for life in College.

The House of Bishops' communiqué identified the following “important developments” which, the bishops said, would flow from the recommendations:

1. Greater flexibility in delivery of training, with alternatives of a three-year full-time course or a five-year part-time programme;

2. Greater emphasis on personal and ministerial formation and development, as well as academic study;

3. Training programme to consist of “blocks” of hands-on practical training alternating with residential blocks of theological reflection and input.

The communiqué continues: “In addition to flexibility in provision of training, there will be



The main building of the Church of Ireland Theological College at Braemor Park, Dublin

flexibility of purpose. Since we are now thinking in terms of the ministry of the whole people of God, the new programme will not be exclusively directed at the training of Ordinands, and there will be built-in ‘departure points’ to enable those who are moving towards non-stipendiary or lay ministry to do so. The training they have received up to the point of departure will count towards their particular qualification, as all training will conform to the standards of the National Framework of Qualification.

“There will be three distinct phases in ordination training:

1. Preliminary locally-based training;

2. Initial Ministerial Education, to include parish placements and ordination;

3. Continuing Ministerial

Education in curacies.

“The third phase will be an integral part of the training programme, but will be parish based following on ordination, with residential components. This will be predicated on selected rectors themselves being equipped as trainers, and being active partners in the training programme.

The bishops said there would be important implications for the Theological College itself, commenting: “As it stands, the present College is not flexible enough to deal with such a course, and it will either have to be considerably modified or disposed of and new premises acquired.”

The full text of the episcopal communiqué is available on the Church of Ireland website: www.ireland.anglican.org.

Drogheda apologies

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Revd Seán Brady, has welcomed a statement of the Irish Roman Catholic Province of the Augustinian Order containing an unreserved apology from Fr Richard Goode, Fr Ignatius O'Donovan and Fr Noel Hession for “the ill-considered celebration” which took place in Drogheda's Augustinian Church on Easter Day and which

involved the local rector, the Revd Michael Graham, as a concelebrant.

Dr Brady said he noted in particular the Augustinian clergy's undertaking “to respect the discipline of the Church regarding the celebration of the Eucharist in future”.

Asked to comment for the *Gazette*, Mr Graham said: “I understand and respect the position of my clerical colleagues in the Augustinian

Priory in Drogheda. Like Archbishop Brady, I too pray for the healing of divisions, and I also pray for the visible unity of the Church.”

Meanwhile, an English Anglican priest, the Revd Geoffrey Squire SSC, has written in a letter to the editor of the London-based *Church Times* that he has concelebrated at Roman Catholic eucharists on several occasions, and on two occasions with Roman Catholic bish-

ops. He added that Roman Catholic priests had twice joined him in concelebrating at Anglican eucharists.

Speaking to the *Gazette*, Fr Squire said that most of the concelebrations in which he had been involved had been in continental Europe. He said that concelebrations were especially common in France; they did not occur frequently in England, he said.