

The Church of Ireland

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3, Wallace Avenue, Lisburn BT27 4AA

Telephone: 028 9267 5743 (from Republic 048 9267 5743)

Fax: 028 9266 7580

e-mail: gazette@ireland.anglican.org

www.gazette.ireland.anglican.org

Hours: 9.00am - 1.00pm

Editor:

Canon Ian Ellis

Assistant Editor:

The Revd Clifford Skillen

Freelance Journalist:

Harry Allen

Assistant Editor Online:

The Revd Craig McCauley

Office Manager:

Ella McLoughlin

Office Administrator:

Leah Grant

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Editorial

MINISTRY TRAINING

Last week's special presentations by the Ministry Formation Project, under the auspices of the bishops, introduced radical new plans for training for ministry in the Church of Ireland (report, back page). The two evenings – north and south – were characterized by effective communication and openness.

Three fundamental themes were highlighted by the bishops as central to the mission of the Church: growth, unity and service. Similarly, three themes were highlighted as fundamentally inter-related in the envisaged new curriculum: Scripture, theology and ministry. Plans for a new Theological Institute indicated the intention of having a new, purpose-gearred design, bringing together learning, living and worshipping.

These are indeed all very welcome intentions, not least the creating of a single curriculum that can be pursued on either a full-time or a part-time basis with a real parity of regard. Such a provision is long overdue in the Church of Ireland. The intention of continuing the historic relationship between the Church of Ireland and Trinity College Dublin is also welcome, as is the move

from a Bachelor of Theology degree to that of Master in Ministry, which will provide a yet greater emphasis on practical aspects of ministry formation.

There is, of course, much to build on in the current system and while a radically new approach is in the offing, it is appropriate to record all the good that has been achieved in the courses heretofore. Change is inevitable, however, in a changing world – and it is a rapidly changing world in which the Church is being called to witness and minister today.

While the focus at both evenings was on the ordained ministry, it was stressed that the Ministry Formation Project saw the system that it had devised as adaptable for all sorts of ministry training. One concern that surfaced in discussion, however, was just how to attract young people to lifelong ministerial office. Rightly, it was pointed out that this is very much down to local parishes and it is vital that clergy and lay people throughout the Church do not forget their role in fostering vocations. However, the very setting up of a new and dynamic approach to ministry training may well prove to be a major attraction in itself.

Liturgical Notes

Revised Common Lectionary

29th APRIL

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Liturgical colour: White. Tuesday 1st May is the Festival of St Philip and St James: Red

The first reading, Acts 9: 36-43, gives a tiny glimpse of the life of the Church in the first decade, when, in Joppa, Peter raises Tabitha from death to life. The alternative reading, Numbers 27: 12-23, tells how Moses was led to appoint Joshua, a man filled with the Spirit, as his successor.

The Psalm on this fourth Sunday of Eastertide is always Psalm 23 – the song of trust in times of hardship and joy in the festive banquet of the kingdom. It is of that banquet and its joy that the second reading speaks, from Revelation 7: 9-17, as the seer hears the victorious company of heaven singing in joyful praise.

The Gospel reading, John 10: 22-30, is the conclusion of the teaching Jesus gave in the Temple after he had described himself as the Good Shepherd.

ANGLICAN CYCLE OF PRAYER

Prayer is for the Diocese of Nnewi in the Province of the Niger, Nigeria. Its bishop is Godwin Izundu Nmezinwa Okpala.

6th MAY

THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Liturgical colour: White

In the first reading, Acts 11: 1-18, Peter reports to the rest of the Jerusalem leadership on his barrier-breaking visit to the home of Cornelius, when Gentiles were baptized, having been filled with the Holy Spirit. The alternative reading (Leviticus 19: 1-2, 9-18) is another version of the Commandments, unique in that it has the positive command to love one's neighbour.

Psalm 148 or 149: 1-6 is an invocation of creation in the praise of God.

The second reading is the passage from Revelation 21: 1-6 where the vision reaches its climax, as the voice proclaims all things will be made new.

In the Gospel reading from John 13: 31-35, Jesus declares that it will be by their love for one another that people will recognize Christians as such.

ANGLICAN CYCLE OF PRAYER

Prayer is for the Diocese of North Kerala, Church of South India. Its bishop is George Isaac.