

Major changes in ministry training announced

By Peter Hamill

The launch of the new Programme for Ministry in the Church of Ireland took place last week at two ministry evaluation meetings, one held in Dublin, the other in Belfast. Over 400 people in total attended the two meetings. Archbishop Alan Harper, who chaired the launch in Belfast, said: "There could hardly be a more exciting time than this to be a member of the Church of Ireland. This Programme for Ministry is the beginning of a journey into new thinking and new life in the Church."

The Programme for Ministry has been developed over the last two years, following a major review of the Church of Ireland Theological



Final year ordinand at the Theological College, Clare Ashbridge (left), with Carmen Hayes, an ordinand from Derry and Raphoe, at the ministry evaluation evening at Newlands Cross, Dublin.

College. The project team comprises Bishop Michael Jackson (chair), Bishop Ken Clarke, Bishop Richard Clarke,

Bishop-elect Alan Abernethy and Andrew McNeile (project co-ordinator).

The key elements of the programme are as follows:

- Initial training for ministry undertaken in one's own locality by distance learning.
- A choice of a full-time or part-time route resulting in equivalence of training and qualification.
- Once qualified, a freedom to choose whether to serve in a stipendiary or non-stipendiary capacity.
- Final year spent as an intern in a training parish, with academic reflection on one's work.
- Bachelor of Theology to be replaced by a Masters in

Ministry, with curriculum focus on Scripture, theology and ministry.

- Training focused on equipping ministers for all aspects of the role of a full-time minister.

- Development of a new site and centre for training.

- Provision for families built into the new site.

There was great excitement at both events and all seemed encouraged by these new developments. It is hoped to advertise for the new Director of the Theological Institute by the beginning of the summer and the programme will commence in 2008.

Bishop Michael Jackson, chair of the project team, commented: "The future shape of ministry for lay people and clergy alike is exciting for the Church of Ireland. Those of us who have been involved in the Programme for Ministry project so far are encouraged by the widespread interest throughout the Church."

(Further information and developments will be posted on the project website: www.ministry.ie.)



Tom and Elva Stevenson, Lisburn Cathedral, at the ministry evaluation evening in the Templeton Hotel, Templepatrick.

Bishops reflect on Church's mission

One of the very helpful features of the Ministry Formation Project's theological review was that it asked key questions of the House of Bishops. One of those questions was: 'What is the mission of the Church of Ireland for which we are preparing ministers in which to serve?'

The bishops spent a considerable time reflecting on this issue. Last week, the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Revd Alan Harper, presented the results of this thinking at the ministry evaluation evening in Belfast.

The bishops' statement reads: *The Church of Ireland, an authentic part of the universal church of God, is called to develop growing communities of faith, in and through which the kingdom of God is made known, and in which the whole people serve together as followers of Jesus Christ for the good of the world.*

Archbishop Harper focused on three key

elements: growth, unity and service. He added: "As a Church, we need to focus on those core aspects of discipleship that will help us deal with the challenges of today - we need to turn discipleship into apostleship. This is a most exhilarating time to be a member of the Church of Ireland. New initiatives and great developments abound. In the forefront is the review of training for ministry and a proposal to create a Theological Institute, but many other green shoots of new growth are to be found."

"Only this week, I was present at the launch of the strategic plan for the Church of Ireland Youth Department and the launch of USPG Ireland. This is a time for us to be encouraged and enthused, and I am filled with hope already by the reception that the plans for new structures for training clergy and laity have received at the two launch events."

APPOINTMENT

The Revd Darren M. McCallig, Curate-Assistant of Monkstown, to be Dean of Residence and Chaplain of Trinity College Dublin, both Diocese of Dublin, with effect from 13th August 2007.

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