

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

REPORT 2001

1. MEMBERSHIP

House of Bishops

Most Rev RL Clarke, Bishop of Meath (Chairman) Ms C McCutcheon (Honorary Secretary)
 Rt Rev MHG Mayes, Bishop of Limerick
 Rt Rev RCA Henderson, Bishop of Tuam

Standing Committee

General Synod – clerical

Rev Canon JAA Condell
 Ven KR Good
 Ven AET Harper

Pensions Board

Lady Sheil

General Synod – lay

Mrs A Forrest
 Mr RF Palmer
 Mr DG Perrin

Representative Church Body

Ven CT Pringle
 Mrs CH Thomson

Principal of the Theological College

Rev Canon JR Bartlett

Honorary Secretaries

Very Rev H Cassidy

Co-opted

Rev OMR Donohoe
 Rev C Lindsay
 Dr A Pierce

Co-ordinator of Auxiliary Ministry Training

Rev Canon KA Kearon

2. SUMMARY

The Working Groups set up by the Commission have concentrated their efforts during the year on progressing matters which have been developing over the last two or three years. The most significant matter this year is pastoral breakdown, which has culminated in a Bill following Green and White Papers in the previous years. The Commission has also given considerable thought to the auxiliary ministry and a paper on this issue is included as Appendix A. The Commission feels that it would be a worthwhile experience to hold a Summit on Ministry in the light of the parish visits reported last year, and proposals are included as Appendix B.

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. GENERAL

Working Groups from within the Commission deal with specific areas. These Groups meet separately and report to full meetings of the Commission, which met on four occasions during the year. The business of the Commission is reported under the headings of the Working Groups, which are as follows:

- (a) Appointment and tenure of office of stipendiary clergy.
- (b) Auxiliary ministry.
- (c) Perceived needs and expectations of ministry.

5. PART-TIME DEPLOYMENT OF STIPENDIARY MINISTRY

The Statute passed by the General Synod in 1999 to provide for the part-time deployment of Stipendiary Ministry, includes a provision, under Section (4) d of Canon 34, for regulations to be made by the Representative Body.

As reported last year, the Representative Body has agreed regulations, which were printed in its report to the General Synod. The Church of Ireland Pensions Board has also agreed regulations pertaining to pensions for the part-time ministry, which have been approved by the Representative Body. These regulations are included as Appendix B to the report of the Pensions Board to the General Synod.

6. APPOINTMENT AND TENURE OF OFFICE OF STIPENDIARY CLERGY

Members of the Group

Rt Rev MHG Mayes, Bishop of Limerick (Convenor)
 Very Rev H Cassidy
 Rev Canon JAA Condell
 Rev OMR Donohoe
 Mr RF Palmer
 Ven CT Pringle

The Commission was very encouraged by the positive response by the General Synod last year to the White Paper on Pastoral Breakdown, which contained detailed proposals for legislation. The Commission felt confident that it now had a mandate to bring forward legislation and a recommended code of practice to implement the proposals in the White Paper concerning conflict resolution and mediation panels. Accordingly, the Commission has submitted a Bill for consideration by the Synod.

The proposal in the White Paper, that the Provincial Mediation Panel should complete its work within three months, was reconsidered. The Commission agreed that the draft legislation should not restrict the Panel to a specific period and that the Panel should report to the diocesan bishop every three months while dealing with a

particular case. It is envisaged that, in most cases, the process would be completed in six months.

The Bill before the General Synod provides for the establishment of Mediation Panels and further provision concerning mediation in conflict resolution and related matters. In addition, during the year the Commission has given much attention to the proposals for payment of severance terms. On balance, it was felt that the severance payment should be calculated on a formula based on years of service and years to the normal retirement date. This would avoid any scope for negotiation, which might cause a delay in agreeing a settlement. As the formula would be generally known in advance, settlements would stand up to comparison and would be seen to be fair.

It has emerged on the advice of the RCB, that the funding and scope of severance terms needs to be given further consideration. The Bill submitted to the General Synod cannot include specific provisions for severance terms.

The Commission would like to acknowledge the helpful advice and assistance on this matter, received from Mr RH Sherwood, Chief Officer and Secretary of the Representative Church Body.

7. AUXILIARY MINISTRY

Members of the Group

Mr DG Perrin (Convenor)
Lady Sheil
Mrs CH Thomson

Rev Canon KA Kearon
Rev Canon JR Bartlett
Rev C Lindsay

Appended to the report last year was a summary of the replies to the questionnaire which was sent to all auxiliary ministers in order to obtain their views on all aspects of the auxiliary ministry. More than two-thirds of the questionnaires were completed.

In the light of the replies to the questionnaire, the Commission considered the role of auxiliary ministers. It was felt that a flexible approach was required as it would be difficult to agree a unifying structure. However, certain benchmarks might be agreed, for example a consistent mileage allowance in each jurisdiction. The experience of auxiliary ministers over the past twenty years must be taken into account.

The Commission acknowledged that there is no theological difference between the auxiliary ministry and the stipendiary ministry, as a stipend was to provide the freedom to carry out ministerial duties. The present differences are related to training, which in the case of auxiliary ministers is inevitably more limited. While recognising the difficulties, the Commission agreed in principle that training for the auxiliary ministry should be the same as that for the stipendiary ministry.

A discussion paper on the auxiliary ministry is included as Appendix A.

8. PERCEIVED NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF MINISTRY

Members of the Group

Ven AET Harper (Convenor) Mrs A Forrest
Rt Rev RCA Henderson, Bishop of Tuam Ven KR Good
Ms C McCutcheon

The report last year included a composite report, which derived from reflection upon the experience of the parochial visitations over two years. During the year, the Commission considered issues arising from the visitations which included lay involvement in parochial affairs, shared vision, the need for in-service training, inherent conservatism and the need for a data-base of training resources.

When the group commenced this process, it was pointed out that “one of the principal tasks of the Commission on Ministry is to examine the life, witness and mission of the Church of Ireland in order to see how its ministry may be shaped or reshaped to meet future needs and opportunities. That examination and any proposals for change must take account of the contemporary experience of the Church at parish level. The sub-committee set up to examine the “perceived needs and expectations of ministry” has begun a process of dialogue to enable us to hear what people active in their parishes think and expect. Representatives of the Commission were [again] generously received and in every case the consultations were open, helpful and illuminating.”

As reported last year, the Commission is planning a *Summit on Ministry* to be held during the year 2002. The issues to be considered at the summit, the format and the speakers to be invited were considered. Proposals for a summit are included as Appendix B.

9. THE DIACONATE

The Commission appointed the Ven AET Harper to attend a consultation, organised by a Church of England Working Party to study the possibility of a renewed diaconate. A comparative study of the diaconate, using material from various sources, in particular from other Anglican traditions, is continuing.

APPENDIX A

AUXILIARY 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, ie 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,

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 candidate’s 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.

APPENDIX B

PROPOSALS FOR A SUMMIT ON MINISTRY FOR THE CHURCH OF IRELAND IN 2002

A meeting of the group considering the ‘Needs and Expectations of Ministry’ was held in the CITC on Wednesday 7 February 2001 to give further consideration to the proposal to hold a conference in 2002. Discussion centred on the shape, content and appropriate preparation for the conference. The outcome of the discussion was as follows:

- The conference must be forward looking.
- It must take account of the current context of ministry both in Ireland and in the Church more widely.
- It will be important to attract attention and promote participation throughout the church and therefore preparation must provide for this.

To meet these general criteria the following shape and content for the conference is proposed:

1. Provisional conference title: **The Ministry of the Church (of Ireland?) in 2020**
2. Conference segments:
 - **The reality of ministry now.** (A setting of the scene based on the research and experience gained in parochial visitations by the Needs and Expectations of Ministry group.)
 - **What will the Church and Community look like in 2020.** (A drawing together of the results of a consultation exercise in preparation for the conference, see below under ‘Preparation for the Conference’.)
 - **Structures and styles and patterns of ministry for the future.**
 - **The place of ‘popular culture’ and ‘populist’ styles in parish worship.**
 - **The international and ecumenical context for ministry in the Church of Ireland.**

Preparation for the Conference

It will be important to ensure that the conference exercise penetrates to the roots of the Church engaging the energy and attention of as many church people as possible. It is suggested that to achieve this the dioceses should be asked to participate in a preliminary exercise, responding through a consultation process conducted within each diocese to the following general question:

- **If trends continue or develop as you anticipate, what will your diocese and its ministry look like in 2020? What should it look like?** (The implications of such questions include, ‘What may be the shape of the parish structures?’ ‘Will there be

teams and what might the membership of such teams look like?’ ‘How will they be trained?’)

The dioceses would be asked to complete the consultation by the end of 2001. A meeting of ‘rapporteurs’ from the dioceses would then follow in early 2002 to draw together the results of the exercise. A report of the outcome of the consultation exercise would form a foundational resource and an appropriate ‘lead in’ for the conference proper in late 2002.

Some Implications

The Commission on Ministry was set up to recommend considered and appropriate change. The Conference on Ministry should set out to be a vehicle for such considered and appropriate change. It should therefore be anticipated that the outcome of the conference will be to require or enable change in the following areas at least:

- **A movement in the mindset of church members** towards an understanding that, primarily, Christian ministry is the ministry of the whole Church, the Body of Christ, not the sole responsibility and prerogative of those entering Holy Orders.
- **Lay ministry and particularly ‘lay pastorate’** which have implications for our understanding and exercise of diaconal ministry and the relationship between ordained and non-ordained ministry.
- **A fresh understanding of the diaconate** and its relationship with and place within a refined concept of Locally Ordained Ministry.
- **Appropriate training, and methods of delivering training**, for all ministry, including such new models of ordained and lay ministry identified as appropriate in the light of modern developments.