

12: STRATEGY FOR THE SECTARIANISM EDUCATION PROJECT

Strategy for the SEP will be defined in response to the Scoping Study and its reception process in 2003, and the following are examples of responses given to the consultants in interviews and Focus Groups.

Clarification only comes through doing the thing. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

We need to put time into trust-building before we 'tell the truth' to each other, to create a safe space where *everyone* can be themselves. This is not a process of manipulation...And we need to continue financial investment – we get nothing for nothing. We may not be able to have one blueprint – different approaches in different places...But we had best do something small now than wait five years till we [think] we're ready...Perhaps there should be one event per year in each parish to begin with as a minimum...We should define a beginning and an end to the first stage of the project, perhaps an initial commitment of 3 years. **Anonymous respondent**

The strategy has to be local, to help people reflect on their own sectarianism...[This includes] the 'hidden smiling' sectarianism against refugees, asylum seekers, etc. **Bishop**

So often there are lots and lots of papers and files but no action. I would hope that there would be money for the implementation stage rather than the research. **Lay person, Tuam, Killala, and Achonry**

What do you think the Church can do to contribute to the future of reconciliation on this island?

- (a) Continual emphasis on opposition to all forms of sectarianism.
- (b) Greater involvement of other denominations in Church of Ireland activities.
- (c) More active participation in inter-Church and inter-community affairs.
- (d) Take the initiative in approaching other interest groups e.g. [the Primate's] dialogue with political parties, etc. **Bishop**

I really hope there is a significant outcome to this whole process. I actually think the work of dealing with sectarianism goes on day after day, week after week, month after month, in the Church. It is something we will be dealing with until the Lord returns. No special commission is going to be the final word on it...I actually see it as part of God's calling to being his people on planet earth, amongst the people he loves, whatever their background, whatever their marginalization, culture, whatever their feelings. This is just part of what it means to be a Christian and a follower of Christ. The friend of sinners, the marginalized, the outsider, the rejected. And I think we need to rediscover that concept of Christ, because our welcome as a Church has been selective. **Bishop**

I think the links between the Church of Ireland and the Orange Order have got to be looked at. That's first. **Rector, Armagh**

The clergy still are the gatekeepers of change, of progress in churches, and unless the clergy are on board with something, it is very difficult to move and to have congregations in that direction. In terms of youth work...there are initiatives and programmes...that in a sense fast track a wee bit of that. But in terms of the Church as a whole attacking the issues, I do agree in a sense it has to begin with clergy...You can't have a strategy without tackling that issue. The other one is – maybe this is a bugbear of mine, but the Church too frequently preach to the converted, and I don't know how many of those who practice violence are in the churches...The churches have a huge input to schools,...How many agencies and how many people [are] employed in all sorts of peace and reconciliation and addressing sectarianism organisations, and it would be enough to staff a large school, and there seems to be little co-ordination amongst those initiatives. **Youth Worker**

Part of the problem is that we deal more easily with failure than we do with success: that we can sociologically in all sorts of ways justify failure, but we never can quite come to terms with success. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

I think some sort of education programme that...emerges naturally rather than an artificial thing that's imposed. Because if my people feel that something is worthwhile and something is good, they'll support it. If they feel it's just a talk shop that is in order to tick boxes, [they] would be resentful. Maybe they

inherit that from me! If something is good and worthwhile we'll certainly look at it and hopefully support it.
Rector, Armagh

This is a more positive anxiety than a negative one – is that there is a lot of good work going on, in dioceses, in parishes all over the place. People are devising resources, but there again – would you believe in 2002 the lack of communication? So that a parish in Ballyholme could be devising a booklet on let's say St Columba, which would be something to do with reconciliation, let's say, and somebody in Derry could be doing the same. Now that is a) a misuse of resources and b) is producing – it's a duplication that's unnecessary. So there needs to be some kind of central resource centre, or you have a website where people communicate on...I would actually like to see some kind of structure [perhaps a full-time office] created within the church that would actually have the specific remit for community relations, moving beyond sectarianism, anti-sectarian education from infants to adults.

I think there actually is a very important point there. I would actually want to argue that there's a whole of a lot more that's going on in a quiet way than is recognised. There is something in the Church of Ireland temperament that precludes us from boasting or going public about things. **Bishop**

Your constituency has got to be from cradle to grave. I'm really serious about this; the education project has to come in at labour...The Church of Ireland needs to aim at a commitment that is a structured commitment. It's not just good enough for the Archbishop to say, 'We want you to sign on for something.' It's got to be more thoroughgoing than that. It has to go through Diocesan Synods, down to...rural deaneries...Now what I mean by structure is, it should not be just a diocesan structure, but should be a parish structure. There should be some kind of learning available to clergy and leading lay people, not necessarily Vestries, on how they set up a sectarian education project structure within the parish.

So that [would be facilitated by a resource person for] about one in every ten parishes?

One in every ten parishes. Something like that....Now it might not be full time work, it could be a part-time work. It could be a retired person who's prepared to do an evening a week....Or it could be bought in [from an outside agency].

How would you make those changes, and how would you measure them?

It's very difficult as you know to measure qualitatively how people change, and into what do they change. It's so much easier to see butterflies coming out of cocoons. But within the church the qualitative change would be more measurable in the way that they relate...That's not the end of the story, of course, because I believe that – a further thing that that has got to be either a yearly or two-yearly or even three-yearly re-visit, review, re-commissioning, re-evaluation. You've got to have these intervals of getting it on board again. And that's why a lot of reports have gathered dust. They were never re-visited. **Former rector, Down and Dromore**

[We] have to do it along with other churches. It has to be a Church of Ireland initiative, but it should be set up as an initiative in concert with other churches, and possibly other faiths. Because it isn't our baby, necessarily. We didn't invent it, we didn't start it, and we'll not finish it. **Rector, Tuam, Killala, and Achonry**

Clergy should be actively encouraged by their bishop to make their Christmas Carol Service and Harvest Service ecumenical occasions. **Rector, Armagh**

To be honest with you I think that someone outside the parish would be far, far better at doing something like this than the rector or even a member of the laity within the parish. Simply because they don't know the people. They come in and it's a blank sheet. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

I think it would be good if the Church of Ireland as a body had some sort of guidance for different things, but it does depend a lot on where you minister. Because what would be relevant maybe in the middle of Belfast isn't relevant in the middle of the country...

So some kind of centralised resourcing.

Where you could go if you needed information or you needed encouragement or guidance, somebody who knew what they were talking about and could tell you how to do certain things if you wanted to. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Well actually seriously we need to learn about our own religion as a primary, and then – well there's the academic learning, but there's also the meeting of our people, and I think that's the best way. And you're prepared if you know where you stand yourself. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Perhaps a Joint Church of Ireland/Roman Catholic Working Group on sectarianism and difference might help. This could be consultative and informative – a 'mediative' group to field questions and disseminate information. **Rector, Armagh**

The clergy can't [always] be protected, but they need to be assured that they're being supported...We need a kind of informative database about what [resources are] out there, and also we need to be able to put people in touch with one another so that they can talk about what works and what doesn't...You could be confident that the person that you are calling in has been given the skills to deal with them, with all of the problems, including the problem of conflict resolution...People need to be reassured that there is that resource in place available at a diocesan level. But ultimately the choices have to be made at parish level, because those are the [people] that actually know the people that they're dealing with...

Do you think that the [SEP] committee needs to have some imagination about where and when it meets?

We would do much better to have fewer but more intensive maybe residential meetings. **Bishop**

STRATEGY FOR THE SECTARIANISM EDUCATION PROJECT

- *Many respondents believe that to address sectarianism is an essential part of being a Christian.*
- *The clergy are seen as the gatekeepers of change and should be involved closely in the development of, and commitment to a sectarianism education project.*
- *Respondents assert that the SEP should set realistic goals and tangible outcomes. It is not likely to solve all the issues surrounding sectarianism, but may succeed in helping people to relate better to one another.*
- *Many respondents still feel that the relationship between the Church of Ireland and the Orange Order has not been resolved, and should be addressed as part of the SEP.*
- *Local strategy is required to implement the vision of the SEP; this should be developed in a partnership, rather than imposed 'from above'; there is no 'one size fits all' solution - different approaches may be required in different places. The project will only succeed if there is an attempt to gain commitment from local parishes.*
- *The SEP committee may need to review its structure and pattern of meetings in order to process the findings of the Scoping Study. Members have stated that the committee itself must model the values of good practice aspired to by respondents.*
- *There should be a defined beginning and end to the first phase of the project, and a long-term strategy for the future.*
- *Respondents do not want the project to be delayed - clarification comes through action.*
- *Some kind of centralised resourcing, especially regarding communication and envisioning is required; this could include (at a minimum) both human resources and a website.*
- *Partnership with other churches would be extremely valuable, and help to avoid the pitfalls of duplication*
- *Some respondents suggested that the SEP should have a full time office.*

13: CHALLENGES FOR THE SECTARIANISM EDUCATION PROJECT

Although the consultants were welcomed by most respondents (only 2 clergy in the sample declined to take part), there are evident challenges for the SEP. Some of these are illustrated in the quotations that follow:

1: Inertia and the bureaucracy of the church:

So many committees – not only in the Church of Ireland – form just as a talking shop. It's comfortable, and there are people who don't have hands-on experience. **Lay person, Connor**

This is a full time job for the church – ongoing yet fraught with difficulties, and hard to keep the motivation going. **Standing Committee lay member, Limerick and Killaloe**

[Cross-community work is] valuable in furthering relationships and contacts, but limited in [its ability to] heal areas of division politically. **Rector, Armagh**

I think it probably will gather dust...I've seen so many of these initiatives over the years...and by the time anything [comes of it] the time has passed. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

It'll only gather dust if those of us who have taken part in it decide to remain anonymous and don't push and ask – 'Well, where's the report on it? What's going on? What's happening with it?' **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

I think it could just disappear up the tubes. People would say, 'Oh, that is not to our liking entirely, so would you take another year and go and explore further'. In other words, keep on putting it off. Unless the church becomes quite rigorous...in its directive. **Lay person, Connor**

My hope is that they will take it seriously, because that's what I think is in doubt, the depth of their commitment to examining these issues. Because it seems to me the church has issued very good reports in the past...but [they] just disappeared off the landscape. And it seems to me...that anyone like ourselves who tries to raise these issues meets a brick wall, and that's very polite, civilised and smiling, and they don't tell you to shut up but they just go on their own way. **Retired Rector, Connor**

The Church of Ireland is too good at setting up structures and committees; its weakness is in actually getting things implemented on the ground where it matters. **Rector, Connor**

What good will it do when all this research is finished? **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

2: Insecurity on the part of the clergy or laity:

Well I know the Synod have heard it already, but I'll quote it again from my rector. The Church of Ireland is full of good people, and they're good for nothing.

Because they don't use their goodness? Because they don't risk their goodness?
Yes. **Youth Worker**

I find this immensely difficult. In a deeply entrenched loyalist working class community a sense of security is, I think, a prerequisite for attempting anything. The more vulnerable the community feels, the less it is able to address these issues. **Rector, Connor**

There is sometimes a sense that 'we have to hold onto everything', that it would be a betrayal if we let go; [this is accompanied by] a loss of morale and confidence. So we need to learn more about the management of change. **Bishop**

I once [took a stand against sectarianism]. The resulting hate mail, abuse, etc. would have been easier to handle if a network could be set up of those with similar experiences. **Rector, Connor**

One of the big issues is those who are involved in the paramilitaries in our own area, and if there's any way of trying to talk to them – I don't even know them, but...they don't live a mile away from here. I might even meet them on the street and not know who they are...

Can you think of a way of doing that?

I think many people in the community are crippled with fear and they daren't speak it. In a sense I suppose I daren't speak out too strongly either. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

One of the real problems of the Church of Ireland is a theology of 'niceness'...There is a superficiality and a pc attitude in not wishing to offend. Blandness results...Because the Church of Ireland is a small church a critique of principles is often viewed as an attack on personalities. We need to get over this hang-up. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

3: Philosophical objections, misinterpretations or negative experiences of peace/addressing sectarianism initiatives:

It's to do with relationships. It's not to do with worshipping together...It's not about dogmas, it's not about doctrines, it's not about doctrines, it's not about worshipping and using a liturgy, and all that sort of stuff. It's to do with relationships, and building that together, and trying to understand differences and appreciate them, then eventually to celebrate them. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Those who do not want to respond to any initiatives cannot be forced to do so. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

In the Church of Ireland there are too many pushing their own opinions and agendas under the guise of anti-sectarianism (i.e. anti-Orange). **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

[At] the training workshop on sectarianism in our post-ordination training...I was told the difference between me and the loyalist paramilitary is that I was educated, and I went to grammar school and he wasn't. He isn't able to think for himself, he goes out and uses a gun, but that's the only difference between him and me. It's wrong.

Now when you say you were told that, do you mean you interpreted what was said that way?

Oh no, that's what [the facilitator] said to us...I remember responding to her that no, I was brought up in a working class housing estate...I didn't go to grammar school until I was sixteen, and the difference between me and a loyalist paramilitary is that my parents taught me that God said, 'You shall not kill.' You don't bear false witness against your neighbour. Love your neighbour as yourself. That's the difference. So that even if – are there sectarian attitudes in me? Yes, there are. Are they qualitatively and quantitatively the same as the Shankill Butchers'? Not a bit...Within the diocese [peace and anti-sectarian initiatives are] not pushed because I would guess there's a nervousness within diocesan authorities. So many of those from bishop, archdeacon et cetera will have liberal political views, and if they're seen to push anti-sectarianism projects it's interpreted by an overwhelming unionist laity as a political agenda, trying to make the Church become the Alliance Party...Sectarianism is a weasel word within the Church of Ireland at present. It's been hollowed out of content, and a new content has been put in, and being sectarian is having strong unionist convictions, strong Orange convictions or having strong reformed theological convictions. My impression has been that this is the Church of Ireland's attempt to remove any sense of legitimacy to the fact that a Christian can be a unionist too...There's an incipient relativism behind the whole project. If you say a certain view is wrong, you are...a stone's throw away from being sectarian. Once you begin to say a person's view is wrong, that is [seen as] close to being sectarian.

And you feel that people who share your views are being treated in a sectarian way?

Absolutely. Yes. **Rector, Clogher**

I [have] two Select Vestries who would not be willing to let a cross-community group use their parish hall even for one meeting. **Rector, Armagh**

As a church we have lost confidence in the gospel...and instead of preaching it have become involved in initiatives which look very good, make people friends, but don't challenge them about the words of Jesus: 'Except a man is born again.' **Rector, Clogher**

The fact that [misinterpretations and principled reluctance to participate exist] requires to be registered. It's important that they be given the opportunity to voice the issues that are important to them, but we have to deliver despite that, and if that means difficult times, so be it. I'm not worried about it. **Bishop**

4: The social context:

A lot will depend on what happens politically. The background of politics affects the foreground of the church, and these issues can't be resolved easily. **Bishop**

In a polarised area like ours, little can be done to cross bridges in a practical way. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

We must recognise and challenge the sophisticated sectarianism of the middle class while...not forgetting lower socio-economic groups who are often the most threatened. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Instead of...middle-class people meeting each other it would be more useful to look at the processes of social exclusion that drive people to a violent sectarian disposition. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

5: The possible propensity for men to not participate:

Could men not become involved in a Day of Prayer and invite all churches to pray for Christian unity? **Standing Committee lay member, Derry and Raphoe**

6: Time pressures:

In introducing sectarianism into the education curriculum, there [is] a real danger of overload; it is important to ensure that it [is] seen as an integrated package and not a competing element. **Anonymous respondent**

7: The internal divisions of the church:

The effect of [such initiatives] is curious: it may serve to lessen the chances of conflict with people and structurally beyond 'our' boundaries, but at the same time it can serve to increase the chances of stress and agreement within! **Bishop**

8: The desire for a 'quick fix' or the potential misattribution of resources:

There is not much profit to be gained by expending huge sums of money in programmes for the church at large but areas of working class conurbations should be targeted to identify the root causes of sectarianism and prejudice. **Rector, Armagh**

We're in for a long haul here, and there's no instant answers...[We must not] suggest [that] once we've finished our work, we've got a report, we will be transformed, and we will eliminate sectarianism within the Church of Ireland..For me...the whole thing is about growing...in maturity. **Former rector, Connor**

CHALLENGES FOR THE SECTARIANISM EDUCATION PROJECT

- *Many respondents are wary of the bureaucracy of the church, and fear that this may stifle the SEP.*
- *Some clergy feel unprotected or ill equipped to respond to potentially controversial issues.*
- *Lay people may not be sufficiently confident in their own identity as Church of Ireland to engage in meaningful dialogue with others.*
- *Some respondents have had negative experiences of initiatives that aim to build peace and challenge sectarianism; there are also philosophical objections; this may inhibit their participation in future.*
- *Some feel that men may not participate in the SEP.*
- *The time pressures of parish life may inhibit the development of the SEP.*
- *The temptation exists to seek an immediate solution, which may, conversely, create more challenges.*

14: THE LOYAL ORDERS AND DRUMCREE

The General Synod has already examined in detail the question of the church's relationship with the Loyal Orders, and specifically the issue referred to in the public sphere simply as 'Drumcree'. There is no need to rehearse the arguments here, not least because these issues were not a key part of the remit for the Scoping Study. Some quotations are included, however, as illustrative of the relevant issues (and it is noteworthy that some respondents declined to comment on these issues at all):

How do we [communicate the General Synod's decision about Drumcree and the Orange Order] to the membership of the Orange Order who are members of the Church of Ireland? We can't say it to anybody else in a sense, while at the same time acknowledging their right to be members of these things, and I in practice I welcome the county Grand Lodge for a service each year, I have preached at it. But it's how to at the same time as being open to them as people, to somehow say that responding to Christ today cannot be done in the terms of the seventeenth century or Reformation questions, which are no longer the same questions as people face in their lives today. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

There are a lot of different opinions, and I think people just get on with it. The only time it really would come out would be in the summertime, if they wanted to hold an Orange parade or something. And there would be different opinions within the two parishes, some would be all for it and some wouldn't. So I don't know – handling political differences – if we have to do a service, we do a service, and we don't make too big an issue of it.

And in your view is that handling it well or inadequately?

From my point of view it's a situation that I find myself in – I've inherited it, so I do it to the best of my ability, but I don't make a big thing about it. They're invited to come and join the evening service, but I wouldn't be so keen on having a separate service for them, because I think they should be integrated into the church. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

The [church and the Orange Order] should not be inextricably linked. We can't throw them all out of the church, but I wouldn't like a situation where the Orange Order compelled me to hold a service. I think we've got to hold our autonomy. **Rector, Connor**

Some found this difficult – suggesting that it may be the 'hidden agenda' of the research. **Focus Group report, Armagh**

Media representation has given a bad name to the C of I in Drumcree – it is tarred with Orangemen and bigots. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

I think at the official church level, in relation to the four main churches in particular, there is a need to get across to those who are willing to listen to us, the idea that there is a genuine respect for one another, that there is genuine trust there, and to cut the ground from under those people who would want to portray a particular group in a sectarian or whatever way. And I came up with the idea at that stage of the four church leaders producing an agreed statement in which they recognised the history in which they've permitted themselves to work together. **Rector, Armagh**

Drumcree – I think something ought to have been done a long time ago. If it means stopping that service, to break the cycle of violence, then stop the service. There is no doubt the service has been hijacked, and that I think throws the Christian Church up in a very bad light. I think the church – whether you're talking about the local rector, or who, I'm not sure, but something ought to have been done.

What about the relationship between the Orange Order and the Church of Ireland?

I don't think there [should be] a relationship. The Church of Ireland is there to proclaim the gospel, to teach the Christian way, now if the Orange Order wants to buy into that, that's up to it. If individual members are members of both, that's up to them, but I don't think the church should be involved. **Rector, Connor**

I think the word 'listen' is very important. I think the church needs to listen, and not just to shut its doors. I feel doors need to be kept open, because what's happening is there's a community out there trying to

articulate its culture. Culture and Church now are two separate things. [We need to bear] that in mind, because if the one gets totally entangled with the other we have the problem that we've got now. But the Church needs to respect the culture that there is, okay, but also needs to highlight the parts of that culture that are in conflict with the gospel of Christ. **Rector, Connor**

I think I grew up blissfully unaware of either my own self-prejudices, or those of my peers and in the church. In [the parish] there was quite a hullabaloo about the moving of flags and things, and you get that kind of local situation being very explosive and very difficult without some backing from the church as a whole on certain issues. And again is that the situation in Drumcree? I'm not saying it is or isn't, but in what way does the church at large give [the parochial leadership] guidance or support? [Are they] really at the mercy of the local situation? **Youth Worker**

Border parishes feel differently towards Drumcree than, say, people in Bangor, because of having families wiped out/eldest sons shot by rogue republicans trying to stir up trouble. **Lay person, Armagh**

As a member of the Orange Order and a rector in the Church of Ireland it would be helpful not to be demonised/stigmatised for expressing my cultural identity. Throwing bricks instead of using them to build would seem to be the norm at the moment. **Anonymous respondent**

The Church itself [has] gone as far as it possibly can because of the present laws of the church. It cannot go any further...If you knock [Drumcree parish] church down tomorrow, or if the Archbishop took the licence away, closed the church, or if new laws were passed at Synod, the Orangemen would still march...and hold an open air service. So it's not going to go away...I'm also very disappointed on occasions when I hear the Archbishop saying, 'I have worked tirelessly since Christmas behind the scenes.' Why behind the scenes? Why not openly? Why not announce in the press, 'I am going to a meeting tonight with the Garvagh Road Residents' Association'? He's been to meetings all over the place, according to what's been said. And why have we not got that out? I believe the church has not been aggressive in a positive way. **Lay person, Belfast**

Do you have an opinion on Drumcree and how it should be resolved?

Generally speaking it's all too easy to have simplistic answers to what is in fact a complex social, religious and an enormous problem with all sorts of dimensions to it. Even though I've had some experience of ministry in the North I don't know. **Rector, Limerick and Killaloe**

The C of I should stop fudging on the relationship with the Orange Order. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

Some of the things that people suggest should be done may not be the best. And the motivation for it I think is questionable. Because the motivation for doing something about Drumcree is to take embarrassment off my particular shoulders, rather than to...solve everything that Drumcree [represents]. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

They should ban all flags, all marches. Let them do it in their own place. At this stage no Christian church should be banging drums and celebrating the annihilation of other people. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

I want to go to Drumcree myself. The silent and peaceful majority want to go and worship and should be allowed to go and worship. If they exclude Orangemen then they could split the church in two. **Lay person, unknown diocese**

The media has done all denominations a terrible disservice. The archbishop was doing a good job trying to resolve the Drumcree situation but the media tore him to shreds. The terminology they used was wrong; they used the phrase 'secret meeting' and this made it sound very devious, like an accusation. Media spin turns things around...pressure is put on because of the media and it's not easy when the world's media turns it up and starts making TV stars out of people. **Lay person, unknown diocese**

Drumcree has been an impediment to [North-South unity in the Church of Ireland]. **Bishop**

The first reaction of some in the Republic to Drumcree was to distance ourselves from it; this caused hurt. Then we began to realise that many of the issues important to us were redolent with sectarianism,

for example, in the controversy over the sale of property, [some people seemed to feel that] 'we don't want to lose face, they were frightened and insecure. **Bishop**

It gauges the tension of my parish...If Drumcree goes off well...all in the garden is quiet. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

It is important to acknowledge that, for many people, Drumcree represents the crux of the issue of dealing positively with sectarianism and difference in the Church of Ireland. There is a prevalent view that 'solving Drumcree will somehow solve all the challenges facing the Church'. It may well be that a disproportionate amount of energy has been invested by the Church in addressing Drumcree specifically, while the everyday sectarianism and negative patterns of relating at the micro-level may have been relatively disregarded. A sociological analysis would caution against this. The questions raised at Drumcree may well be irresolvable in the terms in which they are presented. The perception of repeated failure, and indeed the widespread public perception that the Church of Ireland is not 'doing enough' to address Drumcree obviously do not help the process of responding positively to sectarianism and difference. In other words, it should be stressed that this Scoping Study report does not specifically seek to provide the tools for the resolution of Drumcree, but rather shift the focus to the wider issues of sectarianism and difference in the Church of Ireland. Drumcree should neither be scapegoated (allowing others to claim 'there's no sectarianism on our patch'), nor, of course, ignored; but it should not be allowed to monopolise the agenda and resources of the church. A much deeper and wider process is required to address the issues of sectarianism and difference throughout the Church of Ireland.

THE LOYAL ORDERS AND DRUMCREE

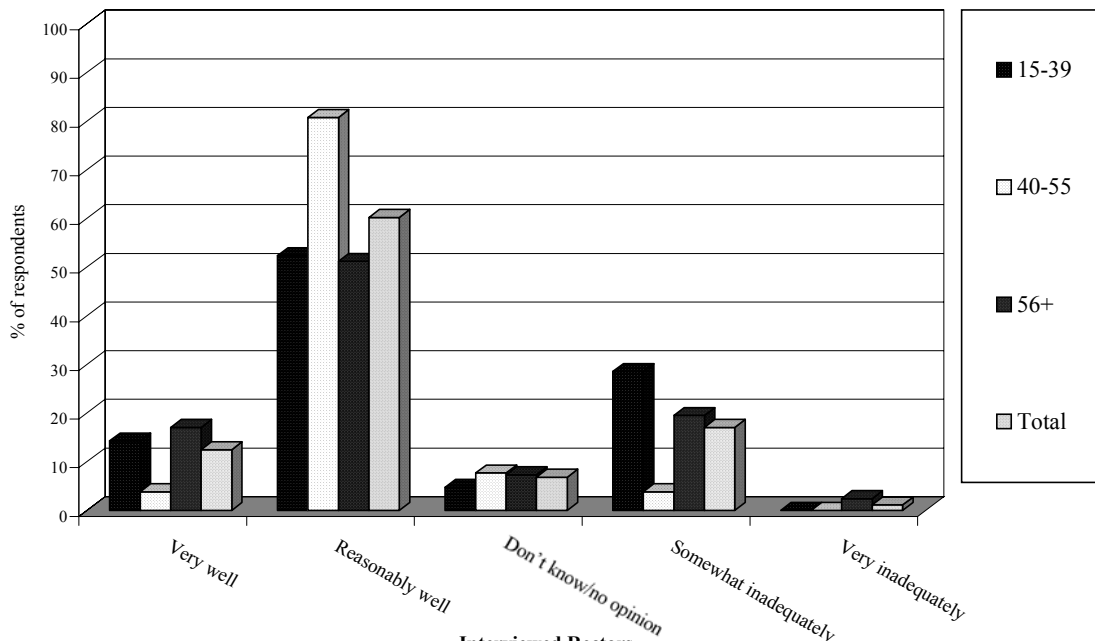
- *This is still one of the most controversial issues facing the church, and it elicits a diversity of responses, ranging from proposing the closure of Drumcree parish, to the full support of the church for the Orange Order (these are both minority views).*
- *Some respondents acknowledge that it may be too easy to propose solutions to a problem at General Synod without the cost of having to implement them. The General Synod may not be the appropriate forum to take such decisions, nor does it appear to have the authority to implement them.*
- *Some respondents feel that the church has done as much as it can to resolve the matter and should distance itself from the Drumcree situation.*
- *It may be the case that the attempt to resolve Drumcree at the micro-level has inhibited the process of addressing sectarianism and other forms of difference at both wider and local levels.*
- *The church's stance towards the constitutional position of Northern Ireland perhaps needs to be further clarified. It may be perceived by some that part of the church's role should be to defend the union.*

SECTION TWO

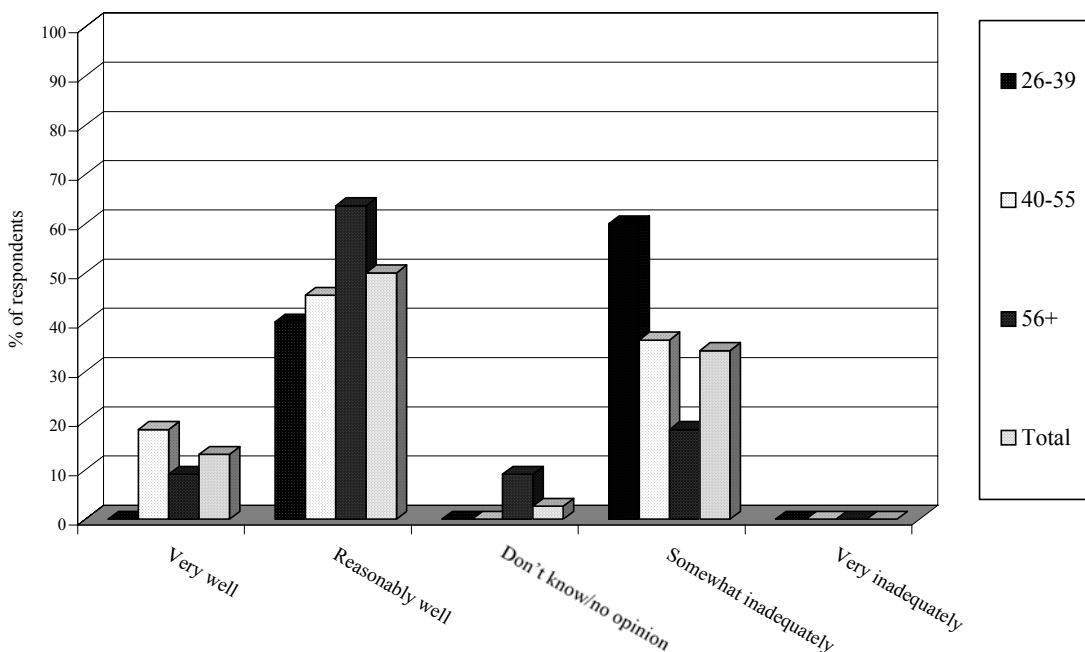
15: WELCOMING/INVOLVING NEW MEMBERS AND BOUNDARIES BETWEEN BELIEVERS AND NON-BELIEVERS

One aspect of dealing positively with difference is the way in which new parishioners are welcomed and invited to participate in parish activities (see Figs. 136, 137). This can also include handling differences between Christian believers and those with no specific faith commitment (see Figs. 138, 139).

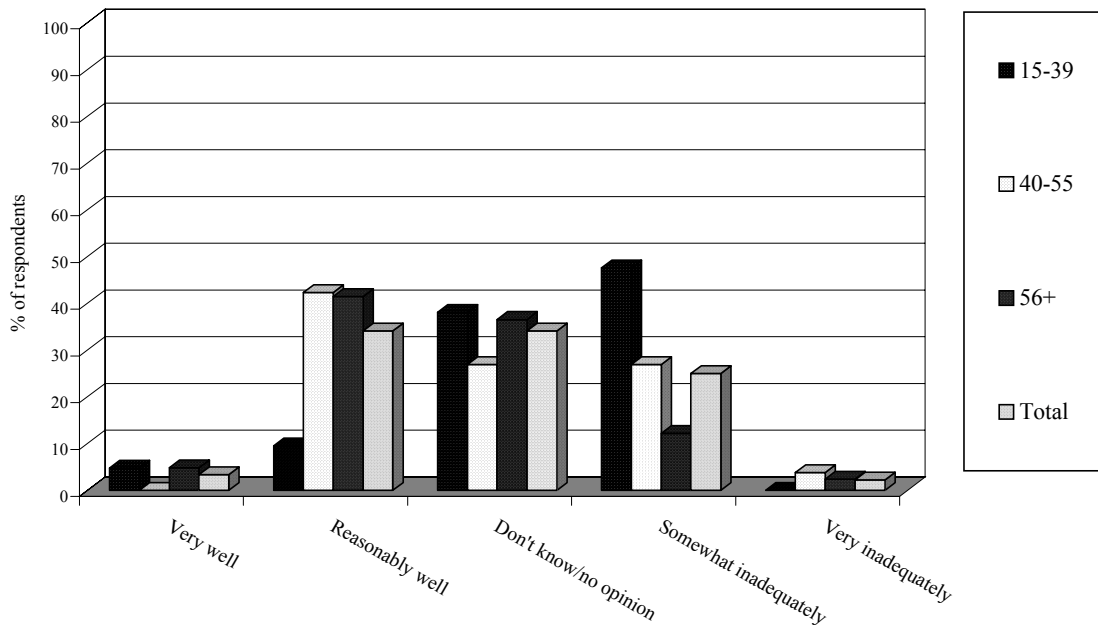
Lay People
Handling differences surrounding long-time/newly arrived members of a parish
Fig. 136



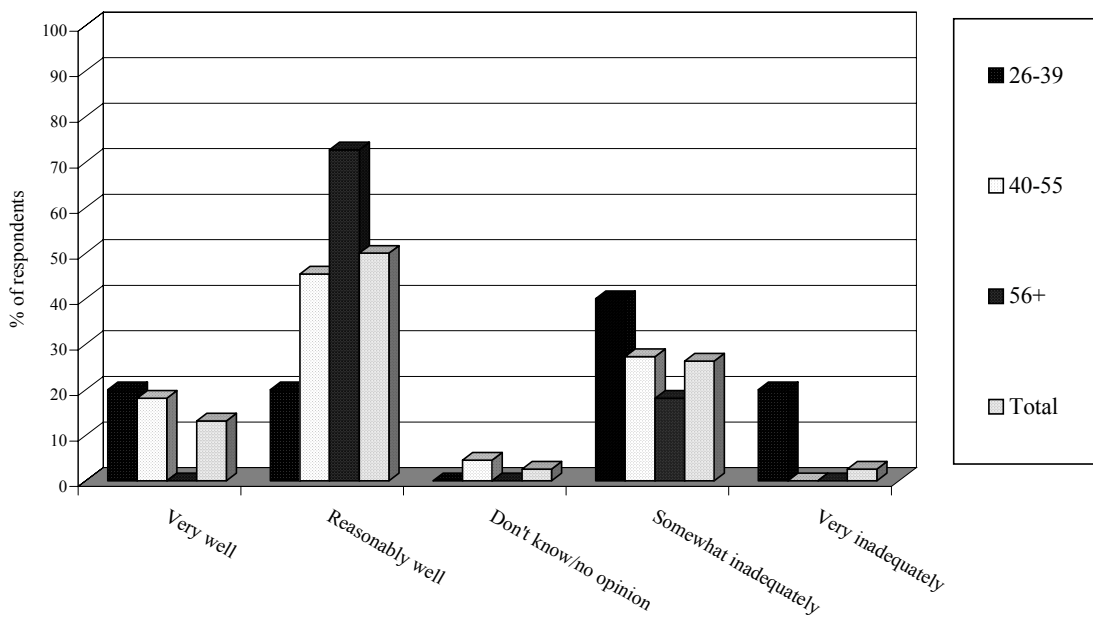
Interviewed Rectors
Handling differences surrounding long-time/newly arrived members of a parish
Fig. 137



Lay People
Handling difference between Christian believers and those of no specific faith commitment
Fig. 138



Interviewed Rectors
Handling difference between Christian believers and those of no specific faith commitment in the wider society
Fig. 139



Unsurprisingly, the manner in which new members are welcomed, or how non-believers may be treated varies between parishes, and statistics are of limited use in this regard, but the following quotations are provided as representations both of the challenges and some good practice in this area.

Respondents were approximately evenly divided over the question of handling difference between Christian believers and those with no specific faith commitment, with around 30% indicating that they thought these were well handled, 30% saying they were inadequately handled, and 30% saying they did not know or had no opinion. This was an unusual question, because some respondents felt that it was not their place to judge the commitment of another. Where respondents had had a positive experience of welcoming someone who had no specific faith commitment, this was usually in the context of parish life (as opposed to 'outreach'), while some respondents felt that evangelism can sometimes 'label' people as 'outside the camp' in an unhelpful way. It is noteworthy that significantly more clergy than lay people felt the church was better at handling these differences. This may be because it often falls to the clergy to respond to the issue, or because some lay respondents may have themselves been in the position of being without a conspicuous or explicit personal faith commitment. In spite of this, respondents generally felt that the Church of Ireland is more welcoming to those with no specific faith commitment than conservative evangelical denominations, which are perceived as dealing somewhat harshly with 'non-believers'. There will likely be a variety of responses to this, as some within the Church of Ireland feel that evangelism must be prioritised, and that it is not a mark of health that people can be long-term members of the church without maintaining a personal faith commitment; while others believe that the process of evangelism may include the possibility of welcoming people whatever their beliefs. Differences between long-term and newly arrived members of a parish were felt to be well handled generally, although some negative examples were given.

New parishioners are welcomed but there is no real follow up. **Lay person, Armagh**

[I try to make] sure that when somebody comes to the church they're not sitting there [alone]...I have my church wardens...go over, sit beside them and...show them where the service is in the book, and they'll help them with it. If people come into the area, if I can't take them into our school, which is running at maximum, I try and pass them onto another smaller school that they can get children into...It can be inadequate, because you do have people who are sitting in the same pews – and I even saw it with my wife, going to a church recently, and I was there as the guest preacher, and she sat on one seat and another woman said, 'Oh no, no, you can't sit there, come over here and sit beside me because so-and-so sits there.' And really I thought the days of buying pews was gone...Some people move into a parish and they were involved in their last and would like to be involved in their new parish, and whilst the help is appreciated, people still look down. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

Certainly I [integrated smoothly]...given the fact that I'm English as well. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

In the different places I've worked, both as a curate and as a rector, I have felt a reluctance generally on the part of long-established members, not so much to see new people coming in, but to see them being given a place of responsibility...I don't think that's just Church of Ireland, I think that's across the board. **Rector, Connor**

There isn't a proper mechanism in place to welcome new members. It's difficult to be anything other than a 'blow in'. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

You can't encroach upon new visitors to the parish and you don't want to get in their way...just take a little at a time and gradually get to know them or get them involved. **Lay person, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

Our rector is very welcoming, but the main area of difficulty is breaking down barriers within the established congregation: The older members seem to think they will be around forever and they won't let new blood take over.' Meanwhile, apathy means that some people just don't want to get involved; armchair critics meaning some people get elected to Vestry repeatedly; but 'the danger of showing interest is that you get elected!' **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

They don't have to have been born in the parish to be accepted?

No. In fact, some of our newest folk have retired from England, and within a year and a half of coming here, I appointed him as my warden...I positively discriminate in favour of the newcomer, and try and get them involved in either church government or clubs, societies or whatever...I think the sad thing about a rural parish can be that the church, after a period of time, can appear to belong to certain families or certain groups. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

There might be within the parish a group set up to welcome new people, which would then invite new people into the existing organisations. That would be helpful...[Although] people who have been there for a long time have their little jobs, and they might feel threatened by somebody else coming in...Which really means that they've never been taught to share, and to say, 'Well maybe my day for doing something has come to an end.' **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

In some of the more staunchly evangelical churches there seems to be a clearer boundary between believers and non-believers. In the Church of Ireland that seems a little more blurred...Thankfully...I believe the Church of Ireland is a welcoming church. The doors are open to anyone of any faith persuasion, colour, creed, you name it. It's an open church. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

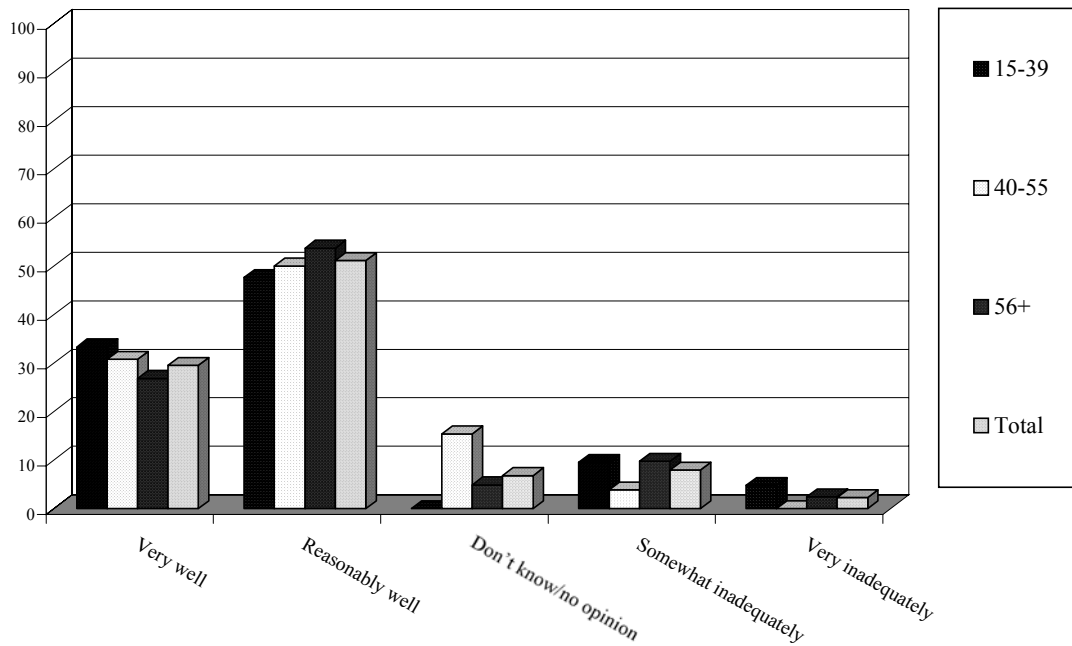
**WELCOMING/INVOLVING NEW MEMBERS AND BOUNDARIES BETWEEN
BELIEVERS AND NON-BELIEVERS**

- *There is a perception that there are 'softer' boundaries in the Church of Ireland between believers and non-believers than in other churches.*
- *There is a challenge to helping people to make a transition from being 'visitors' to being 'family'.*
- *There is a challenge also to help people to make a transition from nominalism to committed faith and practice.*
- *There is sometimes no strategic process in place for existing members to welcome new people. People are often unsure of what will be expected of or offered to new members once they begin integrating into parish life.*
- *Respondents acknowledge the challenge to engage in evangelism, but there is a wide range of views regarding this.*

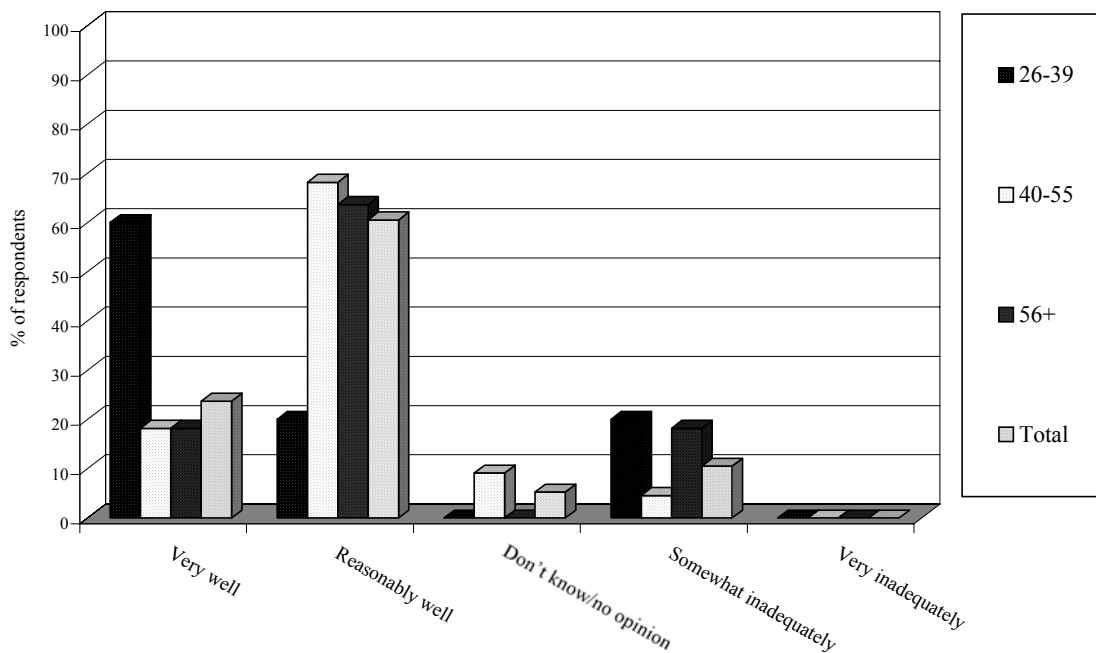
16: GENDER DIFFERENCES AND SEXUALITY

It is difficult to ascertain the extent of negative gender stereotyping in the Church of Ireland, as the Scoping Study relies on respondents' opinions. However, **Figs. 140 and 141** show that the substantial majority of respondents felt that these differences were handled well.

Lay People
Handling Gender differences
Fig. 140



Interviewed Rectors
Handling Gender issues
Fig. 141



Some respondents (a small minority) disagree with the church's teaching on women in ministry, and generally very few people (if any) would wish to admit, or even be aware of their own gender prejudice. Additionally, the Church of Ireland exists in a sociological context wherein the roles of women still reflect traditional 'norms' in relatively conservative terms. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the consensus among respondents was that women should be, and indeed are, increasingly represented on such bodies as Select Vestries. There is still a long path to travel toward full equality, if indeed that is the goal of the church, and perhaps some element of the SEP could address the question of gender in a more systematic way.

Inclusive language is in my opinion irrelevant. **(Male) Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

[One issue is] inadequate toilet provision for women. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

Are women still relied on to make the tea and so on?

Well...they can be. But they take a full role in the parish life, on Vestries and...

Do you think your parish could cope with a woman rector?

I think they would, yes. **Rector, Armagh**

I think there could still be difficulty there...Women tend not to be very highly representative on church [government] be it at national Synod level or at local parish Vestry level. Certainly they're very much involved in the life of the parish as a church, but there's still an imbalance at decision-making levels. Many people would not automatically assume that it would be important that a group would be adequately representative of gender. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

If the ladies wish to make the tea, then we won't stop them. **(Male) Lay person, Armagh**

Out of the four churchwardens, three of them are women. In Vestry – sixty percent women. And that's not because the men aren't around. Some of these people are skilled in their own right and wish to serve the church. **Rector, Connor**

The church has been an equal opportunities employer longer than many secular businesses.

I would say that that's a bit of a fallacy. Because – for example, say there's a parish vacant and I decide that oh yes, God's calling me to this parish, or I feel a strong inclination to make an application to this parish, if the nominators of that parish decide that they don't wish to have a woman about the place, they're allowed to get away with that. **Rector, Connor**

If women aren't represented then it is because women don't propose other women. **Lay person, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

I think [women] are still probably expected to do the mundane things...The thing I think would be that the church caters reasonably well for women. It doesn't cater for men...I mean we don't have any men's groups or societies other than whist and bowls, that kind of thing. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

There has traditionally been a perception within the church that any position of leadership is 'a man's job'. However, this is beginning to change. **Lay person, Down and Dromore**

In general the C of I ducks the whole issue of gender differences. The church has not taken up the issue of women, of [spousal abuse], etc. Ireland has relied on the EU to promote women's rights rather than the churches. **Lay person, Armagh**

Is this a church that handles gender issues well?

Appallingly when I first came; I had a great deal of struggle when I first came.

Is it getting better?

It's actually now, in the last – I would say – and it isn't just since I took over [this parish] – I would say that it's really changed drastically. That there's much more, 'Well this is how it is, we'd better get on with it.' And a very healthy, positive attitude, I find. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Do women feel adequately represented? Just because you have female clergy, has that changed attitudes towards women?

I think they do, provided we don't continue to think of women as being the tea makers and everything else. Certainly in our parish, without them we would have nothing. They are still the mothers of Ireland, who teach and share their faith, and they who come to church. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

I haven't really had any problems. I know that other women might say differently. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

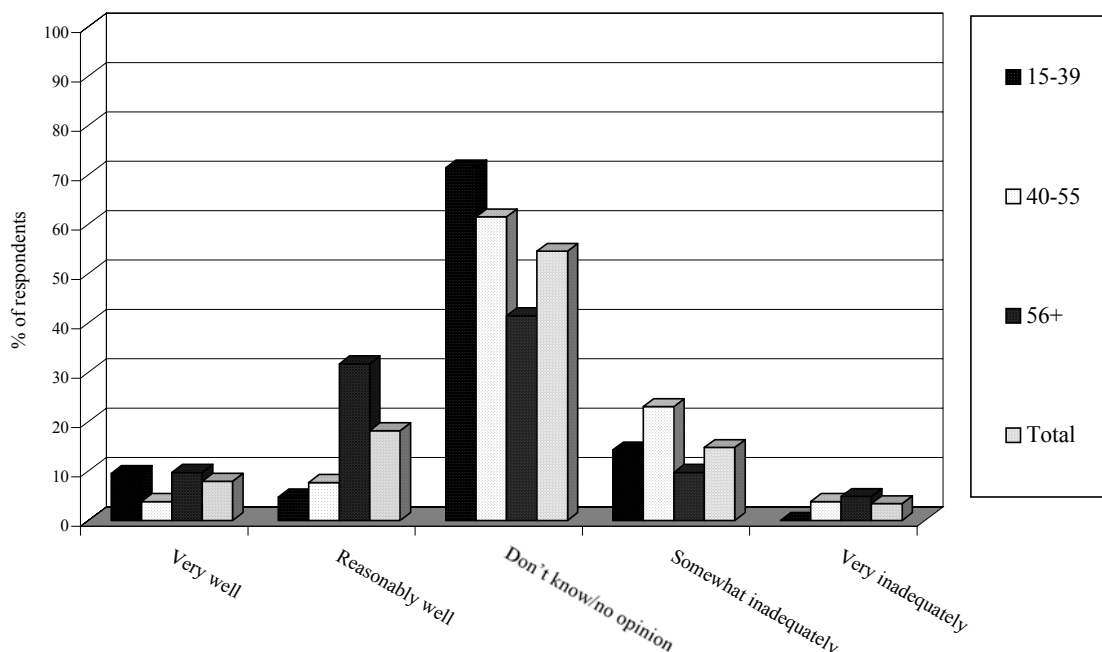
There's very little attempt to engage women, unless those women of course happen to sign up to the theological agenda that the hierarchy have, in which case they're welcomed. But at the institutional, structural level at the top, there still is a problem. They're not engaging where the majority of women in the Church of Ireland are. At parish level there's also a problem, depending on where the parish is. In an area like this here, women do make the tea, make the buns.

Would your parish accept a woman priest?

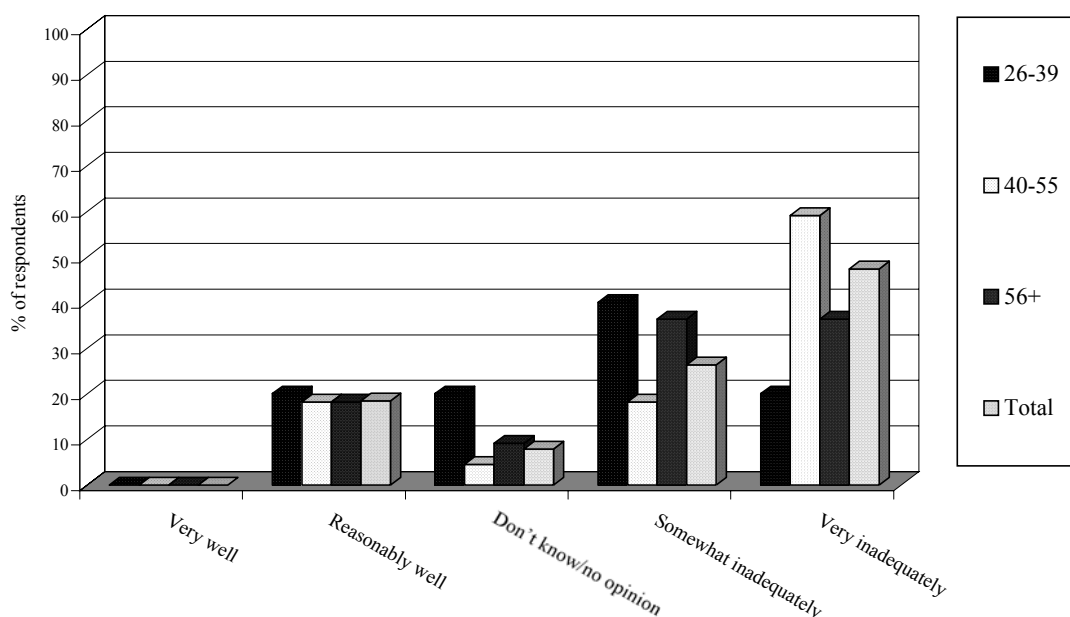
Well they might do, but then they would have to find a new rector, because I'd be going. I'm opposed to the ordination of women. I'm sure that yes, they might accept a woman rector, because they need someone at the front to lead the service. **Rector, Clogher**

The Scoping Study also raised the question of sexuality; this was not only one of the topics that respondents considered to have the most contemporary relevance, but also elicited some of the most comprehensive responses (see **Figs. 142, 143**).

Lay People
Handling differences concerning sexual orientation
Fig. 142



Interviewed Rectors
Handling differences concerning sexual orientation
Fig. 143



The remit of this report is to focus on sectarianism, and so it is important that the issue of sexuality does not obscure the task in hand. It is therefore suggested that the Church in Society committee be informed of the findings of the Scoping Study in relation to sexual ethics and encouraged to pursue this matter further. It is clearly one of the areas where clergy feel most ill equipped to respond to a changing world, and there currently appears to be no forum for formal or strategic discussion of such issues in the Church of Ireland. It is also the case that a substantial minority of clergy may appear to maintain a pastoral position in contrast to the stated doctrines of the Church of Ireland. This should come as no surprise, for the clergy of all denominations have always reserved the right to prioritise pastoral needs over particular interpretations of doctrine. However, the sheer weight of opinion in favour of an open discussion about the range of sexual ethics, from divorce and remarriage, to sexual orientation, to pre- or non-marital cohabitation, underlines the need for a comprehensive response on the part of Standing Committee to this part of the Scoping Study.

It was noted that the Church of Ireland does not handle the question of sexual orientation well, and that there is some confusion surrounding the issue, but that this is not a challenge exclusive to the Christian Church:

In relation to the church's handling of differences concerning sexual orientation, it was noted that the church was too uncomfortable with the issue, but that it was not alone as none of the churches handled the issue well. **Focus Group report, Down and Dromore**

I think it's somewhat inadequate in society as well, because on the one hand we're saying 'Love the sinner, hate the sin,' and yet we're crucifying some of our own members, not only clergy but laity as well. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

Dare I say we're getting rid of the problem? Usually when something happens we are exporting it, either internally into another diocese, or...

And do you think the exportation of the problem is the best way to handle it?

No. Which is why I'm hesitant. I'm saying 'reasonably well' because for the parish it doesn't cause ructions.

Because they don't know about it.

Exactly. And it's away. Therefore they get rid of it. But I think again it's just moving the problem on, and it's not really dealing with the problem.

Do you have any theories about how it might be better to respond?

I've not thought of that, no. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

Do you feel the church handles it well?

No, I feel the church handles it terribly. Very badly. That's one of the worst, actually.

Could you elaborate on that?

I think there is a general – I mean the church is part of society, so the general homophobic attitudes that exist in the North of Ireland, which are very strong, would apply within the church. And people actually assume if you're clergy that you're against gay people. They just assume that, which I'm not. I think people have a right to express their own – whatever their sexual preference is. **Rector, Connor**

Fire and brimstone sermons are very insensitive when parents are present who have a gay child. How would Jesus deal with the problem? **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

And how do you feel the church as a whole approaches this issue?

Absolutely terrified of it. I just don't think – I think really the church just doesn't want to discuss it, and I think one of the difficulties is that the church has never really looked at theology of sexuality at any level, and there would be I think a real fear that opening the debate would be basically uninformed on all sides. **Rector, Connor**

I am confused over this matter, as I know it is referred to in the bible as being wrong, yet I can't believe that if they are born different they are bad. **Lay person, Armagh**

One respondent reflected on what he saw as the ironic inconsistency of the diversity of views, and the sociological influences in this regard.

Once again there would be a diversity. But – we're middle class, and being gay in a middle class context isn't as taboo as being a drunken wife-beater. Whereas in North Belfast it's the other way around. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

As for the question of how to better address the issue, respondents expressed diverse views:

I don't think [policy] needs to change – from my point of view I think the church has to encompass those people and be with them, and do all that. But...I think the church still needs to point to what's right. **Rector, Connor**

How do you think the issue should be dealt with?

Educatively, and slowly, and led up to, and not be a crisis issue. **Rector, Tuam, Killala, and Achonry**

I believe from the Bible that homosexual activity is wrong...And therefore for a practising homosexual to be in ordained ministry is totally out of the question, as far as I'm concerned. I understand that some people are born with an inclination towards people of the same sex, and I think the church has to care for them, and minister to them. Point out to them their behaviour is wrong according to the Bible. I don't think it should be swept under the carpet. I think it has to be handled very sensitively. [But that's not to say] that we should do nothing about it, or quietly hope it'll go away. **Rector, Connor**

One of the Lambeth resolutions in 1998 was that each – well that the bishops would listen to people who were gay telling their experience. Now I have actually been asking myself over the last couple of weeks,

'how do I do that in this society?' In other words, are there people who will come and talk to me? And I find that in our society there is absolute denial of all these issues, and I think sadly there's a denial among many of the clergy as well. **Bishop**

Membership of the church requires heterosexuality since this is in line with biblical teaching. The church should be more forward in speaking out against gay and lesbian communities – as in God's word. **Lay person, Connor**

I cannot see the parishioners of our church opening their arms lovingly to anything other than the norm. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

Sexual orientation is a personal choice: perhaps the church should support people. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

C of I has homosexual priests and no one is speaking out against [a leading gay member of the church]...live and let live, but draw the line at formal recognition of gay relationships through marriage or the adoption of children. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

There are other patterns that are making a big change, and that is what sociologists and other people will call co-habitation...different patterns of betrothal and so on, which were the equivalent of establishing yourself first, and consolidating it afterwards, and I think that the judgemental thing has gone out of it to a great degree because of the way people – the realities as you say of housing and things like that have made people say, 'Well this is different,' and they're looking at the quality of the relationship now much more than in the past. The convention predominated. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

How would the church respond to gay couples?

Well I think – that's a very difficult one, because I mean scripturally I suppose we would say that the Bible would teach that no homosexuals get into heaven. I mean this is it, unless they sort of repent of their sin and change their lifestyle, okay, that's speaking about it biblically. But then on the other hand, as a rector, you would have a pastoral responsibility to these people, and – I'm saying 'these people' as being something that would be odd, or separate – so that's what I suppose one's got to get out of the mind, that their orientation is different but they're human beings at the same time, and they're potentially God's children. I mean they are God's children, and somehow we've got to try and help them to realise that there's a different way of life. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

What would you like to see happen?

A clear statement of biblical teaching that any sexual act outside of heterosexual marriage is sinful, and that the bishops implement a pastoral policy that ensures that their clergy are either faithful within heterosexual marriage or they're celibate. And I think that needs to be done, while at the same time seeking to challenge homophobic behaviour and attitude, and realising too that's probably more impacting the larger urban areas than it does here. I mean I've mentioned it to Vestries here, about the whole issue, and they looked at me blankly as if they hadn't heard the word 'gay' before. **Rector, Clogher**

Do you think that the blessing of same-sex marriages will eventually happen?

I don't think it will happen in my lifetime. I would support it, but I can't see it happening in my lifetime, and I think that if clergy were to say they would support that, they would have to have very definite support from the hierarchy. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Do you think anything needs to be done about it?

Well under the challenge of inclusiveness I think it does, and there needs to be – address the variety of creation. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

Some respondents discussed their sense of being ill equipped to respond to the issue of sexual orientation:

Rector I think it handles it rather anxiously. The church would like to believe that everybody is heterosexual and normal and there are no problem cases anywhere, and I think in many cases the

church tries to ignore aberrations. In other cases, export them, in other cases, sweep them under the carpet and keep it all as quiet as possible, and make sure that no scandal happens...

Curate That is not a non-issue. Sorry, I misunderstood. I can't see – the gender difference is a non-issue. I can't see anybody who's gay coming to ask me for advice.

Because you wouldn't know what to do?

Curate I wouldn't know what to say. I'd try. **Rector and Curate, Armagh (Interviewed together)**

Respondents often said they had no experience of the issue and did not know if the issue had been put to the test in parishes. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

One clergy respondent reflected on what he saw as the challenge to change:

Has the issue of sexual orientation arisen in your experience?

It does arise. I would again see the inclusiveness of God's love, but...I think a lot of people have still got a big barrier there...

[It has been] said that it would be the church's role to stop [people] being gay.

No, I couldn't see that at all. I couldn't see that at all. I think we must simply love them in Christ's name, and openly in Christ's name...

So what do you think is going to happen?

I think there'll be twenty-one years talking about this, from time to time. And again, it's the lack of dealing – the church is as blind as our laity can be blind at times. We do need that leadership...

Would you like to say anything else about difference within the Church of Ireland?

Well I still think that certainly where I live and work, the church is a comfortable club, and anything – whether it's driven by the rector, or by anyone outside, or by any other influence, they don't really want to be disturbed too much. So that means that the status quo will be there. Within the church, I suppose things that worry us would be the fact that so much has changed in forty years. Before that everything could have stayed the same for generations, but now all these things that impinge on us open our eyes, open our ears, and yet the church seems to stand back over there, almost in isolation, and I think that that's very, very difficult. And if we don't open our minds, people in our generation will actually lose what's happening, and the theology will become more and more irrelevant, and the Church's role more and more irrelevant, which is why I think a lot of young people are – and adults – are walking away from the institution of the church. We're not real anymore. And when you get a Dean of Clonmacnoise and he raises questions and he gets thrown out, then we look even less real. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

It is clear that the question of sexual orientation, and sexual ethics in general, are key issues for the future of ministry in the Church of Ireland. Only around 20% of clergy and lay respondents felt that these issues were being handled well by the church, with 45% of clergy saying the response is 'very inadequate'. As post-modernity and pluralism become the guiding norms of wider society, the church's historic response is no longer adequate. This does not necessarily mean that it must re-assess its theology (although a substantial minority of respondents suggested it should), but that its methods and language may require re-interpretation. *The Church of Ireland Gazette* in Summer 2002 reported that the question of homosexuality has not been discussed at General Synod since 1976. This is merely one example of why it is not difficult to imagine why the church lacks credibility in wider society in regard to the issue of sexual ethics.

It is, however, difficult to imagine what kind of process the church may adopt to examine this issue. It seems that the challenges are (at least) four-fold:

- Lack of equipping for clergy to respond adequately to the issue.
- Social norms in opposition to the church's teaching.
- Diversity of views among clergy and lay people about the issue.
- Lack of an adequate structure for an open discussion about the issues.

Several respondents were pessimistic about the possibility of these challenges being met. Most assumed that the issue would be 'swept under the carpet'. It is likely, however, that social processes will lead to the issue continually re-surfacing until the church makes a comprehensive response, through deep theological, sociological, and pastoral reflection, new equipping for clergy, and a continuing open discussion about the range of issues regarding sexual ethics. As previously noted, this may lie outside the remit of the SEP, and therefore the Church in Society committee might be remitted to examine the issue further.

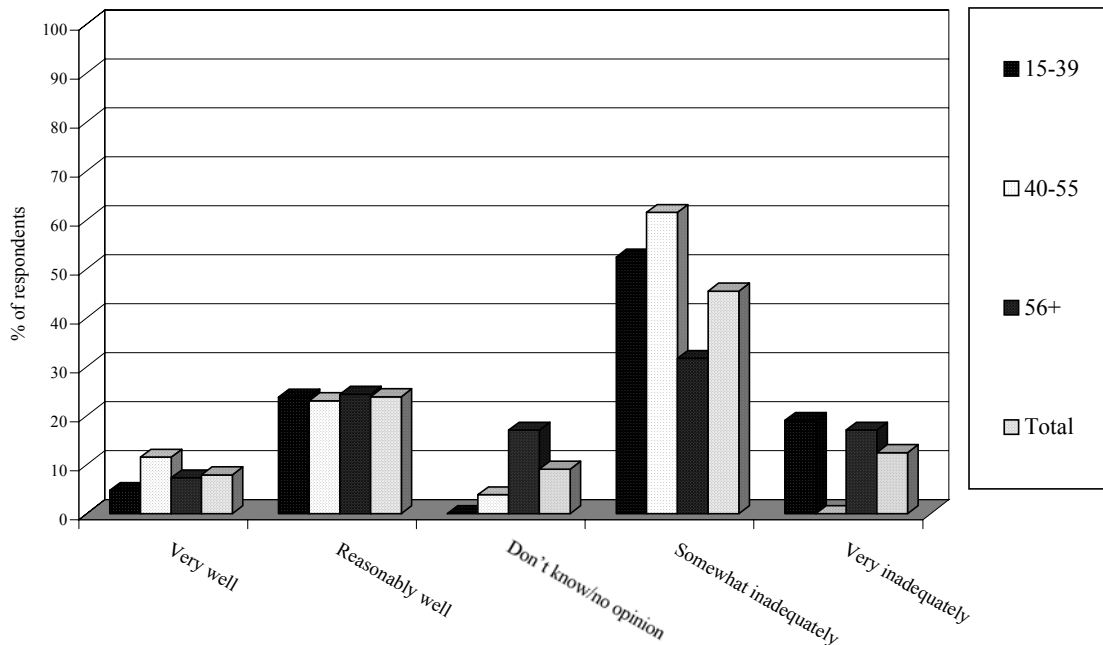
GENDER DIFFERENCES AND SEXUALITY

- *Gender differences are not generally seen as contentious. Some respondents, however, feel that traditional stereotypical gender roles prevail within the church. Some parishes would apparently not accept a female rector.*
- *Some acknowledge that teaching on sexuality tends to be monopolised by older married men, who may not be able to bring the most comprehensive analysis. Engagement by a broader range of people is necessary.*
- *There is a consensus that issues of sexuality (including co-habitation, sex outside marriage, sexual orientation, same-sex partnerships, ordination of gay clergy, etc.) are some of the most difficult to respond to, and usually the most inadequately handled by the church.*
- *There is sometimes a difference between the pastoral practice of clergy and the discipline of the church.*
- *Most respondents agreed that there should be a wider discussion of these issues; such a discussion should not be seen as 'giving way' on historical teachings, but simply addressing the issues as presented in contemporary society.*
- *The SEP may not be able to deal with the issue of sexual ethics; this perhaps lies more within the remit of the Church in Society committee.*

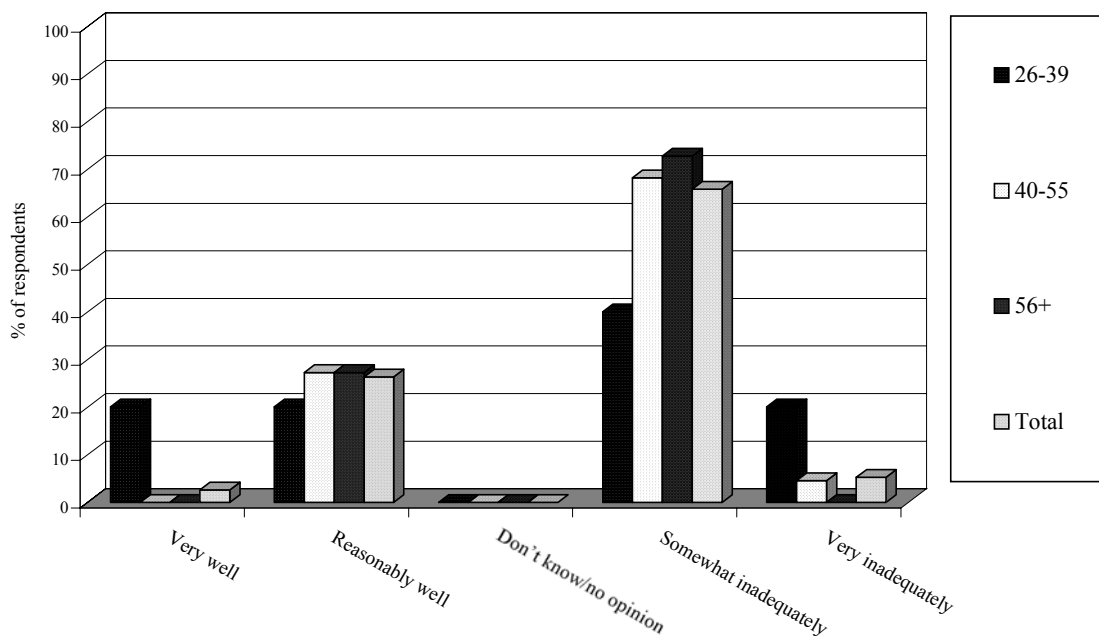
17: YOUNG PEOPLE

As with several other issues, there was significant consensus regarding the issue of ministry to young people (see Figs. 144, 145).

Lay People
Attending to the needs of / utilizing the potential of young people
Fig. 144



Interviewed Rectors
Attending to the needs of / utilizing the potential of young people
Fig. 145



The substantial majority of respondents, both clergy and lay, felt that the church's response to young people was either somewhat or very inadequate. Unsurprisingly, younger respondents were less critical of youth ministry, possibly because those most closely engaged in youth ministry tend to be younger people themselves (although of course this is not an absolute elision). This does not mean that respondents believed that the church was not trying to address this issue. Many respondents felt that the church's youth ministry was hampered by sociological factors such as youth apathy, pressure on young people's time, and the stronger attraction of other choices. However, the fact remains that there are a significant number of young people occupying pews in Church of Ireland parishes who wish to be more fully involved in the ministry of the church. Two focus groups held with young people from both Northern Ireland and the Republic reflected this most strongly.

Confirmation [is like] a 'passing out ceremony'. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

There is a large gulf between old and young parishioners. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

In our parish we have forgotten what young people are! **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

There's always a...difference between the way young people understand things and look at things, and the way older people do. I think sometimes older people misunderstand younger people, and can be a bit harsh or judgemental towards them. Of course young people can become impatient with older people. I think young people can be quite impatient with the way the church is so slow to change.

Is there anything you'd like to suggest to remedy some of the ways difference is dealt with?

Part of the problem is that so many young people have just given up on the church. I think if they were to come in and get involved and begin to express themselves more and participate more and could be listened to. Because older people would say, 'we need younger people, we need to have them in the life of the church,' but they look round and they don't see them. **Rector, Dromore**

There's so much that goes on within the town for young people anyway. I don't think the church could offer anything that could match what's being provided by other groups within the town. But certainly...I don't think their spiritual need is addressed as well as they like. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

There seems to come...a stage at which they feel they outgrow institutional church. I think there's a certain laziness about the approach of some of the young people...that they don't want any sort of discipline, and I think in the Church of Ireland there should be more discipline as well as just benefits. I am not the type that says, 'we must go absolutely gimmicky and have the latest fashion and so on in order to attract.' By the same token I have my concerns and my anxieties about the lack of young people there regularly. **Rector, Armagh**

C of I is currently a two-tier system, which de facto excludes young people from having any authoritative input, or voice until they are 18 when they can be elected to Select Vestry, by which stage it is too late for many of them. **Lay person, Limerick and Killaloe**

We don't have a lot of young people in the churches. They're in the villages but they won't come, and excuses are made that the church is too far out of the village, and the service is too early. We've tried different things to get them to come, but they won't. We've tried youth fellowship; some of them come for a while and then drop out. It's really trying to get younger leaders that will appeal to the younger people, and with being a more senior parish we don't have the younger leaders. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

In short, there are two kinds of young people on whom the church should focus in particular: disenfranchised youth currently untouched by the church's ministry, and young people who are members of the church and wish to participate, but feel alienated or at least not actively engaged by the

culture of the church. For instance, a young respondent from the Republic said she was willing to fully participate in church life, but did not believe she would ever be nominated for the Vestry due to her age (post-secondary school). One respondent from Dublin and Glendalough who has aspirations to ordained ministry explained why she felt unable to invite her friends to church said:

I don't think [my peers] would find out about Christianity in church; I think they'd find out about religion.

And it was claimed that church identity does not mean much to young people:

I think young people more and more sit very lightly to denominations at times. **Youth Worker**

Some young parishioners are clearly thirsty for discipleship; some young respondents criticised what they perceived as a lack of resourcing, and acknowledged other challenges:

Post-confirmation, the only Bible input [we get] is on a Sunday. We need further help to understand it, but sermons don't relate to our everyday experience. Lots of Church of Ireland rectors...are not great at preaching. The teaching needs to be done differently. The clergy live in the church [so are inhibited from being relevant to young people]. We need to liberate the rectors. **Young lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

It is difficult for teenagers to develop friendships with Roman Catholics because they were segregated in schools and society. Even integrated schools aren't split on a 50/50 basis, but rather 70/30...often sermons are not relevant to my generation and there is no youth worship. Young people are not included or given a chance. **Lay person, unknown diocese**

The church structure can be patronising. We don't get anything out of church except when there's a youth service. But we don't want to throw out the liturgy – just to adapt it. **Young lay person, Connor**

Young respondents were surprisingly trenchant in their critique of the training of rectors, saying, for example, that:

Theological training does not prepare people. [It's inadequate on] preaching and teaching and sectarianism. We want more interactive Bible study.

Several respondents praised Youthlink, the annual Summer Madness festival, and other agencies for their ability to engage young people and their needs in a culturally relevant way:

My impression would be that...[Summer Madness is] ahead...in wanting to hear other people's views and to inform young people about how to listen to others, how to...empathise with others without judging, to try and escape from their particular little box...We have a long history of political debates, where we tackle head on...fairly controversial issues...And...though broadly...speakers [are] drawn mostly from the Protestant tradition, we're very happy to have relations [with Catholics] in any shape or form. **John Kee, Summer Madness director**

Youthlink has been a key player in training and resourcing youth work. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Sometimes the church's efforts in directly addressing the issues of sectarianism and difference may cause greater alienation. [Therefore] joint participation by young people from both sides of the sectarian divide in Scouting [for instance] should be given greater encouragement...The boys from my local Scout group...have benefited from interaction with the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland. **Rector, Connor**

However, some 'high profile' events were criticized (by a small minority of respondents) for what was perceived as not engaging young people with substance:

The Church of Ireland youth forums – an awful lot of spin and a lack of substance, to use a contemporary analogy...High profile events, I think their weakness is that they're not grounded where young people are at in terms of the local parish, the local congregation. And also because there is no real understanding within the wider Church of Ireland of just how de-Christianised the popular culture that our young people live in actually is, on a whole range of issues. We've an awful lot to learn...I don't

want to go down the road of a sort of trendy, politically correct, 'Well let's sit down and listen to young people and let them create our agenda for us.' **Rector, Clogher**

Sectarianism was mentioned as an issue facing young people:

[Being educated with Catholics] defined the boundaries for my children, who grew up in the south but when they came north found themselves being defined as outsiders. **Lay person, Down and Dromore**

Sectarianism makes young people look 'big'; but older people do it because they believe in it. **Young lay person, Connor**

The Church of Ireland in the Republic needs to examine the reason for the existence of C of I schools...some travel [a long distance] rather than going to a local school run by the Roman Catholic Church. **Rector, Meath and Kildare**

We need to affirm for young people what Protestantism *can be*, not just *what it once was*. **Youth worker, Down and Dromore**

It is a clichéd truism that young people are the future of the church – but at this point in history, the validity of even that statement is questionable. The post-modern breakdown of absolutes, the increasing pace of life, the insecurity of early adult life in terms of financial security, stable community network, career and purpose, and the exponential growth of a panoply of identity markers and social choices is a challenge that Christian churches have yet to meaningfully engage on a long-term basis. For it is now possible, for the first time in modern history, that mainstream denominations will simply not have young members present; the significant decrease in membership rolls and especially attendance figures in the Church of England and particularly the Methodist Church in England present a potentially depressing picture. But, from a sociological perspective, the church should view the crisis of emptying pews as an opportunity. It is clear that the issue of youth ministry is considered a major priority by clergy and lay people throughout the church. It is also clear that, with some notable exceptions, particularly in the Youth Department itself, there is little articulate sense on a wide scale of what approach might best be taken to address the challenges; and there is a degree of disagreement among some clergy over whether 'cultural relevance' in youth ministry is an appropriate vessel for ministry, or a compromise of values. In many ways, the manner in which the church responds to the issues facing young people will define the success of its approach to all the other issues facing the church; the question here is not so much 'How can the church be more relevant to youth?' but 'How can the church capture the imagination of the culture at large?'

Young people are sometimes criticised for their apathy. This may be a reasonable assertion, but it will not change the fact that the younger generation is more unchurched than ever. The ability of the SEP and the wider Church to consider radical responses is vital. This is a moment in history unparalleled in the lives of anyone reading this document. Post-modernity has wrought, and continues to provoke, the deepest and most epoch-making cultural changes since the industrial revolution. The Church changed enormously during the transition from an agrarian economy to the industrial age; it behoves the stewards of today's Church to respond to the lessons of the past, and prepare for further change.

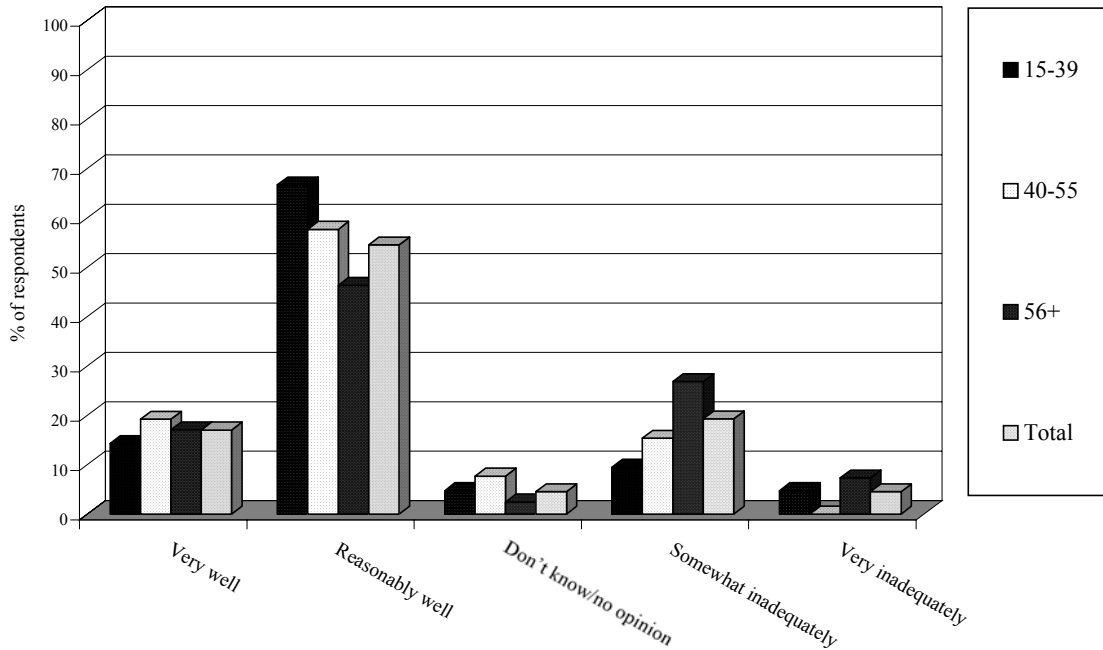
YOUNG PEOPLE

- *Young people often feel that the church is not relevant to them and many leave the church soon after confirmation. Some respondents suggest that the church must consider the potentially unhelpful implications of confirmation practice.*
- *Many have a deep commitment to Christ, and wish to be involved in the life of the church, but feel excluded for a variety of reasons.*
- *There is a lack of youth work provision in some parishes; there may be a need for each parish or appropriate group of parishes to be strategically funded to appoint a full-time youth worker. Alternatively, lay people with time on their hands could be trained and facilitated in relevant volunteer youth ministry.*
- *Young people are often more engaged in peace/addressing sectarianism work than older people due to their experiences at school and through initiatives such as Summer Madness.*
- *Young respondents suggested that a good first step would be to offer opportunities for younger people (and other lay people generally) to participate in organising and leading public worship. Another suggestion was to develop the model of small group ministry already established in some parishes to accommodate all young parishioners, with leadership shared between young people and older adults.*
- *It was suggested that various youth initiatives might find themselves working at cross-purposes, through the duplication of resources, or simply a lack of communication. One short-term response to this could be a website for the sharing of resources, best practice, and better communication.*
- *There is a need to assess the relationship between extra-parochial youth work and parish work, and to ask whether young people can be best served by para-church initiatives.*
- *The example of Summer Madness should be noted by the SEP. It is noteworthy that Summer Madness has not sought to be an explicit 'anti-sectarian initiative', but has organically become one. Sometimes inputs and outputs can be confused with each other – sectarianism does not always require a strategic initiative to oppose it; it can be transcended as a consequence of organic, incarnational Christ-centred ministry*
- *There is a need to examine how the church can creatively approach age differences and avoid the potential for inter-generational conflict or misunderstanding.*
- *It is vital to include young people in the SEP as part of addressing sectarianism and difference for future generations.*

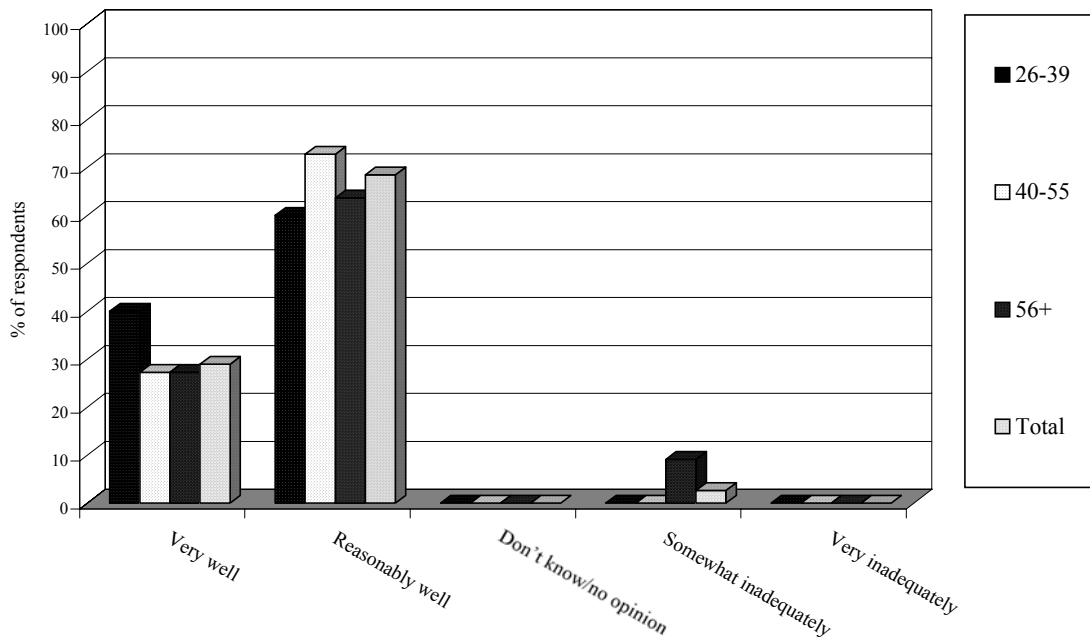
18: OLDER PEOPLE

Another topic that met with significant consensus in the Scoping Study was the question of how the church attends to the needs and utilises the potential of older people (See Figs. 146, 147).

Lay People
Attending to the needs of / utilizing the potential of older people
Fig. 146



Interviewed Rectors
Attending to the needs of / utilizing the potential of older people
Fig. 147



As the age profile of Church of Ireland members appears to be increasing (as with most institutionalised churches), much of the activity of the church centres on old people and their needs. Statistics show that a significant majority of respondents believe the church attends to the needs and utilizes the potential of older people well. As there was little disagreement over this issue, a few quotations will suffice to provide a 'flavour' of the responses.

I would say that the older people are better cared for than the younger, and I use most of mine. **Rector, Glendalough**

Does the church provide services for older people?

Well we do here. Obviously we look after our nursing homes. We have regular Eucharists within those...On the first Friday of every month...I have a central celebration and then I take the communion to them from that central celebration...They realise that by taking part in that particular celebration...they feel part of the Christian community because they know that there were other people from the parish taking part in that. **Rector, Armagh**

I think the needs are well attended to, as in those that are chronically ill and need a lot of care. Utilising the potential of older people – it depends what you define as an older person. People maybe who retire at 55 have lots of potential, and they're not maybe used.

It's not lack of will, it's just strategy.

It's strategy, yes. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

The majority of church organisations are top-heavy with those in the 50+ bracket, but not in a bad way. They have a wealth of experience. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

If we didn't attend to the needs and utilise the potential of older people we would have precious little people on our Vestries or committees or anything. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

70+ I consider old but not inactive! **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

Does anything cross your mind in relation to the potential of older people?

Well it just occurs to me that perhaps we don't adequately deal – or fail to recognise that they have a lot to contribute. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

Older people who are ill should be visited more regularly. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

The church simply has to deal with older people because its members are all old! **Lay person, Armagh**

[We need to guard against being] reactive rather than pro-active. **Lay person, Limerick and Killaloe**

Some felt that the church was better at meeting the needs of older people than considering them as a valuable resource, while others expressed the opposite view:

I think the church utilises the potential of older people when they are able and willing to help. I'm not so sure if it attends to their needs. **Lay person, Armagh**

Often older people can be looked on as a need to be met rather than a resource to be utilised...I wouldn't see them as a need – they're some of the most dependable, have the most time some times. I think we're much stronger in that regard than we are with young people. **Rector, Armagh**

OLDER PEOPLE

- *The topic of older people was the least contentious of any in the Scoping Study.*
- *Older people are one of the most valuable resources of the Church of Ireland; this may be of particular interest to the SEP, which may wish to engage retired people in the delivery of the project as resource persons or intercessors.*
- *There is a distinction between early retired people and the elderly.*
- *There is sometimes conflict between older and younger people, especially over the nature of the church; this is an important issue to face, as the credibility and appeal of the church is eroded among the young.*
- *Respondents generally feel that the needs of older people are well catered for by the church.*
- *There may be a lack of strategy for utilising the potential of older people.*
- *The contribution of older people to prayer should not be underestimated.*

19: RESPONDING TO SOCIETY IN GENERAL

It is evident that one area where the morale of both clergy and lay people is low is that of responding to society in general. The epoch-making social changes wrought in the past 30 years, which sociologists have come to categorise under the triumvirate of labels 'post-modernism, globalisation, and pluralism' are a major challenge to the Christian Church. Most social theorists agree that no moment in history since the Industrial Revolution has included so much change and uncertainty. For many people, these changes are experienced in simple terms, that might be best characterised as follows:

'We know what we used to think, but it doesn't work anymore.'

But things are *not* getting worse. There was no such thing as 'the good old days'. One social paradigm, or world-view, namely 'modernity' has simply been replaced by another. And while it may look like society is spiralling away from 'Christian values', this is most definitely not the case. The modern paradigm certainly included much that churches could take comfort in, from the wide acceptance of conservative moral values (ostensibly basic Christian teaching, but this is debatable), to the more stable home and family, to a less frantic pace of life. But it also included such things as deeply unjust employment conditions, the imposition of religious belief systems on ostensibly democratic populations, and the indignity of the gender division of labour, and lack of appreciation of non-salaried work in the home, almost always done by women. On the other hand, post-modernity (and globalisation/pluralism) has often been criticised by Christians as being the start of a slippery slope for the erosion of the gospel, because it establishes a panoply of truth-claims, rather than 'one big story' for a pluralist people to inhabit. However, it also engenders new opportunities for creativity, tolerance, and mutual understanding, not to mention the human rights discourse that, whatever its failings, has laid the foundations for fairer work practices, the equality of women and men, and protection for the disenfranchised. So, in simple terms, the emergence of post-modernity is not so much the death knell for the Church, but merely raises a different set of problems (and, indeed, solutions) than before. The Church must, therefore, come to grips with the underlying reasons why it may lack credibility in wider society. The Scoping Study sought to engage respondents in a discussion about this, and the results are briefly illustrated as follows:

Anything else you'd like to say about the impact of the church on wider society?

I think it's just a case of being aware of the differences, being aware of what's happening in your area, and trying then to take every opportunity that you have to forge links with people whichever way you can do. Visiting prisons, the hospitals, the elderly...*it's no good sitting at home and waiting for people to come to you any longer.* **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

Would you like to say anything else about difference in wider society and how the church approaches it?

Again I would probably say somewhat inadequately. It's something probably we need to be educated on. Maybe again because we're hiding our heads in the sand. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

I see the term evangelism as – and I suppose that's coming from my Northern background – as 'having a wee mission'. And all that sort of thing. And that's probably why I picked medium. I would see evangelism as being a much wider thing, than – when you said it, that was immediately what I thought, you know. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

There are problems of society which are 'lumbered' on the church. Thus it is seen as a scapegoat. These problems should be dealt with at the societal level rather than the church. **Lay person, Derry and Raphoe**

I've been a member of Diocesan Synod for 18 years. Apart from a discussion with [the last bishop] around the issue of abortion, we don't even talk about such issues. **Lay person, Down and Dromore**

RESPONDING TO SOCIETY IN GENERAL

- *The church must find a strategic way of addressing the question of a changing society.*
- *Such initiatives as the SEP, the Church in Society committee, and the Anglican Commission on Ministry are of potentially enormous value, and should be resourced with the very best expertise available.*
- *There is a need for churches and other agencies to continue to work together to meet the challenges of a changing world.*
- *A strategic partnership between the church and sympathetic academics would be one major step in the right direction; this has already begun with the commissioning of the Scoping Study.*
- *The training/resourcing of the clergy and lay people needs to address the development of post-modernity and globalisation as the two key sociological phenomena of contemporary society.*

20: TRAINING/RESOURCING OF CLERGY

The clergy interviews in particular showed that the training/resourcing of clergy is a hugely significant issue. It is clear that many clergy not only feel themselves to be over-stretched, but also are indeed unable to comprehensively provide the kind of service expected of them by parishioners today. It is quite simply impossible for one person to adequately carry out all the tasks that parish ministry requires or implies. Although a small number of clergy respondents appeared to prefer this situation to a more 'grass roots' approach, they are certainly in the minority. Not only is the question of gifting (square pegs in round holes) brought into focus in this regard, but also issues associated with training and resourcing of clergy, as well as the role of the laity in parish ministry. Some parishes have implemented imaginative structures that make more efficient use of their resources, but there are many whose incumbents feel burdened by expectations (traditional or otherwise) that they are the 'minister' while lay people are merely recipients of the ministry. This report is not the first to raise this issue, but unless the church takes serious cognisance of it, it will not be the last. More urgently, in the context of such high pressure on clergy time, it is unlikely that the SEP will make a significant impact, unless lay people are actively facilitated in taking on the roles required by the project in local parishes. The Church of Ireland is well placed to take the lead in developing a more professional approach to ministry, while guarding against the twin challenges of over-bureaucratisation, and the potential enervation of mission by an ostensibly professional 'sheen'.

There was significant consensus among the respondents that the training and resourcing of clergy requires significant change:

In the next few years in the Church of Ireland, our greatest priority...is training, training, training. [Both] prior to ordination, post-ordination – we no longer live in a static culture. **Bishop**

Our attitudes...are not simply based on religious considerations. Unawareness of the main features of Irish history on the part of so many of our members (and leaders) contributes to our difficulties where perceptions are concerned. **Standing Committee lay member, Dublin and Glendalough**

Do you feel your training prepared you for the realities of parish life?

Yes. But that was – a quick rider on this one – that was because I went to England.

And you did in-service training?

I did in-service training. I was also sent out into different parishes [and it gave me a pretty good grounding.

If issues arise like asylum seekers, like sectarianism, do you feel resourced to be able to deal adequately with that?

Not really.

Would you know who to talk to in the church?

No, I wouldn't. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

My training was good, I got to know the Bible, but they only ever claimed it was an introduction. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Every rector that I have interviewed has agreed on absolutely to the letter...that training is [inadequate].
Oh it's a joke. It is a joke. And it's across the board. It's not just the Anglican Church. It's the Roman Catholic Church as well. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

Without wanting to be rude about the theological college, do you feel that your training equipped you for anything?

Well – slightly agree!...It was more academic, I suppose.

One of the things that is coming through is that clergy feel un-equipped. They feel un-resourced. They weren't trained to deal with sectarianism.

Well you see I was trained some time ago...Even in my day I think there was less practical than what they would have, I would have thought, now. They're out doing time in parishes and things...I have very fond memories of the college, and that, but it was a wee world of its own when I think of it. And things that the wider world does not care two hoots about were major things. **Rector, Armagh**

I find myself reacting [to] anger constantly, and wanting some help...with how...a reformed congregation living in a loyalist community react to that community with grace and mercy.

You are talking about the need for the church to resource its ministers theologically?

Absolutely. That would be great. And psychologically. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Pastoral training needs to engage social scientists, and engage an on-going training infrastructure, looking at such issues as sexuality, conflict, violence, secularisation, evangelical/liberal division, social isolation, young people. **Research and Teaching Psychologist and Lay Member**

Fundamentally, the Church of Ireland needs to communicate the theological basis for reaching out to those who are different. **Rector, Connor**

Ethics is not limited to personal morality...There must be applied/contextual training to equip clergy to face the issues of today. Clergy need to be exposed to the stuff lay people are thinking, saying, trying to articulate about the church. This may require a strategic think tank, to help develop leadership models for the 21st century. **Anonymous academic respondent**

Several respondents mentioned the possible lack of strategy for curacy, for instance:

Your very first job as a curate anywhere is to revive the youth work, because the person before had been allowed to fail. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Clergy stress was also acknowledged:

Some years ago we had a report at General Synod about clergy stress, and I think one of the things that causes a lot of stress is the fact that they're put into situations where they're on their own, and they have to think on their feet and sometimes they make mistakes...I also think that...sometimes...it's very important for you to have someone say, 'You did that job well, or you could have done it better,' or something like that. And there's no formal once a year chat...**Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

Some clergy said that they do feel equipped, but struggle with challenges:

Rector: Not in my own parish, but as Archdeacon I would have had to tidy up some situations I think [were] difficult.

To offer support to the rector, or to try...

Rector: No, to try and find a way through and find a common sense solution to it, rather than taking sides. But that's in my precise role as Archdeacon.

And you feel equipped to do that?

Curate: I can tell you, I have seen that he is. **Rector and Curate, Armagh (Interviewed together)**

As a rector in a staunchly Protestant working class area...a diocesan support system to raise awareness of sectarianism would be appreciated – it can be a temptation in a small parish to ‘let sleeping dogs lie’; it can be difficult to fulfil the twin role of prophet and priest in one’s own community. **Rector, Connor**

Some clergy said that they struggle with the lack of a forum for discussion of difficult issues:

For example last summer here...we were deluged with what I would have called sectarian flags – you know...paramilitary [flags]. And I said to our people that I was writing letters of complaint to the local authorities, encouraged them to do the same. I would have liked to have had an issue like that discussed in a clergy forum, but it wouldn’t be picked up. Another issue, not on the sectarian side, is [in this parish] we have a lot of vagrants – people begging for money, and with alcohol problems. And the way that our clergy group have handled it was to go to complain to the police, why can’t they handle these people and get them sorted.

So that’s what you talk about – needing to listen, and bridge gaps. Do you feel resourced to do that? Did your training equip you to do those kinds of things?

No...because when I came to the parish I was immediately confronted with a delegation from the Orange Order, wanting to know if they could hold their services in our church...I would have liked to have been able...to approach that meeting with something on paper to say, ‘these are our diocesan regulations...’ – you know, the codes that we have to follow about an outside organisation like the Orange Order coming into church to be a part of the service. And I asked the bishop could anything be put on paper, and he said, ‘what a good idea,’ but I never heard anything since. **Rector, Connor**

Suggestions for strategy were made, along with an acknowledgement of the realities of training in a world that is rapidly changing, and the need for standards to be reached in terms of education on sectarianism and other forms of difference

We need to train clergy in...the skills of transitioning congregations...What I need is not people who will inherit parishes, but people who will create them. **Bishop**

Who resources the bishops? [Perhaps] the church should appoint full-time or retained advisors – sociologists and psychologists – working at diocesan and inter-diocesan level. These people could be responsible for identifying the salient issues and suggesting future strategy. We need to not ignore lay ministry and lay professionals. I deeply believe that [the mission of the church] is not being worked out because of the perceived psychological and sociological costs to the parish. **Research and Teaching Psychologist and Lay Member**

Can I put it back to you in another way? I know little about clergy training, although I’ve a brother who’s just retired from being a rector – so I’ve heard a fair bit about it. But I would...say I don’t think I’ve ever met a teacher, or possibly even a doctor or dentist who has said, whenever they have gone out into the reality of GP or classroom that they were prepared for it, and the trouble is that with all of these professions the attitude of the trainers has been to try and raise the academic standard, and get them to degree level, rather than prepare them for the outside. And possibly some kind of a sandwich course might be a useful idea...

Go away for a year?

Well six months anyway, let’s say, out in a parish. The other thing is that unless inside the course the trainee – I hate to keep saying this, but unfortunately in the work that I’ve done and the experiences I have, unless it is examined, unless what they do, say on the sectarianism, or ecumenism, or the history if you don’t want to be controversial about it – on the historical side – if they’re not tested on their knowledge or their experience, and have to do even a piece of coursework on it which is part of their final course, then they’ll not do it. If it’s only an option or it’s only an add-on, or it’s something you can go to if you want to, or you can read about it if you want to – if it’s not tested they’ll not do it... Surely if they’re prepared to suggest the standard must be reached in Hebrew or whatever – I know as I said it’s a crude way of putting it, but it must be acceptable in some way. There must be some way that you can set out a course with objectives, aims and objectives, and say, ‘these are the things we think we must cover, and at the end of it you must prove that you have covered those.’ Even though we may not agree with them...but at least you’ve been led through these and you’ve an understanding of what these things

are. If that's not in place, then you can't argue and say, 'Well why did they come out without knowledge?' **Lay person, Belfast**

You can't force anyone to do in-service training. It's always going to be costly. Bishops need to be prepared to pay a higher cost. **Bishop**

What we need most...are biblical resources and a biblical perspective on issues like forgiveness, inclusion, and reconciliation. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Is it the case that, as someone said to me the other day, 'My training would have equipped me if my role was to translate Greek into English, but two days after I arrived as a curate, the rector was on holiday and I had to do a funeral, and hadn't a clue what to do'?

It depends on the person who is ordained. I went through my training...seventeen years ago. And certainly it was a strong emphasis on the academic side, and very little on parish life, and I suppose I had a good inkling of what was in store because I had grown up in a rectory. But I really felt that some people were thrown out and put in at the deep end – that they really had no idea. And I think since then things may have improved...but one criticism I really would level is that the staff in our theological college have little or no background in the Church of Ireland...They're theologians...We do want more training. This is something that's coming up again and again. We do want more, and we want the opportunities to have more. In all aspects. I mean I'm thrown into prison ministry without ever having darkened the door of a prison, and without anybody saying, 'Would you like to go on a course?' So you're feeling your way all the time. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Do you think your training equipped you for the realities of parish life?

Absolutely not. **Rector, Connor**

TRAINING/RESOURCING OF CLERGY

- *The Church of Ireland struggles with the tension between what might be called the 'professional' and the 'prophetic'. Some alternatively suggest that it is all too easy for churches to fall into an unprofessional, slapdash approach that ill-serves mission.*
- *There is a consensus that the training/resourcing of clergy requires significant adaptation to meet the changing needs and expectations of ministry in contemporary society.*
- *Training/resourcing in issues pertaining to sectarianism, difference, and Christian peacemaking has usually been ad hoc rather than strategic, and not considered a compulsory part of training.*
- *There is a question of credibility and authority regarding the delivery of training/resourcing: who provides it, how is it ratified, what relationship is there between 'trainers' and 'practitioners'? A good first step in addressing these issues would be to clearly define how the clergy 'job description' has changed over time.*
- *The question of more extensive lay involvement in parish ministry may need to be prioritised at all levels of the church, perhaps especially at Diocesan Council.*
- *Some feel that curacy is not strategically resourced as part of training, with curates seen as 'junior rectors' rather than continuing their ministry training. The clergy training process may lack adequate opportunities for 'hands-on' experience in parishes before new curates are released into full-time ministry. It should also be noted that ordinands are not currently strategically exposed to the realities of parish life in Northern Ireland and the Republic, nor offered some form of training by clergy with experience of parish ministry in the North.*
- *Clergy want in-service training to be frequent, strategic, well thought-out, and offered in a manner that facilitates minimum inconvenience on the part of clergy participants.*
- *Experts in the fields pertinent to this Scoping Study (such as ISE, Corrymeela, and ECONI) are a valuable resource that may be contracted to provide at least some of the regular in-service training required. Partners in Transformation could be involved due to the on-going facilitation work done by its representatives with the SEP. A list of resources provided to the SEP in June 2002 should also prove useful in determining resources to use.*
- *Some clergy also feel that a mechanism (possibly internet-based) should be created whereby they may input their perceived needs for assistance and in-service training anonymously. A website resource could also be created for the purpose of sharing information between clergy on such things as models of good practice in contemporary ministry issues, helpful resources, etc.*
- *Stress amongst clergy continues to be a major issue; and some feel that bishops lack a clear strategy for resourcing/equipping and caring for clergy.*
- *The General Synod may need to urgently examine clergy roles with a view to changing patterns of life (and therefore ministry) in the 21st century.*

21: ISSUES OUTSIDE THE IMMEDIATE OR SOLE REMIT OF THE SECTARIANISM EDUCATION PROJECT

A comprehensive study of this nature is bound to raise issues outside its immediate remit. The main issues outside the immediate remit of the Scoping Study are listed below for information, and it is suggested that the relevant bodies within the church should note these:

- Class and economic difference
- Disability; legislative procedures are not adequate to address the issue
- Economic, time, and state pressure on young working families
- Timing church services to suit rural needs
- Integrated education
- Secularisation
- Personal discipleship
- Materialism
- Evangelism
- Prayer – both education in prayer and facilitation of opportunity to pray together (this may be viewed as an issue both within the remit of the SEP, and too broad to be dealt with by the SEP alone)
- Relationships between geographically close Church of Ireland parishes
- Perceived lack of confidence among Church of Ireland people – in their own faith identity as part of a 'bridge' church
- Falling numbers and closing churches
- The perception that the focus of Select Vestries is unduly given to finances and 'bureaucracy' rather than spiritual leadership

CONCLUSION

Professor John Brewer, one of the leading analysts of the conflicts in Northern Ireland and South Africa, and a proponent of reconciliation initiatives, has theorised that sectarianism and other forms of difference exist at three levels – the social structure, the level of ideas, and the level of individual behaviour (see **Anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland 1600-1998, by Brewer with Higgins, 1998, Macmillan Press**). They must therefore be challenged at each of these three levels. The Church of Ireland is well placed to work imaginatively at the level of the social structure through its public role, in education and the media, and where church representation is afforded on public bodies; and parish ministry is, if nothing else, concerned with the ideas and individual experience of parishioners. The church can challenge existing unhelpful norms and encourage the development of fresh thinking and behaviour through holistic Christ-centred ministry. In this regard, the Church of Ireland is facing a similar challenge to most churches in the Western world of the early 21st century. Christendom has crumbled, and post-modern values are becoming entrenched as the social norm. Ignoring or complaining about this will not undermine the fact of its existence as the context in which the church is called to minister. Christ incarnated many roles – of which the peacemaker, the healer, the social critic, the proposer of wide-reaching welcome, the non-violent bringer of justice, and the culturally relevant missionary are only a few. But these must be among the priorities of ministry for the church in a post-modern world. So, in simple terms, this study encourages the following general steps:

- The Church of Ireland may need to help its clergy and parishioners *understand* themselves, and the changing world in which they live.
- The Church of Ireland may need to address and educate its members in the *whole gospel*. Neither pietism nor solely political gospels provide the whole answer to the human condition. Clergy need to be resourced to preach more than pietism; and the strategic priorities of the church should reflect practical action in the keystone areas of sectarianism and other forms of difference.
- The Church of Ireland may need to recognise the core implications of this study for the whole church. The issues of sectarianism and difference will not be resolved by a committee or an education project alone. The Church of Ireland may need to re-evaluate the role of the clergy in contemporary society, and be prepared to consider a much greater role for lay people in ministry.
- The Church of Ireland may need to be prepared to take risks, and perhaps 'lose' in the short term if it is to incarnate such a radical gospel. Members may leave. Property may be lost.

People may be misunderstood. But that was Jesus' lot also. Success in Jesus' view appeared to be less to do with increasing numbers and fortunes and more connected with the substance of redeeming and healing the world. If the church is not willing to lead by example in this area, then it has probably ceded its authority to a business model rather than the ministry of the suffering servant. And there is much in this report that should affirm and encourage the steps the SEP and the church are continuing to take in this direction.

It is appropriate that the last word be reserved for a member of the Church of Ireland:

I know people in all faith and honesty are doing their best...I would go back many years...but it took so long for us to walk over and shake the other person's hand, and in the same way that's where we're struggling through times when we should be twenty steps on rather than where we are at the moment. And again, to be making peace, but peace on our terms, or peace with our flock in mind isn't necessarily peace, and it mightn't even be the right starting point. Making peace looks at the rightness of the situation, not trying to support our own church or our own group. And if we have to make hard decisions and we lose what we call support because of them, well that's fine. That's my view, anyway. So maybe...this [is] the first step in that. -

Anonymous respondent

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