

APPENDIX I

FACT-FINDING GROUP: FUNDING OF ORDINANDS

INTRODUCTION

A resolution of Connor Diocesan Council in April 2001 concerning funding for ordinands, and in particular the inadequacy of maintenance grants during training, was received by the Standing Committee and passed to the Theological College Council for comment. Following discussion at the June 2001 meeting, the Council suggested setting up a Fact-Finding Group 'to investigate the issue thoroughly and to engage the wider Church on how to progress the issue'.

The following are the members of the group and their respective reporting bodies, appointed etc. by November 2001.

Church of Ireland House	Mr Denis Reardon
Grants Committee	Rev Sydney Laing
Ordinand/Student Body	Mr Timothy Irvine
Representative Church Body	Very Rev David Chillingworth
Standing Committee	Mr Wilfred Baker
Theological College	Rev Professor Adrian Empey
Theological College Council	Ms Clare McCutcheon (Convenor)

Papers were prepared by each of the representatives and circulated by the convenor. Each paper set out the actual responsibility with regard to funding as seen by each committee etc. and then discussed the wider issue of overall funding and provision of training.

A meeting was held in Church House on 8th May 2002 when a wide-ranging and very honest and open discussion on all aspects of funding took place. Dean Chillingworth was unavailable as he was on a parish visit in America; Timothy Irvine was on exam study leave and his place was taken by Ruth Murray, incoming student representative.

The tenor of the discussions is presented here by the convenor on behalf of the group. Recommendations for further action are attached in order 'to engage the wider Church on how to progress the issue'.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The authorisation of training for the ordained ministry is the responsibility of the House of Bishops. While it is clear that selection of an individual for training does not imply a commitment to ordain at the end of the training process, nevertheless the Church of Ireland obviously has a responsibility for those who are selected and who commit themselves to the training process. A Church that regards itself as being strong in its tradition of pastoral care will want to act, and be seen to act, justly and to be caring towards its ordinands and their families. Traditionally, ministry has been seen to consist

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of ordained ministry only, although more recent thinking has developed the concept of ministry as consisting of the whole people of the church, both lay and ordained.

RESIDENTIAL TRAINING MODULE

Currently, residential training in a single location is a central value in the training of the stipendiary ministry. The Theological College at Braemor Park is excellently administered with very careful budgeting and care for; the overall welfare and comfort of the students. At present, 31 students are in training over the three year course, 7 in first year, 14 in second year and 10 in third year.

The profile of those presenting for ordination has changed radically in the last 10 years with resulting challenges for the provision of residential training. Students are no longer drawn solely from the young, single, male group and are now of all ages, single and married, male and female.

The quality and commitment of those selected for training is very high but because of the change in profile, the sacrifices now required of many of these students is also very high. In some cases, the sacrifice may be too high, impeding that person's spiritual and pastoral development.

While it may be fairly said that many other people make sacrifices to train for a profession, the nature of the training for the ordained ministry is quite different. Pastoral skills, academic learning and liturgical practice are developed but all within a deepening personal spiritual commitment.

In particular, parents separated from their children over 29 weeks each year for a three year period may lead to unacceptable stress on both the couple and their children alike.

The location at Braemor Park is somewhat isolated with poor access to the city centre by public transport. The costs of running the Theological College, in spite of careful management, will obviously rise each year whether the college premises is full to capacity or with few students. It is, however, a valuable piece of property which, if realised, could free up considerable capital for the more flexible use of funding of ordinands in the longer-term.

FUNDING OF STUDENTS

While it is for the Church of Ireland as a whole to decide the basis of its funding of Theological Training and the support of its Ordinands, in reality, the actual cost is borne, almost entirely, by the Representative Church Body. The historic financial resources of the Church of Ireland are not limitless and the financial costs of training need to be measured against other needs and priorities.

In the introduction to the 2002 General Synod Reports (p.10) the *Mission and Responsibility* of the Representative Body are again laid out as follows:

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‘The Representative Body, as a representative trustee for the Church, strives to operate within a framework of sound practice based on principles of integrity and accountability. The historic and primary mission of the Representative Church Body is to serve and support the Church's ministry with full legal accountability for its governance of property and financial assets’.

This framework of sound practice based on principles of integrity and accountability is what has permeated the work of the Fact-Finding Group in its discussion.

ANNUAL FUNDING PATH

The annual sequence of events in the funding path is as follows:

Funding requests are submitted by the Grants Committee (fees and grants) and the Management Committee of the College Council (Braemor Park) to the Allocations Committee. These are discussed and recommended to the Representative Body and appear in the report to General Synod. This funding covers salaries, fees, accommodation and personal grants. In addition, some extra funds are available by way of bequests and bursaries at the discretion of the Grants Committee Secretary; further funds may be given in individual cases by a student's own home parish and finally, the student's own means, either from personal savings or through out of term work.

CURRENT FUNDING PROVISIONS

Currently, all fees are paid for each student and accommodation is provided at Braemor Park for the academic year (average 29 weeks). A personal grant of €66.00 per week for single students and €182.00 for married students (based on the 29 week academic year) is paid directly to the students. Means testing was generally deemed to be inappropriate and this has not been practiced for several years. Certain bursaries and bequests are also distributed on a discretionary basis so few students are on the basic grant only. Those married students who wish to live out with the Principal's permission, are allocated a living out allowance. Students with dependent children are also given an allowance for each child.

While the current students have requested an increase in the personal grant, further grants in terms of mortgage support, computers, travel, books, vacation, children and healthcare have also been suggested.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FACT-FINDING GROUP: FUNDING OF ORDINANDS

1. The Grants Committee should urgently request the Allocations Committee to give an increase in the personal grant.

Reason: to alleviate perceived and actual hardship in the immediate short term.

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2. The Academic Committee of the Theological College Council, in full partnership with the Principal and staff, should urgently explore the possibilities of some non-residential components of the training of ordinands.

Reason: to introduce more flexible patterns of training that allow both residential and non-residential modules.

3. The Theological College Council should open discussions with the Church of Ireland College of Education through its Patron and Management Committee to explore the possibilities of joint use of the Rathmines facilities.

Reason: to maximise the benefit of existing facilities at a more central location; to encourage the development of a broader community base for those in training for the wider ministry of both lay and ordained.

4. The Representative Church Body should examine the value of the property at Braemor Park with a view to either maximising or realising its financial potential.

Reason: such examination may lead to further commercial use of the building outside term-time c. 20 weeks per annum to subsidise the running of the College in its present form; or may lead to realising the monetary value of the property and investing in a mixture of accommodation at another site such as the College of Education. Such mixture may need to include the provision of some family housing, if deemed appropriate within the context of the development of flexible or distance learning.

Clare McCutcheon
Convenor
5th July 2002