

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

REPORT 2003

1. MEMBERSHIP

House of Bishops

Most Rev RL Clarke, Bishop of Meath (Chairman)
Rt Rev MHG Mayes, Bishop of Limerick
Rt Rev KR Good, Bishop of Derry and Raphoe

Standing Committee

Mr J Richardson

General Synod – clerical

Rev Canon GL Hastings
Rev Canon CG Hyland
Very Rev SR White

Pensions Board

Lady Sheil

General Synod – lay

Ms R Handy
Mr DG Hannon
Mr RF Palmer

Representative Church Body

Ven DS McLean
Mrs CH Thomson

Principal of the Theological College

Rev Canon CA Empey

Honorary Secretaries

Very Rev H Cassidy

Co-opted

Rev OMR Donohoe
Mrs A Forrest
Rev C Lindsay

Co-ordinator of Auxiliary Ministry Training

Rev Canon KA Kearon

The Rt Rev AET Harper ceased to represent the General Synod as a clerical member on his episcopal consecration. The Rt Rev RCA Henderson and Mr DG Perrin retired from the Commission on Ministry in June 2002. The Commission is very grateful for their considerable contribution to the work of the Commission. Bishop Harper and Mr Perrin have been members of the Commission since its inception in 1996.

The Commission welcomed the Rev Canon GL Hastings, the Rev Canon CG Hyland, the Very Rev SR White, Ms R Handy, Mr DG Hannon and Mr J Richardson as new members following elections in June 2002.

2. SUMMARY

The most significant matters dealt with by the Commission on Ministry during the past year have been:

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- Preparations for the Summit on Ministry held in September 2002;
- Continuation of the Summit process and preparations for a follow-up meeting in March 2003;
- A combined meeting of the two Provincial Mediation Panels and arrangements for training;
- A review of women in the ordained ministry a decade after the Synod approved the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Commission on Ministry was established by the General Synod in 1996. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Commission makes recommendations concerning the Christian Ministry, both lay and ordained. This includes the deployment of stipendiary and non-stipendiary clergy appropriate to the requirements of the Church of Ireland in the future. Matters relating to ministry may be referred to the Commission by the House of Bishops, the Standing Committee and the Representative Church Body.

4. GENERAL

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

- (a) Perceived needs and expectations of ministry;
- (b) Deployment of clergy;
- (c) Women in the ordained ministry.

However, during the past year, the business of the Commission has almost entirely been concerned with the Summit on Ministry, which involved all members of the Commission.

5. THE SUMMIT ON MINISTRY

The decision to organise a Summit on Ministry followed the parish visitations reported in 1999, which were instrumental in shaping the topics addressed by the Summit.

The Summit, which was residential, was held over a period of three days during September 2002 in All Hallows College, Drumcondra, Dublin. Approximately one hundred participants attended the Summit, which included a number of the bishops, together with five representatives from each diocese, invited speakers and guest participants from other Churches.

The Commission is very grateful to the Arrangements Committee, chaired by Mr David Meredith who was appointed Summit Co-ordinator, to the Rev Canon John Mann who acted as Chaplain and to Dr Tony Carver who arranged the music. The

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other members of the Committee were the Rev I Gallagher, the Rev C Lindsay, Mr RF Palmer and Mrs CH Thomson.

The purpose of the Summit process, as set out in the Mission Statement, is to enable participants to:

- Reflect on current patterns of ministry in the Church of Ireland;
- Consider a range of theological and cultural perspectives in relation to the nature of ministry and the environment in which it takes place in 21st Century Ireland;
- Formulate proposals for new initiatives in lay and ordained ministry.

The participants representing each diocese were asked to submit a paper on the *Nature and Purpose of Ministry* which was circulated to all participants in advance as preparatory material for the Summit. In addition, papers were prepared on training and preparation for ministry, the nature of belonging and collaborative styles of ministry.

Dr Sean Barrett of the Department of Economics in Trinity College, Dublin, addressed the Summit on *The reality of ministry now and what the Church and Community will look like in 2020* and Pastor Paul Reid responded.

Structures and styles and patterns of ministry for the future was addressed by the Rev Canon Robin Greenwood who is Provincial Ministry Officer in the Church in Wales and the Rev Canon Gary Hastings responded.

The Rt Rev KH Clarke, Bishop of Kilmore, addressed the topic *The place of “popular culture” and “populist” styles in parish worship* and the Rev Canon Maureen Ryan responded.

The international and ecumenical context for ministry in the Church of Ireland was addressed by Father Paul Symonds and the Rev Olive Donohoe responded.

Following the keynote addresses, group sessions were held in which the participants worked on tasks set by the Co-ordinator to produce models or projects for exercising ministry. Further group sessions were held to identify what supports would be necessary to deliver the projects and how the support could be provided. The Summit ended with a plenary session.

Participants at the Summit completed an evaluation sheet and a follow-up questionnaire in which they were asked to state which three issues should be taken forward by the Commission on Ministry. The following issues were identified:

1. Training for clergy and laity;
2. Recognise the gifts and talents of laity;
3. Strategic planning for the future.

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The Commission decided to arrange a follow-up meeting for the diocesan representatives and Commission members to be held on 22 March 2003 in Dublin. Papers on the issues raised in the questionnaire, together with papers on practical projects and existing models of ministry were sent to the participants as resource material for the meeting on 22 March. These papers are included as Appendices A, B, C and D.

The Commission agreed a timetable for the follow-up meeting in which it is hoped to encourage both lateral and linear thinking. The timetable includes consideration of existing models of parochial ministry under the headings Operational, Funding, Spiritual and Community, together with descriptions of other models such as CORE in Dublin. The meeting will end with consideration of how initiatives and changes in ministry can be implemented and managed within the present legal and constitutional framework.

The Commission would emphasise that the Summit on Ministry and the follow-up meeting in March 2003 are part of an on-going process to review ministry in the Church of Ireland. A further follow-up meeting is planned for next year.

6. PROVINCIAL MEDIATION PANELS

The General Synod of 2001 passed the Bill to provide for the establishment of Provincial Mediation Panels from 1 June 2002 and to make further provision concerning mediation in conflict resolution and related matters. The report last year sets out the terms of the Statute.

A combined meeting of the two Provincial Mediation Panels was held to brief the members on how the Panels will operate in practice and notes and reference documents were subsequently circulated to the members. Each Panel appointed a Chairman and a Secretary.

It is a requirement that Panel members attend a training course in conflict resolution and to facilitate members, two-day courses in both Belfast and Dublin were organised by the Irish School of Ecumenics.

As the Provincial Mediation Panels were established by a Statute of the General Synod, the Commission on Ministry has no further role in this matter. The Panels are now formally in existence and each is accountable to the Archbishop of the relevant Province and the Chief Officer and Secretary of the Representative Body.

The Statute provides for regulations to be made by the Representative Church Body concerning severance terms and all other related matters. Regulations have now been agreed by the RCB, subject to a Statute being passed by the General Synod to provide for a levy on dioceses to establish a severance fund.

7. WOMEN IN THE ORDAINED MINISTRY

As it is more than a decade since the General Synod approved the ordination of women as priests and bishops, the Commission carried out a review of women in the ordained ministry.

Early in 2002, a questionnaire was issued to Bishops as well as women priests and deacons. The Working Group submitted a report on the practical issues pertaining to women in the ordained ministry, which is included as Appendix E.

8. COMMITTEE NEWS

At the request of Mrs Janet Maxwell, Head of Synod Services and Communications, the Commission considered a resolution adopted by the Standing Committee in September 2002 urging all committees and boards of the General Synod to post a brief note about their ongoing work on the Church of Ireland website. The intention is to keep the Church at large informed on the work of the various committees by including this information in a new section of the website called Committee News.

The Commission decided that news releases should be prepared by the Secretary and cleared with the Chairman for forwarding to the Head of Synod Services and Communications.

Appendix A

RECOGNISING THE GIFTS AND TALENTS OF LAITY AND CLERGY

Basic to all the discussion at the Summit on Ministry was the understanding that laity and clergy must work together. Collaborative ministry was assumed. One group wanted it said that ‘laity are equal in the sight of God.’

- The necessary gifts and talents already exist in the local Church. We need to identify those gifts and we need to give people the confidence to use their gifts in the service of the Church and community. People need help in deepening an understanding of who they are and we have to maximise the potential that is already there.
- People need to feel that they are valued and that they are part of something that really matters. They need to be equipped and empowered so that they can, with confidence, share their experience of faith with others.
- It will be necessary to match gifts with ministry opportunities and within any community we need a balance of gifts.
- Ministry must be collaborative with laity and clergy working side by side. In many cases the clergy will be the leaders, but this may not necessarily be so. Nowadays people in the pew are often better educated than the cleric in the pulpit! The role of the leader is to build up a vision and identify gifts in people. Leadership should help people realise their gifts and their potential.
- We must be a responsive Church reaching out to the local communities. We have to connect, to build relationships and to listen to people where they are. We need to get alongside people and meet them on their journey. We need to share our experiences of life and faith.
- Clergy should be trained to discern people's gifts and talents. Laity and clergy need to be trained to listen and to discover real felt needs. Then, under God, those needs should be met. Our approach must be ‘need-related’. Following this, we must engage in theological and Biblical reflection.
- To identify gifts and talents people may need to meet in cell groups in order to share in a comfortable and non-threatening atmosphere. A course which has been successful in helping people discover their gifts and talents is the ‘Network Course’. This course helps participants discover their particular gifts and it encourages people to recognise whether they are task oriented or people oriented.

Appendix B

MINISTERIAL TRAINING

METHODOLOGY

No methodology in particular, other than to try to be clear about things to avoid, the things we must try to achieve, and some analysis of how far the summit has taken us along that road. I do not intend to wheel out German or South American theologians with difficult names every time the going gets tough. I am simply speaking as someone with parochial experience, who would like to know what ministries exactly are to be proposed so that I can get on with the job of providing appropriate forms of training for those ministries.

WHAT WE SHOULD NOT DO

I agree with Robin Greenwood that we should be clear in our minds why we are seeking change, or at least be honest about the real reasons for seeking change. If we don't acknowledge them and name them, more frustration lies ahead. I attended a lecture recently where the lecturer, in speaking about networks of higher education, admitted disarmingly that the higher the principle invoked in academic circles for resisting change, the lower it was likely to be. Let's try to avoid guff at all costs.

Greenwood identifies some obvious reasons for seeking change:

- Shortage of clergy;
- Financial constraints;
- Sudden revelations about the nature of the ministry of all baptised Christians, or the missionary imperatives at the heart of ministry.

While none of these can be dismissed as insignificant, they form an inadequate basis for a holistic approach to ministry.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE CONSIDERED

1. Within the total priesthood of the people of God, to discern the ministry of the laity in such a way that it supports the whole mission of the church without being simply a support ministry for the ordained. We must avoid clericalising the laity, thereby inhibiting the possibilities that are open to them precisely because they are not clergy. Ideally every member of the parish ought to be involved, failing which we must ensure that at least the possibility of service is open and available to all members. The bottom line is to identify these specific ministries, because until we do so we cannot prescribe the kinds of training that will be needed.
2. To identify the specific role of the clergy within the total ministry, and how they are to be trained to support the ministry and mission of all.

TRAINING FOR LAY MINISTRY

1. Training for leadership roles was a clear winner by several lengths in the reports of the group sessions. Like motherhood, everyone was agreed that it was a good thing, which meant that it was more frequently invoked as a principle rather than as a working model. One report was more than usually specific, mentioning en passant training for parochial secretaries, treasurers, lesson/prayer readers, house group leaders, welcoming people, youth leaders, Sunday school teachers, Safeguarding Trust, training to train, leadership for parenting groups and church-planting. Other reports wisely stressed the necessity of bringing everyone along, encouraging, communicating, preparing. The necessity of strategic planning was also stressed, to avoid ‘ad hocery’.
2. **Other considerations:** There needs to be a more clearly thought-through strategy about how training and empowering of lay members can be used in the service of bridging the growing gap between the regular church-going community, on the one hand, and the occasional churchgoer, the non-churchgoer, and the sort of people who use the church occasionally (strictly consumerist approach). If the local church is to be the springboard for this kind of initiative, for basic mission, we need to think as much about this kind of training as we do about training for building up existing congregations. A good example of the sort of coherent strategic thinking is provided by the recent report of the Dublin-Glendalough Forum Report.
3. **Resources:** training at diocesan level and the Church of Ireland Theological College were commonly mentioned in the session reports.

TRAINING OF CLERGY

1. ‘The main contribution that the clergy can make to ministry is to envision, to lead, to inspire, to train, to mobilise, to teach, to delegate...[to] seek to...mobilise a whole team of people who know what their gifts are and who collaboratively use them creatively in the church and in the world’ (Bishop of Derry and Raphoe).

While most of these qualities are more commonly to be found in admirals and generals than in ordinary mess officers, we may be demanding a huge amount of ordinary clergy, but at least we have to try. One of the session reports did point out that not all clergy were instinctively leaders, but that other members of the parochial team could supply such leadership - Just a word of caution here - Not all clergy have the capacity to be Rottweilers for the Lord, though they may have other charisms that should be valued no less. The recent Church of England report on training for ordination lays a great deal of stress on developing leadership instincts in ordinands. It also stresses the necessity of providing them with a good third level training to achieve this, so we should recognise that more rather than less investment needs to be made in the training of clergy. Above all must come the recognition, noted well by Wednesday Group 4, that education must involve continuous in-service training, collaborative training, and sabbatical leave.

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2. My own observation is that as an immediate course of action we must take very seriously the structures of post-ordination training.

Adrian Empey

Appendix C

PRACTICAL PLANNING IN THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

Two groups at the Summit on Ministry were asked to identify the role of planning in making the ministry of the church effective. The following are the main points which emerged from the groups.

- a) Both groups endorsed the idea and usefulness of planning within the Church of Ireland.
- b) Planning is about achieving vision, about being pro-active rather than reactive, and about facing up to the reality of the situation – biting the bullet when necessary. It is about thinking through how best to resource the ‘gathered church’ and deciding where God wants us to go in developing faith. The process is as important as the result.
- c) The basic unit of planning should be the diocese with the data etc. provided by the parishes and the final result agreed at provincial or all Ireland level. While each parish needs to do its own planning for the future there needs to be a wider view which comes from looking at the scene at diocesan level and is prepared to question the conventional notion of a ‘parish’ and parish boundaries.
- d) Steps to planning might be:
 - Communicate the idea to all
 - At diocesan level identify people (clergy and lay) with gifts in relation to planning who might form a think tank
 - Train them in planning techniques, gathering information, facilitation skills, implementation of change, etc.
 - Prepare the parishes (see below)
 - Gather the information from parishes
 - Gather information from outside e.g. best practice elsewhere
 - Prepare the plans, remembering to start from where people are at that moment, and prioritise the actions required
 - Communicate to all throughout the process
 - Get agreement from all involved
 - Implement
 - Monitor and evaluate

POSSIBLE OBSTACLES TO PLANNING

- Current church structures
- Current patterns of behaviour e.g. Bishops and clergy chairing meetings, etc
- Finance

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- Sacred cows
- Begrudgery (of others' ideas)
- Competition between parishes
- Constitution
- Them and us attitude between parishes and church authorities
- Perceived loss of autonomy by parishes.

At parochial level prepare parishioners for the idea of change by:

- Acquainting parishioners (not just the Vestry) with the facts (ruthless, honest chronological analysis)
- Encouraging them to see the bigger picture
- Encouraging the formation of a think tank within the parish
- Encouraging a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis
- Helping the parish to identify possible transitional states and provide supports
- Encouraging the exploration of meaning of collaborative ministry.

All of the above must be rooted in spirituality as the reason for change.

QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

- What method(s) would you suggest to ensure the maintenance of a constant communication flow within the parishes and to the diocese and the wider church?
- What obstacles/difficulties do you think might be experienced in your own parish in relation to planning?
- How might these difficulties be surmounted?
- In practical terms what would collaborative ministry mean in your own parish?

Appendix D

AN EXPERIENCE OF LOCAL MINISTRY

One of the more frequent comments voiced with regard to the recent Summit on Ministry was that there was insufficient input (and discussion) on practicalities, in particular on alternative practical structures for ministry today. That is a reasonable point, although it should perhaps be said that this lack was not entirely unintentional, in that those who designed the programme were concerned that the Summit would first approach the theology - and even the ideology - of ministry rather than the structures. New structures are what *follow* from a re-visioning of ministry and, for many people in the Church of Ireland, that re-visioning is still to be found. There is an acute danger that we will place the conspicuous mechanics of the cart before the necessary propulsion from the horse. In other words, we must however ensure that the temptation of the quick-fix does not distract us from an attempt to discern, and to discern together, the will of Jesus Christ for *his ministry* in this part of his Church.

That having been said - and this short paper is not intended as a defence of the processes of the Summit - there is of course a equal and opposite danger. This is the possibility that we allow our discerning of the will of God to be such a leisurely occupation that, by the time we have concluded our discernment, there will be nothing left to require attention. Certainly at the first of the follow-up meetings to the Summit (to be held next March), we will begin seriously to consider how the structures ministry in the Church of Ireland may be re-aligned to make it a better conduit for the delivery of Christ's ministry.

In the meantime, however, where might our thoughts on innovative structures for ministry begin?

At a recent meeting of bishops of the 'celtic' Anglican churches in these islands, I found myself listening to Bishop Douglas Cameron (Bishop of Argyll and the Isles in the Scottish Episcopal Church) with considerable interest, particularly in the aftermath of our Summit in September. *Argyll and the Isles* covers some of the Scottish mainland, but also of dozens of islands, many of them with tiny Anglican communities. These islands are not easily accessible for either the bishop or the stipendiary clergy at the best of times (and they are totally inaccessible if the weather is poor). Necessity - and not merely financial necessity - led this numerically small diocese to put into effect what is called **Local Team Ministry** for some of the smaller communities.

The most important aspect of local ministry is that it is far more than simply ordaining a local person as a priest, so that Communion services may continue. Local ministry comes from out of the heart of the community, and it is entirely communal from start to finish. It is never vested in one person. A group of people train together. After some time, one may be designated as the particular person most appropriate for the ordained element within ministry. But the others remain part of a ministry team, perhaps as pastoral visitors, or as administrators, as teachers or as preachers. The ministry team remains a team and, although one of their numbers will be an ordained priest, there is no

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higher *status* attached to this ministry than to the ministry of the others. The entire team is given recognition and an authorization from the wider Church. The existing rector of the parish continues to have the care and guidance of the local ministry team and remains as rector, visiting when possible, and giving support, encouragement and also providing the crucial link with the wider church. Bishop Cameron would admit that such a system certainly does not solve every problem, but he would enthusiastically maintain that it has worked for great good in that scattered diocese. He would say also that dire necessity may often be an opportunity for God's grace to work.

This, I suggest, immediately raises two important issues for us in the Church of Ireland.

The first is whether we really have to wait, until change is forced upon us. Might we not do things better if we did 'new things' because we believed they were God's will and fundamentally right, rather than because we have no choice?

Secondly, do we not have to accept that whatever new structures we may envisage, the main characteristic will be the variety of those structures? We will not find a template for every situation throughout the Church of Ireland. The structure which works for Argyll and the Isles might indeed work in parts of Ireland but not in every part. The ministerial structures which might develop ministry in an inner-city parish in Belfast are not those which will enhance ministry in a Dublin suburban parish. Nor would those structures which might make ministry more effective in a mid-Ulster country town fit the requirements of a small rural parish in Connemara.

As we begin therefore to think about renewal of structures, are there common principles we might usefully consider? I would submit a few for discussion:

- Ministry should, in every setting, be explicitly a shared enterprise. No longer is ministry the ministry of the ordained priest, but rather a Christian ministry in which the priest has a part to play. This means that Argyll and the Isles has a point for all of us. We should in every setting - populous or scattered, rural, urban or suburban - move away from the image of *the individual's ministry* as the focus, and in particular the individual stipendiary priest's ministry as the basis of ministry. Ministry should never be other than a *collaborative enterprise*. It is Jesus Christ's ministry into which we each humbly take our place. But accepting this in the heart as well as in the head will require a total change in mind-set from every one of us, not only from laity but from the clergy also.
- Ministry, even team ministry, should never be regarded as only those bits of ministry that are done in churchy uniform in a church building. The ministry of administration, of music, of teaching, of care, are all given recognition and equal dignity in the Bible. Why not we give it equal recognition in our Church, and with being patronising or self-consciously politically correct in the process?
- Experience on both side of the Irish Sea would suggest that real collaborative ministry will have one of two possible fulcrums. The first approximates to that of

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the Argyll and the Isles experience where, in a remote Christian community, the local community becomes *more* self-sufficient in its use of ministry resources. The second is the mirror image of this, where in populated communities, living in proximity to other communities, the sharing of resources, gifts, and talents in ministry between the different communities means that each community/parish becomes *less* of an individual fiefdom.

- The existing inherited structures are there only to provide the delivery of Christian ministry. If changed circumstances require change in those structures, then change there must be. Some of these changes may be affected by authorised experimentation (and do not imagine that it is necessarily the bishops who will be most timid about this). Other changes may require changes in the constitutional structures of the Church. In that case, those who wish for change must prepare themselves to do battle. But let us also try to ensure that whatever legislative changes are envisaged are not so detailed that we imprison future generations in the way that we have been incarcerated in the embrace of ecclesiastical legalism.
- In the Church of Ireland we desperately need **data, statistics and facts** - hard, nasty unpalatable facts - about the reality of the situation. We need to know the real facts of church attendance, age-profile of worshippers and involved parishioners, levels of financial contribution, the lot. One of the ways in which change is made to happen in any setting is when people are forced to acknowledge the discomfiting data, and are thus brought face to face with reality. But this data will only produce depression and despondency if it is not accompanied by a genuine *theology of hope*, the knowledge that whether we in our time and place succeed or fail, God will not fail, and that what is required of his Church in any place is its faithfulness and not its “success”.
- Finally, the need for training for new structures is paramount. Are the bishops, clergy and laity of the Church of Ireland even remotely ready for a rigorous, demanding and soul-searching re-training which would in effect be the **re-programming** of all that they have ever known hitherto; perhaps it will even be a re-formatting.

We must indeed now explore the possibilities and practicalities of the *structures* for ministry. But we must also focus again on what ministry is actually for, bereft of all its cultural associations, and this may not be as simple or as peaceful a matter as we imagine.

Most Rev Richard Clarke
Bishop of Meath and Kildare
November 2002

Appendix E

WOMEN IN THE ORDAINED MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION

The year 2000 was the tenth anniversary of the decision of General Synod to admit women to the office of priest in the Church of Ireland, and various events were organised to mark the occasion.

At that time a request was made to the Commission on Ministry to explore the church's experience of women in priesthood during those ten years and also the experience of the women themselves, and to make recommendations if appropriate. A sub-committee was set up under the chairmanship of the Rev Olive Donohoe, which decided to conduct a Questionnaire Survey of three groups – women in the ordained ministry, bishops and archdeacons, the latter two groups to look at issues of deployment of women in the ordained ministry.

The following is a summary of the responses from those surveys.

RESPONDENTS

Of the thirty-seven respondents, nineteen are in the full time stipendiary ministry and eighteen are in the auxiliary ministry, thirty-five being priests while the remaining two are deacons. Twenty-seven are married, (all but one of the auxiliary priests), sixteen of them to husbands who are working full-time, of whom six are in the full time stipendiary ministry and two are in the auxiliary ministry. Six of the women have children under twenty-one. Fifteen of the women in the auxiliary ministry progressed from being deacons to being assistant priests while three moved from curacies to being priests in charge. The careers following ordination of the nineteen people in the full time stipendiary ministry are shown below. Ten of them are now rectors and five served two curacies, which is possibly more than a similar group of male priests.

No.	1 st Position	2 nd Position	3rd Position
3	Curate		
1	Deacon	Curate	
1	Curate	Curate	
2	Curate	Curate	Chaplain
2	Curate	Curate	Rector
1	Chaplain	Rector	
1	Curate	Associate priest	Rector
1	Curate	Team vicar	
1	Curate	Team Rector	Rector
1	Curate	Priest in charge	Rector
1	Auxiliary	Curate	Rector
4	Curate	Rector	

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Their careers prior to joining the ministry are interesting in that many of them were involved in the caring professions.

The career and work experience prior to ordination show that 54% were involved in the caring professions of nursing, teaching (at all levels). Over 80% were involved in voluntary work – the Samaritans, the Acorn Trust, Adult Literacy, working with the homeless, riding for the disabled, and in Church activities – Select Vestry, Diocesan Council, Lay Readers, etc. Responses show that 16% worked in the home and 21% were in Business/Administration, while two of the respondents were/are Artists.

RESULTS

The influences on their careers to date were mainly a sense of a developing vocation, an interest in a particular type of work such as youth work, diocesan vacancies and needs and family circumstances. Looking to the future the factors which the women feel will influence their ministry are more closely related to their family and personal circumstances, 38% mentioning such factors as “family and work commitments”, “the need to remain close to my mother”, “my husband’s ministry”, “the distance from my husband’s work”. Fourteen per cent mentioned a need for challenge and finding “the scope to exercise my talents” while a further 14% believed it was their own skills and hard work that would shape the future and a similar percent relied on God’s plans and will.

One of the objectives of the survey was to establish the extent of freedom felt in deciding whether to join the full time or auxiliary ministry. Respondents were asked whether they were in their present ministry out of choice or necessity and the results suggest the majority feel they the type of ministry selected was their own preference. Sixty-five per cent indicated that it was their own choice citing factors such as “I enjoy the freedom of being an auxiliary – it liberates you from the snare of ambition”, “I want to support my husband in his ministry as well as exercising my own”. However 14% do feel that they are working in their area of ministry by necessity due to family responsibilities and lack of mobility because of husbands occupations. Some people (11%) interpreted the question as relating to choice of location and found the absence of choice as an auxiliary frustrating.

Having to live in a rectory might be seen as a deterrent to would-be rectors but this would not seem to be the case. Fifty-one per cent did not see it as a significant factor in the exercise of their ministry and felt that it was “essential to live within the parish” or “I take it for granted. It would be nice to live in my own home but I accept the importance of living in a rectory”. Many (27%) in the auxiliary ministry felt the question did not apply to them as they are living in their own houses so of those who felt it applicable 70% do not regard it as significant. Not surprisingly, there are some people in the auxiliary ministry who think differently and feel it may have been a factor in their choice of ministry (5 people), while another individual said it “makes it impossible for us both to be rectors”.

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Possibly the question that was answered with the greatest enthusiasm related to the most satisfying and rewarding aspect of their present ministry. In view of many respondents' previous work experience it is probably not surprising that 43% found pastoral work and exercising ministry to people at different stages of their lives the most rewarding experience. Comments such as "I love the pastoral side of ministry" "pastoral ministry, particularly among women", "being with people in their church and their homes" and "the privilege of sharing in other people's lives" were frequent as were statements like "everything about being a pastor and a priest".

The second most frequently mentioned satisfaction was that of dealing with young people and children. Twenty seven per cent mentioned "the opportunity to work with young children", "the interaction, debate and discussion with pupils", and "teaching the Bible to young people and children". A further 24% enjoy the nature of the job itself, "the flexibility and informality and the possibility of exploring different forms of working" and the challenge as "it uses everything that I am and stretches me further". Five people wrote about the pleasure of the healing ministry and others described the satisfaction of living out a vocation or "joyful worship" and the inter-church aspects. One person said she experienced little satisfaction as she felt she had been "side-lined".

There was less agreement on the factors which caused most dissatisfaction but the two categories which were mentioned most frequently (19% in each case) were to do with the lack of support and commitment from parishioners such as "being used by people with no commitment to the parish for funerals, weddings, etc", "expectations that clergy do everything", "small numbers and lack of enthusiasm in vacant parishes", "nasty parishioners who group up against one" and problems with the lack of time. Here the comments probably reflected a little more the difficulty of role overload as people wrote about "not having a clergy wife to run the house", "over-work at expense of husband" and "as an auxiliary not having time to visit".

The administration work attached to being a priest causes problems for five people and this includes vestry meetings in addition to paperwork. A further five people spoke of the lack of support they felt from colleagues possibly because of distance and the lack "of collegial support and sharing in a country parish". Two auxiliaries specifically mentioned "not being treated as a colleague by other clergy". Other factors mentioned by a few people were resistance to any form of change and the issues of dealing with buildings in disrepair. Individuals spoke about "being treated as a wife rather than an ordained minister" and two people included the lack of clarity about the role of auxiliary and their limits - "being in charge but not really able to use one's initiative".

Remarkably few of the women believed that gender had any role to play in their ministry, only four people agreeing that it had been an issue with comments such as "I believe a few people have a deep aversion to my being a woman – not so much as a priest but as an authority figure" and "in one of the churches I was informed they would have accepted the changes better had I been a man". Sixty-four per cent believed it was not an issue; a further 11% believed it to be helpful to be female and 8% found it helpful in some situations but difficult in others such as dealings with the Vestry. A couple of people

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again mentioned the difficulty of balancing their roles as mother or wife with being in the ministry but felt it was not gender that was the issue.

A further question asked whether the Church discriminated between men and women and again the majority felt that it did not. Forty-nine per cent said it definitely did not, a further 14% said that they had not experienced it themselves but felt it might exist because “female clergy do longer curacies and more second curacies than men” and “I have heard other women complain”. Four people mentioned issues to do with marital status as being more of a problem e.g. “ordained women are acceptable as curates but the threat of maternity leave is a real one for parishes” or “single clergy sometimes get unfair treatment at Boards of Nomination”. However, five people or 14% felt that there was discrimination based on gender. “Though not a problem with parishioners it can be problem with clergy” and “I was unhappy with discrimination prior to current position” were two comments passed.

People or things who have presented difficulties for the respondents fell into four main categories. The largest one, 19%, contained comments relating to lack of belief in the individual or her vocation, e.g. “everyone who has not believed in my vocation,” “the initial refusal to consider that I might pursue ordination to the full-time ministry”, “some parishioners not believing in me”. Three people mentioned anti-woman feeling such as “one fellow cleric who seems to feel that women are less capable as clergy” while three women wrote about the loneliness and isolation - “not having a colleague to share parish things with”. Others would have experienced personal difficulties such as worries about parents, family pressures and a “lack of belief in myself”. In addition there were a number of isolated comments such as “financial worries while a student”, being a priest in an unchristian society” and “stipendiaries who feel under threat from auxiliaries”. Happily five people said that they have experienced no difficulties and a further five made no reply.

On a positive note everyone responded to the question about what and who has helped most in her ministry. Husbands and close family were endorsed most frequently (35%) closely followed by colleagues such as those in the same year or neighbouring clergy or retired clergy and “local RC priests”. Rectors, past and present were mentioned by eleven people and bishops by ten people. Parishioners and friends were noted as well as “lots of prayer”. In a couple of cases individual clergy were named as being particularly helpful. One person felt that her conviction that ordination was the right course for her was what mattered as “I really have to say that nobody has helped me”.

ENABLING MINISTRY

One of the major objectives of the survey was to find out if the structures of the church facilitate or hamper women in the ordained ministry and there were as many factors identified as enabling/hampering ministry as there were respondents. However, the factors which had a resonance with issues already mentioned and which were also mentioned in the separate survey responses from the Bishops and Archdeacons fall broadly into three categories.

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The first of these were to do with the balancing of ministry and family responsibilities, especially for mothers with small children and two clergy member families, where more flexibility in Church structures is considered an issue. Other factors include, for example, part-time ministry options, a five-day working week, and more support at parish level with balancing ministry and family responsibilities.

The second category was an awareness of the need to avoid the trap of ‘labelling’ and over-emphasising the gender issue, with ‘women’s’ groups and ‘girl power’.

The third category was the concern about the ministry itself. It was very clear that one major issue is the stipendiary/auxiliary issue as opposed to the man/woman issue.

Then factors such as more help with Parish administration; more definition of role; more on-going training and more team ministry; proper understanding and balancing of parish expectations and of rectors’ expectations; and the need to be aware that the traditional geographical parish system is going to give way under the strain of too many amalgamations and the grouping of too many Church buildings into Unions and Groups of Parishes.

ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS

There was a 100% response rate to the survey from the Bishops and Archbishops and the responses show a marked uniformity. The response to the questions as to whether there has been any reluctance by the parishes to have women priests as Rectors or Curates varied only from ‘no’ to noting that some parishes may have expressed reservations at the start but that things have changed in that regard.

When asked whether there has been any reluctance from Clergy to having women Curates, the answers were a little more mixed with 50% of the respondents saying ‘no’ and the remainder stating that there are still some clergy who would not have a woman Curate.

Over 40% of the respondents considered gender of having no role to play in the deployment of ordained women, the remainder stated that gender could place a restraint in relation to married women in the stipendiary and on ordained women where the spouse was tied to a particular geographical location for work, e.g. farming.

The issue of balancing ministry on the one hand and family commitments on the other had broad consensus that good management is necessary to achieve that balance. In an interesting response it was felt that the flexibility and extra supports necessary to facilitate women in the ordained ministry were the same as those required to support men in the ordained ministry. Child care facilities and maternity leave were mentioned but only as in relating to the needs of both parents, not just women.

Overall the need for extra supports was perceived as a ministry rather than a gender matter.

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There was broad agreement that change takes time and that there was no recognisable or overt discrimination against women in the ordained ministry. The respondents considered that in general, the structures of the Church changed slowly, but that they were not oppressive. However, all agreed that women in the ordained ministry with young children and/or ageing parents in need of care do need extra support and facilitation at every level from parish to diocese. Some respondents felt that there are some women in the auxiliary ministry who would prefer to be stipendiary but family circumstances simply do not allow it, and also that it is a family decision as to what is the balance of ministry and personal matters. It was also noted that the same issues of balance exist in the secular world for married couples, both with careers and families.

ARCHDEACONS

Again there was an interesting uniformity of opinions within this group of respondents, which echoed the issues and concerns raised in the other two groups of respondents, Bishops, and Women in the Ordained Ministry. It is considered that there is no overt or identifiable discrimination against women based on gender from the Parishes, although again, certain hesitancy was noted when women were first ordained twelve years ago. There is, although in a very few situations, still a reluctance by clergy to take women as Curates, the overall and majority situation is that Parishes and clergy are changing and there is so little reluctance to have women that it is not significant, statistically or otherwise.

With regard to the flexibility and extra supports needed for women in the ordained ministry, there was general consensus that parenthood rather than motherhood was the main issue in the need for extra supports. And again it was felt to be a 'role' rather than a gender issue concerning accommodating women in the ordained ministry and the balancing of ministry and family responsibilities.

When responding to the question about enabling ministry, the response was uniform, there was an overall feeling that the structures affect fathers in the same way and so we need to look at structures. It was generally felt that mothers with young children did need extra facilitation, but that parents in general did too. It was also noted that where there were two clergy member families in particular, decisions concerning the balance of ministry and family responsibilities must be made within the family and the Church and the Parish to offer support.

There was a general consensus that there is no identifiable discrimination against women in the ordained ministry. The main issues which presented are perceived to be issues of role rather than gender, definition of role, expectations, work practice, and are practical issues rather than issues of principle.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The Survey was carried out in an attempt to chart the progression of the ministry of ordained women in the Church of Ireland, to establish advantages or shortcomings of the context in which ministry is carried out, to identify if there were discrimination against women in the Church and also to highlight the issues and the structures which women themselves identified as either facilitating or hampering their ministry. The main conclusions which can be drawn from the response to the survey from all three groups of respondents are remarkably similar in theme.

The conclusions may be divided into three main categories:

1. The balancing of ministry and family responsibilities particularly for women with young families, ageing parents in need of care and/or families with two clergy members.
2. The structures which facilitate/hamper ministry.
3. The issue of the auxiliary ministry *vis-à-vis* the stipendiary ministry.

1. BALANCE OF MINISTRY AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

As in the secular world of employment the issue of balancing work, in this case ministry and family responsibilities is a huge one for families with young children. However the nature of full time stipendiary ministry does impose an extra demand on availability of the ordained person for ministry particularly in a Parish and Chaplaincy context, and especially around family times such as Christmas and Easter. Although there was general agreement that there is no discrimination against women in the ordained ministry, this area was felt to necessitate more support and greater flexibility from the Parish, the Diocese and the Church in general.

This was identified as an area which needed a little more creative and imaginative thinking and planning. It was noted by many, in all three groups; the ordained women, Bishops and Archdeacons, that this should not be perceived as a 'woman only' issue, that men were also affected by it. However, many of the women respondents felt it was more particular to them than to their male colleagues, as they were often the parent who minded the children on a fulltime basis. This also affects the choice between auxiliary and stipendiary ministry as the 'live in' model of theological training militates against women with young families even more than men.

2. STRUCTURES WHICH FACILITATE / HAMPER MINISTRY

Many extra supports were identified by the women in their responses, greater flexibility, more realistic expectations by parishes and by clergy of Parishes, more support by parishioners for the Rector, the possibility of a five-day week, more assistance with

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parish administration, the unmanageability of the geographical parish structure, with ever expanding numbers of Churches in each Group or Union, part-time work, the introduction of team ministry, and a clear definition of the role of rector in a parochial setting. All issues which affect men and women alike.

3. AUXILIARY AND STIPENDARY MINISTRY

One of the issues which came only from the ordained women respondents was the issue of the status and deployment of the auxiliary priests. It was felt that their role was often unclear, their duties and conditions and remuneration packages varied wildly from diocese to diocese and needed review. It was also recognised by the bishops in particular, that there were some women who, except for their personal family circumstances, would have chosen the full time stipendiary ministry.

CONCLUSION

Finally, it is clear from the responses to the survey that women in the ordained ministry derive a great deal of satisfaction from their ministry and ‘feel privileged to be able to share in other people’s lives’. The pastoral side of ministry also offered a real sense of fulfilment to many women in the ordained ministry. They identified the issues which facilitate or hamper their ministry as being more role than gender based. The majority share with the bishops and archdeacons the opinion that they do not feel discriminated against, but they do recognise the need for the current model of ordained ministry to be examined and adjusted and changed to suit the changing context in which ordained ministry is carried out.

The last word goes to one of the respondents, (Bishop!) “The integrity, quality, and spiritual maturity of the ordained women in the Church of Ireland has made an immense contribution towards changing and changed attitudes towards women in the ordained ministry.”

The response rates to the survey were: women in the ordained ministry 55%, bishops 100% and archdeacons 63%.

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Appendix I

FACTORS INFLUENCING FUTURE MINISTRY

FACTOR	%	NUMBER
Personal issues (health, family)	38	14
God's will	14	5
Personal need for challenge	14	5
Personal gifts	14	5
Opportunities and needs	11	4
Other (time; cannot say)	14	5
No reply	8	3

(Some respondents gave more than one response.)

WHY IN PRESENT MINISTRY

REASON	%	NUMBER
Choice	65	24
Necessity	14	5
Combination	3	1
God's will	3	1
Choice of location	11	4
No reply	6	2

REQUIREMENT TO LIVE IN A RECTORY A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR

SIGNIFICANT FACTOR	%	NUMBER
No, or an advantage	51	19
Yes because of family	14	5
Significant for other reasons	5	2
Living in own house	11	4
Not applicable	16	6
No reply	3	1

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MOST SATISFYING & REWARDING ABOUT PRESENT MINISTRY

FACTOR	%	NUMBER
Pastoral ministry	43	16
Youth work	27	10
Nature of the job	24	9
Healing ministry	14	5
Inter-church aspects	8	3
Living out my vocation	8	3
Affirmation by others	8	3
Other	11	4

CAUSES OF DISSATISFACTION

FACTOR	%	NUMBER
Lack of parishioner support	19	7
Lack of time	19	7
Administration	14	5
Lack of communication/support from colleagues	14	5
Resistance to change	11	4
Maintenance of buildings	5	2
Other	24	9
No reply	8	3

IS GENDER AN ISSUE?

AN ISSUE	%	NUMBER
No	64	24
Helpful to be female	11	4
Yes, is an issue	11	4
Helpful and unhelpful	8	3
Other	5	2

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**DOES THE CHURCH DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN
MINISTERS?**

AGREE OR NOT	%	NUMBER
No, it doesn't	49	18
Personally but suspect it may	14	5
Yes	14	5
Married versus single	11	4
Other	8	3
No reply	5	2

WHAT AND WHO HAS HELPED MOST IN YOUR MINISTRY?

FACTOR	%	NUMBER
Husband & close family	35	13
Colleagues	32	12
Rectors, past & present	30	11
Bishop	27	10
Parishioners	22	8
Friends	19	7
Prayer	11	4
Other (individuals, MU, no-one)	22	8

WHO AND WHAT HAS PRESENTED DIFFICULTIES?

FACTOR	%	NUMBER
Disbelief in me	19	7
Anti-woman feeling	8	3
Personal	8	3
Loneliness & isolation	8	3
Lack of self-belief	5	2
Resistance to change	5	2
NI Catholic/Protestant issues	5	2
Other (unrealistic expectations, finding church wardens)	22	8
Nothing	14	5
No reply	14	5