

**COMMISSION ON MINISTRY**

**REPORT 2004**

**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*

Mr SR Harper

*Co-opted*

Rev OMR Donohoe  
Mrs A Forrest  
Rev C Lindsay

*Co-ordinator of Auxiliary Ministry Training*

Rev Canon KA Kearon

The Commission welcomed Mr SR Harper, representing the Honorary Secretaries of the General Synod, in place of the Very Rev H Cassidy.

**2. SUMMARY**

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

- Continuation of the Summit process;
- Summit follow-up meeting in March 2003;
- Regional meetings of Summit participants and Commission members held in October 2003 in four venues;
- Further Summit follow-up meeting in February 2004.

### **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**

During the past two years, the business of the Commission has almost entirely been concerned with the Summit on Ministry process, which involves all members of the Commission. The Commission would emphasise that the process is on-going for the purpose of reviewing ministry in the Church of Ireland and formulating proposals for new initiatives in lay and ordained ministry.

### **5. THE SUMMIT ON MINISTRY**

The first major event in the Summit process was a three-day residential conference held in Dublin in September 2002. The conference involved approximately one hundred participants, which included bishops, together with representatives from each diocese, invited speakers and guest participants from other Churches.

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 21<sup>st</sup> Century Ireland;
- Formulate proposals for new initiatives in lay and ordained ministry.

The participants representing each diocese submitted a paper on the *Nature and Purpose of Ministry*. In addition, papers were prepared on training and preparation for ministry, the nature of belonging and collaborative styles of ministry.

The participants identified the following issues to be taken forward by the Commission on Ministry:

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

The Commission arranged a follow-up meeting for the diocesan representatives and Commission members which was held on 22 March 2003 in Dublin.

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As reported last year, papers on the issues identified by the participants, together with papers on practical projects and existing models of ministry were sent to the participants as resource material for the meeting. These papers were appended to the Commission's report to the General Synod in 2003.

The programme for the meeting on 22 March included a presentation on parochial ministry under the headings Operational, Funding, Spiritual and Community. Presentations of existing models of parochial ministry were made, describing ministry:

- in a large parish at the centre of community life;
- in a group of rural parishes serving a dispersed community;
- in a suburban parish with no community focus;
- in an inner city parish;
- in other Church communities.

The meeting considered how initiatives and changes in ministry can be implemented and managed within the present legal and constitutional framework. An opportunity was presented for many valuable exchanges of information and ideas for consideration by the Commission on Ministry. A full report on the meeting is included as appendix A.

The Commission arranged a further follow-up meeting of diocesan representatives and members of the Commission held in Armagh on 28 February 2004. In preparation for this meeting, members of the Commission met locally with the diocesan representatives on 4 October 2003 in four regional locations throughout the country. A standard programme was arranged for the meetings along the following lines:

1. An introduction by a member of the Commission explaining the background of the Summit process and the role of the Commission in the process;
2. A presentation by the diocesan representatives from each of the three dioceses on ministry projects within their diocese. This phase focused on diocesan strategies and addressed the questions *What is the significance of this for the whole Church of Ireland?* and *What can the whole Church do to help us with this?*
3. Comments on the presentations from the representatives of the other two dioceses present.
4. Input from the other Commission members to identify what seems to be for the whole Church rather than specific to a diocese and to establish how the projects tie in with the principal themes emerging from the process, which are:

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- a. The need for genuine collaborative ministry, the truly shared ministry of clergy and laity;
- b. The need for sharing of resources/talents beyond the parish;
- c. The need for the Church to be alive outside its own walls.

The diocesan representatives subsequently received copies of the diocesan presentations, summaries of the business of the regional meetings, together with a themed analysis of the presentations and the reports of the Commission members on the meetings. Reflections on the regional meetings, prepared by the Chairman of the Commission, are included as appendix B.

The meeting on 28 February 2004 commenced with the Service of the Word, which included an address by the Rt Rev KR Good. The Chairman of the Commission, the Most Rev RL Clarke, welcomed the diocesan representatives and the members of the Commission to the meeting, which was attended by more than seventy people.

The business commenced with a presentation by the Very Rev SR White on “The Theological Dimension – what is ministry?” which was followed by a presentation by the Rt Rev KR Good on “Leadership and Ordination”.

Following these presentations, the meeting divided into six groups, when each group was assigned a question based on one of the presentations. A general discussion, chaired by the Rev Canon CG Hyland, heard responses from each group.

The final part of the meeting continued with a presentation by Ms R Handy on “Attaining the Vision”. In the course of a general discussion, chaired by Mr BD Hannon, six topics were identified for the consideration by the groups. Each group was asked to write a goal statement and to identify key milestones in achieving the goal. The following statements were submitted:

### ***Collaborative Ministry:***

To evolve a vibrant and relevant Church which is owned by all and in which the gifts of all are nurtured, encouraged and validated.

### ***Lay Ministry:***

Recognising that ministry is the function of all baptised Christians, we commit ourselves to the exercise of an every member ministry.

### ***The Role of the Parish in the Community:***

Everyone in the parish should be serving the community through his/her ministry.

***The Role of the Parish at Mission:***

The Church's mission is to engage the world with the mission of Christ to see need, to understand how to meet it and to meet it.

***Children's and Youth Ministry:***

An intergenerational Church in which members of every age group are equally valued and engaged.

***The Role of Dioceses and Bishops in Delivering Ministry:***

To mobilise every member of the diocese for the ministry in which they are gifted.

Before the concluding remarks by the Chairman, Mr Hannon paid tribute to Bishop Clarke for his dedication to the work of the Commission on Ministry as Chairman over the first eight years of its existence. Bishop Clarke is leaving the chair of the Commission after the General Synod this year.

In conclusion, Bishop Clarke referred to the presentation to be made to the General Synod on ministry in which the whole Church should be encouraged to embrace change within a theological context and have the courage to make concepts into reality.

**6. CONGREGATIONAL STUDIES**

Dr Helen Cameron, lecturer in Pastoral and Contextual Theology at Oxford Brookes University, addressed the Commission on Ministry on Congregational Studies, a comparatively new academic discipline in the United Kingdom, but well established in the United States.

As a branch of Practical Theology it engages with other academic disciplines such as History, Academic Theology, Economics and Sociology and, within its own specialist area, engages with Cultural, Voluntary Sector, Religious, Organisational, Educational and Gender Studies.

In its practical application, the discipline of Congregational Studies deals with the education and training of clergy and with the life and development of the congregation.

In the area of clergy education, Congregational Studies covers a wide spectrum, beginning before the theological college stage and continuing through theological college, the immediate post-ordination period, appointment to first incumbency, and later appointment as a training incumbent. It is a systematic discipline of reflection, evaluation, monitoring of practice and learning new skills and models of pastoral oversight.

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Within the life of the congregation the same principles of reflection, evaluation and learning are applied, and can be brought to bear on such diverse areas as the culture and identity of the congregation, its internal dynamics, worship practice, ordained and lay leadership and effective use of the resources present within itself or made available to it by the diocese or wider church.

A substantial amount of literature in the area of Congregational Studies has already been produced, mainly in the United States but increasingly on this side of the Atlantic as well. At the academic level, the literature consists mainly of published doctoral theses, but in the area of new concepts and models to inform the development of practice, very little has yet been published.

**APPENDIX A**

**SUMMIT ON MINISTRY FOLLOW UP MEETING**

**College of Education - 22 March 2003**

**GOD'S GIFT OF MINISTRY**

**Overview**

Christian ministry that reflects the needs of a fast changing society is varied and challenging and is developing rapidly within the Church of Ireland and in other communities according to speakers at the second Summit on Ministry meeting in the College of Education in Dublin on Saturday, 22 March 2003.

Representatives from all the Church of Ireland dioceses were given the opportunity to hear about and discuss a range of development models at the meeting, which offered a fascinating insight into how new ministry models are working in different social and cultural contexts.

The one-day event began with an act of worship and was structured around several well-prepared presentations that demonstrated the amazing variety of Christian ministry.

In an opening presentation, a colour-coded model was used to explore the flexible nature of ministry patterns that may develop in response to needs that arise in the communities in which we bear witness. The model stressed that spirituality, finance and a healthy relationship with church structures underpins our ability to meet the ministry needs of the community.

Four presentations followed describing ministry:

- in a large parish at the centre of community life
- in a group of rural parishes serving a dispersed community
- in a suburban parish with no community focus and
- in an inner city parish.

The four presenters, Mr Roy Palmer, Rev Stephen Neill, Ms Carolyn O'Laoire and Archdeacon Donald McLean then took the chair for a set of group discussions that developed the ideas they had presented. The delegates joined groups of their own choosing to discuss one of these types. It was significant that by far the largest group gathered to discuss the experience of the grouped parishes in a rural area.

Two presentations looked at ministry in other communities.

The 'Adam and Eve' parish in Merchants Quay, Dublin is in the Roman Catholic tradition. Presenter Karen Seaman explained how it is run by a female Pastoral Co-ordinator and is involved in community service projects.

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In a contrasting environment, the Most Rev Richard Clarke explained how the Anglican ministry unit of Argyll and the Isles is made up of over 30 parishes served by around eight stipendiary clergy. The challenge is to see how the local community can build a basis for shared ministry with teams emerging from the community.

In the afternoon session five presentations marked the contrasts in different approaches to ministry developments in the Church of Ireland. There was no evidence of a template but a diverse, astonishing and exciting variety of solutions.

The experience of Shankill Parish, Lurgan was illustrated by an organisation chart that traced every conceivable aspect of ministry responsibilities. This ranged from an aerobics class that seeks to bring people into the church building to running confirmation classes and pragmatic support such as management of IT systems. There was a very obvious sense of laity involved and working as a team conveyed by presenter Rev Dorothy McVeigh.

In a very different context, St Catherine's CORE Church in inner-city Dublin emphasised the network of ministries in action and engaged in outreach to community, particularly to the most vulnerable people such as drug addicts and single parents living in area surrounding the church, although there is also considerable energy and enthusiasm for parish outreach. The congregation here is largely under-45, according to rector and presenter, Rev Willie Stewart and has been gathered around a particular exploration of Christian ministry. Typically, they would describe themselves as 'Christian' first, and might be less conscious of the denominational label, 'Church of Ireland'.

Other approaches included the idea of appointing a professional Ministry Development Officer in each diocese, which the Bishop of Clogher, the Right Reverend Michael Jackson presented as a mechanism for ensuring continuity of ministry in situations where vacancies might arise regularly.

The challenge of planting a new congregation was given an airing. It was stressed that people came first followed by the building rather than the other way round. This 'living stones' approach was illustrated by the story of the congregation in Moneyrea, Down and Dromore, who recently began holding occasional Sunday Services in the "Auld House", a local hostelry. Some 40 parishioners from a neighbouring parish agreed to be "planted" and weekly services are scheduled to begin in June according to Rev Norman Jardine, who has been closely involved in this initiative.

The concept of collaborative ministry was presented by Rev Ted Woods with reference to Rathfarnham parish, where planning, co-ordination and good communications prove the key to supporting a dynamic and engaged parish community.

### **Managing change**

Ms Ruth Handy concluded the day with a dynamic presentation that explored the process of change. Ruth explained why we are often resistant to change. She suggested that in failing to participate in the inevitable process of change, we feel hard-done-by and

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driven, rather than positive towards change. There is even a process akin to grieving that takes place when we experience dramatic change - the problem is that when we get to the low point of the process, we sometimes get stuck there and don't enjoy the rewarding feeling of climbing up from the pit of despair. We need to match vision with current reality and competence with energy and commitment if we want to achieve change successfully.

The day contained two important discussion sessions:-

### **Discussion One**

Following the presentations of challenges experienced in four different ministry settings within the Church of Ireland, the discussion focused on

- Ministry responding to need
- Sharing an understanding of ministry between laity and clergy.

### **Competing belongings - identifying and meeting needs**

Ruth Handy cut to the core of the issue when she posed the conundrum of competing belongings - where we fit in and where others fit comfortably. We seem to find it difficult to meet other's needs for ministry when we have to take ministry to them. Yet how much more difficult for them to leave what is comfortable and familiar to come to us. Ruth suggested that in a status-conscious society, other belongings may be more attractive than that offered by the mainstream Christian churches, including the Church of Ireland.

### **Ministry is more than buildings**

The idea of taking ministry beyond church buildings to meet need at its source was expressed by a number of speakers in different ways. The Bishop of Down and Dromore, the Rt Rev Harold Miller pointed out that if the centre of gravity for ministry lies outside the church building, then laity and clergy must embrace the challenge jointly. Rev Steven Forde spoke of the irrelevance of boundaries in the context of changing patterns of community in many inner city situations. The idea of traditional comfort zones needing to give way to embrace alternative views of belonging was echoed in Roy Palmer's address, when he recalled Pastor Paul Reid's concept of people needing to belong first, being welcomed in before they could share in believing and finally adopting a Christian lifestyle.

### **Belief, belonging and social change**

Even in our rural parishes, traditional patterns of belief formation are difficult to sustain as young people leave at relatively early ages, either to attend boarding school, or later to pursue post-secondary training courses, as Rev Steven Neill noted. Although Steven found his parish not greatly affected, in many rural areas, young people must move permanently out of the community to find employment, involving dislocation for them

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and their home community. Add to this, declining rural incomes and increased demands for labour mobility in the corporate sector and the modern pattern of social movement quickly emerges. Rapid changes in value systems and social codes in the last half-century make the process of merging into a new community more long-drawn-out.

Historically, rigid codes of social etiquette and the existence of more formal public institutions tended to facilitate the introduction of strangers in a controlled way to new communities. It has been pointed out by previous speakers at the summit that in the 1950s if a new family moved into a district and didn't appear at church, it would create uproar. Today, no-one would notice. And in not noticing, we also have a social system that ensures newcomers remain excluded from the community unless they force their way in.

### **What is ministry?**

“Ministry is God’s presence and your presence,” said Rev Olive Donohoe, offering a simple and attractive view of what many present were trying to express. Rev Steven Forde urged strongly that we “need to change the idea of dispensers and consumers of ministry”. And Professor Adrian Empey suggested that ministry helps to create communities.

### **The Bishop - a ministry to the ministers**

In terms of who ministers to the ministers, the role of the Bishop came in for some consideration. The Rt Rev Ken Clarke felt that it ought to be an enabling role, giving space for exploration and also supporting those who are engaged in ministry. The Bishop of Down and Dromore, the Rt Rev Harold Miller felt that people sometimes looked to Bishops to do what couldn't be done by anyone else (including the Bishop). He felt that the Bishop's role was better understood as helping to find leadership at local level and encouraging that leadership to grow. The Most Rev Richard Clarke, Bishop of Meath and Kildare reminded the meeting that all Christians are equally part of the ministry of Christ.

### **Discussion Two**

As the day went on it became clear that three things were regarded as central to developing new models of ministry and enabling people to make them work.

- Equipping
- Training
- Resourcing.

Training and resourcing needed to be viewed as a dynamic element of the ministry mix, involving targeted training to meet identified needs. It was important to extend training to laity and clergy, and to see training as an ongoing support for continually developing ministry. Bishop Ken Good pointed out that collaborative ministry relies on clear definition of the roles played by participants. This in turn works well with a system that can deliver focused training courses. Mr Bill Frizell, commenting on the ‘Splash’

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initiative at Shankhill, Lurgan, spoke of accrued credibility that comes from experimentation and development. Within this, selection and training were critical.

Some of the training needs identified were:

- More laity need theological training
- Clergy need more managerial skills
- Both clergy and laity may need counselling skills
- Post ordination training could be used not only for ordinands, but also for laity
- Training in goal setting
- Leadership skills development.

### **Ministry - a flexible kaleidoscope**

The discussion went on to look at how flexible existing ministry structures really are.

Bishop Harold Miller spoke of a kaleidoscopic ministry existing within a church that is essentially conservative. He felt that groups needed to be encouraged and given permission to experiment and share.

Rev Sue Patterson shared some thoughts about the CORE group. She admired its view of worship as a changing thing. The inherent self-assessment demonstrated at CORE kept it constantly changing, she felt, though she wondered if after a time institutionalisation might set in?

Sue identified that for the Church of Ireland it was important to accommodate situations of building from scratch as well as reforming existing parochial structures.

Rev Stephen Neill reminded the meeting that there is risk and pain involved in meeting ministry needs. He pointed out that the newly planted church described by Rev Norman Jardine involved the original parish giving up some of its most active members to become the starter group for the new church.

In conclusion, Chairman of the Commission on Ministry, the Most Rev Richard Clarke, Bishop of Meath and Kildare, said the Summit revived his confidence in the Church of Ireland as a single church that shared a vision of the ministry of Jesus Christ.

### **How should we proceed - suggestions for action?**

1. Mr Tony Forbes asked the meeting to consider what sort of framework would enable the church to move forward in a practical way?
2. Rev Willie Stewart responded by referring to the survey of clergy in England. If we don't do research, we won't know what to do, he suggested. A possible framework for this research would identify:

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- Changing patterns
  - Changing belief systems
  - Changing practices
  - Demographic shifts.
3. Bishop Richard Clarke said that Meath and Kildare was surveying all its members, active and inactive. It was a costly, time-consuming and difficult project but would be worthwhile as without data, we are only guessing and fantasising about our situation.
  4. Bishop Richard Clarke urged participants to work on the premise that they had been set up by their dioceses as a ministry team. He tasked the groups to communicate the content of the Follow Up meeting to their Bishop and Diocesan Council.
  5. A mechanism is to be found to allow ministry units to share their ideas and experiences. This may be through a series of articles for *The Church of Ireland Gazette*, or on the Summit website, or in diocesan magazines. Please send ideas to Janet Maxwell, the Director of Communications at Church House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6.

As is the way of such meetings, a number of people had ideas in the car on the way home that have been submitted subsequently.

Afterwards, some diocesan representatives indicated that their diocese has already made progress on a number of the issues and has information to share. Others picked up on references in some presentations to training available in various dioceses or parishes. It is therefore suggested that diocesan representatives should be asked to report:

- (i) What activity is taking place within their diocese to develop ministry.
- (ii) What training is available at parish and diocesan level for laity and clergy, identifying its purpose, availability and cost.
- (iii) Further information about what is provided to equip clergy and laity for ministry (and to tease out specifically what is needed).
- (iv) How training and equipping is resourced.

In reference to the idea of a survey, Mrs Janet Maxwell contacted a social sciences researcher who has considerable experience in the conduct of surveys following the meeting for advice on how such a project might be undertaken. It is suggested that rather than all dioceses trying to conduct their own survey, a single survey should be agreed upon and used throughout the Church. This would produce comparable results. The information received is attached (Appendix 1). It might be helpful to await the results of the Meath & Kildare survey to ascertain which questions elicit useful responses before proceeding with a major project.

The day was one filled with valuable exchanges of information and ideas. Thanks are due to those who presented material, to those who contributed to the discussions and to all who gave of their time to participate in the event.

**APPENDIX B**

**REFLECTIONS ON THE REGIONAL MEETINGS**

**4 OCTOBER 2003**

Seeking to draw together core themes that have surfaced from the four regional meetings held on 4 October, a number of related ideas seemed to be emerging. All require further thought and exploration. Some of these questions were primarily pastoral, some theological, and some are administrative. There is also clear overlap between many of the issues emerging from the discussions but - in a hope of some orderliness - they are here reviewed under four headings.

These may perhaps form the basis for structuring the February meeting and the presentation to General Synod.

**THE CLERGY-LAITY RELATIONSHIP**

There are undoubted questions and concerns in this area. They are matters which clergy and laity must explore together, honestly, and directly. Often they remain unspoken and unexplored.

- Some are *theological* – “What is a priest?”, in the sense, “What can *only* a priest do?”
- Other concerns are deeply *pastoral* and more often unspoken. There is unquestionably a deep anxiety and sense of guilt or resentment, perhaps based on a loss of professional identity, within many clergy today. Many feel that they are not meeting the requirements of the laity. What are these “requirements”? Are they reasonable? To whom are clergy answerable? What may the lay members of the Church reasonably expect from the ordained? Do parishes today regard themselves as the “employers” of their clergy?
- There are other questions more related to how the Church ‘does’ *administration*. Does a Rector have to be a priest? Why?

**DO WE REALLY WANT COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY?**

- Is the Church honestly prepared to accept the pastoral ministry of the non-ordained?
- Where do we begin with the education/preparation of the laity for ministry? Do we begin with a course, or with the volunteer for service, or with the specific need of the Church? Should such training / education be centrally directed?

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- How are clergy to accept lay ministry, or are they threatened by it? How can they be trained to accept lay ministry alongside them?
- Is the Church prepared to take the non-ordained minister unto its ministry payroll, or are those in non-ordained ministry expected to be volunteers? Is this acceptable?
- Can we begin collaboration *between communities* by “melting the boundaries” between parishes without the need for institutionalised amalgamations?

**CONSULTATION**

- How is the Church to consult and communicate, *horizontally* as well as *vertically*? Surveys? Area meetings of parishes involving the bishop as well as parish membership and clergy?
- Are bishops really sufficiently ‘visible’ in their own dioceses?

**A SERIES OF CONTRASTS / TENSIONS / LINKS / UNEXPLORED RELATIONSHIPS –**

Ordained Ministry. - Lay Ministry.  
Leadership. - Ordination.  
Education. - Training.  
Collaboration. - Parochialism.  
Liturgical Ministry. - Pastoral Care.  
The Paid Sector. - The Voluntary Sector.  
Expectations. - Fulfilment.