

CHURCH OF IRELAND YOUTH DEPARTMENT REPORT PROPOSED BY REV ROBERT MILLER

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to propose the report of the Church of Ireland Youth department that is aware of God's providence and is delivering work that is hopeful, realistic, and above all proven.

Mark Twain said,

When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years. The reality for the membership and staff of the youth department is that we are still learning how to do it all better, and that learning has involved listening, and reflecting followed by strategic action. I would like to pay tribute to the leadership of Bishop Richard Henderson and to our staff in the youth department, as well as the volunteers who make it possible for the department to function. They are totally committed to making our vision, to equip young people and those who work with them for the mission of Christ., a reality

With the support of the RCB, both financially and strategically, as well as the financial support from the Priorities Fund and the Department of Education and Science, we have been building our vision and experiencing proven success. This proven success brings with it the need for limited expansion, and some increased administration. Often the executive committee carries this burden of management; to whom I am extremely grateful.

Our approach over the last three years, facilitated by the strategic thinking happening at Central board and executive level, have been applied under the able leadership of the Youth Ministry Co-ordinator, David Brown. During the year our staff team welcomed Mr Shane Tucker as a full-time fieldworker in the Republic, who joins Geoff Hamilton and Barbara Swann.

Our Praxis consists of a threefold approach – devolved funding to dioceses; delivery of programme and central events; networking and training for youth workers throughout the island. One of the most successful strands in our praxis over the last year has been the further development of our programme of devolved funding. Successful, in that this strand has seen CIYD facilitate local diocesan youth work. The flat rate grant amount to some £5,937 and £9,523pa this strand has ensured we have fulfilled our vision at a local grassroots level. Projects that have been encouraged include:

1. In the diocese of Dublin and Glendalough we have been able to enter into a creative partnership with 3Rock in providing some funding for the production of a DVD on Confirmation.
2. In Down and Dromore we have been able to support the ongoing work of the Youth Development Officer. The work happening with young adults, and around the issue of confirmation preparation in this diocese would be of particular note.

3. The diocese of Tuam the devolved funding has assisted in the appointment of a part-time Diocesan Youth Officer. This appointment has facilitated a focus on youth development that would not have been possible otherwise, noting two years of fruitful summer programme.

4. In the diocese of Derry and Raphoe, the Youth Officer, is developing new models of Youth synods and these will be an important part of engaging young people.

You can see some of the other projects that have been facilitated in partnership with local dioceses on the CIYD stand.

Whilst facilitating, and sometimes initiating, local diocesan events is an important strand in our work delivering an all-church programme remains a priority.

The report sets out our exciting programme for 2005 in Appendix A on page 302 of your book of reports. The professional skills that CIYD staff can offer the church at this level are a very important resource.

The schedules of events represent both a proactive and reactive response to the needs of the church relating to youth work. Already we are beginning to see events become an annual staple in our strategic response to the needs of young people and those who work with them.

ANOIS is one such staple. At ANOIS 140 young people and 30 young adult leaders, mainly from the Republic, came together. Here we had CIYD providing a strategic and co-ordinated event in partnership with the active support of committed dioceses and volunteer leaders.

The REFLECT residential South and North saw 45 and 65 young people gather to encourage and be encouraged.

In CIYD our programme of events have been proven to resource, young people, youth ministers in full or part-time youth ministry, Diocesan Youth Officers, Voluntary youth leaders, clergy, theological students, diocesan youth councils. The list could go on.

Resourcing in youth ministry has sometimes been provided by CIYD through our professional staff and at other times we have simply facilitated productive relationship building amongst those engaged in youth work, at whatever level.

The CONNECT Venue, which we have run in partnership with Youthlink NI, at Summer Madness Festival is also another important training initiative. We commend Summer Madness in becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee and for continuing to strive to reach young people with the transforming message of the Gospel.

Some of you will also be aware of STREETREACH and the call of Summer Madness for Young people to become a part of the solution. CONNECT and LABYRINTH saw contact for CIYD with over 400 young people at last year's event.

In our third strand of networking and training for youth workers throughout the island we

have seen the production of 'BEST FOOT FORWARD' this is a resource produced by CIYD and written by Geoff Hamilton to aid parishes who are seeking to employ a youth worker.

Having a well researched, and simple to apply, resource to steer parishes through issues such as advertisement, job descriptions, contracts, employment and management is something essential. This resource is available from the CIYD stand, and our staff will be on hand to answer any questions about further assistance you may have.

The answer to the question, 'What's worse than not having a curate?' is well known as 'Having one!' This should also perhaps be the reply if it were asked of a youth worker. Reality shows us that having someone to walk with your youth worker and perhaps also you at the early stages of employment can be a very valuable resource. BEST FOOT FORWARD as well as our staff Geoff and Shane are in position for just such an eventuality.

To help with the constant search for good resources for parish and diocesan youth ministry Shane has been working on a parish resource pack, he has compiled this information and would welcome requests from parishes or dioceses looking for good youth resources.

The Church's Youth Department is also stepping up onto the stage of the wider church and played an important part in the NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERS CONVENTION. This was in partnership with Presbyterian and Methodist Youth departments, attracting 600 across both events North and South. David also has been given the honour of being the chairperson of Youthlink NI 2005-2007.

I hope you are encouraged by what you hear from the pages of the report. In commending it I leave you with the words of Winston Churchill who said, However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.

The results of our strategically informed praxis in CIYD speak clearly from this report, and I commend it to you without reservation.

Our Vision is to be the local church, living as Jesus intended.

Our mission is to OFFER our lives to God, to SERVE Him in the local community, to SHARE the message of Jesus, and to GROW in faith and UNITY.