

CHURCH OF IRELAND

HOUSE OF BISHOPS



**SELECTION CONFERENCES FOR
TRAINING FOR THE ORDAINED MINISTRY**

AN INFORMATION BOOKLET

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Foreword

The Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin

No greater privilege can be afforded to a member of the Church than to respond to the call of God to train for the sacred Ministry. Nor is there a greater responsibility for the Church than that of selection and training of those who feel a vocation to Ministry.

In order that a person may have full confidence in knowing that their sense of call is shared by the Church, infinite care is necessary in the process of selection for training.

The Church of Ireland as an Episcopal Church has always placed heavy responsibility on its bishops in all matters to do with selection, training and ultimately ordination. This is a responsibility the bishops take most seriously.

This booklet is designed to assist those whose call to Ministry is being tested by the Church. We hope it will answer some of the questions that are often asked and we commend it for prayerful and thoughtful study.

† Robert Armagh

† Walton Dublin

Part I

Introduction

Introduction

“In a broken world God calls the whole of humanity to become God’s People.”¹

All of us who have come in faith to Christ and been baptized are entrusted by God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit with ministry. To that end, God the Holy Spirit equips us and sends us out as bearers of the good news and as witnesses into the world.

You have been given this information booklet because you are thinking of ordained ministry.

“In order to fulfil its mission, the Church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of its unity. The ministry of such persons, who since very early times have been ordained, is constitutive for the life and witness of the Church.”²

Here you will find practical information to encourage and support you on this pilgrimage together with the Church, in seeking God’s will. The sections cover the following topics: background information, the criteria for selection, an overview of the process, details of the pre-selection process and the selection conference itself.

¹ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* Faith and Order paper No.111 WCC Geneva 1982 Page 20

² *Op. Cit.* page 21

Background

In the early 1960's the Central Advisory Committee on Training for the Ministry (C.A.C.T.M.) was established to advise the Bishops, as appropriate, concerning the outworking in practice of their responsibility for selection and training for the ordained Ministry.

Selection Conferences were organized under the auspices of CACTM. Although not correctly, in the common parlance of the Church of Ireland, these, in themselves, became known as CACTM.

Over the years, the members of CACTM and its selection conferences served the Church faithfully and fruitfully. From time to time, the work and process were reviewed.

In 2001 a substantial internal review of Selection Conferences was undertaken by the Bishops. The consequent report articulated seventy-seven recommendations and challenges which shaped the subsequent process of discussion and deliberation by the House of Bishops. As a result a new selection process (described in broad terms in this booklet) was put in place to enable selection for training for the ordained ministry in the Church of Ireland.

In the course of the discussions of the House of Bishops it also became apparent that a set of new circumstances (principally the formation and work of the Theological College Council) necessitated the setting up of a liaison group to replace CACTM and its advisory and co-ordinating role.

In 2002, therefore, the Bishops inaugurated the *Bishops' Liaison Group on Ordination (BLGO)* which under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of Armagh will provide a liaison forum for the various groups associated with training and ordination: the Bishops, the Theological College Council, Selection Conferences and the Central Director of Ordinands.

Part II

Criteria for Selection

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION FOR THE ORDAINED MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

[approved by the House of Bishops 21st November 2001]

Purpose

These criteria are intended for

- the guidance of the Selection Panel and
- greater clarity and openness in the selection process.

The purpose of these criteria is to assist the panel of selectors in their task of discerning the suitability of a candidate for training for the ordained ministry of the Church of Ireland.

Such discernment will lead to one of four categories of advice being given to the sponsoring Bishop

- a recommendation
- not recommended
- a conditional recommendation
- a deferral

for a course of training.

The criteria are to be taken as a whole unit. Throughout the entire process they are to be exercised in the context of prayer and a seeking of God's will for the future of the candidate and the well being of the Church. The selectors are looking for potential in the areas identified in these criteria as well as actual ability.

Criteria

- A top priority is that the candidate is sensing a vocation to the ordained ministry of the Church of Ireland. Full recognition should be given to the fact that candidates may be at differing stages in their understanding of God's call. Some may express a sense of remarkable clarity in their understanding whilst others may speak in more hesitant terms, but nonetheless real. A genuine call will include not only a personal response and understanding but also confirmation and encouragement from others. The candidate needs to show signs of comprehending that vocation to the ordained ministry is a calling to a stretching and sacrificial way of life with particular demands, unique privileges and immense responsibilities.
- Candidates should be baptized and confirmed, and also members of the Church of Ireland (or a Church in full communion therewith) and be familiar with the teachings, traditions, emphases and characteristic spirit of the Church of Ireland and the Anglican Communion. They should feel that the Church of Ireland is their spiritual home and be

ready to work within it. They should express a preparedness to accept the will of the church.

- Personal commitment to Christ and sincere belief in a triune God is essential. The candidate should possess a basic understanding of the Gospel and a desire to communicate it.
- The candidate should participate regularly in corporate worship, in Holy Communion, and display a discipline in their personal devotional life of prayer and Bible study. Such spirituality should be foundational in their life and in determining their life style, and manifested in a life of service to others. It should be a source of strength and inspiration.
- Integrity of character, mental stability and a growing emotional and spiritual maturity are to be in evidence. How the individual responds to fulfilling responsibility, coping with change, and dealing with pressure are important indicators of balance and stamina.
- A compassion for people and an ability to relate to people are vital in an effective pastoral ministry. Therefore the ability to make and sustain relationships should be noted. Openness to others, a stable family life and the willing support of their spouse (if the candidate is married) are to be looked for.
- It is vital that leadership skills are present in the candidate whilst remembering that the leadership of Christ is essentially that of humble service. The requirements of spiritual leadership are high and require a willingness to lead by example.
- Candidates should have the intellectual capacity and quality of mind to undertake satisfactorily a course of theological study and display evidence of the ability to cope with the intellectual demands of ministry.
- It is expected that candidates for the stipendiary ministry, if ordained, will be prepared to serve anywhere in the Church of Ireland for a minimum of three years.

The criteria apply to selections both for the stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry.

Part III

The Process

Outline of the Process

Step One: Local

The first steps you take will be in accordance with local diocesan procedures. These are broadly standard following consultation between the Bishops.

Step Two: Application

Completion of Application Form and return of same by 1st February in the year of Application.

Step Three: Pre-Selection Conference

In March of the year of application applicants are requested to attend a Pre-Selection Conference Consultation. This, as it were, is the first formal part of the selection process and comprises

- the checking of application information;
- a preliminary interview with a representative of the Selection Conference secretariat;
- psychometric assessment with the educational psychologist;
- general interview and consultation with the Selection Conference Psychologist and psychological assessment;
- Advisory consultation with a representative of the Grants Committee.

Following this Pre-Selection Conference Consultation, preliminary reports will be made to your Bishop who may then wish to embark upon further consultation with you, in order to determine whether it is appropriate or otherwise for you to proceed to the Selection Conference itself.

Step Four: Selection Conference

In May or June of the year of application applicants approved by their Bishop following the Pre-Selection Conference Consultation will be invited to present themselves for interview at a Selection Conference. Interviews will be conducted by selectors from a panel chosen by the Bishops. These will normally include interviews with a Bishop, a Priest, a member of staff of the Theological College, and two lay people. In addition a group exercise will take be conducted and evaluated by a separate selector. All in all, the conference will endeavour, under the guidance of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit to discern vocation, to assess suitability for training, and, where appropriate, under the guidance of the Bishops, to take into account the needs of the Church at a given time.

Step Five: Advice

The Selection Conference will make a report to your Bishop and give its advice. Along with a report the advice usually falls under four headings: recommended for training, not recommended for training, conditional recommendation or the conference may defer giving a decision.

Your Bishop then has to reflect on the report and communicate his or her decision to you.

The Selectors

The House of Bishops, in consultation with one another, have drawn up a panel of selectors. They are a group chosen for their expertise, given additional training and representative of regions, ages, genders, and theological perspective and expertise in the Church of Ireland as a whole.

In addition, specific training is given to the selectors concerning the nature and requirements of this particular process.

First Steps

The first steps towards ordination are taken in your local Church community, in the Diocese. How this happens may vary slightly from Diocese to Diocese and Bishop to Bishop. Generally, however, the following points are relevant and normative:

- You meet your rector, and in time s/he will write to the Diocesan Director of Ordinands to introduce you
- You meet the Diocesan Director of Ordinands (DDO) who will advise you on the next steps to take
- These will certainly include Diocesan Assessment: at least a year of waiting before being sent to Selection Conference; meeting others in the Diocese; occasionally psychological and intellectual assessment;
- The Diocesan Director of Ordinands reports to the Bishop who, if satisfied, will meet you.
- The Bishop decides whether or not to send you forward to selection through this formal selection procedure.

The Application Form

The Application Form for Selection Conferences will be given to you either by the DDO or your Bishop or the Secretary to the Selection Conference on request of your Bishop.

You should not use the form unless you have been recommended by your Bishop to attend a Selection Conference.

The form will not be taken into consideration unless countersigned by the sponsoring Bishop. The form should be completed before seeking the Bishop's signature.

Before completion of the form, it is important to read this booklet in full and especially the section entitled *Criteria for Selection for Ordained Ministry in the Church of Ireland*.

The form should be completed legibly and clearly in block capitals and black ink, preferably typewritten. To that end, a version of the form is available as an e mail attachment to facilitate completion on a PC. When completed in such manner the form should be printed out and signed where appropriate.

Names of referees must only be given with the prior knowledge and permission of the persons concerned.

Completed forms should be submitted no later than 1st February in the year in which it is intended to attend Selection Conference.

It should be noted that candidates recommended for training are accepted subject to satisfactory completion of a medical examination.

The form, when completed, should be returned together with the following

- four passport size photos taken recently
- a copy of your Birth Certificate (photocopies will suffice)
- a copy of your Baptismal Certificate (photocopies will suffice)
- a copy of your Confirmation Certificate (photocopies will suffice)

to

The Secretary
Bishops' Selection Conference
Diocesan Centre
Moyglare
Maynooth
Co Kildare

References and Referees

When your application form is received the secretary of the Selection Conference will write seeking references from the following people who have been named by you:

- Your Bishop
- Your Rector
- Your Diocesan Director of Ordinands
- Your employer (if employed in the previous five years)
- Your Principal/Tutor (if at school or university)
- Two lay people who know you well

Part IV
Pre-Selection Conference
Consultation

Pre-Selection Conference

General:

Generally in the month of March the first stage of selection will take place over a three day period.

This will comprise

- a general meeting and interview with the secretary of the Selection Conference, primarily to check the paper work and to clarify aspects of your form and submission
- psychological assessments and a personal interview with the appointed psychologist
- a meeting with a representative of the Grants' Committee
- an academic aptitude test

Meeting the Psychologist:

As part of the assessment for candidates for ordination, it is considered important that their capacity to cope psychologically with the demands of ministry is considered. To that end, in addition to providing biographical detail and a personal statement, candidates will be required to complete a number of psychological questionnaires which investigate their learning potential, character and personality disposition, emotional stability, coping style and motivation for seeking ordination. These instruments will form part of a psychological assessment which is conducted by two psychologists, both of whom have experience in the assessment of individuals applying for ordination. Candidates will attend interview with the psychologist during the course of which aspects of their personal history, motivation for ordination, and their expectations about the demands of ministry will be examined. The findings and recommendations of the psychologists are then presented to the Selection Conference for further debate and consideration; and where necessary, to the candidate's Bishop.

Psychological assessment results and issues arising from interview are treated in the strictest confidence and are only made available to those involved in the Selection process.

Grants Committee:

In the course of the Pre-Selection Conference meeting, an opportunity is afforded to each candidate to meet with a representative of the Church of Ireland Theological Students' Grants' Committee for candidates for the Stipendiary Ministry only. Information is given and application forms distributed.

It may be of interest to applicants to note that for such candidates all accommodation and meals are paid for at the Church of Ireland Theological College (CITC) for the twenty-nine weeks of the academic year. In some cases additional weeks are paid for. In addition all fees payable to CITC, Trinity College, Dublin and to such other approved institution where an ordinand may be registered.

A personal allowance is also paid to single and married students alike at the agreed rate applicable at the time. Where a student for the stipendiary ministry lives out of College (with the permission of the Principal) a further living out grant is paid. Children's allowances are also paid at the applicable rate.

Second Year students, who are placed in a parish for parochial experience, also receive a placement payment.

The Grants Committee also administers a small number of trust funds which provide bursaries for certain eligible students.

Academic Aptitude Assessment:

The Academic Aptitude Assessment is carried out, at the request of the House of Bishops, by the Department of Psychology at the University of Dublin, Trinity College.

This assessment is considered a vital part of the process of selecting candidates offering themselves for training for the Ministry. Before candidates embark upon a course of study it is essential to ascertain the academic abilities of the individual in order to ensure they will be able to cope with the rigors of academic training. As such, candidates are required to sit two tests of general intellectual ability (outlined below).

Once completed and scored, the test results are reviewed by a psychologist and presented to the Selection Conference. Based upon this, and in light of the assessment results from the other aspects of the selection process, a collective decision is made concerning a candidate's suitability for training.

The Concept Mastery Test (CMT)

The *Concept Mastery Test* (CMT) is a measure of ability to deal with abstract ideas at a high level.

The test consists of two parts:

1. The identification of synonyms and antonyms
2. The completion of analogies.

The test items have been selected in a way that draws on concepts from a wide variety of subject matter fields, such as the physical and biological sciences, mathematics, history, geography, literature, music and so forth.

The AH5

The AH5 is a group test of general intelligence. It is intended for adults, and potential entrants to third level education.

The test consists of two parts:

1. The first comprising verbal and numerical problems
2. The second comprising problems in diagrammatic form.

In devising the test items, the aim has been to devise a test which rewards accurate observation, meticulous attention to instructions and ability to appreciate shades of meaning.

After the Pre-Selection Conference

After the Pre-Selection Conference in March a brief report will be sent to your Bishop who may wish to discuss aspects of it with you, including whether or not you wish to proceed to the interview stage at the Selection Conference proper.

Part V

Selection Conference

Selection Conference

Timing

Candidates who have previously attended a Pre-Selection Conference may be sponsored by their Bishop for attendance at a Selection Conference held in May or June each year.

Conference in Community

The conference is residential in a community framework of fellowship and worship. Candidates and selectors journey together in a process of prayer and discernment. A Chaplain to the conference is nominated from a panel agreed by the House of Bishops.

Worship

The rhythm of liturgical worship is maintained throughout the conference. You will be invited to take part in reading the lessons or other appropriate parts of the Services.

Chairperson

The Bishop with responsibility for Selection Conferences and the Selection Process generally attends throughout the conference.

Chaplain

The Bishops have drawn up a panel of Chaplains in order to ensure that there is a Chaplain in attendance at each stage of the Conference. The Chaplain has no role in the selection process and is available to both selectors and candidates alike to offer pastoral ministry and support in complete confidentiality.

Introductory

The Conference begins with an opening session during which general information is given, the selectors and your fellow candidates are introduced.

Interviews

Interviews are conducted by a bishop, a priest, a member of staff of the Theological College, and two lay people.

Areas covered in the interview include:

- Areas covered and information you have given on your application form
- The statements you have made in response to the open-ended questions on the application form.
- Your beliefs
- Your vocation and journey of faith
- Your understanding of ordination
- Anything which pertains to or arises from the published selection criteria.
- Any matters which you may consider relevant to your application

Group Exercise

A group exercise is held and observed by an independent assessor.

Part VI

After Selection Conference

After Selection Conference

After the Selection Conference the selectors will make a collective report, through the Secretary to the Conference, to your Bishop and give their advice. As outlined in the criteria for selection, the advice usually falls under four headings: recommended for training, not recommended for training, conditional recommendation or the conference may defer giving a decision.

Your Bishop then has to reflect on the report and communicate his or her decision to you.

Candidates who are not recommended for training will not, in general, be permitted by their Bishop to return to a subsequent Selection Conference until a period of two full years has elapsed.

Where a candidate about whom a decision has been deferred returns to a future Selection Conference, that information and the reason for the deferral is made known to the selectors. In contrast, where a candidate has not been recommended, that information is not made known to the selectors, and the candidate comes anew to the conference.

Part VII

Going to Theological College

Going to Theological College

Church of Ireland Theological College [CITC] trains men and women for the ordained ministry. The college provides in-service training and extra-mural courses in theological, biblical, and pastoral studies. Like many Anglican theological colleges, it is associated with a university – Trinity College Dublin – with which theological training for the Church of Ireland has been linked for several centuries. Less formal associations link the college to other theological and vocational institutions in Dublin and further afield

The college has a capacity for about forty-five students, graduate and non-graduate, married and single. The age range is broad and the student body represents a wide range of backgrounds, experience, and theological outlook. This range of geography and outlook provides a unique environment for ordinands to learn to appreciate the differing traditions and viewpoints that are characteristic of the Church of Ireland. Not least among the benefits of this tradition are the life-long bonds of friendship and understanding that are a peculiar strength of our church.

Situated in Dublin, students are in a position to benefit from the cultural and intellectual life of a major European city. Ordinands register in the University of Dublin, Trinity College, and have full access to the university cultural, medical, catering, and library facilities.

Academically, the college seeks to encourage the pursuit of theological understanding and the development of the student's ability to identify and respond to the spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral challenges of contemporary society, focusing on three main areas in their training:

- worship and prayer
- theological, historical and biblical studies
- pastoral studies

The purpose of these studies is to equip students to engage convincingly with today's society, and to see how their spiritual and intellectual development is integral to the experience gained in a comprehensive programme of pastoral placements in parishes, hospitals, and schools throughout Ireland.

Most ordinands study for the degree of Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.) in the University of Dublin. This course – which may also be taken at diploma level – takes three years. Students who obtain a high standard in the second and third year examinations may apply to continue their studies for a fourth year leading to a degree of Bachelor of Theology with Honours. Applicants with previous theological qualifications may be allowed to complete the course in two years. Teaching for these courses is shared by the staff of the college and the School of Hebrew, Theological and Biblical Studies in Trinity College. Lectures are given in both institutions. Students entering the college with appropriate qualifications are encouraged to develop their specialist interests in research or courses of study leading to higher degrees. However, they will be required to complete the pastoral elements of the Professional Course in Theology in conjunction with students pursuing the B.Th. degree.

All resident students (whether married or single) have their own study bedrooms. There are, however, no residential facilities for couples or families. Some spouses and children continue to live in the family home, others, together with the student in their family choose to find accommodation locally. The college provides a full catering service.

Central to the life of the college is the daily pattern of worship in the contemporary setting of the chapel, designed to facilitate modern liturgical understanding.

Much responsibility for the day to day running of the college is shared with the student representatives.

Further details about training for the ministry at the CITC are provided in the college prospectus, which may be obtained from:

The Principal's Secretary
The Church of Ireland Theological College
Braemor Park
Dublin 14

Tel. 01-4923506
Fax. 01-4923082
E-mail. admin@citc.ie