

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY REPORT 2024

Membership (March 2024)

House of Bishops

The Rt Rev David McClay (Chair)

General Synod-Clerical

Ven Elizabeth Cairns

Very Rev Paul Draper

Rev Rob Jones

General Synod-Lay

Captain George Newell

VACANT

VACANT

Director of Theological Institute

Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott

Central Director of Ordinands

Very Rev Lynda Peilow

Co-opted

Rev Emma Carson

VACANT

VACANT

Standing Committee

Ven Barry Forde

Pensions Board

Mrs Judith Peters

The Representative Church Body

Dr. John Graham

Very Rev Nigel Crossey

Honorary Secretaries

Rev Canon Gillian Wharton

Membership

Regrettably, there are currently a number of vacancies on the Commission: two for lay members from General Synod and two for co-opted members. It is the hope of the Commission that these will be filled in the near future.

Report

The following represent some of the topics that the Commission is currently exploring, and on which it would be glad to hear from members.

Advent Retreat

The annual advent retreat organised by the Commission on Ministry jointly with the Church's Ministry of Healing was held 24th – 26th November 2023 in Mount St Anne's retreat centre, Portarlinton. The retreat entitled 'Seeing in the Dark' was co-facilitated by the Very Rev Paul Draper, Dean of Lismore and Ms Lydia Monds, Ministry leader at the Church's Ministry of Healing. Ms Judy Peters acted as co-ordinator. The retreat was fully booked with 18 participants.

The sessions were interspersed with times of silence. Each session gave opportunity for reflection either with the use of images and poetry by Dean Draper or by interactive work by Ms Lydia Monds. Feedback from the retreat showed that participants were very happy with both content and hospitality. It is hoped to run the retreat again in 2024.

Nurturing Vocations

A vocations retreat was held on 26th – 28th January 2024, in Dromantine for those 'exploring' ordination in the Church of Ireland. The retreat was led and organised by Ms Judy Peters, Very Rev Lynda Peilow and Bishop David McClay. Rev Dr Sean Doherty, Principal of Trinity College, Bristol was the guest speaker, and he navigated the gathering through discernment, exploration and answering God's call.

There were some practical sessions with input from Dr Katie Heffelfinger CITI on pathways to ordinations, Rev Rob Jones, Pioneer Ministry and from clergy families which included Mr Eddie Hallisey and Ms Brigid Barrett. Rev Julie Bell was the Chaplain, and she used the space and grounds creatively leading prayer and worship.

The retreat, offered the seventeen participants from across the Church of Ireland a deeper understanding of the spiritual, intellectual, and practical aspects of ordained ministry, fostering discernment and

providing a space for reflection. Participants engaged in daily prayer, worship, and informative sessions. There was also time to chat with one another and to reflect. This built a sense of community, and participants left with a network of peers to provide ongoing support and encouragement. Dromantine proved an excellent facility for the event and the feedback has been very good. The participants felt that they were provided with information, formation, and space to enable and equip them on their journey.

Clergy Retirement

At the time of drafting this year's report on the work of the Commission on Ministry, a 24-hour residential course is being planned for 1st and 2nd May 2024, for clergy that are approaching retirement or who have retired in recent years. Until Covid-19 this course happened annually and catered for those approaching retirement. Because it was not possible during the years of covid-19 all who retired during that period were also invited.

The venue for the course this year is the Stormont Hotel, Belfast, and eminent speakers including Bishop Ken Good and his wife Mrs Mary Good, Rev Canon Horace McKinley, Ms Julie Bond (RCB Pensions), Ms Hazel Corrigan, and members of the Commission on Ministry will be addressing the event. It is hoped that this course will provide essential information and useful support to those clergy and clergy spouses where a clergyperson has recently retired or are planning to retire soon. Over the 24 hours those recently retired and those about to retire will be able to share useful information with each other as well as helpful advice from the team of speakers.

We as a church are indebted to those clergy who have served us faithfully for many years and the course is intended to help enable clergy and clergy spouses to continue having a fruitful ministry in retirement.

Pioneer Ministry

Pioneer Ministry was officially launched in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin in February 2023. Since then, the Pioneer Ministry leadership team have been travelling around the Church of Ireland sharing the vision at Diocesan Synods, along with other clergy and lay information sessions. A new Pioneer Ministry Council was formally approved at General Synod last year, which has met numerous times to sign off on the formal application process for pioneers in training, and also for the funding process of pioneer projects. This application process went live on the new Pioneer Ministry website, and from December 2023 until the end of March 2024 multiple applications came in from across the Island from a variety of backgrounds and contexts. Interviews were held in each diocese that applied along with the consideration of the applications for pioneer funded projects. Since the launch in Spring 2023, it has been an exciting and important time as everything got going and builds towards the first intake of Church of Ireland pioneers in training, which will happen in the Autumn of 2024.

A more comprehensive report, including an update on the selection of pioneers in training, funded projects, new Pioneer Ministry Hubs and Pioneer Learning Communities, will be given to General Synod from the Pioneer Ministry Council. However, we believe it's important that Pioneer Ministry stays on the agenda with the Commission on Ministry, as it forms a vital part of ministry within the Church of Ireland's response to reach those with little or connection to Church. For more information, please go to www.pioneerministry.org or email the National Director at rob@pioneerministry.org.