

MINISTRY COMMISSION

MEMBERSHIP

Chairman: The Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard, (leave of absence in 2012), Ex. Dir. Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture and Assist. Bishop Diocese of Canberra-Goulburn

Secretary: Mrs Dorothy Thorpe, Licensed Lay Minister, Diocese of Willochra

Mr Paul Cavanough, Mission Support Officer, Diocese of Tasmania

The Rev'd Mark Charleston, Rector of Sylvania, Diocese of Sydney

The Ven. Gail Hagon (leave of absence from mid-2013), Archdeacon and Ministry Development Officer, Diocese of Grafton

The Rt Rev'd Alison Taylor (from 2013), Assistant Bishop, Diocese of Brisbane

Ms Jane Tooher, Lecturer, Moore Theological College, Diocese of Sydney

The Rev'd Richard Trist, (acting chairman 2012), Lecturer Ridley College, Melbourne

Mrs Sue Williams, Manager Parish Partnerships, Samaritans, Diocese of Newcastle

PURPOSE

In 2010, the following statement was endorsed:

The fundamental focus for the Commission's work is ***the nature of ministry (lay and ordained) in twenty-first century Australia***. This focus has three areas:

- (a) ***growing the kingdom*** (skills development, training for team ministry, leadership training, lay vocation, missional formation);
- (b) ***sustaining vocations*** (supervision, review, support – this includes consideration of ageing profile, ministry in rural Australia);
- (c) ***guidelines*** for minimum standards for ordination.

ACTIVITIES

For the period 2010-2012 the Commission resolved to work in collaboration with the Fresh Expressions Australia Task Force. As a result of consultation with that group and diocesan bishops, revision of the Guidelines for Minimum Standards for Ordination, including the purpose of and rationale for the diaconate thus became the major focus of the Commission's work in 2012. This work has now been completed.

In 2011, the Ministry Commission forwarded to Standing Committee a paper supplied to us by Colin Reilly, ***Australian Anglican Clergy 1995 & 2010***. We felt it was important to continue to do some work on this and alerted Standing Committee to the issues that arise from it. The Standing Committee:

- (a) noted Colin Reilly's work on the projected Retirement Age of Clergy,
- (b) forwarded a copy to every Diocesan Bishop, Director of Diocesan ordinands and Principals of Theological Colleges, and
- (c) requested the Ministry Commission to investigate how different Dioceses seek to recruit future clergy.

However our attempts to have a research project on this failed because of inability to employ a suitable person to undertake this.

The revised **Minimum Requirements for Ordination** was finally forwarded to Standing Committee in early 2014.

At its March 2013 meeting the Ministry Commission discussed the topic of trends and issues in ministry today. This is a potentially wide-ranging project, the purpose of which would be to clarify and develop understanding about what kind of ministry the church requires for our times and how this might be better achieved.

Papers were prepared on:

1. provision of ministry in rural and remote Australia,
2. parish ministry in a changing culture,
3. encouraging more women to pursue formal theological training,
4. comments and reflections on leadership effectiveness.

Discussion raised many important matters that warrant further attention in the view of the Commission:

1. Diversity: church and ministry are in turbulent times and a degree of uncertainty & urgency surrounds questions concerning the nature of Christian ministry, with the result that no 'one size fits all' but diverse solutions/responses required.
2. Leadership: leadership effectiveness required more careful attention; a shift in emphasis on leadership from transformational to transitional leaders as the new forms of ministry and church emerged; growing new generation of leaders a priority.
3. Re-evangelisation: re-evangelizing of society; need for more joined up thinking regarding strategic directions.
4. Effects of immigration: growth in congregations/parishes where English second language.
5. Financial situation: problems of funding ministry and increasing incidents of dioceses in deficit and the impact this has on leadership.
6. Education and support: challenges of training/education; health and resilience of those in Holy Orders is an issue.
7. New styles of ministry for a changing world need for listening to 20s and 40s generations and their sense of the future and their ministry needs; need to recover appropriate pace and presence in Christian ministry (responding to fixation on the past or frenetic anxiety of some current approaches to ministry).
8. A consultation on ministry (futures/scenarios): a possibility given the importance and complexity of the topic of future trends in ministry.

The Commission did not meet again in 2013 but the March 2014 meeting is doing further work on **The nature of parish ministry in a changing culture: trends and issues we need to warn the Church about in relation to its ministry.**

+Stephen Pickard
For the Ministry Commission