

THE WORK OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL LAW SOCIETY'S EDUCATION OFFICER

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Clergy education is currently undergoing a process of upheaval and renewal following the Hind Report of 2003. The report refocused clergy education in terms of the mission of the Church, declaring its vision to be to 'provide high quality training for the clergy that will equip them to offer vibrant and collaborative spiritual leadership, to empower a vocationally motivated laity, and thereby to promote and serve God's mission in the world' (para 1:3). As well as viewing the role of the clergy primarily in terms of the mission of the Church, clergy training is seen as a task of the whole Church; the whole Body of Christ. As the body of Christ the Church is held together within the economy of the Holy Spirit so the various theological institutions of the Church exist in relationship with the dioceses — the report seeks to stimulate a greater reliance on those relationships. The practical outworking of the strengthening of these relationships is to be seen in the streamlining of theological training. Different bodies are encouraged to work together towards a single aim which is the training of the Church's clergy for God's mission. We are encouraged to see this shift in emphasis as more than pragmatic and as an opportunity to participate in the dynamic life of God. Training is now to be both before and after ordination and is seen more as continuing discipleship rather than the mere acquisition of skills.

Two groups were appointed in order to implement the report and produced their recommendations to the House of Bishops at the beginning of the year. The House has accepted their recommendations. In their report, the group which had the role of considering the curriculum for the training of clergy and post-ordination training declined to adopt a precisely defined curriculum content or syllabus. However, the development of the same by the individual Regional Training Partnerships (RTPs) concerned will be monitored by the Education and Validation Panel. The aims of training are articulated in the form of 'outcome statements' which provide sets of outcomes expected at the point of ordination, completion of Initial Ministerial Education (IME) and at the point of licensing to a post of responsibility. One of these outcome statements concerns legal, canonical and administrative responsibilities.

As a part of the streamlining or integration which is central to the Hind Report philosophy, IME is now usually to encompass three years of pre-ordination training and four years of post-ordination training. In keeping with other moves to ensure that clergy are equipped to deal with the essential demands of the new mission-shaped Church of the 21st

century, training will ensure that ministers are fit to practise within the new formal capability procedures proposed in the McClean Report on Clergy Conditions of Office.

The new emphasis is therefore upon professionalism and partnership. The Ecclesiastical Law Society has something to offer in both respects. It has expertise in an area with which those on the point of ordination are now required to be familiar and of which those on the point of being licensed to a position of responsibility are required to have a good understanding and working knowledge. It is my hope that the Society will be able to work in partnership with RTPs in order to develop schemes of training in Canon and Ecclesiastical Law and to assist them with the delivery of this training.

To an extent this has already been occurring in an informal manner. A number of members of the Society are engaged in delivering lectures and discussions in the area with the aid of *An Ordered Church* published by the Society in conjunction with the Ministry Division. The publication consists of a number of fictitious case studies along with model answers which are used as a basis for discussion showing where one might source answers to legal problems facing the modern Church. This publication is also being used by training institutions themselves and in some cases a lot of enthusiasm is being generated. There are, however, still some institutions where Canon and Ecclesiastical Law are apparently not being taught and there are many opportunities for new partnerships to be forged. I hope to enable the material to be developed further and to put more members of the Society in contact with local institutions as they endeavour to meet the new requirements. Part of my role will, I hope, be processing feedback from all those participating in such sessions to discover the needs of those learning and training in this area. The Society might have views about what it perceives the needs of clergy to be in the years of their formation but it is also important that it listens to those who are involved with this formation on a daily basis; those who are training and those being trained.

Thus the time is now ripe, I would suggest, for the Society to build on its past educational projects for the clergy and to work with Regional Training Partnerships in order to realise more fully its primary aim of educating the clergy in Canon and Ecclesiastical Law. As well as working with the Church's formal training structures there are other less formal avenues for the Society to explore over the next few years. One of the chief media available to us currently is the internet. There are plans to redevelop our site and to include more educational material, much of which would have a very practical focus and would enable clergy to find the answers to a number of their everyday problems. The Society currently puts on a number of lectures and it is hoped that we can increase access to these through better communication via a more sophisticated website.