



Communication from the House of Bishops, May 2017.

### **Ordained Local Ministry**

Since the last session of the General Synod, the House of Bishops has been extremely mindful of the desire of the Synod, expressed by means of formal Resolution, that an appropriate form of Ordained Local Ministry should be developed among us. Last year, in the context of the Report of the Commission on Ministry, the Synod had the opportunity to discuss something of what such ministry would look like, and how fit persons would be duly called and prepared to serve in it. The mood of the synod in its discussion of this possible development was overwhelmingly positive. We would wish to express our appreciation of the work done both by the Commission, and the Director and staff of CITI, in assisting the synod in its consideration of this issue.

The bishops are satisfied that Ordained Local Ministry, rightly understood and cherished within the overall life of the church, would be a source of enrichment and strength in to - day's circumstances. As we are responsible for the actual Ordination of duly - trained persons to serve in the historic threefold ministry which the Church of Ireland has received, it is our duty to ensure that this development is properly placed within the framework of catholic order. Necessary emphasis on the local must not obscure our understanding of the relationship of all ordained ministry to the whole Church.

The bishops wish to inform the Synod that it is now our intention so to advance matters that it will be possible to begin a programme of training for ordained local ministry in the autumn of 2018, with selection processes for suitable candidates taking place earlier next year. It is envisaged that Selection will be undertaken at diocesan or regional level, with the benefit of additional external wisdom and at the ultimate discretion of the bishop. Training, which will need to take some appropriate account of the previous experience and knowledge of candidates, will be essentially delivered locally but in a manner that ensures consistency of content and standard. While



those called and ordained in the context of OLM will of course be deacons and priests in the fullest catholic sense, they will be serving in a manifestation of ministry which we will regard very much as a distinct and lifelong vocation with its own integrity and character, lived out in its fullness at local level. Hence we emphasise that we do not envisage transfer from this ministry to any form of stipendiary ministry: were such a thing to occur it would require a fresh and full selection process at all-Ireland level and consequent substantial further training and formation.

There has been much preparation to do to make all this possible, particularly in the area of training. We are confident at this stage that Ordained Local Ministry will strengthen the mission of the Church and its ministry of Word and Sacrament in a wide variety of contexts. It will be something new for us all, and we will have much to learn from the very manner of its implementation over the coming years. It is always a basic task of the Church to offer prayers for vocations to ordained ministry and for those in training. We now pray in a particular way that in this matter we may have the gift of a sound judgement as we make this response to authentic and discerned local need within the church. We remember too those who may feel moved by the promptings of the Holy Spirit to serve God and his people in this distinctive context which has rich potential for our time.

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