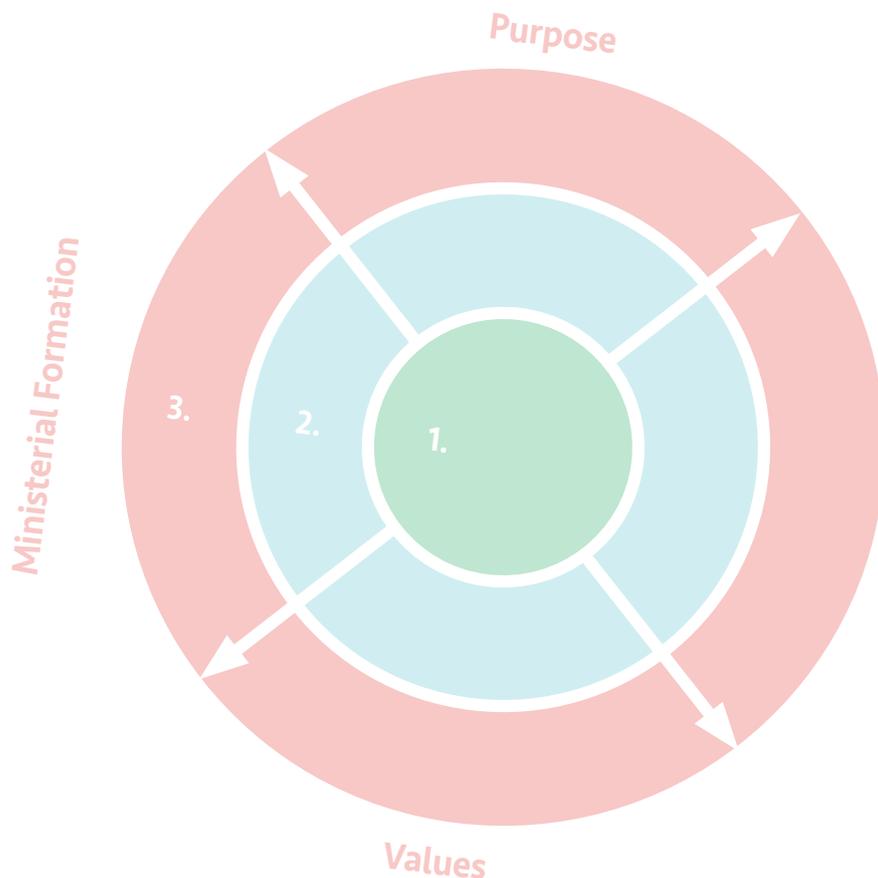




The Church of Scotland

TRANSFORMING RECRUITMENT & TRAINING

Ministries Council - Interim Report
General Assembly
May 2018



Ministerial formation for the Mission of God in the Church today

Our Mission

Our mission is to live out the call of Jesus to love God and love our neighbour.

Vision for Recruitment and Training

To deliver a...

Christ-centred and student-focused

integrated ministerial recruitment and training programme committed to the mission of God in the Church of Scotland today.

We will have an integrated programme of ministerial formation to recruit and train those entering the Recognised Ministries so that they are able to serve and lead in the Church as together we participate in the mission of God.

Our Purpose

To recruit and train ministers to lead and serve in the Church today.

Our Values

- **Christ-centred:** we are called and sustained by Christ
- **Mission-orientated:** we are called to participate in the mission of God today in the Church
- **Responsible:** we take personal responsibility for our formation and training
- **Reflective:** we reflect on our practice in order to develop and mature
- **Diverse:** we recognise the diversity of gifts, skills and backgrounds work together to strengthen ministry
- **Reforming:** we are called to serve in the Reformed tradition

Introduction

We are delighted to present the Interim Report for the Rethinking Initial Training programme. This report includes the key information from the research and consultations that have taken place over the last two years, and outlines proposed changes to be developed. This programme is working in conjunction with the Recruitment Review Project and developing Recruitment Strategy.

The shape of ministry is changing. This was communicated clearly from the first focus group with those in ministry. Change is happening all around the Church and we must continually examine our processes and procedures to ensure that they are fit for purpose. Within the scope of recruitment and training we currently have systems that no longer effectively serve that purpose.

The changing horizon before the Church means that we must ensure those embarking on ministry are well prepared in their vocation to serve God in the Church today. The call remains consistent but the outworking looks different. It is with a renewed commitment to the mission of God that we approach the changes to initial ministerial education for the different ministries in the Church of Scotland today.

We are indebted to those who have gone before us in the work of ministerial recruitment and training. Throughout our research phase many have commented on how much they have appreciated elements of the training they undertook. This includes the many people they encountered such as placement supervisors, Ministries Council staff, Presbytery Committees and MTN leaders right across the Church.

But now is the time to make changes to ensure that we continue to build on these foundations. We are developing a renewed partnership with Higher Education to create a centre of excellence that more fully prepares individuals for leadership in the Church of Scotland

This report includes the Executive Summary from the Blake Stevenson Consultation that was undertaken in 2017.

Best wishes,

Neil Glover

Convener of Ministries Council



David Plews

Education & Training Secretary



Lezley Stewart

Recruitment & Support Secretary



For more information, please contact David Plews
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1. Programme Location

The Rethinking Initial Training (RIT) Programme and the Recruitment Review Project (RRP) will be fully aligned with the Church's Strategic Plan presented by the Council of Assembly.

Council of Assembly: Strategic Plan

Ministries Council: Development Programme

Recruitment & Training Transformation Programme

Recruitment Strategy

Recruitment Review Project

Rethinking Initial Training Programme

Curriculum Development Group - Chaired by Rev Prof David Fergusson

2. Changed Landscape

The Church has changed. We need to recruit and train those called to serve in the Church today; to lead and serve congregations into new ways of worship and witness.

The structures of recruitment and training have served the Church well, but are now under incredible strain and pressure. The numbers below show the scale of the challenge. Action is required to ensure that recruitment and training meet the needs of the Church as it is today, and anticipating the road ahead.

	2005	2015	Drop	Change % (-)
Membership	520,940	363,597	157,343	30.2
Elders	41,218	30,301	10,917	26.5
Charges	1,204	1,017	187	15.5
Congregations	1,523	1,373	150	9.8
Ministers	1,032	786	246	23.8

The number of congregations has dropped by 9.8%. The number of ministers has reduced by 23.8%. The impact on serving ministers is exponential. The skills and resilience required in ministry today is significantly different to even just ten years ago. The clear way ahead requires significant investment in continuing ministerial development.

Number of Candidates						
Year	Glasgow	Edinburgh	Aberdeen	St Andrews	HTC	TOTAL
1980	80	65	28	10	0	183
1985	76	64	39	23	0	202
1990	64	43	40	26	0	173
1995	48	46	23	12	0	129
2000*						
2005	29	25	15	0	0	69
2010	8	21	5	1	6	41
2015	14	14	1	2	8	39

*no data available

80% reduction in the number of candidates between 1985 and 2015

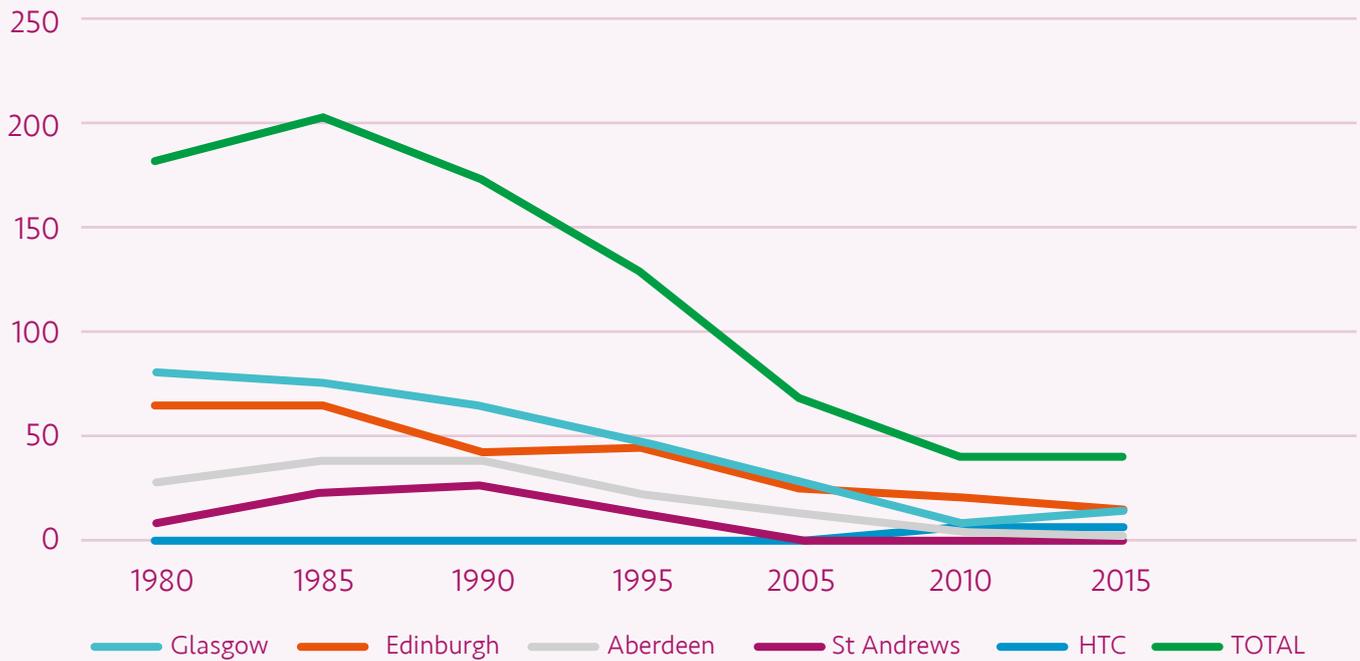
During this same period, we have increased training centres by 20%.

Change in the Colleges between 1985 and 2015

	Glasgow	Edinburgh	Aberdeen	St Andrews
Reduction	81.5%	78.1%	97.4%	91.3%

This reduction has significant impact on the provision of academic courses tailored to ministry training. Students now struggle to specialise in subjects that are specifically ministry-oriented.

Candidate Numbers



3. Blake Stevenson Executive Summary

We received a total of 459 responses to the surveys of which:

- 320 were Full-time Ministers / OLMs
- 36 were current IME students
- 95 were Readers
- 8 were Deacons.

Consultations were held with:

- 4 Ministries Council staff
- 6 Academic leaders
- 9 telephone consultations with ministers

Seven focus groups were conducted covering a range of stakeholders and geographical areas:

- Probationers
- Full-time ministers
- Placement supervisors
- Presbytery / TTG Assessors

32% of current students think their current course of study is not preparing them for ministry

78% of current ministers did not feel their education equipped them for ministry

Blake Stevenson Ltd was commissioned by the Church of Scotland to review the training and support that is provided to ministry candidates through Initial Ministerial Education (IME), and to ministers through Continuous Ministerial Development (CMD).

In undertaking the review, Blake Stevenson examined the Church's internal operational systems and structures relating to training and support, and reviewed current training provision, considering content, structure, delivery methods and providers. Through desk research, online surveys and focus group consultation Blake Stevenson examined what ministry candidates need to effectively prepare for their duties as ministers, how well the current provision meets these needs, and what changes need to be made to better prepare ministry candidates.

The review also addressed how well CMD meets the ongoing training needs of ministers once they are ordained, and considered the unique experiences and training and support needs of Ordained Local Ministers (OLMs), Readers, and Deacons.

The emerging picture is one of significant need, with ministers' roles and responsibilities increasingly demanding, and competing priorities leading to people working under pressure to fulfil their obligations. The unique nature of the profession, with ministers being called to their post and working as office-bearers rather than employees adds to the complexity of the environment within which training and support must be provided.

The research identified gaps in training and support for both candidates and ordained ministers (including OLMs), as well as Deacons and Readers. The support needs related to both building confidence and the ability to manage ongoing duties and change, and competence in relation to specific skills required to meet congregations' and the Church's needs.

Some 78% of current ordained ministers did not feel that their education and training has adequately equipped them for the challenges they currently face. 35% also indicated that the training and support they had received from the Church of Scotland since they were ordained had not prepared them well

“I feel that since entering the Church of Scotland I have been left very largely to find my own way in nearly every area”

57% felt church did not equip them for the competencies needed in their role

“I have little time for my own spiritual growth”

for their duties as a minister. Furthermore, 57% felt that this support had not been sufficient to support them to develop their competency.

More specifically, for candidates and probationers, gaps identified related to support for innovation, and a need to further develop candidates’ sense of resilience and ability to manage their own wellbeing.

For ordained ministers, gaps identified included support to develop knowledge and application of social media, leadership development, financial and conflict management, and issues related to church law and property.

Amongst current candidates and probationers, only 69% of those we surveyed indicated that their academic course had been effective preparation for becoming a minister, but 100% felt that there had been a high standard of teaching, and that support by academic staff was good. However, feedback suggests a lack of integration between academic learning and practical application

post-ordination, and a lack of cohesion between training received through universities, and the training and support provided by the Church of Scotland centrally.

40% do not feel resilient for their role

459 responses to the consultation

Candidates and probationers also indicated a lack of consistency across academic institutions. A desire for more interaction between Church of Scotland candidates was seen to be hindered by the student body being fragmented across five institutions. This fragmentation of the students across institutions was also raised by academics consulted, some of whom could see benefit in concentrating provision for Church of Scotland candidates in fewer institutions.

“The list of requirements and new legislation seems to grow continually and the administrative burden does not ease”

Training and support provided to candidates and probationers was generally felt to be in need of further improvement, whilst recognising recent positive developments. Placements were felt to be important, but lacking in consistency and breadth of experience. The Ministries Training Network was valued as a means of connecting students to each other, but the demands related to taking part (for example, journaling tasks), and the Training Portfolio were both felt to be time consuming but lacking in value.

“Keeping the plates spinning is more and more difficult”

Post-ordination training and support was also recognised as having improved recently but with further development required. Particular priorities related to extending the nature and extent of support on offer and tightening the relationship between central office and the individual presbyteries. In addition, a significant

number of people were concerned that the current system relies on those in need asking for support, and a risk that those most in need may not be receiving support (or not receiving the support until point of crisis) as a result. Particular gaps cited related to having robust review processes in place, informed by a comprehensive competency framework to enable training and support needs to be more easily and clearly identified.

Recommendations

Academic study

1. Work with academic institutions to explore opportunities to reduce the number of providers and ensure that the Church of Scotland has more extensive input to course content.
2. Take steps to integrate the Church of Scotland training support more seamlessly with university provision – options for further integration include facilitation of functions such as Ministries Training Network or similar through the university providers; a shared post to offer pastoral support to students; and more regular engagement between the Church of Scotland and university representatives.
3. Consider introducing more digital and blended learning opportunities for initial ministerial training to ensure that there are more flexible entry routes in to the Church.

Church of Scotland support pre-ordination

4. Review of functions and associated requirements of Ministries Training Network and the Training Portfolio to ensure that the work involved in these is merited and valuable.
5. Closer monitoring of candidates and probationers' experiences of placements to ensure that these are valuable and offering the necessary range of experiences to equip people for ministry.
6. More pastoral support for candidates, including development work with Presbyteries to develop their role in pastoral support for candidates/probationers, and more extensive pastoral support from national office / Ministries Council.
7. More extensive training for supervisors to ensure consistency of approach, clear understanding of any revised processes following this review, and regular updating of training.
8. Development of a comprehensive competency framework to inform the selection process for candidates, and progress whilst undertaking their pre-ordination training. This competency framework would also create a direct link between Initial Ministerial Education and Continuous Ministerial Development, and ensure continuity of learning beyond ordination.
9. Ensure the candidature recruitment process is based around any new competency framework developed, whilst also supporting candidates to follow their calling by using a values-based approach to recruitment.
10. Consider candidate representation on the Training Task Group or Education and Support Group (or other group as appropriate).
11. Simplification and improved presentation of paperwork associated with training and support.
12. Overhaul of the candidate review process to ensure transparency, an effective mechanism for reviewing progress and consistent application by all those involved. An important consideration within this is how best to have supervisor input to the review process, without compromising the candidate's ability to speak candidly (a two-part process, with the supervisor only attending the first part of the review process may be a simple step to address this current gap).
13. Maintain clear, transparent and coherent communications between recruitment and training bodies within the Church to ensure recruitment and training processes are more closely linked and consistent.

Training and support post-ordination

14. Introduction of a robust regular process of review, informed by the development of a comprehensive competency framework to inform monitoring of ministers' progress throughout their career and provision of necessary training and support.
15. Improve training and support in relation to gaps identified in this review including church law and procedure, business skills, self-confidence etc.
16. Consider introduction of a more extensive package of pastoral support, and consider the introduction or development of mentoring schemes.
17. Review the provision to support innovation and other more recent demands related to church management, including the use of social media, to ensure that ministers are equipped to manage change within both their congregations and presbyteries.

Read the full report at: <https://tinyurl.com/y8ckbrc9>

4. The Change Model

The diagram outlines the key areas of change and development. This has been developed from the evidence from RIT Phase 1, Blake Stevenson, Curriculum Development Group, and RIT Group.

Transforming Recruitment and Training



Christ-centred : Student-focused

- Purpose:** to recruit and train ministers to lead and serve in the Church today.
- Values:** delivering a programme with clear articulated values that guide and shape every aspect.
- People:** throughout the programme we need talented people to lead and manage. From recruitment administrators through to university lecturers, people are our greatest asset.
- Process:** streamline processes throughout the programme. Ensure processes add-value. Overall reduction in bureaucracy. All processes should be clear and simple.
- Formation Framework:** a consistent and coherent understanding of the characteristics, gifts, skills and understanding required to flourish in ministry. This will be used in recruitment, initial training and continuing ministerial development.
- Curriculum Development:** underpinned by the Formation Framework, a developed ministerial curriculum to ensure ministry-specific education. This will span across university-based learning, conferences and placements. Commissioned and approved by the Church and developed in partnership with HEI*.
- Digital:** deploy a central digital home for recruitment and training to enable students to manage their training record, and improve communications and reporting. Moving to automation will reduce unnecessary paperwork and bureaucracy.
- Support:** improve student support throughout the process to ensure our students receive the best preparation for ministry.
- Finance:** increase student funding to enable people from all backgrounds to embark on training. Financial rationalisation across the whole of training will ensure consistent and sustainable model of funding.

*Higher Education Institution

5. Formation Framework

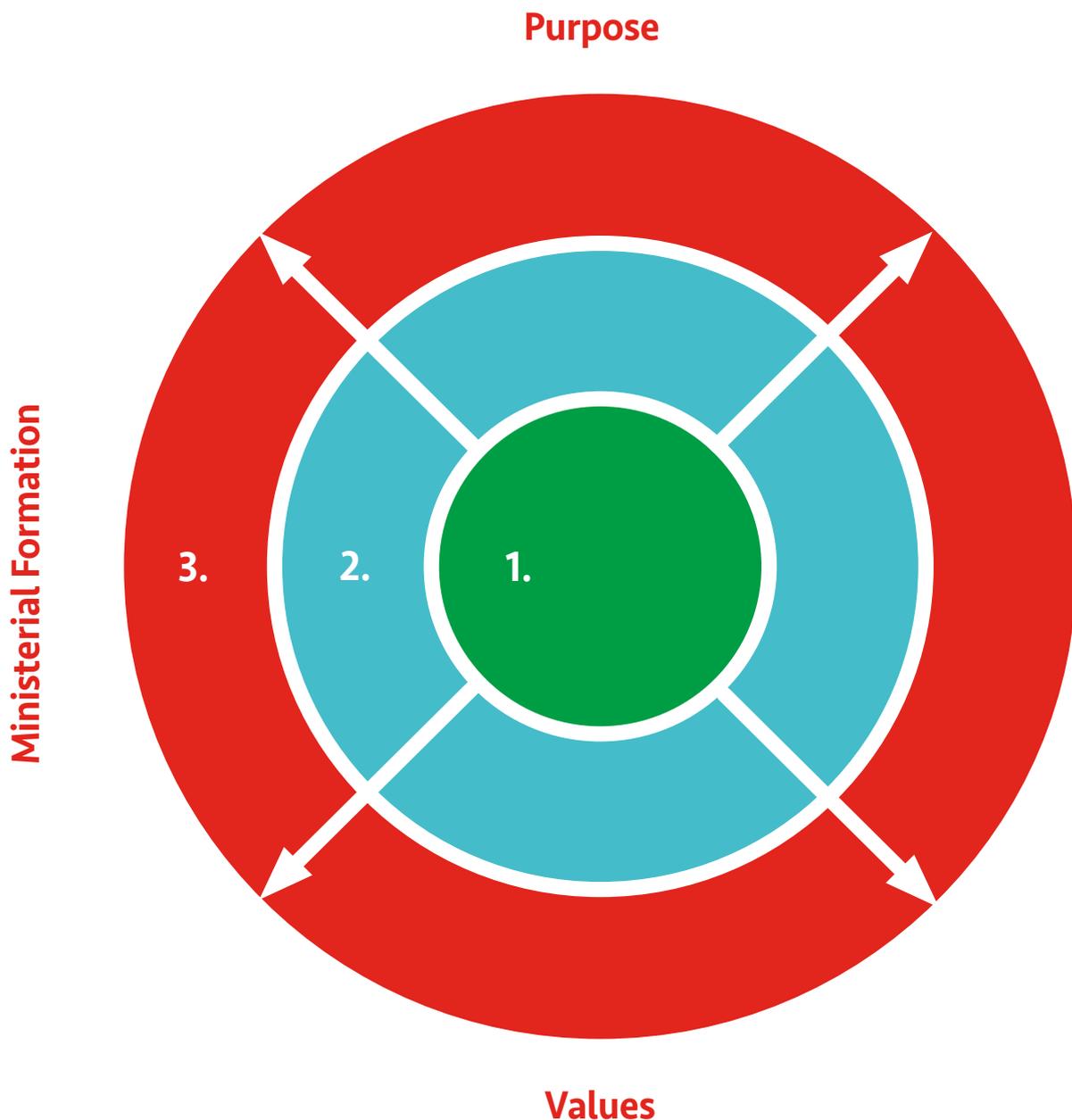
Training for ministry should explore – at the profound level – what it means to be called by God to lead and serve in the Church today. This requires a maturity of gifts, knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities. The Formation Framework being developed provides a systematic approach to ensure that everyone embarking on ministry is adequately prepared.

The framework will:

- Help students understand the direction of their own learning
- Outline to prospective students the entry requirements and demands
- Provide a clear framework for the Higher Education Institution to ensure curriculum provision
- Gives a benchmark to help identify Continuing Ministerial Development requirements
- Guides Initial Ministerial Education to ensure proper resource management.

Ministerial formation cannot be easily distilled into a simple framework. There is something unique about the vocational call of ministry that is, at times, hard to grasp. By providing a model of formation we set out the responsibilities individuals carry as they undertake service in the Church.

We believe that training for ministry ought to engage the whole-person in their training and development. This forms part of the wider discipleship journey, but importantly is designed to build strength-on-strength, i.e. a level of maturity is required before embarking on ministerial training. The formation framework will include competency standards to ensure that essential skills required for ministry are present, and identify areas for growth and development.



Called and equipped for the mission of God in the Church of Scotland

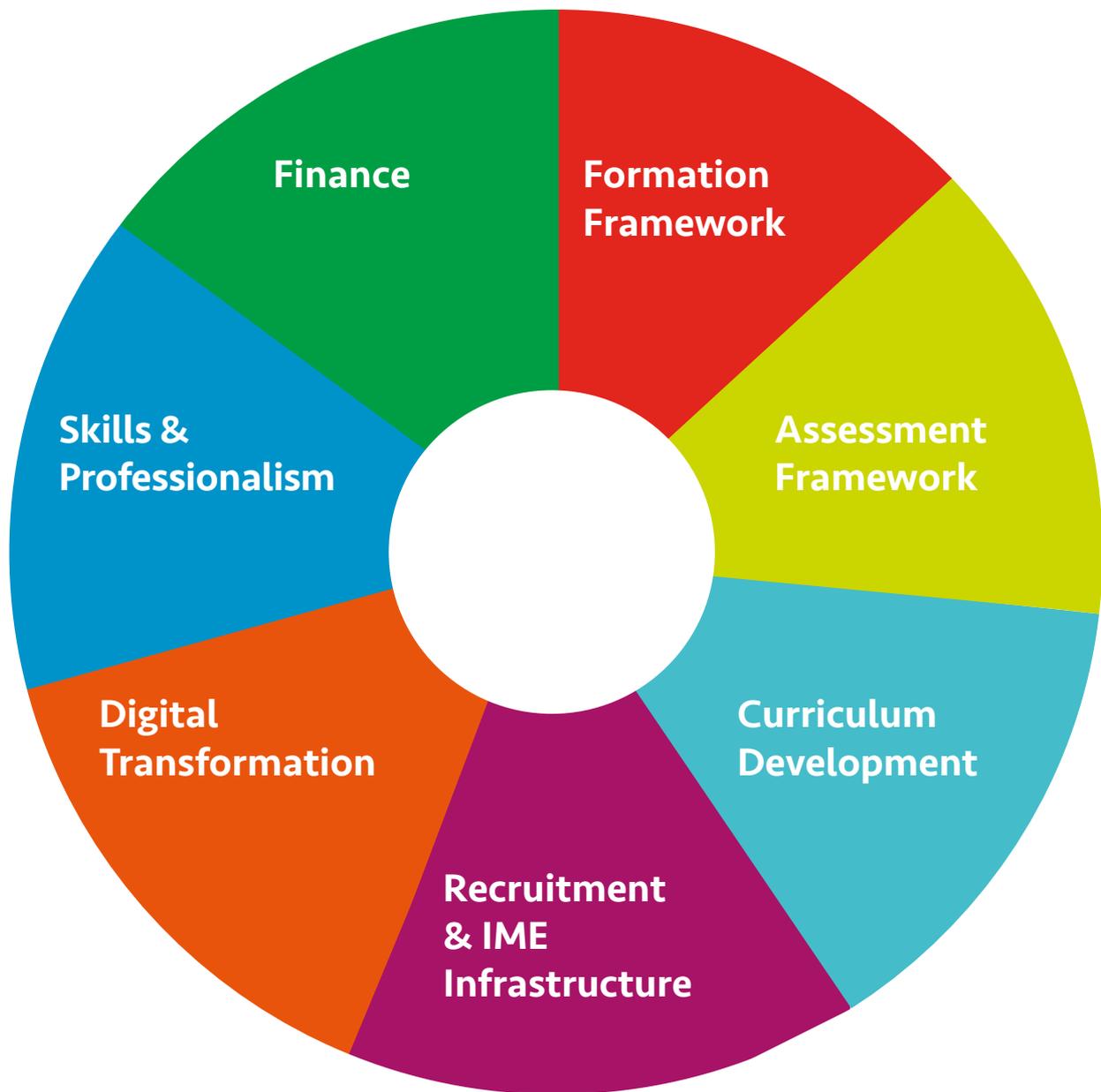
- 1. At the core is personal Christian faith and vocation. These remain at the very heart of our ministerial formation.**
- 2. Gifts, knowledge and understanding, disposition**
- 3. Skills, competency in tasks**

The arrows indicate that the direction of ministry is to serve God, to serve parishes and communities and to serve the Church. This indicates the missional nature of ministry in the Church today.

The formation framework will be further developed into a structured Formation Criteria to guide recruitment, training and continuing ministerial development.

6. Action

The following areas are under development.



Project	Information	Status
Formation Framework	Project to systematically document the requirements for ministry in order to support recruitment, training and continuing ministerial development.	Underway
Assessment Framework	This will be developed from the Recruitment Review Project and the Formation Framework. Assessment applies from recruitment and throughout training.	Pending
Curriculum Development	A group chaired by Rev Prof David Fergusson has met to bring together the initial scope for this work. This technical piece of work will now be undertaken in partnership with University of Edinburgh.	Underway
Infrastructure	An extensive infrastructure will be put in place to support the ministry student: we will examine all our processes to ensure they are student-focused in approach.	Pending
Digital Transformation	Scoping work for this significant project is underway. The digital transformation will reduce bureaucracy, increase reporting and allow for greater student communications and engagement.	Start-up
Skills and Personnel	We are committed to developing our people. The changes that will be put in place will require a review of the skills and knowledge we have in the organisation.	Pending
Finance	An extensive financial review is underway to ensure that recruitment and training is focusing funds in the most critical areas.	Underway

A full blueprint for training will be submitted to the General Assembly in 2019.

Appendix 1: Phase 1 Principles

The principles outlined in Phase 1 remain in place.

Initial Ministerial Education should be:

- **Attractive** – In a Church that struggles to recruit candidates for its professional ministries, it will be increasingly important that the proposition offered to applicants is one that intrigues and entices them to explore their calling and offer their time and energy to the process of ministerial formation. We believe that the remaining ten principles of IME will help to ensure that good quality applicants are attracted towards the journey of formation that is offered.
- **Collaborative** – There needs to be a qualitative change in the management of the relationships among the many stakeholders involved in the process of IME, so that the formation process is articulated and consistent. As the communications centre for many partners in delivering training, the Council should take advantage of innovations in technology to make sure that candidates each see the logic within the single process of preparation for ministry.
- **Cost-efficient** – Current patterns of IME are proving expensive because some processes are administratively very draining (for example, the weight of paperwork required at certain points in the cycle) and some elements of formation are costly (for example, the scale of candidates' travel expenses during training). Hard judgements will have to be made to reduce elements that produce extra costs, including numbers of external providers of training.
- **Denominational** – the Review Group has been struck by the absence of calls to remove any major elements of our current IME, which is recognised to stand in a very long and distinctive tradition

of Scottish Presbyterian ministerial formation. The Church must not lose the best of its traditions, including the standards of university education we require and the depth of mentoring we offer in the system of attachments.

- **Flexible** – This major principle has two main applications. 1. Our candidates come from hugely varied backgrounds, have differing visions of their own eventual ministries, and live in all sorts of circumstances of family life, finance, work and geographical restriction. It is important that this variety, much greater than in previous generations, is recognised in the courses we can offer them, including perhaps through distance learning or part-time study where appropriate. 2. That ever-changing nature of the Church and the society it serves will change our IME needs in years to come, in ways we cannot entirely predict. It is therefore also important that the general requirements remain flexible and under scrutiny, and that our model permits the future integration of new elements of academic or practical preparation.
- **Formative** – The Review Group adheres absolutely to the view that IME must be a deep education and formation, and not a mere training in skills for a job. Only the former produces a candidate for ordination who will be able to sustain ministry over a lengthy career. In our view, candidates should always be students for the ministry, and not apprentices.
- **Habit-forming and sustainable** – As the recent experience of the Scottish Episcopal Church testifies, IME should have the effect of producing ministers who are in the habit of continuing to attend to their formation intellectually and spiritually, after ordination. In particular the two habits of reflection and collaboration - highlighted in so many recent Ministries Council Reports to the General Assembly - should be encouraged as life-long habits, though the Review Group does have a concern that there may be a deficit in the quality of preparation for the traditional solo parish ministry that is still very common. In general, though, the Group hopes that IME and the development of those in the first five years of their ministry should be a single continuous process that continues to serve the individual long afterwards.
- **Integrated and Clear** – This principle is likely to require the greatest changes to current processes, because some candidates find their experience of the various elements of training to be disconnected. IME must be integrated, both (1) in the relationship between the academic requirements and the many church-based elements of the training, and (2) in the relationship between the requirements made of the candidates at the outset and the criteria for reviewing their performance year by year during training. Very clear mapping of the whole curriculum, to assist candidates' understanding of their training as an entirety, is one example of the use of good communication to guarantee the engagement and enthusiasm of students and probationers. Future changes to IME must drive integration between component parts to form a coherent training programme. IME must ensure this integration is cascaded into clear operational changes that enable all staffing components of IME to be clear on the purpose and strategy of IME.
- **Mission-orientated and contextual** – The Education and Training section of the Ministries Council is the servant of the Church's needs, and expects to be advised of the training implications of a changing context and a changing ministry. The relationship between the wider Church and its educators must be one of 'pull' not 'push', so that it is the Church's mission that defines the educational task and never the other way round.
- **Multi-dimensional** – The Review Group applauds the principle of training and development of practical demands of ministry and denominational-specific needs which is currently addressed in varying degrees in the Conference Programme. There is a need for further integration between academic education, skills training and Church of Scotland specific development in any changes. The Conference Programme model should be explored but not in isolation to other component parts. Further work on digital learning should be undertaken. Our consultations reveal a number of areas, mentioned in this report, in which the conference programme could fill more of that gap, or improve its existing offering, to serve the complex needs of our trainees.
- **Supported** – The personal and pastoral support of those who take the courageous step of offering themselves for training is the least we owe them in the Church they aim to serve. The most concrete element of that support is financial, and pressing in an age of restrictions and uncertainty in student finance. The Church needs to be bold in the investment it is willing to make in individuals, albeit with a requirement of 'return of service' against such assistance.

Appendix 2: IME Picture

The diagram demonstrates the different aspects of IME and the groups involved.



“Staffing” components within IME



Appendix 3: GA Reports Summary

Rev. Aaron Janklow

Review Paper for the Ministries Council

Overview

This review paper identifies and summarizes important themes, principles, and outcomes of General Assembly Reports since 1999 of the Ministries Council, formerly named the Board of Ministries, with attention to the training and formation of ministers, including recruitment and discernment. The principles and themes identified in this report include: the shortage of ministers and the necessity to recruit more people for ministry, with a particular concern for also recruiting younger people, high standards of practical and academic training, which include universities and Church organized conferences that help prepare future ministers to serve today's communities, integrating theology and practice, developing skills for collaboration, ensuring the role of the Bible and spiritual development in training, and focusing on preparation for the first five years of ministry, and acknowledging and encouraging a life-long pursuit of learning.

Shortage of Ministers: Recruitment, Young Clergy

The Board of Ministry, and later, Ministries Council, repeatedly express concern about the increasing shortage of ministers and the necessity of attracting more people to the ministry. Recognizing that "these figures...are indicative of a serious trend over the next five years" (GA2002 3.2.1), the Board stated, "The challenge to the Church is quite clear; a range of imaginative measures must be taken to deploy and support existing ministers in different ways and to find ways of building up the ministry of the whole people of God" (GA2002 3.2.2). The impact of a shortage of ministers is felt across "the whole ministry pool," as "more and more ministers are having to serve as Interim Moderators for prolonged periods of time," and the "demands of Presbyteries and of the boards and committees of the General Assembly are being shared by fewer and fewer ministers" (GA2002 3.2.3). Reported in 2002, "The General Assembly of 2001 instructed the Board to prepare a report which addressed the projected shortage of ministers in a realistic and pastoral way" (GA2002 3.1). This is a task that continues today, and the 2014 Council reported, "far from improving, the picture is going to become worse" (GA2014 1.1.4).

An integral issue identified in addressing the increasing shortage of ministers is the necessity of recruiting younger people for ministry. The 2014 Council Report cited "the number of people entering Parish Ministry is currently at its lowest point for a generation and more than 80% of those serving in ministry are over the age of 50" and that "there are only two Parish Ministers under the age of 30" (GA2014 1.2.1). The Board echoes these concerns in subsequent years, and the 2016 Council, reports, "An almost complete lack of candidates under the age of 30, and very few even under 40 began to point to an approaching crisis. By 2010, well over 80% of Church of Scotland Parish ministers were over the age of 50, with more than 600 due to retire by 2025" (GA2016 1.2.2.2). Even before these alarming projections, the Council identified that "there is a need for the Church to take a more pro-active role in seeking out people who will respond to a call to ministry" (GA2012 1.2.10.4). The Council suggested the "reintroduction of an annual Vocation Sunday" (GA2012 1.2.10.4). Significantly, the Council argues against the "perception that prior to becoming a Parish Minister, it is best to acquire some experience in the 'real world'" (GA2013 2.2.3.3.1), and affirms theological principles that support young adults entering the ministry. They assert, "For God, youth is not a barrier to ministry" (GA2013 2.2.1.2), and point to Martin Luther, John Knox, George MacLeod, Martin Luther King Jr., Jackie Pullinger, and Jesus Christ himself (GA2013 2.2.2.3). Interestingly each of these people accomplished amazing things when they were younger than the Church of Scotland's average age for beginning ordained ministry, which is 48 (GA2013 2.2.2.1).

In addition to the shortage of ministers, and its intensification as current ministers retire and there are fewer people entering parish ministry, the Council identifies that decreasing church involvement and membership among younger generations is a part of the problem, and possibly also a result. The Council identifies a circular problem in that

The declining numbers of Church members below the age of 45 must also be a significant factor for decline in ministers from younger generations. Furthermore, there may be a circular process at work here.

As the number of ministers below the age of 45 decreases, so the Church will find it harder to attract those under the age of 45 to its membership. As the number of members below the age of 45 declines, so also does the pool of people of those generations who may be encouraged to explore a call to Ministry (GA2013 2.2.3.5.1).

To address the shortage of ministers, the Council appointed a Vocations Promotion Officer, and later Vocation Champions. The General Assembly of 2014 stated,

The critical shortage of those applying for and being accepted to train for the recognised ministries highlighted the need for a role dedicated to recruitment. The Council has created and recruited to the post of National Vocations Promotion Officer who will among other things, take a lead in creating promotional materials, running Vocations Conferences, implementing the findings of the Under 45s group, collating material for Vocations Sunday, supporting the Volunteering Vocations Programme and recruiting and supporting Vocations Champions. The Council has also created the post of National Vocations Co-ordinator to run the Assessment process and implement the changes created by the Enquiry and Assessment Review (GA2014 4.4).

The 2016 Report provided an update on this effort towards recruitment, and stated, "There are now 9 Vocations Champions working across various Presbyteries from England to Inverness" (GA2016 4.1).

Training: Universities, Preparing for Today's Communities

The Council maintains the importance of high training standards, which includes theological education and pastoral experiences, and is focused on preparing candidates for "what is essential for the formation of the 'beginning minister,' including individual spiritual growth, the development of habits of reflective practice, and the fostering of a commitment to collaborative working and lifelong learning" (GA2005 3.4.5). The 2003 Report addresses how the Church of Scotland works alongside universities to ensure that candidates are prepared for parish ministry, stating,

The Committee believes that Candidates should undertake a broad theological education in an academic environment where theological ideas and issues of faith are subjected to rigorous intellectual examination and discussion amongst those who both share and do not share the particular faith stance or denominational allegiance of our Candidates for Ministry. It is recognised, however, that there are likely to be some courses of instruction, essential for the preparation of Candidates for Ministry, that cannot be provided as part of the normal undergraduate programme offered by an academic institution. Similarly, there will be a range of skills essential for ministry that cannot be developed in the classroom or the study. These gaps will be addressed in the supervised field placements and the Candidates' conference programme. The field placements and the conference programme also have an important role to play in the cultural assimilation of Candidates from other churches, in the creation of a culture of collegiality which encourages peer-support and team working, and in the spiritual as well as professional development of the 'beginning minister'" (GA2003 5.5.4.2).

The Council affirms the theological education ministers receive in universities "where theological ideas and issues of faith are subject to rigorous intellectual examination and debate involving both those who share and those who do not share the particular faith commitment or denominational allegiance of our candidates for ministry" (GA2004 5.3.1). Alongside affirming the ability of universities to provide "theological training of a high academic standard" (GA1999 8.1.2), the Council values the interactions with people of other faiths and none that occur in universities (GA2008 6.1.1.1). Within this principle, the Council seeks to prepare parish ministers for living and ministering in communities that have people of diverse faiths and none. The 2007 Report asserted that Scotland "is a vastly different society from even a generation ago," and identified challenges that will be faced by parish ministers, such as "an increasing disaffection with institutional religion running parallel to an increasing interest in spirituality," as well as "the breakdown of traditional models of community," and "the unparalleled movement of people across the world resulting in complex multi-cultural and multi-faith neighbourhoods on our doorsteps" (GA2007 1.1.3).

Training: Integrating Theology and Practice, Collaboration, & Conferences

In addition to seeking to equip future ministers for working alongside and with others in the wider community, the Council also affirms as a principle the importance of creating community and fellowship among those training for ministry (GA2002 4.12.4.1; GA2005 5.2.2.1). As part of this, the Council seeks to achieve a high level collaboration among parish ministers, which they believe will be necessary with changes within society and the Church. Referencing the Ministers of the Gospel and Deacons of the Gospel Reports, the 2002 Council Report identified collaboration as “an important part of ministry in the future” (GA2002 4.12.4.1). Conferences are increasingly being utilized as ways to foster community among those training for ministry, which is important as those training for ministry may be studying at different universities. Additionally, conferences are ensuring, or strengthening, the integration of theology and practice, and addressing specific skills needed for parish ministry. The 1999 Report, listed among other principles, “the importance of integration of theology and practice,” “encouraging a sense of belonging to the Church from the point of selection,” and “developing and extending peer group formation” (GA1999 8.5.1). Conferences are utilized to help achieve these learning goals and make up an important part of training for ministry.

The Enquirers’ Conference is repeatedly recognized as a positive step in the recruitment and training of ministers (GA2001 6.2.2.1; GA2000 6.2.2.1, 6.3.1.2, GA2001 4.1, 6.2.2.1, 6.3.1.2; GA2002 4.1; GA2003 5.2.1; GA2004 3.2.1; GA2006 2.1.1). This conference addresses ministry within the Church of Scotland, and is an initial step towards determining a calling (GA1999 7.2.4; GA2011 3.1). This conference helps create community among those exploring a call, and also helps create or solidify relationships with those already in the Church of Scotland from the earliest stages. Following time as an enquirer, the candidate stage consists of conferences and placements. During this stage, conferences are increasingly used to address the training of ministers as it relates to integrating theology and practice, and developing specific skills for parish ministry. The initial conference for candidates was held in 2000, and “covered a number of topics which are vital in formation for ministry and many other topics will be raised as appropriate in future training conferences,” and is also described as having “served well in encouraging a sense of belonging to the Church and developing peer group formation” (GA2001 7.2.4). According to Reports, in order to integrate theology and practice, and the cultivation of specific skills for parish ministry, the Candidates’ Conferences, “and, where possible, the supervised field placements,” should include “public worship and preaching,” “principles in effective communication,” “speech training,” “sacramental practice in the Church of Scotland,” “Church law and procedure,” “team working,” “leadership, support and encouragement of volunteers,” “the practice of ministry,” and “personal prayer life” (GA2003 5.5.5.2), and mission (GA2007 2.2.3.3). In addition to these conferences, candidates “undertake two part-time winter placements and one full-time summer placement” (GA2006 2.9.6). The 2006 Report states, “At present, the aim of placements is to give candidates a broad-based set of skills that are (or should be) transferable to any situation in which they find themselves in ministry” (GA2006 2.12.2.3). Conferences continue into the probation period, and as the 2006 Report stated, “Four short conferences for Probationers took place,” and “the conference programme is a major element of the formation process enabling a support network to develop among the candidates which will continue into the future” (GA2006 2.9.4).

Training: The Bible and Spiritual Development

A further component of integrating theology and practice in preparation for the parish setting is familiarity with the Bible. The Council seeks to aid candidates “to place the Bible at the heart of their spiritual as well as professional development” (GA2004 5.8.2). The 2003 Report recorded the replacement of “the current system of three Bible Examinations by an Examination by Portfolio” (GA2003 5.5.7.2). In this Portfolio, “each Candidate would be expected to produce various pieces of work in each year of training which relate biblical knowledge and the practice of ministry, throughout his or her training and educational process,” and seeks to “encourage Candidates to integrate their academic knowledge and understanding of the Bible with reflections on their experiences in supervised field placements and on the conference programme” (GA2003 5.5.7.2). The 2004 Report affirmed “that this element should be more closely integrated with the other parts of the formation process: in particular, reflection on the practice of ministry” (GA2004 5.8.1). The Bible Portfolio was replaced by the Ministries Training Network, which includes “a series of regional meetings designed to enable candidates to gather for worship, peer support and learning” (GA2008 7.2.1.4.1). In addition to the program conferences and placements for candidates, “the Board believes that, as part of their process of spiritual development, each candidate in training should undertake regular devotional reading of the Bible and vocational reflection on spiritual classics under the guidance of a trained Spiritual Advisor” (GA2004 5.3.2.2, re-affirmed by GA2005 3.4.3). In order to lend further pastoral support to candidates, “a named representative of the Council (either Committee member or staff member) would attend each ordination and formally convey the congratulations and good wishes of the Council” (GA2006 2.9.9).

Training: Focus on the First Five Years and a Lifetime of Learning

The 2003 Reports stated, “The Board continues to review its provision of courses and conferences trying as best it can to balance the needs of Ministers against the financial resources available,” and “after careful consideration...it was decided to concentrate the resources on the provision of conferences for those in the first five years” (GA2003 4.6.1; affirmed in GA2004 6.10.1.1). The Board states that these conferences “are primarily educational in nature, but also contribute to the continuing development of a peer group identity for those who have gone through their theological education and conference cycle together. In the intervening years (two and four) the Board is offering one day conferences for the same group of participants” (GA2004 6.10.2.1). The 2012 Report maintains that “although the focus of this report is pre-ordination training, it must be seen as intimately connected to life-long learning and development in Parish ministry,” and “that those engaged in Parish ministry must be people who are constantly in training: that is, equipping themselves in order in turn to “equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12)” (GA2012 1.4.1.1). This theme of equipping others for ministry is also asserted with reference to Ephesians 4 in the 2000 Panel on Doctrine Report (3.4).

Conclusion: Executive Summary

This review paper identified recurring themes and principles in General Assembly Reports of the Board of Ministry, and later Ministries Council, dating from 1999 onward. The shortage of ministers, and the related concern about the lack of younger ministers, is repeatedly identified as necessitating an examination of recruitment strategies, which have included Vocations Promotions Officers, and encouraging ministers and parishes to identify potential individuals and promote the ministry through a Vocations Sunday. The training of ministers is thoroughly addressed, and the integration of theology and practice and skills for collaboration are key themes. The Ministers of the Gospel Report exerted tremendous impact on the decisions and direction of the Board (examples include, but are not limited to: GA1999 3.4; GA2002 4.12.4.1, 5.13.1; GA2003 1.1; GA2007 1.2.1; GA2012 1.2.2.1, 1.4.2.1). The 2002 Report cites the “Church Without Walls” Report which “further calls on the Church to find imaginative new ways to use the gifts of the whole people of God” (GA2002 3.5.3). These Reports show the importance of training ministers to work in collaboration, not just with other ministers, but their congregations. For a thorough theological examination of ordination see the 2000 Panel of Doctrine Report. This report also addresses shared concerns of the Board Reports, such as how “rapid social change and a half century of numerical decline are posing serious questions to the Church of Scotland about its nature and task” (Panel on Doctrine 2000 1.4).

Preparing for their first five years of ministry reflects the vast array of skills that are needed in the parish, and encouraging the lifetime pursuit of learning recognizes that new skills will constantly be developing. Conferences are an integral part of ministerial training and aim to work alongside theological education in the university settings. Pointing to the constant reevaluation of recruitment and training, the 2016 Report stated, “The characteristics and gifts required of the leader of such an extended group of Parishes will be significantly different from those of the settled pastor-teacher to which we have become accustomed. Our contemporary context points, therefore, to a need not only to rethink initial training, but to develop patterns of ongoing development and retraining for those already in ministry” (GA2016 1.2.2.4).

In addition to the themes and principals addressed in this paper, other themes that are important to note include the difficulty of rural parishes (GA2001 9.2.2.3; GA2009 1.9.1, 9.2.2.4), the use of the internet (GA2006 2.9.5; GA2014 4.6.4), the training of those who work with enquirers, candidates, and probationers (GA2012 1.4.2.4.8), exploration of a “flexible learning option” (GA2003 5.5.8, GA2004 5.4.3, GA2005 3.6.1), and new ideas and focuses for ministry that are emerging, such as emerging church (GA2008 2.2.5.3.1) and pioneering skills (GA2015 2.5.14).

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