

COUNCIL FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY

Convener: Rev JNI McNEELY
Secretary: Rev TJ STOTHERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Council for Training in Ministry met on four occasions since the 2015 General Assembly to receive reports from the Committees and Panels through which it carries out its strategic responsibilities. The Council Convener, having guided the Council through the period of transition from the Board of Christian Training to the new Council, is retiring in June 2016.

2. The **Ministerial Studies and Development Committee** looks after all aspects of selection, training and ongoing development of full-time Ministers and operates with an Assignments Panel. The Committee reports a reduced number of applicants for the ministry and that 4 candidates are being nominated for acceptance as students for the Ordained Ministry in 2016. The report refers to the revision of the Ministerial Development programme and an adjustment to the age limit for sabbatical leave.

3. The **Union Theological College Management Committee** is responsible for all management of UTC and operates with a Curriculum Panel and a Property, Finance and Administration Panel. The Committee is pleased to report progress during the past year in regard to the restoring of the stonework at Union Theological College and the intention to appoint two full-time lecturers to the academic staff.

4. The **Reception of Ministers and Licentiatees Committee** primarily considers requests from Ministers and Licentiatees of other Churches in regard to service within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Following the resolution of the General Assembly in 2014 requesting a review of current guidelines for the receiving of Ministers from overseas the Committee agreed a set of revised arrangements for applicants.

5. The **Deaconess Selection and Training Panel** oversees the selection and initial training of Deaconesses including supervision of the probationary period. The Panel has agreed to receive applications from candidates to commence Deaconess training at Union Theological College in the 2017/18 academic year.

6. The **Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Minister Panel** handles all aspects of the selection, training and on-going development of Accredited Preachers and Auxiliary Ministers. The Panel reports that a second cohort of candidates is participating in the Auxiliary Ministry Course and will complete their training in March 2017.

7. The **Pastoral Care of Manse Families Panel** is responsible for the development of pastoral care and provision of support for Ministers and their families. The Panel has been holding information events for Presbyteries and particularly those responsible for pastoral care of Ministers and their families.

8. The **Conciliation Panel** provides a service of conciliation and a team of trained people to assist in situations where conciliation is required. The Panel

has been producing a range of training materials which can be delivered by team members in local situations.

9. The **Ministry Formation Panel** monitors the progress of students for the Ordained Ministry and may add specific requirements to a candidate's pathway.

10. The **Qualifications Panel** considers the academic merit of degrees awarded by a university or college not normally recognised under the law of the Church and reports directly to the General Assembly. It did not have occasion to meet during the year.

Convener's Introduction

11. The former Board of Christian Training and the current Council for Training in Ministry have gradually been applying the recommendations included in the 2009 Assembly Report of the Union Theological College Review Panel. Two of the major recommendations were the appointment of a Principal with executive responsibility and the structuring of three departments to include full-time (junior) lecturer posts. The Council in 2016 is now pleased to report that it has been agreed to appoint two such lecturers in the Department of Biblical Studies and the Department of Systematic Theology and Church History.

12. The Rev Prof Patton Taylor retired as Professor of Old Testament at Union Theological College on 15th February 2016. The Council acknowledges the significant contribution he has made to the College since his appointment in 1994. Special recognition is recorded regarding his two tenures as Principal of the College from 2002-2008 and 2010-2013. Prof Taylor is not only recognised for his expertise in Old Testament studies but also will be remembered for the congenial rapport he formed with the students and his devoted commitment to the ethos of Union Theological College.

13. Council representatives and members of the Linkage Commission and the Council for Mission in Ireland met to consider the future developments in ministerial training. The Council has been considering the introduction of special training in Church planting and rural mission and subsequently involving students in training situations outside normal assistantships. Representatives of the Councils have been meeting to consider the implications of such a strategic approach and have been consulting with the Principal and the Dean of Ministerial Studies and Development. Appropriate use of income from scholarships has been able to contribute to funding to enable one third year student to be assigned to a Congregation in a missional context in Belfast.

14. In exceptional cases, following a report from the Ministry Formation Panel, it may be necessary to suspend a student's studies or recommend to the General Assembly that a Ministry Candidate's pathway be terminated. The attention of the Panel has been given to three particular students over the current academic year. Mr Keith Parke has recently withdrawn as a student for the ordained ministry. It is important to note that students are on pathways of training and that it should not be assumed that acceptance as a student for the Ordained Ministry is a guarantee of successful completion of the course, nor of being declared eligible for a call after a period of licentiatehip. An Overture is submitted which is intended to give clarity over the position of a licensed assistant whose appointment is terminated.

15. There have been a significantly reduced number of applications from candidates for the ministry in the last two years – nine last year and eight this and of the latter the Council can only recommend four. The Council reminds Ministers, Kirk Sessions and leaders in Congregations to be regularly looking out for people who demonstrate the gift profile that would potentially equip them to be ordained Ministers of the Church. It is important that men and women who may be called to ministry in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland are encouraged to consider such calling, to pray, seek guidance and explore the possibility of the Ordained Ministry. The Council provides the Accredited Preachers Course which can be for some people a stepping stone towards helping them decide the form of ministry they may follow.

16. Over recent years, as the recommendations of the 2009 Review have been implemented, the provisions of the Code have diverged from what has been agreed by resolution of the General Assembly. A series of Overtures are submitted to bring the Code into line with those resolutions, in accordance with the instruction of last year's General Assembly (Minutes page 50, resolution 4). Flowing from that same resolution steps have also been taken to amend the provisions of the 1978 Act of Parliament relating to Union Theological College. That work is almost complete: the amendments have been accepted by the relevant government department at Stormont and await enactment.

17. The Council acknowledges the retirement of three Conveners of Panels, coincident with the meeting of the Assembly

- (a) The Rev Nigel McCullough retires as Convener of the Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Minister Panel. During his service as Convener he has been strategic in the creating of the Accredited Preachers course and the introduction of the Auxiliary Minister training.
- (b) Dr Lena Morrow retires as Convener of the Curriculum Panel. Dr Morrow was a member of the 2009 UTC Review Panel and has been serving on the UTC Management Committee; she gave significant and perceptive guidance to the Curriculum Panel under the new management structure.
- (c) Mr Joe Campbell retires as Convener of the Conciliation Panel. Mr Campbell offered many years of experience in conciliation and community relations to his work as Convener. He contributed much wisdom and discernment as he gave leadership to the Panel and was regularly engaged in mediation work with Churches and individuals.

The Rev Jim Stothers writes:

18. The Rev Noble McNeely retires as Convener of the Council at this year's General Assembly. Having served as Convener of the Ministerial Studies and Development Committee from 2007-2010, he was appointed as Convener of the Board of Christian Training in 2010. He gave himself fully to a very important position within our Church and steered the Board through the implementation of many changes which had been agreed in 2009. He graciously agreed to stay on for the transition of the Board into the Council for Training in Ministry at the start of 2015, with the further changes that that has entailed. To the position of Convener he has brought his own commitment to the work of the Board, then Council, and a very open and straightforward manner in guiding them and their Committees. The Council records its thanks to him for all that he has done. It

is understood that the Nominations Committee will nominate the Rev Nigel McCullough to succeed Mr McNeely as Convener of the Council for Training in Ministry. Mr McCullough brings a wealth of experience on the former Board and present Council and is currently Convener of the Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Ministry Panel as well as a member of the Ministerial Studies and Development Committee: we look forward to the leadership he will provide.

STUDENTS' BURSARY FUND

The Rev Mark Russell, Students' Bursary Fund Agent, writes:

19. The Students' Bursary Fund exists to make financial provision for students for the Ordained Ministry and their families, during their time of study.

20. In the academic year September 2015-June 2016 there are 36 students in receipt of grants. The cost to the Fund of grants, fees and all other expenses for this period is £477,765.36. This is being met through offerings at services of licensing, ordination and installations of Ministers and Elders, personal and Congregational donations and by Congregational assessment. Thank you to all members of the Church who generously support the Students' Bursary Fund.

21. All those who have responsibility for planning services of licensing, ordination and installation are asked to ensure that full use is made of the SBF literature which is available from reception in Assembly Buildings, especially the Gift Aid envelope. Past experience has shown that where literature is handed out at an earlier service, those attending the special service are more likely to make use of the Gift Aid scheme.

MINISTERIAL STUDIES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

22. At the time of writing, in this academic year (2015-2016) there were 38 students under the care of Presbyteries, as listed in the appended Schedule (see Appendix 1). This is in addition to 2 students training at Union Theological College for Deaconess service.

Accredited Preacher Course Requirement

23. As agreed at the General Assembly in 2013 ministry candidates are now required to have completed the Accredited Preacher Course (and by implication the Handling the Word Course). It is believed that this requirement will not only be of tremendous benefit to Presbyteries by giving them an objective basis on which to assess the giftedness of any applicant for Ordained Ministry, because they will have overseen that applicant's journey through both the Handling the Word Course and the Accredited Preacher Course, but will also give a solid platform on which to set college years of intensive theological study and ministry formation if the applicant is accepted for training for Ordained Ministry. It has been realised that requiring completion of the Course prior to application introduced an unnecessary and unintended additional length of time, and so the Overture submitted anent Par 214 of the Code requires completion by time of interview, rather than at time of application.

Interviews

24. The interviews of 8 candidates were held in Union Theological College under the revised Application and Assessment process on Monday 21st and Tuesday 22nd March 2016. The Interviewing Panels comprised: Ministers – Amanda Best, Robin Brown, Andrew Faulkner, David Leach, Niall Lockhart, Colin Morrison, Nigel McCullough, Dr Ivan Patterson; Elders – Mr Joe Campbell, Dr. Lena Morrow. *HealthLink360* acted as Vocational Consultant, the Rev Noble McNeely as Chairman, the Rev Dr Bill Parker as Secretary, and the Rev Dr David Allen as DMSD. The Rev Jim Stothers, Secretary to the Council, was also present at the reporting stage. The Panels had previously had opportunity to meet and get to know those they had the responsibility to interview at a study day in December 2015. Having completed the interviewing process, 4 candidates are being nominated to the General Assembly by the Council for Training in Ministry.

Introduction to Biblical Languages Course Unit

25. The Biblical languages curriculum was revised for the academic year 2010-2011 and was reviewed towards the end of the academic year 2011-2012 after two years of operation. At that time the Committee expressed general satisfaction with the Course Unit. The Committee has now agreed that there will be a full formal review of the Introduction to Biblical languages Course Unit in the academic year 2016-2017.

Ministerial Development Programme

26. The Ministerial Development Programme (MDP) has provided significant benefits for our Ministers and Deaconesses, and through them subsequent benefits to Congregations in particular, and the Church in general. In the early years of the Programme applications for in-service training and sabbatical were limited and this allowed a significant surplus to be built-up in the Fund, e.g. £310,000 in 2011. In recent years, however, applications for In-service Training (IST) and Sabbatical leave have grown, and for this reason, along with the introduction in 2009 of a five-year residential programme for Post-ordination Training (POT), demands on the Fund have increased considerably. It was decided by Board of Christian Training not to overly increase the assessment on Congregations to the Fund. As an alternative to increased assessments, the surplus was allowed to diminish.

27. The surplus has now reached the point at which it cannot prudently be allowed to diminish further. The assessment has already been increased significantly from £25,000 in 2014, to £49,000 in 2015, and £100,000 for 2016. It is likely that the demands on the Fund will increase further as Ministers who have completed POT are more likely to apply for IST and sabbatical leave than Ministers who have not undergone that training, and as the requirement for Ministers to take at least 4 weeks' sabbatical within ten years of ordination takes effect. In light of the financial position of the Fund, the Committee agreed to recommend that the General Assembly make two changes to the Programme. The changes, it is believed, will achieve a balance between maintaining the benefits of the Programme, while at the same time limiting future increases in Congregational assessments.

28. Sabbatical leave has its emphasis on enabling a Minister to seek personal spiritual renewal and refreshment and also on allowing time and space for reflection on aspects of his/her ministry within the wider mission and ministry priorities of the Congregation. Although this may well include the enhancing of knowledge and skills in a specific area, the aim of sabbatical leave is to enable Ministers to refocus on their calling under God as both Minister and believer. Benefits of sabbatical, therefore, not only accrue personally to the Minister but also must be given opportunity to accrue to that Minister's ministry. The Committee agreed to recommend that the General Assembly reduce the maximum age of eligibility for sabbatical grant from the year in which recipients reach their 62nd birthday to the year in which they reach their 60th birthday. This would ensure the twin benefits of reducing demand upon the Fund, and of giving recipients longer to apply the benefits they have gained from their sabbatical. It is envisaged that the change will be phased-in so that recipients may prepare for impending changes. The recommendation includes the proviso that the maximum age of eligibility remains at this point as long as UK State Pension age is not more than 67 years – the General Assembly agreed in 2010 that normal retirement age for Ministers would be the male UK State Pension age. However, if the UK State Pension age becomes older than 67 years the maximum age of eligibility for sabbatical grants should be increased accordingly in order to maintain a seven year gap between final sabbatical entitlement and the normal retirement date. The Committee believes that seven years is a suitable period of time to give Ministers the opportunity to apply benefits gained from their sabbatical leave.

29. The Committee agreed to recommend that the General Assembly modify POT from a residential to a non-residential format. The current structure, established in 2009, provides two days of training, spread over three days, with two overnights, in a conference format. Ministers are also eligible to receive the rest of the week as leave and to have the cost of a pulpit supply covered by the Fund. The Committee is concerned to retain the objectives of POT but to reduce the demands on the Fund by removing the residential element. The Committee agreed that POT could be provided just as effectively by two separate days of training, normally in Assembly Buildings. The training days would additionally be open to Accredited Preachers, Auxiliary Ministers, Deaconesses, Additional Pastoral Personnel and others. Ministers will continue to receive the rest of one week as leave and have the cost of a supply fee covered by the Fund. This will allow the training element to be maintained, with time programmed for reflection, informal conversation and fellowship. The Committee is aware that some may see this as a negative change in the delivery of the Programme but notes that in 2015 the residential element of POT cost the Fund in the region of £18,000. The Committee believes that two non-residential Training Days will continue to provide the excellent training that has been delivered in the past but at a cost that is more equitable to the wider Church which has generously been financing it.

Pre-Retirement Residential

30. The Pre-Retirement Residential seeks to equip ordained Ministers and their spouses as they anticipate the transition from full-time ministry to retirement. It is open to ordained Ministers and their spouses from the year in which the Minister reaches the age of 63. A residential was held from 10th-

12th November 2015 with nine couples and one single person attending. The Committee wishes to express its appreciation to the facilitators, the Very Rev Dr David and Mrs Hazel Clarke and the Rev Bill and Mrs Margaret Sanderson. Another residential is planned, God willing, for 2016.

Assignments

31. This year the Assignments Panel assigned thirteen students to Congregations, and has also re-assigned four students or licentiates. The Panel recognises the important role of mentoring in the training of students and licentiates, and is grateful to those Congregations and Ministers who accept this role.

WJM PARKER, Convener

UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

32. The Committee adds its own strong appreciation of the Rev Prof Patton Taylor's particular service to it, to that given earlier in this report by the Council Convener.

33. The annual Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visit produced a satisfactory report. The next one in October will be the major triennial visit.

34. Queen's University Belfast is going through a time of considerable flux due to financial constraints. Many of the areas of academic study are being reviewed, including Theology. In view of this, the agreement between QUB and UTC for the delivery of Theology continues to be under review, although there are positive indications of progress. Because of the on-going uncertainties, the introduction of the Masters degree programme for teachers of Religious Education has been delayed.

35. The Committee is pleased to report that there are 56 first year theology students in the 15/16 academic year. However, some concern was expressed over the lower number of applications from ministry students.

36. Two Church in the Public Square events were held: in October 'Economic Hope: a biblical roadmap for a just society'; and in January 'The Future of our Past: Remembering and Reassessing 1916'. Good interest was shown in both, with the latter drawing an especially full attendance.

37. Although some issues remain to be solved, there has been a marked improvement in the College IT experience. The Committee is grateful to the IT Department and to the Support Services Committee.

Personnel

38. There have been some changes in the administrative staff. Mrs Donna Orr took up duties as Senior Secretary (3 days/week) in April 2015, Mrs Margaret Olivier as permanent Library Assistant in June, and Mrs Sharon McWhirter was employed as Receptionist from September to March.

39. Following the retirement of the Professor of Old Testament the Committee approved the appointment of two (junior) lecturers, one each in the

Departments of Biblical Studies and of Systematic Theology and Church History. Following Council approval, permission was requested from the Finance and Staffing Commission to advertise, interview and make appointments in time for the beginning of the academic year in September (See Appendix 2, 'Additional Appointments'). Overtures to implement appropriate changes in the Code are submitted.

Stonework Restoration

40. **Phase 1.** This is complete apart from a small amount of snagging work. The tender sum was £779,000, professional fees £97,375 and VAT £175,275, giving an overall total of £1,051,650. The NIEA grant aid offer was £403,610 and £396,400 was been paid to date. A further claim for grant has been made for the outstanding amount of £7,210. It is estimated that the contract may end up some £16,000 over the tender sum, c£13,000 of this due to unforeseen dry rot remedial work to the library roof.

41. **Phase 2.** Due to the withdrawal of the NIEA grant scheme across Northern Ireland, the original Phase 2 was split into Phase 2A (completion of the front of the building and the south west corner) and Phase 2B (the residential block along University Avenue).

42. **Phase 2A.** This is also complete apart from a small amount of snagging work. It was a less complex job than Phase 1. The tender sum was £336,900, professional fees £42,113 and VAT £75,803, giving an overall total of £454,816. It is estimated that the contract may end up some £30,000 below the tender sum. However, this does not include the cost of reinstatement of the front grass. Due to the withdrawal of the NIEA grant aid scheme upon which budgeting had been based, no NIEA grant was available for Phase 2A. The Committee remain deeply grateful to the Trustees who, as reported to the General Assembly last year, agreed in principle to make a grant from their Discretionary Fund to match what the NIEA grant might have been.

43. **Phase 2B.** The external wall of the residential block has bulged by up to 90mm (3.5 inches). The bulge is more pronounced towards the front of the building and less pronounced towards the rear. While there is no danger of the block itself collapsing because the floors are supported by the wall's inner leaf, which is sound, the same cannot be said for the outer leaf. Advice from a structural engineer's report is that the outer leaf of the wall needs to be 'tied in' to the inner leaf by the insertion of steel ties at appropriate intervals. The Committee examined the following options:

- Do nothing. Estimated cost £1,000 (improved signage).
- Install wall ties to stabilise the area of the wall with the significant bulge (partial stabilisation). Estimated cost: £86,000 including reinstatement, contingencies, fees and VAT.
- Install wall ties to stabilise the entire wall (full stabilisation). Estimated cost: £127,000 including reinstatement, contingencies, fees and VAT.
- Restore the stonework and windows of the residential block and install wall ties to stabilise the entire wall. Estimated cost: £760,000 including site works, fees and VAT.

44. Given the structural engineer's report, it was agreed that Option 1 was inappropriate. While Option 2 reduces significantly the risk of the wall collapsing

and Option 3 eliminates this risk, both have disadvantages, e.g., subsequent stonework restoration will be more difficult and therefore more costly, the longer it is deferred the more costs will rise, the area beneath the wall must continue to be fenced off. The Committee unanimously decided on Option 4 as the preferred option, and consideration is being given to its financing. It should further be noted that as part of preparation for the stonework restoration, £45,610 including VAT was paid for fees associated with design work for the residential block stonework.

HA DUNLOP, Convener

RECEPTION OF MINISTERS AND LICENTIATES COMMITTEE

45. The Committee has met twice this year with a further meeting planned before the General Assembly.

46. Eight people contacted the RMLC during the year for information about transferring to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland but have not followed through as yet with a formal application.

47. The Rev Gunther Andrich of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa did submit an application and completed a guided week of exploration in Irish Presbyterian churches including preaching at a Sunday morning service. As a result he wished to pursue his application and was interviewed on 14th April. The interview Panel recommended his approval and, if received by the Council, he will begin his two-year assistantship later in the year.

48. The Rev Jared Stephens continues his assistantship in West Church, Ballymena, and his progress is being assessed.

49. A review of application procedures took place during the year with an additional short form compiled to facilitate initial contact. *HealthLink360* has agreed to meet with interview Panels to advise of any issues requiring clarification. Assistantships for those who have applied through this Committee are being assessed more rigorously. A list of core questions on fundamental issues have been drawn up for interviews in the future.

50. After an enquiry the Committee discussed the status of retired Ministers who had previously left the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and wish to return with the status of 'Minister without charge (Retired)'. It was agreed not to change the recently established rule that they would not be accepted into ministry again but could be rendered eligible to preach in vacancies, act as stated supply or as an assistant to a convener.

51. The Committee has considered its responsibility of making recommendations to the General Assembly regarding requests from Presbyteries for authorisation to retain individuals with the status of Minister or Licentiate without charge (*see Code Par 219(3)*). For the sake of clarity: this is not related to Recognised Ministers of the General Assembly serving in particular ministries not under the Assembly's control. It has agreed that, apart from those who are retired, all Ministers and Licentiates without charge ought to be actively considered before submitting their names to the General Assembly. A list of names will be submitted with the supplementary reports: for this year it is likely that all will be

recommended for retention, but a more thorough consideration will be given next year with the possibility that some will not be recommended for retention.

ANDREW FAULKNER, Convener

Recognised Ministries

The Rev Dr WJP Bailie, Mission Africa, writes:

52. Mission Africa (The Qua Iboe Fellowship) is one of Ireland's oldest mission agencies. We look forward with humble yet confident expectation to the years ahead, praying that God might continue to be pleased to use the mission for His sovereign purposes.

53. The mission concentrates on four areas of ministry: evangelism and Church planting; the strengthening of existing Church bodies through theological education; medical mission; and compassionate ministry, especially amongst disadvantaged and abused children. These ministries are carried out in partnership with various evangelical African denominations, and often with like-minded western mission agencies.

54. The mission continues its work against a background of financial challenge, an ever diminishing interest in foreign mission amongst western Churches and at a time when many within the Church cannot adequately distinguish mission and aid and development work. Nevertheless, we continue to send out full time missionaries. We continue to operate a short-term programme of teams and medium term placements. We also continue to operate branches in Scotland and England. Mission Africa is a member of Global Connections (Evangelical Missionary Alliance) and Mission Agencies Partnership. I am particularly pleased to report a close working relationship with the Council for Global Mission.

55. As Chief Executive I have responsibility for strategic planning; pastoral care of Missionaries; administration of personnel and finance; partner relations with a variety of Churches and agencies, and I am particularly involved in promoting theological education in Africa.

56. I am also grateful to be able to record that my status as a Minister in recognised service permits me to play an active role within my Presbytery (Ards) and in the Council for Training in Ministry. I am particularly glad to serve the Church through part-time teaching at Union Theological College and participation in the Accredited Preacher and Auxiliary Ministry Schemes.

The Rev Dr Ruth Patterson, Restoration Ministries writes:

57. This year marks the 40th anniversary of my ordination. Two of the highlights have been, firstly on January 29th, 2016 a celebration of my ordination and of women's ministry in general hosted by Harmony Hill Presbyterian Church and Restoration Ministries, and on March 5th, 2016 'Remembering the Future' at Newtownbreda Presbyterian Church, in conjunction with the Presbytery of Belfast South, celebrating 40 years of women's ordination to ministry and 90 years of women's ordination to the eldership.

58. 2016 also marks for me 25 years of full-time work with Restoration Ministries. I am continually grateful to God for all the doors that continue to open to spread the good news of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. During the last 12 months there have been many such opportunities:

- Giving retreats and conferences within Ireland and Europe;
- Faith and Friendship's annual gathering in May marked 19 years of a movement that continues to be vibrant and encouraging for people who seek for better understanding and respect in the midst of increasing diversity. Six groups from across Northern Ireland meet monthly to share their faith in an atmosphere of friendship, based on Scripture Guidelines prepared annually by me;
- Spiritual Direction at our home base in Restoration Ministries continues to grow;
- Our Listening and Prayer Ministry, based on the hospitality of God toward us and our resulting hospitality to others is a hidden and vital part of our work;
- As always, prayer is the heartbeat of everything we seek to be and do. As we pray for others, we are conscious and thankful for the supportive prayers of our friends from around the world.

59. Our Board of Directors, drawn from the Presbyterian and Catholic denominations is encouraging in every way. My colleague Rose Ozo and I feel privileged to be engaged in the journey of Restoration Ministries backed by such a supportive team.

60. *The Gaze of Love*, my latest book, published by Veritas, is available from late Spring 2016.

The Rev. John Peacock, Youth Link Programme Leader, writes:

61. I can report another successful year for Youth Link and the degree programme for which I am responsible.

62. This year our fifth cohort of students graduated, giving a total of 80 graduates to date, and I am pleased to report that, as in previous years, almost all are working in the areas of ministry. In September, 2016, there will be a further 20 new students joining the programme, giving a total of 50 students across the three year groups. All classes are now held at our Youth Link training and resource centre on the Springfield Road and this has helped to create an enhanced sense of community among students and staff and allows more flexibility in our teaching pattern.

63. Graduates are working in Australia, North America and England, though the majority have remained in Northern Ireland. Most graduates remain in youth ministry roles in local churches although some use the skills developed in other contexts. The fact that at every level we seek to encourage and enable students to inter-relate theology and youth work theory and practice and apply these to their practice contexts means that our graduates are well prepared to minister in a wide variety of roles.

64. The course provides an intentional environment where students can develop their awareness of a maturing Christian character, youth work skills and the qualities and skills that enable them to minister with competence in a variety of contexts, particularly focused on young people in the age range 4-25.

65. As the reputation of the quality of the qualification continues to grow, the impact on the sector is increasingly notable. We continue to be grateful for the support of PCI Churches that recognise the value of the course and are prepared to provide a placement for the student to undergo training. The Churches in turn experience the benefit that a student can bring to their ministry amongst young people.

66. The training of students for ministry and mission is a very labour intensive process and over 100 people are actively involved in teaching, supervising and supporting the students on the course. We have an excellent team of module tutors, who are mostly practitioners, with expertise in their particular area of teaching. As a result we are able to integrate theology, youth work theory and practice into every aspect of the course.

67. Once again I wish to record my thanks to the large number of Presbyterians who have supported the development of this work in the last 12 months through prayer and encouragement as well as those who have worked as module tutors, professional practice tutors or line managers in Congregations who have provided practice contexts for our students.

DEACONESS SELECTION AND TRAINING PANEL

68. The Panel is responsible for matters concerning the recruitment of Deaconesses, including procedures involving their selection and training. Requests to recruit Deaconesses are made by the Council for Mission in Ireland which oversees the ministry of Deaconesses in the Church, with funding for training being supplied by a partnership of the Council for Mission in Ireland and Presbyterian Women.

69. Trainee Deaconesses are normally required to undertake a two year course of full-time study at Union Theological College along with two Congregational placements. On successful completion of the course, trainees are awarded a Certificate in Diaconate Studies. These years of full-time study are followed by a Probationary Year of full-time placement in a Congregation, after which trainees become eligible to be called as a Deaconess. At present, there are two trainee Deaconesses, namely Miss Rachel Cubitt and Mrs Heidi England, both of whom are in their second year of study.

70. The Council for Mission in Ireland has requested that a cohort of up to five trainee Deaconesses be recruited, with the intention that they would begin study at Union College in September 2017. The Panel is taking the steps necessary to meet this request.

71. Prior to the Church's new structures being established, responsibility for Deaconess recruitment and training lay with the Board of (now Council for) Mission in Ireland. Consequently, it has been a steep learning curve for the Panel as it has been dealing with issues about which many of its members had little previous experience. The Panel is indebted to the Rev David Bruce, Secretary of the Council for Mission in Ireland, and Mrs Charlotte Stevenson, Acting PW General Secretary, for the wisdom and experience they have brought. Overtures are submitted to bring the Code into line with current arrangements.

TD ALLEN, Convener

ACCREDITED PREACHER AND AUXILIARY MINISTRY PANEL

72. Seventeen candidates successfully completed the most recent Accredited Preacher Course and received their Certificates of Accreditation at a service in Saintfield Road Presbyterian Church on Sunday 22nd May 2016.

73. The Belfast intensive course has begun with the main teaching scheduled for the week of 27th June 2016. Eleven students are participating. This

experimental format will be reviewed but may become the best way to deliver the course in the future.

74. A second Auxiliary Ministry Course has begun with seven participants. This course will be due to finish in March 2017 and those who are successful will join the ten previously trained and able to apply for Auxiliary Ministry posts as they are created. To date only one post has been created and the Panel continues to remind Sessions and Presbyteries to consider the Auxiliary Ministry as a possible solution to ministry provision for example in smaller charges with multiple linkages, and larger Congregations with busy teaching programmes.

NIGEL MCULLOUGH, Convener

PASTORAL CARE OF MANSE FAMILIES PANEL

75. Part of who we are as a Church within the 'family of the worldwide Reformed Churches' suggests by its name that we should always be open to change under God's direction. A large part of the Panel's work over the last few years has been to put in place services that will meet and serve the needs of our Ministers and those who live in a Manse.

76. The world and society have changed so much and ways of ministering are being questioned. Issues are brought to the media's attention which constantly challenge our faith and Biblical understanding. All of this has a knock-on effect on our Ministers and their families. Ministry has changed, congregational life has changed and how we respond and care for those involved in Ministry has to change so that it can meet the resulting needs. This defines the core purpose of our Panel and why it needs to keep communication lines open and transparent with Ministers and Presbyteries so that it can respond in the best way for all – Jesus took care of His needs by prayer, meeting with disciples/friends and sharing the load.

77. Last June in both Banbridge and Randalstown a Forum was held to bring together those responsible for the care of Ministers and Manse families within our Presbyteries. People were open, sharing their situations, and also mutually helpful in the different ways they offered support. Two of several issues highlighted were the need to consider compulsory training in taking care of self and the fact that Ministers in training and those applying often do not understand the 'cost' of ministry. In April a second Forum, facilitated by Dr Lena Morrow will pick up on the issue of 'taking care of self'.

78. The second avenue of communication was to meet with 19 recently licensed assistants to help make them aware of the services our Church provides and where to find help and not to be afraid to do so. A copy of the Panel's new leaflet was given to each Licentiate. This is something the Panel will seek to do each year towards the end of students' 3rd year studies and before licensing.

79. The Panel works well under the new Council. Having the Dean of Ministerial Studies and Development and the Deputy Clerk as part of it has made such a difference and widens areas of communication enabling it to be more aware of what is happening within our Church. It thanks God for the privilege of having this responsibility of being a part of how we care for His servants.

GAJ FARQUHAR, Convener

CONCILIATION PANEL

80. A very small number of conciliation cases have come to the Panel during the past year. While this can be seen as very positive it is hoped that issues are being dwelt with at a local level and are not being buried only to re-emerge in months or years to come when they are very difficult to resolve.

81. A new information leaflet about the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Conciliation Service was made available to Congregations.

82. During the year the Panel has worked on a conflict prevention strategy aiming to support Clerks of Presbytery in their roles with Congregations. A number of short one- or two-hour courses have been developed with Elders and local congregational leaders in mind. These include: Managing Change Effectively, Healthy Decision Making, Skills for Handling Conflict, Living with Difference and Understanding Conflict and its Causes. All of these courses are offered and can be delivered to Elders, organisation leaders, a Presbytery evening or to groups of teaching Elders. In addition short DVD clips are available to explain the process of conciliation within PCI and the need to attend to relationships while progressing the work of the Kingdom within our Congregations.

83. Clerks of Presbytery have been briefed and reminded of the Conciliation Panel and how the Panel can be of service to Clerks in accessing and reporting to them on Congregational issues.

JOE CAMPBELL, Convener

APPENDIX 1**SCHEDULE OF STUDENTS**

ARDS	Alan Marsh	Union
	Richard Tregaskis	Union
ARMAGH	Edwin Frazer	Union
	Craig Jackson	Union
BALLYMENA	Jonathan Boyd	Union
	Matthew Boyd	Union
	Richard Patton	Union
	James Porter	Union
	Chris Wilson	Union
NORTH BELFAST	Philip Houston	Union
	Jonathan Newell	Union
SOUTH BELFAST	Andre Alves-Areias	Union
	John Martin	Union
	Seth Wright	Union
EAST BELFAST	Sam Bostock	Union
	Andy Downey	Union
	Ben Johnston	WTS
	Steve Kennedy	Union
CARRICKFERGUS	Stuart Hawthorne	Union
	Robert Orr	Union

COLERAINE & LIMAVADY	Richard Morrison	Union
	John Torrens	Union
DERRY & DONEGAL	Robert McFaul	Union
	Jonny McKane	Union
DOWN	Michael McCormick	Union
DROMORE	Robin Aicken	Union
	Jamie Maguire	Union
	Philip Poots	Union
DUBLIN & MUNSTER	John Brogan	Union
	David Curran	Union
	Kevin Hargaden	–
	John O'Donnell	Union
	Joanne Smith	Union
IVEAGH	Keith Parke	Union
	Michael Rutledge	Union
MONAGHAN	Jonathan Porter	Union
NEWRY	Campbell Mulvenny	Union
TYRONE	Philip Leonard	–

APPENDIX 2

ADDITIONAL APPOINTMENTS

Background

1. The Board of Christian Training Report to the General Assembly in 2009 recommended a new structure of three departments: Biblical Studies; Systematic Theology and Church History; and Practical Theology and Ministry (Reports 2009 p 229). In this context the report stated: “*It is envisaged that a Junior Lecturer post will be created in the Department of Systematic Theology and Church History, but only when budgetary constraints permit.*” (p 230). The Assembly approved the new structure (Minutes 2009 p86 Resolution 14): “*That the General Assembly agree that the new three Department model within Union Theological College be adopted...*”

Rationale

2. Although the three Department model was implemented, the retirement of the Professor of Old Testament permitted a review of current staffing arrangements in the light of the vision and recommendations of the Review Panel. A number of options were considered: (a) maintaining the *status quo* by appointing a Professor of Old Testament (b) making one appointment in either Biblical Studies or Systematic Theology/Church History (c) making two appointments at a junior level in both the Biblical Studies and Systematic Theology/Church History departments.

3. It was noted that:
- the 2009 Review Panel’s recommendation that Dr Desi Alexander be appointed as Senior Lecturer in Biblical Studies had been implemented;

- with some rationalisation and enhancement, current staffing with full-time and part-time teachers in the Biblical Studies department, would allow the continued delivery of the OT curriculum without the replacement of the current professorial position;
 - currently the greatest curricular challenge is in the area of New Testament which requires additional resource due to the long-term illness of a part-time teacher who has taught extensively in the NT department;
 - the 2009 Report identified the need for additional help in Systematic Theology/Church History, a need that still exists and is exacerbated by the retirement of a part-time teacher in Systematic Theology;
4. Moreover, the Committee believes that:
- the appointments allow the implementation of the vision set out in the last review of theological education;
 - they relieve a significant overload in the teaching commitments of current full-time Faculty and reduce 'risk' in certain key areas;
 - they allow current full-time Faculty to engage in more writing and research;
 - they allow enhanced delivery of the current curriculum by increasing the range of expertise and specialisation available to students;
 - they allow the recruitment of additional postgraduate students and to develop a research culture;
 - they allow the improvement of pastoral support of students and enhance the assessment and feedback processes;
 - they allow the development of skills and gifts of younger teachers with a view to developing suitable candidates for any future vacancies in the full-time Faculty.

Costs

5. The proposal is to appoint two lecturers, one in Biblical Studies and one in Historical Theology, both at Executive Scale 2 (£26,725-£32,149). The total annual costs would be approximately £72,000. The retirement of the Professor of Old Testament releases some financial resources. The appointment of two Lecturers will also result in a potential savings in our current part-time teacher costs. A detailed analysis of the part-time teacher costs in the two most recent semesters shows an anticipated savings of £14,000 although the exact amount will depend on the academic profile and competencies of the persons appointed.

6. By relieving the pressure on current full-time faculty, this development would allow for the recruitment of additional students, particularly international postgraduate students, and thereby increase the College's tuition fee income. As well as postgraduate research students at Masters and Doctoral level, this initiative would allow us to move forward with other initiatives that would increase tuition income.

Confessional Commitment

The present position of our Church is that the only roles which require subscription to the Westminster Standards are the ordained offices of Minister and Elder. Licentiates also subscribe as those who are understood to be on a

pathway to Ordained Ministry. Senior lecturers are asked to commit to the subordinate standards of the Church by responding to the following questions, which may take place at a Commissioning Service similar to that for Deaconesses and Auxiliary Ministers:

Do you accept the Westminster Confession of Faith, as described by the Clerk, to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God; as such do you acknowledge it as the confession of your faith; and do you approve of the Catechisms compiled by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster and received as the Catechisms of this Church?

Adhering to the fundamental doctrines of the faith, set forth in the Standards of the Church, and accepting the also the Presbyterian form of Church government to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, do you promise to adhere to and to support the same and to yield submission in the Lord to the courts of this Church?

The personnel specification for the proposed lecturer positions states: 'Must evidence an understanding of, and commitment to, working within the Christian ethos and doctrinal framework of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.'

We anticipate that there may be some applicants for these posts who are not Presbyterians, but who would fulfil all the other essential and desirable criteria. In order to ensure their orthodoxy, we propose asking the following questions at the interview:

1. What do you understand to be the key theological features of the Westminster Confession of Faith?
2. Do you have any personal reservations or take exception to any of the doctrines which are described in the Westminster Standards?
3. Is there anything that would prevent you from accepting that the Westminster Confession of Faith is founded on and agreeable to the Word of God or from acknowledging it as the confession of your faith?
4. If appointed, in what church, denomination or fellowship would you be a member?

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the following candidates, their nominations having been sustained by the Council for Training in Ministry, be accepted as students for the Ordained Ministry, and placed under the care of their Presbyteries:

Name	Congregation	Presbytery
Peter Burke	Carryduff	Dowry
John Graham	Vinecash	Armagh
Gareth Keaveney	Rathcoole	North Belfast
David Morrison	1st Donaghadee	Ards

2. That the General Assembly approve that the final year in which Ministers will be entitled to take sabbatical leave will be during the year in which they reach the age of 60, rather than 62 and that this be phased in.

3. That the General Assembly approve that Post Ordination Training take the format of two non-residential Training Days each year for the first five years of ordination.

CONSOLIDATED RESOLUTION

4. (a) That those reported by Presbyteries as Licentiates and Ministers without Charge be retained as such on the Church's current records.
(b) That the assessment for the Ministerial Development Programme be set to raise £100,000.
(c) That the assessment for the Students' Bursary Fund be set to raise £400,000.
5. That the Report of the Council for Training in Ministry be received.