

The new Programme for Ministry in the Church of Ireland was launched on April 18/19 with information meetings in Templepatrick and Dublin.

Two hundred and forty people attended the Templepatrick meeting.

Chairing the launch in the Templeton Hotel, Archbishop Alan Harper said: "There could hardly be a more exciting time than this to be a member of the Church of Ireland. This Programme for Ministry is the beginning of a journey into new thinking and new life in the Church."



The new ministry programme has been developed over the last two years following a major review of the Theological College. The project team is made up of Bishop Michael Jackson (chair), Bishop Ken Clarke, Bishop Richard Clarke, Bishop-elect Alan Abernethy and Andrew McNeile (Project Co-ordinator).



The key elements of the programme are as follows:

- Initial training for ministry undertaken in your own locality by distance learning
- A choice of a full-time or part-time route resulting in equivalence of qualification and training
- Once qualified a freedom to choose whether to serve in a stipendiary or non-stipendiary capacity
- Final year spent as an intern in a

training parish with academic reflection on your work

- Bachelor of Theology replaced by Masters in Ministry with curriculum focus on Scripture, Theology and Ministry
- Training focused on equipping ministers for all aspects of the role of a full time minister
- Development of a new site and centre for training
- Provision for families built into the new site

THERE was great excitement at both events and all seemed encouraged by these new developments. It is hoped to advertise for the new Director of the Theological Institute in early summer and the programme will commence in 2008.

Bishop Michael Jackson, Chair of the Project Ministry Team, said 'The future shape of ministry for lay people and clergy alike is exciting for the Church of Ireland. Those of us who have been involved in the Ministry Project so far are encouraged by the widespread interest throughout the church.'



Peter Hamill, Connor Diocesan Training Co-ordinator, said: "This is one the most exciting things happening in the Church at the moment. It heralds a new dimension to training in the church and will complement and enhance the aims of the Training Council in Connor Diocese."



Further information and developments will be posted on the project website www.ministry.ie