

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT OF THE FAITH ACTION PROGRAMME LEADERSHIP TEAM – MAY 2024

Proposed Deliverance

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.

APPRENTICESHIP ROUTE

2. Approve the direction of travel offered by the Apprenticeship Route (*Context based Education and Training for the Church of Scotland Family of Ministries*) towards the rethinking of Initial Ministerial Education.
3. Approve the introduction of a two-year foundational programme to provide a general qualification for ministry, equivalent to a Certificate level education of 120 credits (*Section 1.4.2*).
4. Approve the framework of the initial two-year foundational programme followed by one, two or three years of further training, as the normal route for ordination to Full Time Ministry of Word and Sacrament and the Diaconate, subject to legislation being brought to the General Assembly of 2025 (*Section 1.4.4*).
5. Approve the minimum educational requirement for ordination to Full-Time Ministry of Word and Sacrament and the Diaconate to be a Diploma in theology (240 credits), subject to legislation being brought to the General Assembly of 2025 (*Section 1.4.4.4*).
6. Note that every encouragement will be given to Candidates for Full-Time Ministry of Word and Sacrament to achieve the completion of a Degree in theology (360 credits) through their initial training or during their first five years in ministry (*Section 1.4.4.4*).
7. Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to bring such legislation to the General Assembly of 2025, to replace the Selection and Training for Full-Time Ministry Act (Act X 2004) and the Deacons Act (Act VIII 2010) (*Section 1.4.4.2*).
8. Instruct the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to explore with the Registration of Ministries Committee, the principle of introducing compulsory continuing professional development for those ordained to Full-Time Ministry of Word and Sacrament, and those ordained to the Diaconate, noting that Readers and OLM are already required to undertake such, post their Initial Ministerial Education (*Section 1.5.3.2*).
9. Instruct the Assembly Trustees to work with the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team to provide a budget to fund the new programme of Initial Ministerial Education (*Section 1.5*).

Report

1. THE “APPRENTICESHIP ROUTE” – CONTEXT-BASED EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND FAMILY OF MINISTRIES

1.1 Summary of the proposals

This Report proposes a radical change to the Initial Ministerial Training (IME) pathway for those entering into the recognised (sometimes called national) ministries of the Church of Scotland. The model recommends a two-year Apprenticeship Route (AR) programme which fully incorporates practical training and academic study while being rooted in theological reflection and personal formation in an apprenticeship model. After the initial two-year period, those training would be assessed with the expectation of continuing training which would depend on the individual, their skills, experiences and their calling. This would allow those called to Full-time Word and Sacrament (FTWAS) and the Diaconate to be equipped, encouraged and exercised for future Christ-centred service.

1.2 Background – Why a new way of training?

1.2.1 It has long been recognised that the Church of Scotland needs to reshape our patterns of IME. *The Ministers of the Gospel* Report to the General Assembly of 2000, initiated this journey by affirming the place of ministry of word and sacrament **and** the ministry of the whole people of God. Whilst commending the integration of the person and practice of ministry in Christ himself, the Report recognised for the first time the need for the ‘formation’ of our ordained ministers.

1.2.2 Focusing not only on the need to train our ministers ‘to do’ but ‘to be’, led to the approval at the General Assembly of 2019 of the Formation Framework. Eight different areas of formation were identified. This followed the recommendations brought through the Blake Stevenson Report (January 2019) and gives focus to the formation of the inner relationship of a minister with Christ, working outwardly to the development of the skills and aptitudes required for ministry.

1.2.3 Following this trend in theological education of other denominations, our context and delivery of IME requires to be reframed. With five current Academic Providers (Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Highland Theological College and St Andrews) servicing a decreasing pool of candidates, each Academic Provider provides a different course. This is supplemented by a Church programme of additional requirements, with placements, conferences and a Ministries Training Network (MTN) covering a number of areas outwith the academic curricula.

1.2.4 To this must be added the perspective of a changing Church within a changing Scotland. While the *Ministers of the Gospel* Report highlighted areas requiring attention, our society has changed. With increasing secularisation and marginalisation of the Church, we live with a strong missional desire and need to share the gospel message. This requires to be reflected in our ministry training.

1.2.5 As the Church seeks through its Presbytery Mission Plans to meet these needs, our congregations require that our ministers and deacons are trained for this new context. Further, following the Theological Forum Report to the General Assembly of 2023, *The Calling of the Church*, the place of 'call' of every member is reaffirmed. The integration therefore, of training pathways for those who are 'sent' beyond their own congregation, whilst opening opportunities to ensure those who continue to 'abide' within their home congregations, becomes a crucial part of our future missional effort. The recently launched *Church of Scotland Learning* programme will help equip our membership for this task, and a review of our IME provision is now urgent.

1.2.6 It is against this background that we bring our proposals.

1.3 Our vision for the future

1.3.1 The Faith Action Programme Leadership Team (FAPLT), through the work of the People and Training Programme Group, recognises the need to reshape patterns of IME in ways which support and encourage vocations to the recognised ministries. Broadening training opportunities will help resource the ministry of the whole people of God, not least those seeking entry into these specific areas. We therefore now talk of the 'Family of Ministries', where each national ministry of Reader, Deacon, Ordained Local Minister (OLM) and FTWAS has their own function and role. Each brings an offering that complements and supplements that of the others, contributing to the calling of the Church. FAPLT seeks to reimagine the mindset that sometimes sets a hierarchical framework around our national ministries. Formation for each is uniquely focused on what they offer into new and developing ministry contexts, requiring formation to be set in the space of the relationship between theological reflection and ministry practice and ensuring that training is set in the context of church communities and parishes.

1.3.2 It is hoped that a new IME programme will:

- Integrate a renewed 'Culture of Calling' into the life and being of the Church, where the call of every Christian is to follow Jesus and serve him is recognised, be that in a local or national setting.
- Enable people to fully discern their specific role in ministry while undertaking a more generalised form of ministry training.
- Offer more flexible and more inclusive routes into education and training. This may include those who do not have a strong background in education, but with strong leadership characteristics and experience of Christian life and ministry; or those who may not wish to study to degree level or who may be looking for a more bespoke mix of courses to equip them in their future ministry.
- Bring a more fully integrated formation pathway in accordance with the goals of the Formation Framework.
- Offer a salaried route into formation which is more affordable and secure for those who enter it and so increases numbers entering.
- Achieve greater integration to enable enhanced capacities for reflective practice and a more integrated mix of character, capacities and competencies.
- Allow those in training to benefit from the experience, activity and reflection of a stable context, supported by an experienced mentor, by having extended placements in congregations. Within that, shorter-term placements will help provide new and specialised experiences.
- Develop a range of courses where those training for national ministries are learning alongside members and elders, thereby creating a sense of partnership in ministry within local churches.
- Allow local churches to share and benefit more fully from those in formation and training.
- Encourage a culture of calling, where the whole Church is active in identifying potential Readers, Deacons, OLM and FTWAS, increasing the recruitment to the national ministries.
- Maintain high standards of theological education by engaging one provider with multiple hubs in the delivery, co-ordination and assessment of the key components of the formation curriculum.
- Look for opportunities for ecumenical partnering.
- Create a longer season in which someone can discern to which ministry they are being called, with a greater ease to move to a different ministry.

1.4 The essence of our proposal

Deuteronomy 6 is foundational in terms of how one generation communicates the 'faith of the fathers' to the next and verses 6-9 make it clear that a whole life approach is to be employed;

'These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.' (New International Version)

This is clearly much more than the imparting of information; but points to formation.

1.4.1 The Apprentice Model

1.4.1.1 There is no greater example of this being worked out than in the way Jesus was with his first disciples – and not just in introducing them to his upside-down kingdom values but in how, from the moment he said to them *'Come and see,'* he was preparing them for the calling that was, through him, upon their lives.

1.4.1.2 The model that Jesus adopted was in effect, that of master and apprentice. He taught them and showed them. He walked and talked and ate and prayed with them. He was forming them and equipping them. And then, under his authority, He sent them out that they might try for themselves, that they might learn by doing. Three years of intensive 'on the job' preparation culminating in: *'Go and make disciples of all nations...'*

1.4.1.3 In consultation the People and Training Programme Group have heard mixed responses to the use of the word 'Apprentice'. On balance, the Group have decided for the time being to keep this wording as it is felt that it best reflects a program or position in which someone learns a trade by working under a certified expert. As further thinking emerges, the Group are open to using other wording or terms.

1.4.2 *The Apprenticeship Route*

1.4.2.1 In creating a new way of doing our IME, the Church of Scotland requires to achieve a greater integration of the various strands of theological reflective practice, together with developing ministerial character with practical competencies and capacities.

- i. The AR would be through a two-year full-time programme.
- ii. It would be open to those with a general sense of call to ministry, with selection overseen by a partnership of the national church, Presbyteries and local congregations.
- iii. There would be one main placement with one or more short-term placements depending on the needs and interests of the Apprentice. Each Apprentice would be placed within a cohort to provide a sense of mutual support and community, and for particular pieces of training.
- iv. This would be a paid appointment with a contract of employment issued through the FAPLT.
- v. There would be a broad-based assessment programme of entry to the AR overseen by the National Assessors, focusing on
 - Faith journey and expression
 - Leadership potential
 - Wellbeing and Resilience
 - Sense of Call to 'ministry'
- vi. An Apprentice would be appointed to a specific training placement and with an accredited Supervisor.
- vii. There would be a required programme of study, conferences and seminars over the two-year period, leading to the award of a Church of Scotland Certificate in Church Studies. This would be equivalent to 120 credits of nationally awarded degree programme.
- viii. Areas of study would focus on the following areas:
 - Biblical Studies
 - Systematic Theology
 - Practical Theology and Theological Reflection
 - Sacramental Studies and Worship
 - Church History
 - Missiology
 - Pastoral Care and Ethics
- ix. The programme for each Apprentice would be set in conjunction with guidelines agreed by a future General Assembly. This work would be under the direction of the People and Training Team, with a specific post that would relate and co-ordinate the coursework offered by the Academic Providers with the needs of the Church.
- x. The obligation of the Church to the Apprentice, and vice versa would cease at the end of the two-year apprenticeship period.
- xi. During this time, as discernment conversations progressed for the Apprentice, they could apply to be considered for FTWAS or the Diaconate following our present assessment processes.

1.4.3 *Applying for the Diaconate or FTWAS*

1.4.3.1 While some applicants presently apply to the national ministries with a certainty of call to a particular ministry, others do not. At present we do not assess on the broad base of call, only to a specific national ministry e.g. someone presenting as an OLM will be assessed for acceptance to that ministry. They cannot change midway through the process to another form of assessment for different national ministry. They are required to begin the process again.

1.4.3.2 We feel that the AR offers those who wish to explore their sense of call to a life in ministry, a firmer foundation on which to build. It may be to one of our national ministries. There will also be a number of opportunities either through locally employed posts within congregations, or as Mission Development Staff (MDS) employed by the national Church as decided by Presbytery Mission Plans.

1.4.3.3 For those wishing to enter into training for the Diaconate or FTWAS, they will enter into the traditional assessment process for those ministries. At this point, the assessment of their call will be a key element, as well as the skills and capabilities that they have extended through their Apprenticeship period.

1.4.3.4 Being accepted as a Candidate for either of these national ministries will lead to the need for further training before ordination.

1.4.4 *Training for our Deacons and FTWAS*

1.4.4.1 Having such foundational training as the AR should help to meet the requirements for both the Diaconate and FTWAS. Much will depend on how far the Academic Providers will be able to recognise the credits gained through this Church of Scotland awarded certificate and this is discussed further in the Report.

1.4.4.2 Given the changing needs of the Church, and with that the need for new forms and ways of ministry, FAPLT wish to ensure that our present IME programme is replaced with a training programme that is flexible and more responsive to the changing needs of local congregations and Presbyteries. This will require the replacement of the Selection and Training for Full-Time Ministry Act (Act X 2004) and the Deacons Act (Act VIII 2010).

1.4.4.3 This is not without precedent. Following the Second World War, many returning servicemen took up theology studies, achieving a LTh, a licence rather than a degree in theology. Some continued with their education, completing both B.D. and Ph.D., rooting their theology within the practice of the post-war church.

1.4.4.4 While the FAPLT would wish to encourage all those in our national ministries to ultimately obtain a theology degree, it is proposed that the minimum level of theological education for both the Diaconate and FTWAS be at Diploma level (i.e. 240 credits equivalent of a university degree). This would require a Candidate for the Diaconate or FTWAS to undertake at least one or more years of study to obtain a diploma or degree level of education.

1.4.4.5 Ordination will not be the finishing point of study for our ministers and deacons. Consideration requires to be given to whether those entering through this new route, continue in their ministerial training and learning, throughout their ministry, with a compulsory form of study and development.

1.4.4.6 In some exceptional cases, where someone has already achieved a degree level theological education, it may be possible for them to move towards ordination following the two-year apprenticeship.

1.4.4.7 In other exceptional cases, where someone has already accumulated extensive experience within a congregation or congregations, consideration would be given to allowing them to bypass the apprenticeship stage and move directly into a required three-year BD programme. Further, for those showing particular academic ability, encouragement should be given to pursue their education to Masters or Ph.D. level so that the Church of Scotland retains a depth of theological expertise in the future.

1.4.4.9 Candidates would continue to be financially supported by the Church at the same level as the Apprenticeship Route.

1.4.4.10 – Training for the Readership and OLM

1.4.4.10 The Church of Scotland would retain the certificate as the minimum level of education (i.e. 120 credits equivalent) for both the Readership and OLM. Application and assessment processes would also remain the same.

1.4.5 The Implications for our Academic Providers

1.4.5.1 In a changing world it is not just the Church which is impacted by both global and local influences. In our recent conversations with our Academic Providers since 2019, we are more aware of the business and commercial pressure they are under. FAPLT understands better the striving of those who lecture in our theological faculties to ensure that those in ministry are properly equipped and educated to lead the Church at local, Presbytery and national levels. FAPLT has learned much from them, and has appreciated their patience with us as we have so done.

1.4.5.2 Together, we have realised that we cannot continue with five Academic Providers. While this has been openly acknowledged in our meetings with our Academic Providers, getting to that place will require much more work.

1.4.5.3 Following the recommendations of the Blake Stevenson (2019) Report, we need to give our Candidates a more collegiate experience and help them develop good peer group support as they take up their ministries. The commissioning of new courses will though require further financial investment by the Church to provide these.

1.4.5.4 While all of our Academic Providers have intimated their willingness to offer their course framework into further discussions, FAPLT would like to further explore the appointment of one Academic Provider as the primary accrediting body of our ministry courses. This Academic Provider would serve to manage a 'hub' of provision using other providers as required and as possible. This sense of 'hub' working is one that our Academic Providers have discussed and indeed it has come from them, but does require more thinking to take this forward. The role of the postholder referred to above in 1.2.4.1 (ix) would be a key element within this, working with both the course providers and our present Training Team.

1.4.5.5 Key to this is the use of accredited placements, whereby time spent in placement would contribute to the academic award, with an emphasis on the development of theological reflective and integrated practice within and for ministry. The content of the academic provision requires to be met with a focused, inclusive, supported, flexible, enriching experience for our Apprentices and Candidates, and FAPLT is confident that with a focused provision this can be done.

1.5 The implications for the Church

1.5.1 Finance

1.5.1.1 There are obvious financial implications for the Church particularly as we have been in the fortunate position that for many Candidates their university fees are presently paid through Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) funding.

1.5.1.2 Further work requires to be done on the full costings to the Church, but the Church appointed post to begin the liaison work with our Academic Provider is now crucial.

1.5.2 Supervisors

1.5.2.1 FAPLT fully recognises that this will require a new investment by the Church in the training of Supervisors. A new training programme has already been piloted and further conversation with our Academic Provider is required to ensure that supervision meets the standard required for accreditation for the Apprentice/Candidate. The quality of training and support for our Mentors and Supervisors will be essential, but early indications are that many are keen to do this, and recognise that this will require to be an essential part of their own ongoing ministry.

1.5.2.2 FAPLT also feels that to offer remuneration to either the Supervisor or their congregation would be a key element of support of the Apprenticeship Route going forward.

1.5.3 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

1.5.3.1 The wish of FAPLT remains for an educated ministry, with each person called to a national ministry continuing to undertake some form of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

1.5.3.2 We would wish to bring our proposals for CPD to a future General Assembly, with some consideration given to the compulsory obligation upon those in FTWAS and the Diaconate.

1.5.4. *Capability and competency framework*

1.5.4.1 While work continues on this, any new IME programme would require such a framework to work in tandem with the Formation Framework and CPD requirements.

1.6 Conclusion

1.6.1 FAPLT, through the work of the People and Training Programme Group have reached a point where the Church must now take a decision about the future direction of IME. This proposal offers a way to ensure that theology and practice go hand-in-hand, in a way that meets the diverse needs of those wishing to train for our national ministries.

1.6.2 As society has changed in these last years, so must our response as a Church. Having congregations and new worshipping communities that are worshipful, inspired and inspiring, creative, enthusiastic, reflective, pastoral and missional, requires those in our national ministries to be well resourced, well trained, encouraged, resilient and reflective practitioners of Word, Service and Sacrament.

1.6.3 In proposing a new way forward for IME, we honour that which has been achieved in past years, particularly in more recent times when our Academic Providers have worked in the face of increased secularised thinking and have sought to maintain the place of Christian theology, insight and practice within our academic institutions.

1.6.4 New realities now have to be faced. The Church should now take full responsibility for ensuring that the equipping of those we send out to the mission fields of our own communities are prepared for this changing context.

1.6.5 Moving to new models of training and changing from degree level entry to FTWAS to diploma level is a significant change. However, the FAPLT hope that with the support of continued education and practical training throughout ministry, rooted in reflective practice, and a passion for mission, the Church of Scotland will have within those who serve in our national ministries a zeal for the glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and a desire for the salvation of all people.

In the name of the Committee

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ALISTAIR CUMMING, *Vice Convener (Resource and Presence)*
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