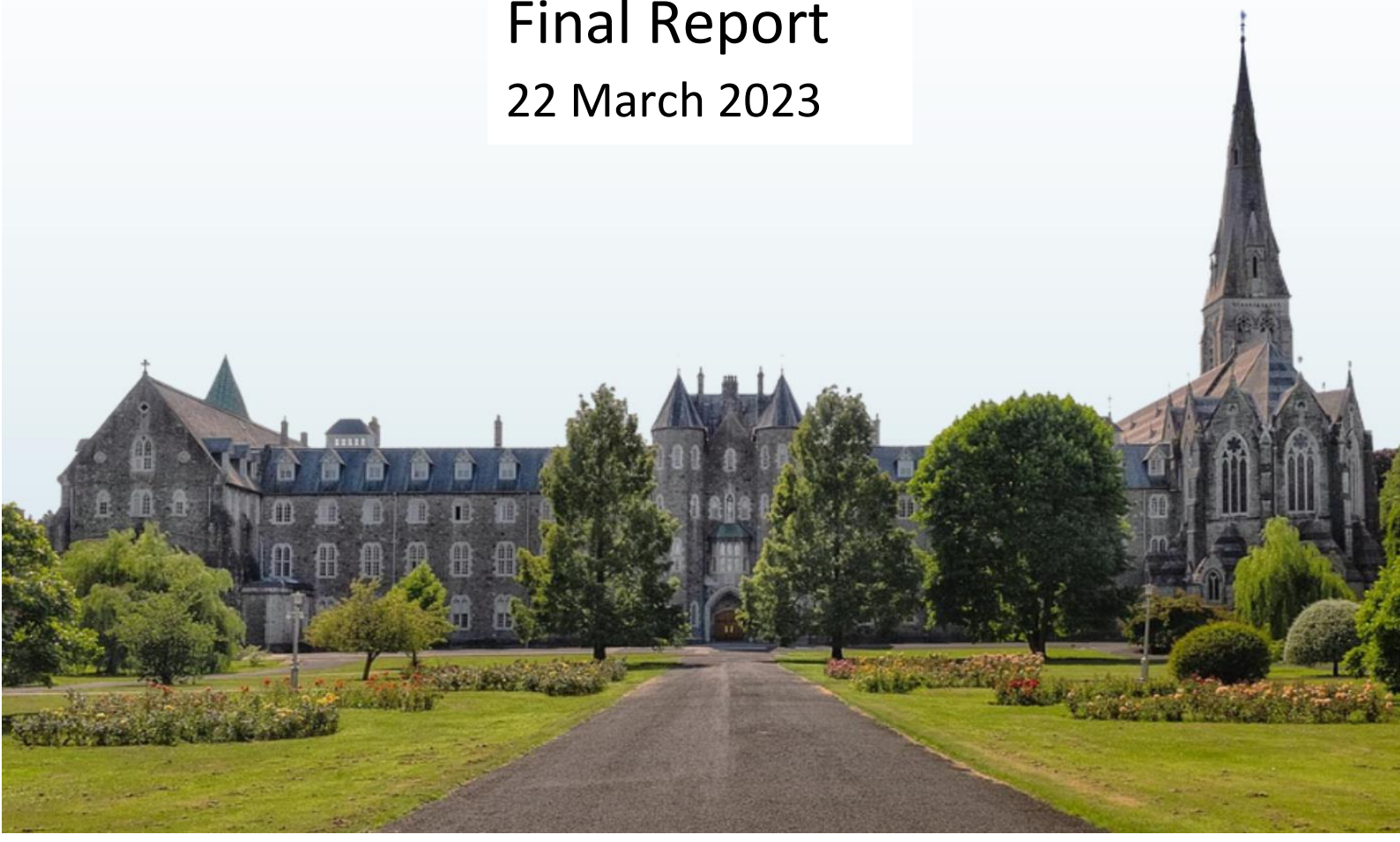


Evaluation of the Formation Programme for New Ministries Killaloe Diocese

Final Report
22 March 2023



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Introduction

Context and Programme Aims

The Formation Programme for New Ministries was designed in response to the needs of the Diocese of Killaloe and its commitment to nurture and develop lay ministries. Its objective was to train people for two new volunteer ministries in parishes and pastoral areas: Catechists and Ministers of Pastoral Care.

It was originally intended to be a three year programme. Year 1 was to be an exploratory year for discernment by both participant and diocese. This year focused on personal and vocational development, in particular a growth in self-awareness and reflective ability. The second and third years were to continue the focus on human and personal development, growth in faith and spirituality. In addition they were to provide a theological understanding of Christian faith and skills for ministry, alongside an understanding of the contemporary cultural context.

Given its nature as a pilot project, there was an evolution in the design of the project as it progressed. For example, the decision by Mary Immaculate College not to include a placement module in the academic programme led to the evolution of the Wrap-Around Programme. Even more significant were two unforeseeable developments: the Covid 19 pandemic and the appointment of one of the core Programme Team as bishop to another diocese. These required great adaptability on the part of both participants and the core Programme Team.

The broader context for this programme is the rapidly changing religious landscape in Ireland. On the one hand there are resource and other challenges which make the current models of clergy-centred ministry unsustainable. As *Builders of Hope: Pastoral Plan, Diocese of Killaloe 2013-2020* made clear, the diocese has long realised that it is necessary for survival to change old patterns of ministry. On the other there is a renewed recognition of the baptismal vocation and of the potential for co-responsible and collaborative ministry that includes more of the people of God. Since the programme started, the launching of the Irish Synodal Pathway and the Global Synod on Synodality have added further impetus and energy to the possibilities for dynamic lay involvement in the diocese.

Terms of Reference for the Evaluation

The Centre for Mission and Ministries was commissioned to provide an evaluation of the Formation Programme for New Ministries with a view to determining whether the programme should be offered again and what changes may be required to make it more effective. It was requested that attention be paid to the resources required to run such a programme effectively.

All elements of the overall programme, including the Discernment Process, the Academic and Wrap-Around Programmes, and the integration of the new ministers into the diocese were to be considered. Jessie Rogers was the designated evaluator and author of the report.

The Diocesan Pastoral Development Office would provide documentation on the programme and arrange for the Focus Groups and the interviews, including identifying and inviting suitable participants. It would also provide a high-level financial breakdown of the costs directly associated with the implementation of the programme.

Data Gathering

I was given access to extensive documentation related to the programme, as set out in **Appendix 2**. I already had knowledge of the Academic Stage in my previous role as External Examiner for the Certificate in Pastoral Ministry. Focus Group Discussions allowed me to gauge the experience of various categories of participants and stakeholders and interviews provided an opportunity to deepen knowledge and understanding of the process. All those listened to offered valuable insights and suggestions which have been incorporated into the recommendations.

Interviews and Focus Group Discussions were held between 28 November and 9 December.

- 21 Participants across 3 Focus Groups
- 7 Priests across 2 Focus Groups
- 9 Mentors across 2 Focus Groups.
- The three Team members in one Focus Group

In addition, there were five individual interviews conducted. These were with Bishop Fintan Monahan, Eamonn Fitzgibbon as Director of the Irish Institute for Pastoral Studies, and one with each of the Team members, Maureen Kelly, Maranna Quinlivan and Gerard Nash.

Evaluation Framework

A formation programme for lay volunteer ministers needs to be accessible, manageable and effective in training people for ministry. It must not only give skills, but also *form* ministers. It should thus address human, spiritual and academic development.

Given the context for ministry and the need for ongoing formation, personal and theological reflection and the ability to collaborate and innovate are also important outcomes. It should meet the requirements of the diocese in a way that contributes to the ongoing evolution of new models for ministry and co-responsible leadership.

A sustainable, repeatable programme also needs to make wise and effective use of resources. It cannot stop with preparation of the participants but must also be able to interface with the broader context of the diocese and its structures so that there is a viable and supportive context for these lay ministries into the future.

Evaluation

The overall programme had a number of embedded programmes, helpfully approached as 'Phases and Stages'. These are set out in detail in **Appendix 1**. This evaluation will follow the structure of the 6 Stages to state and evaluate the findings of this research.

Overall Observations

1. The Programme of Formation for New Ministers has produced graduates who are able to articulate their faith, who have a genuine desire to minister, who are self-aware, who have learned how to learn, who are committed to the future of the diocese and eager to work collaboratively with priests and people. The programme did not give them all the knowledge and skills that they will need for all their ministry (no programme can do that) but it gave them an excellent foundation on which to build.
2. The success of the programme was facilitated in large part by the fact that it was championed by the Bishop and that it was clearly embedded in an overall diocesan strategy.
3. The programme was enabled to succeed because it was resource rich. The decision to put considerable financial and personnel resources into the programme was necessary and it paid rich dividends.
4. The role of the Programme Team is indispensable to the success of the programme. The Team worked very effectively, bringing complementary skills and experiences to the task. It seems that the loss of Ger Nash impacted negatively on the Team's ability to communicate effectively with and enrol the support of some clergy.
5. The administrative support supplied by the Pastoral Development Office was crucial to the smooth running of the programme from beginning to end and to ongoing communication with the participants through all stages.
6. The closer their involvement with the programme, the more positive people were about it. It appears that lack of knowledge of the programme is the primary reason for scepticism or indifference.
7. The participants experienced the programme as transformational. This was due in part to the high quality of the inputs and the training, but also to the dynamics within the group. Although it added to the costs of the programme, the residential aspect had benefits for the participants that go beyond the positive experience of the programme itself. A cohesive group has emerged which can offer peer support, and which is a strong basis for modelling team and collaborative ministry. The initial experience of community appears to have been sufficient to sustain that dynamic, even though much of the programme had to go online during the pandemic.
8. It was widely agreed among clergy, participants and mentors that the training programme did things well at the level of theory and that it was very personally enriching and spiritually nourishing. The programme was particularly effective in creating a sense of community among participants. Some gaps were noted in skills around '*the practical movements and the liturgies themselves.*'

9. Communication is a challenge. I saw clear documentary evidence of numerous communiques yet some who were not closely involved with the programme knew very little about it prior to the commissioning of the New Ministers. Communication is not only about what is said, but about what is heard. I cannot suggest any easy fixes here, other than to recommend that it remain on the radar as an important dimension for all diocesan initiatives. Clergy described the communication as '*one-way information sharing*'. Perhaps a more relational approach to communication is needed.
10. Two further areas for improvement in the programme are (1) providing intentionally designed and supervised placement experience and (2) integrating stakeholders in parishes and pastoral areas earlier and more fully into the programme.

Stage 0. Planning and Development

The Programme Team – referred to by all those I spoke to simply as 'The Team' – were indispensable to the success of the programme. Two of these positions were paid, the third was voluntary. The administrative support provided by the Pastoral Development Office was crucial to the smooth running of the programme throughout.

The Team produced something from nothing. They gave such a commitment. They tried to tick every single box. I am in awe of their commitment and their work. (participant)

The initial design of the programme had effective input from several highly qualified people with experience in various contexts within Ireland. These are listed in the appendix. Fr Ger Nash and Maureen Kelly are well connected to a wide network of experts, and the close collaboration with Fr Eamonn Fitzgibbon and the Irish Institute for Pastoral Studies meant that the initial design of the programme could draw on best practice. Its location within the Pastoral Development Team with strong backing from the Bishop maximised its effectiveness.

Stage 1. Announcement of New Ministries Programme

Great efforts were made to get the word out about the new programme, to ensure that suitable candidates would hear about it and respond. This was done in the form of literature, bulletin inserts, and guidance on how to announce it from the pulpit. In this way, regular mass-goers were highly likely to hear about it, whether or not it was actively promoted in their parishes. This strategy targeted the right cohort – those who are connected in with their parishes. The Information Evenings provided the opportunity for effective communication of the vision and the requirements so that people could make an informed decision on whether this new initiative might be for them.

All the material - brochures, FAQ, homily notes - were consonant with the image of the church as missionary disciple. The programme was not presented simply as a response to the shortage of priests, but as an opportunity to live out one's calling.

Stage 2. Selection Process for New Ministers

The very high retention rate in the programme, even though it was extended beyond the initial 3 years envisioned and had the added challenge of the pandemic, is testament to the effectiveness of the selection process, both at this point and at the end of the discernment process. The difficult task of informing unsuccessful applicants was sensitively handled.

Stage 3. The Discernment Process

Including a period of discernment is consonant with recognising lay ministry as vocational. The approach taken combined the diverse aspects necessary for effective discernment:

- awareness of self and how one has been shaped by one's past, and God's place in that story;
- an ability to bring the Scriptures into conversation with that story;
- an understanding of the contemporary context and the Church's response;
- an understanding of the particular ministries of catechist and minister of pastoral care.

Only with all of these pieces in place could participants effectively discern whether the programme was for them. As in Stage 2, the discernment was not one-way; the Team were also discerning who was a good fit.

Participants found this stage particularly helpful. The residential weekends contributed to its effectiveness.

What I liked the best was the whole gathering, the gathering in Roscrea on a Friday evening at 6 ... The containment of that 48 hours was so good. The benefits of us gathering once a month were tremendous.

We pre-empted the synodal journey, without having that language.

Sharing within the group, that compatibility, the honesty, the integrity of contribution, I really felt that was a living faith. ... I never felt exposed or at risk from what I might say. What we will be wanting to do in ministry, was already going on in the programme.

There were clear criteria for making the difficult decisions around who not to invite to go forward with the programme. While this was done with sensitivity, and those not selected were encouraged to continue meeting their mentors, this is always a difficult step to take. But the success of the programme does depend on having the right participants.

The Mentoring Process

I deal with the mentoring process at this point in the report because it was originally set up to accompany participants in the discernment phase. It was such an effective aspect of the process that it continued throughout the programme. Many of the New Ministers are still in contact with their mentors.

The aim of the mentoring process was to help people reflect on their learning and insights from the formation programme. People with a background in counselling, supervision and spiritual accompaniment were identified and approached to fill this role. The diocese is blessed to have people of such calibre and experience to call upon in a voluntary capacity, and the mentors were generous with their time and expertise.

The mentors reported that the expectations were very clearly communicated to them at the training day.

There was apprehension when we were asked first. But the session in the Abbey Court Hotel lessened the anxiety around it. I relaxed totally about it then.

It was important that the Mentors were not involved in evaluation of the participants and that the conversations were confidential and no reporting-back to the Team occurred. (The caveats of risk to

the person etc, applied.) The mentoring process was frequently described as a *safe space* by both mentors and participants.

This involvement of people from around the Diocese had the positive effect of increasing the number of people familiar with and committed to the formation programme.

The mentors had a very positive experience of the programme and of the mentoring process itself, which they considered to be vital to the programme. Participants spoke very positively of their experience of being mentored, naming it as one of the most valuable aspects of the programme and one that should not be omitted in any future iterations.

It was all so new that it was really an exciting time, for them and for me too because I believed in the road that we, the diocese was taking. It was like breaking new ground as it were. Going on that road was challenging but exciting. (mentor)

The mentorship was brilliant. I thought it was a great thing. A privilege. (participant)

Stage 4. The Academic Programme

In addition to addressing the intellectual dimensions of the programme, the Certificate also taught the participants the essential practice of theological reflection.

There was a spectrum of opinions about the Certificate. While all the participants I spoke with acknowledged its value and importance, many found the workload a challenge. It was considered to be very 'academic'. There was a preference for those modules where the assessments were not essays but tasks that demonstrated attainment of the learning outcomes in a way that felt more directly relevant to life and ministry than an academic essay would.

I loved the lectures and I loved the reading, but when it came to the essay and it came to writing it down - that was pure stress for me.

The best part was theological reflection - the concept, the practice, the getting into it. I had been quite unreflective in my faith. It is a very helpful tool in my toolbox. And it will be for the whole church.

A lot of repetition, and a lot of an academic approach, some of low levels of relevancy. Leave some of that out and put the extra time into other things that got less than they might have. This is interesting, but it is not bringing me to where I need to be, my reason for doing this course. I went in to come out useful.

Participants made a number of suggestions about what could be included or excluded in the academic programme.

We were doing the whole course with the white elephant in the room of the attitude to the church in Ireland at the moment. I felt there was an opportunity in there somewhere to give us a positive theology of church to hold on to, even for ourselves, and that was never addressed.

I couldn't see any of the modules that we could leave out. We need more practical dimension, but I wouldn't pull out anything.

Sacraments. We needed more on the sacraments.

The Programme Director has been very responsive to feedback since the Certificate's first outing and the academic programme has been constantly improved, for example by developing rubrics that are more aligned with an emphasis on reflective practice than academic writing skills and by setting assignments better suited to adult learners who are training for ministry.

Stage 5. The Wrap Around Programme

This programme was necessitated because there was no placement module on the Certificate in Pastoral Ministry.

It is clear that much thought went into what participants needed in terms of skill development, and in choosing suitable external experts to share their experience and insights with the group, either together or separately as catechists and ministers of pastoral care. But learning outcomes for this piece of the formation programme were not drawn up, and there was no way for participants to demonstrate the attainment of skills.

If during the last year of the course, we could be literally silent partners with the priests doing it. And then beginning to do it alongside. If there could have been a transition stage ...

(participant)

Many participants would have preferred to have completed this and the Academic Programme simultaneously, but there was universal recognition that the Covid pandemic made it almost impossible to do.

From the beginning of the course, we should be out more in the parish, out doing more placements, getting the priests involved in what we will be doing. (participant)

Four years is a very long time. If it could be tailored to two years, it would help. That is more manageable as a commitment. Maybe we didn't need to do so many assignments?

(participant)

An online format was suitable for some of the inputs, but face-to-face learning is almost indispensable for practicums and workshops.

For those of us in pastoral ministry who had an inclination, who knew that they would be involved in funerals or lay led liturgies or whatever it is, I think we should have been given experience in that. ... We were given all this theory but we never really had an opportunity to practice or do it. (participant)

Stage 6. Integration of New Ministries

Previous experience of those undertaking academic studies and training in the diocese has shone a light on the challenges of finding appropriate and supportive spaces to be involved in ministry after completion of studies. The Dominican Biblical Institute Diploma and the Redemptorist Youth Ministry programme were cited as two examples. Therefore, this final phase of the Formation Programme is of utmost importance.

By the end it was 'we're ready, but is everybody else ready?' (mentor)

The importance of connecting with the priests and achieving clarity around the role that the new ministers would play was correctly identified. In practice, this was not universally achieved, in part

because Covid prevented some of the planned face-to-face initiatives. The working out of roles and relationships is an ongoing task. There is not uniformity of practice across the diocese in the manner or degree to which the new ministers are involved in pastoral areas gatherings for priests.

It's all grand to send out notes and emails, but on the ground there is no accountability. And that translated into, with the new ministers, when they came on board, there were various things we were asked to do in terms of facilitating and involving, and again, I am not sure about the accountability how much of that happened. (priest)

I have felt included and afforded the greatest of welcome. (participant)

An awful lot of effort went into the programme and the new ministers and I think any of the efforts to link back to the diocese or link back to the priests was an afterthought. It was like they ran ahead and said 'O God we don't have people with us, we'd better bring them in' rather than being an integrated piece from the beginning. (priest)

We need structures into the future... I shouldn't be left fighting a battle while others are comfortable. I don't want to fight - I didn't come into this to fight. My God it is the exact opposite of what I want. It hurts me right through and wears me out and wears me down, but I'm damned if I am going to give up because it has to be done. But I shouldn't be doing it on my own and I feel like I am. (participant)

There was not uniformity in how they were introduced to the parishes or pastoral areas. Different experiences, which created a tension within the group. Person A and person B are doing this, but person C and person D are sitting twiddling their thumbs and no one is coming near them. (mentor)

It is working well. I come up with my ideas and if they are off the wall they tell me they are off the wall. If they are usable I'm told they are usable. (participant)

Clergy and participants referenced the change in mindset and ways of working among both clergy and parishioners that is required for the new ministries to succeed. Several focus group participants identified the need for training in collaborative ministry.

I think that communication and collaboration would be the gaps. (priest)

This is a big difficulty ... communicating about faith with priests. They seem to be uncomfortable with having discussions with us. The only way to get comfortable with somebody is by meeting regularly and having exchange and interchange. I think that must be done on a wide basis. (participant)

Not only with the priests, work needs to be done with the ordinary parishioners in the seats because they are the people that they are going to be working with, and to be accepting of them in that role is a big big ask. (mentor)

"There's a feeling that the ministers were being trained independently of priest and parish ... if somehow people can be feeding from the same food and experiencing the interaction with each other. I think it is from that personal interaction with each other, that's where the divine presence begins, that whole teamwork, leadership, personal interaction, for all of us. I think we all need constantly to be helped with that." (priest)

For the priests who took part in the focus groups, their experience of the new lay ministries, while still in its early stages, is overwhelmingly positive. In their own words: *the difference between surviving and not surviving; invaluable; a huge asset going forward.*

It has been a blessing from heaven as far as I'm concerned. (priest)

We have found, clergy and laity, a wonderful rapport, it is going very well. (participant)

It is one of the great things that has happened in my time in the diocese in Killaloe. (priest)

I have found it immensely - I use the word immensely - encouraging, energising, fulfilling. I couldn't speak positive enough of the experience. ... You don't feel that you are on your own. (priest)

It appears that initial tensions were 'more around role description than the actual ministry' and these could be relatively easily resolved.

More time is needed for the new ministries to 'bed down' before it can be stated whether issues arising at this point are just teething problems or whether there are more fundamental structural and 'church culture' issues that will need to be addressed.

Are we replacing some of our present ministries with lay ministers, or is our future going to be different? Some work still needs to be done on that. Are we going to be deliverers of service? Are we going to be functionaries? Or are we going to be facilitators of faith growth? I hope that develops out of what we are doing. (participant)

I fear - I hope to God I am wrong - that it could result in the new ministers simply doing the things that there aren't priests to do or the priests aren't able to do, whatever else, rather than infusing new energy, new ideas, new creativity, new vision, but I hope to God I'm wrong. (priest)

We are not here for maintenance of what already exists. We are here to move into a new, to bring the old with us, but to move in new ideas. I am very aware that I am not here to maintain an old system. I am here to work with the system and hopefully initiate change along the way. (participant)

Recommendations

1. **Keep going!** This programme cannot be left as a 'once-off'. It needs to be built upon and continued in some form into the future.
 - a. Decisions about when and how the programme is offered again cannot be made in isolation, but must continue to be an integral part of the wider diocesan vision and plan. It must be remembered that the diocese now has a network of mentors and new ministers as an additional building block.
 - b. The challenge of integrating the new ministers fully into the structures of the diocese should be considered in parallel with the broader challenge of creating structures and spaces that support synodality and co-responsible ministry.
2. **Programmes of this type are worth the investment.**
 - a. The financial, time and personnel investment in the programme is to be measured against the benefits of having holistically formed commissioned volunteer ministers. These new ministers add exponential value, not only because of the work that they are able to do, but by being the seeds and initiators of future evolutions in the diocese.
 - b. A Team of three appears to work very well, including by modelling a collaborative way of working. The Team should include a priest that is well connected in the diocese, to facilitate connections with clergy and to bring the perspective of the clergy into discussions and decision-making. Attention should be given to making it sufficiently diverse. A married person and parent, for example, may have a unique insight into the demands on participants' time. Given its vital role to model effective collaborative ministry to participants, it would be helpful for the Team to have periodic group supervision.
3. **Build on strengths and address gaps**
 - a. Continue to prioritize ways of building group cohesion in any future training, for example by residential weekends, at least at the beginning and end of a programme. The dividends of this for future resilience due to having a network of peers are priceless. These residential weekends could also provide an opportunity for informal meetings with priests, e.g. over a meal, so that those who will be working together can begin to get to know each other.
 - b. Engage earlier and more intentionally with stakeholders. This includes but is not limited to priests, sacristans, and pastoral councils. Recommendations 3c-e give some ways in which this could be done.
 - c. Make Pastoral Placement a more clearly integrated aspect of the programme. Even if it is not an official part of the academic programme, it should be formulated with clear learning outcomes and a phased strategy for ensuring that participants have opportunities to develop the practical skills that are needed. It will bring the added benefits of involving parishes / pastoral areas, priests and other stakeholders in the programme from an early stage, and giving the participants a profile with the people among whom they will be ministering.

- d. Identify the 'receiving communities' in which new ministers will work and involve them in placements.
- e. Consider Continuing Professional Development opportunities that are available to all ministers, both clerical and lay, as a way to build the muscles of collaborative ministry and address any current or future skills lacunae.
- f. Explore the possibility of upgrading the Academic Programme to a Diploma by formalising the placements and skills training and including it for credit.

Appendix 1. Description of Killaloe Diocese New Ministries Programme¹

Stage 0. Planning and Development

The Programme was developed and led by the Pastoral Development Team in Killaloe (Fr Gerard Nash and Maureen Kelly, the Pastoral Worker), in close collaboration with the Director of the Irish Institute for Pastoral Studies, MIC, Dr Eamonn Fitzgibbon, with administrative support from the Pastoral Development Office and championed by the Bishop.

Prior to commencing the New Ministries Programme, Fr Ger Nash and Maureen Kelly had conversations with a number of people about the content of a Formation Programme. These included Dr Kevin Egan (previously Director of the M.A. in Pastoral Leadership in All Hallows College), Dr Dan O'Connell, (Lecturer in Religious Education, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick), Donal Harrington, (theologian who had previously directed a programme in Pastoral Ministry in Carlow) and the then Fr (now Bp) Michael Duignan (who had set up and directed the formation programme for Catechists in the Elphin Diocese).

Stage 1. Announcement of New Ministries Programme, Promotion & Advertising

May 2018: Development and Printing of Brochures on Ministry of Pastoral Care and Catechist Ministry

Development of Diocesan Application Form

Development of 'Frequently Asked Questions' document for each Ministry.

June 2018: Circulation of Brochures to Parishes

July/Aug 2018: Information re New Ministries and invitation to apply sent for insertion in Parish Newsletters on the weekends of July 21/22, 28/29, August 4/5 and 11/12.

Aug/Sept 2018: Notice for Parish Newsletters re the holding of Information Evenings about the New Ministries sent to parishes for insertion on 18/19, 25/26 August and 1/2, 8/9 September. This was accompanied by supporting email from Bishop asking the priests of the Diocese to speak about the New Ministries – homily notes provided.

September 2018: Information Evenings held at three venues:

- Kilrush Community Centre: Wednesday, September 13th at 8 p.m.
- Ennis, Pastoral Centre: Thursday September 14th at 8 p.m.
- Obama Plaza, Moneygall, Monday 17th September at 8 p.m.

The Bishop introduced the New Ministries and underlying rationale and the Programme Team explained the roles, the application process and the different aspects of the formation programme.

Stage 2. Selection Process for New Ministers

Sept 2018: Decision to invite Maranna Quinlivan to join the Assessment Process along with the Programme Team. She became a core member of the Team in a volunteering capacity.

57 completed applications received for New Ministries Programme.

¹ The details in this outline of the programme were supplied by the Pastoral Development Office. It was accompanied by extensive supporting documentation as set out in Appendix 2.

October 2018: Reflection Days

All applicants were invited to attend one of two Reflection Days. The aims were: (1) for Programme Team and applicants to get to know one another; (2) to help applicants to articulate their understanding of the world around them; (3) to introduce discernment and an understanding of ministry as vocational.

52 applicants took part.

November 2018: Interview Process

All participants in the Reflection Days were invited to an interview with the Team on selected dates between 9 November and 3 December, according to participant availability. Set questions and marking formats were employed.

47 participants chose to attend for interview.

31 participants were successful at Interview. A Reference Form was developed and sent to the nominated Referees. The participants were then invited to participate in the Discernment Process beginning January 2019.

Care was taken to be as affirmative as possible in communicating with those who were not accepted for the next stage of the process.

Stage 3. The Discernment Process: January to July 2019 (*Formation for Ministry*)

Mentoring Process

A Mentoring Process was set up to accompany each applicant during the six -month programme. A volunteer group of Mentors was drawn together from people who had experience of accompanying people in counselling, spiritual direction, supervision or similar roles. Their brief was to meet with their mentees monthly. These conversations were private and no reports were made back to the Team. An orientation meeting was held for all mentors to make expectations clear.

Formation for Ministry

The Formation for Ministry Programme took place over six weekends, with an initial orientation session.

1. Orientation Session, 10 January 2019, 7 p.m. – 9.30 p.m.
2. Weekend 1: Personal Development & Family of Origin Work
 - Led by Dr Kevin Egan
3. Weekend 2: Exploring Spirituality: Finding God in our human and faith story.
 - Led by the Team
 - Included further work on material from Weekend 1
4. Weekend 3: Introduction to theology and thinking theologically
 - Input from Dr Eugene Duffy
 - Input from Dr Jessie Rogers on call and response in Scripture
5. Weekend 4: Appropriating faith as adult Christians. Discernment – what do we mean by it?
 - Input from Diarmuid Ó Murchú
6. Weekend 5: Beginning to Explore Ministry
 - Input from James McMahon
7. Weekend 6: Exploring ministry, gathering insights and reflection on journey to date
 - Inputs on Catechetics ministry from Noreen Spain
 - Input on cultural backdrop to ministry from Fr Harry Bohan

- Introduction to Certificate Programme from Dr Eamonn Fitzgibbon

Ongoing Reflection, Evaluation & Discernment

Reflection questions were sent to participants on 19 April 2019. These formed the basis for an end-of-year conversation which the Team held with each participant in the week of 8-14 July.

At the conclusion of the Discernment Process, 4 participants withdrew themselves from the programme and it was recommended to 2 further participants that they discontinue as it was felt that they were not an optimal fit for the programme at this stage.

The Participants received written communication from the Bishop, who also wrote to the priests of the diocese in the Summer of 2019 and gave an input on the progress of the Formation Programme at the Council of Priests in June 2019.

Stage 4. The Academic Programme: Certificate in Pastoral Ministry, Mary Immaculate College Limerick, September 2019 – May 2021

The group was to meet on one weekend per month from 6 p.m. on Friday to 6 p.m. on Saturday in the Guesthouse in Roscrea Monastery. From the start of Covid, the programme had to move online with classes conducted via Zoom.

Certificate in Pastoral Ministry Year 1: (2019-2020)

Introduction to Pastoral Theology I (Dr Eamonn Fitzgibbon)

Introduction to the Bible (Dr Myra Hayes)

Ministry and Personal Development (Dr Jo-Anne Mc Millan)

Introduction to Pastoral Theological Reflection I (Dr Eamonn Fitzgibbon)

Liturgy and Sacraments (Dr Anne Francis)

Certificate in Pastoral Ministry Year 2: (2020-2021)

Introduction to Pastoral Theology II (Dr Eamonn Fitzgibbon)

New Testament Christology (Dr Eamonn Fitzgibbon)

Christian Spirituality for Ministry (Frances Rowland MA)

Introduction to Pastoral Theological Reflection II (Dr Eamonn Fitzgibbon)

Towards a Theology of Collaborative Ministry (Martin Kennedy MA)

The mentoring process continued during the academic process, with summaries of work covered sent to the mentors.

Stage 5. The Wrap Around Programme January 2020-April 2022

This aimed to give ministry skills. It was initially designed to run alongside the Academic Programme, but it was then largely moved to after it. The two groups were more differentiated in their learning. It also included two retreats, one online and one face-to-face.

January 2020	(In-person) Listening Skills: Input / Workshop / Practicum (Róisín O' Loughlin) ALL
May 2020	Online Retreat (Conall O'Cuinn) Retreat in daily life
1 October 2020	(Online) Responding in the parish/pastoral area to those bereaved since COVID began (Breffni Mc Guinness Irish Hospice Foundation) - PASTORAL CARE

19 October 2020	(Online) Working with families at times of celebration of Sacraments (Maeve Mahon) - CATECHISTS
November 2020	(Online) Input on a new formation programme for Confirmation (Dermot Ryan) - CATECHISTS
8 and 10 November 2020	(Online) Holding difficult conversations (Bryan Nolan, former Hospital Chaplain) - PASTORAL CARE
18 February 2021	(Online) Understanding the Life of a Prisoner: A prison chaplain shares his role (Michael Kelleher CSSR) - PASTORAL CARE
June 2021	(Online) Community Garda: A Resource for Communities – PASTORAL CARE
10-12 September 2021	Retreat led by John Bennett MSC
15-16 October 2021	Group work (Maranna & Maureen) - ALL <i>Pastoral Care of & Outreach to People with Mental Health Issues and Their Families</i> (Maureen Mc Cabe) - PASTORAL CARE Pedagogy with adults. Groome's Methodology: Life-Faith-Life (Dr Dan O'Connell, MIC)
6 Nov 2021	Holding Difficult Conversations Practicum (Bryan Nolan) Adult Faith Development: Working Experientially Input and Practicum (Gemma Mc Kenna & Mary O' Dwyer, Partners in Faith). - CATECHISTS
11 Nov 2021	(Online) Speaking in Public Effectively (Ciana Campbell) - ALL
4 Dec 2021	(Online) Working with Dementia (Rev Bruce Pierce) - PASTORAL CARE Sacraments and Sacramentality: Coming to Awareness of the Sacramentality Around Us. Implications for Sacramental Programmes (Maureen Kelly) - CATECHISTS
8 Jan 2022	(Online) Ministry and Personhood - ALL
12 Feb 2022	Spirituality and Pastoral Care at the End of Life Input and Practicum (Bryan Nolan) - PASTORAL CARE Working with Parents of Children Preparing for Sacraments. Practicum on developing a session (Gemma Mc Kenna, Partners in Faith) - CATECHISTS
11-12 March 2022	Workshop & Practicum on Public Speaking (Ciana Campbell) - ALL The Role of the Funeral Team & The Funeral Rites Input and Practicum (Fr Damien Mc Niece, Dublin Diocese) - PASTORAL CARE The Sacrament of Reconciliation as understood and celebrated in the <i>Grow in Love Programme</i> (Sr Essie Hayes); <i>Share the Good News</i> . Practicum on Adult Education - CATECHISTS

Stage 6. Integrating New Ministers into the Diocese June 2021 – March 2022

June/July 2021: Each of the New Ministers was invited to reflect on questions about the ministry needs of the parish/pastoral area where they lived and how they might see themselves responding to those needs through their ministry. A one page reflection paper was submitted by each participant which formed the agenda for a face-to-face meeting with the Team in July 2021. Following these meetings, the Team met with Bishop Fintan and briefed him on the kinds of possibilities participants saw for ministry in their local areas.

September 2021: Individual meetings were held with the Vicars Forane of each of the twelve pastoral area where the New Ministers were to be assigned. The purpose of these meeting was to build connection with the Vicars and explain to them the process leading up to the appointment of the New Ministers. It would involve three-way explorations between the local priests, the new lay ministers and the Diocese. The Bishop was part of these meetings. Vicars and priests of each pastoral area were invited to a meeting with the New Ministers, to be facilitated by Martin Kennedy.

November 2021: Six sessions of shared input to priests and lay ministers on the topic of the changing face of ministry by Martin Kennedy were planned (two pastoral areas participating in each session. But Covid necessitated going online and there were two sessions held. A number of priests did not attend.

January 2022: Individual meetings with the participants were held by the Team where again the discussion was on local ministry needs, how the lay minister might respond to those needs and the particulars of this response.

February 2022: Conversations with priests and people were arranged in each pastoral area where lay ministers were to be appointed to tease through possible roles. Bishop Fintan and the Team attended these meetings. The needs of the parishes/pastoral area were discussed, and the New Ministers spoke about what they would like to do to respond to those needs through their ministry. In many cases there was already agreement between priests and lay ministers about their role. Bishop Fintan also spoke about his expectation that the New Ministers would form part of the Ministry Team of the Pastoral Area and would be invited to Ministry Team Meetings. The payment to lay people of expenses incurred in the course of their ministry was also agreed.

February/March 2022: Follow Up Conversations in the Pastoral Areas – The new lay ministers were asked to follow up these conversations by meeting again with the priests.

March 2022: While clarity about roles was emerging in many cases, this was more difficult in some pastoral areas. Follow up meetings were held, which Bishop Fintan and the Team also attended. In some areas further meetings were held in **May/June** and right up to the announcement of Diocesan Assignments in **July** to sort out difficulties.

13 April 2022: The formal commissioning by Bishop Fintan of the Ministers of Pastoral Care and Catechists took place at the Chrism Mass in Ennis Cathedral. As well as promises of commitment on the part of each lay ministry cohort, the Rite of Commissioning involved the priests and lay ministers committing to working alongside each other collaboratively.

July 2022: Lay Ministry Assignments are announced by Bishop Fintan along with the annual clerical changes in the Diocese.

Appendix 2. Supporting Documentation Received

In addition to a stage-by-stage description of the programme, I had sight of the following supporting documentation:

Stage 1. Announcement of New Ministries Programme, Promotion & Advertising

- Brochures for Catechist and Pastoral Care Ministries
- Frequently Answered Questions
- Parish Newsletters Notices
- Homily on New Ministers for use by Priests
- Application Form - Ministry of Pastoral Care
- Application Form - Catechist Ministry
- PowerPoint Presentation for Information Evenings

Stage 2. Selection Process for New Ministers

- Letter to Applicants re Reflection Days
- Format of Reflection Days
- Interview Questions for New Ministers
- Assessment Rating for Interviews with New Ministers
- Reference Format for Applicants for New Ministry Programme

Stage 3. The Discernment Process

Orientation Session

- Orientation Session Outline
- Prayer Used
- Group Building Exercise Description
- Reading Material for Group
- Report-back sheet on Hopes Fears Anxieties

Weekends 1-6. For each weekend, most or all of the following:

- Detailed Timetable
- PDFs of all inputs
- Notes for Opening Session and Groupwork
- Summary notes from weekend
- Readings for participants

Mentoring Process

- Mentoring Participant booklet
- Mentoring Orientation and Training Day Timetable
- PDF of Presentation: Towards an Understanding of the Mentoring Process
- Handout for Mentors 1
- Handout for Mentors 2
- Letter to Mentors Sept 2019
- Mentoring Meeting Review Page

Ongoing Reflection, Evaluation & Discernment

- Reflection Questions sent to participants
- 3 Examples of Mid Year Evaluations (anonymised)
- Conversation points for individual meetings
- Easter Letter from bishop to participants
- Speaking notes for input to Council of Priests June 2019

- Bishop's Letter to Priests Summer 2019

Stage 4. The Academic Programme: Certificate in Pastoral Ministry, MIC, Limerick

- Programme Submission document for the Certificate in Pastoral Ministry
- Module outlines for all modules
- Student Handbook Year 1
- Student Handbook Year 2
- Grading rubrics
- Timetables for year 1 and year 2
- Summary notes of content as shared with mentors
- External Examiner's Reports for the Certificate

Stage 5. The Wrap Around Programme

- Schedule of ministry skills inputs
- Weekends 1-6
- Session material – handouts, PPTs etc
- Retreats
- Videos for online retreat in daily life
 - Retreat timetable and participant lists
 - Letters to participants
 - Prayers

Stage 6. Integrating New Ministers into the Diocese

- Where I see myself in Ministry – Reflection paper to participants
- Notes for Conversation 1 with Priests of Pastoral Areas October 2021
- Martin Kennedy's input to the priests and lay ministers – summary and PPT
- Video of Martin Kennedy's input on Pope Francis' vision for ministry
- Rite of Commissioning of Lay Ministers at the Chrism Mass
- Bishop's announcement of assignment of lay ministers with clerical changes

Appendix 3. Diocese of Killaloe New Ministries' Project Costings²

Diocese of Killaloe New Ministries Project Costings							
	4 months	12 months	12 months	12 months	6 months		
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	TOTAL	
Non - Pay Costs							
ACADEMIC FEES		€25,000	€25,000			€50,000	
Lecturers'/Presenters' Fees	€639	€2,450	€2,720	€3,978	€4,643	€14,430	
Accommodation/Meeting Room Hire/Food	€875	€15,744	€3,055	€4,375	€4,509	€28,558	
Stationary & Books	€1,046	€1,344				€2,390	
Travel Expenses		€2,517	€220	€763	€520	€4,020	
Sundry					€148	€148	
- Total Non Pay	€2,560	€47,055	€30,995	€9,117	€9,819	€99,546	
Pay Costs							
Employee 1	€11,765	€35,295	€35,295	€35,295	€17,648	€135,299	
Employee 2	€5,883	€17,648	€17,648	€17,648	€8,824	€67,649	
Religious Employee	€6,173	€19,514	€20,907	€20,987	€10,533	€78,114	
Secretarial Support	€766	€2,298	€2,298	€2,298	€1,149	€8,809	
- Total Pay	€24,587	€74,755	€76,148	€76,228	€38,154	€289,872	
Project Total	€27,147	€121,810	€107,143	€85,344	€47,973	€389,417	

Note:

- Employee 2 was a volunteer but pay costs have been included to more accurately reflect the real cost of the programme.
- The time donated by mentors and others did not have a financial impact on the Diocese but is essential to the overall success of the programme.

² As supplied by Diocesan Administrative Office