

Westcott – Future Developments

We have spent the past couple of years addressing our financial structure and operational costs so that we can cover the expenses associated with our core activity of training ordinands through the income we receive from the Church of England's Ministry Division. However, there are other areas of cost – most notably building refurbishments, bursaries and outreach – that are not covered by this support, and we are looking to help ourselves where possible by diversifying income streams through conferences, independent students and fundraising activities.

The three key priorities for Westcott are therefore:

- maintaining theological excellence;
- providing facilities fit for the 21st century;
- developing our outreach to the wider Church.

Maintaining theological excellence

Westcott is a thriving community, currently with 73 Church of England ordinands and six resident independent students. Of these, half are aged 30 or younger, just under half are women and just over half are single.

We have been consistently full over the past several years, and the signs are good for next year even in these challenging times. Ordinands clearly value the quality of our community life and the seriousness we place on the study of Theology in the context of the life of prayer, interweaved with extensive pastoral practice.

Ordinands usually spend between two and four years in training with us. Most follow a degree pathway, with two-thirds taking Cambridge University awards and one-third taking awards accredited by Anglia Ruskin University. The proposed increase in academic fees could endanger our vital relationship with Cambridge University and the access for ordinands to the theological excellence and rigour which this ensures. It is our intention to do all we can to enable ordinands to continue to take Cambridge Divinity Faculty awards, including the BA (Tripos) and BTh, as well as higher degrees including the MPhil and PhD. The impact of fee increases on the Anglia Ruskin Foundation Degree is still unclear, but this too may be in jeopardy.

Raising funds for bursaries to enable ordinands to continue to take Cambridge University degrees is a key priority.

Facilities fit for the 21st century

As returning alumni point out, our buildings have not changed much over many decades! We have undertaken necessary refurbishment in the past three years, including rewiring, updating fire alarm systems, and improving disabled access, but much remains to be done. Community life is an essential component of what we offer, requiring as many as possible to live on site, but we do not have enough accommodation to make this possible for all ordinands. We therefore need to add rooms for around fifteen more single students and five married students, and to upgrade remaining accommodation. As we move into greater use of electronic learning resources, we also need to provide library facilities both for books and online study that are fit for this generation of students.

Raising money for new building and renovating current facilities is a key priority.

Developing our outreach to the wider Church

Our focus is on the training of ordinands, but we have extraordinary resources in both staff and ordinands, and we wish to make these resources much more available to the wider Church.

We have been aiming to do this through conferences, but the internet is an extraordinary vehicle of which we wish to make much greater use as a resource for clergy and laity. We wish to redesign our website to make this a more effective resource for the Church, as well as extend what we have to offer through study days, conferences and publications.

Resourcing outreach initiatives to support the learning and development of clergy and laity is a key priority.

Fundraising activities will be vital to the success of our objectives. In setting out our priorities here, I hope you have a feel for the current and future direction of Westcott House. I also hope that you will feel able to help in some way, and I will be in touch again in due course with some suggestions as to how you may be able to do this. In the meantime, if you would like to contact me about anything you have read here, I would be delighted to hear from you.

The Revd Canon Martin Seeley

