

Theology House Annual Report to Synod

2022 was a year of consolidation for Theology House. We really started to make the Anglican Centre on Tuam St feel like our home. The library collection looks fantastic in its new layout and the flexible upstairs space with meeting rooms and a large kitchen is proving to be a real benefit. We have already hosted several events and look forward to welcoming visitors and students.

We were sad to lose Heather Fraser from the team at the end of 2022. Heather was a stable presence in my time at Theology House, a wonderful administrator, and an enthusiastic presence in the Anglican Centre. She was always willing to go above and beyond and never missed an opportunity to help where she saw a need. Past director Ken Booth passed away this year. His legacy is alive and well in our church and at Theology House we continue to sell his marvellous *God's Never-Ending Story*. We are all part time at Theology House and I'm often pleasantly surprised when I reflect on just how much we are able to contribute on Christ's Church through this special ministry. It's only because of God's provision and the stewardship of resources over many decades that we have these gifts to share.

We ran the Theology House Certificate in Ministry and Leadership for the second time. After the successful pilot in 2021, the course content and structures were all in place but the added administrative load of a larger cohort of students was a challenge. Late COVID surges meant that sessions over Zoom were a regular part of the experience early in the year. Paul Hegglin and Emma Tovey from the Diocesan Ministry Team taught their streams in Leadership & Discipleship and Ministry Skills alongside my contribution of Bible & Theology. I know our students have benefited hugely from the programme and are grateful for the support of St John's College Trust Board to allow them to make it their primary focus for the year. This is a special gift. Having the opportunity to build a programme from scratch allowed me to test some of my own ideas about how theology should be taught, and I remain convinced that, at least at the introductory level, the artificial separation of biblical studies and systematic theology common in most programmes is unhelpful. This programme has been an excellent way for Theology House to contribute to the life of the Church during the pandemic when things like short courses, seminars, and conferences were so difficult to plan and run. We may well offer this programme, parts of it, or something similar in the future.

At the request of the Diocese, we began work on the first of two Lenten studies addressing the learnings from the Abuse in Care Royal Commission. The subject matter was daunting, especially for my first

attempt at publishing anything, but I am grateful for the generous support of the wonderful authors who agreed to participate. I also benefited greatly from the wisdom of several advisors inside and outside the church to ensure that I was keeping survivors' perspectives central in my work. Work is already underway on the second requested study.

I have enjoyed teaching liturgy for St John's College in recent years. The current iteration of the course is entitled Anglican Worship and includes deeper theological exploration and the chance to consider non-liturgical expressions of Anglicanism. As well as keeping me connected to the life of the College, it's great to meet students from across our church. I value the opportunity to influence (hopefully for the better) a generation of leaders. I aim to equip them with the theory and skills to move beyond simplistic explanations of our worshipping life and justifications of "that's how we've always done it." We continue to host delivery of papers for St John's Diploma in Christian Studies. This programme allows students to complete the equivalent of a one-year full time diploma over three years and can be credited towards further study such as a theology degree. This is an excellent and low-risk way to try formal theological study.

Continuing strong headwinds in financial markets have impacted Theology House's investments which provide approximately half our income. For a long-term investor such downturns are inevitable but still unpleasant. We remain grateful for the ongoing support of the St John's College Trust Board who provide a grant to support our ministry.

As the pandemic has receded from our consciousness, we are working on a return to a roster of course offerings. I know many people in our diocese have benefited from various courses over the years and I hope you will notice these returning as a regular feature of the calendar. Please do let me know if you have suggestions for courses that would be of benefit in your own contexts.

I continue to be grateful for the support and guidance of the Theology House board which comprises: Rt Rev Dr Peter Carrell (Chair,) Peter Hart, Rev Cameron Pickering, Rev Chris Orczy Rev Margaret Neate, and Tom Elliott.

Gareth Bezett
Director

May 2023