

## **Wycliffe in 2010 – briefing for Bishops and Senior Staff May 2010**

*Wycliffe Hall is an evangelical theological college with 100 full time students, located in the fine city of Oxford. Wycliffe is a Permanent Private Hall of the University of Oxford. Over half of the student body are Ordinands in the Church of England, the rest of our students come from various denominations, and from around the world, pursuing qualifications up to Doctoral level.*

### **Churchmanship**

The 1877 Trust deed of Wycliffe Hall, signed by all members of the Hall Council, emphasises a Protestant interpretation of the Thirty-Nine Articles, atonement, justification, the sacraments, priesthood and the Bible. This is the rich heritage in which Wycliffe Hall stands.

Throughout its existence Wycliffe has identified itself as an Anglican Evangelical Theological College. In practice this means that we have represented in our community those who would describe themselves as conservative, those who would call themselves charismatic and those who would have a more reflective or contemplative spirituality. We believe that this gives us a genuine depth and richness which enhances our community and equips those preparing for ministry within the Church.

Our Chapel services include daily worship using the range of services in Common Worship (and Book of Common Prayer), Scripture readings, a combination of organ, keyboard, and guitar for sung worship. Students lead and preach, taking responsibility, along with their tutors; our weekly Holy Communion service often includes a guest preacher. Other services include a weekly student led Complin service and occasional prayer meetings and a Taize style service.

### **Training**

The three principal parts of ordinand life at Wycliffe are Academic learning, Ministry Training and Spiritual formation. All students study towards an Oxford University qualification (Diploma in Theological and Pastoral Training, C.Th. B.Th., B.A., M.Th. D. Phil). Wycliffe's academic results have consistently been high, with the Hall in the top two positions in the Norrington table for at least the last 5 years. Amongst the Tutorial staff we have (8 Doctorates) and (91 years of parochial experience)! Our recent staff appointments have deliberately sought to hold together academic excellence and recent parochial experience.

Ministry training is undertaken by practitioners and we place particular emphasis on the ministry gifts of Leadership, Preaching, Church Growth and Christian Apologetics. Students will spend some of their time at Wycliffe in Pastoral placements which take place in churches of very different sizes and demography to enable them to experience worship in contexts which are different to their sending Church and range from rural parishes across

Oxfordshire to larger City Churches with a more student emphasis. Many students elect to use their placements to experience a Churchmanship with which they are not familiar.

Spiritual formation lies at the heart of everything we do. Some formation happens within the formal curriculum, including writing a Pastoral Reflection on a long summer placement, or writing an essay on Worship, or on a style of Pastoral Counselling. All students meet with their personal tutor formally at least once per term, and informally on a regular basis along with the other 11 members of their fellowship group. They will undertake the Myers Briggs Type Indicator and spend an intense week considering the spiritual aspects of Church leadership. The communal experience of rubbing shoulders with men and women from different backgrounds over meals, worship, sport and informal conversation is often very significant for personal devotion and spiritual development. When put alongside the active mentoring of students by Tutors throughout their time here, the two or three years at Wycliffe Hall can be the most spiritually formative period of an ordinand's life.

## **Men & Women in Ministry**

Wycliffe holds together the "Two Integrities" which are currently evident in contemporary Anglican Church life. Two of our full time academic staff are ordained women who along with a substantial number of students and fellow tutors hold to a more egalitarian approach. Others, both on the staff and in the student body, hold to a more complementarian approach to men and women in ministry. What is important for us is that Wycliffe is a place where differences of viewpoint may be acknowledged, discussed and allowed an equal place alongside each other.

Focus Days and Integration Study Weeks spend considerable time discussing the ministry and personal implications of academic training. For example, an annual Focus Day on Men and Women in Leadership involves a debate between two tutors who have divergent views in this area and allows students to hear a passionate and clear presentation of both positions. Additionally, the Focus Day on Human Sexuality recognises the pertinence of a related current issue in the Anglican Communion, wrestles with the biblical text and concludes by seeking to encourage students to be aware of the conclusions of "Some Issues in Human Sexuality" (and other Church House publications) whilst exercising positive love, overcoming prejudice and showing compassion to the struggles of many in this area of human sexuality.

## **Community**

Wycliffe is a thriving community which continues to train some of the finest men and women for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church of England Ministry. We consider that our best ambassadors are the students themselves. We hope that Bishops and DDO's will take up our invitation to visit the Hall and experience student life here. Students will happily share of the positive and negative experiences of Residential training in the Hall and give a balanced impression of what it is like to be a student at Wycliffe.

**Revd Dr Simon Vibert**  
**Vice Principal Wycliffe Hall**