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DISCRIMINATION AGAINST OAK HILL

By David Phillips

Available on the Association of Ordinands and Candidates for Ministry website are the results of a survey conducted last year amongst ordinands. Students at 18 out of 41 training institutions responded, that is 256 people out of a total of 1,185. Two-thirds of these were training for stipendiary ministry.

We understand that there were initially some objections to the findings of the survey but that these were verified by an independent source.

Just less than half of those who responded claimed to be evangelical with conservative evangelicals comprising almost one fifth of the respondents.

The survey found that one third of conservative evangelicals did not feel supported by their Director of Ordinands (DDO), this compared with about one quarter of those who claimed to be charismatic but only around one in twenty of all other groups. Put the other way around only one in four conservative evangelicals felt supportive. Bishops were generally seen as more supportive, but still there is a problem.

A similar question was asked in relation to selection conference and here the figures are even more alarming. Over half of conservative evangelicals felt unsupported by their selection conference. Bear in mind that these are the people who were eventually sent for training. This suggests that there is positive discrimination against conservative evangelicals in selection.

The most alarming question of all was in relation to whether DDOs or Bishops directed students to or away from particular colleges. Seventy students felt they had been directed away from Oak Hill, whereas only 40 of the respondents were students at Oak Hill. Likewise only four students felt they had been directed towards Oak Hill. The other colleges that would have been once recognised as evangelical (Wycliffe, Trinity, Ridley, Cranmer and St. John's) fared almost exactly the opposite, many directed towards and very few away (though Wycliffe still had 15 who felt they were directed away from it). This shows considerable prejudice against Oak Hill college in particular, despite the fact that such a high proportion of those going into training are clearly conservative evangelical.

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