

Cynhadledd Esgobaeth Llanellwy :: St Asaph Diocesan Conference



Pwyllgor Sefydlog :: Standing Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Diocesan Conference held on 25th November 2021 via Zoom

1. Welcome and Opening Reflection

The meeting was chaired by Revd Dr Jason Bray who opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present to the Standing Committee. Jason congratulated John Lomas on behalf of the Standing Committee on his appointment as Bishop of the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon. Bishop John Lomas delivered the reflection focusing on the idea of change.

2. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

Apologies from the following members were recorded:

Llŷr Williams, Sally Harper, Trish Owens, Peter Simpson, Mary James, Pam Massey.

Jason Bray asked the members of Standing Committee, having seen the agenda, whether anyone wanted to register a conflict of interest. There were no conflicts of interest raised.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the Standing Committee held on 28th September 2021 via Zoom were reviewed and presented for approval by the Standing Committee.

For: 92%

Against: 0%

Abstentions: 8%

Result: The minutes of the previous meeting were approved

4. Matters Arising

Future pattern of Standing Committee meetings – a paper had been circulated in advance of the meeting by Llŷr Williams incorporating the feedback received at the last meeting of the Standing Committee. Jason Bray asked for comments. Rebecca Sparey Taylor asked the organisers to be aware of the two Bank Holidays and school holidays when scheduling the May meeting date. Hugh Burgess reflected that there is a danger that with all day meetings we fill the time available and asked that meetings be kept as focussed as possible.

5. Planning our Future

Jason Bray reminded Standing Committee that 2022 will be a year of reconstruction as we build the church that God wants us to be after the events of the last 18 months. The focus will be on mission, ministry, and the new diocesan vision of 'Grow Faith; Bring Hope; Demonstrate Love'.

Jason Bray introduced Bishop Gregory.

Bishop Gregory explained the launch plans for 'Grow Faith; Bring Hope; Demonstrate Love'. The new version of the diocesan ident was shared and this will be introduced from Advent Sunday. Bishop Gregory reminded everyone that this is not intended to be a new initiative but a focus to encourage us to reflect on whether what we are doing meets the core purposes of the church.

Launch Timetable

- **Advent Sunday 2021**- Bishop Gregory's Advent message, available in English visual, Welsh and English audio, Welsh and English written versions.
- **December 2021** - Teulu Asaph will feature the new branding and an exploration of the new focus.
- **January 2022** - Diocesan Manifesto – intended to lift our vision and explain what we are trying to achieve in relation to Mission Areas, diocesan initiatives, strategy and funding.
- **Lent 2022** – Lent Prayer – focusing on the three foci to be said daily at 6pm together with a short message from people across the diocese.

Bishop Gregory introduced Karen Maurice who spoke about communications and the new focus

Work has been done to refresh the brand whilst retaining the core elements that reflect St Asaph Diocese. There is a new logo with three new hexagons to represent the new focus. The dominant colour will be the green of 'Grow Faith'. The new branding will be used in all communications and the new edition of Teulu Asaph will explore the new focus more fully. Work is being done on the manifesto that will be launched in January and will shape our Lent discussions. The Lent Prayer is being written by Sally Harper (Director of Spirituality). A Mission Area course will be launched in May with the aim to run five sessions with multimedia and interactive sessions. The website will be updated to reflect the new branding.

Karen Maurice introduced Andy Grimwood to explain more about Mission Areas

Mission Areas are now the clear focus and driver of this diocese. As a result of Mission Area Reviews, recommendations have now been agreed with each Mission Area to help us all get ready for sharing faith, hope and love. Andy explained that the message in the Book of Numbers is that God has called people to work together so that we can all flourish. Faith, Hope, and Love is intended for us to promote the Good News in all we do.

Andy Grimwood introduced Barry Willson to explain how the message will be communicated to all in the diocese.

Barry explained that he has produced a course outline which could be used in house groups or MACs. Ideas for the course are actively encouraged and invited from all members of the Standing Committee. The course will consist of five weekly sessions including a short video clip featuring lay people, followed by a Biblical focus, a personal focus, a shared experience, and concluding with a plenary.

Session 1 Telling our stories

Session 2 Faith and how it shapes our lives

Session 3 Hope and the expectation of change

Session 4 Love and the power to transform

Session 5 Choice and the creation of new possibilities

Jason Bray thanked all the speakers for their contributions and invited questions from the floor.

Will Marshall – asked about whether there was space for engagement with scripture. Barry explained that he chose the model based on the nature of our diocese and he didn't want to alienate people but rather focus on the joy of meeting together. Norman Morris – felt there was some ambiguity in the message of the course – what are we trying to achieve? Jenny Creed – shared that people love to talk about their own experiences and this course would help to draw people together which can lead to genuine fellowship. Ros Crawford – agreed that when people get together they want to share their stories which can then lead on to an exploration of scripture.

Jason Bray explained that there would be 30 minutes in breakout rooms to reflect on what has been heard and to discuss:

1. What do you want to affirm in what you have heard?
2. What do you want to change?

Plenary Discussion

Tracey White – affirmed the focus of Faith, Hope, and Love. Good for the diocese to provide a sense of purpose for the clergy and laity and the phased introduction was appreciated. People were engaged in the idea of the course and the simplicity of the structure. People felt there should be more scripture but scripture which is easy to engage with. There needs to be substance to what we do and we need to see the action that underpins Faith, Hope, and Love. Felt that the course should be shared more widely than the Mission Area Conference. It would be useful for Standing Committee to hear how the manifesto will be disseminated. Bishop Gregory responded that the hope is that the manifesto will be in a physical format so that people can share it with others.

Sarah Wheat – focusing on three words will be helpful as most people know them already. There was a lot of affirmation for Faith, Hope and Love as it affirms what we do already, but also allows different ways of focusing and challenging ourselves. 'Grow, Bring, and Demonstrate' are equally important as they help with the practical application, the work that is being done. The information must filter down from the Diocese, to MAs, churches and each individual in the church and in the community. In general, people liked the course – would be good to use it ecumenically too. Really like the idea of doing less – of thinking about what we do and if it doesn't Grow Faith, Bring Hope and Demonstrate Love,

then why are we doing it? Some asked if there could be more time to let what we have heard filter through. We need to work out how this all fits in with our MA action plans. Make sure people don't feel they have to redo the plan in the light of this development. Some concerns that it can be hard to get people to commit to a course. Questions - will there be any ideas about how to do this, will there be pilots run that we can learn from, how can we use it in a blended way, zoom isn't for everyone, but neither is in person now. How can we use a blended way of delivery?

Barry Wilson – encouraged that this is about refreshing what we already have. The course is probably focused in the right direction. Don't want anything too structured – this needs to be flexible so the needs of different groups can be met. Need to be clear on the focus – is it for MACs or more widely across the diocese?

Norma Rowles – liked the strap line and want to focus on new things. Some felt courses on Zoom would be good as group work is easier and more productive. Hope was felt to be the most significant factor. Concerns were raised about the continuing pandemic and how this might hinder the course. How much will this cost? Being aware of vocabulary, particularly the word 'change', which is a challenge and uncomfortable for many.

John Lomas – could the course be adapted between Mission Areas? The focus was well received but questions were raised about the branding and how it will be distributed to Mission Areas.

Hannah Daniels – thanked the communications group who have brought this to fruition, including a clear strategy about how this is going to be achieved. As members of STANDING COMMITTEE, we have to be active in promoting this in Mission Areas. The group was very positive about the new logo and focus and felt that the course is easy to follow without being too prescriptive. How does the course fit in with other groups already running in the church eg Alpha? Is the focus a discipleship course or is it sharing fellowship with others? Perhaps there could be greater engagement with scripture in weeks 2, 3 and 4. We need to be careful how the course is rolled out and it doesn't become yet another thing that MAs have to do.

Michael Plane – thought that the course should be trialled by a smaller group before sharing with a wider group in the Mission Area. Feeling that it affirms and celebrates what is happening across the diocese. There is a great opportunity here for working with young people and engaging them with scripture through the course. Need to look at how it leads into the work of the Engaging Steering Group and the needs in our communities. It will enable confidence building in the Mission Areas to share the work we do.

Jason Bray asked Karen Maurice to explain how the branding will be shared with Mission Areas. The brand will be on the Advent message and in the next issue of Teulu Asaph. The elements of the brand are being saved in a Dropbox which will be available and accessible to everyone on the Mission Area toolkit page of the diocesan website.

Jason thanked everyone for their comments and suggestions which we will make sure we include as we develop and refine the proposals.

6. Update from the Engaging Steering Group

Jason Bray introduced Sarah Wheat who provided an update about the work of the Engaging Steering Group.

Sarah explained that are many people in the diocese who are doing excellent work in the community, but this isn't often heard about or shared. It was decided that an area of the website will be created to provide resources and templates to help people who want to develop a project in their church or community. Bishop John Lomas came up with the name for the page – 'This Works!'. The page has been set up under the Faith in Action section of the website and will showcase projects and stories which are already happening in the diocese. LyCiG principles will be followed. Sarah encouraged people to send in stories and projects which have been successful (big and small) so that we can inspire other people in the diocese. There will be a launch event in March 2022.

Sarah Wheat introduced Ann Williams – the new Dementia Support Officer

Sarah explained that we have been awarded funding for a further 12 months to support a dementia support officer. Ann explained that her career had been in mental health services. In the next 12 months, Ann aims to raise awareness of dementia across the diocese and had been impressed by the real willingness in the diocese to make changes to be more inclusive to those living with dementia. Dementia UK offer a short awareness learning session to enable people to become a Dementia Friend. Ann has recently become a Dementia Champion so she can lead awareness sessions. Ann has written a piece for Teulu Asaph encouraging four people in each church to engage with the course. Based on enquiries from clergy and laity Ann has formed a four-point plan which is available on the diocesan website:

- Becoming Dementia Friends
- Spirituality and Services
- The Physical Environment
- Supporting your community

Jason Bray invited comments and questions from Standing Committee

Hugh Burgess – affirmed the idea of 'This Works!' but raised the question that the LyCiG principles might get confused with the new focus. Tracey White clarified that Faith, Hope, and Love is overarching and the LyCiG principles remain to help people action and underpin Faith, Hope, and Love.

7. Financial Update

Report from the Diocesan Grants Committee

Clive Myers presented this item and reported that Ian Day has retired from the group and Ben Lines has joined the group. Clive appealed for more lay members to come forward and join the committee. All meetings are held on Zoom and the committee considers urgent applications by email. The Committee administers building, youth and social engagement grants; bursaries for education and training; Mission Area Administrator grants; Coronavirus emergency fund grants and church emergency support grants.

Clive summarised the grants awarded to date and asked members of the Standing Committee to reflect on the following points:

- Spending on youth and social engagement grants is significantly lower than the spending on buildings. This reflects the number of applications received rather than the decision making of the committee.

- Encouraging to see training bursary requests go up this year as restrictions were eased.
- MA Administrator grants were down on the year as some Mission Areas had not yet spent their 2020 funding.
- The Coronavirus Emergency Fund has been spent in full as Mission Areas have helped the most vulnerable in their communities.
- The Committee awarded over £227,000 of grant funding in 2021.

In 2022 the grants pages of the website will be refreshed. Clive asked for the support of the Standing Committee to:

1. Nominate a lay person from each archdeaconry to join the Committee.
2. Share information about the grant schemes across the Mission Areas.
3. Tell us about one grant that has made a difference to people in your Mission Area.

Clive asked for questions from Standing Committee. Jason Bray asked what is the mechanism for nominating someone for the Committee? Clive explained that names can be passed through to Diane. Norman Morris commented that this is an excellent Committee that makes a real difference and he encouraged more people to join.

Jason Bray thanked Clive Myers and the members of the Grants Committee. Jason Bray introduced Diane McCarthy to provide an update on the financial outlook.

Financial Outlook

Diane reported that the Mission Areas had all expressed sincere appreciation for the emergency funding provided in 2020 and 2021. Thanks were offered to the RB for using central funds to support our churches and to the DBF who had decided that all the funding would be awarded to churches and Mission Areas to be applied at a local level. There is a real sense that the bonds between the churches in the Mission Areas have been strengthened. Concerns have been raised about the lack of attendance data as we normally use a three-year rolling average for the Mission Area Share calculation. We have had to use data from 2018 and 2019, as it was not possible to collect robust attendance data during 2020. Many people are undoubtedly weary after the challenges of the last 18 months but remain determined that their church will not only survive but also thrive in the future. The DBF has committed that any surplus on the diocesan accounts at the end of 2021 will be reinvested in Mission Areas through the Mission Hub Churches, Dot Eglwys and the Cathedral investment programme. The Share Review working group will look for a new way of allocating Mission Area Share in 2023 which encourages growth. There needs to be an urgent focus on growth so the gospel message can be shared as widely as possible.

Jason Bray thanked Diane for her contribution and asked for questions from Standing Committee.

Ros Crawford – Why don't we include figures of people attending church during the week?
Diane – this is one of the options that will be considered by the Working Group. Jane Ayee – Is there any more detailed information about the impact of grants that have been awarded? Clive Myers – we will research this and report back.

Jason Bray invited Pam Powell, Director of Ministry, to talk about Life Events

8. Life Events

Training was given by Canon Sandra Miller in November to Mission Areas representatives. We often diminish life events as marginal in the life of the church, but they are key events in the life of people. Life events are huge opportunities for church growth and link with LyCiG principles. Research shows that the quality of welcome is more important than the building, the service or the vicar. Sandra Miller has compiled a resource pack about Life Events including printed literature, videos and online support. Governing Body decided to roll out the pack and tailored for the Church in Wales. Each Mission Area has been given a pack and these can be personalised for individual churches. Information is also available on St Padarn's website and includes recorded training sessions about how to use the packs. The training was excellent, but it now needs to be acted upon in Mission Areas and churches.

Jason Bray thanked Pam Powell and asked for questions from Standing Committee

Jane Ayee – was there information about using the content in crematoria? Pam Powell responded that cards can be given to local undertakers and the materials can be used in crematoria. Hermione Morris – found the training informative and affirming. Tanat Vyrnwy has already had a meeting with the Shared Ministry Team and asked them to take one thing forward from the literature.

9. Casual Vacancy on the Governing Body

Mr Rob Dawson (Borderlands Mission Area) has been nominated for election to the Governing Body and detailed papers had been circulated in support of his nomination. Standing Committee moved to a vote:

For: 97%

Against: 0%

Abstentions: 3%

Mr Rob Dawson was elected to the lay vacancy on the Governing Body for the triennium 2022-2024

10. Date of next meeting

10am on Wednesday 30th March 2022.

Bishop Gregory thanked everyone for taking part and contributing. Bishop Gregory added his personal congratulations to Bishop John Lomas on his new appointment.

Bishop Gregory closed the meeting with a blessing.