

Cynhadledd Esgobaeth Llanelwy :: St Asaph Diocesan Conference



Pwyllgor Sefydlog :: Standing Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Diocesan Conference held on 28th June 2022 in St Matthew's Church Hall, Buckley.

1. Welcome and Opening Reflection

The meeting was chaired by Norma Rowles, who opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present to the Standing Committee, including Ryan Marsh the new Diocesan Churches Inspector. Revd Canon Jason Bray delivered the reflection, prayers and a hymn.

2. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

Apologies from the following members were recorded:

Jenny Creed, Stuart Evans, Mary James, Sam Allin, Huw Lloyd, Heather Loveridge, Clive Myers, Christine Owen, Carole Poolman, Rebecca Sparey-Taylor, Trevor Trevor, Suzanne Wardell, Llyr Williams, Sam Erlandson, Sally Harper, Roger Dutton, Jennie Castle, Andrew James, Jeffery Olstead, John Phillips and Sandra Roberts.

Norma Rowles asked the members of Standing Committee, having seen the agenda, whether anyone wanted to register a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest was declared by Revd Hermione Morris, as she has links to one of the charities nominated for the Diocesan Offering.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the Standing Committee held on 30 March 2022 via Zoom were reviewed and presented for approval by the Standing Committee. The minutes were proposed by Norma Rowles and seconded by Ros Crawford.

For:	27
Against:	0
Abstentions:	0
Result:	The minutes of the previous meeting were approved unanimously.

4. Matters Arising

Norma Rowles stated that there were no matters arising that are not the subject of a separate agenda item. Norma then gave the members of the Standing Committee the opportunity to raise any matters that they would like to discuss, and are not already coming up on the agenda. No matters were raised.

5. Funding our Diocesan Strategy – our vision for 2022 and beyond

Norma Rowles explained that the next part of the agenda will focus on how we are going to be funding our new Diocesan Strategy and living out the refocus on Growing Faith, Bringing Hope and Demonstrating Love across the Diocese.

a) **Annual Accounts 2021** – Diane McCarthy took the committee through the Annual Accounts in the absence of the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance.

Income: Diane summarised another extraordinary year and said that the diocese was very grateful once again to the RB for the Coronavirus Emergency Funding of £1.2 million, all of which was paid out to the Mission Areas. Diane thanked all the Mission Area and Church Treasurers for all their hard work throughout the pandemic.

In 2021 the financial markets recovered and our investment income increased to £101k (£33k in 2020), but still is not back to pre-pandemic levels.

There have been significant changes to the allocation of the Block Grant from the RB. Clergy pensions are now paid centrally, so this has been removed from the amount paid to each diocese. The change was introduced on 1 July 2021 so the Block Grant for 2021 was reduced by £342.5k, which represents 6 months costs of the Clergy Pension Scheme. There is also a corresponding reduction in clergy costs.

The bulk of the income to the DBF comes from the Mission Area Share and we have had strong collection levels of Mission Area Share. 2021 was the fourth consecutive year that MA share has been held at its current level.

Expenditure. The DBF has maintained its commitment to frontline ministry despite the challenges – this is a key priority for us as a diocese. There has been no increase in clergy stipends, clergy housing costs or staff salaries in 2021. The clergy costs look lower due to the change in accounting for clergy pensions, and there were some underspends due to restriction on activities because of the pandemic.

2021 ended with a surplus of £197,247 on operations due to emergency funding from the RB, restrictions on normal activities, limitations on clergy recruitment and the efforts of our Mission Areas to pay their Share in full and on time.

The immediate priorities for the DBF are:

- Understand the medium-term financial impact of the pandemic for our Mission Areas
- Develop a robust 10-year financial strategy that will;
 - Prioritise numerical growth
 - Improve missional and organisational effectiveness.
 - Measure outcomes against objectives.

- Support the outputs of the Mission Area Review process
- Fund "Grow Faith, Bring Hope, Demonstrate Love" initiatives as a demonstration of our faith in the future of our mission.

The surplus on the accounts from the last two years will be reinvested in the *Grow Faith, Bring Hope, Demonstrate Love* initiatives. Any additional funding required will come from diocesan reserves without further call on the Mission Areas.

There was an opportunity for questions and the Standing Committee then voted on the 2021 Annual Accounts. The results were:

For:	32
Against:	0
Abstentions:	0
Result:	The 2021 Annual Accounts were unanimously accepted.

Norma then thanked all the members of the DBF for all the work they do on behalf of the diocese and for this vital investment in the future of all our churches.

b) New Mission Area Share Formula – Diane introduced the New Mission Area Share Formula to the Standing Committee. During 2021, the DBF commissioned a working party to look at changing the mission area share formula, which has been in place for the last 14 years. The new formula needs to complement the diocesan strategy, encourage our Mission Areas and encourage growth. Since the pandemic, there have been no meaningful attendance figures and this has been a key element of the current formula.

The key principles of the new formula are:

- Mission areas pay for frontline ministry (ordained and lay).
- Central funds (provincial and diocesan) cover the support costs.
- Remove the Sunday attendance element of the formula.
- Introduce a factor for ability to pay.
- Introduce a factor for population.
- A minimum charge for each church building.
- Limits on the size of annual increases and decreases.

The new formula consists of the following elements:

- The diocesan budget will be reformatted in a way that makes the elements of income and expenditure more transparent.
- Actual front line ministry costs will be met by the Mission Areas.
- The full cost of a stipendiary cleric will be allocated in the same proportion as is currently the case.
- There will be a fixed charge of £500 for each church building.
- Other frontline ministry costs that benefit the whole diocese will be allocated in the following proportion: 20% on Mission Area population, 20% on Mission Area unrestricted cash and 60% on Mission Area clergy allocation.
- Governance and central costs will be covered by other sources of income

The advantages of the new formula are:

- The formula provides a powerful means of encouraging churches to support our strategic objectives.
- Exclusion of the attendance figures removes what was a disincentive to grow the church, and this is warmly welcomed.
- Introduction of this new formula means that there is now every incentive to grow the church and to draw as many people as possible into the life of the Teulu Asaph. It is hoped that, in time, this will drive a significant culture change across the diocese.
- People will be invited to join our churches and to share their time, talents and resources in the service of God. The more people we can draw in, the more people we will have to contribute to our shared life in whatever way they can.
- Inclusion of population should help make the calculation more equitable across rural and urban areas. It will also help to focus our attention on the wider mission field and opportunities for growth rather than constantly looking inwards.
- Inclusion of the number of church buildings will support the strategic review of buildings that was begun during the Mission Area Review process.
- Inclusion of unrestricted funds and assets will encourage churches to consider better use of resources and how they can be used to further mission.
- Members of the Board were keen to provide as much financial stability as possible for the Mission Areas in these challenging times and it was agreed that a 'cap and collar' would be introduced that limited both increases and decreases to a maximum of 7%.

The next steps, clear communication will be essential and different audiences will be considered. The roll out will begin in Autumn with the new formula being effective from 1st January 2023. Mission Area Treasurers will be a key supporting group in communication and implementation of the new formula, as well as the introduction of the new membership app, will identify and encourage growth.

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The following questions / comments regarding the new formula were raised:

Kevin Horswell: Where does the funding for the Mission Hub Specialist and Clergy team come from?

Diane: The stipend of the mission hub leader is included in the mission area share calculation but additional costs such as the curate and youth worker are funded centrally.

Will Marshal: if an additional space is being rented, how will the £500 work if sharing a space with another denomination'?

Diane responded a cost per church will only be included where the CinW owns the building. Where additional space is rented, this will not be included in the calculation.

Roy Turner: for one of our churches, we don't actually own the building and all the maintenance is done by the landowner, would that be included?

Diane replied no that would not be included.

Hugh Burgess: I welcome the change it's a good step forward and I appreciate how difficult this will have been. However, I am interested to know what the process is for the allocation between individual churches?

Diane: we will have to start with where we were in 2022. We already provide several alternatives for Mission Areas as a starting point for the MA discussions. There are different situations in different churches that we will want to reflect. We will be learning so much this time and the DBF is committed to remaining open and flexible.

Hugh Burgess: notes £500 for each church building and felt that there might be a very good pastoral/mission reason to keep a building although it doesn't make financial sense.

Paulette Gower: welcomes the move away from Sunday attendance to focus on mission. This will be exciting!

Diane: we do so much more than just Sunday services – hopefully it's a liberation to do new and creative things.

Hugh Burgess: could you say more about the membership app – what's it for?

Diane: An App will be rolled out by the RB to record in real time the activity which happens across the church. It will include worship, social engagement, fresh expressions (e.g. forest church), youth work etc and the idea is to consolidate the information we collect in a more timely manner. People who lead a service, for example, can log how many people attend. This will go to a dashboard and all the information is compiled and saved. It will be accessed from smart phones, laptops etc. We will be piloting the Membership App in Valle Crucis and Estuary and Mountain Mission Areas and will share more information as the pilot progresses.

Huw Bryant: There are concerns about maintaining the level of clergy: the easiest thing to do will be to lose staff (clergy or lay workers) to balance the books.

Diane: This is an important point and is already a challenge for us – we will need to monitor this as we will need people to resource our churches to grow.

Roy: Dividing the share between churches could lock in historical attendance by default, especially if we're looking to offer stability.

Diane: That is a risk, but the quality of conversations at Mission Area level is what will make the difference.

c) **Funding new initiatives** –Bishop Gregory welcomed everyone saying how wonderful it is to see everyone in person once again, Bishop Gregory said that whenever he thinks of the future he thinks of Matthew chapter 13 'Every teacher trained for the kingdom of God is like a householder who brings forth from their stock, things old and new'.

Diversity is going to be the hallmark of the life of the diocese. Tradition will be our source of strength, but we need to look to new initiatives and new ways of responding to the needs of our communities and the churches to invite people in. St Asaph has always been good at being bold with new initiatives: for example, we now have two centres of mission in partnership with the Church Army, in Pensarn and Wrexham. Hope Street, funded by the Evangelism Fund, was launched in lockdown and yet managed to establish a new church, which is seeing substantial growth.

Mission Hub churches are using the expertise of the archdeacons to support a focus for growth. Good things are already happening in the Mission Hub Churches, and each are doing things in a locally appropriate way. Having achieved that with three - one in each archdeaconry, we would like to roll out more Mission Hubs in the future although that will depend on finances. The Province is taking the idea of funding mission seriously, the DBF is already looking at this and seeing which churches are showing best practice and deserve more support. The DBF have recently identified and supported a fourth Mission Hub Church in Holywell, as something remarkable is happening there – a new congregation is emerging and that is something as a diocese we want to support. The diocese wants to invest where there is new life and follow growth in the future. Mission Hub Churches are key stream of that

strategy.

Archdeacon Andy Grimwood then spoke on the theology of Mission Hubs, explaining the three key principals are:

- 1- Objective is not church growth but church health.
- 2- Statistical growth is an expected consequence.
- 3- Church revitalisation and church planting is the apostolic model.

Andy said, if you would like to study this yourself, read Acts 13-15 referring to the missionary journey. When the apostle Paul goes to a new place, he has a repeated formula: he first enters a city, engages in gospel evangelism and disciple making, and then plants a church. The church then responds to prevailing needs with deeds of love and mercy. Paul then moves on having appointed good leaders to the church. Moving on to Acts 15 and 16, he continues the journey to plant new churches, but also revisits the first churches to strengthen them. Revisiting what has gone before, and the consequences of this ,are clear in chapter 17 where, they turned the world upside down".

Church Planting and Church Revitalisation both have advantages and disadvantages and we will need to do both. Archdeacon Andy then continued that it's also about recognising that God builds his church his way. The Mission Hub Churches and Church Revitalisation will focus on 3 key areas:

1. Leadership – Proverbs 29:18

- Vision
- Communication
- Facilitation

2. Discipleship

- Willing people
- Serve and use gifts

3. Buildings

- Practical
- Fit for purpose
- Servant to the church
- Right location

Norma then thanked Andy and asked Diane to talk about the next item 'Towards a 10 year plan'.

d) **Towards a 10-year Financial Plan** – Diane reported that the RB is planning to:

1. Release more direct funding to the diocese in the form of the Block Grant, now known as Partnership Funding. This will be another £0.25m to each diocese this year.
2. Release more core funding each year: £100m will be released over 10 years from the provincial reserves for spiritual and numerical growth, organising ourselves better and planning for the future.

Huw Burgess: asked do you have any strategic thoughts on direct support or initiatives for supporting those in Ukraine?

Diane: mentioned that Denbigh MA are working with one of the housing associations to potentially use the vacant rectory in Llandyrnog for refugees. Diane then invited Sarah Wheat, Diocesan Community Engagement Officer, to speak on this matter.

Sarah: said that the diocese have made a partnership with Link International and donations towards supporting those from Ukraine can be made through them. We have also run three forum meetings early on which included information on how to set up a support hub and putting on events to bringing refugees together. If you would like more information, it can be found on our website: [Faith in Action - Diocese St. Asaph \(dioceseofstasaph.org.uk\)](https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk)

6. Review of Standing Committee Membership

Norma asked Archdeacon Barry to introduce the paper on Standing Committee membership. Archdeacon Barry explained that membership of the Standing Committee has an anomaly which is that MA Leaders are invited to attend but cannot vote, unless they are the elected clerical or lay rep for their MA. It is curious that people at the heart of delivering the diocesan strategy cannot vote on the strategic direction and management of the diocese. To rectify this, Standing Committee is asked to discuss the following options:

1. Mission Area Leaders should continue to attend Standing Committee meetings but don't automatically need to have a vote This is the current state.
2. By virtue of their office they should have a vote in addition to the lay or cleric rep.
3. By virtue of their office they should have a vote instead of either the lay or cleric rep.

Norma then invited any comments and feedback. The following comments were made:

Hugh Burgess: The present structure is adequate, but there is an anomaly. It's not about Mission Area Leaders voting, but about representation of the Mission Area. Giving Mission Area Leaders a vote will change the power dynamics. Personally, I'm not in favour.

Nigel Williams: Disagreed with Hugh, saying Mission Area Leaders have to implement the decisions of Standing Committee, and therefore they should have a vote. They should have a vote as part of their role. The Mission Area Share is a classic example.

Paulette Gower: I understand the power dynamic but as a non-voting Mission Area Leader, I have a responsibility for delivering things. There is a big difference in the role of the Mission Area Leader and it is important that we have a say.

Kevin Horswell: There is value in having more than one clerical rep in SC and in feeding back. To focus entirely on the Mission Area Leaders would be a mistake.

Andy Jones: Seconded what Kevin said. To focus entirely on Mission Area Leaders is a bad thing. As a Mission Area Leader, it shouldn't just be my voice and there are already many demands on my time.

Val Aldcroft: As Mission Area rep I come to represent what the Mission Area has agreed and that can be done by any cleric or lay person – it doesn't have to be the

Mission Area Leader. We have to look at how the MAL is chosen/appointed as they are not currently appointed by the Mission Area.

Huw Bryant: As a Mission Area Leader who won't get to vote later, I worry that the Standing Committee will grow so large that it can't make a decision. If I come too, there are two clergy out of the Mission Area. What about a single transferable vote?

Stephen Hayes: Mission Area Leader is a vital role but not giving Mission Area Leaders a say in strategic decisions is not right.

Tracey White: The constitution says there should be a balance between cleric and lay reps. By adding Mission Area Leader we might skew that balance (although a growing number of Mission Area Leaders are lay).

Norma thanked everyone for their comments and suggestions which we will reflect on further as we further develop our plans.

Outcome: As there was a diversity of opinion and views, a clear proposal will be brought to the next Standing Committee meeting in September, with different options included. Any changes to the membership of the Standing Committee will have to be approved by the Diocesan Conference.

Following a short break, Jason Bray chaired the second half of the meeting.

7. Report from the Developing Steering Group

Jason Bray asked Chancellor Pam Powell to report on the recent work of the Developing Steering group, and the diversity of our Licensed Lay Ministers.

Pam Powell spoke of the importance of diversity and demonstrated the range of our licensed lay ministry within the diocese:

6 LLMs were licensed in 2021 and, although we don't currently have any pioneers in training, this is very similar to the evangelist strand. Evangelists and Pioneers look outwards from the church, Pastoral chaplains have a caring and nurturing ministry and Readers take on some of all of these roles.

In Licensed Lay Ministry, we currently have 28 Licensed Readers, 26 PTO Readers, 2 Readers in training, 2 Evangelists (one of whom is sponsored by the Church Army). 4 Pastoral Chaplains with another 4 in training, 2 Youth and Children's Chaplains and another 1 in training.

In Ordained Ministry, we currently have 8 full time stipendiary curates and 8 part time non-stipendiary curates, and 6 people in discernment for ordained ministry.

An opportunity for questions was provided.

8. Asaph 1450

Jason Bray then invited the Bishop to speak again regarding Asaph 1450, as there

was a very diverse range of opinions on the subject at the last Standing Committee meeting.

Bishop Gregory said that we are one of the few dioceses named after a saint. The traditional date of St Asaph's consecration as a bishop by St Kentigern was 573 AD, that makes next year, 2023, the 1450th anniversary of essentially what we may regard as the foundation of the Teulu Asaph as a distinct branch of the people of God, the followers of Jesus Christ. The 1450th anniversary of Asaph in 2023 offers a great opportunity to celebrate. After the last meeting, Bishop Gregory acknowledged there were mixed feelings about whether and how to mark the anniversary. We could seek to replicate the success of "Feeding the 5000" at the turn of the millennium. This would involve a large-scale celebration somewhere in the diocese, possibly in the Llangollen Pavilion, where as many as possible of the diocese would come together for a festival Eucharist and associated activities. A lesser scale celebration would be to designate a Sunday, or Sundays, in the diocesan calendar as occasion when appropriate celebrations could be organised. There could be archdeaconry or mission area celebrations, with guest preachers, and a meal together. In addition, or slightly later, there could be a diocesan service in the Cathedral to which representatives could be sent. Alternatively, the anniversary could be the focus of the Diocesan Conference in the autumn, appropriately adapted to include the celebration. The focus would have to be future oriented – a celebration of what has been, but a commitment to the future. The Bishop then invited members of the Standing Committee to use the cards provided to show a general consensus of the proposed event. There was hesitancy towards holding a large event and but less reluctance towards smaller ones around the diocese.

The Bishop then invited comments from those who felt averse to Asaph 1450.

Jane James: My Mission Area doesn't connect with St Asaph at all. How do you sell A St Asaph event when your Mission Area feels separated geographically? At the moment, with the Mission Area being so fragile, putting my energies into this would probably be counterproductive. Personally, because I feel part of the diocese and connected to the Cathedral, I would make the effort to attend but I don't think my Mission Area would be engaged in it at all.

Hugh Burgess: Feeding the 5000 was an excellent event but it was a big event to Organise. Local would be better, but we should focus on looking forward rather than looking backward. We need to focus on mission.

Bishop Gregory: you have got to look at the past to unlock the future. There are two future benefits of celebrating St Asaph:

1. It should help in creating a sense of pride: we are the inheritors of a tradition 1450 years old and we've survived. We can be proud of our identity and proud of the locality of being the Teulu Asaph – a Christian family in this part of the world.
2. St Asaph, along with St Beuno, St Tysilio, and others, evangelised this part of the world – why did their Christian witness thrive? How did they relate to this part of the world? What was the nature of their witness?

There was a general sense that people would be interested in local events but not one big event. These could be used as a springboard for the future. Bishop Gregory asked for volunteers to assist with this.

Adam Pawley: wondered if 1500th anniversary was more appropriate than the 1450th, and perhaps efforts now should be put into ensuring the diocese is in good shape to celebrate in 50 years' time!

9. Review of the Order of St Asaph (OSA)

Jason Bray asked Dean Nigel Williams to introduce the next item, the Review of the Order of St Asaph.

The reason this is on the agenda today is that we always receive nominations for Mission Area individuals who have undertaken outstanding work in Mission Areas and local churches. However, these people are not eligible for the OSA as at the moment, it is only awarded to those who make an outstanding contribution to the diocese specifically. Each member receives a medal and Esgobty commits to 2 or 3 awards each year.

Archdeacon Barry: I personally support recognising and valuing the work at ground level, but can we afford to award more than 3 each year?

Will Marshall: It's designed to reward outstanding service, but if we are to widen the net, it should be 5 or 6 a year.

Paulette Gower: It would be nice to be able to honour more people, could we have a separate award for outstanding work in Mission Areas and churches – perhaps the Order of St Kentigern?

Pam Powell: Would it be possible to have two categories? One diocesan and another with a limited number of people from each archdeaconry each year?

Nigel: There is a scheme already in existence where you can write to Esgobty with an outline of the contribution a person has made. Esgobty will then issue a certificate which specifically recognises this and can be awarded in a way in which your Mission Area chooses, but we still get nominations for those in Mission Areas for the OSA.

Tracey White: We call ourselves the Teulu Asaph and yet there are some parts of the family who are excluded from this award.

Hannah Daniels: Do we simply need to make our communications clearer?

John Gambles agrees with Tracey and Barry. If someone has offered great service, why should they face a competition?

Bishop Gregory: When this was first proposed, it was felt by the Standing Committee that the award should be rare and be for exceptional service with the award itself being of good quality that reflected the honour of the award. The medals are solid silver and cost £180 each. We can sustain two or three from the funds in Esgobty, but if you want a radical widening of the Order of St Asaph; we will have to visit whether we can sustain the medallion in its current form. We don't want to have a two-tier system, with different classes. Is it a long service award or is it for excellent work? If we widen the criteria, it must be very clear.

Jason Bray then asked the Standing Committee to consider voting on the following options:

- Maintain the current system
- Amend as suggested to widen the criteria for the award
- Establish a new award scheme for Mission Area and local church service

Hugh Burgess: suggested we need more information before voting and wondered if it could be re-presented at the next meeting?

The Bishop said it would be good to get a general consensus about the options suggested, rather than a formal vote. As suggested Standing Committee didn't vote formally on this matter but indicated with a show of hands:

Maintain:	12
Amend what we have:	28
Establish something else	12

Result: The strongest proposal was to amend what we already have, making it available to those offering outstanding service to the diocese, mission area or church.

10. Diocesan Offering 2023

A film from Hilary and Adrian about the 2022 Diocesan Offering is available to watch on the diocesan website [Diocesan Offering - Diocese St. Asaph \(dioceseofstasaph.org.uk\)](https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk)

The Bishop noted that the 2023 nominations presented for each charity were not in a consistent format, so this agenda item was not voted on. Standardised nomination forms will be sent out after the meeting for members to vote on. The chosen charity will then be shared with members of the Standing Committee.

11. Matters Raised by the Mission Areas

No Matters were raised by Mission Areas

12. Date of the next meeting

The committee voted whether the next meeting on Thursday 22nd September 2022 should be in person or on zoom. It was agreed by majority that we should meet in person.

Bishop Gregory Cameron thanked Norma Rowles and Jason Bray for chairing the meeting and congratulated Revd John Harvey on his new post as Archdeacon of Ynys Môn. He then closed the meeting with prayer and a blessing.