

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 29 June 2021 via Zoom

1. Welcome and Opening Reflection

The meeting was chaired by Sue Huyton who opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present.

Gregor Lachlann-Waddell from the Bryn a Môr Mission Area led the opening reflection on behalf of the diocesan eco-group focusing on Psalm 8 and Creation being God's temple.

2. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

Apologies from the following members were recorded: Sally Harper, Kevin Horswell, Helen Jones, Heather Loveridge, Lorna Mills, Hermione Morris, Christine Browne, Kate Tiltman

Sue Huyton asked the members of Standing Committee, having seen the agenda, whether anyone wanted to register a conflict of interest. Peter Lewis registered a conflict of interest for item 8 – the proposed merger of Penedeyrn and Valle Crucis Mission Areas.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the Standing Committee held on 30th March 2021 via Zoom were reviewed and presented for approval by the Standing Committee.

For:	90%
Against:	0%
Abstentions:	10%
Result:	The minutes of the previous meeting were approved

4. Matters Arising

No matters arising were identified from the minutes that were not already the subject of a separate agenda item.



5. Report from the Eco-Group

Nigel Williams introduced the item on being an eco-church and thanked the eco-group for their passion and enthusiasm. None of us can ignore the fact that we need to act now. He quoted David Attenborough, "the future of humanity and indeed of life on earth depends on us" as well as Greta Thunberg's challenge to world leaders "how dare you take our future away from us". Nigel stressed that this is urgent business and we have been called to account by the next generation. Six films outlining the inspiring work being done across the diocese were shared. "We want to make eco-church a reality in our own context. It's not about the church next door, it's what it looks like for us, and we want to do what we can".

1. St Peter's Church Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd - first bronze eco-church in the diocese
2. Ss Asaph and Cyndeyrn Church, Llanasa – first silver eco-church in the diocese
3. Green energy at St Cynfarch and St Mary's Church, Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd
4. St Peter's Church Holywell – Going for Gold
5. The 'lawnmowers' at St Cynfarch's Church, Hope
6. Whitford eco-group – Ysgol y Llan and Ss Mary and Beuno's Church Whitford

All of the videos are available to share via the following link [Eco-Church stories and inspiration - Diocese St. Asaph \(dioceseofstasaph.org.uk\)](https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/Eco-Church-stories-and-inspiration)

Sue Huyton introduced **Julia Edwards**, Climate Change Champion for the Church in Wales. Julia thanked the Standing Committee for the opportunity to introduce her work and praised the diocese for the work that is already happening in the churches. In April 2021 the Governing Body (GB) declared a climate emergency: it is important for us all to realise that climate change is a key priority for the Church. We need to radically rethink in many different ways and we need a global response immediately. We also need a local response as we have been tasked by the GB to reach net zero carbon as soon as practically possible. The GB has made a commitment to change: to learn about the good practice already in place; listen to concerns; move forward and identify opportunities for development. There is a link on the webpage of the Church in Wales with key resources including a practical guide to achieving net zero [Climate change - The Church in Wales](#) The Church in Wales has produced a draft environmental policy to highlight the responsibility we have towards the environment and the actions we can all take.

Sue thanked **Julia** for her contribution and encouraged members of the Standing Committee to visit the web page mentioned.

6. Planning for our Future – Grow Faith, Bring Hope, Demonstrate Love

Bishop Gregory – Bishop Gregory thanked everyone for what they have contributed to the Standing Committee and for the very positive reaction to Grow Faith, Bring Hope, Demonstrate Love: the focus of our mission from 2022. We are working through our pandemic strategy of react (2020), respond (2021) and reconstruct (2022). We have done remarkably well during the period of Covid and proved our resilience as a diocese. The Mission Area Review programme is almost complete and it is now time to



create a vision for the future. The Mission Area Reviews are already being developed into action plans. The Diocesan Board of Finance believes that finance is there to empower mission and has taken the decision to use its resources to allow us to be missional in our thinking. The new focus of Growing Faith, Bringing Hope, Demonstrating Love will be launched on Advent Sunday 2021 with the aim that 2022 will begin with that new mission focus.

Bishop Gregory introduced **Archdeacon John Lomas**.

Focusing on Mission Hub Churches: We have been reimagining mission and ministry for our existing congregations. We realise that in today's church we need to be 'blended': not fixed to one particular idea but having many different ideas for mission and ministry across the diocese. We will be creating three Mission Hub churches, one in each archdeaconry, identifying key locations that are of strategic importance and where spiritual and numerical growth is critical. Consultation has identified St Mary's Church Mold as the location for the first Mission Hub Church in the archdeaconry of Wrexham. It will be a five year project that is achievable and measurable and will seek to grow and multiply the church as part of Mission Areas. The Mission Hub churches should not be about competition but the place where we can all go to access training and learn together. We are looking to form the teams in the next few months and into 2022.

Archdeacon John Lomas introduced **Archdeacon Barry Wilson**:

Much of the south of the diocese is deeply rural; scattered populations in small villages and a few towns. Montgomery archdeaconry is looking at St Mary's Church Welshpool as its first Mission Hub church. The current congregation is about 25 members and we want to focus a cleric in the town for five years, supported by the archdeacon, to create multi congregational worship. There will also be a curate and a youth and children's worker.

Sue Huyton introduced **Nigel Williams - St Asaph Cathedral, our Mother Church**

There are two particular aspects to focus on:

1. **Sacred music** - we already have a very gifted Director of Music and the sacred music and chorister development would be greatly enhanced if he were appointed full-time. Most of the parents who come with choristers have no previous involvement with Church elsewhere. This is a real opportunity to build relationships.
2. **School Chaplain** - the Welsh-medium high school in St Asaph, Ysgol Glan Clwyd, has a wide catchment area and we want to appoint a full-time chaplain to engage with the school, as well as with all our local Welsh-medium primary schools.

Sue Huyton introduced **Diane McCarthy** to speak about Digital Ministry:

Diane explained how Bangor and St Asaph dioceses have been working together to develop proposals for a Digital Cathedral/Ministry and Mission Area. This has received encouraging support from the RB, particularly James Turner (Chair of the RB) and Simon Lloyd (Chief Executive for the RB) and out of this work, and work in other dioceses, has arisen the provincial Digital Innovation Group.



The key priorities are:

- resourcing digital ministry
- supporting digital innovations
- training our Mission Area teams to be confident in using digital technology
- providing hardware and software to Mission Areas
- creating content and resources for use.

The Digital Cathedral would be a new online presence for the Church in Wales which is not linked to any physical church. It would be a space for new audiences to explore faith and spirituality at their own speed. It would be a wide-open door to welcome all. It would be locally owned and distinctively Welsh but not limited by geography.

Bishop Gregory summarised the speakers and explained that the identification of a Mission Area hub church in the St Asaph archdeaconry is ongoing.

At this point the SC broke into breakout rooms (30 mins) where members were asked to reflect and discuss the information heard. Each group was facilitated by a named person who recorded the salient points.

After a comfort break, the delegates were welcomed back, and each group fed back their discussion to the meeting in a plenary session.

Feedback from breakout groups:

Llŷr Williams: everybody was very excited about the eco films, the mission hubs and digital ministry. Focus on the outdoors and seeing our churchyards as a resource rather than a burden is a great opportunity for the church in the community. Engagement with Welsh speaking schools was seen as exciting. Possible pitfalls - communication is the key and the information needs to get to the congregations and communities. Some people still prefer paper and there are still some digital not-spots. Need to be ready to deal with opposition to change (including from outside agencies) and take time to discuss matters, explaining that we are moving forward and not taking away. The pandemic has made us look inward to see how we can look outward.

Hannah Daniels: discussion mainly focused on digital church and hub churches. Positives - like the greater flexibility that digital church offers, how do we replicate this in in-person worship e.g. times of services? One MA is trying to get WiFi in all its churches as it offers new opportunities e.g. being able to attend a funeral from another country. Pitfalls - losing the togetherness, coming round the table, the sacramental element. This can affect finances as we are not taking the offering every week. Hub churches - like the idea but concerns that all the resources might be focused on the hub church and other churches feel they lose value. Concerns that the hub church is an hour away from where they are in the diocese; feels urban focused what about rural ministry? We are on the right track but we need to communicate this well and take the people along with us. Do we need a hub person in each church rather than a hub church? We have to travel forwards somewhere, at least we are travelling!



Juliet Fraser: a very positive response to all we have heard. Digital church – it is going to generate interest and is accessible, a wide-open door, people can dip in and dip out, excited about the prospect of training and for resources to be available to everybody. A chance to talk positively also about growth and seizing the challenges of last year. Eco-church was well received and provides an opportunity to engage with people who think the church has nothing to say about the environment. Pitfalls - deciding what we may have to leave behind in order to take up new things; not to forget people; don't rush things through; trying to do too much. The wrong direction is to do nothing at all.

Huw Burgess: generally very positive about the initiatives and excited that we using existing resources and our gifts. Concern that digital ministry could seem centralised but it was welcomed that there were also local initiatives to allow for digital ministry. Pitfalls – we are still a church of place and we need to take our local people with us and look after our volunteers. We are supportive of what's happening but should also celebrate the local. As a Standing Committee, we need to come with solutions not problems.

John Lomas: digital church - generally well received and talked about good practice and how we can share resources. Digital church can be less engaging than physical church so we need to get the balance right. It is not about doing the services we already do but how we do things differently. MA hubs - like the potential to flourish but need to be careful we don't neglect other churches at the expense of a hub church. Pitfalls - everyone needs to be kept on board and not left behind; how do we remain the physical body of Christ in a digital church? The pandemic has been hugely draining and we need to rest. Energy levels are low for some people.

Norman Morris: overall the focus on growth and mission is welcome. Eco-church - there are a huge number of bodies we can partner with. Pitfalls: we are not out of Covid yet, there are many who are still cautious, and there is a danger of rushing into lots of new initiatives. We need to engage theologically with what has happened during the pandemic. What does this mean to people and how have their lives changed? Children's lives have been blighted by Covid and we need to evaluate God in all of this.

Sarah Wheat: it is good to have some information about the new initiatives in advance of them being shared with congregations so we are prepared for questions. The group loved the films and thought they were an excellent way to share the message of what we are doing in our communities. Digital ministry is exciting as it gives people lots of opportunities and flexibility to join in. Having access to training and the right tools will be beneficial. Some areas still need better connectivity and perhaps we could be a pressure group to improve Wi-Fi in these communities. Hub churches - a good example of what we can do and to learn from each other. Pitfalls - people feeling left out, that it is focused on young people. Need to show the fruits of what is happening. There is digital poverty in some areas and concerns that some people won't be able to join in. Don't be afraid to fail - it can be a positive thing. Some people felt they needed a pause of 12 months and that we need time to digest things.

Bishop Gregory summarised the session and the next steps: there is much enthusiasm and affirmation but also a note of caution. He felt it was important to state that he did not want to create a two-speed church: one church getting the funding and the other



being disenfranchised or left behind. The future of the church lies in all 210 of our churches and congregations as we move forward. Any new initiative should support the flourishing of each congregation. It is about building a future in which people have a stake in sense of ownership. The reason for the hub churches is not to draw all life into them but rather to give life out of them and to show what can be done when we go for growth. Bishop Gregory thanked the Standing Committee for the high level of discussion.

7. Diocesan Accounts 2020

Diane McCarthy took Standing Committee through the accounts (see the detailed meeting papers).

Income (£000's)				
2020 actual	2019 actual	% inc	2020 budget	% inc/dec
5,802	4,863	+19.3%	4,756	.+22%

Income was substantially higher than anticipated and the Diocese is very grateful for the £1.2m received from the RB as Coronavirus Emergency Funding. There was no increase in Mission Area Share in 2020 despite an increase in clergy stipends and lay salaries of 2.1% and an increase in clergy housing costs of 4.0%. There was no increase in the Block Grant from the RB in 2020.

In 2020 MA Share represented 56% of diocesan income. On behalf of the DBF, Diane thanked the Mission Areas who all met the terms of the Financial Enabling Scheme. This meant the DBF was able to provide additional funding to each Mission Area that could be used in their own local context.

Expenditure (£000's)				
2020 actual	2019 actual	% inc	2020 budget	% inc/dec
5,597	4,576	+22.3%	4,742	+18.0%

Expenditure, the priority remains frontline ministry, but clergy vacancies were higher than usual due to the pandemic when recruitment had to be paused. This led to an underspend and the diocese saved £130,000 on the total for clergy and housing costs – the main element of the £203,981 underspend in 2020.



Surplus/Deficit for the year		
2020 actual	2019 actual	2020 budget
+£203,981	+£286,462	+£14,087

We ended the year with a surplus of **£203,981** on operations. This is due to:

- Emergency Funding received from the RB
- Outstanding efforts of our Mission Areas to pay their Share in full and on time
- Unable to recruit for clergy vacancies as planned
- Restricted operations as a result of the pandemic

The immediate priorities for the DBF now are:

- To understand the short-and medium-term financial impact on MAs of the pandemic
- Continue to encourage the courageous and proactive responses of our MAs to the crisis, especially to encourage regular giving online using Gift Direct
- Develop a 2022 budget that supports the new reality of living with coronavirus
- Support the MA Review process and the emerging Mission Action Plans
- Fund "Grow Faith, Bring Hope, Demonstrate Love" as a clear indication of our faith in the future of our mission

How will Grow Faith, Bring Hope, Demonstrate Love be funded?

The DBF has committed to fund "Grow Faith, Bring Hope, Demonstrate Love" over the next 5 years to allow initiatives to mature. All the 2020 surplus on diocesan operations of £203,981 will be re-invested in developing the Mission Hubs, Digital and Cathedral ministry. We also need to be willing to use our reserves now to re-generate the church. There will be no further financial demand from the local churches to support any of these initiatives.

The following questions/comments about the accounts were raised:

Hugh Burgess – A lot of money has been invested into Hope Street, where are we at with the project? **Diane McCarthy** - You can see that there have been significant changes in the balance sheet this year where the full grant monies relating to Hope Street have been credited. This will be paid out over the next five years for the life of the project. **John Lomas** responded regarding the operational aspect of Hope Street, Given the pandemic things are going very well. Digital services have taken place but they have also had physical services and the first baptisms are due to take place in the next week. The team is now fully assembled and there is exciting work planned with Wrexham Glyndwr University. Expectation of numbers attending have been met and, in some cases, exceeded.

Sue called on the SC to accept the annual accounts for 2020:

For: 90%

Against: 0

Abstain: 10%

Result: The 2020 Annual Diocesan Accounts were approved



Sue thanked the members of the DBF for the hard work undertaken to safeguard the finances and invest in the future for all our churches.

8. Merger of Penedeyrn and Valle Crucis Mission Areas

Archdeacon Barry Wilson spoke in support of this proposal and a detailed paper had been circulated to the Standing Committee in advance of the meeting. There was an opportunity for questions.

Sue called on the SC to vote on the merger of Penedeyrn and Valle Crucis Mission Areas:

For: 92%

Against: 0

Abstain: 8%

Result: The proposal to merge Penedeyrn and Valle Crucis Mission Areas was approved

9. Casual Vacancies on the Governing Body of the Church in Wales

A detailed paper was circulated in advance of the meeting. Diane McCarthy spoke for the paper. There are two vacancies, and our thanks go to Carol Jones and Jennie Willson for their commitment to GB over the past years. Both of the candidates standing for the GB are under 30.

Melody Lewis has agreed to stand for the vacancy created by Carol Jones' retirement for the remainder of the triennium that will end on 31 December 2021.

For 80%

Against 8%

Abstain 12%

Melody Lewis is appointed to the GB until 31 December 2021.

Lewys Evans has agreed to stand for the vacancy created by Jennie Willson leaving the diocese for the remainder of the triennium that will end on 31 December 2023. Lewys has previously served on the GB as a youth representative.

For 82%

Against 8%

Abstain 10%

Lewys Evans is appointed to the GB until 31 December 2023.

10. Matters raised by the Mission Areas

Cedewain MA - asked about the discernment and training process for NSMLs (non-stipendiary ministers - local). Sue asked Bishop Gregory to respond. This was last discussed in 2019 and Bishop Gregory had asked the Venerable John Thelwell to write an independent report on the process which made two recommendations as follows:



- Expectations for discernment, training and formation will be fully explained to each potential candidate for NSML
- We are unlikely to accept NSML candidates who are beginning this process and are already over the age of 70

Nia Wyn Morris responded on behalf of Cedewain Mission Area: time has moved on and the individual who prompted this report is happy with their current ministry. Better communication about the process of training is to be welcomed.

Pam Powell responded: detailed information about discernment and training is freely available on the ministry section of the diocesan website:

<https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/vocations-and-ministry/>

Maelor MA asked about DBS checks and the new safeguarding database. Hannah Daniels will send out the detailed information to all MA Leaders and Administrators for onward circulation.

11. Date of next Meeting

A paper had been circulated in advance about the format of the next meeting. Travel has been reduced and attendance has improved since meetings moved on to the Zoom platform. However, it is also important to acknowledge the benefits of face-to-face meetings. Members were asked if the next meeting in September, should be in-person in St Asaph Cathedral or online.

Nia Wyn-Morris asked if we were voting on all future meetings returning to face to face meetings. **Diane McCarthy** clarified that the vote was for the September 2021 meeting only.

For a physical meeting:	30%
Against a physical meeting:	65%
Abstain:	5%

Sue confirmed that the next meeting would be on Tuesday 28th September 2021 via Zoom.

Sue thanked Steve Willson for his service to the diocese, especially as Vice President of the Standing Committee. Sue thanked the diocesan team for the work put into preparing the meeting. Sue asked Bishop Gregory to close the meeting with a blessing.

Bishop Gregory spoke first about the Standing Committee vote on the next meeting. He respected the decision of the Standing Committee but was disappointed. Having recently started to resume physical meetings at a provincial level, he realised how much he had missed. The bishop felt that we should have a more in-depth discussion in September about the pattern of meetings going forward. The bishop also expressed his thanks to Steve Willson and Jennie Willson for their faithful service.

Bishop Gregory closed the meeting with a blessing.



