



## Asaph 1450 – Retreat, Refreshment and Re-Creation



**Throughout this Year of Jubilee, the leadership team of every Mission Area has been encouraged to take time out together on retreat. Funding has been provided by the Diocesan Board of Finance and over these next two pages, we hear from three Mission Areas about their experience and the insights they gained.**

### **Tanat-Vyrnwy Mission Area by Peter Crocker, a Worship Leader**

Our group from Tanat-Vyrnwy Mission Area consisted of four clergy and three Worship Leaders, and we enjoyed 24 hours away at Foxhill House, the Chester diocese retreat centre. As a group, we know each other fairly well and it was with a sense of expectation that we assembled on arrival to find out what lay in store.

Our worship and meditation leaders were Karen and John Hellewell, who are respectively a Reader and Mission Advisor in the Chester diocese. The aims of the time away were to explore the foundation of our mission, develop ideas on how to change the 'culture' of our churches to be more mission orientated and look at practical possibilities.

After an introductory talk by Karen and an excellent evening meal around a communal table, our first session comprised a time of prayer and a series of participatory activities helping us to consider how we see ourselves in relation to mission. There was an opportunity to reflect on anything in our current mindset which might be holding us back.

We finished our evening with Compline, taken from the Northumbria Community.

On the second day, after a light breakfast, we shared morning worship and started two group sessions. The first was based on studying our relationship with God and how this determines our approach to mission. After coffee and time to chat, we looked at how we could nurture a mission culture in our church communities. A major obstacle, it would seem, is our preoccupation with the financial challenges of keeping our heritage buildings in reasonable repair. Quite often, though, we use this as a convenient diversion from facing the reality: that most of us feel awkward about sharing our faith with those outside our church community. We were presented with exercises we could use to prepare appropriate ways to express ourselves. We are certain to be given opportunities to describe how our faith has guided us and supported us, during both joyful and worrying times. After lunch we shared worship before making our way home.

In addition to the formal sessions, there was plenty of time for informal conversations and for contemplation. We are looking forward with some trepidation to explaining our vision for sharing our faith in our wider communities. Hopefully by doing this we will succeed in enriching the lives of our friends and neighbours, being the salt, the light and the yeast so perfectly envisioned by Jesus.

Foxhill proved an excellent venue for our small group, with welcoming, efficient and friendly staff, comfortable rooms and meeting areas, and a simple, well-laid out chapel. We left with plenty to think about and feeling we knew each other a little better.





### Aled Mission Area by Revd Gareth Erlandson

In June, members of the Aled Shared Ministry Team (SMT) enjoyed a 24-hour stay at Gladstone's Library in Hawarden. It was a varied day of thinking, prayer, personal quiet time, food, and reflection.

The retreat was centred around three group sessions led by the library's warden, the Revd Dr Andrea Russell. In-keeping with the ethos of Asaph 1450, Andrea took us through highlights of Walter Brueggemann's *Sabbath as Resistance*, which stimulated much debate around how we stand up to the modern western culture of consumerism and productivity. This was practically applied to our Sunday community gatherings, days off, our relationship with church officers and administrators, and our church life from Monday to Saturday.

However, we felt we had only begun to scratch the surface of Brueggemann's thinking, and so have decided to dedicate the initial portion of our monthly SMT meetings to further reflection on the book, working through the study guide of each chapter, month by month.

The day was also extremely valuable in being able to connect with one another on a deeper level than our regular meetings allow. This happened over food, during private time and whilst enjoying a few drinks in the Gladstone Room after dinner. One of the results of this was that we were able to identify things we would like to discuss and tackle as an SMT in the future. Things such as digital mission, Baptism preparation and follow-up, and rural ministry have all made it onto the agenda.

The SMT found it very valuable to worship together, as well. Evening prayer on the first day was led by our Licensed Lay Ministers and we gathered for the midweek Eucharist at St Deiniol's Church next door the following morning. We concluded the retreat with Eucharist in Gladstone's chapel.

The 24 hours was such an enjoyable and rejuvenating experience, we will be looking to organise more time away for reflection and fellowship in the future.

### Aber-Morfa Mission Area by Revd Jayne Coxall, Mission Area Leader

We held our retreat at Noddfa Retreat Centre in Penmaenmawr from a Sunday into a Monday at the end of May.

Our Mission Area (MA) is going through some changes with two clergy leaving, a new Priest joining and a vacancy pending. We wanted to spend the time thinking about how we are as a Mission Area and what we feel that God is calling us to do. It was good to be able to spend a whole 24 hours together thinking and praying. We had taken a few craft activities with us to teach each other new skills, but in the end, we spent all our time talking!

We based our thinking around two Bible verses:

- when the men in the garden at the Resurrection say to Mary "Why are you looking for the living among the dead?"
- when the fishermen in the boats after being told by Jesus to cast their nets on the other side hauled in a huge catch "and the nets didn't break".

We talked about where we felt God was already moving in our MA and how we can be strong like the nets and not break if we follow what Jesus tells us to do.

We all had a really good time and have said we are going to do this again, as a day, in the Autumn.

We came away with ideas and plans and a new MA statement: "We are called to be the salt of the earth and a light to our community."

