

TEULU ASAPH

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CONNECTING OUR DIOCESAN FAMILY

HYDREF 2023 | AUTUMN 2023

ASAPH
1450



Asaph 1450 – Adfer, Adnewyddu ac Adfywio
Asaph 1450 – Retreat, Refreshment and Re-creation

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From the Editor

Welcome to the Autumn edition of our diocesan magazine, *Teulu Asaph*. As we move into the season of Harvest and thanksgiving for all that is provided, our Rural Affairs Advisor offers a timely reminder of the difficulties faced by many communities this year due to rising food costs. How is your church celebrating Harvest? What plans do you have to support your community?

As we come to the end of our Year of Jubilee for Asaph 1450, we hear from some of those Mission Areas who have spent time on retreat, reflecting and refreshing. There is still time to mark the Year of Jubilee by taking time out in the Kingdom season (November) to focus on your passion. Three clergy in the diocese unveil their plans for re-creation.

If you have news, interesting services, exciting events or activities taking shape for Christmas please share them with me so I can include them in the next edition. It is always helpful to use *Teulu Asaph* to invite people to come along, rather than show them what they have missed!

Details of how to send me news, photographs, articles and information is just here – I look forward to hearing from you.



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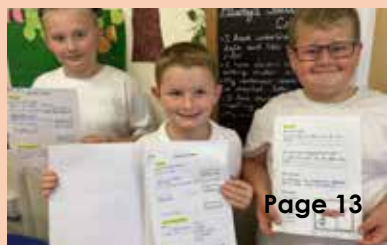
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Cover image depicts some of those Mission Areas who have attended a retreat as part of Asaph 1450.

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Bishop's Word / Gair gan yr Esgob

Rediscovering our Creativity

We are drawing to the close of our Year of Jubilee as we celebrate the 1450th anniversary of the reputed date of Asaph's consecration as our bishop. Although a splendid and special Eucharist was held in the Cathedral on 29 April, we have avoided major events and initiatives, and, as you know, asked people instead to focus on those things which energise and excite their faith and the way in which they follow Jesus.

I wonder what you have learned about yourself and the gifts that you can offer to your Church if you have undertaken that reflection?

In particular, we have invited people, during the forthcoming Kingdom season, to find space to rediscover their creativity, and to invest in the things that make for life. The Kingdom season runs from the Feast of All Saints (1 November) until the Feast of Christ the King on the last Sunday before Advent, usually around the end of November, so there's a whole month in which to find some time to focus upon the opportunity to find new energy and passion for discipleship.

In the Letter to Titus in the Bible, the apostle writes that "God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:6), so we should be looking for the Spirit doing all sorts of good things at a deep level of our lives. Have we prayed, and been silent before God, and talked through with our Christian friends, to discover just what joys can grow in our lives?

Ailddarganfod ein Creadigrwydd

Rydym yn tynnu at derfyn Blwyddyn y Jiwblif yn yr esgobaeth a ninnau'n dathlu 1450 mlynedd, yn ôl y traddodiad, ers cysegru Asaph yn esgob arnom. Er i ni gynnal Ewcharist ysblennydd ac arbennig yn y Gadeirlan ar 29 Ebrill, rydym wedi osgoi digwyddiadau a chynlluniau mawr gan ofyn, yn lle hynny, fel y gwyddoch, i bobl ganolbwyntio ar y pethau sy'n bywiogi ac yn cyffroi eu ffydd a'r ffordd y maent yn dilyn Iesu.

Os buoch chi'n myfyrio ar hynny, tybed beth rydych wedi'i ddysgu amdanoch eich hun a'r doniau y gallwch eu cynnig i'ch Eglwys?

Yn benodol, rydym wedi gwahodd pobl, yn ystod Tymor y Deyrnas, i ganfod cyfle i ailddarganfod eu creadigrwydd a buddsoddi yn y pethau sy'n creu bywyd cyflawn. Mae Tymor y Deyrnas yn para o Wyl yr Holl Saint (1 Tachwedd) tan Wyl Crist y Brenin ar y Sul olaf cyn yr Adfent, tua diwedd Tachwedd gan amlaf, felly mae gennych fis cyfan i ddod o hyd i amser i ganolbwyntio ar y cyfle i ganfod egni newydd ac angerdd i fod yn ddisgybl.

Yn y Llythyr at Titus yn y Beibl, mae'r apostol yn ysgrifennu bod Duw wedi tywallt "yr Ysbryd arnon ni'n hael o achos beth oedd Iesu Grist wedi'i wneud i'n hachub ni" (Titus 3:6). Felly dylem ni fod yn disgwyl i'r Ysbryd wneud pob math o bethau da ar lefel ddofn yn ein bywydau. A ydym ni wedi gweddïo, wedi ymdawelu gerbron Duw, ac wedi trafod â'n ffrindiau Cristnogol, i ddarganfod pa fathau o lawenydd a all dyfu yn ein bywydau?



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."





Food Poverty in Rural Communities



At this time of Harvest when we focus on all that is provided for us by God and others, it can be tempting to dwell and focus on the abundance we receive, rather than the scarcity many experience. Revd Hermione Morris, the Diocesan Rural Affairs Advisor, explores the reality of food poverty in rural communities.

If we associate blessings with abundance, then the words taken from Psalm 65 and often used at Harvest may ring more hollow this year:

"The earth has yielded its harvest; God, our God, has blessed us...You crown the year with Your bounty and Your carts overflow with abundance..."

People may doubt God's blessings and goodness if their 'harvest' is small, their access to food low. Yet, recalling Jesus' words in the Beatitudes, we remember that blessings can come in unexpected ways, including from what we might consider to be times and situations of scarcity.

Cost-of-living premiums

It is within this context of 'scarcity' and a 'cost-of-living crisis' that we celebrate and give thanks for the Harvest this year, whether we live in an urban, coastal or rural location. Each area has its own specific challenges associated with poverty. Yet, it is well publicised that rural poverty is more prevalent than we might think. This is partly due to the premium in living costs of seemingly idyllic rural locales, where the cost-of-living can be 15 – 30% higher than in urban settings, a 'gap' that's exacerbated by the current 'crisis'.

Limited affordable choices

The issues surrounding poverty are not unique to rural communities, but they are amplified in them. As with most things, there are several contributing factors to food poverty in rural communities, such as access to foodbanks and benefit support agencies, due to poor public transport links, inadequate broadband and mobile coverage. These mean that people have reduced choice of where

to shop, so are unable to take advantage of supermarket deals, may not have the variety of produce available from which to make healthier food choices, may not be able to produce their own food, and, as in other areas, may not be able to cook what food they do have due to coexisting fuel poverty (again, this is amplified in rural locations).

In addition, whilst small rural communities can be places of great support and help, there is a stigma attached to asking for help, of admitting you're struggling, that acts as a barrier, and means that much of the poverty, food-related and other, can be hidden and unaddressed.

Offering help

Imagination and creativity, along with co-operation, are needed in discerning and establishing the most effective ways to assist and support those experiencing food poverty; no one size will fit all. Working with primary care networks and health/social care services may be a possibility; looking at ways of providing confidential, sensitive transport to the nearest foodbank, or deliveries from it; becoming a good food hub linked to Well-Fed, the Flintshire based social enterprise, seeking to eradicate food poverty in Wales; establishing a community fridge; having a community garden open to all, are some examples of what may be possible or is already happening.

What are you doing in your Mission Area? Can you share your good practice to help others?

For information on tackling food poverty visit
<https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/cost-of-living/>
or <https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/faith-in-action/places-for-support/>

For Harvest resources visit
www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/faith/prayer/year-of-prayer/september-2022-creation-harvest-creativity

The Diocesan Conference 2023



The 2023 Diocesan Conference will take place in hybrid form this year.

The usual business elements of the conference agenda will take place online, while the speakers and worship will take place in-person. The keynote speaker will be the Archbishop of Wales, the Most Revd Andrew John, who will outline the future strategy for the Church in Wales. Bishop Gregory

will also give his Presidential address and worship will be led by members of Dyffryn Clwyd Mission Area.

- Online conference: Thursday 12 October, 7pm – 9pm – papers, along with a link, will be sent to all conference members.
- In-person conference: Saturday 14 October, 2pm – 4pm at St Asaph Cathedral.

All conference representatives are encouraged to attend both events. A limited number of observer places will be available at St Asaph Cathedral to hear the archbishop. **If you would like to register an interest to attend, please email, stasaphoffice@cinw.org.uk for details.**

Healing and Wholeness Event

A day exploring healing and wholeness has been organised by the Diocesan Spirituality Group. The event on Saturday 9 September at St Asaph Cathedral will offer an opportunity to find out more about healing ministry, to benefit from it on the day and to be encouraged to practise it. The speakers will include Revd Katy Hacker Hughes, Priest

Pastor at St Marylebone Healing and Counselling Centre, in the Diocese of London, which is widely known for its healing ministry. You can reserve a free ticket at www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-day-exploring-wholeness-and-healing-tickets-640405850137



Re-Opening of All Saints

A church in Newtown has re-opened after a 15-month refurbishment project. All Saints Church is now light and airy with modern facilities, including a full kitchen, toilets, wifi and a state of the art audio-visual system. The £700,000 project means the church can better serve its local community, offering a toddler group, a warm hub lunch club and plans to

make links with local mental health charities. The Bishop of St Asaph formally re-opened and blessed the building during a service in June. The Rector of Newtown, Canon Nia Wyn Morris said: "I hope the re-opening of the building will bring new people into the congregation and our families will come back to church. I pray I won't be too tempted to stay

Historic Signing for Flintshire Well



An historic agreement to recognise and celebrate the significance of the holy well and Shrine to Saint Winefride in Holywell has been signed by the Bishop of St Asaph and his Roman Catholic counterpart, the Bishop of Wrexham. The Rt Revd Gregory Cameron and the Rt Revd Peter Brignall have pledged to work co-operatively towards the development of the whole site in Holywell as an integrated place of worship, pilgrimage and tourism, while maintaining the distinctive tradition of worship associated with the Shrine. The two bishops signed a statement of intent during a service in the Beaufort Chapel of St James' Church in July. The agreement paves the way for work to begin to convert St James' Church into a centre for well-being. Work on St James' is due to begin in the Autumn.





Asaph 1450: Rediscovering our Creativity



Our Year of Jubilee for Asaph 1450 will end after the Kingdom season in November. It's during this time that Bishop Gregory is encouraging everyone to take time out to devote to a passion or hobby which brings refreshment. Several of the clergy from across the diocese outline their plans for refreshment here.



A Passion for Writing by Revd Rebecca Sparey-Taylor (left), Denbigh Mission Area Leader

Having studied a neuroscience degree, before working as a software engineer, I had always considered myself a scientist and gave very little thought to being creative. However, whilst studying for a theology degree, I discovered I had a hidden passion for writing. As I read the Bible, I have always imagined what it must have been like to be there at the time and how the different people felt and reacted. I started to write in the way that I read scripture, to open it up to other people.

It was, therefore, with great excitement that I heard that the Asaph 1450 Jubilee was encouraging clergy to be more creative. I booked on to an online writing course specialising in historical fiction through the National Centre for Writing. As well as learning ways to write to ensure a piece is historically authentic, I have also received feedback on my own writing.

Despite being a scientist at heart, I find great refreshment in writing, particularly when I'm not writing to a deadline, but can go and silently spend time in St Beuno's Library. It's a time, as an introvert, to be quiet and recharge my batteries, to spend time with God in prayer, as I write.



Life through a Lens by Revd Jo Mackriell (right), Priest in charge St Garmon's Church Llanfechain and St Ffraid's Church Llansanffraid

When I was given the opportunity to do something creative for Asaph 1450, I jumped at the chance. I am always looking for new ways to inject more creativity into my ministry. I enjoy many arts and crafts and am very visual in the way that I learn and process. Recently, I was inspired by someone I follow on Instagram, to look with a different eye at what is around me. She had posted amazing photographs of the everyday which told a story.

I was looking for a creative opportunity and came across a photographic retreat coupled with Ignatian spirituality, at Launde Abbey. I am hoping that this will inspire me to look at the world around me, the people, the mundane perhaps and see more stories.

I was also looking for a retreat where I could find refreshment. I spend a lot of time doing textile crafts which helps me to feel centred and to pray; I wanted to do something new, but still visual. I have always been taken by the prayer of St Teresa d'Avila, "Christ has no body now on earth but yours...." And I hope that I will be inspired, refreshed and renewed by recognising that "yours are the eyes with which he looks with compassion on this world."





Solitude, Photography and the Stars by Revd Dr Richard Hainsworth, Vicar of Flint and Flint Mountain

When the Bishop and Archdeacons encouraged the clergy to take five days at the end of the year to 'find refreshment' and do whatever renews us, I knew that for me that would have to involve solitude, photography and the stars.

It is when I am alone, in the presence of the vast infinity of the night sky, that I feel neither lonely nor insignificant as the Psalmist also experienced:

"When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have ordained; what are humans that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour." Psalm 8:3 – 4

Our ancestors lived with the yearly cycle of the ever-changing yet constant night sky as a blazing light above them, and wove it into their festivals, mythology and faith. Sadly today, light pollution increasingly steals this experience and robs us of our connection to the stars out of whose dust we are made. North Wales has some wonderful dark sky locations, as you can see from some of my photographs here, and it is important to me to explore them when the chance arises. 'Sabbath time' is part of God's plan for us and helps us have the 'life in all its fullness' that He wishes for us. However, in Wales our climate offers us few clear moonless nights a year – and finding five of them in a row, to order, at the right time of year seemed unlikely. This is why I thought it would be a chance to do something a little bolder. Or possibly foolish.

The Sahara Desert in winter is one of the few places on earth where you can almost guarantee clear skies, which

are among the darkest left on earth. The winter also offers temperatures that won't instantly melt a middle-aged ginger Vicar!

The desert, of course, holds a long spiritual tradition as a place of communion with God: from the earliest of times to the people of Israel, through Jesus himself, the desert Fathers and to contemporary experiences. Therefore, this December new moon, I will, God willing, be found flying into Marrakesh and then hiring a car to drive the eight hours alone over the Atlas Mountains and down through the desert to the far south of Morocco. I will stay five nights in a hotel in the middle of nowhere, which hosts the only private astronomical observatory in North Africa. I will also be mounting a camel to journey into the dunes themselves and camp in a tent.

There I intend to spend the days in contemplation of the desert spiritual tradition and the nights photographing the night sky. Photography is what I do because I can't paint – being creative is an instinct and part of the image of God within us. Photography also forces me to slow down, look and really see. It is a form of contemplation. Astronomical photos take hours, and over those hours the details of the full beauty of the heavens begin to reveal themselves, whether that is the Milky Way and constellations against the landscape or the Nebulae and distant galaxies in the depths of space.

Of course, there is always the small chance that clouds will find their way over the desert those nights, in which case you will hear un-vicarly language all the way back in St Asaph! However, I hope that this will be an experience of renewal, creativity and freedom unlike any I have had before, and I'm grateful to the Asaph 1450 initiative for the impetus to go on an adventure.



Over the summer, the Diocesan Rural Life Advisor, **Revd Hermione Morris** (right) has been to several agricultural shows across the region. She attended the Royal Welsh as part of the chaplaincy team and reflects here on the purpose of attending these events and looks back on Rural Mission Sunday.



Visiting Shows

Shows are an opportunity to engage with those whose lives are spent working the land, caring for the environment, producing food or supporting those who do. They are opportunities to remind people that they are valued by and important to 'the Church' as well as to the local, national, and international communities.

Shows are also great opportunities, alongside livestock marts, for farmers and others in the agricultural sector to socialise and connect, which helps to mitigate isolation and hopefully support good mental health. These are matters of ongoing concern in rural communities, as was highlighted by 'Len's Light' Tractor Run from John O'Groats to Lands' End in June and July.

'Len's Light' Tractor Run



Lynda and Andy Eadon launched 'Len's Light' after their son Len took his own life in October 2022. The couple want the campaign to raise awareness of the mental health issues that impact people in the farming and rural community. I was very fortunate to meet with and pray for Lynda and Andy as they visited Welshpool Livestock Sales.

You can read more about it on Len's Light

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/777456263826917>

Rural Mission Sunday

As a Mission Area, (I'm based in Tanat-Vyrnwy Mission Area) we celebrated Rural Mission Sunday on 30 July, with a Mission Area Eucharist at Christ Church, Bwlch-y-Cibau. Churches across the MA shared what they are celebrating in their church this year, and 50% of the monetary offering at that service went to The Agricultural Chaplains Association.

www.agrichaplains.org.uk

Rural Ministry Course

Having been appointed to seven churches in the Pool Mission Area, the **Revd Paulette Gower** (right) attended two-day rural ministry course in April organised by the Arthur Rank Centre, along with 30 delegates from across Wales and England. It was a good opportunity to learn, she says.



Pope Francis has called his Priests to "be shepherds with the smell of the sheep" and since moving to Montgomery there have been days when I have come back from a walk with the distinct odour of sheep clinging to my boots and trousers!

Having been asked to take my wellies and waterproofs to the conference, I did wonder whether this course would help with my encounters with those four-legged members of my flock, especially to know what breed they were! However, the course was much more about understanding how rural communities work and what ministry and evangelism might look like in the rural context, especially within multi-church groupings. It was very worthwhile, and talks included an opportunity to discuss bumping spaces (those places in a community where people may encounter each other) and an understanding of how rural communities are made up of original villagers, incomers, and new incomers; how each group may have very different views of the place of the church to them in the community and their relationship with it.

There was time to relax too with a wild-church meditation session and a quiz all about modern farming and agriculture. My team was feeling very smug, as we included a practising farmer. We didn't win though!

Visit the Rural ministry pages of the website at <https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/rural/>

Revd Hermione Morris, Diocesan Rural Life Advisor: HermioneMorris@churchinwales.org.uk



Creating Holy Time with Spiritual Direction

A College of Spiritual Direction exists in St Asaph, convened by Revd Dr Alexis Smith, a former priest in the Pool Mission Area. Here Dr Smith introduces herself and explains the purpose of spiritual direction.

My background

I came to the UK from the USA to serve in the Church in 2016. Before that, in 2003, I completed a seminary degree and then went into full-time chaplaincy in a large hospital, mainly working in Trauma/Crisis, Oncology and Mental Health. I had two years of graduate chaplaincy training, including one year of Clinical Pastoral supervision, then served as a lead chaplain, as well as mentoring chaplaincy and counselling students and teaching courses at a local seminary. In 2015, I completed a PhD in Theology and Religious Studies at Chester University, specialising in Narrative Therapy and working with people's stories for pastoral support.

An introduction

Before coming to Wales to serve as priest-in-charge, I thought spiritual direction was something I did as part of my job. In 2018/19 after completing Revd Janet Fletcher's course in Bangor Diocese, I realised that spiritual direction was a calling. When I retired as a vicar in May 2022, I did more training at St Beuno's in Tremeirchion and it is now the main focus of my ministry. I am passionate about spiritual direction. I have experienced the power of it personally and as I accompany others on their journeys. As Jeremiah wrote, it is to come to know the plans God has for each of us, to hear them and take them into our day-to-day lives.

Holy Time

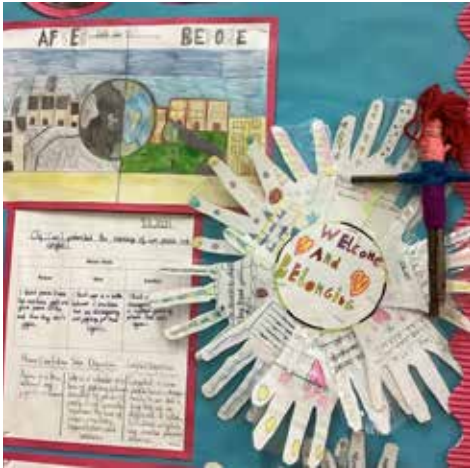
As a spiritual director I recognise that the time spent with another exploring how God might be speaking to him or her is a 'holy time'. The Holy Spirit is always the third person present in those meetings. The director offers a total and unconditional listening, putting his or her own self away to focus on what the directee is saying to understand how the Spirit might be speaking to the person. The role of the director is to help the directee focus on their relationship with God and so enable their personal vocation (to become the person they were created to be) to grow and be better lived out through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit.

St Asaph offers both spiritual direction and supervision for spiritual directors. Since coming to Wales, I have built on my earlier supervision training by completing St Bueno's course in Supervision in May 2022. Supervision is an important part of being a spiritual director. St Asaph provides spiritual direction, but spiritual directors also need to have a place to bring honest conversations that will help us grow in our call to spiritual direction. As Convenor for the College of Spiritual Directors, I hope to not only support the spiritual directors in our Diocese, but also those seeking spiritual direction.



To find out more and to contact Alexis about spiritual direction, visit
<https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/prayer/spiritual-direction/>





A primary school in St Asaph has become the first church school in north Wales to be awarded the title 'School of Sanctuary'. As the **Diocesan Schools' Officer, Jennie Downes, explains, staff and pupils must undergo a rigorous process to demonstrate a culture of welcome across the school, the curriculum and the learning.**

Ysgol Esgob Morgan in St Asaph is the first Church in Wales School in north Wales to be formally awarded School of Sanctuary accreditation. It recognises the school's inclusive culture of welcome, with a commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment for all. The journey to becoming a School of Sanctuary began in 2021, when the lead teacher for Religion, Values and Ethics, Cara Drumm, began to align the core Christian values and school policy to the overarching School of Sanctuary principles of Learn, Embed, Share.

The school community worked together to explore the meaning of the word 'sanctuary'. Pupils brought their message of welcome to the local community during Refugee Week with a range of activities which included artwork, writing and creating items for community events. Teachers developed meaningful opportunities for learners to discover what 'sanctuary' means to different people. Contexts for learning included widening the theme of War and Conflict to provide opportunities for challenging

and complex narratives to be explored fully in class. Pupils were given opportunities to develop the skills of critical and objective analysis of data to more fully understand why people seek refuge and sanctuary. The older pupils presented learning on a variety of themed tasks to their peers across the whole school.

The lead teacher for the School of Sanctuary process, Cara Drumm said: "Every child in our school has a voice and has been part of this journey, enthusiastically taking part in learning experiences that will help them to become ethical and informed citizens of Wales who will embrace and celebrate diversity in the world around them."

The School of Sanctuary appraisal panel met with the School Council in July 2023. Pupil representatives who had driven the decision to apply to be recognised as a School of Sanctuary explained why this was important to their school and wider community. The panel stated: "Your pupils are well-informed active citizens who fully understand the rights of all children and how to activate their voices. You have some great future leaders!"

Ysgol Esgob Morgan is being encouraged to celebrate the award and invite local MPs, MSs and other local representatives to find out more about the work they have done to achieve School of Sanctuary Status.



Digital Tour Guide in Kerry

Pupils from St Michael's Church School in Kerry have created a tourist information guide of their local church, targeted at children. The Minecraft model to scale can be accessed online and offers a virtual tour of St Michael's church. The project has taken almost a year to complete with children visiting the church to record the dimensions of the building, photographing key features and writing reports. The final part was the

generation of virtual walkthroughs with a voiceover to create the online tour. David Jarman is the teacher who led the project. He said: "The children have made their Minecraft model public using their Hwb accounts, so other children can sign into the world to look around. The next step is to create websites where they will have a link of the virtual Minecraft world video so people can login and walk around the virtual church."



St Peter's to the Senedd

Members of Year 6 from St Peter's School in Rossett visited the Senedd in June to assist in the handing in of a petition on seagrass restoration. More than 2,000 people had signed the petition and the children performed their Seagrass rap on the steps of the Senedd building in Cardiff Bay.

Africa Theme in Ruabon



Year 3 in St Mary's School in Ruabon have been busy making and selling African themed bracelets, writes Mr Steele and Mrs Leighton. They have raised the money to adopt THREE African animals from Chester Zoo. In total they raised £195! We had a special donation from The



Cons Club in Ruabon of £90, which was incredibly generous, helping us reach this huge target. Mrs Conlan, the school cook, also baked us some animal biscuits as a 'thank you' for all the pupils' hard work. Pupils have decided on the African Painted Dog, the giraffe and the okapi to



adopt. As part of the adoption, we have received three Chester Zoo admission tickets. All Year 3 pupils were put into a draw and three children were chosen at random to receive a free ticket!





Celebrating Renewal in Pool Quay



On Sunday 30 July, the Guilsfield Group of Churches held a joint service to celebrate the renewal of St John's Church, Pool Quay, after substantial repairs, reports Yvette Turner. A leak in the church roof had resulted in water ingress causing extensive mould and considerable damage to both the decoration and the organ. After six months away, all the work was finally completed with

the return and re-fitting of the organ in June 2023. It was a joyous occasion for the congregations to come together and celebrate the end of a long and difficult journey when the church had not only survived but gone from strength to strength.

It was a pleasure to hear the organ being played once again, with the church full and led by the church

choir of St Aelhaiarn's. To add to the sense of occasion, it was wonderful to welcome the Archdeacon of Montgomery, Venerable Dr Barry Wilson, to commission Margaret Hague as a Worship Leader and Pastoral Assistant. After the service many people stayed for an excellent lunch provided by the members of Pool Quay Church.

Patronal Festival Service in Valle Crucis



In June, the community of Glyndyfrdwy in Valle Crucis Mission Area gathered for an outdoor service to mark the patronal festival of St Thomas, writes Revd Helen

Gheorghiu Gould. The service was held in the village playing field, with the Llangollen Steam Railway as a backdrop. The theme of the service was 'Fishers of Men'. We dramatised Matthew 4:12 – 23 using a play parachute as a fishing net. One of our worship leaders, Alan Hodgkinson, played Jesus, and his wife Sue provided the musical accompaniment. Ordinand Beci

Ratcliffe arranged a fishing game with magnets, so the children had to try to catch people, not sharks. The weather was glorious and the 11am steam engine whistle provided a very apt call to worship and also steamed home as we drew worship to a close! It was enormous fun and St Thomas hope to make it an annual celebration.

St John's Wood

Members of the Valle Crucis Mission Area have been working to transform overgrown land adjacent to a cemetery in Llangollen into a space of remembrance and reflection. St John's Wood, behind St John's Church, has been cleared of debris and weeds and planted with heritage fruit trees. A path has been laid, a wildflower

bank sown and several seating areas created. The Mission Area Leader of Valle Crucis, John Gambles, said: "We've taken skips full of rubbish out of the wood and removed dead trees to make this area much more attractive and welcoming to visitors. It's been a collaborative project with the Tidy Town Team and local councillor and

has attracted funding from Welsh Government and Cadwyn Clwyd."





Visiting the Holy Land



It had always been on Revd Sally Baird's 'bucket list' to visit the Holy Land and in May 2023 she joined her sister and 17 other people mostly from Manchester diocese to make the trip.

We travelled with McCabe Pilgrimages on an 11-day pilgrimage,

staying five nights in Jerusalem and five nights by the shores of Lake Galilee. We saw a wealth of scenery, from desert in the south to the lush greenery in the north. I got to float in the Dead Sea and swim in the living water of Galilee. I was constantly reminded that despite Christ's call for unity, this was a country beset by division as shown by the Banksy graffiti on the separation wall between Israeli and Palestinian territory.

One of the many highlights was a visit to the Jeel Al Amal boys' home and Co-Ed primary school in Bethany. McCabe supports the school as part of its outreach. It has 50 boarders,

many of whom are orphans or disadvantaged children. We were told that we could take gifts for them, and so being chaplain to Connah's Quay Nomads Scholars Football Club I asked whether the club had any football shirts that were no longer in use. They did, and it was a delight to see how appreciative the school was to receive them.

So take a moment to: Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels. For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you" (Psalm 122).



The Best of Online!



River Baptism at Llanarmon-yn-Iâl
Congratulations to Paul on his Baptism in the River Alyn.



Welcome Fr George Bearwood as the new vicar of Shotton and Garden City in the Borderlands Mission Area.



St Asaph Cathedral welcomed ITV Wales' Carole Green and Gerallt Jones for a feature on Cathedral Cities.



Our favourite storytelling bear Teddy Francis-John released his 100th story! It's the parable of the pearl. You can watch it along with the 99 previous stories at <https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/coronavirus/resources-for-young-people/resources-for-young-people-teddy-francis-john/>

Holywell Mission Hub ran two brilliant Hub Clubs during the summer holidays. At them, they thought about St Paul being shipwrecked and had so much fun with songs, crafts and games!





MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING

There are two Mental Health First Aid training sessions available for you to book!

BOOK YOUR PLACE NOW!

Mental Health First Aid is the help provided to a person who is:

- developing a mental health problem
- experiencing a worsening of an existing mental health problem
- in a mental health crisis.

The first aid is given until the appropriate professional help is received or the crisis resolves.

The Diocesan Engagement Officer, Sarah Wheat, who is running one of the courses, said: "It seems now more than ever people are struggling with financial demands, loneliness and isolation and generally from what we hear on the news or social media. We are offering both a Youth Mental Health First Aid course and an Adult Mental Health First Aid course. Both will be delivered online, using online modules followed up with live webinars. The online modules should be completed before the participants attend the webinars and both courses are delivered over two sessions."

ADULT MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID COURSE

Mon 25 Sept and Mon 2 Oct (participants need to attend both) from 9.30am – 1.30pm each session.

The Adult eMHFA Wales course teaches adults how to provide Mental Health First Aid to friends, families, co-workers and people in their community.

To book a place or for more information, please email sarahwheat@cinw.org.uk

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID COURSE

Thurs 28 Sept and Thurs 5 Oct (participants need to attend both) from 9.30am – 1.30pm each session.

The Youth eMHFA Wales course teaches adults how to provide Mental Health First Aid to young people.

To book a place or for more information, please email hannahdaniels@cinw.org.uk

You can find out more about Mental Health First Aid and the course at <https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/faith-in-action/mental-health-first-aid>