

ASAPH 1450



2023 is the 1450th anniversary since Asaph was consecrated as the Bishop of our diocese. The date 573AD is traditionally ascribed to the appointment of Asaph by Kentigern as his successor as Bishop of the diocese now named after him. Centuries later, his current successor, Bishop Gregory and the senior staff team have been considering how to mark this remarkable anniversary. Bishop Gregory explains the plans.

In the Bible, a significant period of time was marked by a Jubilee, and the book Leviticus laid down that it should happen on the fiftieth year.

"... cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound of the tenth day of the seventh month ...and you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you ..." (Leviticus 25.9,10)

It was to be a year of liberty, when the land was allowed to lie fallow, all debts were forgiven, and justice and equality restored to the people of Israel.

In the diocese of St Asaph, we are proclaiming 2023, 1450 years after the consecration of Asaph, as a Jubilee for our diocese.

After all the difficulties and challenges of recent years,

and the challenges which are yet to come, we need a time to pause, take a deep breath, and re-centre ourselves on the love of God, and allow his Grace to be at work in our lives.

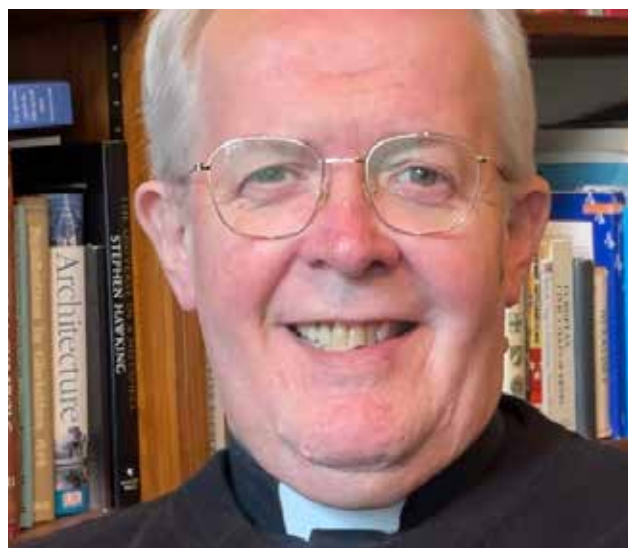
Ideally, we would like 2023 to be a year of liberty – not in which to abandon the tasks ahead of us, and to sit back and relax, but to find space to concentrate on those things which are the most important and the most life-giving, in order to allow ourselves to recover our first passion and love for Our Lord. You could call it an initiative-free initiative – you are not being asked to take on more activity in addition to everything else, but to be intentional and focus on your own faith and ministry, and the things that give you life and energy, in order to re-centre on the most important contribution that you can make to your own well-being and discipleship, and to the life of the *Teulu Asaph*.

It is a time to revive our spiritual lives around two central promises by Jesus – to offer living waters and spiritual refreshment when we seek him (John 7.38), and to renew our passion for the Gospel, for Jesus promises us life in its fulness. (John 10.10).

What will be the treasures of life and ministry, and the giftings of God that you wish to invest in and celebrate in 2023?

I, and the diocese, will help in a number of ways:

- We intend 2023 to be a year of intentionally fewer meetings, especially during Lent. Not that Lent should be emptied of activity, but to give space for us all to concentrate on those things that we find life-giving and liberating. For example, if you actually love leading Bible Studies, this fits the bill. It is an opportunity to do those things that fulfil us the most, and an opportunity to lead the people of God to the living waters of God's Grace.
- To assist in Lent, the diocese wishes to offer all those in licensed ministry a copy of my new book *Easter Book of Days*, with its call to be transformed in our discipleship, and enabled to transform the world. We will also develop a course inviting people across the diocese to reflect upon the book.
- We want to give every Mission Area Leadership a funded opportunity to take a 24 hour residential retreat together. Retreats are important times to be quiet in each other's presence and the presence of God, to grow in our spiritual lives and vision, when we take time out of the busyness of life
- We want to encourage every licensed minister to access their training bursary, and to use it for a purpose that will re-energise and enable their charism and ministry.
- We want to earmark the Kingdom season in 2023 (1 - 26 November) as a time to prioritise creativity, when we invite everyone to commit to finding a sacred time, which we will set aside for creativity, to do those things that feed our well-being and flourishing. We invite clergy, in particular, to find the inside of a week in the diary when their most creative talents can be given space and priority.
- The Archdeacon of St Asaph is developing *Skilful Shepherds*, a spiritual resource to review our own ministry, and to reflect upon its fruitfulness.



Above all else, we want the Year of Jubilee to be the year when we re-discover our first love, the experiences of faith that inspired us first in our journey of discipleship, and generated our commitment to the Lord; an opportunity to re-energise ourselves by learning to love the Lord in new ways, and to draw upon our gifts and talents in a way which can refresh and sustain our discipleship and ministry.

Updates and information about Asaph 1450 will be posted on the diocesan website at <https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/asaph-1450/>

