**Llandaff Diocesan Conference**

**Minutes of the Diocesan Conference held on**

**Thursday 24 and Saturday 26 September 2020 by Zoom video conference**

**(due to the Covid 19 pandemic and legal restrictions)**

Present: The Bishop, 128 clerical members, 140 lay members

In attendance: Mrs Sarah Rickett (Consultant and Facilitator of Diocesan Conference), 10 members of Diocesan Office staff

Apologies: 6 clerical members, 13 lay members

Absent without apology: 1 clerical members, 30 lay members

Registered but did not attend: 12 individuals

3 parishes had no lay representatives at the Conference.

At the time of the Conference the diocese had 12 Clerical vacancies

**Thursday 24 September 2020 commencing at 7.30pm – Formal Business**

1. The Conference opened with a live streamed celebration of the Eucharist.

The Bishop welcomed everyone with thanks to the Ven Mike Komor, Sarah Rickett, Matt Batten and James Laing for the technology. This year of all years we rely on God and his goodness. The Bishop thanked Angela Cooper for leading prayers.

1. The Minutes of the Conference held on 15th July/28th September 2019 were approved.
2. Matters Arising from the Minutes – Lambeth Conference was postponed for 2 years (2022) so the reference in Paragraph 9 referring to hospitality is no longer appropriate.
3. The Annual Report from the Diocesan Board of Finance was presented by Mike Lawley, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance.

*This presentation, the Annual Report and Accounts are available on the diocesan website.*

Since last year, the diocese had been successful in its Evangelism Fund bid focused on Young Faith Matters engaging younger age groups, so we are grateful to RB and the EF committee. We have made a good start on the development of Citizen Church; other projects are due to start.

Covid 19 has influenced the finances and the work of the diocese. We have a balanced and strong diocesan team and DBF, and we reached out to parishes to give support and share experiences. We saw (and enabled) a great increase in digital output and direct/digital giving. Most parishes have been resilient and innovative, and continued to pay Fairer Share in full, some even paid a full year in advance. We have made savings in office costs, vacancies, and pension contributions following an actuarial review. We hope to end the year close to the deficit that we budgeted, but this will depend on future investment values. We received a generous rebate from the Representative Body of the Church in Wales (RB) which we passed on to parishes as flat grants of 25% in Q2 and 35% in Q3; a Hardship Fund (now renamed Reimbursement Scheme) of £200,000, and strategic support towards achieving long term resilience.

Beyond 2020, the DBF’s focus will be on the Vision and Ministry Areas, providing support in building reserves of finance, human resources, and energy. The DBF will work innovatively and agilely, keeping support for digital ministry, working online which saves travel time, money, and the environment. The DBF needs to cautious with the 2021 Budget which will be approved in November, so it will be a standstill budget – 0% increase in stipend, salaries, and other expenditure, 0% increase in Fairer Share.

Mr Lawley thanked the Board, staff, and clergy who have gone above and beyond their duty and laity who have continued to support and give of time and money.

There was no plenary session, but the following was noted:

* Many members of Conference thanked the diocese and DBF for all the work that they had undertaken during the past year under such difficult circumstances.
* In response to a question from Peter Watson if DBF has liability for the CiW pension body, Mr Lawley responded that this is RB responsibility. We pay through the recharge but are not involved in the management of the scheme.

1. The Annual Report from Diocesan Standing Committee (DSC) was presented by Ven Mike Komor, Acting Secretary ofConference.

Governance is the responsibility of the Diocesan Conference which meets once per year and delegates authority to the Diocesan Standing Committee to make decisions on its behalf in the meanwhile. The DSC also takes care of territorial arrangements and approves mergers and moves of parishes: about 10 this year.

This year DSC also made some decisions about governance, authorising electronic meetings such as this one. A further meeting last week is not included in the report, which was a joint meeting with the DBF. This was about coming together for the vision, and preparatory work for this Conference and in particular the meeting on Saturday.

The development of the Diocesan Vision has been a recurring theme, which has focused our work and will do for the coming years. Building on the success of EF bid, has been postponed due to Covid 19, but not cancelled.

Q&A Session

Q - Norman Allen, Rachel Williams, Mike Payne, Melanie Prince, Heather Payne and Marc Walford asked similar questions about the consultation in deciding upon Ministry Areas.

A - This is the culmination of 8 years of conversations and consultations; now we are moving forward with implementation and taking the opportunities posed by Ministry Areas. The continuation of Conference on 26th September allowed for further discussion, after which Conference Members are ambassadors, and their role is now to take this forward and out to Ministry Areas.

Q - David-Lloyd Jones asked about the formal approval of PCC members as registered charity trustees.

A - the Registrar confirmed that they have to act in the best interests of the charity and act independently, but must also note that they are part of the Diocese and governed by the Church in Wales constitution which forms the Constitution of each PCC.

1. Matthew Batten, Director of Engagement, presented our progress this year and even though Covid took us by surprise the Diocese should note the following achievements:

* New website (8,000 monthly visitors, 50% increase on 2019)
* Social media reaching people all over the world (reaching 20,000 on Facebook, Twitter 158,000, and with 175 hours on YouTube, where the most popular video is how to say the Lord’s Prayer in Welsh).
* Llandaff Matters now has 813 subscribers, with a very high 77% open rate.
* Outreach included Men’s Sheds and increased work of foodbanks in terms of faith in action – such stories help engage people who are unfamiliar with church.
* Day of Prayer took place online and is still being widely viewed. It was agreed that it would be repeated quarterly or seasonally rather than annually.
* Continual Ministerial Development online has been varied and responsive to current needs.
* Generosity Matters has been well received and a package of supportive resources for parishes has been developed. Llandaff has accounted for over 25% of new Gift Direct sign up (230 out of 816) and generated an additional £120,000 per year.
* We launched Eco diocese last year and are preparing our application for Eco Diocese bronze award. 25 of our churches have registered as Eco Churches, of which 9 achieved bronze, 5 achieved silver, and all are progressing.
* Revd Dean Atkins noted that as well as the growth in online activity during the pandemic, it's also important to celebrate the churches that have worked hard to be able to open for prayer and public worship every week and sometimes every day.

Mr Batten then introduced Revd Ryan Forey, who introduced Revd Mark Simpson and Henry Grover (lay rep), from Citizen Church who said how excited they are to be in Cardiff and showed a video from Citizen Church about its vision and their work to date.

1. Answers to previously submitted questions
   * 1. When will recruitment for vacancies in parishes restart, posts have been advertised at diocesan office and elsewhere in the church in wales?

The Bishop replied that we are starting now (have started with Vision resources) and will recruit clergy as soon as we can – this must be done well and correctly, acknowledging the importance of face to face interviews in appointing parish priests.

* + 1. What support is planned for parish share in 2021 to help parish recovery?

Mr Lawley referred to the financial and staff support that he had described during his presentation, reminding parishes about resources available to support Ministry Areas who should contact the diocesan office who will be able to assist. The DBF and the RB will continue to monitor the situation and impact on Ministry Areas into 2021 and will act appropriately as the situation changes.

* + 1. Is there any plan to prolong the year of the pilgrimage?

Revd Mark Prevett replied that although our year has gone in unimaginably different ways from what we had expected, the whole diocese has been on a pilgrimage. The Year of Pilgrimage itself was always specifically tied to 2020 and so will not continue into 2021 – but pilgrimage remains one of the central expressions of our faith and all are encouraged to continue on pilgrimage as part of personal spirituality, parish ministry, and engaging with others.

Revd Mark particularly recommended the book *Britain’s Pilgrim Places*, and the excellent resource *A Home Pilgrimage* created by Revd Marc Walford, available on the [website](https://llandaff.churchinwales.org.uk/en/faith-and-ministry/home-church-resources/).

*Ruth Coombs added that our journey together with vulnerable people, the anxious and afraid will continue beyond 2020 as long as the impact of the pandemic does.*

1. Elections were held electronically this year for the first time and cost about 10% of what it would have cost by paper, not including the hours of work. The following were elected:

**Governing Body of the Church in Wales:**

*Anthony Mullins*

*Heather Jayne Temple-Williams*

*Hannah Burch*

*Andrew Sims*

*Revd Peter Lewis*

*Revd Canon Steven Kirk*

*Supplementary members: Revd Rosemary Hill, Revd Maggie Thorne.*

**Representative Body of the Church in Wales:**

*Geoff Moses*

*Ven Mike Komor*

**Disciplinary Tribunal:**

*Revd Peter Lewis*

*Revd Canon Steven Kirk*

***Conference adjourned***

***.***

***Conference reconvened on Saturday 26 September 2020 at 9.00am***

Open in prayer: Morning Office, led by the Rev Dr Angela Cooper, Assistant Curate in the Benefice of the East Vale.

Celebration – Delegates moved into breakout groups to share stories of encouragement and hope from lockdown. Feedback session from these groups was Introduced by Ven Mike Komor.

All those present shared a range of positive stories and experience, many spoke of moving online to continue their work and gave details of other activities:

* Zoom, Skype and WhatsApp have been used for services, sharing resources, bible studies, coffee mornings, youth groups. Online services attracted many, from all over the world
* Welsh services attracted bigger audiences
* Communications have increase across the diocese, the parish, the community including online, telephone, and post
* Numbers have grown, with more social media interest
* Growth of existing Food Banks, instigation of new ones
* Food delivery services to vulnerable groups – the elderly, those living alone, children
* Greater partnership working and fundraising with and for other churches, community groups and charities
* Knitting projects
* Children’s packs including Wildflower bombs to attract bees
* Gardens of remembrance developed for community use and used for outside prayers
* Collecting necessities for the homeless
* A renewed commitment to prayer, lockdown experience made people more prayerful
* An atmosphere of peace and tranquillity
* The Citizen Church opened a coffee van to facilitate engagement with new students and the community – socially distanced

The Bishop gave her Presidential Address:

Remember 2020 was our year of Pilgrimage, we have shared a different kind of Pilgrimage, a year like no other.

The Bishop thanked everyone for maintaining worship and pastoral life, being part of kindness and care in community life. She thanked the RB and Diocesan staff and Officers for their support.

We need to adapt. We cannot wait until the Covid crisis is over. We cannot afford to watch parish life disappear. We are on a pilgrimage that began in 2012, we are proposing to accelerate that journey and implement Ministry Areas based on two strong principles. Firstly, the structure of our life has to be built on what we believe about Christian Ministry, our theological understanding of how we shape our life. Secondly, in all of this we are community of faith, not solitary Christians. May we seek the welfare of our communities for in their peace and healing we find our blessing.

*The full text of the Presidential Address may be found on the Diocesan website and attached as Annex 1.*

James Laing, the Diocesan Secretary gave a short presentation entitled Meeting the Challenge: how we will bring the Vision to life in our communities, working together in Ministry Areas. This focused on the benefits of collaborative ministry and the governance and practicalities of establishing Ministry Areas which will all be formalised by Bishop’s decree by 31st December 2021.

*The PowerPoint presentation may be found on the Diocesan website.*

Learning from others, facilitated by Ven Mike Komor:

Conference heard from the Parish of Pontypridd and the Benefice of Eglwysilan and Caerphilly what the formation of a Ministry Area has meant for them. Revd Michael Gable and Deryn McAndrew explained how they have collaborative, lay led teams incorporating the clergy, who are responsible for governance, and delegate to local church or, increasingly, task or ministry-focused teams to undertake the day to day running of the parish, its finances, buildings and ministries, supported by dedicated administrators. During Covid this has been very effective in supporting the local community.

John Gambles, MA Warden in Valle Crucis in the Diocese of St Asaph, and Andrew Jones, Archdeacon of Meirionnydd in the Diocese of Bangor, joined Conference and reported that post Harries report, how they introduced Ministry Areas in order to better deliver their diocesan Visions. Mission Areas emerged from facilitated consultations, and are responsible for governance (as a registered Charity), church buildings, finance, strategic planning for worship and pastoral care. Under a shared mission, local activities are delegated, and smaller churches protected. Bangor Diocese defined 5 qualifying factors to decide parity across the MAs:

* population
* number of church buildings
* parish share
* secondary school in each MA
* potential: is there a uniqueness that pertains to the MA? Eg tourism, or pilgrimage

Ven Mike Komor led the Conference in expressing our thanks and appreciation for Mr Gambles and Ven Jones. Several questions were raised by members of Conference, which were addressed by the Archdeacons and the Bishop. All questions will be consolidated in a “frequently asked questions” page on the diocesan website after Conference.

Facilitated breakouts in Ministry Area groups to discuss what opportunities are presented by Ministry Areas so that each MA could begin to plan their common future.

Following a short break feedback from breakouts was facilitated by Ven Mike Komor. Some are at the beginning of this journey and although they see the opportunities some were concerned about the speed of this development. Skills audits of local talents might be undertaken. Support needed with children and youth work. All noted the importance of identifying goals in order to assess success, of building relationships and facilitating conversations, and of the opportunities that are presented in sharing ideas and experiences.

Closing Prayers were led by the Rev Dr Angela Cooper.

Conference closed at 1.00pm.

*Annex 1:*

**Presidential Address at Diocesan Conference**

**26th September 2020**

Friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, I am delighted to be speaking to you this morning after we have just shared together our experiences of the last six months. As we recalled on Thursday evening, this time last year we declared 2020 to be our ‘Year of Pilgrimage’ and hoped it would be extra special. Well, it’s certainly proving to be a year like no other, an unexpected pilgrimage, and in so many ways - as we’ve just shared - we’re still proclaiming that faith matters, as we look out for each other.

It’s right we begin with prayer and thanksgiving, telling the joyful story of the Diocese of Llandaff in Covid days. And I want to say thank you to you all:

• Thank you for taking Church out of our buildings when they had to close; for all the activity on-line, for maintaining our worship and pastoral life, and for returning prayer to our churches when we could do so.

• Thank you for being such an important part of the kindness, care and solidarity which is needed in local communities. This year both the Cathedral and Ewenny Priory are celebrating 900 years of their foundations. They have seen many threats and crises over those 9 centuries – as we know our Cathedral was nearly destroyed during World War Two – but we continue in faith and compassion as our neighbours face once again a very unwelcome environment.

• Thank you too, to the Representative Body of the Church in Wales and our own Board of Finance – to Mike Lawley, James Laing, Jan Boyce, Mark Brampton and all who have worked so hard to keep our financial ship steady as we also heard on Thursday. I know all too well what challenges and hardships our parishes are facing but I hope you feel our determination to support you.

• And thank you for what comes next. We meet today as we face more measures to protect our communities; with more than half the diocese already in some form of local lockdown and all of us apprehensive, knowing we have to adapt.

Adapt to how public health will still dominate. We can’t simply sit out this crisis: we have to respond as we sustain the worship of the church and its pastoral ministry. People need to know the love of Christ for them and to be met in their needs, as life is now not as we would wish it to be. We also must adapt to the challenges in our sources of income and how to ensure parish life continues to flourish. And that’s what most of my address to you today is about.

We continue joyfully in our pilgrimage, knowing God is good, he listens to our prayers, we listen to his purposes for us, and we travel together as a community of faith.

As we think about what it means, to continue in our pilgrimage, let me remind you that the whole Province of the Church in Wales began a different kind of pilgrim journey in 2012.

It was called the ‘Transformation Agenda’, all six dioceses signed up for it, the Governing Body agreed it: you may even have voted for it when this Diocesan Conference discussed it more than five years ago.

The whole purpose which lies behind this initiative of our church is to allow us to sustain parish ministry. As we watch Chapels close and Non-conformist ministers become few on the ground, we cannot afford to watch parish life also disappear.

I passionately believe in parish ministry and suspect you do too. It is many of the things which we associate with parish life which will carry our local communities through this time of Covid trial, and which we want to hand on to our grandchildren’s generation:

• The maintenance of our parish churches;

• The offering of life events in a sacred setting – baptisms, weddings and funerals;

• Having parish-based clergy to whom a congregation can relate;

• Attracting lay officers who are well-resourced and well supported by the diocese;

• And connections made - by Foodbanks, dementia care projects, charity shops, job cafes, debt clinics – places our communities need help and where they can find hope.

If that ‘parish life’ is important to us (and I think it is) we have to move forward because we can’t sustain it unless we do adapt. This isn’t about whether your parish can survive but whether the whole church can operate within parish life.

We are putting before you today a new plan for parish life in Llandaff. Some of you are pretty much there, you heard the ‘Transformation’ challenge and got on with it. We have 11 Rectorial Benefices (effectively single parishes) which, in different ways – and they all have a very different feel to them - model how we want to operate. 75% of our clergy already work in some form of collaboration. What we are proposing is an accelerated and well supported implementation of what we’ve begun and which, as we’ll hear later at least three other dioceses have completed.

Before I tell you why we’re doing this and what undergirds our thinking, let me tell you what it’s not:

1. This is not a bureaucratic restructuring in order to make the life of the diocesan office or its staff easier. It’s true that you will hear us say that having 105 separate units which will soon all have the burden of individually registering with the Charity Commission is inefficient and surely a waste of our resources which ought to be focused on serving people rather than what it takes to produce over a hundred sets of accounts. But this is not about diocesan convenience. It’s about the effectiveness and sustainability of the local church.

2. And nor is it a scheme to cut clergy numbers. On the contrary, this is the first time to my knowledge that we’re being entirely transparent about the deployment of clergy. We have a finite number of clergy posts, based on what we know we can currently afford. We could have more if we grew our stewardship. But for now we’re publishing what posts go in which Ministry Area and encouraging you to think about what else you need in terms of children and young people workers, outreach workers or mission enablers: they are part of our funded vision.

It’s not a restructuring for restructuring sake.

It’s not a hidden agenda for cutting clergy posts.

There are 2 strong principles on which I hope we will build our future and I put them before you today.

**Firstly, the structures of our life have to be built on what we believe about Christian ministry, our theological understanding of how we shape our life.**

If I hear any criticism of the Church in Wales’ ‘Transformation Agenda’ it’s usually that there wasn’t sufficient theological reflection which went into it. Which is partly why I set up a piece of work across the whole diocese three years ago to consider what we believe about ministry. It was led by the Rector of Cowbridge, Stephen Adams and 130 people, clergy, Readers, laity participated. It’s a very good piece of work and it will now keep us clear about who we are as we face a rethinking of what ministry looks like.

Let me give you just a taste of what will inform our decisions:

• There’s the importance of relationships: the church flows out of God who is Trinity, God who embodies inter-relationship. So the quality of our relationships really matters.

• From that relational character we look to the worth, equality and dignity of the whole church: the work of the church is the work of the whole people of God, which is why our Vision takes really seriously lay discipleship and lay ministry. Our Vocations work seeks out clergy of the future, but ministry belongs to whole people of God. It’s also why we value ministry in the Valleys as much as in the Vale or in Cardiff.

• Because we believe in the transforming power of God, the Holy Spirit, at work in what we do, we are interested in how we live and what we are becoming: into what do we grow? So, things which seem so important to a secular world – order, reward and remuneration, hierarchy and power are all only valid if they serve our pursuit of being mature disciples of Christ, ‘growing into the full stature of Christ’ as St. Paul puts it.

• Being Christ-like in our service is our goal. So, we have to be collaborative, not just because we get better decisions that way and protect our well-being but because it’s the model set by our teacher and Lord. “I do not call you servants… but I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father… I chose you and I appointed you to go and bear fruit”

• And those collaborative relationships seeking to exhibit the grace of God, are expressed and practiced in the liturgy of the Church, most notably the Eucharist. We are pilgrim people; we are resurrection people, whose song is Alleluia and whose name is love.

Which leads me to the second principle on which we build our life of ministry and mission.

**In all of this we are a community of faith not solitary Christians.**

This year we are watching before our eyes the enormous costs of social isolation and what happens when communities can’t meet, or sing together, or grieve together, or hug one another.

At a diocesan level I really want us to feel connected to our big Anglican story. We’re a worldwide church with a history and tradition which ought to make us confident and proud. What is being proposed – collaborative working – begins with us feeling part of the whole. What are we ‘becoming’? Not a narrower and narrower interest group but a diocesan community of faith of Anglican believers with a broad outlook. Rejoicing that we eat together at a broad table (that’s when we’re allowed to!) Most of us experience that community of faith week by week at the parish level. Some of our congregations are very small but that’s okay (a small congregation is not a failed large congregation), provided we stay connected with one another.

As I said in the handbook for today all challenging work or complex issues need us to work together. When life was simpler we might have prospered on our own, but life now demands a diversity of outlook and a networked approach.

So, my friends what is being proposed is a diocesan wide project to help us achieve our goals on our pilgrim journey. We know what the shape is we wish to create: 29 Ministry Areas up and running by 1st January 2022, with established leadership and operating as a single legal entity. Every congregation will relate pastorally to a Vicar but there will also be new resources to help implement our Vision of confident Christians and a habit of outreach.

That is the given but on Thursday some of you rightly raised how we involve the insights and energies of the parishes in achieving this. Very few parishes haven’t made some progress already in this direction so it won’t be wholly new terrain but there are some key decisions which remain ahead; what is your Ministry Area to be called being just one of them; what are your outreach priorities being another.

Now for the rest of this morning we’ll be introduced to how other dioceses have done the same and we’ll begin to ask the questions of where we go from here. Because it’s you who have the answers to what Ministry Areas will look like, and it’s you who have the relationships which matter.

The most important thing is that we go forth, into this winter and all that the next year holds, with a sense of direction and energy, and holding on to God’s purposes for us, proclaiming that faith matters. It really matters in a Covid world.

We are going to live this coming year in a Covid world. We are going to commemorate All Souls offering liturgies of bereavement and loss for people who have not been able to grieve properly. We are going to celebrate Advent and Christmas abnormally but will still be telling people that God is with them.

And, as we reach another Lent, Holy Week and Easter we are going to remind ourselves that we are Easter people, who face all our trials and tribulations with Alleluia on our lips and generous self-sacrificing love as our enduring ambition. That means we will look out for our neighbours.

May God indeed bless us as we go forward together proclaiming the love of Christ.

May we seek the welfare of our communities for in their peace and healing will we find our blessing.

+June Osborne

Bishop of Llandaff

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