



Esgobaeth Abertawe ac Aberhonddu The Diocese of Swansea and Brecon

Cyd-gyfarfod, cyd-dyfu, cyd-genhadu
Gathering, growing, going



Dear Colleagues,

As promised, I want to keep you updated with our plans for the diocese as we move forward into 2023.

Having met with you, the clergy, and many of the laity, and listened to your stories, both of the joys and the difficulties you face concerning ministry in the Diocese of Swansea & Brecon, and bringing all these concerns to a special convening of the Staff team, the following course of action has been proposed.

In the past we have, with resources dwindling and parish share proving even harder to find, tended to reduce clergy numbers to cut costs and make ends meet. This course of action, while acknowledging it to be a prudent short-term solution, in the long term simply adds pressure to those that are left to serve our churches, congregations and communities.

We approached the Representative Body with a plan to reverse this trend, the cost of which will amount to some £6.4mil over the next ten years. This costing has now been approved on the following basis.

- That provision of administration for every Ministry Area (MA) in the diocese will be provided.
- That sound succession planning, especially in regard to clergy and the training of new ordinands, is introduced.

- That present posts in youth and families work are maintained and given sound financial footing to continue the work already provided.

So Far

Ministry Area Administration Provision

The first tranche of funding is due to be provided shortly. The administrators will be DBF employees and benefit from the administrative knowledge, software and processes already available within the Diocese. Office equipment and set up costs (e.g. laptop, desking etc), will be provided. Employment contracts will be offered either as a part-time 21 hr/week post for one MA or as a full-time, 35 hr/week post covering two MAs, depending on the suitability to the MA and the candidates.

Each MA (MAL or nominated representative) will be consulted regarding individual MA needs, available space, facilities and working location. MALs will also be asked to take part in the interview process.

As this will be a large increase to our headcount, we need to ensure that the staff will be properly supported. We will therefore also recruit a MA Admin and Resources Supervisor. This will be a full-time role, to manage the staff and support with policies, procedures and information required. We aim to recruit this post first and use the successful candidate in the interview process for the administrator posts. We aim to begin recruitment for this role shortly, and will advertise it as soon as possible.

Draft job descriptions and associated documentation for all roles are currently being compiled.

Clergy Succession Planning

We have looked carefully at the diocese as a whole, paying particular attention to where clergy are thin on the ground. We have appointed Rev'd Sam Aldred to work with Rev'd

Lance Sharpe as assistant DDO, to look at identifying and drawing forward those who are being called to ministry with the Church in Wales.

The costs involved in appointing extra clergy are substantial, but we believe that, with assistance and careful action planning, we can make new posts affordable over a five-year period.

Therefore, we will be seeking to provide an extra post in West Radnor, East Radnor, and the current Hay, Talgarth, Glasbury, Llyswen and Llyn Safaddan groupings (name of Ministry Area to be determined), plus a new post at 0.5 working with Faith in Families and 0.5 in the area of the former Parish of Glantawe, a place that has seen two churches close and the presence of the Church in Wales largely diminished.

Further to this, we will be recruiting to the Killay group, South West Gower, Oystermouth, Llangenny and Ystradgynlais. There are retirements that will be occurring over the next few years, but it is our intention to replace clergy as soon as we are able. One of the restricting factors has been finance around housing, but we are working hard to make sure we have a solution to this problem.

Ministry Area Implementation – Update from Archdeacon Peter

Since before Christmas I have been travelling around the Diocese meeting with clergy teams and PCCs to look at the various issues that are being raised as we move from being Parishes to Ministry Areas.

I have been asked a number of questions relating to structure, finance and the way forward and, of course, with this announcement from Bishop John you are aware of the timeframe that we envisage before each Ministry Area is officially and legally brought into being.

Part of the toolkit we are developing is a Q&A booklet that contains the digest of a number of meetings, the questions I have been asked and the answers I have been able to give so

far. This booklet will appear on the toolkit pages in the Ministry Area section of the diocesan website and there will be further information there soon as to the role of the Ministry Area Council members and the work of the Ministry Council itself.

Another item in the toolkit will be a way for new Ministry Areas to look closely at where they are and what they do now, and to plan and imagine what they can do together in the future.

There are still questions to be resolved about charitable status and the employment and work of the Ministry Area administrator, but we will again have the answers to them soon and we are, as a team, working on these issues.

One thing we will be looking at in 2024 is developing in each Ministry Area a Mission Action Plan to enable each Ministry Area to focus on what outreach and events they wish to develop to grow their churches.

This will be aided by a number of training opportunities that we as a Diocese are developing.

In the first instance representatives from each Ministry Area will be asked to participate in the Leading Your Church into Growth course that has helped so many churches regardless of tradition or location to rethink their mission in simple and achievable ways.

There will also be, for each Ministry Area, an away day with Canon Mark Clavier and myself looking at the Biblical thinking behind our new way of being Church and also to discuss with the key people from each Ministry Area where they are and how the Ministry Area is developing.

For the north these will take place in Llangasty and, for the majority of the Gower Archdeaconry, will take place at the St Madoc Centre on Gower.

I have also been asked by Canon Tim Hewitt for clergy and laity to think about what specific training requirements their Ministry Area might have and how we as a Diocese can best provide that training to enable all of us to move forward.

Talks are beginning on implementing at least three 'Mission Hubs' as a resource to the diocese and wider Ministry Areas. Essentially, these are certain places we identify as presently ripe for mission activity and growth given the right support immediately.

So, there is a lot about to happen, and a lot that will happen, and, as these things come about, you will of course be given plenty of notice. Do check the webpages from time to time and I will of course be in regular communication with you as things develop further.

Finally

The Ministry Areas will be brought into being this year from Ascension through to Pentecost. It is my intention as Bishop to attend each of the 13 Ministry Area services to license you in these new structures.

Each Ministry Area will be asked to create a service of music and liturgy particular to itself; the only part being common to all will be the legal words needed to bring the area into fruition. The services can be mid-week or on a Sunday and we will do our best to accommodate everyone's times and dates.

With our continued thanks for all that you do.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Abbe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning and a semicolon at the end.

*The Dean
Archdeacons Alan, Jonathan and Peter
The Diocesan Secretary
The Registrar*