Code of Practice — “aims to keep all included”

The Bill to enable Women to be Consecrated as Bishops that came into force on 12th September 2014 required the Bishops to produce a Code of Practice “to make provisions such that all members of the Church in Wales, including both those who in conscience dissent from the provisions of the Canon and those who affirm it, may have a sense of security in their accepted and valued place within the Church in Wales”. The Bishops have widely consulted about the nature of such a Code and have drawn on good practice from elsewhere in the Anglican Communion in producing the principles and provisions.

Archbishop Barry introduced the Code of Practice, stressing that this meeting’s Presidential Address reflects the collective view of all seven bishops, and that he is the mouthpiece for them. “I am aware that there is a danger that what I am about to say will not please either the strong advocates for women in ministry or the strong advocates against women in ordained ministry either.”

The first principle stresses that the Church in Wales is committed to all orders of ministry being open to all without reference to gender. “This Code affirms that any woman becoming a diocesan bishop in the Church in Wales, becomes such on exactly the same terms and with the same jurisdiction, as any other diocesan bishop in the province,” said Archbishop Barry.

“We could then have gone on to say that that being the case, those who disagree are free to leave or quietly fade away. We refuse to do that partly because we do not believe that is compatible with the Gospel we proclaim but also because we are still in a period of reception, both within the Anglican Communion and the wider church. There are still provinces within the Anglican Communion who do not ordain women to any of the three Orders and the wider Church too is in the process of discernment.”

“The jurisdiction of a woman bishop has to be ‘recognised unreservedly and without qualification as set out in the Canons and Constitution of the Church in Wales for a diocesan bishop’ (Provision 1),” said Archbishop Barry. “However, alternative provision is to be made for individuals, (not parishes), but individuals who on the grounds of conscience are unable to receive the sacramental (not jurisdictional) ministry of a woman bishop i.e. her confirmations and ordinations. (Provision 2) “Alternative provision shall be made by the bishop of the diocese, on submission in writing by individuals, supported by a letter from the parish priest. (Provision 3)”

“If that happens, the bishops of the Church in Wales promise to assist one another in making such provision. If, for example, in a diocese where there is a woman bishop, individuals ask not to be confirmed or ordained by her, she will consult the Bench and, at her request, one of her male colleagues will either come and do it or she will ask candidates to go to them to be confirmed or ordained. Some might even prefer to be ordained by a woman bishop and that request will go to the relevant Diocesan who will make provision for that to happen so that there is total reciprocity.”

Archbishop Barry recognised that many of those who are against the ordination of women want the Bench of Bishops to go a step further and allow ordinations or confirmations by a male bishop specifically ordained for the purpose who is himself against the ordination of women. “That is a model of episcopacy this Bench cannot accept. We regard it as an un-catholic view of the episcopate for people to accept only bishops who happen to agree with their own views. Others could refuse the ministry of bishops simply...
because they are not in accord with their views on a whole range of other issues.”

“Now some may be thinking that the Bench has ordained a Provincial Assistant Bishop in the past, so why not do so again? In fact, I am the only bishop left who was party to that agreement and since that time, the Church has moved on and the situation now is very different. When the then Bench decided to appoint a Provincial Assistant Bishop, its members were voluntarily subjecting their own ministries to restrictions. They were, if you like, limiting their own ministries to restrictions. Members were voluntarily subjecting the unity of the church”. “The Code, as I have already said, makes specific provision for such members, both to request and receive alternative sacramental provision.”

“Bishops have a particular responsibility for matters of faith and order and we want to be as inclusive as possible which is why we are able to affirm wholeheartedly the ordination of women to the episcopate and can also accept that provision should be made for those who cannot accept their sacramental ministry. By making such a provision, our hope is that no-one will feel the need to leave the Church in Wales.”

“The Church in the past has chosen to be inclusive and exclusive. But exclusion is only an option when we can no longer see Christ in each other. In the Church in Wales, we, as your bishops, quite frankly see Christ at work in our members, married or single, gay or straight, we perceive the call of God in women to all three orders, and we are respectful of the faith of those who cannot in conscience receive such ministry. In these issues, as in others, we invite the Church to unite in the greater task of proclaiming the Gospel.”

**A Code of Practice in relation to the Ministry of Bishops**

**Principles**

1. The Church in Wales is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender. It holds that all those whom it duly elects, canonically ordains and appoints to office are the true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience.

2. Anyone who ministers within the Church in Wales must be prepared to accept that the Church in Wales has reached a clear decision on the matter.

3. Since the Church in Wales continues to share the historic episcopate with other Churches, including other Churches of the Anglican Communion, the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, which continue to ordain only men as priests or bishops, the Bench of Bishops acknowledges that this decision on ministry and gender is set within a broader process of discernment and reception within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church of God.

4. Within the Church in Wales, those who on grounds of theological conviction and conscience are unable to receive the sacramental ministry of women bishops or priests continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion. The Church in Wales therefore remains committed to enabling all its members to flourish within its life and structures as accepted and valued. Appropriate provision for them will be made in a way intended to maintain the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church in Wales.

5. Since the Code of Practice needs to be both strong and flexible enough to respond to a changing situation in the future, and since the Governing Body has entrusted the Bench of Bishops with the task of agreeing a Code which commits the Bench to making provisions for all the members of the Church in Wales, the Bench reserves the right to amend the provisions of this Code as may be necessary in the future.

**Provisions**

1. Should a woman become a diocesan Bishop in the Church in Wales, her jurisdiction as a diocesan bishop is recognised unreservedly and without qualification as set out in the Canons and Constitution of the Church in Wales for a diocesan bishop.

2. Individual members of the Church in Wales who, on grounds of conscience, are unable to receive the sacramental ministry of a woman diocesan bishop, shall not be required to do so against their conscience, and alternative provision shall be made.

3. A diocesan bishop shall make for such members within their dioceses all reasonable provision for appropriate sacramental episcopal ministry on such occasions as necessary upon submission of a request in writing from those individuals supported by their parish priest.

4. The bishops of the Church in Wales commit themselves to making themselves available to their colleagues to assist one another in facilitating any such provision.

5. No bishop shall be obliged to bring proceedings against any member of the Church in Wales on the grounds that such a member dissent in conscience from the provisions of the Canons enabling Women to be Ordained as Bishops or Priests.

Inclusivity

Archbishop Barry prefaced the introduction to the Code of Practice with comments on the Church reflecting the inclusive ministry of Jesus, which defined God’s chief characteristic as compassion. Throughout the Church’s history there have been times when it has not always been inclusive. Within the Church today there are Christians who hold totally different and sincerely held views.

“For example, there is no easy answer to the question - what should the church’s attitude be to people in same-sex civil partnerships and marriages? “Some believe that we should exclude those who have entered same-sex civil partnerships and marriages, but the Church’s stance on the matter in the past has caused untold misery.”

“The temptation to be neat or to be logical and to exclude one category or other is great. The trouble is these are not neat divisions between Christian people and those who reject the gospel of Jesus, these are divisions within the Body of Christ and the crucial question is, how do we accept difference and diversity?”


**Diocesan Stories**

The main presentation at the meeting was a short film of projects from across the dioceses which have been inspired by 2020 Vision but implemented through diocesan strategies and local initiatives. The DVD will be made available to dioceses and can be viewed on-line.

The six dioceses provided their first annual reports to the Standing Committee in July 2014 on progress in developing Ministry Areas. These reports may be found in the 2020 Vision section of the Church in Wales website.

**The Review Revisited**

An analysis of progress in taking forward the 2012 recommendations is now available online at www.churchinwales.org.uk/review. Called The Review Revisited, this resource will be updated in line with new work. The 2020 Vision section of the website contains also a range of resources and links to diocesan materials.

**Funding for 2020 Vision projects**

The Representative Body and Diocesan Boards of Finance have been in discussion about future use of provincial funds, in particular to help support new initiatives arising from 2020 Vision. A Transformation Fund of £3.5 million will be made available over three years (starting in 2015) for new diocesan and provincial work linked to 2020 Vision. It is hoped that this significant provincial investment in the process will prove instrumental in enabling exciting new projects to get off the ground without endangering funding for day-to-day expenditure.

**The Time is Now**

A major Church in Wales conference will be held on 21 and 22 November at Venue Cymru, Llandudno. Entitled The Time is Now, it is designed to enable dioceses to share ideas, experiences and plans linked to the development of Ministry Areas and Ministry Area Teams. Dioceses will be leading the content of the conference, and will provide 30 delegates each. In addition, 20 delegates have been invited from other churches and organisations with which the Church in Wales has close working relationships.

**Ministry Areas: Technical Matters**

The move to Ministry Areas and Ministry Area Teams is essentially a cultural one: it is about the provision of ministry to the community first, and about legal, structural and financial matters second. However, there is concern among some about these more technical issues when faced with a local reorganisation. Two specialist groups have been established to consider the legal and financial implications of the development of Ministry Areas.

The Legal Issues Group’s first conclusion was that there was nothing in the Constitution as it stands to prevent the creation of Ministry Areas (or to require the creation of a new definition of ‘Ministry Area’ in the Constitution at this stage). The Group has developed a checklist for dioceses to ensure that all legal requirements are met when designating new Ministry Areas, and has prepared advice for bishops, registrars and clergy on operation of the Marriage Law in Ministry Areas.

A Financial Issues Group has been established to advise both on the future funding of ministry in Ministry Areas and on the financial management of the new, larger units. The results of further work from this Group will be reported to future Governing Body meetings.

**In September 2004 the Governing Body authorised the experimental use of a new Alternative Ordinal (the order for the Ordination of Deacons and Priests, and the Consecration of Bishops). Bishops have been using this on appropriate occasions, and at the September 2013 Governing Body expressed their wish to bring forward a Bill to authorise the service on a permanent basis.**

**Having gone through its various stages, GB passed the Bill to incorporate into the Book of Common Prayer of the Church in Wales the Alternative Ordinal.**

**Worship at the GB**

Worship was led by the Diocese of Bangor. The opening reflection was given by Mr Siôn Rhys Evans, Diocesan Secretary. Taking as his text 1 Corinthians 13, he asked the question, “What will you do during this time together to build up the body of Christ in the Church in Wales marked by love?” Our faith is lived out in the Church; its distinguishing mark should be love—love that is concrete, demanding and challenging. With love like that, we will be doing what God does.

The preacher at Evensong was the Revd Dr Stephen Wigley, Chair of the Welsh Synod of the Methodist Church. He challenged the Church to speak into the present situation, “speaking truth to those in power” especially to find other ways of resolving conflict than war in this year of the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War.

The Collection at GB services amounted to £1410 before Gift Aid. This will be divided between the Gaza Mobile Dental Clinic and Christian Aid.
**Representative Body Report**

“Whatever the financial context, whether good or bad, the Representative Body of the Church in Wales has a duty to make available to the Church in Wales the maximum sustainable level of support, financial or otherwise,” said Mr James Turner, the Chair of the RB in introducing its Annual Report and Accounts.

“Dioceses have made clear progress in implementing new diocesan strategies inspired or reflected in the 2020 vision. These strategies are providing an exciting challenge to the Church at all levels, including the Representative Body.”

The RB has undertaken a major review of its expenditure commitments with a view of assessing how provincial funds might be used to the best effect to support a rapidly changing Church. This was undertaken taking into consideration four factors:

- the outcome of the actuarial valuation of the Clergy Pension Scheme;
- the decision to move to a total return basis for setting levels of annual expenditure;
- maintaining financial support for the Church’s current work;
- the challenge of finding ways to support new initiatives taken forward as part of the Church’s 2020 Vision.

The following decisions have been taken on expenditure for the next three years:

**Block Grant**

The Block Grant to each diocese, used mainly for ministry costs, will once again be increased by 3% in 2014. It will then be held at 2015 levels for the next three years. Although the RB is running an annual deficit, it is felt that it is more important for dioceses and parishes to receive some protection from the full impact of the recent economic recession than for the RB to eliminate a short-term deficit.

**Transformation Fund**

Through the Transformation Fund (see page 3) the RB will invest in the 2020 process. The £3.5m to be made available is to be matched funded by the dioceses, who will report annually on how they use the money. In addition an increasing proportion of provincial staff time is being dedicated to support work related to the implementation process such as communication, support for church buildings and the provision of specialist advice on financial and legal matters relating to the creation of Ministry Areas.

“This is both an exciting and a challenging time for the Church in Wales, and the RB is determined to play its part in helping to ensure the Church is successful in remodelling itself to become a more outward facing Church by 2020,” said Mr Turner.

It was reported that there would be a significant increase in parochial fees for marriages and funerals in 2015. A working group has proposed that the ‘ministry element’ of fees should no longer be paid to clergy but to dioceses, with an allowance paid per annum in lieu of receiving fees. The proposal will be put out for consultation.

**Investment Performance**

The Representative Body has been slowly recovering from the losses incurred during the economic crisis and the recession. An excellent set of results was achieved in 2013, with a total return from investments of 19.1%.

Mr Paul Marshall, the RB’s deputy Chair, and Chair of the Investment Committee, emphasised that the return from investments meet 30% of the total cost of running the Church. The investment policy seeks to achieve a balance between sustainable levels of income and capital growth, to optimise total returns without undue risk, and to operate within the constraints of the Church’s Ethical Investment Policy Statement. The principal liabilities are the Clergy Pension Fund and the Block Grant to dioceses.

“Despite the recovery of capital values, our income levels are still below those in 2007. So the RB this year will base its decisions on how much it can spend on the total returns on investments, not just on income — and so can provide the additional funding to dioceses.”

**Places of Worship**

There is an increasing recognition in society that places of worship are seriously threatened and new ways of supporting them must be found. Discussions are taking place with a wide variety of stakeholders, out of which it is hoped will develop a body, being given the working title of Sanctaid (that can work across all denominations and increase financial and technical support for all who care for church buildings. This will incorporate Churches Tourism Network Wales, and therefore also further encourage the development of pilgrimage and tourism in places of worship.

**Redundant Churches**

23 churches were closed or made redundant in 2013, with responsibility reverting to the RB. Alternative futures for church buildings are being explored, such as

- Affording housing—a large number of sites are being investigated with support from the charity Housing Justice;
- Pilgrim churches—simple wayside churches retained with local volunteer support;
- Leases to community groups.
- Possibilities for use for holiday accommodation.

**Managing Buildings**

**Training and Guidance**

In order to assist parishes in the care of their buildings, and following on from the success of the ‘Taking Forward Our Church Heritage’ project, a comprehensive programme of training and guidance is being developed. This will include community engagement, green issues, the regulatory framework and the wider use of buildings.

**Managing Buildings**

The principal role of the Representative Body is to hold and manage the assets of the Church in Wales to provide support for the work of the Church as carried out through its Archbishop, Bishops, Clergy and Laity.
MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCE

The annual Church in Wales Membership and Finances Report gives an indication of the state of the Church, to be taken into account when making significant decisions about the Church’s future. The complete set of statistics for every parish, deanery and archdeaconry helps in planning and setting priorities for the future, and for targeting assistance to parishes and deaneries.

The 2013 Report stresses that “it is important that the Church in Wales is given a true, un-sugared picture of the level of participation in Church life across Wales and of the Church’s finances. This year’s report contains some difficult figures for the Church to digest: lower levels of regular and occasional participation, with responsibility for meeting parish costs falling on a reduced core of members. This is the context within which dioceses are considering how best to deploy the significant resources—people, buildings, money—which we still enjoy as a Church. The picture painted by the figures suggests that this work is urgent.”

Bishop Andy John (Bangor) began his introduction to the Report with the good news: “More money today is being spent on ministry than at any other time in the history of the Church in Wales. That means less on buildings, more on people. For a Church that wants to orientate itself towards mission, that is very, very good news.”

The bad news comes with membership. “The trend is down across the board. There is no set of figures which indicate a rise in physical numbers in any single category. There are no positive indicators—every field shows decline compared with previous years, and in some cases that decline is significant. Our core membership continues to fall year on year.” However, there are the specific times in the year—Remembrance Sunday, carol services etc when the statistics show a significant number of people come to church.

“What is the Church doing to address the consequences and implications of the decline? Quite a lot, it appears, with the variety of outward looking, creative services being offered. But the numbers attending those services need to increase, because it...”

The Statistics

### Membership
- Easter communicants dropped by 10% from 2012
- Christmas communicants dropped by 5%
- Average Sunday attendance (over 18s) dropped by 4%
- Average Sunday attendance (under 18s) dropped by 9%
- Baptisms down 3%
- Confirmations down 18%
- Weddings down 13%

### Finances
- Total income in parishes was £3m less in 2013 than in 2012
- Total expenditure was £1.49m less in 2013 than in 2012
- Planned giving increased by £88,000 and loose collections by £11,000
- Grant income and income from legacies both fell significantly
- Exceptional property expenditure fell by £2m
- The proportion of total expenditure by parishes on ministry increased from 52% in 2012 to 55% in 2013
- The proportion of total expenditure by parishes on property decreased from 34% in 2012 to 30% in 2013

will evidence a church life that is outward looking, that listens to what people are saying to us, what animates them in worship, what they find spiritually fulfilling and energising. The challenge for us is to order more of our activity and our life to that way of being church.”

“How does the smaller, committed but declining group of worshippers turn its energy towards those outward looking activities that reach the fringes. There are questions about discipleship, learning, finance.”

Bishop Andy John’s challenge to the Church is “Stay calm, do mission.”

Speakers emphasised the need for work outside the church - in schools and organisations - which does not show up in statistics. Mrs Penny Williams (Llandaff) called for a cultural change, equipping people to ‘be the Church’ in the places where God has placed them.

Porvo Communion

The Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad and the Lutheran Church in Great Britain will be admitted to full membership of the Porvo Communion (of which the Church in Wales is a member) on 20th September 2014 in York Minister. In welcoming the decision to admit these two Churches, GB requested that a Bill be introduced to amend the Porvo Canon to reflect this.

University of Wales

Trinity St David

Professor Densil Morgan of the School of Theology, Lampeter, introduced the report of the UWTS group, which now has campuses at Lampeter, Carmarthen, Swansea, Cardiff and London. A small institution has become a large multi-campus, with 25000 students, and is significant academically, sociologically and economically throughout the communities of South West Wales. The University’s Swansea Waterfront Innovation Campus links academia, innovation and business. The next phase in the journey is the impending merger with the University of Wales.

Widows, Orphans and Dependents Society

WODS provides financial assistance to widows, orphans and dependents of deceased clergy who have previously served in the ministry of the Church in Wales. The annual report was introduced by the Venerable Robert Williams (Swansea and Brecon), who thanked the parishes and individuals that give generously to WODS, and the diocesan and central committees for their hard work who provide not only financial, but also pastoral support to widows.

Overseas Mission Fund

The Church in Wales Overseas Mission Fund, set up in 1985, has an investment income of about £13,000p.a., which supports the mission of the Church overseas. Its annual report to the GB shows that this year it has supported such needs as flood displaced communities in Brazil, a socio-economic development programme in Bangladesh, and the Al Ahli Arab Hospital, Gaza, damaged in the recent conflict.
All Wales Training Institute

Following wide consultation across the Church in Wales, the Bench of Bishops has endorsed a way forward for ministry training in the Church in Wales which will see the creation of a new Training Institute, presenting a dynamic and exciting way forward for the Church to meet the challenge of Ministry Areas whilst allowing a coherent and flexible approach. The staff of St Michael’s College, Llandaff, and St Seiriol’s Centre, Bangor, in their paper *A Vision for Wales*, see the new Institute leading all ministry training in Wales, including education for discipleship and training for ordained ministries, both residential and non-residential.

The Training Institute will develop new learning pathways as well as drawing on existing training resources, including St Michael’s College and St Seiriol’s Centre. The base would be at the present St Michael’s site, but there would also be other centres across Wales. Non-residential training would be offered locally. There would be accreditation and validation options for the new training courses.

It is intended that the new arrangements will be in place by 2016/17. Until then, training will continue to be provided at St Michael’s and St Seiriol’s.

The Ministry Report was introduced by Bishop Richard Pain (Monmouth). “The Report acknowledges that the Church is the community of those immersed in Jesus’ life, baptised into Christ’s love. Our ministry is working out in love the relationship we have, immersed in Christ. Because that relationship cannot be broken from God’s side, and is guaranteed in baptism, then we have hope.” “All that we talk about in changing structures, in culture, in our reaction to society and responding to it, will not make sense to us unless we are fundamentally rooted in God. That’s where our ministry comes from—not just ‘doing’ but ‘being’, immersed in the love of Christ.”

“It has been a turbulent time for many; its been a transition time which has been unsettling. There have been incredible challenges for all of us in the Church in Wales. The staff of our training institutes, the Ministry Officers, and the provincial staff have worked hard together to identify the changes needed and to work creatively and imaginatively to bring them about.”

“There is no simple solution. There are different ideas about what ministry is and how ministry works. But in a small nation and Church like ours, we have the advantage of our compact way of working together and hearing each other.”

“The National Training Institute will allow us to have national oversight but respond to local initiatives in a collaborative and collective network.”

Looking at all the statistics, Bishop Richard stressed that with less clergy, declining numbers, and diminishing finance, that Ministry Areas, with shared worship and ministry, will be the way forward. There must be trust and cooperation, with ordained and lay ministry equally balanced. Local ministry must be enabled to grow and flourish. Ministry needs to be shared, be flexible, based on mission. “The good news is that this is happening. Many different things are going on. This is a time of change, which some will find unsettling, others will embrace wholeheartedly. It is clear that the ministry we have in the Church in Wales will never be the same—but then God never remains the same. At the heart of ministry is the heart of God, for we are immersed in the life of Christ and that is where all ministry begins.”

Bishop Richard concluded, “These are exciting initiatives which suggest that the Church is responding to God’s call to be engaged with communities and the working of the kingdom of God.”

Speakers demonstrated a commitment to lay training, calling for it to be local, relevant and grounded. Mrs Sue Last (St Asaph) was concerned that there would be those who would be trained—but then not asked to do anything. Mr David Blyth (Llandaff), while excited about lay ministry, was concerned that most people in the pews were divorced from what was being proposed in the wider Church.

Archbishop Barry said that what was before GB were the principles; the details were now to be worked out. The Report was accepted *nem con*.

SAME SEX RELATIONSHIPS

At the April 2014 GB members discussed in groups issues relating to same sex partnerships. The reports from the groups were circulated, and introduced by Archbishop Barry. He pointed out an apparent contradiction: while there is an openness and desire to affirming in some way faithful monogamous same sex relationships, there is an unwillingness for same-sex marriages to be solemnised in church. “These are complex issues, dealing with people’s lives—and point to the fact that GB wants to deal with the pastoral issues.

A consultation paper setting out the main options for the Church in Wales to consider will be shared with dioceses to enable Church members more widely to be asked for their views on the way forward. The three main options are:

- No change to the Church’s current teaching and practice on marriage and partnerships;
- To allow same sex unions to be blessed in the Church in Wales;
- To enable same sex couples to marry in the Church in Wales.

In the light of the results of the consultation, the Bishops will consider what the next steps should be, and a report brought to the GB.
A Journey from Welcome to Inclusion

In 2009, the Governing Body was challenged to think beyond its Disability Strategy to ensure that all people are included within its community and worship. A Working Group was established to develop best practice, guidance and materials for developing and delivering ministry for people with additional needs, and designing, delivering or commissioning training for clergy and lay workers.

The Chair of the Working Group, the Venerable Christopher Smith (Llandaff), in the light of the challenge, reminded the GB of the Church in Wales’ commitment to develop an ethos in which people who have additional needs are supported with dignity and respect and which ensures that they, their families and carers are welcomed, are enabled to grow in discipleship and are fully included in our church community.

Airing out that commitment, a number of recommendations have been made and put into practice: to resource spiritual development, to make available policies and resources, to celebrate good practice, to provide training for clergy and lay people, and to address the practicalities of buildings.

Links are being established with a number of groups with particular specialities and interests with whom we can further develop training and understanding. Specific training is offered, working with MIND Cymru, in tackling some of the issues and stereotypes associated with mental illness.

Ministry Areas and parishes have been creative in adapting buildings, by providing ramps, toilet facilities and through re-ordering, particularly to remove internal steps. “The needs of the disabled and those with additional needs should always be a factor in discussion about the way buildings are used, and indeed in which buildings we should keep and which should be closed.”

What is preventing us from being an inclusive Church? Attitudes and ownership of the vision; the basics not being addressed; inclusiveness seen as an extra burden; and still not thinking as disciples. “We need to see beyond the problems to the potential.” “There are many examples of good practice and expertise available to assist.”

The Revd. Dr. John Gillibrand (St Davids), a member of the Working Group, outlined the task ahead, of creating opportunities for exercising ministry with and for people with disabilities and additional needs. “Where we see ‘welcome’ we need to think of ‘include’”. The key intention is “to focus on specific areas for action and to work with specialist partners in the voluntary sector to produce good practice guides and training to support our mission and ministry with all.” The specific areas are around learning disabilities, autism, mental health, physical disability, dementia, and families and carers.

“In order for this to happen, we must secure the place and engagement of people with disabilities and additional needs in the life and structures of the church; listen to the voices of people with disabilities and additional needs; and ensure that everything we do is rooted in serious theological reflection and to provide accessible theology. Clergy and lay people must be trained and enabled to work alongside people with disabilities; and a toolbox of practical resources to support worship activities provided.”

Discussion

The presentation was followed by discussion groups where members of GB considered and responded to these questions:

- From what you have heard, what has struck you for the first time about people with disabilities and additional needs?
- What does inclusivity mean?
- What would a fully inclusive Church look like?

Thoughts and experiences from the groups will be reported back to the Working Group to assist in the further development of resources and training to support ministry in this area. A further report will be brought to GB in 2016.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ MOTION

Lower age limit for membership of Diocesan Conference

The Motion

That the age limit for membership of the Diocesan Conferences in Section 7 Chapter IVA of the Constitution of the Church in Wales be amended to the age of sixteen.

The St Asaph Diocesan Conference has recently undergone a period of constitutional reform, and passed a motion recommending that those over the age of 16 should be eligible for membership of the Diocesan Conference. This requires a change to the Church in Wales Constitution in order to bring it into effect.

The motion was proposed by the Venerable Dr Peter Pike (St Asaph), who asked for the lowering of the age of membership because of the fresh insights that this group of people, established, gifted in life and involved in the world, can bring.

Seconding, Dr Huw Lloyd (St Asaph) said that while the Church is doing a lot with 16 and 17 year olds, the word would soon spread if it was found out that they were not wanted on decision-making bodies. “Young people are asking the Church to listen to them.”

Mrs Ros Crawford (St Asaph) emphasised that the days of seen but not heard are over. Encouragement to young people will lead into participation and commitment. “they will help us to look at new ways of being Church.” Miss Carol Cobert (Llandaff) called for a lower age limit for all aspects of Church life—PCC, Eucharistic Ministers etc. “But in an inclusive Church, there should not be an upper age limit—we need to think about that as well.” Canon Jenny Wigley (Llandaff) warned dioceses that they might have to re-shape their conferences. The Revd. Peter Brooks (Swansea and Brecon) said that there must be a willingness to make adjustments to include this “stimulating and at times frustrating” group of people, “who ask the questions adults won’t ask.” “We must create a culture where 16 and 17 year olds feel no boundaries, not barriers.”
PRIVATE MEMBERS’ MOTION

Call for end of violence in the Middle East

The Governing Body supported nem con (with 5 abstentions) a motion brought to it by Bishop Gregory Cameron (St Asaph) on the situation in the Middle East, particularly in the light of the recent ‘Operation Protective Edge’ in which 1500 of those killed in Gaza were innocent civilians, the expulsion of the entire Christian population of Mosul, and the extreme violence of ISIS. Dr Brian Willmott (Monmouth) proposed an amendment to add a further clause (iv), which was accepted by GB.

“There were two events in the summer when I felt to stay silent was to become complicit in the horrors that were being perpetrated,” said Bishop Gregory. “But now the reporting has ceased. Once the bombs stopped falling in Gaza, the media moved on. Once the persecution of the Yatsidis had been well and truly covered and the persecution of the Christians virtually ignored, outrage against ISIS has focused on the awful beheading of Western hostages. ‘Hell has broken out,’ wrote Canon Andrew White, ‘and nobody cares.’ Outrage shouldn’t be so easily stilled.”

Since the motion was published, Bishop Gregory has received emails calling him anti-Israel, pro-Hamas. “I respect the Jewish people and faith and I want to see a secure and prosperous Israel. But that does not stop me from being a critical friend—in fact it requires it. I don’t support Hamas with its hate-fuelled charter and their readiness to use their own people as human shields, while they are indiscriminate in their violence against Israel.”

“What went on this summer should provoke profound dismay, perhaps anger and a fierce response, over the monstrous policy in which Hamas has lured the Israeli Defence Force in killing innocent civilians and destroying schools, hospitals and neighbourhoods.”

“There is no hatred of Israel or anti-Semitism in this motion, but there is a call to Israel to wake up and realise that while their security is a legitimate concern, it should never be secured through the sort of wasteful, careless, truly horrible collateral damage that they inflicted this summer. This is something that I can only condemn….” I think the time has come to say specifically to Israel—Come on, you’re not some sort of terrorist organisation, you’re a democratic state. We expect more of you than of the other side. Please, please, Israel, don’t do it again.”

Bishop Gregory added, “ISIS attacks everyone, and not just Christians—everyone who disagrees in the smallest matters from the opinions of their self proclaimed Caliph. They have turned the virtual violence of computer games into real life atrocity. We need to say to our friends, to all people of peace: quite simply, we stand with you. We will not forget you in our prayers, we will not cease to bring your plight to the attention of our politicians.”

“This motion is not intended as a political side-swipe or point-scoring, but simply in the name of the Prince of Peace.”

In seconding the motion, the Venerable Peter Pike (St Asaph) said the Church in Wales has a history of grappling in prayer and discussion with what is happening well beyond Wales, especially where there is shocking violence and death. He believes we should be speaking up in response to the questioning presence of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in our lives. “We have not used the language of outrage in our motion, but express profound dismay.”

The eleven speakers from the floor all supported the motion. The Venerable Philip Morris (Llandaff), who has visited Gaza many times in his work as co-ordinator of the Church in Wales Jubilee Fund, which finances the Mobile Dental Clinic there, described conditions in the ‘open prison for a million and a half people’, when ‘even in times of relative peace one is conscious of the severe deprivation under which people are living…a situation now much worse with 1000s of homes destroyed, hospitals and clinics damaged and half a million people displaced.” He called on members of the Church in Wales to continue to help those suffering in Gaza through its support of the work of the Near East Council of Churches in solidarity, prayer and money.

Canon Patrick Thomas (St Davids) said that soon there will be no Christians left in the Middle East—those particularly in Iraq and Syria need our support. “Why has the UK not offered asylum to those fleeing?” Miss Theresa Smith (Monmouth) asked that, through information from charities, parishes should be kept informed of what is happening.

The next meeting of the Governing Body will be held on 15th and 16th April 2015 at the Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells