



Discussion meetings around the re-shaping of our Ministry Areas are in full swing!

Five of the 16 meetings have already taken place and the focus of each meeting has been very different – with all being well-attended and interactive.

Bishop Cherry, who opens each meeting with an introduction to Ministry Areas says, “I am immensely encouraged by the Ministry Area meetings that we have held so far. We have had an excellent number of people attending, some really pertinent and helpful questions, and a genuine sense of engagement from the local churches.

“It is wonderful to see people getting so energised and excited about the future God is leading us into and the possibilities that God is holding before us.”

Attendees can submit questions in advance of the meeting and these are answered first, before ‘opening the floor’ for wider discussion. So far, the panel answering the questions has consisted of the Archdeacon, Ministry Area Leader, Diocesan Secretary and Diocesan Accountant.

Diocesan Secretary Isabel Thompson, says, “The number of questions submitted in advance varies greatly from area to area, but we are very grateful to all who have submitted their questions in advance, as it allows us to group the questions by topic - such as Governance, Finance, Mission and Ministry. Just like an ‘in-person’ meeting, when a question is being asked and answered the individual, or group of individuals, who have submitted the question are given the opportunity to respond and discuss. Whereas in an ‘in-person’ meeting they might stand up, in a zoom meeting we can ‘spotlight’ attendees, so they are visible in a larger box like the panel members.”

The focus of each of these meetings has been very different as the discussion and debate is guided by the questions and comments that are submitted.

In the new Ministry Area Newport #5 in the south-eastern corner, that amalgamates Cyncoed and parts of Wentloog, a lengthy discussion was had about lay ministry and the opportunities for their lay ministers to gain more experience and confidence working as part of a larger team.

Revd James Henley, Ministry Area Leader, says, “It was really heartening to see people from across the congregations inspired by the opportunity to form the new Ministry Area. While there are still lots of details for us to work through, there was, and is, a real sense that God is at work, drawing us together in love, and guiding us into a new shared future.”

Ian Loynd, Headteacher, St Teilos CiW High School, shares this enthusiasm.



He says, “Be encouraged! That is the message I have taken from our Ministry Area meeting. What strikes me is the wealth of talent, wisdom and enthusiasm for mission that exists across our parishes, and all of the opportunity this represents. Certainly, there are processes and systems that will need redesigning – and no doubt some ‘creases’ that will require ironing out along the way – but the potential to grow God’s Kingdom, here, today, together - fills me with excitement. We have a powerful and hopeful story to tell as Christians. Think what we can do collectively as we begin to pool our time, talent and resources!”

Gwent Valleys #5 is the Ministry Area of Mid-Torfaen who are already joined as a single parish and they were also clear on the benefits of working-together.

Jim Thompson (LLM), says, “I’m looking forward to a vibrant future for our Ministry Area based on inclusivity – though we are scattered we remain connected through our faith.”

Ann Phillips, Subwarden at St Cadocs, Trevethin, says, “I feel very confident about the future. I feel that our mission will be greatly improved as we all work together and pool our resources and skills. I have so much faith in the MA working. As far as I can see, we are all wanting this to work so we can further Gods work within our area. So, the future looks really good!”

Sian Harvey, also a Subwarden at St Cadocs, Trevethin, says, “We are clearly making progress and this is good to see, also, we already have that feeling of becoming one, where other, more wealthy churches are helping out the smaller churches.”

“This was such a good move for us I believe it was God’s plan to set this in motion, we did not know we were going to have a pandemic, and the support that all the churches have given to each other over this last 18 months have been wonderful.... We are creating a network of faith that will sustain for future generations and give the community a sense of how we work together to bring faith to the world.”

The meeting with Monmouth #6, which largely combines Raglan, Usk and Goytre, discussed the governance structures in far more detail and raised concerns about the rural application of the ministry area model.

Isabel Thompson, explains, “It is understandable that change can be unsettling, but these proposals are not new and this diocese (like all other dioceses in Wales) has been working towards establishing them for the past 10 years. I agree with those at the meeting who are anxious that these changes are underpinned by proper governance and financial structure and we will continue to do everything we can to learn from successful models in other parts of the Church in Wales.”

Ministry Area Leader Revd Sally Ingle-Gillis who attended the meeting also highlights the opportunities which this new way of working will offer.

She says, “We are in an exciting time in Monmouth Diocese as we move towards new MA structures. I am hugely encouraged that we have the opportunity to shape our church, its mission and its ministry, in ways that will allow each of us to flourish and grow in ways that suit our situations. This really is an opportunity for every single one of us to allow God to use



our gifts and to be his people. I hope and pray that we can all see a positive future, because whether our churches are big or small, our place in the community is essential, and God has work for us to do. I cannot think of a better time to be part of our church communities!”

A great deal of work is being done around the re-shaping of our Ministry Areas, however, forming Ministry Areas that are also single legal entities is not something that we are doing in isolation - all the dioceses in the Church in Wales are on this journey!

Isabel Thompson, explains, “The northern dioceses of St Asaph and Bangor are considerably ahead of us, having made this change six years ago. Rightly, questions are being asked about the lessons that can be learnt from their experiences. Instead of hearing those lessons and experiences from the panel, we are looking at setting up small group conversations between the clergy and lay from other dioceses so we can exchange ideas and learn from each other.”

Following on from these meetings, the Treasurers from all those areas that have already had their meeting will be invited to a specific meeting to discuss the financial arrangements in a Ministry Area in more detail.

For more information, resources, toolkits, visit our website [Ministry Areas - Monmouth Diocese \(churchinwales.org.uk\)](https://www.churchinwales.org.uk)

