

2022 Annual Report for Cynon Valley South Ministry Area

Description of the Ministry Area



The Cynon Valley South Ministry Area is part of the Diocese of Llandaff within the Church in Wales, a province of the Anglican Communion. Geographically, we are based in the villages and towns leading from Abercynon in the south through to Penrhiwceiber and Mountain Ash,

and on to Cwmbach and Aberaman/Cwmaman in the north. The ministry area has five worshipping communities based around the following churches: St Margaret Aberaman, St Mary Magdalene Cwmbach, St Margaret Mountain Ash, St Winifred Penrhiwceiber/ All Saints Matthewstown, St Donat/ St Gwynno Abercynon.

Ministry Area Information

Charity Number	1198411
Independent Financial Examiner:	Young and Phillips Limited Inspiration House Williams Place, Cardiff Road Upper Boat Pontypridd CF37 SBH
Bankers:	Our Ministry Area account is with Virgin Money but each of the five congregations have separate finances with various banks
Architects:	Alwyn Jones Ltd (Taff's Well), Caroe and Partners (Somerset) Hook Mason (Hereford)
Parish Website:	Cynonchurches.co.uk
Insurers	Ecclesiastical Insurance

The Ministry Area Council (MAC), its composition, procedures and powers, are regulated by the Constitution of the Church in Wales. Being part of the Diocese of Llandaff, the MAC members are trustees of the charity. It is the responsibility of the MAC to work together and cooperate in all matters of concern to the Ministry Area for the promotion of the whole mission of the Church, evangelistic, pastoral, social and ecumenical. The MAC often operates through a number of informal committees that are set up for particular tasks, including congregational communities for each of the former five parishes. These are responsible to the MAC and assist it in fulfilling its functions and responsibilities.

Our lay chair, Tanya Bennett confidently assumed her new position as supporting the clergy and overseeing the Ministry Area Council (MAC). As expected, there was a succession of obstacles to overcome as the diocese sought to establish new patterns in ministry, but the MAC faced each challenge, drawing on the experience and resilience of our congregations. When our Archdeacon's Visitation took place in December, we were congratulated as having well-considered plans and vision for taking our ministry area life forward in deepening our faith and encouraging others to come to faith.

Each congregation was encouraged to deepen connections with the community, with warm hubs set up, new youth groups, connections with all our primary schools made, new Messy Church and Sunday schools and new Study and prayer groups. We all linked into our communities to mourn the death of Queen Elizabeth, receiving a letter of thanks from King Charles. We welcomed delegates from a ministry area in the Lutheran Church of Sweden who will be linked with us in 2023 and during Ascensiontide we joined with Thy Kingdom Come in praying for 5 people we know to come into Faith in Christ. A ministry area website became the new focus for communication, supported by facebook pages and regular 'magazine updates' and a monthly prayer diary.

Supporting one another with the new data systems used to capture information, we created a robust system for a new central account to deal with clergy expenses, Gift Aid, Fairer Share, joint photocopying and projects we are undertaking together. Similarly, our safeguarding procedures were integrated, with the appointment of Tina Williams as our safeguarding officer and the introduction of the My Church People data base which will be used in 2023 for the integration of safeguarding training and checks.

Despite the natural challenges from our congregations recognising the changes in our structure we are celebrating our new approaches to working together and sharing in God's mission.

2022 Annual Report Aberaman & Cwmaman

During 2022 we began to see a lifting in lockdown and a slow return to normality, over the year it has been great to welcome people back to church and take part once again in the life of the congregation. With this said the past year has kept our congregation busy.

It has been great once again to celebrate the church's year through our worship coming together as we did before the pandemic for the various feasts and solemnities throughout the year. We have also visited the Cathedral as a congregation for the Chrism Mass, and again as part of the Ministry Area in October. Last year we hosted the first Ministry Area Confirmation, young people and adults from across the Ministry Area came together to be confirmed by Bishop June.

Our ministry with young people has been concentrated around the Monday evening Mass with lots of families attending the service and through this has started to play an active part in the life of our Congregation.

Throughout the year we have had many fundraising events from the summer and winter fayres to a Pentecost picnic, barbeques, and afternoon teas. Again it has been wonderful to begin to come together as we once did.

The newly formed linen guild has also played a very big part in fund raising by spending a great deal of time making different items to sell at Christmas and Easter. They have also spent time in carefully restoring lots of the vestments and frontals for church. Thank you to all those who dedicate so much time and effort in ensuring the success of these events.

The community art group have continued to meet in the crypt through the year and also Tenovus have used the crypt for their meetings and the church and grounds for their summer fundraising event.

During 2021 the difficult decision was made to close S Joseph's Church, Cwmaman, this was made official in January 2022 and during the year the task of preparing the final inventory took place. Many items from the church have been moved to S Margaret's where they will continue to be used and will help in the re-ordering of the church. Other items have been given to S John Baptist Church in Wales High School to be used in their School Chapel. As a congregation we now look forward to the challenge of reordering our building in the coming years.

2022 Annual Report Abercynon

2022 was an exciting time in Abercynon churches with the gradual lifting of Lockdown restrictions allowing us to take forward the plans started in 2021. We look forward to 2023 when St Donat's church will have been open for 125 years.

In St Donat's we undertook the construction of the new café area and kitchen with additional installation of a security system, sound system and TV monitors. We had funding from our own reserves, many church and secular agencies that allowed us to pay for the works, despite the rising costs of construction. The new facility allowed us to revive established groups, develop new projects as the year continued and train up people for food hygiene. It has enhanced our worship giving us more flexibility and the access to technology enabled us to start a Job Club, open mic evening, and Holy Week showings of The Chosen.

Our monthly Messy Church started in May and throughout the year connected us with new local families as we built up a team of 12 Messy Church organisers. From these connections we've been able to link people into church life and pastoral care.

The Social Hour group adjusted its time and has continued to be a valuable source of fellowship providing regular outings for locals.

The foodbank team continues to work hard each week and has seen an increase in the number of clients coming to Abercynon for food and support. The team has worked hard to keep going through all weathers and get used to new IT.

Following visits by The Message Bus in the village, in May we started up a weekly Youth Club which grew week on week to some 30 to 45 teenagers in attendance. We had seasonal invites to church for Yr Ysgol Gymraeg and the Community School with the vicar and engagement officer Simon involved with schools work. Each school holiday activities were organised for children, with film and puppet clubs in the summer.

St Donat's formed a support group for those Sponsoring Ukrainians coming to be housed locally, raising funds and providing care, ending the year with excess cash that will be used in 2023.

At St Gwynno's much effort was put into renovating the grounds and developing a sense of a community garden.

2022 Annual Report Cwmbach

During 2022 we began to see a lifting in lockdown and a slow return to normality, over the year it has been great to welcome people back to church and take part once again in the life of the congregation.

It has been great once again to celebrate the church's year through our worship. During the year we also opened the church with book of condolence and Mass following the death of HM Elizabeth II. We have participated in the Mothers' Union Wave of Prayer, Mothers' Union prayer diary and Mothers' Union Chaplain's on-line devotions. It was also good to have our Remembrance Sunday service and invite the local community.

During the year we also celebrated our 140th with a Eucharist and buffet lunch in August it was also wonderful to welcome Fr Christopher and other cleric friends to that.

Throughout the year we have had many fundraising events from the nearly new sale, Autumn Fayre, Pancake tea, and Mothers' Union lunches.

We have welcomed the community action group in to use the church hall many times through the year and have continued to support and be involved in their events. We have also continued our support of the Salvation Army food-bank. There is also a good connection between other community groups who use the church hall.

We have been encouraged some new families and young people attending church and some of the young people have begun to read during the service.

As all but one MU members make up the Congregational Committee the smooth running of, and fund-raising for, the church fall on the same group of people. CC members think 'new blood' is urgently required to spread the load.

2022 Annual Report Mountain Ash & Miskin

We gradually picked up church life in Mountain Ash as the year continued, with increasing numbers attending church and a renewal of our connections in the community. In particular, we were excited to be able to relate again to Miskin, Darranlas, Glenboi and Caegarw Primary schools and make contact with Mountain Ash Comprehensive.

The Mothers' Union restarted their meetings and with their support we resumed our monthly church visits to Aberpennar Court, Maesteg House and Troedyrhiw House, enjoying fellowship, singing and prayer.

Through Advent to Christmas we welcomed people into special services, recognising that many people chose to use St Margaret's for their funeral services.

A faculty was obtained for regilding of the reredos and next year we will seek a quinquennial report and consider repairs to the church hall and the church external doors

With sadness we note that Canon Mike Jones needed to take time away from work during 2022, affirming him in Peace and Healing. In his absence, ministry area lead, Vicar Peter, assumed responsibility for pastoral care, church life and mission.

As the year continued, it was clear that we continued to have many people who were still unable to attend church, who had sadly passed, or who were unable to continue in their church giving, with the result that we ended the year £15K in deficit. This spurred us onto to regain our community fundraising, including a successful Christmas Fete.

2002 Annual Report Penrhiwcieber & Matthewstown

The year has been a typically busy one for these communities in the Ministry Area. Following the appointment of Fr. Stuart Ghezzi as focal priest for the congregation here, ministry, mission and fellowship has continued and grown and some of the key events and highlights are mentioned below.

Following the increasing release from National Lockdowns and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, life within our churches has gradually been returning to normal. Sung Mass on a Sunday in St Winifred's has continued and consistently sees good numbers both in the congregation and in Sunday school. With the re-starting of Mass on a Thursday in All Saints in August 2022, the daily mass has now been reinstated and continues to be well attended. Mothers' union meets monthly once more for Mass and their monthly meeting and special services for Fr. Michael Short's 60th Anniversary of ordination, St Winifred's Day and Remembrance Sunday have seen large numbers of people gather to worship together in church.

Schools have returned to church for festivals and events this year, and Perthcelyn, Penrhiwcieber, Pengeulan and Ynysboeth Primary schools have all visited for Christmas and Harvest events amongst other things and school assemblies led by Fr. Stuart have once more returned, along with Engagement Officer Simon Evans running the 'Flourish' project in some of the schools in the community.

Our outreach projects have continued to be well utilised and much needed within the community. Period products through the Hey Girls partnership continue to be collected on a frequent basis from Church which is currently open during the mornings Monday through Friday. The requests that Baby Basics receives has increased throughout the year and Moses baskets packed full of essentials for new mums in need continue to be provided when requested by health visitors.

Since early Autumn 2022, the launch of our Personal Care Resource has seen over 30 backs packed with essential hygiene products given out through community events and the local schools - this continues to be something that is needed and well received by those who make use of being able to access such projects.

Fit and Fed in conjunction with Lee Gardens Pool has continued to grow with volunteers from the church community preparing food and helping with activities for children during the school holidays. During the colder and wetter months, this has been held in the Church Hall, providing a warm dry space for the events.

Socially, the vibrancy of our social calendar has continued and has slowly returned to normal. Bingo has begun once more on a Monthly basis during the spring, summer and autumn months and numbers have continued to grow each time. Coffee Mornings, Cheese and Wine evenings, afternoon teas, teddy bears picnics and ice cream parlours amongst many other things have been the highlight during the year 2022-23.

St Winifred's Church currently needs essential repairs to the East Wall and a significant amount of money needs to be raised to complete this work. A sponsored Zip wire which saw Fr. Stuart and Sophie on the Tower Colliery Zip wire for sponsorship has been one of the highlights of the early autumn.

Missional Report

By the end of 2022 the MAC had planned several initiatives for prayer and sharing faith going into 2023 that would bring our congregations together. In preparation for this, the MAC encouraged congregations to continue and embed the projects going on in their own vicinity. In Cwmbach they developed relationships with their local community action group; in Aberaman they reached out to new families connecting to the Church in Wales schools; in Mountain Ash new connections were made to residential and care homes as well as local schools; in Penrhiwcieber their cost of living and social projects expanded with a strengthening of children's work; in Abercynon the new youth group, Messy Church and Foodbank connected people through the modernised kitchen facility. Our local branches of the Mothers' Union continued in their worship and meetings, offering practical support to the local missional projects.

Financial Report

Coming out of the Lockdowns meant that a significant number of some congregations were slow in returning to services and therefore some congregations faced financial challenges, needing to draw on reserves. Increases in utility bills have similarly impacted our finances, so each congregation is developing its own strategy to increase their income. Our ministry area Treasurer, Rhys Evans, coordinated the congregational treasurers' day to day financial overviews and we undertook discussions with the diocesan senior leadership team in relation to increases to our Fairer Share - despite our average attendee numbers decreasing to 188 in 2022, the diocese was continuing to use a figure of 266 from pre-pandemic information.

The whole way that we manage our finances changed as we transitioned to the ministry area structure in 2022, and the MAC offers its thanks to all who've contributed to making it a smooth transition.

The Revd. Peter Lewis, ministry area lead, 25 April 2023