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Dear Reader,

*Where there is no vision the people perish. (Proverbs 29.18)*

In January 2022 the parishes of Pentyrch, Radyr, St Fagans and Michaelston-super-Ely, and Tongwynlais will join together to form The Garth Ministry Area. The Parochial Church Councils of each of our parishes have recently each passed a resolution supporting this process. This means that our Diocesan Registrar (lawyer) will now prepare the Bishop's Decree which within a few months will formally constitute our Ministry Area. This is both scary and exciting. Few of us like change yet some see the opportunities that change brings.



Encouraged by our PCCs I am writing to reassure you that the church you love and worship in will keep its own identity and, of course, its own name - in fact when you take part in worship, activities, and the various events that make up parish life you may see little change. I believe that the desire of every priest and lay person in this Diocese is to see all of our churches flourish. This is absolutely not a plot to close churches down. Neither is it an attempt to boost the assets of one church at the expense of another. It is however a significant change in our understanding of the structures of The Parish Church. The old ecclesiastical boundaries will no longer exist but there will be new ecclesiastical boundaries around the entire much larger area, just like a Rectorial Benefice. But why are we doing this? At a meeting of the Governing Body back in 2010 it was recognised that The Church in Wales could not "go on doing the same thing in the same way" - it needed to address the decline in numbers and consequently finance. The Standing Committee and Bench of Bishops responded to this by calling for an external review of the church with particular concern for its structures, its resources, its ministry and its mission. After a lengthy consultation period The Harries Report commended that The Church in Wales parishes be drawn or grouped together as Mission or Ministry areas (Rectorial Benefices). Llandaff is the last Diocese in The Province to follow these recommendations - this means that we can see MAs working effectively elsewhere.

So what does the future hold? For generations we have worshipped in our churches, our sons and daughters have been baptised and married and funerals have been conducted by our clergy. Our parish priests have walked with us through moments of joy and also sorrow - this will not change. We have given generously of our time and our talents, and from our financial resources for the ministry and mission of the place we love and where we worship - this remains unchanged. When you give to the church where you worship your gift is effectively designated for that place. When you raise funds for a roof, an organ or a repair to the fabric of the church you love then you will still be designating funds to that project. If we choose to leave a legacy to the church where we worship when we die that legacy will be a restricted fund for the purpose you have chosen.

The Harries Report, and subsequently our own Diocese, took the view that each MA should usually have three clergy with each of the current parishes having a priest whose pastoral ministry is focussed in a place to provide pastoral presence and be a catalyst for local mission yet who has particular skills that maybe exercised across the entire area for the benefit of all the churches. At present the Diocesan "offer" for us is myself as the Ministry Area Priest in Charge plus two further priests whose title will be Vicar. Since we have four parishes and Vicarages (three being empty at present) and much new housing when our new Archdeacon Rod Green arrives in September, he will work with me to review the needs of this area ahead of advertising posts.

Once we are officially 'The Garth Ministry Area' our PCCs will be replaced by a Ministry Area Council - there will be two representatives from each parish on this. There will be only two

individuals with the legal status of Church Wardens for the area but in each church we will appoint individuals to effect the work that is currently undertaken. At present the Ministry Area Transition Team is looking at the structures of our parishes to ensure we have processes in place to continue the day to day operations in each parish whilst sharing skills and experiences more widely. Already all our Safeguarding Officers and Treasurers have met several times as we get to grips with a new accounting package and new ways of working. The children's leaders from our parishes are due to meet this summer to share experience and expertise and perhaps plan events or groups that are hard to deliver in churches where there are small numbers of children or volunteers.

The birth of Ministry Areas in our Diocese is certainly a massive shift in our imaginations of what it means to be church but perhaps in years to come we will look back and say it has been our salvation as we continue to worship locally yet work collaboratively on new opportunities that might be difficult to effect alone.

Please pray for the parishes of Pentyrch and Tongwynlais who are currently in vacancy and for all who will be involved in the appointments processes to shape a team of clergy and lay ministers to increase our impact and tell the message of Jesus.

Yours in Christ,

*Vicki*

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The Rev'd Vicki Burrows  
The Garth Ministry Area Leader