

Notes from 1 March meeting of MAE Cymru

Advocacy

Further to all that is on the website, we aspire:

- To be a voice of good practice and to speak out against bad practice.
- To consider the well-being of women here and also, particularly women refugees most likely to be the target of violence.
- To further support 'Support' where needed to come alongside and help speak for those in a 'difficult place'.
- To research equality and rights for women.
- To support 'Networking', 'Support' and 'Story' where required.

Stories

Ask for the next MAE Cymru newsletter:

"MAE Cymru is committed to collecting, recording, and sharing the stories of women in Wales who are answering God's call for their lives. We believe that this powerful witness can comfort, encourage, and inspire us as Christians, and help us to remember the work and ministry of those who have gone before us.

As we begin the process of collecting our stories we would like to encourage you that you, wherever and however you're reading this message, have a story to tell - and we would love to hear it! If you feel called to share your story, please contact us and we will arrange a time to speak with you. We really do mean everyone, both lay and ordained, and at all stages of your life. All of our stories are works in progress, and we can always come back to them with additions at a later date.

If you know a woman whose story you would love to see shared more widely, please consider whether you might encourage her to speak to us. Sometimes that message from a friend or colleague is just what we all need, to reassure us that we are on the right track.

One of our members is working with the Women's Archive of Wales (<https://www.womensarchivewales.org/en/>) to create an archive of documents relating to the campaigns for the ordination of women in the Church in Wales. If you have any letters, photos, old campaign leaflets or posters, emails, sermon notes, parish newsletters, or anything else you can think of that relates to the ordination of women as priests and bishops in the Church in Wales, please let us know. We may well ask you to scan or photograph it and send it to us, so that we can make as complete a record as possible both for the Archive and for all those who don't remember the campaigns but would like to know more about them.

If you have written an essay, poem, blog, or book, or created art that you would like to share with us, or would like us to share the details of with our members and followers, please do get in touch with us. We would love to have the opportunity to lift up your voices and show the many and varied ways that we are responding to God's call."

Networking

- We started by talking about the various networks we each belonged to.
- We talked about other groups that MAE may want to renew or make new links with:
 - WATCH
 - Catholic Women's Network
 - Religious Orders in Wales
- We thought having an up to date flyer that we could give people we thought interested might be helpful
- Noted that everyone was busy and so had limited availability
- Is there a way of checking diocesan groups against the national database, within the GDPR rules to make sure that we have the right names and contact details for everyone? *(Answer: Diocesan link people can have access to the database, so long as they abide by the GDPR rules – detailed on tab 1. HB 22/3.)*
- Paid membership does not necessarily include all who consider themselves members.
- How do we encourage lay membership?
- Something else that occurs to me now but which we didn't mention is whether there is a difference between the networks that are appropriate at a diocesan level and those at a provincial level

Support

On the MAE Cymru website, we currently offer two pathways to support people to navigate gender-based challenges within the Church in Wales:

- 1) Accompaniment (informal) – connecting someone up with one of our supporters for a chat and some informal support.
- 2) "WoMentoring" – providing an experienced mentor from the MAE Cymru community to support and potentially advise someone with a specific challenge.

We considered a few different questions and have organised our thoughts in response to these.

Q: What are some of the common gender-based challenges that people face in the Church in Wales?

- Insidious things – being treated differently because you're a woman.
- Microaggressions e.g. a male priest insisting on walking behind the presiding female priest in the procession.
- Sense of being less important due to being a woman.
- There are different problems in different places – the key is to have support in place e.g. a Dean of Women's Ministry.
- Non-affirming priests – even when they're friendly it's very undermining.

- There is a widespread bullying culture within the C in W and people haven't been called out on it. Bullying is selective and targeted at more vulnerable people – who are then afraid of acknowledging that they are being bullied.
- Safeguarding – there's an issue where there is an imbalanced power dynamic.

Q: What would good support look like?

- A Dean of Women's Ministry would be a good way of challenging unjust practices and making sure women priests knew there was somewhere they could turn to for support.
- A well-publicised offer that women can find at point of need.
- Publicising the Bullying & Harassment Policy to help people identify bullying.
- Not recruiting non-affirming priests

Q: Is our current offer the right offer?

- Yes, but we need to publicise it.
- We also need to ensure that we are working within safeguarding guidelines when we're supporting vulnerable people.

Q: What are our next steps for taking this work forward?

1. Raise awareness of the issues that women face in the C in W
2. Exploring the possibility of having a Dean of Women's Ministry so that women have a representative
3. Stop recruiting non-affirming priests – campaign for this
4. Link to the Bullying & Harassment policy – campaign against bullying
5. Publicising MAE Cymru's support offer

Working Groups

Advocacy

Janet

Jenny

Hannah

Stories

Ruth J will put together an ask – we'll then need input from the MAE community

Networking

Pam

Anna

Katharine

Support

Sian

Hannah

Gill

Tracy

Susan H

Susan B

Kim