

## Periodic External Review Follow-up Report

# St Padarn's Institute, Church in Wales

**Conducted onsite, January 2024**

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# Senior Reviewer's Follow-up Report to the 2022 Periodic External Review of St Padarn's Institute, Church in Wales

## Introduction

### *Periodic External Review of St. Padarn's*

The Periodic External Review of St. Padarn's took place in October 2022 when the team of reviewers representing the Church of England's Ministry Development Team visited residentials in Bangor and Cwmbran and onsite at St Padarn's, Llandaff. The PER documentation received was clear, thorough, and received in very good time. The Team had conversations with key members of staff, Archbishop Andrew John, Bishop Cherry Vann (the Ministry Bishop), Canon Simon Lloyd (Chief Executive of the Representative Body of the Church in Wales), and a broad range of past and present candidates and stakeholders. Reviewers were also able to observe a range of teaching sessions, both online and in-person, and attend a variety of acts of worship at each venue.

The introductory sections of the PER report made some general observations which set the wider context of the review. The PER process was designed for TEIs within the Church of England and therefore required some adaptation for St Padarn's because of its different structure and role within the Church in Wales. Whilst making good use of the physical site in Llandaff, Cardiff (previously occupied by St Michael's College) as their administrative base and permanent teaching space, St Padarn's Institute is the 'training arm' of the whole of the Church in Wales and uses venues and engages with people across the province bringing continuity, input and oversight through the different stages of formation and training for all licensed ministry in the Church in Wales (and indeed the formation of Christian disciples more widely). Dioceses – and their bishops and diocesan officers - are also involved in the formation and training process throughout initial and ongoing training, but the weight of responsibility held by St Padarn's shifts, with dioceses taking more responsibility and oversight during the NLM and CMD stages. However, whilst the PER covered both Formation for Licensed Ministers (FLM) and Newly Licensed Minister (NLM) training, a greater amount of time was directed to FLM activity.

St Padarn's is not an independent institution, but all staff are employees of the Representative Body of the Church in Wales, who are trustees of the Institute and have oversight of its budget and the financing of all grants and costs of training. Long term planning and the strategic development of training are seen through the eyes of the Representative Body and the Bench of Bishops, rather than being initiated and led solely by the Principal and staff of St Padarn's.

For the PER to be effective, some adjustments were made within each criterion, to reflect the distinctive nature of St Padarn's. Whilst the focus of this PER was St Padarn's, because of how it is embedded with and relate to the Bench of Bishops, some of the team's recommendations were for St Padarn's alone, others were to be considered collegially with the Bench of Bishops and others (particularly the Director of Ministry Development). Reviewers also indicated wider strategic recommendations for the Bench of Bishops to consider, highlighting issues beyond the responsibility and oversight of St Padarn's, but which fundamentally impact its work, effectiveness, and strategic direction.

St. Padarn's is a new institution (beginning in July 2016), although it carries forward the work of predecessor bodies, and the first six years have been a period of rapid development, inevitably impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic. This sits alongside the implementation of significant recommendations from the 2012 Harries report within the Church in Wales, though these have sometimes developed at differing speeds and ways in each of the six dioceses in the province.

The population of Wales is significantly smaller than England, which means the Church in Wales has a more familial identity. As the only TEI in Wales, St Padarn's must seek to engage with the ecclesial breadth and diverse geographical, diocesan and individual needs. In addition, recent years have seen a steep decline in church attendance in Wales and many chapels have closed. This has re-focused the Church in Wales on what it means to be the Anglican Church in Wales and now not uncommonly the only Christian denomination in a community. This has led to the Church in Wales proactively engaging with issues of Welsh culture and language and having a growing openness to pioneering and fresh expressions of ministry, including partnering and welcoming new HTB (Holy Trinity Brompton) resource churches in North and South Wales.

St Padarn's – along with the Bench of Bishops – requested this PER, not wanting to merely be judged by anecdote, but seeking objective assessment. The team of reviewers were warmly welcomed by staff and candidates and found participants in interviews were almost universally measured, open and honest and wanted to see St Padarn's continue to grow into its potential. The reviewers found a happy, mission-focused, friendly and mutually supportive community of candidates with committed leadership and a readiness to reflect, learn, grow and innovate.

The reviewers identified a significant number of commendations and the main recommendations for St Padarn's are developmental rather than remedial and not unexpected at this early stage of its development.

Whilst the integrated structure of St Padarn's within the Church in Wales brings many benefits, the reviewers also identified some points of tension. What can be decided on a provincial level and what is best agreed locally in each diocese is not always clear. Seeking to shape and agree strategy within the Bench of Bishops is theologically sound but is not easy to do in practice with a small and diverse group of bishops, the majority of whom had changed in the years since the creation of St Padarn's. In addition, at the point of the PER the Bench was reduced in capacity by a third, with the See of Llandaff vacant and the Bishop of St. David's on long term sick leave. The creation of the Director of Ministry Development role (the appointee had not yet started at the time of the PER) recognised the need for an additional focused role, involving close working and collaboration with a wide range of colleagues - Bishops, archdeacons, the Director of Evangelism and Church Growth, Directors of Ministry and their teams, the Principal of St Padarn's and his team.

#### *PER Follow Up Review*

St. Padarn's worked closely with the Bench of Bishops to develop an action plan covering the recommendations set out in the PER report. The Bench through the Ministry Bishop took the lead in relation to the wider strategic recommendations, while St. Padarn's led in relation to other

recommendations. The Senior Reviewer met via Zoom with the Ministry Bishop and Dean for Initial Ministerial Training (the Principal was on sabbatical) in spring 2023 to discuss the draft action plan.

The Senior Reviewer then visited St. Padarn's in Cardiff in January 2024, meeting with the Principal, Ministry Bishop and Director of Ministry Development. A comprehensive written update on the action plan had been sent beforehand, the content of which was discussed in a characteristically honest and constructive way. It was evident that the appointment of the Director of Ministry Development and the Bench now being at full capacity for the first time in several years has had a very positive impact. A Strategic Plan for St. Padarn's for 2023-2028 has now been discussed and wholeheartedly agreed by the Bench of Bishops. This plan is not wholly dissimilar to the draft Strategic Plan seen by the reviewers, but has been refined and honed in the light of ongoing discussions and the more effective collaborative working since the PER.

I am satisfied that all the recommendations have been addressed or are in the process of being responded to effectively. The wider strategic recommendations will properly take several years to come to fruition and require ongoing discernment. I would recommend that the Bench, with the RB, St. Padarn's and the Director of Ministry Development, identify a clear mechanism for the strategic oversight and monitoring of these longer-term recommendations to ensure momentum and focus continue to be maintained.

**The Revd Canon Rebecca Swyer, Senior Reviewer**

**February 2024**

## St. Padarn's and the Bench of Bishops' Response to the PER Recommendations

The 2022's report's 4 wider strategic recommendations and 27 other recommendations are set out in **bold**. Each is followed by text in regular type representing both the response by the Bench of Bishops and St. Padarn's and the Senior Reviewer's assessment of progress to date.

### *Wider Strategic Recommendations*

These wider strategic recommendations are – on the whole – longer term areas to address. I am impressed by the progress already made and the enthusiasm for change and am confident that the timescales are realistic and appropriate at this stage and allow for organic development and ongoing discernment in the coming years.

### **Strategic Recommendation 1**

**That the Director of Ministry Development, Bench of Bishops and appropriate others undertake further work on effective communication with St Padarn's, ensuring their work is firmly embedded and understood within the wider vision of the Church in Wales and its individual dioceses.**

The Bench of Bishops discussed the scope of St Padarn's at its meeting in February 2023, following which the Ministry Bishop met with the St Padarn's Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The Bench met with the Director of Ministry Development in April 2023. The SLT met with the Bench in June 2023 to discuss the new Strategic Direction which was formally signed off in July 2023. The Bench agreed that it would have a substantial annual engagement with the SLT focused on the delivery of the strategic direction.

The Principal is now meeting with the Director of Ministry Development every couple of months, taking joint papers to the Bench in October 2023, and again in January and in February 2024. The principal discussed other St Padarn's items with the Bench in July and Oct 2023, and will again in March 2024. A new schedule of meetings now ensures that the Principal, Ministry Bishop and Chief Executive of the Representative Body meet together monthly. It has been agreed that the previous suggestion, which had only been taken up erratically, that the St Padarn's SLT should meet with each diocesan senior staff annually, should become normal from 2024.

There is now an annual Church in Wales ministry conference, first occurring in March 2023. The Principal is on the planning group for this, and 3 St Padarn's staff attend (alongside 2-3 from each diocese, plus the Ministry Bishop and Director of Ministry Development). The Director of Ministry Development has met several times with key members of St Padarn's as his programme of work has required, e.g. in reshaping processes surrounding the flow from Discernment Panels to St Padarn's.

### **Strategic Recommendation 2**

**That the Bench of Bishops articulate more clearly the different forms of ordained and lay ministry, including a nuanced understanding of different forms of lay ministry and considering what can appropriately be agreed provincially and what should be agreed or nuanced at a diocesan level.**

This is a long-term task. The Bench of Bishops identified that the first step needed was in fact to replace the section of 'The Church Serving God's World' document which dealt with Commissioned Ministries. The

use of commissioned (as opposed to licensed) ministries was currently particularly confused, and it was believed that a revival in these ministries was the necessary precursor to the future reinvigorating of lay licensed ministries. The new (streamlined) commissioned ministries – worship leaders, pastoral assistants, and catechists – were launched in September 2023, with new publicity materials and St Padarn’s training booklets released nationally for dioceses to use as they wish.

Discussion between the Principal, Director of Ministry Development and the Ministry Bishop established that the next step needed to be clarification of ordained ministries. In part, this was because of different approaches to NSM(L) in different dioceses which were causing some difficulty in relation to selection and training. In part, it was to allow the commissioned ministries to take root before the work on lay licensed. This work on ordained ministries, and in particular NSM(L) will happen in 2024.

Alongside this, the Director of Ministry Development has been continuing work arising from the Doctrine Commission’s ‘Faithful Stewards’ report and has started to release a series of short videos explaining ordained ministry and vocation.

### **Strategic Recommendation 3**

**That the Bench of Bishops work with the Director of Ministry Development to develop a vocations strategy that ties in clearly with workforce planning in the coming years and consider how the provincial discernment and selection process might be re-shaped to ensure the Church is calling the candidates it needs and to train the ministers it requires to enable mission and evangelism.**

The Bench of Bishops tasked the Director of Ministry Development to undertake a thorough review of the discernment process in the first 6 months of his role. This review was affirmed by the Bench, and a new innovative discernment framework is being developed over the next two years (rolling out in September 2025).

The Archbishop kicked off ‘workforce planning’ with a short paper in October 2023, in particular addressing the question of where the Church in Wales was going to get the ministers from which its new emphasis on mission and evangelism, and the new Church Growth Funding, requires. The Principal and Director of Ministry Development worked on a joint paper for the October 2023 Bench meeting, giving the current data and outlining various of the challenges. They were asked to produce a further paper, drawing in diocesan predictions of their workforce needs, and vocational pipelines, which was discussed and a number of decisions taken in the January 2024 Bench meeting. This is now an ongoing area for action and review.

### **Strategic Recommendation 4**

**That the Bench of Bishops initiate work on the challenges and opportunities of theological breadth within the Church in Wales, including issues of Anglican ecclesiology, missiology, worship and spirituality and then give clear direction to the staff at St Padarn’s about the impact of this on training and formation.**

The Bench of Bishops and St Padarn’s SLT discussed aspects of this at the June Bench meeting. They are not clear that an attempt to nail down questions of theological breadth is possible or productive. What has

been valuable has been the discussion, allowing St Padarn's senior staff to understand and be in step with episcopal views, and allowing the bishops to fully understand the challenges and successes of St Padarn's in being the Theological Institute for the whole Church in Wales. Issues in this area were key in the annual review of the Formation for Licensed Ministry programme in August 2023 (Principal, Dean for Initial Ministerial Training and Director of Formation). Further discussions generating mutual understanding and support took place between the Principal and the Ministry Bishop in September 2023. The Ministry Bishop is clear that she values St Padarn's approach to holding together the diversity and producing the generally harmonious, positive, St Padarn's community.

#### *Other Recommendations*

These recommendations have all been carefully considered and are being responded to appropriately.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**That St Padarn's staff continue to develop their collaborative working with the Bench of Bishops and individual dioceses to form effective partnerships in the light of ongoing formation, development and discernment of calling to meet the needs of God's mission.**

As noted above, a range of meetings and actions have taken place that respond to this recommendation, such as:

- Agreement of the Strategic Direction, and annual engagement between the Bench of Bishops and the St Padarn's SLT.
- The Principal engaging with the Bench regularly (since his return from sabbatical in June 2023, this was June and October 2023; January, February and March 2024).
- Annual Ministry Conference including representatives from St Padarn's and each diocese.
- The work of the Director of Ministry Development pulling together the different diocesan approaches in key areas such as discernment to produce national clarity and clear processes.
- Regular meetings between St Padarn's senior staff and the Director of Ministry Development about the different aspects of work he is taking forward.
- Monthly meetings of the Principal, Ministry Bishop and Chief Executive of the Representative Body.
- Agreed that for 2024 onwards St Padarn's SLT should meet with each diocesan senior staff annually.
- The launch of the new Commissioned Ministries, supported by St Padarn's resources.
- The reshaping of the workflow of the Director of Ministry Development to focus on ordained ministries in response to difficulties raised by divergent views of NSM(L).
- The work on workforce planning, with its particular focus on the ministers the church needs for its mission in the next decades.
- Better communication and mutual understanding about the diversity within the Church in Wales, and St Padarn's role to shape positive, united, missional purpose within the diversity.

## **Recommendation 2**

### **That St Padarn's staff identify appropriate and constructive opportunities for debate and discussion between those from different theological traditions.**

The PER report made clear that this was primarily meant in relation to opportunities which had not been taken within individual teaching sessions to build on learners' responses to explore issues of difference. This was a focus of staff training and the staff residential in June 2023, to equip and encourage staff to not shy away from engaging with the differences between learners which emerge during the teaching programme.

The SLT considered this recommendation more broadly, in conjunction with the discussions with the Bishops regarding diversity (SR4 above). The SLT believes that its overall approach to diversity – which is to avoid polarisation by the use of labels and setting issues up as a debate between two sides – is achieving significant positive results, in forming the positive, broadly content, mission-focused learning community which the reviewers themselves commended. Indeed, even the language of 'those from different theological traditions' feels out of step with the reality of St Padarn's ordinands today many of whom simply do not own or particularly emerge from the classically defined different 'traditions' within Anglicanism.

## **Recommendation 3**

### **That the Bench of Bishops might consider the identification of potential theological educators through the discernment and selection process to encourage the raising up of Welsh theologians.**

A measured response was given to this recommendation, which identifies an alternative way of identifying and nurturing those who are academically able with the potential to engage in theological education in the future.

Initial discussion with the Bench of Bishops suggested that the numbers involved in Wales meant that it would be difficult to establish a 'category' at discernment. They also believe that focusing this at discernment is likely to have a negative impact on diversity, for inevitably such identification at discernment is heavily influenced by the individual's prior educational background and theological self-confidence.

Thus, they believe that it is best to make the most of the integrated nature of the Church in Wales's investment in ordinands, with St Padarn's having a long-term role in dialogue with bishops often starting before discernment (since many begin with Theology for Life as part of the discernment journey) and continuing through curacy into CMD. This will take attention and the crafting of individualised solutions.

One building block is the introduction of a heading in all Bishop's Reports "*Does the candidate demonstrate an aptitude and interest for further academic study (Levels 7/8 or beyond) at some point in the future, and to what extent does the candidate demonstrate the skills and character required of a potential theological educator?*".

Another is the clear backing from the Bishops in the new strategic direction for St Padarn's to be offering Masters programmes and developing vehicles for clergy to conduct research.



The Director of Ministry Development is also keeping this area in mind as he renews the discernment processes.

The Principal has also been asked to return to the Bench mapping out some of the options for how individual clerics could be supported in developing higher-level theological skills and qualifications at different points in their ministry, depending on their individual circumstances.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**That St Padarn's undertake further discussion with the Bench of Bishops about the possibility of identifying and resourcing additional training pathways that might be more accessible to some potential candidates.**

This recommendation was taken in conjunction with recommendation 6 below.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**That St Padarn's explore occasional possibilities for PT candidates to gain from/participate in some of the specific FT programme.**

St Padarn's embarked on a process of consultation with candidates including meetings and questionnaires, as well as staff discussion. What emerged was that while this was not a concern for most PT candidates, for a smaller group it was an issue they felt strongly about. The SLT and FLM team also identified that they needed to develop this with some care because it would be easy for change here to clash with the strategic priority of increasing geographical equity, by creating opportunities only available to PT candidates who live close to Cardiff. It is also important not to confuse the two distinct – FT and PT – programmes, which have different lengths for most candidates, different funding arrangements and different academic structures.

Therefore, their response to the recommendation is to keep a careful eye on the issue and tweak plans where appropriate, but not make sweeping changes. For example, they took the opportunity in Autumn 2023 to pilot live streaming for PT candidates the 'Guest Lecture' (a biannual event in the FT community coupled with a 'feast' of worship, food and fellowship). This worked well and was appreciated. Similarly, they invited PT candidates to the FT Christmas meal in December, also offering them overnight accommodation. They are also reviewing communications, both formal and informal, to make sure that their message that PT candidates are welcome on site all the time, for example, to use the library, study space, worship or engage with staff, is fully heard by PT candidates.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**That St Padarn's continue to evaluate whether a weekly 48-hour gathering is the best fit for delivering the desired FT FLM outcomes, or whether other patterns of meeting (e.g., for longer periods, less often) might be viable alternatives.**

This recommendation is being taken very seriously. Indeed goals 1 and 4 in the Strategic Direction 2023-2028, agreed in July 2023, connect to it ('widening participation' and 'geographical equity').

St. Padarn's is currently in an extensive period of consultation. This has involved the meetings individually with key churches, with candidates for ministry, and the two northern bishops. The See of St Davids, the other diocese parts of which are at some distance from Cardiff, was vacant until recently; a meeting will follow. The issue has been a major item in St Padarn's senior staff meetings, in meetings focused on the details of curriculum and timetable, and the termly strategy meeting with the Chief Executive and Ministry Bishop. St. Padarn's has also pondered the difficulty of accessing the views of those who might potentially be put off from entering discernment discussions because of their perception that the training pattern will not work for them. This connects with the 'widening participation agenda'. They will also engage with Theology for Life Students (which is a regular source for future ministerial candidates) and with diocesan vocations officers.

A significant discussion is timetabled for the Bench of Bishops in March 2024, based on a document from St. Padarn's outlining one or more possibilities, worked through in terms of formation, impact on vocations, finance, community life, and contribution to the Church in Wales's mission and unity.

Several factors have emerged:

- longer periods of residence less often have a more negative impact on family life for candidates at a distance.
- there is no appetite for reducing the amount of face-to-face engagement or the formational benefits of residence;
- nobody wants to divide the Church in Wales – all ordinands training together is a key benefit of St Padarn's;
- it is easier for candidates closer to Cardiff to be given flexibility (for example for family reasons) than those at a distance;
- there is a real but somewhat intangible impact of St Padarn's 'feeling' further away for those in the north dioceses which can impact on vocations;
- there is a feeling that it is harder for clergy from northern dioceses to contribute to the St Padarn's programme than those based near Cardiff, though the staff would say that the reality of who they invite to speak does not substantiate this;
- the key impact on those travelling from the north is a build-up of fatigue across the term.

A proposal is developing which the staff could commend to the Bishops which makes a number of changes, the cumulative effect of which could be significantly beneficial to candidates from the northern diocese (and from St Davids), but which is evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

More broadly, the work with the Director of Ministry Development in relation to discernment and workforce planning (noted above) continues to consider whether additional training pathways in some form would serve the increase of vocations in general, from particular groups, or for particular ministries such as church planting and evangelistic.

In pursuit of the strategic development goal 1 on widening participation (with a particular focus on disability, age, ethnicity and prior educational achievement), the Church in Wales has agreed the funding for a one-year part-time post in 2024 to help St Padarn's establish appropriate benchmarks, and draw in good practice from elsewhere, as a first step in this long-term goal.

### **Recommendation 7**

**That St Padarn's maintain the recent focus on development and support of Formational Cell Guides and offer clearer articulation, especially to PT candidates, of the purpose and value of Formational Cells, to ensure all candidates value this element of the model.**

The Director of Formation met with each of the formational cell guides in July 2023 to discuss the feedback from candidates and review the aims of formational cells as stated in the Formation for Licensed Ministry Handbook. The Director of Formation also focused on this in the Summer School (August 2023) articulating the purpose and value of formational cells for all – PT and FT candidates.

Further enhancing formational work is item 3 in the strategic direction, and was discussed at some length with the Bench in June 2023. It was clear to all involved that the single most important step which could be taken was to move formational cells from being volunteer-led to being staff-led. Funding to allow this was written into the 2024 budget which was agreed in December 2023. Work is now going forward to transition to staff-led formational cells, prioritising first the formational cells for part-time candidates. Re-structuring to allow this is also part of the thinking under (6).

### **Recommendation 8**

**St Padarn's and its diocesan partners should consider intentionally extending diocesan support initiatives (e.g., for clergy spouses) to include spouses and partners of those in training at St Padarn's. This would have the benefit of making the connections across the college community whilst being more geographically alert and accessible.**

The recommendation suggests that diocesan support initiatives should support those training at St Padarn's. This has been discussed with each bishop in the round of review meetings in November, where it was positively received. Each diocese handles supporting and engaging with clergy partners differently, but getting them to add partners of those in training to whatever they do is a simple step which will benefit the partners not just through the provision but also through enabling them to make connections with clergy partners in their locality. This will be formalised early in 2024.

At the same time, while recognising that because of the distances involved and the importance of ensuring provision is there for partners of PT as well as FT candidates this should be done via dioceses, St Padarn's has consulted with PT candidates on this question. There was little appetite for St Padarn's itself doing more. Nevertheless, they have made a change to now invite partners to one evening at each residential. Because the residentials are deliberately in a different geography to St Padarn's Cardiff, this means that partners at least once a year will be made welcome at a significant event which would be geographically relatively convenient for them (either in Cardiff or at a residential).

## **Recommendation 9**

**That St Padarn's explore possibilities for enhancing the worship space, either through re-ordering of the chapel for flexibility, or using other spaces as appropriate.**

Item 6 on the strategic plan focuses on developing the St Padarn's Cardiff site.

There is now significant momentum behind work to invest in the chapel – both in terms of bringing it up to a good standard of maintenance and aesthetically, and in terms of re-ordering to maximise its contribution to training by expressing a spirituality in keeping with the missional focus of the current Church in Wales, and being flexible enough to meet the diverse training needs of St Padarn's students.

A working group drawing together significant national church expertise in Church buildings, the Head of Property for the Church in Wales, as well as the Principal and Director of Operations, is making progress towards firm proposals. Given that the chapel is Grade 1 listed, and work will not be cheap, getting agreement (permissions and finance) to the work is likely to take some time, but is now firmly on the agenda.

## **Recommendation 10**

**That St Padarn's explore opportunities to create more of a sense of 'space' within the residential programme, including attention to the physical environment for worship and potential for the facility for learners to 'retreat' or reflect throughout the programme.**

A decision was taken in January 2023 to ensure that there is physical space within each FLM residential dedicated solely for worship/reflection. (This was often provided but now it will always be.) This practice has been followed in the two residentials and summer school since.

New furnishings (e.g. a Laudian altar frontal) have been purchased which are now taken to each residential/summer school to 'clothe' this space (given these events are held in hotel/university accommodation), to mark out its dedicated purpose and to provide continuity.

## **Recommendation 11**

**That the Chief Executive of the RB and Ministry Bishop, who will both line-manage the Director of Ministry Development, consider ways in which the effectiveness of the new role can be assessed, particularly in relation to further development of the strategic dimension of the work of St Padarn's.**

Regular meetings of the Director of Ministry Development, Chief Executive of the RB and Ministry Bishop set priorities and monitor progress. Meetings including the Principal take place where appropriate, and the Principal meets regularly with the Director of Ministry Development. The post has increased strategic thinking and output, by giving the needed resource to bring together the different parts of the whole, particularly the six dioceses.

There is recognition that the Director of Ministry Development role will need to be agile and develop in relation to the ongoing progression and implementation of strategic priorities.

### **Recommendation 12**

**That the Chief Executive of the RB and Bench of Bishops, in partnership with St Padarn's agree a clear process for developing, agreeing and monitoring strategic direction.**

A draft strategic direction, developed by the Principal and the St Padarn's SLT, was discussed and warmly received at the Bench meeting in June 2023. The Bench formally agreed it unanimously at the meeting in July. It was agreed that there would be a significant engagement between St Padarn's SLT and the Bench each summer focused on progress towards the Strategic Direction. The Director of Operations at St Padarn's is developing the metrics and reporting framework to facilitate ongoing monitoring. The Principal's plan for how this should be taken forward during 2024 was fully funded by the Representative Body in the 2024 budget it agreed in November 2023.

### **Recommendation 13**

**That, after due discussion and any required adjustments, the Bench of Bishops formally agrees the strategic direction of St Padarn's for the coming six years.**

This was done at the Bench meeting in July 2023.

### **Recommendation 14**

**That St Padarn's look to develop a research policy to enable staff and candidates' development and ensure further development of a research culture.**

A commitment to research is contained in the agreed Strategic Direction 2023-28. A draft research policy has been developed and will go to the Academic Board in Feb 2024. The Director of the MA in Theology, Mission and Ministry (started 1 July 2023) has been given clear responsibility for developing a regular series of research colloquia and a vehicle for publishing student and staff scholarship. Focus time has been granted to the Director of Formation in 2024 to allow him to make significant progress on / complete his next book on Theology and Ecology, with cover being provided. St. Padarn's have also supported their two biblical studies experts in launching a new monthly podcast, Horizons of Scripture, which contributes to a research culture.

### **Recommendation 15**

**Given the very strong PG taught programme on offer, and the fact that staff are qualified and are already supervising research degrees, that St Padarn's consider launching a validated PG research degree programme.**

This is supported in the Strategic Direction. Positive initial discussions have been held with the University of Wales: Trinity St Davids. One of the Deans, who regularly supervises PhDs was given responsibility for all PGT programmes in Jan 2023 to ensure robust MA provision across the three MA programmes and spread of best practice. From Jan 2024 his role was expanded to all PG studies with a brief to develop the PG research options, for possible first entry September 2025.

## **Recommendation 16**

### **That St. Padarn's reviews opportunities for learning biblical languages, including the structure and format of teaching and learning.**

The new Director of the MA in Theology, Mission and Ministry (started 1 July 2023) is a Hebrew expert. He and the tutor in Bible Studies (a Greek expert) have produced a clear plan to allow both languages to be studied at an initial level and further study of texts in the original languages. This was agreed in principle at the Academic Board in Nov 2023; detailed planning is now underway.

## **Recommendation 17**

### **That St Padarn's give further consideration to the support, review and feedback process for learning group facilitators.**

The Tutor in Theological Education has become the personal tutor for all the 'Theology for Life' students to increase the support for them. This also means feedback from the students about learning groups is received in a clearer and more focused way. A review meeting with the group facilitators took place with the Dean in September 2023. The Coordinator for the BTh (who started July 2022) took a new responsibility from Sep 2023 to work closely with the facilitators ensuring that they are supported week-to-week (e.g. concerns about learners, Moodle problems).

Responsibility for directing the BTh was passed from the Dean to the Tutor in Biblical Studies from April 2023. She is attending carefully to the training, review and feedback agenda, for example, she led a session for the facilitators on "best practice" in response to learner feedback. This gave the facilitators an opportunity to reflect on what has worked well and what has not worked well within their facilitated groups and enabled them to glean ideas from each other. Moreover, this resulted in feedback from the facilitators that they experienced variations in the type of learning materials provided by different tutors. She has taken this back to the tutors, and is working on a scheme to ensure greater consistency, through 'levelling up' to the current best examples.

To improve on feedback/review, the programme leader intends to attend each facilitated group once a year so more constructive feedback can be offered to the facilitators. This is in addition to the current feedback gathered termly.

There has been discussion between the Principal, the Dean for Initial Ministerial Training, and the BTh Programme Leader about moving away from relying on volunteers to be facilitators, to a more robust model of a team of highly supported, professional, facilitators. This is now possible because the groups meet online, rather than face-to-face which required small groups to exist across the geography of Wales. This will deepen the collaboration and oversight between staff and the learning group facilitators, enhancing the student experience and ensuring a higher level of quality assurance. This plan has support from the St Padarn's SLT, and has been warmly received at the Academic Board in Nov 2023 but the necessary resources are yet to be identified.

## **Recommendation 18**

**That St. Padarn's considers some diversification of forms of assignment to encourage the skills of theological reflection and reflective practice and enabling further ministerial formation.**

This is supported in goal 5 of the Strategic Direction. It is complex to move this forward, particularly given the logistics of the BTh being taught both face-to-face and online, to students some of whom are engaged in ministerial formation and some of whom are studying purely to develop their own discipleship. The tutors are committed to diversifying assessment, but the practicalities need to be got right, particularly since there seems to be considerable student anxiety about any such changes. The Academic Board and Quality and Standards Panel are monitoring progress.

All tutors and key support staff gained a certificate in *Supporting Student Learning in Higher Education* from Wrexham University in January 2023, part of which involved looking at diversity in assessment. This has been continued in staff training sessions, in particular, it was a major focus in the June 2023 staff residential, with training and the sharing of good practice arranged by the Dean of Initial Ministerial Training and the Dean for Discipleship. The Senior Coordinator has gathered the data on the current situation, demonstrating that there is considerable variety in the nature of the written assessments used (reflections, essays, projects) but there is no use of non-written summative assessment. The new Director of the MA in Theology, Mission and Ministry and Director of the BTh have been tasked with bringing practical examples of good practice in other TEIs to the February 2024 staff residential. The 2024 budget includes a temporary 'educational project officer' part of whose time will be to bring examples of good practice from elsewhere to relevant tutors, and to support them in using this to diversify assessments.

## **Recommendation 19**

**That St Padarn's continue to develop the placement process, looking at the selection and induction of placement supervisors and the links between learning and practice built into the FLM placement training agreement.**

A new placement handbook was produced in the Summer of 2023, which gives clearer guidance for supervisors, candidates and updated forms. New 'milestones' have been created to ensure the quality of experience and of training in placements. The placement training agreement has been improved to clarify expectations around the frequency and nature of supervisions. A new face-to-face training event for supervisors will be run for the first time early in 2024 in both north and south Wales.

The Tutor in Contextual Training is now having termly placement catch-up meetings with every candidate for ministry, and keeping in touch with supervisors. From 2024 he will also visit each diocese each year to meet with candidates and supervisors in situ. The Tutor in Contextual Learning is currently engaged in a programme of visiting other TEIs who offer contextual training to investigate best practice.

## **Recommendation 20**

**That St Padarn's articulates more clearly to PT FLM candidates how Theology for Life is formative, more than 'mere' theological learning.**

The Dean for Initial Ministerial Training has engaged in a listening exercise with candidates to try to track down the problem (our information, the general culture, folklore in dioceses etc.). At the same time, they ensured that this was emphasised in induction. Generally the feedback seems to be that it is made clear at induction, but that induction is naturally quite overwhelming. Therefore attention is now given to ensure this is reinforced throughout the year.

There is some overlap with recommendation 17. The progress achieved and in the pipeline there, allows St Padarn's to ensure the right message and culture is communicated in Theology for Life learning groups.

### **Recommendation 21**

**That St Padarn's work with the Bench of Bishops to continue to hone the theological and ministerial formation of candidates to exercise appropriate leadership, and the exercise of episcopate within the complexities of ministry areas in each diocese.**

New investment in the development of ministry area leaders and others with enhanced leadership responsibilities is goal 2 in the agreed strategic direction. Significant new resources have been agreed in the 2024 budget to allow this to be developed during 2024. This development will be led by the Tutor in Ministerial Development, who is now a member of the St Padarn's SLT, and will involve engagement with the Bench of Bishops.

This development work will help clarify the overall leadership development pathway for ministerial candidates and what different levels of competency and experience are appropriate goals at the different stages of an ordinand/cleric's development. To the extent that this refines learning outcomes within FLM and NLM, it will lead to further development in those programmes.

This process – identifying first the needs of ministry area leaders, and working backwards from there to what should be supplied at different stages in the developmental journey, ensures that the work is shaped by the reality on the ground, not theological college surmises about ministry area leadership. The new resource allows this to be done to a new, higher, level.

### **Recommendation 22**

**That there should be further development of the relationships between St Padarn's and dioceses in relation to the selection, ongoing support and oversight of supervisors and facilitators.**

Regarding facilitators, see recommendations 17 and 20. This is fundamentally not a diocesan responsibility.

The process for appointing placement supervisors is clear, yet it outworks differently in different dioceses due to the different ways of working in those dioceses (e.g. the level of involvement wanted by the bishop personally).

The process was a significant feature in the meetings held with each bishop and Director of Ministry in Apr/May 2023 which led to greater understanding. The appointment of supervisors went smoothly in all but one case in the summer of 2024. Improvements in the training and support of placement supervisors have been noted under recommendation 19.



### **Recommendation 23**

**That the Bench of Bishops clarifies whether it wishes candidates from the resource churches to have a distinctive form of FLM or NLM training to prepare candidates for their future ministry.**

The Bench has decided that it does not want a distinctive pathway for candidates from resource churches in FLM/NLM. This is because of a desire for all candidates at St Padarn's to be trained and formed for the whole breadth of ministry in the Church in Wales. In addition, there is no simple correlation between an ordinand coming from a resource church and a cleric being deployed at curacy or later to a particular church planting or revitalisation ministry.

### **Recommendation 24**

**That the Bench of Bishops sets clear expectations around the daily disciplines of prayer for candidates and St Padarn's incorporates this into its teaching, worship planning, placement agreements and reports.**

Goal 3 in the strategic direction expresses the Bishops' desire that St Padarn's focuses on formational excellence, "building on existing success, but focused on increasing formational quality, the life of prayer, the breadth of Anglican tradition and robustness of formational outcomes in a rapidly changing ministerial and cultural context." Funding to further this has been agreed in the 2024 budget.

Discussion with the Bench of Bishops has clarified that this issue is seen to be best approached through good communication and trust, rather than through an attempt to fix rules in black and white. The bishops trust the Principal, Dean, Director of Formation and other staff, to develop appropriate disciplines and patterns to manifest 'the life of prayer, the breadth of the Anglican tradition ... in a rapidly changing context', best suited to formation, worship, and the community's life and needs. As noted under (2) above, there is praise from the Ministry Bishop for how St Padarn's navigates these factors in a diverse and changing church.

However, as noted under W1 and W4, there is a renewed level of communication and engagement between St Padarn's and the Bench of Bishops, which allows St Padarn's to confidently keep making adjustments to ensure it remains in step with the bishops. The monthly meetings of the Principal and Ministry Bishop allow issues and priorities to be checked both ways. The role of the Director of Ministry Development is also key to effective, collaborative working.

### **Recommendation 25**

**That the Bench of Bishops with St Padarn's and relevant diocesan officers works on how appropriate forms of support can be given through the transition from FLM to NLM and ongoing into the development of ministry.**

The text of the PER report which precedes this recommendation gives further clarity:

There was feedback during some interviews concerning how candidates experienced the progression from FLM to NLM, with some saying they did not feel fully prepared for the reality of ministry. The reasons for

this are complex, but the lack of clarity about different ministries in terms of 'being' and 'doing' (referred to at section A) is pertinent here, and also a lack of parity in terms of ongoing support within dioceses.

One aspect of this was the particular experience of those who trained during Covid, who were nervous about the depth of their practical ministry experience at the point of ordination because significant elements of the practical training and placement experience had been limited during Covid.

The St Padarn's Dean for Discipleship, responsible for St Padarn's NLM support, is a standard fixture at the last FLM residential of the year to introduce the NLM programme and the support available from St Padarn's before people are ordained, and the first NLM sessions for those ordained in June happens in July to ensure there is no 'gap'. A residential meeting convened by the Dean for Discipleship for diocesan Directors of Ministry and NLM officers happened in November 2023 to ensure all were fully cognisant of the flow from FLM to NLM, and to identify any enhancements needing to be made.

As noted under W2 above, the work on the clarity of the different ministries is going forward in 2024. The workforce planning work (W3) is also focusing attention on the overall ministerial pipeline for the whole Church, clarifying and focusing attention on the different ministries needed and the need for a coherent approach for the whole national church.

The Director of Ministry Development convened a meeting with diocesan Directors of Ministry and NLM officers on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024 to explore the support offered in the different dioceses and to see whether greater coherence would be beneficial. This is being coordinated with the Dean for Discipleship to ensure that if further support from St Padarn's would be desired by dioceses this can be built into the St Padarn's provision.

## **Recommendation 26**

**That the Bench of Bishops works with St Padarn's and diocesan officers to ensure training incumbents and placement supervisors are carefully chosen and trained and that any accusations of bullying or sexual harassment are dealt with appropriately and effectively, in the light of the Whistleblowing Guidance in the Provincial Safeguarding Policy.**

The questions over the selection and training of training incumbents and placement supervisors are dealt with in other recommendations (e.g. 19 and 22).

The concerns over bullying and harassment are important and complex. The Principal discussed these with the Trustees of the Representative Body who took particular note of this recommendation. They believe that there is no 'silver bullet' to these issues, indeed it would be a mistake to think that there is and that such issues could be resolved, but instead need to have a sustained approach on multiple fronts.

Engagement and reflection has made clear that the issue is not that appropriate policies do not exist, but that those affected by these issues in curacies can feel disempowered to raise issues because of the power dynamics involved in training posts. This can be made more difficult by some dioceses being small and thus the perception that incumbents, senior clergy and diocesan officers all know each other well.

A number of meetings between, variously, the Director for Ministry Development, the Ministry Bishop, the Dean for Discipleship at St Padarn's and the Principal of St Padarn's have taken place to identify enhancements which can be made.

St Padarn's is enhancing its training on Church in Wales policies, such as the new Dignity Charter, within FLM to ensure that these policies are well understood by candidates.

The NLM training already has a package delivered by Bridgebuilders on "transforming church conflict". It was decided to add a new package, again delivered by Bridgebuilders, on "team dynamics" (with particular attention to power dynamics) to be delivered for curates and their training incumbents together. This was delivered for the first time in the Autumn and was well received.

It was decided to deliver the same training to Directors of Ministry, NLM officers and DDOs to encourage further reflection and dialogue on these issues, and to ensure that these diocesan staff were fully aware of the training which St Padarn's arranges for their curates on these issues – raising expectations and ensuring coherence in approach and language. This took place the first time in November 2023 and received very positive feedback. This had the effect of bringing into the open for honest discussion by diocesan officers the fact that some curates experience these serious issues.

More broadly it has been agreed that a key principle is all those in training / training posts have clear access to a **dual-track** for any concerns – one through their ministry context (placement/curacy) and one through St Padarn's. This will ensure that there is always a supportive channel for any concerns to be raised, through people with whom the individual already has a strong relationship. This approach is supported by the fact that curates already have strong relationships with St Padarn's staff because of the integrated nature of all training within the Church in Wales through the one institution. Hence, for example, three curates raised their concerns with the Principal personally at the NLM residential at which the PER reviewers heard about these concerns, and he discussed them with the Ministry Bishop at their next regular meeting.

However, they recognise that it will take some sustained work to ensure that this principle is fully rooted in practice and culture. Part of the Director of Ministry Development's engagement with the diocesan officers is to help dioceses understand that the possibility of concerns being raised with St Padarn's, rather than with diocesan officers, is a strength in the system, not a threat. Over recent years the sense that in FLM there is a 'team around the candidate' involving both St Padarn's and Diocesan officers (e.g. DDO) has become well established. While NLM is different, this nevertheless demonstrates that this level of collaborative work is achievable.

### **Recommendation 27**

**As part of the wider strategic recommended clarification about particular forms of lay and ordained ministry, that St. Padarn's review whether undertaking a mapping exercise about specific tasks would bring greater clarity and parity for candidates across the Church in Wales.**

As written this recommendation can only be taken forward after the work recommended under W2. That work is going forward but is not yet at a point at which St Padarn's can do a mapping exercise based on its results.

Nevertheless, the detailed work being currently undertaken on workforce planning (W3), ensures that the Principal is fully in touch with the emerging sense of the future ministerial needs of the Church in Wales, and can feed this back to the Dean for Initial Ministerial Training and others. The biannual meeting of the Principal, Dean, Bishop and Director of Ministry in each diocese also keeps St Padarn's up to date with the developing understanding and use of the different ministries within each diocese. However, a more comprehensive, written, mapping has to wait for the Director of Ministerial Development's work bringing together the different diocesan perspectives into an overall national framework.