



GWEINI

Serving the Christian Voluntary Sector in Wales

Evangelical Alliance Wales & Gweini Manifesto

**For the 2016 elections of the
National Assembly for Wales**

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Foreword

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Introduction

Introduction

We are delighted to present you with the Evangelical Alliance Wales - Gweini Manifesto for the 2016 National Assembly for Wales elections. This manifesto stands out among voluntary organisation manifestos for its scale and the extent to which we have consulted our members. Certainly it is unprecedented among Wales' faith groups.

The 31 policy papers worked up in 2011-2012 involved almost 200 Christians of all ages from all over Wales.

The consultation was wide enough for us to be certain that these views are representative of thousands of people in Wales

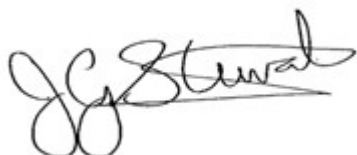
Although we haven't included an exhaustive list of the names of the people who took part, many experts with a wealth of experience were involved, including former or present chief executives and government advisors, all independent of political parties.

The 31 groups produced the policy papers in one-off meetings independently of each other, and yet we see themes such as a concern for social justice, communities and the marginalised running throughout.

Some papers have to a degree, since the time they were written, become outdated: the excellent Human Trafficking paper being one such example, in this case having been overshadowed by the Modern Slavery Bill. Nevertheless, even these papers show the intent of evangelical Christians in Wales to engage seriously in the political process across a range of issues, including ones where Christians have historically been involved (e.g. homelessness and housing), and newer ones (e.g. climate change and the environment). We really do believe that evangelical Christians have a valuable role to play in Wales' future and so it is worthwhile political parties taking the time to understand and to engage this part of the Christian church, which numbers in the tens of thousands in Wales.

The papers are good and worth reading, taking a long-term approach to societal problems and demonstrating the continuing importance of faith to modern Wales.

Yours sincerely,



Jim Stewart
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Asylum and Refugees

Priorities

Priority A – To promote the emotional wellbeing and mental health of asylum seekers and refugees

We propose that WG create a consultation group of stakeholders from NGO's, RCO's, Faith groups and other groups that are actively engaging with asylum seekers and refugees at a local level, to investigate the development of a **counselling service for refugees led by trained refugee volunteers**. The African Refugee Development Centre in Tel Aviv could be a successful model to emulate. This initiative could support refugees and asylum seekers overcome the trauma of dislocation and the post traumatic stress many feel on arrival in the UK, and also provide valuable work experience and training for refugees. It could be accommodated in a number of existing refugee community initiatives already in place in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham.

Priority B – For all WG politicians to campaign positively to promote acceptance and minimize intolerance of asylum seekers and refugees

We propose that all WG parties publicly support the initiative to make Wales a Nation of Sanctuary, and to be clear when campaigning not to confuse issues surrounding migrant workers with asylum seekers and refugees.

Priority C – To further promote refugee inclusion

Restoring a sense of belonging is very important in enabling refugees and asylum seekers to contribute positively in the receiving community. We propose that WG develop, recognise, and engage with Faith groups and other voluntary groups who make significant local contributions to restoring a refugee's sense of belonging. Strong local partnerships between statutory bodies, local authorities and the voluntary sector to further promote refugee inclusion need to be strengthened. In particular, local faith groups and other local voluntary groups could work alongside WG in delivering outcomes of projects such as the Gateway refugee resettlement programme.

Priority D – To reduce poverty amongst refugee children

Many refugees, particularly those most vulnerable with young children, suffer considerable hardship whilst waiting several months for the processing of child benefit and child tax credits. We request that the WG engage with DWP and JCP to bring down timescales locally in the processing of these key benefits.

Priority E – To enable Refugees to access Higher Education

Many refugees flee their country of origin and are unable to document their previous education, and many also lack academic English. These can be barriers to accessing Higher education. Therefore, to enable more refugees to fulfil their potential and contribute positively to society, we propose that WG work alongside the Higher Education establishments in Wales to set up Access courses specifically aimed at enabling refugees to access Higher Education. Initially, this would probably start in Cardiff but could be expanded to Swansea and Newport if there was demand.

Christian Context

Bible verses:

Luke 4 v18 Proclaim liberty and set the captives free

Hebrews 13 – hospitality to angels

Mat 25 – the sheep and the Goats

Leviticus – and others – you were once strangers in Egypt, you should welcome foreigners

Jesus himself started life as a refugee, fleeing genocide in Israel following God appearing in a dream to his parents.

The group recognised that UKBA and other issues surrounding asylum lay in the control of Westminster. However, 5 proposals covering, mental health, Education, campaigning, refugee inclusion, and refugee poverty were agreed upon following discussion of issues facing refugees in these areas. No other proposals were discussed.

Business and Entrepreneurship

Priorities

Priority A – Skills for business

For business, the education system is of critical importance in providing the appropriate education and skills for business and life through the ability in basic literacy and numeracy for the individual's level of responsibility, and an understanding and practice of the necessary attitudes and disciplines, together with a strong sense of moral and ethical responsibility in their behaviour.

Priority B – Transition from education to the world of work

Businesses and community enterprises must be encouraged to contribute to supporting the important transition from education to work by creating and using apprenticeships and community enterprise activity.

Priority C – Mutual understanding of the world of business

There should be an improved understanding of the needs and operation of successful enterprises by Assembly members, officials and education establishments. It is suggested that this can be brought about by introducing regular visits by members and officials to enterprises of all sizes in their area of responsibility. This would be both useful information and enable them to keep informed of the latest situation in a fast changing and highly competitive world.

Priority D – Business engagement in education

Similarly, ensuring a proportion of business representatives on boards of schools and colleges would help to keep these abreast of changing needs and conditions in the business world. All these would improve the understanding of risk; the operation of competition, particularly from overseas; the difficulties of cash flow and the need for the availability of capital for growth. Clearly all these are vital for the successful operation of any enterprise and consequently for the future prosperity of Wales, so need to be fully understood by the legislators and implementers of policy.

Christian Context

In Britain over the past 200 years Christians have been at the forefront of the development of education, viewing the opportunity to develop skills and talents to their full extent as an indication of the value of each person in the eyes of God. In business Christians have sought to promote a strong sense of personal responsibility and accountability, as well as concern for the well-being of others. The Bible highlights the importance of purposeful work, whether paid or unpaid, for all as a means to promote human dignity and well-being. As made clear in the early chapters of the Book of Genesis, God's original intention was that humankind would share in his creativity and stewardship of the material world. New Testament teaching reinforces the importance of work (2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, 1 Timothy 5:8). Private and social sector businesses play a key role in providing paid gainful employment for large numbers of people. Mutual understanding of and respect for others is a key Christian virtue (1 Corinthians 12:12-20). This has several practical dimensions for the relationship between business, government and wider society in Wales.

Children and Young People

Priorities for Children

Tackling Child Poverty

Priority A – Providing for Children

Keep provision available. Make it open access but targeted towards deprived children. Not based on postcode so children can access breakfast clubs, childcare without it being dependant on where they live.

Priority B – Opportunities for Children

Make quality free provision available. Make it a funding priority. Make training available for volunteers and leaders to narrow ‘the gulf’ between free provision and paid provision giving greater opportunities for those that cannot afford to pay.

Priority C – Supporting Children

Give the voluntary sector help to work with and support children in poverty.

Priority D – Inspiring Children

Have provision available that will help raise the aspirations and confidence of children before they become teenagers to help them break the cycle of poverty.

Priorities for Young People

Priority E – Protection

Change pornography access to opt-in rather than free access. It needs to be made harder for teenagers to access.

Priority F – Sexual Education

Address the sexualisation of children and young people by developing sexual education in schools giving it a more holistic approach.

Priority G – Support

Provide funding and support for organizations that can help support and educate young people both inside and outside school in sexual education, self-worth and confidence.

Priority H – Building Character

Develop PSE lessons in schools so that they are an educational priority alongside academic lessons. We need to help children and young people become well-rounded adults with maturity, confidence, strong self-worth and character to help them face life issues.

Christian Context

Children and young people are important to God. We see when Jesus instructs his disciples to allow the children to spend time with him (Matthew 19:13) that he cared for, blessed and addressed their needs. The bible also explains how seriously he takes the welfare of children. Matthew 18:6 tells us that children and young people should be protected, that we should look after them and treat them with respect. We also need to educate and discipline them to grow into mature and responsible adults that can play a positive part in their community (Ephesians 6:1-4).



Christian Engagement with Society

Priorities

Priority A – Facilitating Dialogue

In cases where the characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 conflict with each other, mediation and arbitration between groups should be encouraged as much as possible, with lawsuits as an absolute last resort. Rather than allowing for the creation of winners and losers, policy needs to focus on fostering dialogue between groups whose rights conflict with each other.

Priority B – Equal Protection

This dialogue should take place with a view to protecting the liberty of conscience of the religious person in public employment as well as the rights of other groups to equal treatment in public society. Examples would include the previously mentioned Ladele case, nurses' freedom to appropriately respond to requests for prayer, and the ability of religious persons generally to express their faith in the context of dress code subject only to issues of safety and the capacity to function effectively in their work.

Priority C – Clarification of Funding Guidelines

Local authorities, in dialogue with religious groups, need help to clarify the extent to which they can support faith based community support initiatives. This dialogue is particularly necessary in clarifying the interaction and difference between proselytising activity on the one hand and faith motivated community projects on the other.

Priority D – Regular Review of Practice

With regards to the protection of liberty of conscience, practise in areas over which the Assembly has jurisdiction (e.g. Health services, education) should be reviewed on a regular basis (e.g. every three years) to ensure that this is not being unduly limited. One way to enable this would be to ensure that guidelines for the appropriate expression of faith in public sector organisations were developed in dialogue with religious groups.

Christian Context

Most Christians want to make a positive contribution to society. We are encouraged by Jeremiah in his letter to the exiled Israelites to “seek the welfare of the city...and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” (Jer. 29:7). We are exhorted to respect the nature of our culture whilst staying true to our Christian values and convictions: Paul in his letter to the Romans tells us to “live at peace with everyone” (Rom. 12:18), as far as it depends on us, while at the same time taking care to “do what is right before all people” (Rom. 12:17). So it is our Christian values and convictions that drive us to respect and serve others and to help the disadvantaged.

It is therefore a matter of some concern that the manifestation of Christian faith in the public sector is a subject of considerable controversy. Highly publicised court cases (e.g. Lillian Ladele v London Borough of Islington, 2009) have highlighted an application of the Equality Act 2010 whereby some protected characteristics (in the Ladele case, civil marriage/sexual orientation) are seen to have priority over others (e.g. religion and belief) in situations where they are in conflict. Moreover, some Christian groups applying for funding for community support projects, such as food banks, have been refused by local authorities out of a desire not to fund the propagation of a particular religion, whereas others have not.

The “Clearing the Ground” inquiry, published in February 2012 by Christians in Parliament (1), contains an in depth analysis of these interpretations of the Equality Act, and a number of recommendations in response to them. They are echoed, in part, here.

1. <http://www.eauk.org/current-affairs/publications/upload/Clearing-the-ground.pdf>, accessed 07.06.2012

Clean up of Politics

Priorities

Priority A – Dealing with temptation

1. Power corrupts, and we can all be tempted. Some mechanisms should be adopted to help to reduce the likelihood of temptation, and provide deterrents if temptation occurs.
2. There should be an ethos of transparency, robust constitutions and accountability.
3. People should be held to account for financial and commercial transactions by an effective scrutiny committee to ensure no ‘tribal’ favouritism or nepotism.
4. A review of the apportionment of power should be undertaken to ensure a wiser distribution as:
 - a. Powerlessness in lower levels of staff can cause frustration.
 - b. Too much power may lead to senior staff believing they are infallible.
5. Unitary councils should have a constitution as they currently don’t have one and this can lead to lack of transparency and limited accountability.
6. Every elected member and official should have an induction and regular reminders to ensure they never forget that every pound spent is a pound hard earned by a member of the wider community and handed over in good faith for services that are valued.

Priority B – Press and publicity

1. The freedom of press is imperative. A voluntary code and guidelines should be established to ensure that:
 - a. The press is more objective and not just aimed at selling papers.
 - b. The press is more involved in local matters, and better informed about local events, people and issues.
 - c. As it is very difficult for elected members to admit to mistakes without being pilloried disproportionately, being accused of 'U-turns' and 'flip-flopping' there should be proportional reporting allowing for reasonable human frailty.
 - d. As political correctness leads to a person being lambasted for events decades earlier, again disproportionately; - there should be proportional reporting to allow for yesterday’s events being judged by today’s standards.
 - e. The press should be more investigative and rigorous as they appear to have lost the confidence of the public in these areas.
 - f. There is no benefit from the lure of being famous for fifteen minutes at whatever cost.

Priority C – Handling pressure groups

1. As it is hard to know how to handle pressure groups new guidelines should be established to assist in communicating to them to ensure that:-
 - a. They are seen as good in encouraging people to participate in local events and to engage with the democratic process.
 - b. Their potential danger in providing a focal point for potential blackmail, or a means of providing backhanders is minimised.
 - c. The disproportionate impact of some Company lobbying which can be almost unstoppable and overcome genuine local concerns is fairly restricted.
2. Registers of members’ interests should include lobbying interests, and potential conflicts of interests should certainly be published and corrective action taken.

Priority D – The blurring of distinction between right and wrong actions

1. There appears to be an increase in ‘professional’ politicians, who see politics as a career

- choice rather than a public service. As this can lead to putting self before the good of the community there should be a review of the values code to ensure an increased emphasis to the fact that the prime role is a public service and not a career.
2. The values code should take account of the fact that those who take part in politics from local to national level are representative of society as a whole. There is sin in society; therefore there will be sin in politics.
 3. All parties should recognise we believe there is an important place for people of faith.
 4. Politicians should treat people of faith with respect and dignity, as bringing something valuable to society, e.g. Street Pastors.
 5. All parties should recognise that Christians must be more assertive and self-confident in the gospel, by grace and by example.
 6. There should be more explicit teaching on standards, on service, on duty and on responsibilities. We have emphasised our rights and diminished our responsibility to one another.

Priority E – Freedom of information and transparency

1. As it is difficult to get background information about any issue and the thinking around it a system should be set up which is easy to access covering all fields of interest.
2. There should be full disclosure of income from all sources.
3. There should be full disclosure of relationships – family and friends who may profit from a decision, and membership of organisations such as Freemasonry.
4. Genuine competition should be inbuilt with regard to employment of all staff, to avoid even the suspicion of nepotism and tribalism.
5. The Freedom of Information Act must be respected, including all information which has led to a particular decision.
6. All parties should commit to the procedure that all Manifestos must be made in good faith, not promised then forgotten, and explanation given when important parts of a manifesto are dropped after an election.

Priority F – Conflicts of interests

1. In addition to the points mentioned earlier as an important factor all parties should commit to the following:
 - a. Government must be transparent. Lack of transparency leads to cynicism and disengagement by the public. This is very dangerous for democracy.
 - b. As a major factor is the practice of people having more than one job. In our opinion, it is desirable that one person should have one job in any legislative body. Being an Assembly Member should be a full time job. Other positions outside may be part time, and then other paid work should be proportionate in terms of hours and pay.
 - c. Separation of council/assembly responsibilities and interests from other areas of similar work and interests, whether paid or not, whether directly or not, must be clear and transparent, and a politician who is perceived to be involved in decision making while having an interest – family, financially or other – must be seen to be separating himself or herself from that decision making process.

Christian Context

Looking at Romans 13:1-7 it would seem that the Bible points to certain principles regarding governance. Civic authority and government is seen as a divine gift for human benefit, and the common good, and so must reflect the benevolence of God through the good ordering of society with, as a consequence, certain powers to compel compliance. Christians are urged to seek to develop civic and personal virtues which enable them to attempt to fulfil their social and political duty as citizens.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 has the implication that there is an imperative to promote peace, respect and dignity, and the freedom both to practice religion and to meet the demands of faith. This means that Christians are to be involved in every human activity in order to bring God's justice and righteousness. This may mean challenging a government which is not reflecting God's purposes.

Crime

Priorities

Priority A – Intervention Parenting

We are concerned not just with crime itself but the root causes of crime which often involve lack of self worth, insecurity poor role models, and poor education and so this is wide-ranging and long-term. It will not be cheap, but will probably be cheaper than the cost of increasing the prison population and the cost (often ignored) that should be incurred in repairing the social and emotional damage caused by crime.

Parents need to be supported and helped to create socially-secure, spiritually-aware young people. Young people with a strong sense of self-worth, a stable moral framework for living and a desire to succeed and make the world a better place for all. Parenting is one of the most challenging tasks we face but one of the few at which we are expected to excel without training. We offer ante-natal classes for all expectant mums; parenting courses should follow on from ante-natal classes without stigma and possibly mentoring where possible as well. These are being piloted in some areas.

Priority B – Intervention Children

Where children, for whatever reason, come into the care of the local authority, it (the LA) should not only seek to achieve the above but also, in partnership with other agencies and organisations, seek to repair any emotional, psychological or social damage that has been done, such care should not end arbitrarily at a set age but be ongoing as in any natural family and if appropriate with a mentor.

It is important to ensure that the ethos of schools, working in partnership with families, however defined, reinforces or creates the pupils' self-worth as well as their spiritual and moral framework schools should import the resilience to resist negative pressures from society in whatever form they may come, and to strive to build a better society. There needs to be close co-operation between schools, social services, police, faith groups and other agencies and organisations to help achieve this.

Priority C – Mentoring

Mentoring is a valuable way of supporting individuals who are struggling at any stage in their lives, whether it is an older mum mentoring a younger one, a reformed drug addict mentoring youngsters heading for addiction, successful members of society getting alongside those who are failing, or potential high-fliers being supported by existing high-fliers.

Priority D – Prisons

The Wolfe report after the Strangeways riots in Manchester stated that Prisons should be no further than fifty miles from an offender's home.

Due to prison overcrowding and the location of existing prisons this is not the case, this is particularly true in Wales where there is no women's prison the nearest being Eastwood Park near Gloucester.

Given the value of maintaining family links while in prison it is essential that we have sufficient prisons, strategically located to enable families to visit regularly. This would indicate a move away from high capacity prisons in isolated locations. Given the key role of women in family life it is essential that we have at least two women's prisons in Wales (one north, one south), and that there are women's units attached to other prisons where practical.

Also there is a big need for a men's prison in North Wales rather than in Liverpool which is the present situation.

Where for whatever reasons a prisoner is kept a long way from home, ways of facilitating visits should be explored.

Priority E – De-criminalisation of some drugs offences.

There has been a move in recent years to increase the number of things that can lead to a criminal conviction and to a subsequent criminal record. This has huge effects on individual's future prospects and also increases cost to the criminal justice system using resources that could be used elsewhere.

Christian opinion is divided on the de-criminalisation of drug use but there is certainly a case to look again at who is being convicted as a matter of urgency.

There is also a case to look again at what class illegal drugs are categorised at.

Priority F – Detox and Rehabilitation Programmes.

There is though a need for treatment rather than punishment for those who are users of illegal and harmful substances and this needs to be taken forward. Reduced cost for prison sentences could release some money for more drug treatment programmes.

Compulsory detox and rehabilitation could be a good compromise on this matter. Linked with employment and accommodation opportunities for those without these things, it could prove very effective.

Christian Context

At the heart of the Gospel is a message of justice together with restoration and this is at the root of this manifesto.

There is also an emphasis upon family life and so the need to prevent breakdown of the family unit, this has inspired the request for local prisons in particular for women who are still the main carer for a child.

We do not believe prison should just be about punishment but should follow the Christian principle of restoration, forgiveness and compensating the victim in some way for what they have done.

Lastly Christian community is important and as a first step helping people to become members of the community in which they live is very important. People often need help to do this rather than putting them in to prison which widens the gap for the person.

Language; Tourism and Leisure; Culture, Art and Heritage

General Principles

As a general principle it is necessary to recognise that:

1. These topics do not exist in isolation, neither from each other, nor from thriving local communities.
2. Strategies based upon the topics listed above need to be developed alongside economic regeneration plans within the nation. Suggested policies have of necessity been categorised, but many suggestions with equal relevance could also have been categorised.
3. This requires deliberate and measureable commitment to cross-sector partnerships to encourage strategic and holistic approaches that both encapsulate and coordinate local regeneration projects. All of these impinge upon and have effects upon language, tourism & leisure, and culture, the arts and our national heritage: our responses locally and nationally will be shaped in turn by our own understanding of our unique language, heritage and culture.
4. The Welsh Assembly Government has repeatedly recognised this requirement as specified in past reports such as its own: 'Making the Connections-Delivering better services for Wales' (2004) which recommended the need to share best practice between organisations.
5. To utilise local knowledge and expertise in order to develop the local economy and launch community-based products and services (similar to Fair Trade or local-based small community cooperatives). There is a need to enable community bodies to develop their capital and become less reliant on grant-funding. This could include training and capacity-building to enhance their skills and ability to apply for, prepare and win tenders.
6. The Welsh Assembly Government has recognised the importance and achievements of the 'Spiritual Capital' within communities as described in the 'Spiritual Capital Working Group' (2008) report.

These recommendations would seek to build upon past insights as well as contemporary requirements.

Priorities

Language, Culture and Heritage

Introduction

Welsh national identity is intrinsically linked to its heritage, culture and language. All these need to be handled sensitively for they have the potential to be used, both positively and negatively, either as means of exclusion or as the means of creating an inclusive society. In view of the most recent Census reports, issues surrounding the decline in the use of Welsh as a living communal language in its traditional heartlands require immediate attention. Without a vital appreciation of the place of the living Welsh language within the nation its historic culture and unique heritage will be misunderstood.

There is a necessity to:

Priority A – Ensure Cooperation between Welsh-Language Teaching Programmes

Ensure further co-operation between Welsh-language teaching programmes across Wales.

Priority B – Protect First Language Welsh-Speaking Communities

Implement policies to protect first language Welsh-speaking communities and to encourage confidence in Welsh as a living language of community. This will include taking the impact of planning, housing and other pertinent issues on the Welsh language and small communities in to account.

Priority C – Increase Number of Welsh-Language Schools

Ensure increased provision of Welsh-language schools. There was, not unexpectedly, a significant minority not in favour of this priority.

Priority D – Recognise the Historical Importance of Faith Communities in Wales

Recognise and record (orally, digitally or through spoken word) both local history (e.g. People's Collection through Cymal) and the role of faith communities in shaping the character and identity of Wales e.g. geographically through place names (Llan) and architecturally through buildings and their effects on the natural, rural and urban landscapes and environments (monasteries, churches and chapels).

Arts

Introduction

The Arts are increasingly recognised as a key aspect of a well-balanced society. The potential of the Arts to educate, inspire and encourage people to realise their potential is well documented. The Arts have the potential to boost confidence, encourage positive community relationships, develop new skills, and inspire people to work together to create something they can be proud of.

Therefore we need to ensure:

Priority E – Arts should be Accessible to whole of Wales

That access to quality and affordable arts should be widened and increasingly accessible to all across the whole of Wales

Priority F – Commitment to Arts Projects to Benefit the Socially Deprived Areas

The benefit of, and on-going commitment to Arts-based projects within socially deprived areas.

Priority G – Commitment to Performing Arts to Improve Community and ‘Well-being’

A recognition that in an age of austerity and financial cutbacks, music-teaching in schools provides long-term cultural benefits to communities, as well as benefits to physical and mental health; participation in cultural activities such as music, drama etc. has been shown to improve community and “well-being”. Participation in cultural activities should not be the prerogative of more affluent areas or families. For these reasons peripatetic music teaching should be protected and supported through cultural and educational policy.

Tourism and Leisure

Introduction

Tourism remains vital to a thriving Welsh economy. International tourism brings revenue from outside and helps promote Wales; tourism from within Wales helps to develop an understanding of our national identity and sense of belonging.

We recognise the need to:

Priority H –Continue to Improve Accessibility of our Tourist Attractions

Improve travel infrastructure within Wales.

Priority I – Continue to Improve to Achieve a Clean and High-Quality Environment

Continue to address environmental concerns- e.g. cleaning up of post-industrial waste sites and the elimination of excessive, embarrassing and image-damaging fly tipping. All these create negative impressions of Wales for both locals and visitors alike.

Priority J – Promote Internal Tourism

Develop a strategy to promote internal tourism – e.g. twinning schools from North and South Wales to work together on local projects; encourage twinning between villages and towns within Wales.

Priority K – Develop More Sustainable Policies

Promote and develop sustainable industrial and environmental policies.

Priority L – Formulate New Policies to Capitalize on our Worldwide Christian Heritage

Develop policies to capitalize on Wales’ historical Christian heritage

Priority M – Market Wales Better Abroad

Improve resources and coverage of Wales abroad.

Priority N – Promote Existing and Develop New All-Year-Round Attractions

1. Develop facilities for attractions that can be used all-year-round.
2. Protect and develop Leisure Centres– also for holistic wellbeing, and ongoing health.

Christian Context

This submission is based upon the distinctive language, history and heritage of Wales and endeavours to promote a vibrant national culture within this land.

The document urges the adoption of the policies outlined in stimulating such a thriving culture and in reversing the decline in Welsh-speaking recorded in the 2011 Census.

Contemporary social sciences devote considerable attention and interest to the subjects of tourism & leisure, arts & heritage, language and culture.

Likewise, God created humankind in His own image, giving them a “Cultural Mandate” to be fruitful and to govern society and nature in the same manner as He: that is, in creativity, love, wisdom, righteousness, skill, and in deep concern for the well-being of all.

This fruitfulness and emulating creativity is a reflection of the Creator Himself.

In God’s dispensation variety and abundance are the norm, whilst singularity of language and concomitant culture are understood as deviations from God’s blueprint for thriving civilizations.

In biblical passages such as Acts 2:8, languages, cultures and national identities are not only preserved but become expressions of worship and creativity. (cf. Revelation 5:9; 6:9-10)

Heritage; knowing our story, retelling our story, defining ourselves by that story and recognising the hand of God in that account is also celebrated.

Psalm 87:7. Leisure, a cycle of rest and refreshment, according to the Bible is inbuilt into creation rhythms. Thus all these aspects of human life which are necessary for a flourishing community are central to the Bible's vision of an abundant life.

Disability

Priorities

Priority A – Communication and Partnership

People with disabilities, families/carers and other agencies have a wealth of knowledge. They would value sharing it with the Welsh Government, churches, and other community bodies in order to form partnerships for collaboration.

1. Develop a national strategy for celebrating good practice and sharing stories of partnership between statutory and third sector is desirable.
2. Make resources available for new initiatives.

Priority B – Advocacy

People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable because they and their families do not always know their legal rights nor are in touch with agencies that can help them.

All organisations and agencies, including the faith communities, should be provided with training to equip them to provide information about rights and services and be given the ability to signpost disabled people to local services.

Priority C – Empowerment

People with disabilities want to be enabled towards greater independence.

This will only come through communities understanding needs through awareness raising, quality support and local initiatives.

Priority D – Inclusion

People with disabilities want to be fully included in communities, at local and national levels. The Christian faith community provides a good role model of participation and service to the community. Although 70% of churches in Wales provide disabled access, and 40% provide a hearing loop system, there is a way to go to encourage total accessibility.

1. Enable the Christian faith community to have an opportunity to share cases of good practice nationally and at a local level through websites, social media and other vehicles of communication.
2. Support for Christian churches to access and successfully apply for grants that will assist churches to provide accessible facilities to people with learning disabilities, mental health challenges, sensory impairments and mobility problems.

Christian Context

Any theology of disability must begin at the beginning – human beings, made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and therefore ascribed dignity and value, quite separate from their actions or achievements. Throughout the Bible we discern a pattern of righteousness and social justice (Proverbs 31:9) and learn about the God who defends the weak and a Saviour who treats disabled people with love and respect (Mark 1:41-42). We stand in the tradition of those Christians who have pioneered in the provision of care for disabled people – Andrew Reed, John Grooms, Lord Shaftesbury, to name but a few. The Christian church and Christian voluntary organisations form part of today's third sector and therefore are a national and local resource.

Economy

Priorities

Priority A – A holistic approach

Economic policy must proceed from recognition of the wider needs of all people in Wales. This should avoid “silo-thinking” in which particular sectors of the economy and groups in society are supported or favoured in isolation from their connections with others. Policy should also be consensual and focused on long-term human flourishing, rather than short-term fixes which are framed within the constraints of the political cycle. So, for example, public investment should consider the needs and interests of future generations, as much as those of the present. Human flourishing is as much about investing in social and spiritual capital as in material prosperity. Economic policy should also give due consideration to the importance of exercising good stewardship over the shared natural wealth with which God has blessed the people of Wales.

Priority B – Sustainable finance

Contemporary society and its economic structures are pre-occupied with interest rates, inflation, debt, consumer spending and monetary measures of well being (for example GDP per head). Economic policy in Wales should seek to reduce the burden of interest payment, inflationary pressure, and debt burden on the population by promoting and supporting community-focused systems of finance, such as credit unions and micro-finance and away from usurious credit and bad lending practice which wring resources from the most vulnerable. Stronger consumer protection measures should be introduced to promote prudent and equitable lending practices.

Priority C – Work opportunities and incentives

Employment opportunity is not always fairly distributed across society – some are expected to work very long hours to make ends meet, others find themselves economically inactive. Individuals ought to be encouraged and supported to stay in work and not incentivised to stay out of it, and policy makers must re-double efforts to achieve effective implementation of this principle. However, alongside this, policy must recognise that society faces obligations to promote access to appropriate skills and training opportunities, whether vocational and practical or academic. Flexible approaches, rather than “one size fits all”, should be adopted to equip people for purposeful activity, whether paid market work or non-market work, such as caring and homemaking or volunteering and community engagement. Policy should recognise the different needs of individuals at different life stages.

Christian Context

The principle of good stewardship runs throughout the Bible. It reminds society that individual and corporate talents and abilities, as well as the natural created resources with which humankind are blessed, are God's gracious provision for us (Psalm 8). That provision is both economic, provided to meet material needs, and spiritual (Luke 12:22-28). An exclusive focus on the material to the detriment of the whole person, body, mind and spirit, is condemned (Luke 16:13). The Bible also speaks extensively of the need to ensure that all people have access to that material and spiritual blessing, and are not excluded through loss of economic opportunity or through financial exploitation (Deuteronomy 24: 10-22, Amos 5). There is therefore an obligation on those who have much to provide for those who have less (Acts 2: 44-47).

Education

Introduction

The references to education in the following points encompass the full range of learning from pre-school education to primary, secondary and further education establishments and on into lifelong learning for all ages and abilities.

Priorities

Priority A – The importance of Christian values in education

In recognition of our rich Christian heritage, we feel that the education system should continue to reflect Christian values that have hitherto been the bedrock of our society.

Priority B – The importance of the development of God-given skills

The education system should build on the value that has been placed on communities and individuals to encourage the development of God-given skills.

Priority C – The importance of the right to express personal faith within the educational context

We uphold the right of individuals, both staff and learners, to express their faith within the educational context.

Priority D – The importance of supporting spiritual and moral development within educational communities

The education of children and young people must not hinder the spiritual and moral development of the next generation.

Priority E – The importance of supporting parents in preparing their children for adult life

We believe it is the responsibility of parents to prepare their children for adult life and state educational provision should support parents in this.

Christian Context

The biblical mandate for upholding strong educational principles can be found throughout the bible including:

Train up a child in the way he should go Proverbs 22:6

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of understanding Proverbs 1:7-9

Teach them diligently Deuteronomy 6:7

Employment

Introduction

Work is:

1. **The means for exercising our stewardship** and in doing so, people should have access to resources and control over them. Work is essential to human dignity but is not an end in itself. It meets the **Jubilee principle** of restoring individuals to their stewardship resources.
2. **A social activity** promoting co-operation in stewardship of talents and resources as is illustrated in the New Testament teaching on the church. There should be **set limits to work** – the principle of the Sabbath.
3. **Worship** when seen aright (the word in Hebrew “avodah” means both worship and service)

Priorities

Priority A – Sense of community and social cohesion

Work serves the function of bringing people together with mutual dependence and cooperation, an essential for human prospering. This may involve a degree of decentralisation of policy bearing in mind the local history and culture. Communities need to be empowered to be able to take initiatives and may involve pump-priming (funding) and self-help ventures like co-operatives. A greater respect for the value of voluntary activity is also a necessary ingredient. As communities come together in genuine co-operation there will also be a sense of inclusion for disaffected youth, ex-offenders and refugees.

Priority B – Encourage positive parenting and family influence

A positive and healthy attitude to work is primarily born out of family influence. The family should be the first unit in society to provide support and structure for life. When working effectively, this is where the right environment is created for children to begin to realise their potential. Positive role models are needed in family and wider society to inspire youth and adults and stimulate achievement, breaking down negative life cycles and reinforcing positive ones. Churches, health and social services all have a role in recovering, strengthening and reinforcing parenting skills.

Health issues need to be addressed at family level in terms of how to eat in healthy ways, habits of exercise and a positive ethos of making a contribution. Unhelpful expectations perpetuated in media and entertainment need to be countered and measures are also needed to deal with the negative effect of much of their output.

Priority C – Education & Mentoring in Business Enterprise

We have to find ways of avoiding worklessness, even if this does not involve paid work. For example, young people can learn from older people if a channel of assisting them can be found through voluntary service.

We must engender a greater respect for older people and what they can pass on from what they have learned. Discovering others’ achievements, often with far less resources, can be inspirational.

Role models are important in terms of setting an example in business enterprise. An entrepreneur mentality needs to be encouraged in schools and colleges. Courses should be practical in supervising the setting up of an actual business, so that its formation and development is witnessed as part of the Course, maybe involving the co-operation of local government enterprise departments.

Local business is crucial to community cohesion.

Priority D – Replacing benefits with work opportunities for Carers, Disabled, Single Parents etc

Recent benefit changes aiming to get people on Incapacity Benefit into work requires corresponding work opportunities. There needs to be a Business incentive developed to involve people who are disabled or have other health disadvantages e.g. paying toward salary costs for the first two years while their skills are developing for their value to be appreciated.

People with particular disabilities e.g. the range of Autism including Asperger's syndrome, should be given opportunities suited to their particular mindset such as IT skills or statistics.

Those providing care for sick/elderly relatives should be recognised by providing benefits equivalent to a normal wage to show the importance of what they are doing.

Reducing the bureaucracy of employing someone must be encouraged e.g. a National Insurance "holiday", relaxing maternity pay provisions for very small businesses, allowing more people to be self-employed.

Priority E - Recognition of volunteer opportunities in preparing for paid employment

The present unemployed need to become skilled to become job-ready through volunteer opportunities (as currently provided by Vine Social Enterprises at IKEA Wales and others). Although unpaid, this is an essential pre-requisite for the world of work, learning to be dependable, turning up on time, working with others, culture of no excuses etc.

Volunteer work e.g. with a Charity or other employer should be recognised by the Jobcentre on the jobseeker's record as seeking to prepare for work (and included on any job application). However, safeguards must be put in place to ensure that potential employers do not take advantage of such volunteer labour.

Time banking should also be more greatly encouraged.

Christian Context

The biblical picture of work is first and foremost that of God in His work of creation and the delegation to humanity of the stewardship of the created order (Genesis 1: 26 -30) so that everyone has a calling to exercise their talents in this task.

The principles of responsibility and accountability were confirmed by Jesus in the parable of the talents (Luke 19: 11-17).

Men and women have a right and obligation to work, this being the creation provision (Genesis 1:28, 2:15) echoed in the Psalms (Psalm 104:23) and New Testament (2 Thess 3:6-13 , 1 Tim 5: 8).

The biblical understanding of work is not limited to merely paid work.

Environment and Climate Change

Priorities

Priority A – Taking Sustainable Development Seriously

The Welsh Government should honour its constitution and seek to undertake all of its functions with sustainable development as a key guiding principle – this has got to progress beyond an activity for the Environment Minister alone! We look for a specific commitment to see:

Genuine and significant progress towards a “one planet Wales” with a retained commitment to eco foot-printing as the main monitoring technique (i.e. measuring the impact that we have – including our use of imported resources and travelling abroad, especially by air).

Continued encouragement of Welsh civil society to engage with the sustainable development agenda at home and in partnership with communities around the world.

Priority B – An aspiration for a Zero Carbon Wales By 2030

The route to this goal for Britain has been plotted by the Centre for Alternative Technology but we recognise that not all of the powers required for its implementation are held in Wales. We would never-the-less seek a commitment for relevant actions including:

1. Welsh and local government leadership by “putting their own house in order” particularly in terms of energy use and procurement.
2. Using devolved powers, its own estate and EU funding programmes effectively to, for instance, increase carbon sequestration in the Welsh landscape whilst significantly reducing the greenhouse gas emissions from Welsh agriculture.
3. Ensure that expenditure on transport is focussed on delivering sustainable options with the reduction of greenhouse gas and other undesirable emissions as a priority objective.

Priority C – An Emphasis on the Production of Renewable Electricity

The emphasis on electricity as a key part of the energy mix is likely to increase as we switch to electric vehicles and more electrical heating (heat pumps). All forms of renewable electricity should be explored – including wind power, on- and off-shore, solar and hydro-power. There should be a particular emphasis on wave and tidal power.

Power from sustainably produced biomass (including biogas) should only be encouraged where the “waste” heat is effectively recovered as part of a combined heat and power unit. As most renewable electricity is intermittent the development of storage techniques should go hand-in-hand with the deployment of the generation capacity -especially pumped storage and the generation of hydrogen/methane through electrolysis. The electricity grid needs up-dating in order that it reflects a new pattern of more local generation.

Priority D – Sustainable Housing

Waste of energy through poor housing design is a major issue. New houses must be built to the best low carbon standards, especially in terms of insulation and sustained low energy use. There must also be a major effort to continue to improve the status of the current stock of housing, seeking to bring them at least to level C on the current Energy Performance Certificate ratings. The incorporation of low carbon heating solutions (solar thermal, efficient wood fuel stoves and boilers, and heat pumps) into the existing and new building stock should be a priority. The planning system should ensure that new housing is so sited as to allow efficient servicing by public transport.

Priority E – Working Towards Zero Waste

Waste is a major source of carbon production – in terms of the carbon and other finite natural resources that have been used in manufacture, and the production of methane from land-fill. The aim must be for zero landfill and the effective implementation of the “waste-hierarchy” (reduce, re-use, recycle, recover). This will require careful thought, but must include severe reduction in the use of packaging, the use of anaerobic digesters to process as much readily bio-degradable waste as possible, and the use of properly regulated combined heat and power incinerators for (genuinely) residual waste.

Conclusion

We recognise that this is an enormous and complex subject and that we can only “scratch the surface” in this brief but we believe that these aims, as outlined, would not only be a major step in our care for God’s creation, but they would also provide a much needed boost to the economy – in terms of the research and production needed to provide these new technologies, and through jobs created in the construction industry as new infrastructure is put in place, new houses are built and old houses are refurbished. We recognise that the commitments that we are seeking will require significant expenditure but we are also firmly convinced that this would constitute a very wise investment that would negate the need for even greater investment in years to come.

We commend these points to those who seek to govern Wales in our name.

Christian Context

Caring for the natural world is important to Christians. From the beginning, scripture teaches that God created it and gave humankind "dominion" (i.e. responsibility) over it, inviting us to "work it and take care of it". We also have a God-given mandate to care for "the stranger, the orphan, and the widow" – the poorest in society. Our failure to care for creation, especially through our part in climate change, is also an assault on those who are poorest in our societies – especially those in the majority world.

*As Christians, we share responsibility for this failure, and have to accept the challenge to heal and protect our world. Within this general concern, we accept the scientific evidence and consensus that highlights **climate change** as the greatest threat to our planet, and seek to slow down and then reverse the impacts that humanity’s over-use of the earth’s resources has played within it.*

With that understanding, we commend the Welsh Government for their commitment to a sustainable Wales, but need to see those words transferred into action. To that end, we call for a further commitment to the above.

Equality

Priorities

Priority A – All are of equal value to one another.

All of us are made by and of value to God and so should be of equal value to one another.

Priority B – All Government activities should promote and protect equal respect and dignity to all

A civilised society is one which treats all its members with equal respect and dignity throughout their lives and in which all government activities reflect and protect that.

Priority C – All should be entitled to share, discuss and challenge each other according to our differing values and belief systems

The broader civic agenda should reflect the right of individuals and groups to hold value and belief systems and live according to them providing those beliefs promote and protect the equality of all human beings.

Everyone in society is equally entitled to share and discuss those values and beliefs.

This also means that individuals and groups are equally entitled to challenge one another's values and actions.

Christian Context

The purpose of this statement is to provide a clear framework within which policies can be developed. It reflects a Biblical Christian approach to equality, based on the example of Jesus who was open to everybody but always ready to challenge and be challenged. Our starting point is Genesis [1:27](#) "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them". But we are all equally able to get things wrong [Romans 3:23](#) "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". We therefore believe that all people are significant and of equal value to God and should be treated equally, with courtesy, dignity and justice.

Families

Introduction

The best context for the formation of stable communities is one of stable relationships within society. This places support for marriage and family life at the heart of building a healthy society. Statistics show that 48% of all children born today will see the breakdown of their parents' relationship [1]. The breakdown of the couple relationship has a direct impact on the life course and well-being of their children, directly correlating the value of stable couple relationship to a stable childhood [2]. Knowing that healthy marriages bring the best outcomes, not only for couples but for children, makes relationship support for families in Wales a priority.

Priorities

Priority A – Early intervention and support

Preventative parenting and relationship support is more cost effective in the long term than the cost of crisis intervention [1] and [3]. Introducing support at an early stage provides couples and parents with the skills needed at key life stages, equipping them to deal with problems when they arise.

Priority B – Culture change

Relationship breakdown is estimated to cost the UK Government £44bn per year [4], so a strategy to prevent breakdown and equip families to build strong and healthy relationships will be of obvious benefit to the Welsh economy. It is important that there is a focus on promoting the benefits of family relationship support at all stages of family life – in good times as well as bad – to change cultural perception that relationship support is only useful or needed in times of crisis.

Priority C – Eradicate child poverty

Policy should aim to strengthen family life and support families across the spectrum of need. It has been shown that children's outcomes in the areas of health, education and finance are closely linked to the stability of the family unit [1] & [3]. Since poverty is often the cause and effect of family breakdown [1], it essential to address this issue in the overall strategy.

Priority D – Community-based delivery model

Research shows that the most appropriate means of delivering support for families is by equipping people to do this at a local level [3]. Measures such as preventative relationship education that is accessible through community gateways mean that more people benefit and de-stigmatises the concept. Churches and other faith settings, the workplace, register offices, community centres, GP practices, health centres, schools etc. are venues where support is seen to be easily obtainable.

Priority E – Workplace initiatives

Policy-makers and practitioners should be encouraged to develop incentives with employers to promote a beneficial work-life balance. Workplace initiatives can include appropriate childcare provision and encourage employees to have quality relationships at home. This will reduce the effect of consequent absenteeism in employment due to family difficulties.

Christian Context

Christians believe that marriage was instituted by God at creation to be the foundation for an environment where generation after generation children can be born, loved, nurtured and brought to healthy emotional and physical maturity (Genesis 2:24). The formation of a healthy society will therefore be about the importance it places on the strength and durability of relationships, marriage and family life.

[1] 'Forgotten Families', Centre for Social Justice 2012.

[2] Cowan and Cowan 2011.

[3] 'Stable Relationships for a Stable Society', Relate 2012.

[4] 'Counting the Cost of Family Failure', 2012 Update, The Relationship Foundation.

Finance and Taxation

Priorities:

Priority A – Consider Replacing the Barnett Formula

Whilst there is consideration being given to replacing the Barnett Formula, there should be no decline in funding for Wales throughout that process.

Priority B – Any Replacement to the Barnett Formula should be Needs Based

The Barnett Formula has the merit of being simple, but if it is agreed that it should be replaced based on needs, then there should be no decline of relative funding in Wales.

Priority C – A New Longer Term Planning Approach to Allow Unused Funds to be Rolled Over for Five Years

There should be more flexibility in funding for public bodies with free access allowed to funds accumulated in previous years. This will allow there to be better long term planning.

Priority D – New Enterprise Departments to Raise Funds for Public Bodies but No Tax raising Powers for Wales.

We see no particular benefit in having powers to raise taxes outside of Westminster. The power to do so would not mean that this would ever be exercised, just as the tax raising powers Scotland has at present have never been exercised. Public bodies should however be allowed to raise funds independent of the Treasury by operating 'enterprise' departments where possible.

Christian Context

Matthew 22: 17-21

17 Tell us then, what do you think? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

18 But Jesus realised their evil intentions and said, "Hypocrites! Why are you testing me?"

19 Show me the coin used for the tax." So they brought him a denarius.

20 Jesus said to them, "Whose image is this, and whose inscription?"

21 They replied, "Caesar's." He said to them, "Then give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Romans 13:6, 7

6 For this reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants devoted to governing.

7 Pay everyone what is owed: taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due.

Galatians 2

V10 We should continue to remember the poor

So: - 1. It is right for governments to levy and for the people to pay taxes

2. At all times the poor must be provided for

Health and Wellbeing

Priorities

Priority A – Good health care must recognise and promote chaplaincy services.

The current chaplaincy budgets should be ring fenced.

The importance of on-going chaplaincy input in the transition from hospital to community should be recognised.

A national system should be set up whereby hospitals can identify vicars, ministers and pastors conducting hospital visits, mindful of the fact that there are approximately 25 denominations in Wales and a large number of independent churches.

Priority B – Good spiritual care should be promoted as an integral component of good healthcare.

1. The impact of recently introduced regulations to ensure provision of appropriate spiritual care for patients should be assessed.
2. Formal recognition should be given to the importance of religious content to spiritual care which is not just about treating people with dignity.
3. The important role non-chaplaincy NHS staff can play in the provision of certain aspects of spiritual care should be recognised and encouraged.

Priority C – Whole person health care should be formally recognised and promoted with regards to the:

1. Interrelatedness of person and community and the implications of dislocation in this regard with respect to lack of self-worth and consequent risk taking with health implications: drinking excess alcohol, drug taking, comfort eating, smoking etc.
2. Importance of family stability and the role of fathers in relation to self-worth in insuring against later risk-taking behaviour. Investment should be made in marriage and relationship support schemes to promote family stability.
3. Health care cost of loneliness and to invest in voluntary and community sector initiatives to address loneliness.

Priority D – The investment in the prevention of illness should involve the following:

1. The promotion of cheap sporting or other exercise opportunities for all ages. Also, provide places to be active, especially for families with children under 5.
2. The promotion of healthy eating, for example healthy food co-ops in schools, especially to families with children under 5.
3. Invest more in education: a) regarding obesity, addressing the risk that obese mothers will have children who will be insulin resistant and thus more likely to become obese; b) regarding foetal alcohol syndrome, addressing the risk that alcohol dependent mothers will give birth to children with foetal alcohol syndrome; c) encouraging breast feeding, stopping smoking and safe sex.

Priority E – The following health policy should be revisited:

1. The morning after pill should no longer be provided free of charge to children and young people because it creates an environment in which they know they can have sex even if they don't have contraception to hand, justifying taking less care, and it does nothing to address STIs.

Priority F – Dignified care of the elderly and those at the end of life should be improved by adopting and investing more in the following policies:

1. Palliative care at home.
2. Palliative care training for all doctors including secondments to hospices.
3. Hospice care.

Priority G – Action should be taken to ensure full advantage is taken of the proven relationship between religious faith and health and well being by:

1. Partnering more extensively with successful Christian Voluntary Sector projects in Wales, so that people increasingly have *the option* of accessing services in the context of a faith ethos. (Given the commitment to promote diversity and choice, the desire of some people to access services in the context of a faith ethos and the connection between faith, health and well being, this policy is particularly compelling.)
2. Provision of a similar 'myth busters' document to that provided by the previous English Labour Government (and endorsed by the current government) by the Department for Communities and Local Government, to help ensure that faith based welfare projects are not being discriminated against.
3. Development of a government investment programme in Christian Voluntary Sector community franchising projects as in England, and on a proportionate basis.

Christian Context

God's blessing is the ultimate source of all good health and wellbeing. Sickness and death are both part of our human experience but God's love for his world ensured that his son Jesus Christ came to bring hope. It is through Jesus that we see most clearly God's commitment to establish his kingdom on earth as he taught his disciples to pray 'your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. This brings the hope of forgiveness, restored relationships, healing, health and wellbeing as we see in Jesus' ministry and that of his disciples. That the early church did not see the need to bring healing just through miraculous intervention is eloquently underlined by the fact that one of the gospel writers who recorded many of Jesus' miracles, Luke, was a doctor.

Housing and Homelessness **(Including the Homeless Community and Supporting People)**

Introduction

Although Wales has a proportionally higher amount of social housing (provided by local authorities and housing associations), this is more than offset by the higher deprivation and unemployment levels than in the rest of the UK.

We welcome the Welsh Government's White Paper on Housing, published in May 2012, which has shown a commitment to housing as a high priority.

Priorities

Housing Policy

Priority A – Housing Quality Standards

Funding levels are sufficient to enable social housing providers to deliver on their obligation to bring their homes up to standard (otherwise known as the Welsh Housing Quality Standard).

Priority B – Community Focused Housing

Housing provision should:

1. Be linked with a holistic view of community, providing housing that is accessible to employment, education and welfare provisions, tying in with provision of employment opportunities of various sizes (as encouraged in the employment groups manifesto points).
2. Encourage development of community assets other than property so that finance can be invested (with returns) into communities and community enterprise. This is preferable to focusing on rented property: housing built to meet people's need rather than investment portfolios. Refurbishment of existing housing stock should also be explored.
3. Include flexible housing stock that can be used to meet the needs of single people and families. Homes should have sufficient space to allow for estranged parents to have access to families, for children to pursue education and for carers to support needy family members, for people with differing physical needs to be housed in an integrated way.

Priority C – Housing and Faith Communities

1. Establish and maintain a link between policy makers and the faith communities in each local authority by the appointment of Faith Liaison Officers.
2. Promote meaningful tenant involvement and reach out to faith groups to provide "added value" in housing and related support services.
3. To establish a Church Land & Property Service in Wales, to enable churches to release surplus land and buildings specifically for housing use, so to build up an accessible land bank which should speed up new house-building.

Services for the Homeless Community

Priority D – Resettlement Support

1. Homelessness is in many ways a form of institutionalisation and many of its community have spent much time in institutions, e.g. the armed forces, mental health institutions (not as numerous now as in previous decades), the prison system, and the child care system. Early prevention of homelessness in the first place should be developed through better preparation for life after institutions and support in resettlement.
2. Resettlement services and appropriate counselling should be seen as key to providing sustainable housing options alongside preparation and support to enable homeless people to make the transition into housing. This has proved to be the case in housing initiatives in previous decades such as the HMII (Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative in London) Sufficient resources should be made available to enable the development of resettlement services throughout Wales.

Priority E – Resettlement in Local Communities

All homeless services should be based upon the local community enabling resettlement to occur within that locality where the homeless person might enjoy the benefits of family support and not be drawn into the larger cities by the need to survive. This will mean the provision of local preventative services, hostels and resettlement not the present sparsely populated network of hostels that removes the homeless community from their locality. Homeless people need, where possible, to be re-housed near to community and familial support.

Priority F – Homeless Community Support

1. Support should provide connected services for the homeless community via the development of consortia (groupings of statutory and voluntary agencies collaboratively working with the homeless community).
2. Local authorities should give, in both principle and practice, support to initiatives such as soup runs, food hamper provision etc. (many of which are Christian based in co-operation with statutory community agencies). These services are intended to provide short term and immediate relief to those of the most disadvantaged in our society.
3. The provision of advice and prevention services as well as tenancy sustainment work, possibly provided by church community initiatives.

Priority G – Correctly Identifying the Full Homeless Need

Statistics should be collated to identify all types of homeless people including sofa surfers and then recognising in policies that all kinds of homeless people are vulnerable and not just certain more narrow categories. A homeless individual's circumstances should be investigated fully and not dismissed if needs are found.

Supporting People

Priority H – Support the Most Needy.

Ensure that the most disadvantaged members of our society are properly supported by the ring fencing of All Wales Supporting People funding, to ensure that high quality services are provided for the most needy groups.

Priority I – Reduce Red Tape in the Supporting People Regime

Exempt sheltered housing for older people providers from the Supporting People regime (making up shortfalls from housing benefit) so to relieve them of the associated red tape and bureaucracy. Then housing providers can concentrate on building more homes and providing a

better service to their residents.

Christian Context

Within his earthly ministry Jesus experienced the vulnerability of homelessness

Mat 8:20 And Jesus said to him, the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.

Within the Christian faith there is a strong tradition of hospitality towards strangers and those without shelter as a way of including and embracing those who have been excluded by circumstances, such as the shortage of affordable and adequate housing. In doing this we fulfil our call as disciples and in many ways we are serving God (Matt 25:32-40).

Throughout the history of the housing movement Christians have been at the forefront of bringing about progress with examples like Octavia Hill, an early pioneer in social housing. This ministry has continued within Housing Associations and projects alongside the homeless communities. Christians continue to work in partnership with government and local authorities and through this manifesto to support and influence on-going progress.

Human Trafficking

Introduction

Human trafficking currently constitutes a shocking menace not only to overseas victims but also to the well-being of UK families. “A child goes missing in the UK every 3 minutes” (25th May 2012 <http://www.ceop.police.uk/Media-Centre/Press-releases/2012/A-child-goes-missing-in-the-UK-every-3-minutes/> accessed 20th February 2013). Similarly, prosecutions have shown abuse rings to move their victims around in a ‘post-code’ world of trafficking. UK children and women are especially vulnerable. The frightening political fact is that human trafficking is a powerful, global, organised crime that could ruin the lives of any of us. The three key areas cited repeatedly as requiring **more concerted effort** in the UK (for example according to the *Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Anti-Trafficking 2012* [1.13]), are (1) *data capture and intelligence sharing*, (2) *training and awareness-raising for front-line professionals*, and (3) *coordination of prevention activities*. These three helped form the basis of the proposals below. Funding practicality is briefly addressed at the end.

Priorities

Priority A – Awareness-raising and Professional and volunteer Training

Awareness

There should be commitment at national and local levels in Wales to a campaign of zero-tolerance on human trafficking like that deployed against violence against women, and it should centre on a continual programme of awareness-raising among politicians themselves.

Training

Anti-trafficking training already rolled out in police forces should now be maintained in step-by-step presentations, especially throughout the largest, South Wales. It should be retained as standard from induction through regular personal development. Similarly, training should reach other relevant professionals, for example community health workers and hospital staff (especially in Paediatrics), but also GPs with their receptionists, administrators and nurses. *Critically and urgently*, training should reach *social workers and staff in children’s care homes, both primary and secondary schools*. Appropriate versions, possibly using IT and new media, should open up further to NGOs and the volunteering sector as well as cascading into virtually every kind of induction course in public and private settings.

Priority B – Co-ordination and concerted effort

The pioneering appointment in Wales of a full-time Anti-Human Trafficking Co-ordinator should be consolidated as a long-haul strategy until Wales is known as a permanently hostile and unsustainable environment for human trafficking. And for the foreseeable future the following should go on being developed in Wales:

1. An evolving, well-disseminated anti-human trafficking policy,
2. Continuing political commitment to Welsh participation in all multi-disciplinary and cross-Government efforts in the UK, including attempted solutions to problems and their pilots,
3. Further official recognition of, and co-operation with, relevant NGOs, consulting them and helping with: education, updating and training, referral issues and possibly translation services,
4. Increased sharing of expertise between all police services, such as good practice and any innovations built up by other authorities, especially by nearby ones,
5. Prompt adoption of any promising or proven UK legislation that makes prosecution of

trafficking a more formidable prospect for perpetrators.

Priority C – Care of the victim

1. Authorities should further address commitment to treating trafficked victims as victims not offenders, especially in the case of juveniles, and should not require the suspect to offer evidence of trafficking before its possibility is explored. Police should be resourced to investigate routinely any alleged offender's claim to be trafficked and the National Referral Mechanism should provide immediate, effective advocacy for the person concerned (see IDMG 4.8). And since even verbal disclosure from a victim may demand exceptional courage and an unfamiliar trust in authority, it should not be the only or necessary trigger for action. Investigation for trafficking should be resourced whenever merely suspected or likely (for example in certain sex industry offences).
2. Agencies should receive all necessary support in their work of keeping rescued victims safe, informed, supported and secure from re-trafficking.

Priority D – Data Capture and Intelligence Sharing

Authorities should go on exploring creatively and with determination how to achieve the best possible conditions for sharing maximum information without infringing data protection legislation, for example possibly notifying HMRC if there's a suspected or likely tax fraud crime.

Priority E – Re-trafficking, especially of children

“Trafficked children from abroad are particularly being let down and their needs ignored because the authorities view child trafficking as an immigration control issue.”

[Report from the Joint Inquiry into children missing from care (2012 p.10),

Victims exploited among and by our population, whether unintentionally or not, should receive compensating protection, care, respect and sympathy from our public resources and our law. To avoid foreign victims being re-trafficked, they should be granted residence if trafficking has rendered their homeland dangerous (eg from the so-called ‘Romanian Mafia’). Authorities should further address the re-trafficking of trafficked juveniles in particular. The safety of victims could be achieved by allowing particular discretion regarding the appropriateness of prosecution. This is especially the case with regard to age-determination which is already diversely defined for different purposes in the UK (eg 16yrs for marrying, 18yrs for purchasing alcohol). Repatriation should also be facilitated when the victim so wishes.

Priority F – Funding

Within fiscal constraints, funding for the above anti-human trafficking initiatives should be sustained until Wales is known as a permanently hostile environment for human trafficking. Policy-makers and government should recognise that costs saved by prevention and care of victims as outlined above will reduce expenditure in legal proceedings, social work and health. Re-trafficking not only causes extended suffering but soaks up budgets in repeat activities and procedures. Finally bonus benefits for revenue should be sought from seizure of criminal profits in the UK and even abroad.

Christian Context

Some older parts of the Bible accommodated limited forms of 'slavery' as debt-payment or civil punishment to curb hunger or death in a bare-subsistence world. But these Scriptures always strictly forbade trafficking while also greatly mitigating slavery's harshness, despite one or two problematic texts.

Jesus promised to fulfil Jewish prophecy by lifting every oppression (Lk 4. 16-21). Roman culture, though sometimes humane, commonly viewed slaves as lesser beings than humans. Slaves (around a third of the population) had now become the Empire's indispensable, economic cornerstone. Fledgling, persecuted churches couldn't hope to overthrow this. But their message fatally undermined the practice. Slaves and owners were all one family in the higher kingdom of Jesus, equally possessing the dignity of being human (Gal.3.28, [Ephesians 1. 6:7-9](#) [cf.2.15]; [Colossians 4:1](#), [Philemon 1.16](#)). Owners' treatment of slaves was a form of service to them and God (Eph.6.9). Universal sin and God's redeeming love levelled all people before God (Ro 3.23,24) and this pointed inexorably to eventual Christian abolitionism regarding all forms of slavery and especially human trafficking.

International Affairs

Introduction

Although international affairs comes primarily under the remit of the UK government, there are a number of mechanisms by which Welsh political parties and Welsh Government can legitimately engage in these issues:

1. The British Irish Parliamentary Society
2. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
3. The EU Committee of the Regions
4. The EU Council of Ministers
5. The Government of Wales Act 2006 Par 62
6. The Wales for Africa programme
7. Trade missions

Priority A – Human Rights

1. For continued support for the *Wales for Africa* programme and to develop the human rights agenda within it.
2. To strengthen the link between human rights and economic cooperation in Wales' trade missions and in the EU's bilateral relations with other states.

Priority B – Freedom of Belief / Religious Freedom

1. To speak out on international issues where freedom of belief – including the freedom not to believe and the freedom to change religion or belief – is being suppressed and where faith groups are being persecuted.
2. To speak out in support of persecuted Christians in the world, including countries in which the Church's historical presence is under threat.

Priority C – Human Trafficking

1. To support Welsh civil society links with anti-trafficking initiatives that could be networked and developed within the Wales for Africa programme.
2. For continued financial support for Wales' Anti Human Trafficking Co-ordinator and the development of the role to include combating human trafficking in source countries.

Priority D – Women's Rights

1. To set up a women's educational rights programme to encourage developing partnerships via the Wales for Africa programme
2. To explore ways in which female genital mutilation (FGM) issues can be addressed through the Wales for Africa programme.

Priority E – Economic and Trade Justice

1. For Wales to take a lead in supporting tax transparency and fair trade in its procurement services.
2. To build on the Sustainable Development Charter in order to equip businesses in Wales to take into account the economic and social impact of their actions on developing countries, as well as to contribute to the vision of a sustainable Wales.

Priority F – Climate Change

To continue to work towards carbon reduction commitments through encouraging behavioural change across all sectors; for Wales to lead on a global level, promoting achievement and targets through the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development and using its position to call for vigorous international action on climate change.

For Wales to continue to grow its Climate Change Partnership programme to lend technical expertise to countries threatened by the effects of climate change.

Christian Context

Scripture affirms that people of every nation share a common humanity (Acts 17: 26) and all alike share the dignity of being created in the “image of God” (i.e. with something of the nature of God stamped into our identity). We believe the love and dignity God gives to all people are the birthright of all people of all nations. As Christians, therefore, we are committed to human rights, including freedom to worship and to believe (or not to believe) according to one’s conscience, fairness between nations, and protection of the weak and vulnerable.

Justice

Priorities

Priority A – Access to Justice

There can be no real justice if access to justice is denied. The UK Government's Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 drastically reduces the availability of free legal advice throughout the communities of Wales. Those without means to pay for face-to-face advice, in many cases, will not be able to access advice at all.

Action will be needed to alleviate the pressure on this foundational pillar of our society. Access to justice can and should be safeguarded for the most vulnerable by allocating appropriate resources and by continuing to encourage local authorities to support local free legal advice providers. Such arrangements are already in place and illustrate that positive cooperation between Welsh and Local Government with service providers can work to preserve fair access to justice.

Priority B – Restorative Justice

We commend the principle of restorative justice as a tool of reparation to communities affected by crime. This principle was utilized in post-apartheid South Africa to confront wrongs against the community and to provide healing and restoration between those affected.

In Wales, with many communities suffering from the effects of crime, restorative justice initiatives offer a progressive solution to deep wounds that otherwise may remain un-treated for generations. It also offers hope for the genuine reform and transformation of those who commit crimes; so it is important to support and facilitate initiatives that seek to increase social cohesion and community rehabilitation along the principles of Restorative Justice.

In the following issues, we recognise that the Welsh Assembly's direct responsibility for justice issues is limited, but hope influence can be brought to bear on the Westminster government regarding –

Priority C – Indeterminate sentencing

We believe indeterminate sentencing is unjust, especially when its implementation is neither transparent nor open to challenge. It leaves potentially arbitrary power in the hands of unaccountable individuals, and the uncertainty it creates in the minds of prisoners appears to be a barrier to their ability to prepare for life beyond prison. At the very least, the reasons behind reviews of indeterminate sentences should be explained and open to appeal.

Priority D – The detrimental effects of “Health & Safety” litigation culture.

There is of course a continuing need for some legal redress for major injury and loss caused by gross negligence. Nonetheless, the growth of a Health and Safety litigation culture brings a whole range of unwanted and unhelpful consequences – from schools and youth clubs that are no longer confident to organise outings and events, to rising insurance costs that largely pay lawyers' fees, to costs to the NHS that threaten treatment levels. None of this is helpful, affordable or just, and decisive action is needed in order to curb it.

Christian Context.

*Justice is a core Christian value – “What does the Lord require of you? To act **justly...**” (Micah 6:8). One of the striking distinctives of God’s people in the Old Testament was that every member of the community stood equally under the demands of justice: the highest government and the most marginalised immigrant alike were accountable to God’s law, and merited its protection.*

Christians inherit this view of justice as a universal God-given right and imperative, and we continue to affirm the equality of all people before the laws of society and of God. We also affirm the biblical perspective that justice is served not just when the wrongdoer is punished, but also when sound and just values prevail.

Local Government

Priorities

Priority A – Service priorities

Local Government services should be targeted at those most in need.

1. A commitment to ensuring that social justice is reflected in all service policies, and supported by service plans that ensure that those in greatest need receive services.
2. Clear policies which will enable people to move out of poverty.
3. Welsh Government and local authorities to define 'core services' in times of financial stringency.

Priority B - Community Leadership

Local Government should give leadership in understanding the needs of their community and providing direction for how those needs should be addressed.

1. Enabling Local Authorities to work out what is in the interest of their communities, and to implement plans which can be shown to promote the prosperity of the area and quality of life of citizens.
2. Providing the conditions that promote collaboration between Authorities and agencies.

Priority C – Partnership

Reductions in public spending give opportunities for faith communities to provide some community services

1. Recognising the value of and supporting faith communities in providing community and preventive services to their local communities (e.g. day provision for children and older people, parenting groups, marriage guidance, debt counselling etc.)
2. Enabling faith communities to acquire redundant public buildings and land as a base for service provision.

Priority D – Fair Taxation

The current system of Council Tax is not seen as fair and equitable.

1. A commitment to press for a form of local government taxation and relief that is based on the disposable resources of citizens.

Priority E – Clearer Responsibility and Accountability

There is a lot of confusion about the roles of tiers of Government and confusion about accountability because members tend to interfere in the functions of lower tiers.

1. A clear commitment to the principle of self-government by communities.
2. A commitment to a review of the decisions that are best taken at each tier of Government (i.e. Community Council, Unitary Authority, Welsh Government).

Christian Context

Four scriptural principles are reflected in the determination of priorities

- i) All forms of Government are established by God for the ordering of society.*
- ii) Involvement in Local Government should reflect servant values.*
- iii) Authorities should have a particular concern for the poor and those in greatest need.*
- iv) Churches and other faith groups are a major community resource, and are well placed to meet a range of social, emotional and spiritual needs in partnership with Government.*

Media

Priorities

Priority A - Limited Regulation is required

An independent regulatory body for media ethics that can hold the media to account.

Priority B – Portrayal of Faith

Well informed and accurate representation of faith in the media is necessary for civil public debate.

Priority C – Additional Support for the Welsh Language

A financial and regulatory framework that supports and sustains local and Welsh language coverage and media plurality.

Priority D – Education and Ethical Training

For university media course accreditation to require ethical training with a strong self-critical element.

Christian Context

A theology of media needs to be rooted in the reality that God has made Himself known and desires to be found by his creation. He has revealed himself uniquely through Jesus Christ. Since humanity bears the image of God the need to communicate to each other in a variety of media is a fundamental aspect of human life.

Mental Health

Introduction

The following are suggestions of including the 'spiritual' to promote healing of the mental health issues people experience:

Priorities

Priority A – For Faith Communities to be seen as a vital part of the Primary Care Resources for emotional wellbeing, mental health promotion and recovery from mental health illness

To continue the partnering with statutory and non-statutory organisations and be written into care packages. Faith Communities can offer many social action opportunities such as Volunteering in a nurturing and 'hopeful' recovery environment, Engagement Gateway Schemes, Internships, Youth Work, Food Banks, Street Pastors, Homeless shelters, Debt advice centres, Personal Development Courses and linking with hard to reach groups. They can also offer spiritual support in the form of Counselling and Prayer.

Priority B – For continued profile and funding for Chaplaincy within the NHS

So that dedicated staff can promote emotional and spiritual wellbeing for those with and without faith, mental health promotion and recovery from mental health illness.

Priority C – For emotional literacy, resilience, moral and spiritual development to be prioritized within education

Helping prevent mental health illness developing with young people and consequently into adulthood.

Priority D – For holistic training for NHS and non-statutory staff to address spirituality

Throughout the lifespan.

Priority E – A designated Mental Health Welsh Government Member.

Christian Context.

*Jesus talks of “‘**Lov(ing) the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind**’ (Luke 10:27). This suggests how we have different parts to ourselves; physical, emotional and spiritual. All of these parts of us can be well, but they can also get sick too.*

Physical illness is often visible like breaking a bone. Emotional illness can be hidden and present as a mental health issue. This can be as devastating as a broken leg. Many times the spiritual part of our lives is ignored and yet Jesus suggests that all of these areas are entwined.

Morality, Politics and Government – the Role of Conscience, Values and Human Nature

Priorities

Priority A – The distinction between conscience and legal provision

Any discussion of public policy should take account of the need to recognize that there will be a necessary difference between such moral values as honesty and faithfulness and the legal provisions required in any civil society.

Priority B – Tolerance and respect

Politicians should initiate and nurture a culture of robust debate in matters of conscience. This would be evidenced by a spirit of tolerance, grace, respectful listening, and attentiveness to cases of personal conscience. This should affect the way in which the entire democratic process is pursued as well as shaping the emergence of any manifesto.

Priority C – Freedom to vote by conscience

Individual politicians should be allowed much more freedom of conscience on any key votes that deal with issues of contentious morality, without fearing or suffering political censure and disadvantage.

Priority D – Personal integrity

These priorities should be complemented by a renewed emphasis on the need for the highest standards of morality in public life, whilst recognizing the fact that human nature renders every individual imperfect.

Priority E – Policy statements.

Policy statements should be framed within a transparent and informative description of a party's underlying values and standards, and of the personal integrity expected of its members. Reference should also be made to party discipline and how it would be applied where necessary.

Christian Context

The Bible affirms the dignity of humankind (Genesis 1:26-28), the dignity of the human mind (Romans 12: 1-3) and the primacy of conscience (Romans 14:10-12).

It presents us with a tried and tested basis for moral values, and an understanding of what pleases the life-giving and life-enhancing God who has revealed Himself supremely in Jesus of Nazareth, whose character is therefore one of truth and love.

The Bible also offers us a realistic and continually relevant assessment of human nature with its potential for good and for evil and shows us how power can become both destructive and idolatrous.

The diminishing impact of the Bible in our contemporary culture has resulted in a corrosive atmosphere of cynicism, apathy as well as a growing distrust of politicians and the political process in general. There is a real need to address these issues and a renewed emphasis on the importance of conscience and the value of debate will help address the growing crisis in the contemporary democratic process.

Older People

Priorities

Priority A – Cultural Change

Older people should be valued as contributing members of society, and treated with honour and respect.

Review the effectiveness of The Strategy for Older People in Wales.

Institute a national programme aimed at all sections of society, including children and young people, destined to bring about a change in the attitude of society as a whole towards older people.

Priority B – Health & Social Care

Older people should have access to health and social care services that best meet their needs, including specialist provision for dementia.

1. Ensure the provision of integrated health and social care services that provide the right care in the right place and at the right time to enable older people to retain control over their own lives.
2. Implementation of an equitable and universal scheme for charging for care services which encourages people to make their own provision for homes and pensions on retirement.

Priority C – Enablement

Older people should have access to information and support from a wide range of sources to help them live independent lives

1. Support for faith communities to provide information and support to help meet the social, emotional and spiritual needs of older people.

Priority D – Participation

Older people can be a major resource to enrich their communities, and communities can help address many of the challenges older people face in relation to isolation and travel difficulties.

1. Promote and develop initiatives that will encourage active participation by older people in social affairs that will enhance individual well being of the participant and enrich the experience of the community.
2. Increase the range of community transport services that older people could access, particularly in rural areas.

Priority E – Resources

Some older people are asset rich but cash poor, and others have to live on very limited resources.

1. Develop advice services that enable adults to plan for their future, their pension, and their housing needs.
2. Develop support for older people who experience fuel poverty so that they can access the full range of services benefits available.

Christian Context

The Bible speaks with both hope and realism about old age. It refers to old age as a time of glory and celebration, the fruit of a godly life (Proverbs 4:18, Psalm 92:14). It also paints a much

more challenging picture of old age (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Both perspectives are reflected in our priorities.

Regeneration and Social Enterprise

Priorities

Regeneration in Wales

In keeping with the principles above, we propose the following actions are taken to encourage Regeneration across Wales:

Priority A – Community-oriented Actions – actions to strengthen the sense of community (enhancing ‘social capital’).

1. Multiply self-governing, representative, local umbrella organisations (such as Local Community Partnerships, People’s Assemblies; Development Trusts), encouraging bottom-up participatory democracy.
2. Develop integrated regeneration interventions, harnessing the local education, employment, physical works and infrastructure, business opportunities, churches and community groups, and so on.
3. Engage everyone in meaningful, communal, creative work for the good of the local community, avoiding dependency cultures.

Priority B – Economy and Funding

1. Develop what are being called ‘bio-regional economies’ across Wales. The bioregional approach seeks a new ethic of consumption that prioritises locality, accountability and conviviality in the place of expansion and profit; it proposes a shift in the focus of the economy away from profits and towards provisioning; and it assumes a radical reorientation of work from employment towards livelihood.
2. Unite funding streams from all sources, under local umbrella organisations.
3. Fund the purchase of redundant land and/or buildings for community use.
4. Apply the principles of social enterprise (ethical and social benefit) to all projects with regeneration aims.
5. Link funding to outcomes (social and ethical impact), based on sustainable financial plans.
6. Support the integration of the disadvantaged and socially excluded.

Priority C – Education and training

1. Make education available to all, creating learning communities.
2. Fund apprenticeships, internships and volunteering, linked with local colleges and local community enterprises.
3. Ensure that training leads to gainful employment in the bio-regional economy.

Priority D – Infrastructure

1. Engage local labour in building and refurbishing affordable housing to Wales Housing Quality Standards, and with social inclusion clauses in the contracts.
2. Develop effective infrastructure to facilitate local regeneration.

Social Enterprise in Wales

In keeping with the principles above, we propose taking the following actions to encourage Social Enterprise across Wales:

Priority E – Strategic

1. Update and resource the Social Enterprise Strategy for Wales, including the development of bioregional economics and local umbrella organisations.
2. Ensure on-going resource for a Social Enterprise Unit (SEU) for Wales, to initiate and

facilitate the operational actions below.

3. Establish community/development banks, to fund local social enterprises and credit unions.
4. Establish effective and efficient ways to contract out public services to local providers/social enterprises, including churches and community groups.

Priority F – Operational

1. Facilitate the development of social enterprises as part of the developing bio-regional economies; local co-operatives with grass-roots construction.
2. Ensure all social enterprises receiving public funds operate on a ‘Results Based Accountability’ basis, to develop effectiveness in outcomes for societal benefit.
3. Skill up and multiply across Wales the social enterprises and social firms that have a proven track record to work.
4. Identify in each disadvantaged community the social entrepreneurs, philanthropists and natural community leaders who are already resident, and then resource them up, not just appointing ‘expert’ outsiders.
5. Focus Social Enterprises on sustainable use of local resources.
6. Encourage partnership of social enterprises with local business leaders. Lots of business people have strong ethical and social principles of operation. We need to learn from these.
7. SEU to pro-actively network the capacity and services of local voluntary and charitable organisations including churches, to add strategic and operational value to the local community development.

Christian Context

In keeping with their faith, the Bible and the teachings of Jesus Christ, most of the 200,000 Christians who are attending churches in Wales have a vision for a healthy society, not just for healthy individuals. They believe wellbeing has social as well as individual dimensions. Given this, they would see the regeneration of disadvantaged communities, including meaningful work, as a priority.

*The following **Principles**, in keeping with Christian faith, would form the basis for **Regeneration and Enterprise** for the social good.*

1. Individuals and Community.

- a) Citizens to be seen as in-community, not simply as isolated individuals.*
- b) Well-being to be seen as the ultimate Capital – striving for individual and social well-being, not simply financial growth.*
- c) Rights and responsibilities for all; all of us are givers and receivers. This is part of what Christians understand to be human.*

2. Work Ethics.

- a) Meaningful work to be viewed as a social good for community wholeness, not as an end in itself.*
- b) Wealth creation should contribute to justice and ethical society, not be seen as an end in itself.*
- c) Local sustainability to be sought within socio-economic ‘bio-regions’.*
- d) Community-centric action to be based on the best research evidence.*

3. Life-long Learning and Development.

- a) Life-long learning to be the cultural norm. Community comes from within; mental and ‘spiritual’ growth will result in growth in social capital.*

Rural and Farming

Priorities

Priority A – Full time Minister for Agriculture & Rural Affairs (but the following are Priorities even without a specific minister).

1. To clearly & visibly include agriculture as a priority.
2. To ensure needs of agriculture and other rural businesses considered as a priority when deciding policy & regulations.
3. Tasked with making a success of all aspects of the rural economy.
4. To develop a clear sustainable and effective policy on animal disease especially Bovine TB in consultation with those whose livelihoods are most directly affected, giving priority to their needs.
5. A background of clear understanding of the issues.
6. To work within a clear understanding of the definition of rural (taking into account those businesses peoples and dwellings which consider themselves to be rural even though coming geographically/politically within other boundaries?)
7. Clearer understanding of who consults who and who makes decisions about regulations, CAP reform etc. – EU or UK National/Regional/Local?
8. To achieve a genuine reduction in red tape and bureaucracy.
9. Possibly a “Rural Tsar” to champion the countryside & its needs.

Priority B – A rural economy defined by its diversity and relying on its own profitability

1. Recognition that business profit is necessary for future investment.
2. Reducing negative power of large multinational buyers to distort producers markets - e.g. supermarkets, grain buyers – producers need variety of markets to improve cash flow.
3. Encouragement of entrepreneurship, flexibility & viability by means of training & education, financial & other support. e.g. Planning support - for diversification, modification of management.
4. Encouragement rather than pressure to address change. Access to business advice.
5. Recognition of individual constraints e.g. Farming – landscape, geography, farmers’ ages, isolation, single proprietors etc.
6. Improving attraction of farming to the next generation.
7. Recognition of value of all business types in relation to each other.
8. Recognition that contentment in business leads to greater sustainability.
9. Reasonable freedom from regulatory constraints for farmers/landowners/rural businesses to produce what they consider they can make a living from. (reduction of distance between decision makers & rural business)
10. Wean off grant dependency – false economy due to costs of admin etc.

Priority C – Enabling communities

1. Loss of rural village communities needs to be reversed
2. Encouraging relationship between all stakeholders....banks, consumers, politicians, policy makers, local/national authorities, community groups etc.
3. Support for small and micro rural businesses to restore sense of centre to villages to recreate sense of wellbeing. Open farms, village shops etc.
4. Recognition of value of church within rural communities.
5. Support for community groups and rural charities recognising that numbers of people reached will not always be high.
6. Reduction or eradication of the distance – through lack of knowledge & understanding as well as geography - between decision makers and rural communities, agriculture in particular.

7. Protection of rural education including schools which encourage community relationships by enabling family homes to stay within villages.
8. Planning policies to take into account changing needs of village communities e.g. higher numbers of older people, affordable housing and businesses from home etc?

Priority D – Food Production

1. Produce a clearly defined plan for future land use in Wales.
2. Rural policies to prioritise national food security.
3. Better promotion of home produced food and other products, rural food tourism.

Priority E – Transport and Other Communications

1. Road plans should all include consultation with those local business and other communities affected to ascertain if, in the view of these businesses and communities, they do actually improve business opportunities or damage it.
2. Rural Broadband speeds – fibre optic cables to be the “norm”.
3. The procedures for clear and easy access to decision makers for rural and farming communities needs to be reviewed.

Priority F – Health Provision

1. Consideration of needs of self-employed in small/micro businesses when moving health provision away from locality.
2. Minimise travelling distance to health services both for the ill person and their family/carers.
3. Recognition of lower patient numbers in rural areas – cost per person always likely to be more.

Christian Context

God created the land with all the potential to produce everything needed for life, and the vegetation, flowers and animals to inhabit it - and God saw that it was good. Even after the “fall”, from Genesis and throughout the bible we see man called to live within this provision, working in harmony with the Creator, an agricultural people. In God’s Kingdom everything is interconnected; farming effectively is the work of cultivating God’s Creation within His plan and timing in order to protect the future provision and enjoyment of the land for all. Jesus taught often in a pastoral context to those who recognised the relevance as they lived close to the land. Whether we are those who farm or those who enjoy the produce or the landscape, we need to do so within God’s boundaries, for they “have fallen for us in pleasant places”, and though Deuteronomy 28 tells of God’s intended blessing on the land and all within it, this is a covenant blessing with serious responsibilities given to man to honour the Lord.

Social Cohesion

Priorities

Priority A – Politics

That politicians when submitting economic and social development proposals will demonstrate how their impending decisions will positively affect social cohesion. The government will authorize the Audit Commission to monitor and report on social cohesion regularly and systematically, giving it equal priority with Health and Education.

Priority B – Schooling

That the Ministry of Education for all age groups will oblige schools to teach social cohesion as a “core value”, encouraging children to respect, enjoy and benefit from ethnic and religious diversity rather than reacting negatively to it.

Priority C – Young People and Employment

That politicians will ensure and demonstrate that they are invested in long-term economic and societal strategies that will build hope and a future; that they minimize globalisation thinking and short-termism—practices generally detrimental to engendering confidence, stability and social cohesion.

Priority D – The Media

That politicians will as much as possible make Media personnel aware of their significant role in augmenting or diminishing community cohesion, holding the Media accountable for responsible and constructive reporting as they too aim to improve rather than harm social cohesion.

Christian Context

God is committed to community cohesion. His only plan is for all people to thrive in safe, harmonious, mutually beneficial and supportive families, communities and societies. In Matthew 22:36-40 Jesus demarcates the most foundational of Christian praxes—love of God and of neighbour. Jesus defines “neighbour” as “all people equally”. Galatians 3:28 and innumerable scriptures, affirm that all people are equally deserving of respectful treatment and opportunity regardless of ethnic background, gender, economic status or other distinctive.

Government-Church Partnership

Both the government and the church are dedicated to establishing and maintaining social cohesion, and both have major roles to play. Therefore it is our strong desire that at all levels governing authorities and churches will work together as partners towards this aspiration. The church by its glad inclusion of people from all ethnic minorities, by its huge voluntary service to the needy, by its ubiquitous immersion in neighbourhood affairs and by its wide-spread educational programmes, has an invaluable contribution to make towards community cohesion and should be included at all levels in relevant decision-making.

Sport

Priorities

Priority A – Sport is good for the Nation

Recognising that leisure, sport and play are part of God's holistic blueprint of health and well-being for all people and all of society, we want to encourage all levels of government in Wales to inspire and resource the nation to be a healthy, participatory one to partner with all who are seeking these aims.

Priority B – Sport unifies in diversity

The governmental responsibility to inspire and resource should be one exercised with equality to all forms of sport (professional/ semi-professional/ amateur/ social and recreational/ disabled and able-bodied/ male and female sport). In the nation's sporting landscape a healthy balance between professional and amateur sport is to be aimed for, recognising that sport is about playing against others and playing alongside others in competitive and non-competitive capacities.

Priority C – Fitness, sport and child-poverty eradication interlinked

The goal of equality of opportunity to practise and play sport will mean policy makers needing to continue to see poverty, and especially child poverty, in parts of Wales as something to be strategically addressed. Strategies and policies to be developed that incentivize fitness as part of a child's upbringing and its continuation into adulthood.

Priority D – A managed change to the culture of Sports-reporting

A commitment to influence all forms of the media towards a more positive culture of reporting on sporting issues, majoring more on examples of sporting excellence, of good, ethical, fair play, of positive role models and of inspirational triumph over adversity. Such a purposefully positive media reporting culture should be of the type that was noticeably more evident during the London 2012 games as compared with mainstream weekly media sports reporting. The lion's share of routine media reporting of sports stories focusses on falling sporting heroes and unethical behaviour. Policy makers are encouraged to incentivize the media towards a good news culture of sports-related reporting and coverage.

Christian Context

Biblical material directly alluding to sport is relatively scarce .In the New Testament almost all the references to sport are to Greek athletic contests. The apostle Paul in particular often makes reference to the games and to competition. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the biblical writer draws parallels between Christianity and sport and highlights lessons for Christian living to be inferred from the experience of athletes of his day and age. Given the relative paucity of scriptural texts, a responsible and authentic theology of sport requires a considered hermeneutic (interpretation process) resulting in sport being understood as:

A gift from God/ a part of God's creation/ an opportunity for worship/ an opportunity to love one's neighbour/ a moral and ethical testing ground / an opportunity for witness and mission / important but not all-important.

Not the source of an individual's ultimate significance as a person.

The Third Sector

Introduction

The “Third Sector” is an internationally recognised term. The Sector is often referred to as the “Voluntary Sector”. It includes:

1. Volunteers
2. Organisations, e.g. WCVA
3. Agencies, e.g. WRVS
4. Campaigning groups
5. Arts and cultural societies
6. Community associations based around place and locality.

All of the above have faith group involvement, which may be as individuals, agencies or churches (see Gweini and WCVA, 2008. *Faith in Wales: counting for communities*).

It is ‘a distinctive sector that makes a massive contribution to the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being of Wales’ (see WCVA. *Third sector statistical resource 2013*).

Volunteering not only benefits others, but can also provide benefits to the volunteer, such as social interaction, gaining confidence, health benefits, skills development and work experience (see Rochester, C. et al, 2012. *Volunteering and society in the 21st century*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

Priorities

Priority A – Empowering and resourcing the Third Sector

1. Affirm and reinforce the independence of the Sector.
2. Recognise the Third Sector as an equal partner to the Private and Statutory Sectors.
3. Consult regularly with the Sector, recognising and making use of its expertise and grass roots knowledge when formulating policy.
4. Facilitate the accessibility of the Sector to every person by providing training opportunities on how to access funding and how to be involved in governance of the Sector.
5. Establish local distribution of funding independent of the Statutory and Private Sectors: for example, by enabling, promoting and encouraging Regional Community Chests in which all monies for charitable causes are placed and distributed with local accountability.

Priority B – Sustainability in the longer term

1. Recognise and utilise what is already working and sustain what works well.
2. Facilitate the free flow of ideas across the Third Sector, enabling the development of best practice.
3. Encourage innovation, accepting risk and learning from failure. Use grants as catalysts.
4. Help Third Sector agencies bridge the gap into social enterprise.

Priority C – Faith-based contribution to the Third Sector

1. Recognise that the faith-based Voluntary Sector is integral to the Third Sector. It has contributed to the Sector's development and wellbeing and continues to do so.
2. Engage with and support organisations and agencies that continue to be expressions of activities based on faith values, e.g. Care for the Family, Trussell Trust (Foodbanks).
3. Encourage the many individuals from faith communities, who participate within the Third Sector as employees and volunteers and contribute to society in this way because of their faith-based values.
4. Recognise that many people of faith are stakeholders in the Third Sector as recipients of its services. Their views should be taken into consideration to enable expressions of faith to be maintained and developed within the Sector.

Christian Context

“Giving” is an aspect of God’s character and a basic principle for Christian living.

‘Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.’ (Luke 6v38, NIV).

The Lord’s Prayer (OUR Father) reminds us that we do not exist in isolation. We need to be concerned for the welfare of the place in which we live (Jeremiah 29v7).

‘For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.’ (Ephesians 2v10, NIV).

As people of faith, we seek to make a positive and distinctive contribution to a future Welsh Government's policy towards the Third Sector.

Transport

Priorities

Priority A – Integrated Transport for Wales

The transport network should be seen as a national social provision that could be effectively marketed through publicity and ticketing. The initiative should be taken to introduce a universally accepted ‘Smart Card’ for local transport on a national level. We would encourage the development of walking and cycling routes as part of the integrated strategy.

Wales has a rich resource of Tourist Railways which, in some places could be fruitfully used as local public transport and marketed as part of the integrated network, notably the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland railways, and the Llangollen to Corwen railway.

Integration should consider realistic long-distance rail connections with ferry routes, notably Fishguard Harbour, Pembroke Dock and Holyhead.

An Integrated Transport Strategy should be developed for freight as well as passenger transport. Freight is a growth sector for the railways; the missing links should be identified in rail freight provision, especially to the West Wales ports, such as Milford Haven.

Priority B – Community and Rural Transport

Critical to the health, well-being and economic sustainability of rural communities is access to health, employment, shops, and leisure and community services.

The making of serious provision should be looked at for rural bus services to run to time, and imposing penalties - and offering refunds - where there are consistent failures in the delivery of the advertised timetable.

Whilst rural communities rely on their subsidised bus services, we have to ask whether there is any opportunity to fund Community Minibuses run by a coalition of local voluntary groups (such as WRVS, youth organisations, churches and local health trusts).

Local Minibus Trusts could radically improve the transport options available to people in rural communities, pooling individual minibuses for wider use. We would urge that the excellent work undertaken in Pembrokeshire on promoting accessible, sustainable local community transport is made the benchmark.

Priority C – Investment in Cross Wales Links

Strategic road links between the North, South, East and West should be improved where there are no realistic rail alternatives. It is recognised that strategically and sensitively placed bypasses can re-invigorate town centres, notably Talgarth. Dualling of trunk routes can improve journey times and safety.

Priority D – Fairer Taxation of Road Use

A significant proportion of the population in rural Wales are forced to make round trips of significant distance to access employment and key services. Whilst recognising that taxation policy is in the hands of the Westminster government, we would urge consideration be given to the impact of fuel tax and road tax upon businesses and individuals in rural communities and develop a strategy fit for Wales that could be implemented if and when.

Priority E – Cardiff Airport

It is critical to international trade and tourism that Wales has a strategic air link properly connected to the rest of Wales and the South West of England. With the electrification of the South Wales rail network, including the Vale of Glamorgan, a significant priority must be to provide a physical rail link (either heavy rail or light rail) from the airport to the East and to the West.

This must be supplemented by improvements to access roads to the airport.

Priority F – Further Devolution of Transport Strategy

The Devolution Settlement should be examined to assess whether further Devolution of Transport Responsibilities would benefit the economy of Wales, and give greater autonomy over Transport Policy and Funding as has been granted to the Scottish Government.

Christian Context

i. Inclusion & Social Justice.

Christians are called to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with their God. Transport provision and access to transport is more than a matter of personal choice, it is a matter of social justice. This is increasingly true as we become a more elderly population, and as our towns and cities become more densely populated.

Good transport provision is vital for access to work, to medical care, to relatives, to worship.

Many people have to surrender their licenses and find themselves trapped at home, or reliant on others.

Tourism and growth of the economy can be stimulated by effective transport provision.

ii. Environmental Stewardship.

Christians are called to act as stewards of the planet. The practical outworking of this is to ensure that the resources of the earth are not exploited for selfish gain, but used responsibly and shared widely for the common good of all God's people.

Conservation of resources, reduction in CO2 and other emissions, and the protection of green spaces are all part of responsible transport planning.

Priorities should balance the need to protect the environment with the need for provision of effective services.

iii. Building of Community

The early Christians pooled their resources and lived as a community. Sharing of transport promotes conversation and fellowship, reduces social isolation and enables rural centres to thrive, enables access to local facilities. Recent studies have shown that bus services play a significant role in delivering people to town centres to work and shop and meet, to access services and to make use of leisure facilities.