

MAY 2026

REPORT OF THE PARISH CONSULTATION
UNDERTAKEN IN THE PARISHES OF

ABERYSTWYTH

AND

LAMPETER

WITH A VIEW TO UNITING THEM INTO ONE
CANONICAL PARISH

VERY REV. LIAM BRADLEY



Approximate area of the proposed combined parishes of Lampeter and Aberystwyth (southern boundary is to give the essence of the size, but is only approximately drawn).

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PART A

1. Summary

1.0 Timeline and methodology of consultation.

During April 2026, a consultation was undertaken in the parishes of Aberystwyth and Lampeter, with a view to canvassing the option of parishioners on the diocesan proposal to unite both parishes.

The parishes were prepared by way of public announcements at all Sunday Masses on 11th and 12th April, and by notification in the parish newsletter, which was also made available online. Fr Liam Bradley and Fr Malachy Orjiebele (parish clergy) were available for conversations during the entire time of the consultation period, which was from 11th April to 27th April, 2026. Mr David Evans, Chief Operating Officer, and Rev. Canon Brian Gray, Vicar General, attend both parishes to give a presentation, followed by a time of questions and comments from the parishioners. The presentations took place on 21st April. Following the presentations, those who attended were asked to vote on the proposal. In addition to making a vote in person, parishioners were given the opportunity to submit a vote and/or comments either by post or by e-mail. Several e-mails were received along with one postal letter, the contents of which have helped to shape this report, along with comments, questions and observations made during the parish presentations.

1.1 Consultation question and result.

The question placed before both parishes was:

“Do I agree with the proposal to unite the parishes of Aberystwyth and Lampeter?”

The results are as follows:

	Lampeter Parish		Aberystwyth Parish	
	In person vote	Postal/e-mail vote	In person vote	Postal/e-mail vote
YES	15	1	13	7
NO	1	0	0	0
ABSTAIN	1	0	2	0

Combined Results		
YES	NO	ABSTAIN
36	1	3

The combined results show parishioners in both parishes are broadly supportive of the proposal to unite both parishes.

1.2 Current situation.

The two parishes are very differently resourced with widely differing needs.

Aberystwyth Parish has two churches (Welsh Martyrs at Penparcau and Holy Cross at Aberaeron) and supports a large and ethnically diverse congregation.

Lampeter has just one church (Our Lady of Mt Carmel at Lampeter) with a significantly smaller attendance and less diversity, although there is a Polish population which are supported by the Polish Chaplaincy.

Aberystwyth parish supports chaplaincy activity at the University, Hospital and Primary School, whereas Lampeter is much smaller and has none of these.

Fr Liam lives in the parish house at Aberystwyth which is only suitable for one priest, while Fr Malachy lives nearby in rented accommodation costing £950 rent pcm, with additional overheads. Fr Malachy could live in the house attached to the church at Lampeter, however, that house is in such poor repair as to make it presently uninhabitable.

The house at Lampeter was hitherto used for both clergy accommodation (upper floor) and for parish rooms (lower floor) including a bathroom and a small hall with nearby kitchen and office space. Since the closure of the house at Lampeter, there have been no parish facilities here of any sort. Fr Liam has entered into an agreement with the local Church in Wales parish, so that the Catholic community can use their hall and bathroom, in exchange for the Church in Wales parish having use of the Catholic Church's carpark.

The on-going accommodation costs, some of the transport costs and remuneration for both clergy are currently met by Aberystwyth Parish because Lampeter Parish does not have the necessary resources to support a priest. Thus, even if the parish house were available for a resident cleric, some external financial support would still be needed for Lampeter Parish to maintain the priest's ministry.

Aberystwyth Parish has a fully refurbished and modern church at Penparcau which was re-dedicated in 2018, having previously been closed and derelict. In addition, Aberystwyth Parish has a second church at Aberaeron in good condition. Neither location, however, has social facilities, save for the sacristy area at Penparcau and a poor-quality conservatory which is part of the priest's house. The Church at Penparcau sits adjacent to a large parish field which is not used for any purpose, and the parish has a privately rented house in a nearby village of Taliesin. There is a primary school (St Padarn's) at Aberystwyth which is in very poor condition and needs considerable work, to the extent that a full rebuild of the school is now required.

1.3 Proposal.

The diocese have put forward the proposal to unite the parishes, with the purpose of creating one administration, which will better support the missionary activities needed to sustain, and then grow the parish. All three churches are to remain open and the parish will continue to have two priests: one living at Aberystwyth and the other at Lampeter. This will cause a modest reduction in transport costs and will reduce time spent traveling to cover the vast area. It will also mean a resident priest in two of the three churches, enabling the faithful to more easily have access to clergy.

1.4 Parishioners' feedback.

During the parish consultation meetings there was broad support for keeping all churches open and for maintaining two priests. It was understood that unification would mean the sharing of financial assets and, while there were some concerns, it was broadly supported. It was noted that a lack of social space was detrimental to missionary activity, and that any future development of the new parish must include the provision of a some social/meeting space.

Parishioners were sympathetic to clergy having appropriate accommodation. It was understood that the united parish would probably be the largest geographical parish in mainland UK and that having two priests was essential, both for supporting the pastoral/spiritual needs of the people and for their own priestly support. To best serve the needs of the parish they should be located in different locations.

There was some disappointment at Lampeter when they learned their social facilities would not be reinstated, but the need for a bathroom was a minimum requirement. Some felt they would always been seen as secondary to Aberystwyth which would become the centre of the parish and some felt they would be unable to make that journey (aprox., 25miles in good weather, 28miles in winter weather via Aberaeron).

There was a desire for different cultural groups in the parishes to come closer together, this was especially true of the Polish community at Lampeter which isn't present when the Polish Chaplaincy isn't functioning. Aberystwyth parish has a large African and Indian contingent.

Parishioners had a desire for a worked-out strategy as to how the parish would develop. While the unification was seen as the first step, questions were asked seeking a more clarity on future direction.

There were several questions asked to clarify the funding position. Responses from the diocese indicated that the diocese would support the upfront costs, with this money being returned to the diocese over a period of potentially 10 to 15 years. In addition, the diocese would seek to obtain grant funding and is actively considering the sale of some land, so as to defray the costs.

PART B

2. The Remit of the Consultation

2.0 During April 2026, a consultation was undertaken in the parishes of Aberystwyth and Lampeter, with a view to canvassing the opinion of parishioners on the diocesan proposal to unite both parishes. This took place from the 11th to 27th April 2026.

2.1 Notification of the consultation.

The parishes were notified by way of public announcements at all Sunday Masses on 11th and 12th April, in a statement read by the clergy. Notification was also given in the parish newsletter, and made available on-line the same weekend. An additional statement of information was printed in the parish newsletter and made available the following weekend, the 18th and 19th April. The public announcement, and both notifications in the parishes' newsletters are reproduced in Appendix I & II.

2.2 Method of consulting.

All members of the parish were given the opportunity to speak with the parish clergy and to attend public meetings. The public meeting at Aberystwyth was also broadcast on-line if in-person attendance wasn't possible. Oral questions and observations could be asked at the meetings, and written questions and observations could be submitted, either by paper or electronic means. Written questions and observations could be submitted at any time during the consulting period. The public meetings were attended by two officers of the Archdiocese; namely, a Vicar General and the Chief Operating Officer. The parish clergy were available for individual conversations during the whole time of the consultation.

2.3 Purpose and effect of the consultation.

This consultation is being undertaken to answer the following question:

“Do I agree with the proposal to unite the parishes of Aberystwyth and Lampeter?”

In practical terms, if agreed to in this consultation and by the Council of Priests, the Archbishop will be given the advice to unite the two parishes. If the Archbishop issues a decree to this effect, it will mean the two parishes shall become one juridic person in Canon Law. The resulting parish would be overseen by one parish priest with all the obligations and rights of that office. The current parish finances, sacramental registers, and other elements of administration, would be consolidated into one single administration.

3. Current Provision

3.0 The Parishes of Lampeter and Aberystwyth adjacent and located in the far north-western part of the Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia. Each has their own particular characteristics which are outlined below.

3.1 Aberystwyth parish.

Aberystwyth Parish has two Mass Centers: the Parish Church of Welsh Martyrs is at Penparcau, on the southern approach to Aberystwyth Town, with the church of the Holy Cross Church at Aberaeron, some 15 miles further south. The average Sunday Mass attendance shows a regular congregation of 240 people at Penparcau, with an average of 22 people at Aberaeron.

The parish supports chaplaincy activity at Aberystwyth University with an active CathSoc and a weekly Mass on campus (term time only). In addition, chaplaincy support is provided at Bronglais General Hospital, for which Hywel Dda University Health Broad provides the parish with remuneration of 4 hours per week. There is a single-form entry Catholic primary school, St Padarn's, (with nurse) with strong parish links, which is in the process of transitioning to the diocese's first Welsh-medium primary school.

The area is bilingual with some Welsh-language elements incorporated into the Sunday liturgy, but previously has hosted regular, scheduled Masses in the medium of Welsh.

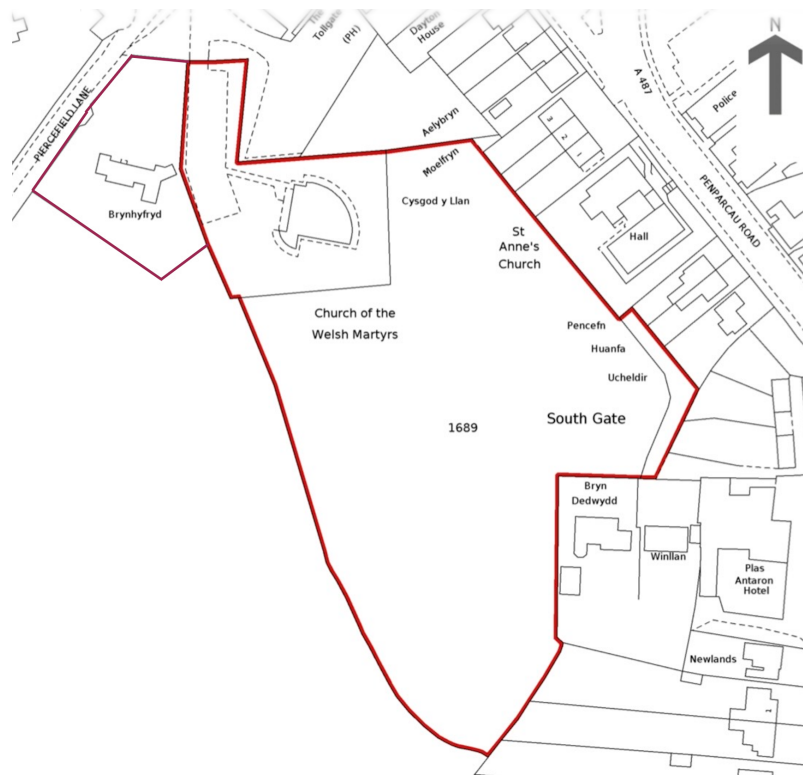
The church at Penparcau is a modern, crescent shaped building, opened in 1970. It was fully refurbished in 2018 when it was rededicated. It had previously fallen into disuse and become derelict during a period of consternation, but attained a new lease of life following the closure of an older Church at the town center. At Aberaeron the church is over 160 years old and in good repair; it having formerly been used for worship by a different denomination, and temporarily as a dwelling. It was purchased for Catholic worship in 1957. It has been extended within living memory to provide extra space and toilet facilities. Both churches today have disabled toilet facilities, are well heated and are structurally sound. Neither church is listed.



Welsh Martyrs, Penparcau.



Holy Cross, Aberaeron.



Plan of the Penparcau Church Estate - including the Priest's house 'Brynhyfred', the Church itself with associated car park, and the area of the large field to the south.

The parish owns a large field adjacent to the church at Penparcau which is not utilised, save for dog walkers who erroneously think it is common land. The parish owns a private dwelling house at Taliesin, which currently houses a single tenant. This house is due to be sold in the near future, subject to the tenant's departure, however, the house is in poor condition and will sell for well below the market value. The present priest's house ('Brynhyfred') was not designed as a presbytery, but was a retirement home for an elderly couple and, while it is comfortable for a single priest, has restricted office space, no meeting room and is unsuitable for additional clergy.

A statement of parish accounts has been provided by the curial office for the last financial year and can be found in Appendix III. It can be seen that the financial contributions given by the faithful on a regular basis amount to £54k, which given the size of the parish, indicates it is a viable going concern. Nevertheless, it must also be noted that expenditure on clergy is just below £23k which is significantly high. The large value is for two reasons; namely that Lampeter parish doesn't have the requisite income to cover the costs of a cleric which are being met by Aberystwyth, and also because the parish is renting a property for £950pcm in order to accommodate Fr Malachy. In addition to this rent there are the normal overheads of heating, lighting, council taxes etc.

3.2 Lampeter parish.

Lampeter Parish has one church, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, adjacent to the town center on the western approach road. The average Sunday Mass attendance shows a regular congregation of approximately 50 people. However, this figure hides the subtlety of a Polish chaplaincy which uses the church only on a fortnightly basis. The standard Sunday morning congregation (non-Polish chaplaincy) averages 34 people, with an additional 33 Polish parishioners (on average) attending fortnightly; hence the calculated average of 50. Sadly, only two members of the Polish community regularly attend the parish Mass outside of the Polish chaplaincy, and the two communities do not mix.

While the parish used to support an active CathSoc connected to the University, this hasn't met for some time. In any case, the former University of Wales Lampeter campus (latterly University of Wales Trinity St

David) recently closed. It should be noted that the University of Wales Lampeter, for a time, validated the degree awarded to students of the Beda College, Rome which several clergy of the diocese have obtained. The area is bilingual with no Welsh-language incorporated into the Sunday liturgy, with the majority of the small congregation being only English speaking and predominantly elderly.

The church is attached to the presbytery, forming one complete building, which is Grade II Listed. The church was built in the late 1930s and much of the internal work is post-war, Polish craftsmanship. The church was originally part of Aberystwyth Parish, but became a parish in its own right in 1947. It was served by the Carmelite Order (O'Carm) until the order left the area, approximately 22 years ago. Lampeter was then served by diocesan clergy, first from Aberystwyth and latterly was loosely joined to Llandoverly parish, with a resident priest at Lampeter covering both places. Since 2024 there has been no resident priest and the presbytery has been empty. The Church itself is quite beautiful and in sound condition with a good heating system, albeit that some guttering work needs to be urgently undertaken to prevent damage, and some wooden items such as the door need replacing/restoring. There are no bathroom facilities, nor running water in the church.

There are no additional pastoral responsibilities outside of the parish itself and, save for the Polish Chaplaincy which has its own priest, there are no additional chaplaincies, nor schools, hospitals, etc. The parish currently has no social facilities and lacks both a hall and bathroom, see below.

The presbytery is in an woeful state of disrepair and has been closed owing to dangerous facilities: namely a unusable bathroom with damaged porcelains, a gas pipe which contravenes standard safety codes, outdated electrics, no fire alarm system nor fire doors (despite being attached to the church) and has a major damp problem of rising damp on the ground floor, and large areas of damp on the upper part of the chimney breast.

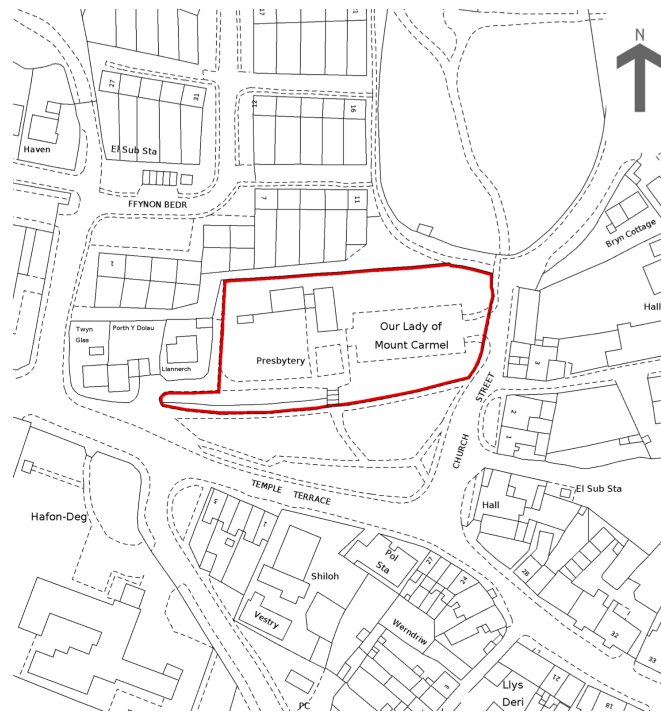
Formerly the lower floor was public space containing a small hall/meeting room, with a nearby kitchen, office space and a bathroom. The upper floor was a self-contained, two-bedroom flat which needs a complete redecoration. Cirttle windows throughout are listed, but some have been replaced (without permission) with double glazing. The church is on the edge of the Lampeter Conservation Area. Since the closure of the house, the parish has also lost is social facility and bathrooms. This has had a detrimental effect, and a few members have stopped attending Mass owing to the lack of facilities (recently one older lady suffered the indignity of having to visit the garden to relieve herself).

The church boasts a large carpark and some surrounding land. An arrangement has recently been entered into whereby the Church-in-Wales parish (adjacent to the Catholic Church) can use the Catholic carpark, in return for the Catholic community having use of the Church-in-Wales hall and bathroom after Sunday Mass.



Our Lady of Mt. Carmel exterior: Presbytery and Church.

Church interior.



Plan of the Lampeter Church Estate

A statement of parish accounts has been provided by the curial office for the last financial year and these are given in Appendix IV. It can be seen that the financial contributions given by the faithful on a regular basis amount to £10.8k, which falls short of the parish's needs, given the amount of work which needs to be undertaken. Currently the parish is benefitting from the generosity of resources at Aberystwyth parish, upon which the parish leans heavily for clergy provision.

4. Possible future development

4.0 Both parishes will need some redevelopment in the near future, irrespective of any possible unification. Together any newly formed parish will require three pressing issues to be addressed.

- 1) The refurbishment of the presbytery at Lampeter, with some exterior restoration to the church and surrounding grounds.
- 2) A full rebuild of St Padarn's primary school.
- 3) The development of some social and meeting space.

Each of these items, if undertaken correctly, will support the missionary activity of the parish and will shape the parish for the generations to come. Each of these options are currently under consideration by the diocese.

4.1 Refurbishment at Lampeter.

Following a diocesan assessment, the house is to be refurbished and made independent from the church, so as to become a private dwelling for a resident priest. There is no plan to restore the parish rooms on the lower floor, as this would result in a mixed used (domestic and commercial) property. A mixed used renovation is prohibitively expensive as it would require additional items such as sound proofing, fire sprinkler and alarm systems etc. to be installed. The option to restore and make an independent dwelling also 'future-proofs' the house for many years to come: should there come a time when no priest is available, a retired cleric or private family could use the property.

In making the house independent, a bathroom will need to be provided for the users of the church and supplies of amenities (gas, water, electricity) will have to be considered. The building of a new bathroom for church use will require a remodeling and/or extension of the current sacristy area.

Funding for this refurbishment can be provided from the diocese in the form of a loan, to the parish. This has been agreed in principle with the diocesan trustees, but the specific terms have yet to be decided. Repayment may be supported by the sale of some of the land around the parish carpark. The diocese is actively looking at the selling some of the land for development as housing, and has already approached some housing associations to gauge interest.

4.2 Rebuild of St Padarn's primary school.

This item is under discussion with the local Education Authority. A potential site for a new school is the field adjacent to Welsh Martyrs Church at Penparcau. This area of land will soon be subject to a feasibility study to ascertain if it is a suitable school site. While the state has to provide schooling, the diocese is responsible for 15% of building costs for Catholic Schools. If no school is to be built on this land, then it is available for other projects and could prove to be a valuable asset to support the parish's development.

4.3 Development of some social and meeting space.

If the unification of the parish is undertaken, then it may be the only parish in the diocese which has no proper social nor meeting facilities.

Currently both Lampeter Parish and Aberystwyth Parish have to utilize other properties for social occasions. At Lampeter, the local Church in Wales hall is used after Sunday Mass, in exchange for the Church in Wales's use of the Catholic Church's Car Park. At Aberystwyth, a local Memorial Hall (Neuadd Goffa) has to be hired, subject to availability. This is not ideal as there are restrictions on the use of that hall: for example, no alcohol may be consumed on the premises. At the time of writing this report Neuadd Goffa was out of use owing to a recent fire.

None of the three churches have dedicated space where a priest can host a meeting, nor can a small group gather for catechetical, or administrative purposes. There is no space to meet with a couple to plan a wedding or a child's baptism, and there are no suitable spaces to support a bereaved person to plan a funeral. Currently, the only place to do this at Lampeter and Aberaeron are inside the church buildings themselves. However, this is not ideal owing to the sacred presence of the Blessed Sacrament, underscoring that this should be a space for prayer and worship, not admin for admin and social function. At Aberystwyth there are two spaces, either in the sacristy or in a poor-quality conservatory, which is principally used by a gardening club to propagate seeds, and effectively doubles up as a potting shed. The conservatory is part of the priest's house, so use of this space has safeguarding implications if the priest is to meet in his home with a single person. The conservatory area is also the priest's laundry area as it houses a washing machine and tumble dryer.

It would be beneficial if any development of social space also incorporated a meeting room for smaller, personal, conversations, to give pastoral support, or to host meetings such as the parish the finance committee or safeguarding committee.

If the purpose of the unification of the two parishes to increase the missionary life and activity of the area, then any unification proposal needs to consider all the options for the betterment of:-

- pastoral support for individuals, couples and families;
- their spiritual development in terms of prayer and their relationship with God;
- the growth of the community through social activity and charitable works;
- the provision for clergy to live at an appropriate standard to coordinate the parish's activity.

5. Public Meetings and the Parishes' Response

5.1 Timing of the public meetings .

The two parishes were visited by Rev. Canon Brian Gray, Vicar General (VG), and Mr David Evans, Chief Operating Officer (COO) on 21st April 2026. In both parishes they were given a tour of the local estate prior to a public meeting. The public meetings were held at 3:30pm at Lampeter, and at 6:30pm at Aberystwyth, and took place in the respective parish churches. The meeting at Aberystwyth was broadcast on the parish website, and it is known that some people did take part this way. The meetings were introduced by the Parish Priest and Dean, Fr Liam Bradley, whose opening address set the tone for the discussion. A copy of this text is given in Appendix II.

The public meetings were conducted in a constructive manner with good order being maintained throughout. There was also a good spirit of generosity by the people of Aberystwyth in recognising the current plight of the people of Lampeter.

5.2 Content of the presentations by the VG and COO.

The Vicar General spoke of the Bishop's desire that parishes become more missionary. The Diocese envisages the parish still being here in many years to come, by building today a legacy for the future, which will serve the needs of the area and share our faith with subsequent generations.

Canon Gray highlighted that the missionary activity of the priests in Lampeter and Aberystwyth is different from the ministry of other clergy, owing to the unique geographical challenges of such a vast area. Even if the parishes were not to unite, there would still be a need for the priests to live in such a way that they can be supportive of each other's ministry. Otherwise, isolationism could be to the detriment of clergy wellbeing. Canon Gray stated there is a commitment by the diocese to have two priests resident within the area of the new parish, acknowledging that this comes with some costs. By having two priests who can share ministerial activity, their pastoral outreach becomes more effective for all concerned.

"Practical problems" (buildings), he said, "can be fixed, but communities need to be built and sustained, and that is why we are here today: It's because we are interested in your future and we want to genuinely make it happen for the good of all in this area".

Mr David Evans's presentation shared that the newly formed diocese of Cardiff-Menevia was toady a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (a trust akin to a limited company) and is not an unincorporated trust. Having this new status was one of the motivations for the two diocesan trusts coming together, and has been beneficial. In a likewise manner, a unification process has now taken place in a number of parishes across the new diocese. Since Mr Evans commenced employment with the Diocese (of Cardiff) in 2014, he doesn't know of any parish having to close, owing to it being united with a neighbouring church, and forming a larger parish unit. By sharing clergy and resources, Catholic communities which may have hitherto failed, have been sustained. An example was given of the parishes of Pontarddulais and Gorseinon, both in the greater Swansea area.

"What we are finding, following a similar path of combining where ultimately two become one parish...what seems to be happening pastorally is the congregations of both parishes are working together; and pastoral events, and ecumenical events, and all types of things are happening, and people are seeing the benefits".

Mr Evans explained that, in the past, the size of the Diocese of Menevia meant that it was under resourced which has given rise to problems with the estate. Now that both dioceses have come together, there is

better access to greater resources to fix the problems of the past. While the Church in Lampeter is in good order there is work to be done, and the presbytery needs to be refurbished. In a similar way to the under-resourced Menevia, the parish of Lampeter is under-resourced and needs to join to Aberystwyth to ensure a better future. The improved presbytery will address the geographical provision of clergy, by having a priest resident at the Lampeter end of the parish. Because Lampeter alone cannot afford the cost of a resident priest, it needs to work in conjunction with Aberystwyth, so that two clergy can be sustained. Mr Evans stated that the area being covered needs two priests to be effective.

The diocese wants to invest in the area by giving the parish the financial facility it needs to undertake the works required, with the investment being paid back over time. The diocese does not want the parish to continue to keep paying rent for Fr Malachy's accommodation, rather the diocese wants to invest in the presbytery to safeguard it. He stated: "If this process goes through, and we are able to amalgamate the two parishes, then the Trustees will provide the facility to repair the presbytery and address the works of the church (at Lampeter)". In addition, it was made clear that the diocese would work with others to try and secure additional funding, such as from organisations that can provide grants. This grant funding would benefit the new parish which would cover the joint area of both Lampeter and Aberystwyth.

In terms of missionary activity, the facilities at Lampeter need to be saved and supported, so that going forward, missionary activity can increase and the parish grow. Mr Evans underscored that all the financial planning was undertaken to allow missionary activity to take place. This proposal is a 'first step' in restructuring the parishes in order to provide better missionary activity, to grow the parish in the future.

5.3 Concerns, questions and observations of the faithful.

Parishioners were sympathetic to clergy having appropriate accommodation and there was widespread support for keeping all three churches open, and for two priests to be maintained. Concerns were raised that, if the house at Lampeter was being remodeled as an independent unit, then this indicated a hidden motive: that is, converting the house to a rental property and removing the priest, so that the house generates revenue for the diocese. This was strongly rebuffed, with a commitment being made to have two priests. Nevertheless, the house does need to be future-proofed in the most expedient way, and long-term future planning for clergy provision is never a certain science.

Members of the faithful at Lampeter were grateful to hear of other successful unifications elsewhere in the diocese. Nevertheless, they expressed concerns as to the applicability of these successful unifications towards the current proposal. In many cases the parishes were geographically proximate, and not 25 miles apart on a road which can become impassable during harsh, winter days. Parishioners wanted the diocese to be aware that many of them would not be able to undertake to journey from Lampeter to Aberystwyth for bigger liturgical occasions and social functions. The parishioners of Lampeter expressed a desire to have some social facility close by, not as far removed as Aberystwyth.

Wastage of money was an issue for some parishioners, on two fronts. Firstly, that the situation hadn't been remedied years ago, despite concerns being raised to the diocese (of Menevia) on several occasions. Presently, there was a concern of excessive wastage with regards to heating and lighting costs, and a need to have more stringent approach to saving money.

At Lampeter, the support of the Polish community was noted with a good congregation attending every fortnight with the Polish Chaplaincy. However, it became clear that the normal congregation and the Polish Chaplaincy congregation do not mix, save for maybe a couple of people. Despite there being a desire for greater cooperation between the two communities, it's hard to reconcile this desire with a community that won't attend Sunday Mass when celebrated in English. Fr Liam spoke with some of the Polish Community present who said that the Language barrier was the reason the Polish community didn't

integrate with the rest of the parish. Nevertheless a pledge was made for £15,000 from the Polish community.

There was disappointment from the people of Lampeter that the refurbishment of the house precluded the use of any public space. The parishioners did underscore the need for bathroom facilities as the present situation has meant some faithful can no longer attend Mass. There will also be a need to have access to water in the sacristy.

Questions were asked as to whether the diocese had explored the option of using other public halls in Lampeter for social space. Fr Liam has recently entered into an agreement with the local Church in Wales Parish to use their hall after Sunday Mass. Going forward, it would be for the parish to source locations for social functions as and when the need arose. A suggestion was made to install a curtain in the church so that the sanctuary area could be shaded off to enable social gathering in the church itself. In Aberystwyth, a proposal was made that a Portakabin could be sited in Lampeter's carpark to enable them to have social space.

A question was raised that, given the distances involved, why wasn't Fr Malachy's rental accommodation provided in Lampeter parish? The response to this enabled Mr Evans to explain that that diocese had previously looked at the possibility of purchasing a property in Aberaeron/Lampeter. However, this wasn't a viable option as it would mean purchasing more estate, when the objective is to consolidate the estate we have and to make the present buildings useable and financial viable.

It was recognised that there needed to be a strategy to develop the parish of Aberystwyth, as well as Lampeter. Such a strategy would have to include development of the school and a greater provision for Welsh Language. Aberystwyth is its own community and a recognized centre in Wales, quite distinct from other centres such as Cardiff or Swansea. It was noted that Aberystwyth parish was growing and, in recent times, had provided several vocations for clergy, who are either now in ministry, or part way through formation. A response was that school, Welsh language and mission were all elements of a successful strategy and that this proposed unification was the first step in a much longer journey to develop the Church in West Wales.

Specific questions were asked with regards to funding, such as, would Aberystwyth have to fund the full cost of the works required at Lampeter? The properties at Lampeter are a diocesan asset and so the diocese will provide up-front funding for the works. However, with regards to the costs of such big projects, an assessment has been made regarding the viability and how providing for these costs might be best met. The diocese will apply for grant funding; funding may be generated by the sale of some elements of the parish assets; but there will be a shortfall. The diocese would then expect this shortfall to be met by the new parish over an extended period of time. This would normally be ten to fifteen years. Money will also be saved by ceasing to pay rental costs for Fr Malachy. The current predicted costs for the restoration of Lampeter is about £130k. If this cost had to be met solely by the parish of Lampeter, with no external help, then Lampeter would not be viable as a parish. Mr Evans and Canon Gray reframed the question saying the problem is not how do we pay for Lampeter, but rather, how do we accommodate a second priest in the (new) parish to enable the parish to move from a model of maintenance, to one of missionary activity, where two priests can work together to build something new with the support of the local people.

Some members of Aberystwyth parish wanted specific elements of a strategic plan, and wanted to know the practical priorities of such a plan. It was explained that the first concrete step was to unite both administrations. This was because the current burden of double admin tasks in the current climate, meant the clergy were spending too much time focusing on buildings, and were not able to full focus on their pastoral work. A joint parish would have better economies of scale and could then look at potentially

hiring admin support. While it was understood this was a first step, there was a desire to have more clarity as to what the next steps were.

Questions were asked in terms of timeframe for development. Once the merger has been undertaken, there will be a period of time needed to make surveys, draw up architect's plans, seek permissions for works on listed building etc. In terms of loose timeframe, it was understood that it would be about 7 to 8 months before actual physical building works commenced.

5.4 Ballot results.

At the close of the two public meetings a ballot was held for those who attended in person. Those who were not present could write/e-mail with their ballot. The results were as follows:

“Do I agree with the proposal to unite the parishes of Aberystwyth and Lampeter?”

	Lampeter Parish		Aberystwyth Parish	
	In person vote	Postal/e-mail vote	In person vote	Postal/e-mail vote
YES	15	1	13	7
NO	1	0	0	0
ABSTAIN	1	0	2	0

Combined Results		
YES	NO	ABSTAIN
36	1	3

6. Parish Priest's Personal Thoughts

In the past 15 months, since my arrival in the parishes, I have seen ever more clearly the good that is being achieved, and there are many positives. We have a beautiful Laudato Si' garden which provides food and opportunity for the community; many young men and women have been received into the church – in both of our parishes; social activities like BBQs, quiz nights and a string quartet concert have supported the parishes and our recent 'reapers and sowers' fundraiser was a great success, not just financially but socially too. However, as a priest, I have also been frustrated at having to drive vast distances, which absorbs so much time that could be better spent at pastoral work. The poor quality of some of our buildings is a constant challenge and one that is deeply upsetting: it's heartbreaking to have to tell a congregation that their hall and bathroom are so dangerous that they have to be closed. And to hear the response: "then I can no longer come to Mass Father" are words no priest should be comfortable receiving.

There is little point today in looking at the sins of the past, to an under resourced diocese that failed to maintain its estate. Pointing fingers and shouting back in time won't resolve the current problems, and every priest of the former diocese is aware that there were problems. What matters more is solutions. There is now an opportunity before us to do something new and it's an opportunity that cannot be missed. The best solution must be found.

What is this best solution? I don't know, because nobody knows: there is no golden plan which will make everything perfect. If there were, we would all have done it by now. We are going forward, exploring new ways, and praying that the Holy Spirit will show us the best path, out of many possible imperfect options. We have an option before us that myself, Fr Malachy and the diocesan officers have spent many hours discussing.

These hours of work have taken the clergy away from pastoral work and missionary activity, but I think I speak for both Fr Malachy and myself in saying that this time is an investment in a better future. But it is a future which will be different. The situation is complex as there are many factors at play – both parishes have some land, yet neither parish has a hall. We have a very robust church at Aberystwyth and a beautiful, solid church at Lampeter. There's an excellent church at Aberaeron too. However, the presbyteries are not of the same standard: the house at Lampeter is woeful and, while the house at Aberystwyth is comfortable it doesn't function as a presbytery – it was never designed to. Two priests cannot live there, there is no space to receive the bereaved who want to plan a funeral, nor the young couple who are excited to be getting married. As such, there is a need for social space and meeting space.

St Padarn's school at Aberystwyth is not really part of this consultation, but a new school is required. In the not-to-distant future, education provision will have to be included in the evolving strategy for our parish.

Our Catholic parishes are culturally diverse, but this isn't always reflected in the life of the parish. There are a significant number of Welsh speakers, Polish speakers, Malayalam speakers and other language groups. But they are often underrepresented at parish functions, be they liturgical or social. A reformed parish must come with an energy for us all to work closer together in a more cohesive way.

The faithful of our parishes have indicated their broad support of the current proposal, and have asked astute and probing questions. This is good, every difficult question is an investment in the success of the proposal. There have been some clear themes and I just want to highlight a few of them.

The house at Lampeter must be refurbished to accommodate a priest. In undertaking these works, a bathroom must also be provided for the church there.

There is a need for social space such as a hall. In addition, this must have a meeting room where the clergy can offer support and counsel to parishioners, and which can be used for other smaller meetings, like the parish financial council, safeguarding committee, or school governors etc.

In order to help the community recognize itself as a single unit, there will need to be good cross-pollination of ideas, activities, sacramental preparation, liturgical activities, etc. This is not going to be easy, given the distances involved, and our human desire to be comfortable in the locale which we know, both physically and culturally. To this end, I wonder if it is healthy that we keep referring to 'Aberystwyth Parish' and 'Lampeter Parish'. A new parish will need to have some identifying name which is neither of these, if the unification is going to be more than just merely administrative.

In order to fund this I'm delighted that the diocese will be looking at various options to obtain grants, and to support the costs going forward. But the finances are very significant and I would commend the diocese to be as creative as possible in trying to resource for our needs, which may include selling land or other parish assets, such as the house at Taliesin.

My hope is, and I ask each of us to hold this in prayer, that we use this opportunity to come together, work together, and share our many talents to grow the faith which Jesus Christ gave us, so that many more people in west Wales will live as a people of hope, with direction and purpose in their lives.

APPENDICIES

Appendix I

Notifications given to the parishes of Aberystwyth and Lampeter.

I.I The following text was read at all three churches on the weekend of 11th and 12th April, to announce the consultation.

As we continue to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord in this Easter Season, now is an opportunity for us to reflect on the future of our parishes. The parish of Aberystwyth, and the parish of Lampeter, are places where we come to pray, to celebrate the sacraments, to share fraternity and grow in our relationship with God and with each other. There are many positive elements in both parishes, but there are also areas of concern - and these will need addressing if our parish communities are going to not only survive, but flourish.

The diocese has asked us to undertake a consultation with a view to uniting the parish of Aberystwyth and the parish of Lampeter to form one single parish. This would mean that the three churches of Welsh Martyrs Aberystwyth, Holy Cross Aberaeron and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Lampeter, would come together into one parish unit, with a single administration. The diocese feels this will best serve the pastoral needs of the Catholic Community here in mid, west Wales.

Currently, each parish is responsible for its own resources, estate and record keeping; all finances and sacramental registers, safeguarding training, GDPR information and so on, are separate to each parish. If the proposal goes ahead, all the resourcing and administrative functions would be combined.

But this proposal needs to be discussed: you may have questions, suggestions or concerns. The diocese wants to know your opinion so that it can be more fully informed, prior to the diocese making a final decision. In the near future, a public meeting will be held in each parish. This will be your opportunity to ask questions, to provide feedback and to vote as to whether or not you agree with the proposal. You will be given the opportunity to make written submissions too, if you are not able to attend the meeting.

The feedback from the two parishes will form the basis of a report, which will be presented to the Council of Priests. The Council of Priests is an organ of governance within the diocese which the bishop uses to help him in his administration. The Council of Priests will review the report and they too can ask questions and raise issues. The Council of Priests will also be asked to vote. All of this information, from both of the Parishes and the Council of Priests, will be presented to the Archbishop for a decision to be made.

While this proposal may seem to be purely administrative, it is nevertheless being proposed to best support the pastoral and spiritual needs of the people in both areas. The proposed union of the two parishes will result in financial assets being combined, along with the responsibility for providing buildings which best serve the mission of the Catholic Church in Ceredigion. The future of our parishes must be a future that is self-sustaining, enabling all three churches to remain open and so that each place can be adequately resourced in providing for the needs of the resident clergy, support chaplaincy provision to university students and Bronglais Hospital, as well as ensuring that St Padarn's Catholic Primary School continues to be a provider of first class Catholic education to our Children, with facilities that are fit for purpose.

Now is the time for us to reflect on what we think the needs of our parish are, and how we can best look towards meeting those needs. It's a time for us to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us towards making a mature decision which safeguards the future of our churches.

I.II The following text was published in the newsletter of all three churches on the weekend of 11th and 12th April 2026.

Parish Consultation The diocese is making a proposal to unite the parishes of Aberystwyth and Lampeter. A statement will be made about this at all Masses this weekend. Next weekend, dates will be published for parish meetings in both parishes. In this coming week please spend some time reflecting on the needs of our parishes, and in prayer for the gift of wisdom. For those who are not at Mass, the statement will be made available on the parish website.

I.III The following text was published in the newsletter of all three churches on the 18th and 19th April 2026.

Parish Consultation On Tuesday 21st April, The Vicar General, Rev. Canon Brian Gray, and The Chief Operating Officer, Mr David Evans, will be visiting our parishes as part of the Consultation. These meetings are open to anyone who would like to attend. Lampeter Parish: At the Church of Our Lady of Mt Carmel, Lampeter at 3:30pm on 21st April. Aberystwyth Parish: At the Church of the Welsh Martyrs, Aberystwyth 6:30pm on 21st April. At the end of each meeting, a vote by show of hands will take place to respond to the question: “I agree with the proposal to unite the parishes of Aberystwyth and Lampeter.” Respondents may vote “Yes”, “No”, or “Abstain”. Each person may only vote in one meeting. For those who cannot attend a meeting in person, a vote can be cast and emailed to aberystwyth@menvia.org or lampeter@menevia.org, or posted to the parish office, with voting closing at midnight on 27th April. e-mailed/postal votes cannot be made by those who have voted in person. Any person may make a short statement, via email or post, to express their views in writing, the themes of which will be incorporated in to a report to be presented to the Council of Priests. The morning and evening masses in Lampeter this week have swapped over so as to better facilitate these meetings. The table below may prove useful to get an idea of the sizes of each parish.

	Aberystwyth Parish	Lampeter Parish
Number of Churches	2 – Welsh Martyrs and Holy Cross	1 – Our Lady of Mt Carmel.
Number of Sunday Masses:	4 Masses (3 in Welsh Martyrs, 1 in Holy Cross)	1 Mass
Number of Weekday Masses:	7 Masses (with 1 at the University in term time, and 2 in Holy Cross)	2 Masses
Average Sunday attendance during last census, 2025	Welsh Martyrs: 240 people Holy Cross: 22 people	Our Lady of Mt Carmel: 34 people Polish Chaplaincy: 33 people, every other week.
Average Weekly Income during census dates	Dona Digital Collection £141 Loose Plate Collection £370 Standing Orders £460 Total £971 (and Hosp Chaplaincy c.£445pcm)	Dona Digital Collection – not used Loose Plate Collection £125 Standing Orders £100 Total £225
Additional Ministries	St Padarn’s School, University CathSoc (Catholic society) Bronglais Hospital Chaplaincy	None
Estate	Presbytery, 2 Churches and Car Park Dwelling in Taliesin Parish Field	Presbytery, Church and Car Park



Areas of growth which are required in terms of estate: A hall for social activities is needed because neither parish has any dedicated social space. In Lampeter there are currently no useable bathroom facilities: this is because the toilet is located inside the parish house, which is in such poor repair it has been permanently closed as it is dangerous. The house in Lampeter needs a full restoration so that it can be used. Potentially this could be used to accommodate Fr Malachy, who is currently living in rented accommodation. St Padarn's school in Aberystwyth is in a poor state, and future development of the parish will need local government support to provide better school. The private dwelling in Taliesin, which is part of Aberystwyth parish, is in a poor condition and steps have been taken to facilitate its sale.

Appendix II

Opening address at the public meetings.

The following address was used by Fr Liam to open the public meetings, at which the proposal under question was discussed.

“Welcome to the formal consultation meeting to discuss the union of the parish of Lampeter and the parish of Aberystwyth. As we start this meeting, I would like to introduce two visitors. The first is Mr David Evans, who is employed as the Chief Operating Officer of the diocese. He effectively undertakes the day-to-day running of the charity of the diocese on behalf of the bishop and the board of trustees. Mr Evans has oversight of all of the different departments of the diocese such as safeguarding, land and property, finance, health and safety and so on. The other person to welcome is Canon Brian Evans, who is one of two Vicars General within the diocese. For those who are not aware, the Vicar General is a position defined in Canon Law, and is someone who shares in the bishop's ordinary jurisdiction and effectively acts as the bishop's number two in the day to day operations of running the Church – he has oversight of clergy, pastoral and spiritual development, the sacraments, catholic schools and parishes and so on. Welcome to both of you and thank you for taking the time to travel out to us today, and for being part of these consultation meetings taking place in both parishes.

For the purposes of this meeting, as your parish priest, I'm just going to say a few words to set the context before I pass over to David and Canon Brian, and then there will be an opportunity to ask questions and have a debate about what is being proposed. Then at the end, by a show of hands, we can gauge if there is support, or not, for the proposed union of the two parishes.

You should be aware that I will take notes from these meetings, and I'm going to use AI to rerecord and help me to take those notes, but the final report of our discussions will be written by me, a human being. The results of our discussions today, and any letters which you send me, and the vote at the end of today, will all go into forming that report which will be given to the Council of Priests. The Council will discuss the report and will also vote on the proposed union, and all of this will be presented to the bishop for his decision.

Myself and Fr Malachy have been with you now for just over a year. When I was appointed here by Bishop Mark, I was totally unaware of the situations of both parishes – that's the finances, the estate, the spirituality, the pastoral provision and so on. However, I'm indebted to Fr Matthew Roache-Saunders who spent some time giving me a briefing and who put before me the challenges and opportunities which are now before us all. In the past year, I've had various meetings with Mr David Evans, and with various officers of the diocese from Health and Safety and the Land and Property offices to try and understand the situation more. And that brings us to today, and the proposal of the Diocese to unite the two parishes into one. On the face of it, the decision we are being asked to consider is straight forward: to bring together the two administrations of both parishes, so that there will be one parish. This brings with it opportunities for growth, but there will be challenges to be address along the way.

In these discussions, we must keep in mind that Aberystwyth parish has two churches, one at Penparcau and one at Aberaeron. Lampeter parish has just one church. The plan is to keep all three churches of our two parishes open, with a priest resident at Aberystwyth and a priest resident at Lampeter. However, the house at Lampeter is in such a poor condition that it is currently closed and has been for a number of months. The closure of the house has meant Lampeter parish has also lost the use of its social space and bathroom facilities. The house will need extensive re-development, along with some restoration of the church too – items such as the church guttering and church doors are in poor repair, while the house is in need of a full refit with work needing to fix damp problems and refit bathrooms, electricals, gas piping and so on. Such works may cost in the region of £120,000. Lampeter parish cannot afford this. It presently has less than £10,000 in the bank, of which £5000 is ringfenced as a grant for the church guttering.

The best option for the house at Lampeter is to make it independent from the church so that the two buildings can be separated and used independently. This will mean a new bathroom will have to be built of the use of church goers, which will be a part of the church and not the house.

To fund this, one proposal is to sell part of the carpark at Lampeter for housing. If six plots can be sold for £35,000 this will generate £210,000 to provide for the works. However, my understanding is that getting other parties interested in purchasing the land has not been easy and, even if the land is not sold, the house still needs redevelopment and funding will have to be found. I know David can speak more fully into this later.

Why does the house need restoring? Because currently the parish of Aberystwyth is paying £950 rental costs for Fr Malachy's accommodation each month, and this ongoing expense is having an impact on Aberystwyth funds, to the value of £11,400 per year.

You should all be aware that the parish of Aberystwyth has a private dwelling house in Taliesin, halfway between Aberystwyth and Machynlleth. In the very near future that house is due to be sold (perhaps David you can give us an update in a minute on when that will likely happen). However, the house is not in good shape and is not worth a lot of money: it will generate revenue, but well below the average house price owing to its poor condition.

One of the desires of Aberystwyth parish is to have a dedicated parish hall for meetings and social space. Since the closure of St Winifred's and the reopening of Welsh martyrs at Penparcau in 2018, there has been no hall in Aberystwyth parish. This is something the people of Lampeter have also started to experience, as their social space was closed in the autumn.

If the proposal to join the parishes together goes ahead, my understanding is that this will make us the biggest parish in mainland UK with an area just bigger than the M25, and the parish of Aberystwyth have made it clear to me that a hall is a priority to them. I would say that if both parishes are to come together, there will need to be some dedicated social and meeting space. But this will come at a cost and where is the best location?

Aberystwyth parish has a large section of land, much bigger than what is available at Lampeter. The field next to the church is owned by the parish. This land is a valuable asset and it's future needs to be carefully considered. One option is to do nothing with it, but it could be developed for housing, or even for a new school. The current primary school is not in the best condition and a feasibility study is scheduled to take place later in the year to see whether or not the land could be used for this purpose. However, at the moment, this is unknown.

So in summary, to best support the pastoral needs of the people of the people, consideration has to be given to accommodation for clergy which is most cost effective in terms of both accommodation costs and transport costs. The social space we have is negligible, and this needs to be addressed, with an absolute basic necessity of having working toilets at each church (something we don't currently enjoy). Both parishes have assets in terms of land: Lampeter has a carpark that can be partially redeveloped, Aberystwyth has both a house and a field.

The parish school in Aberystwyth has buildings well past their prime, and this is becoming an increasing concern demanding attention.

There are wonderful opportunities here to plan and do something for the future to allow our churches to flourish. But there are challenges and sacrifices: there is an inequality in each of the parishes demands and resourcing, and any unification will mean the sharing of resources in a way which is different to now.

I hope that helps to set the scene and I'd like to pass over to our guests to help us understand the diocesan proposal a little more.

Appendix III

Parish Statement of Accounts – Aberystwyth.

Parish Accounts:

Aberystwyth

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2025

INCOME	£
Covenanted Offertory	30833.96
Non-Covenanted Offertory	23175.24
Gift Aid	
Other Collections	8226.51
Tax Refunds	8660.79
Fund Raising	14651.49
Investment Income	
Chaplaincies	697.19
Rents	2860.00
Books/Newspapers	1561.62
Club Income	
Miscellaneous	12853.57
Legacies	
School Grants	
Gift Aid Third Party	
Non-Gift Aid Third Party	9326.73
Poor Mission Grants	
Cash from Archdiocese	19670.00
Paid By Archdiocese	
Extraordinary Income	
Grant Income	
Total Receipts during year	132517.10
Bank Balance @ 1 April 2024	7064.42
Cash in Hand @ 1 April 2024	0.00
TOTAL "A"	139581.52

EXPENDITURE	£
Clergy Expenses	22818.37
Domestic Wages	
Housekeeping	
House Expenses	1774.46
Church	13207.72
Repairs	32492.37
Light & Heat	4313.41
Rates & Insurance	5616.39
Schools	
Office Wages	
Printing/Stationery	1517.46
Telephone	855.88
Interest on Loan	
Parish Assessment	15000.00
Donations	240.00
Misc	9087.83
Fundraising expenses	1882.94
Hall expenses	60.00
Books/newspapers costs	464.96
Club expenses	
Third Party	8401.78
Loan Repaym'ts/Dep's with Archdiocese	
Income Deposited with Archdiocese	
Extraordinary Expenditure	
Total Payments during year	117733.57
Bank Balance @ 31 March 2025	21847.95
Cash in Hand @ 31 March 2025	0.00
TOTAL "B"	139581.52

Reserve Account				
Opening balance	50786.78		Transfers	19670.00
Deposit			Repairs	
Gift Aid				
Interest	555.25		Closing Balance	31672.03
	51342.03			51342.03

Appendix IV

Parish Statement of Accounts – Lampeter.

Parish Accounts:

Lampeter

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 March 2025

INCOME	£
Covenanted Offertory	5941.45
Non-Covenanted Offertory	4926.40
Gift Aid	
Other Collections	8506.14
Tax Refunds	1359.97
Fund Raising	
Investment Income	
Chaplaincies	
Rents	
Books/Newspapers	
Club Income	
Miscellaneous	
Legacies	
School Grants	
Gift Aid Third Party	
Non-Gift Aid Third Party	682.17
Poor Mission Grants	
Cash from Archdiocese	
Paid By Archdiocese	
Extraordinary Income	
Grant Income	
Total Receipts during year	21416.13
Bank Balance @ 1 April 2024	1341.52
Cash in Hand @ 1 April 2024	0.00
TOTAL "A"	22757.65

EXPENDITURE	£
Clergy Expenses	977.16
Domestic Wages	
Housekeeping	6.77
House Expenses	485.85
Church	1556.04
Repairs	1641.28
Light & Heat	4472.86
Rates & Insurance	1459.69
Schools	
Office Wages	
Printing/Stationery	
Telephone	305.96
Interest on Loan	
Parish Assessment	3168.00
Donations	
Misc	20.50
Fundraising expenses	
Hall expenses	
Books/newspapers costs	67.00
Club expenses	
Third Party	656.38
Loan Repaym'ts/Dep's with Archdiocese	2000.04
Income Deposited with Archdiocese	
Extraordinary Expenditure	
Total Payments during year	16817.53
Bank Balance @ 31 March 2025	5940.12
Cash in Hand @ 31 March 2025	0.00
TOTAL "B"	22757.65

