

Revd Lyn Léwis Dafis (1960-2022)

A very wide circle of friends were saddened to hear of the passing of the Revd Lyn Léwis Dafis on 15 March 2022, aged 61 years. He was Priest in Charge in the Bro Padarn Group of Churches, with special responsibility for the congregations of St John's, Penrhyn-coch and St Peter's, Elerch, under the leadership of LMA Dean Canon Andrew Loat. Lyn was a popular, much loved, highly respected and talented parish priest who will not only be missed by his congregation and parishioners, but also by many associates extending well beyond Wales to the international community.

Lyn was born in the small north Pembrokeshire village of Mynachlog-ddu on 11 August 1960. He attended the village primary school before moving to Ysgol y Preseli in Crymych. He graduated BA in Welsh Language and Literature from Aberystwyth University in 1981, and later in 1986 took a post-graduate qualification in librarianship at the Department of Library and Information Studies at Llanbadarn Fawr after a period working for Dyfed Libraries. Thereafter, he again worked in the public library sector in Mid Glamorgan prior to his appointment on 17 April 1989 as an Assistant Curator in the Department of Prints, Maps and Drawings at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. Following restructuring he worked in the Digitisation and Metadata Unit from November 2006 and, from April 2009 until his resignation from the Library in October 2014, he served as Head of the Library's Digital Development Unit. During this period he oversaw many innovative projects such as the digitisation of the Library's extensive photographic and periodical collections making these resources available to a world-wide audience, and transforming the traditional readership and user base profile.

Although brought up in a traditional Baptist background, Lyn became a regular communicant at St Mair's (Welsh Anglican) Church in Aberystwyth, where he developed into a much valued lay reader. Although he had risen through the ranks at the National Library he still felt unfulfilled as a greater calling to the full-time ministry beckoned. In 2014 he took, after serving the Library well for 25 years, the very brave decision to resign his lucrative post, and train at St Michael's College, Llandaff, for the Anglican priesthood. Graduating with a diploma in theology, he was ordained deacon in 2015 and priest in 2016 by Bishop Wyn at St Davids Cathedral and appointed to serve as Assistant Curate in the grouped Benefice of Llanbadarn Fawr, Elerch, Penrhyn-coch and Capel Bangor. In July 2021, in a service at Llanbadarn Fawr Church, Revd Lyn was licensed as the Diocesan Officer for the Welsh Language and Bilingualism and a Priest in Charge in the enlarged Bro Padarn Local Ministry Area. This joint rôle suited him well – not only was he a member of the team responsible for the pastoral care of the congregations of Penrhyn-coch and Elerch, he was also able to draw upon his extensive professional skills in enhancing the churches' presence and profile on social media and helping members of the different congregations to gain confidence in using and developing them for themselves. He also edited the weekly Bro Padarn digital newsletter and contributed regularly to the diocesan newspaper *Pobl Dewi*.

Lyn was a caring and compassionate parish priest. He was very much a people person, and those who knew him well will testify to his enormous talents. He was a faithful priest, and very supportive of his superiors. He was also a true and natural performer, as those who knew him, especially from his Library days, will testify. Launching a book, or competing at the annual Library staff eisteddfod, or leading the charades at the Christmas dinner, no one could come anywhere near

matching Lyn's acting and presentational skills. Onlookers would inevitably be left in a parlous state of laughter when Lyn was on top form.

But Lyn also had his very serious side, and those who witnessed his ministry and pastoral work could not fail to appreciate his unwavering commitment to the cause of Christ. The children of Ysgol Penrhyn-coch adored him and will always remember his carefully prepared presentations, and his memorable props were always carefully crafted. He often served as the master of ceremonies at the annual Cheese, Wine and Song evening at St Peter's Church, Elerch, combining his unique talent to entertain, whilst not forgetting at the same time that we were all there to further and sustain a noble cause. Lyn was a polymath – a bibliophile, broadcaster, editor and linguist, a passionate Welshman, and perhaps, surprisingly to many, a football fan of Chelsea, where his mother had once worked.

Lyn struggled with ill-health for many years, and in one sense, somewhat ironically, the advent of Covid-19, and the closure of our churches enabled him to utilise his digital skills to ensure that the word of God was not forgotten, and that zoom services were an excellent substitute to enable weekly worship, to serve both the Welsh and English congregations. They proved popular and whilst not all churchgoers managed to adapt, they did draw new participants, and smaller congregations, like Elerch, were glad to be part of a larger congregation. Whilst Lyn struggled with his health and general mobility, these avenues at least enabled him to make a telling and valuable contribution to the work of the parish. He was also instrumental in expanding digital activity to include a fortnightly online quiz for the Penrhyn-coch community coffee morning, in which he majestically presided as the quiz master (although his persuasive skills ensured that us lesser mortals would have to set the questions!).

We have all lost a very good friend, and a committed Christian. We will all miss his company, compassion, friendship, guidance and humour. No longer will I be able to pull his leg that his little red Skoda car CK62 VRR had an appropriate personal number plate – Very Reverend!

Our sympathies go to his family – his sister Mandy, brother Robert, his nephew Dion and his niece Sara. We also thank his good friend and companion Richard Owen for looking after him for over four years, and enabling him to carry out his work to the best of his ability.

Lyn will be cremated following a private service at Aberystwyth Crematorium on 26 March, followed by a memorial service at Llanbadarn Fawr Church. His ashes will later be interred at St John's Church, Penrhyn-coch.

Cwsg yn dawel Lyn!

Richard E Huws