

Wales Economic Summit

October 16th 08.

The Welsh Assembly Government called an emergency Economic Summit in Cardiff on October 16 to address the implications of the global financial crisis for Wales.

It was attended by the Secretary of State for Wales, Paul Murphy, the First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, economists, trade union and business leaders. A communiqué was issued outlining ways forward.

The challenge for the Church in Wales is now to consider its response to the implications of the crisis at a local level.

The Revd Robin Morrison, the Bishops' advisor on Church and Society, who also attended the Wales Economic Summit in Cardiff, said, "If the problem - though not the cause - has been that of confidence, then we should be careful about the kind of messages we give to the organisations of Wales, so that confidence can be rebuilt and supported by practical initiatives. This has to be done with great sensitivity given the social effects of increased unemployment, indebtedness and the sense of insecurity in local families and communities."

As a church we need to be aware of possible effects such as:

- the social consequences of increased unemployment and uncertainty
- the numbers of vulnerable individuals,
- despair about mortgages,
- homelessness (huge reductions in house building),
- poverty indebtedness,
- fuel poverty concerns.
- more family breakdowns, tensions, crime, mental health problems, substance misuse.
- less public funding from local authorities for third sector initiatives over the next year or so.

Action which churches can take to help address these effects includes:

- Thinking about new parish and deanery pastoral initiatives rather than clerical ministry working in isolation.
- Providing opportunities for people to share their stories. Be prepared to follow these up with pastoral visits, healing services, sermons etc.
- Visiting local small businesses and find out how they are coping. There are opportunities for small business growth in this recession. There may

well be business collapses in your area. When companies are facing this possibility your listening, counselling and support might be invaluable.

- Talking to business organisations and going along to meetings if invited to do so.
- Considering whether your church could become a centre for referral advice and support
- Providing space in liturgy for people to express their concerns in presentations, intercessions and study groups.
- Considering who they can partner locally to demonstrate to vulnerable people the church's availability and willingness to help with new initiatives, including the greater community use of church buildings.

The WAG communiqué can be seen at:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/news/latest/081016statement/?lang=en>