

The Ven Peggy Jackson  
Archdeacon of Llandaff

## REPORT on SABBATICAL LEAVE – July to September, 2019

1. I was very grateful to be given the opportunity, through my diocesan bishop, to take sabbatical leave during the summer of 2019. I used it to spend an extended period of time in the USA which was also my first ever visit to that country. Through Bishop June's contacts, I accepted an offer to do a clergy house exchange with a retired priest of The Episcopal Church, now living in Kerrville, in the Diocese of West Texas. I used his house and car as a base during my stay, and I was grateful for a number of introductions he was able to provide, which helped me to meet and talk to clergy and people in The Episcopal Church. He, meanwhile, stayed in my rectory in the Diocese of Llandaff, conducted services in my parish, and proved a popular visitor with parishioners during my absence.
  
2. Purpose and Aims of the Sabbatical:-
  - a. To have an extended rest and holiday; to visit the USA for the first time, and meet up with relatives, not seen for many years.
  - b. To meet clergy and lay members of The Episcopal Church, and in conversations reflect on:-
    - i. The development of Anglican women clergy in this first generation when all church roles are open to women; what helps or hinders their access to senior posts, and their realising of their full potential in ministry;
    - ii. The experience of another nationwide Anglican church which has to operate alongside many other Christian denominations and large independent church networks, but, unlike the Church in Wales, does so without ever having had a history of establishment, yet still seeks to provide a coherent nationwide ministry, and claim a voice to speak into the national public debate.
  - c. To experience everyday domestic and church life in a Texas community, which is rapidly expanding as a popular locale for retired professionals, and regenerating its economy principally through new leisure and tourism enterprises - reflecting on the way individual local history shapes and accommodates that development.
  
3. Outline of Trip:-

July – 8 <sup>th</sup> to 15 <sup>th</sup>	flew direct to Austin. Texas, and then by car to Kerrville, and settled into hosts' house, meeting with local clergy, parishioners and neighbours
16 <sup>th</sup> - 28 <sup>th</sup>	hospitality, meetings and visits with local church clergy and lay people in Kerrville and Comfort, especially Revd Carol Blaine (retired priest with responsibility for congregation) in Comfort, and Revd Bert Baetz, Rector in Kerrville. Visits to museums, art galleries and key tourist locations in Kerrville, San Antonio, Fredericksburg and the Texas Hill Country

28 <sup>th</sup>	celebrated eucharist and assisted in worship at St Boniface Episcopal Church in Comfort, Texas.
29 <sup>th</sup> July – 9 <sup>th</sup> August	trip to New York (30 <sup>th</sup> July – 4 <sup>th</sup> August, accompanied by my daughter and grandson), then by car to Rahway New Jersey (pursuing family history connection) and on for 2 days in Boston Massachusetts. Returned to Kerrville
13 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> August	trip to Houston, Texas – during which, met: Canon Christine Faulstich, Canon to the Ordinary, Diocese of Texas, and Rev Sarah Condon, Diocesan Missioner to Rice University, Houston Texas. Return to Kerrville.
16 <sup>th</sup> – 23 <sup>rd</sup> August	trip to Las Vegas, Grand Canyon, San Francisco, and return journey via Amtrak, down the Californian coast to San Antonio. In San Francisco, worshipped at Rice Cathedral, and met Canon Ellen Clark-King for conversation. Other visits included earliest founded church in the city: Mision San Dolores. Train journey to San Antonio passed through El Paso, and alongside the newly-extended Mexican border wall
23 <sup>rd</sup> -24 <sup>th</sup> August	trip to Austin, Texas. Visit to the Seminary of the Southwest, and meeting / conversations with Rt Revd Dr Kai Ryan, newly-consecrated Suffragan Bishop of Texas, and the Very Revd Dr Cynthia Kittredge, Dean and President of the Seminary of the Southwest. Return to Kerrville.
26 <sup>th</sup> August	lunch with Revd Bert Baetz, Rector of St Peter's Episcopal Church, Kerrville, and visit to Christian Assistance Ministry (ecumenical churches' foodbank, clothing supply and debt assistance project) in Kerrville.
28 <sup>th</sup> Aug – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sept	road trip to visit relatives in Nashville, Tennessee – including two nights and a full day in New Orleans, worship and visit to (very large) Westminster Presbyterian Church in Nashville, and meetings there with relatives, friends and church members. Return trip via Memphis.
12 <sup>th</sup> – 17 <sup>th</sup> Sept	sightseeing time in Washington DC, and Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia - including Sunday worship in Washington National Cathedral, and lunch and conversation with Rev Canon Dana Colley Corsello, Canon Vicar at the cathedral, and Sue von Rautenkranz, Archdeacon (in deacon's orders) of the Diocese of Washington, responsible for diaconal training and ministries.
17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Journey back to the UK.
18 <sup>th</sup> – 27 <sup>th</sup> Sept	'down-time' in the UK, to reflect on the trip, and draft report.

#### 4. Principal Impressions / Outcomes

##### 4a Holiday / Extended Rest.

I felt this was certainly achieved, by the luxury of a full 10 weeks in the USA – offering space for lots of social encounters, and beginning to form friendships with a number of people, with whom I expect to stay in touch, at least in the immediate future. I admittedly ‘worked hard’ as a tourist, to gather as wide an experience as I could of many parts of the US, and discovered something of the immensity of the country, but it was really valuable to be able to test those impressions in informal conversations with new Texas friends, between trips, and during a long weekend stay with my American-born cousins in Tennessee.

The American family share a love for family history. One of the bonuses in New York was to visit Ellis Island, and discover my great-uncle’s immigration record from 1896; and then to drive through to Rahway New Jersey where he set up practice as a doctor, discover many references to him in old directories and archive newspaper cuttings, and then see the last house he lived in, which is still occupied today.

Every (white) American I spoke to knew their immigrant family roots in great detail, and one way or another were living the story of life being better here in America than it could have been for them back in Europe. But alongside this, of course, are the very different stories of African Americans, First Nation Americans, or Hispanic Americans, and many others. Their continuing history is being formed very publicly at the present time, through daily events reported in news bulletins and by the current highly-charged political rhetoric – but it is also being presented in great detail, and in a more nuanced and thoughtful way, by a number of relatively new, and very comprehensive, specialist museums. Everywhere I visited, I was struck by the highly developed network of museums, galleries, visitor centers, information points, public libraries etc – even in quite small rural towns - providing a tangible welcome to visitors and the tourist economy, but also shaping the communities in which they are set, by offering the stories which people can own, and within which they can self-consciously identify themselves. No doubt this is a function of a more-recently mobile and diverse population in the US, but is an aspect of modern living, which all nations need to engage with. The high level of genuine welcome, openness to visitors, and information-giving was also evident in all the churches I visited – even the most modest in size – and is certainly something our Church in Wales churches could take example from ...

##### 4b Experiences of Anglican Women Clergy

It is over 25 years since the consecration in the US of the first woman to be a bishop in the Anglican Communion, and over 40 since the first American women were ordained as priests. I expected to find that the issues around ordination were long past, and in some ways that is true: younger women, with now 10-20 years of ministry experience, find little in common as women, with the older generation who fought those particular battles. But there remain a host of structural factors in the church, and in society, which impact disproportionately and negatively on women clergy, and are perhaps the reason why there are still a relatively small proportion of women in senior (or better-paid) , posts and among the bishops, although among new ordinands, gender numbers are equal. A greater proportion of women clergy than men take up the equivalent of non-stipendiary ministries after ordination, although many of these will hold the equivalent of incumbent responsibilities in parishes, while drawing their incomes from other paid employment.

As one younger woman put it “The older generation still keep going on about inclusive language in the church, but the issue I’m more concerned with is how women clergy secure proper maternity leave and fairness in employment terms from parishes and dioceses”. For her and others, feminist theology is just one among many contemporary theologies, which were part of their academic formation for ministry, but they find that, in recent

decades, its ultra-academic (sometimes abstruse) development has lessened its ability to speak directly to their situation or needs. The issues they are struggling with are closer to those of other women across all professions: to challenge organisational structures which disproportionately disadvantage women, eg through inadequate provision for parental leave, or childcare arrangements. These still hinder their realising their ministry potential as easily as contemporary male colleagues.

All the women I spoke to mentioned that overt prejudice on grounds of gender (and also of sexuality) had all-but disappeared, following the splits which took a number of dioceses out of The Episcopal Church altogether. They spoke admiringly of Katherine Jefferts-Schori's leadership through that period – that in spite of facing a barrage of vicious and often gender-based criticism, she had seen through this very necessary process. Equally, they were shocked to hear details of the CofE's current situation towards women's ordained ministry, and arrangements for 'mutual flourishing', and very concerned about the apparent direction being taken by the leadership of the Anglican Communion concerning sexuality. But the appointments system to parishes – varying slightly between dioceses, but generally made by the bishop, but also requiring consent (and sometimes competitive interviews) by church councils - does not necessarily challenge persistent unspoken prejudices and expectations. One person said she thought there was an unspoken prejudice operating against single women, most of whom seem to be in very modest parish posts, and very few in posts of significant responsibility. This chimed in with a remark by someone else that women who had well-connected or highly-paid professional husbands often found it easier to get into prominent (and well paid) parishes – because of the unspoken and invisible networks of men who hold many of the power positions in churches and dioceses, and can wield disproportionate influence behind the scenes. While others denied that this was so, and did not want to detract in any way from the legitimacy of the women's appointments who happened to have well-connected husbands, Bishop Kai Ryan did observe that she'd noticed her male bishop colleagues were automatically invited along to social and networking occasions (eg golf tournaments or hunting trips in the summer) by influential men in the diocese, who did not extend similar invitations to her.

She was clear that women need now urgently to be forming, and developing, their own equivalent professional networks across communities, in order for the churches they lead to be able to draw on that broad base of available resource. A priority for senior women will be to address the culture and ethos of the church organisation, so that it conforms less to secular society, and better reflects the inclusive community the church aspires to be. Ellen Clark-King spoke of a need to address this through developing more inclusive and varied styles of leadership in the church; she thought that too many of the current women leaders had adopted leadership styles very similar to the 'norms' established by their male counterparts, rather than forging a new ethos and culture. This is an area where she is actively contributing at national level (and will be speaking on it to a conference in Autumn 2019).

Thinking about our situation in Wales, I brought away a clear understanding that women clergy need to acknowledge and also rejoice in the distinctions of experience between different 'generations', and that those who have been longer in ministry need to be ready to relinquish the 'front line' in setting agendas for those who come after. We should be active in supporting and promoting networks, particularly among women, across the church and wider community structures, and ensure that these are open enough, to include and benefit later generations, who will use them in different ways, to suit their own needs. We need to retain a critical scrutiny of appointments processes, and the less visible ways in which prejudice and unconscious bias manifest themselves, and continue to bring issues into the light where necessary, without assuming that 'our' agendas are the defining ones for all women in ministry.

#### 4c Observations of another non-established Anglican Church

I expected to find high levels of churchgoing and Christian affiliation in the USA, and this seemed to be apparent in the relatively large numbers of highly visible church buildings, belonging to a wide variety of independent denominations, in even small towns, as well as the larger cities. People in conversation who were not regular attenders at worship still all seemed to be very clear which denomination they 'belonged' to, and there seemed an assumption that religious affiliation was still a 'normal' part of the social fabric. At the same time, I was told, on any given Sunday, roughly 20-21% of the population actually attended any church – a high level compared with Europe or the UK, but still definitely a minority. Shops and services all seem to be open on Sundays, even if sometimes on reduced working hours. In the Diocese of Texas, the majority of episcopal congregations, apart from the cathedral or major city parishes, were said to be quite modest – at the 50-60 average level of membership, and given the huge geographical area, inevitably they, and their clergy, tended to operate as relatively isolated units.

Episcopal Churches were in evidence on streetfronts, but apart from the cathedrals or famous locations (eg Trinity, Wall Street), they were not immediately distinguishable from others, by eg distinctive or historic architecture (as most have in the UK). To my eyes, they all seemed to have a sophisticated plant, with kitchens, restrooms, meeting rooms, offices and often a library in addition to worship space; most also seemed to have an identifiable staff – administrator, youth officer, pastoral worker etc – in addition to the clergy, even if those staff were often lay, and not necessarily paid. Some had schools attached, and many will operate eg nurseries, or social care day groups. Incumbent clergy therefore always have responsibility for leading, managing and often appointing some sort of ministry team. But most of clergy engagement will be through pastoral care, education and social events - with their own congregation. There is no presumption of eg a civic role for Anglican clergy, and social care projects (eg the extensive Christian Assistance Ministry in Kerrville) will almost always require broad ecumenical collaborations, in the case of CAM, with 40-50 other churches in the town. At the same time, where there were high-profile news bulletins following terrorist attacks or natural disasters (the shooting in El Paso, or hurricane damage) reporters spoke, as a matter of course, of local churches being on hand helping with the emergency relief effort, as if that were naturally their expected role in society, and therefore (by implication) statutory secular agencies might not expect to take the same frontline care responsibility.

The Diocese of West Texas has been very involved, alongside other churches, with projects along the southern border - ministering to immigrants, and especially those being detained by border authorities. There is a diocesan officer with responsibility for co-ordinating that work, and eg appealing to all churches for contributions – money, clothes or school rucksacks etc. The bishops have on various occasions issued joint statements, with The Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, at national level, expressing deep concern at the effect of government policies on vulnerable immigrants. The bishop in Washington DC and senior clergy at Washington National Cathedral wrote an open letter to President Trump, appealing, as from the cathedral which hosts major national occasions, for an end to incendiary language in public, which could fuel racism. But those occasions don't seem so readily to get reported in national news media.

I was struck by the high value that all the churches seemed to place on Christian education and faith development for their congregations, with an assumption that active faith expects engagement with Biblical and theological study; also by the high level of theological literacy and education which is to be expected as normal for all clergy. St Peter's Episcopal Church in Kerrville has made a point of structuring its church congregational planning in line with national church priorities, as set out by Bishop Michael Curry, on the theme of the power of Love – so that, even in widely scattered churches, spread over vast geographical areas, what the Episcopal Church can still offer is a tangible connection with both a national church and a worldwide Communion. Connections to the diocese are valued – bishops aim to visit every congregation at least once every year, and diocesan councils draw members from local churches – but in other respects, the diocese seems to be less significant to congregations, in day-to-day terms. The 'Anglicanism' on offer is derived from the

network of love and commitment, and a common approach to theological understanding, shared across a national church, and the worldwide Communion, and epitomised in the common form of eucharistic liturgy used in all places.

I reflected that the picture in the USA might be illustrative of the future which awaits the Church in Wales, if we deliberately, or through economic necessity, relinquish any further our hold on the former trappings of establishment: ie the concept of geographical parishes, a worshipping church identified for every person in every place, incumbents serving as priests to whole communities etc. While a number of our larger town-centre churches already have a structure and appearance similar to the US - focussing resources increasingly through project-based outreach, and building up ministry teams under clergy leadership – I don't think this is the one-size-fits-all panacea for our future. Our influence and voice in national debates in Wales is derived as much or more from our consistent history of engagement at all social levels, and commitment to being a constant 'presence in every community', as it is from our extensive good works operating currently from the major church hubs. A fullscale move towards the American model would mean abandoning a significant portion of spiritual capital, which arises from our history, if we continue consciously to shift resources into fewer and larger centres. We would lose one valuable distinctive feature of our Anglican identity, but would risk more than that, if we were to do it, before we have in place a compensatory increase in our sense of belonging and engaging as a single national church in Wales, and as part of a worldwide Anglican communion.

#### 4d Everyday life in a changing Texas community

Kerrville describes itself as the capital city of the Texas Hill Country, and is consciously building on that reputation. It has a modest population of c 23k, 20% under 21, and c 30% over 60. There are many new houses being built, and still an inflow of retired professional couples – often coming back to their Texas roots, moving to be closer to their younger families, or seeking a healthier environment, and bringing considerable spending power with them. Texas itself, and the Hill Country, are both highly developed as marketing brands, as they bid for a mostly American internal tourist and holiday trade, and encourage development of many riverside properties and outdoor activities. There is huge wealth tied up in the extensive ranches across the Hill Country, although many of the livestock are specialist breeds, and some of the land is now diverted into eg vineyards. A number of people use Kerrville as their dormitory, and/or work online from home, while travelling, when they have to, into eg San Antonio for business. There is a substantial hospital and the Schreiner University, art gallery, riverside natural parks, theatre and a museum. The city's origins lay in developed trade by a few key individuals being quick to exploit local natural resources along the river valley, and then to welcome cattle drovers, and later the railways to make Kerrville a transport hub. Many of the city's public buildings and institutions were given by historic private benefactors.

Leisure activities, service industries and tourism are now the chief sources of income. The city presents its own story well, through the museum and galleries, and preservation of historic buildings; these, as well as the links into wider 'Texas' and 'Hill Country' branding (eg through a local rodeo, or the Museum of Western Art) make an attractive offer to visitors, and one which (unlike Wales) is not dependent upon the vagaries of the weather. Presenting a story for visitors, and especially the local history, also has the spin-off effect of crystallising the story the community wants to tell of itself – and certainly the impression I took away was of a city enjoying this new phase of its life. Everyone I spoke to, including those with very modest lifestyles, who had lived in Kerrville all their lives, was happy to be here, and had no expectations or desire to leave.

I reflected that similar factors would apply in Wales, where service industries, leisure and tourism are an increasingly significant part of local post-industrial economies. To succeed, these new industries need to be

embraced by communities overall, but an essential part of that ownership is the rootedness and proud linkage with the historical story Wales wants to tell about itself.

5. Other Miscellaneous Highlights – apart from the most obvious and well-known tourist locations:

- The National Museum of Funeral History – just outside Houston, Texas – as far as I know, unique of its kind
- Hummingbirds – on the Texas garden feeder
- A Welsh flag hanging in The Alamo, honouring a single Welshman, said to have been among the final group of defenders, who were all killed (tho' more recent research suggests he was actually English)
- A town called 'Welsh', a few miles outside New Orleans – with no connection to Wales at all, but honouring the surname of one of the founding families
- A Welsh congregation in New York, which meets regularly for worship and Bible study and has its own website (but unfortunately not during the time I was there).
- Discovering that in Tennessee they say that they are 'in the south', whereas Texans say of themselves that they are 'the west'. And a visitor from Seattle, in the Museum of 'Western' (ie Texan) Art, said 'But I always thought that we were the west' !
- Immigration and complex national identity being very visibly and vocally a part of everyday experience and public discourse – reflected in lots of individual conversations, but also publicly in excellent modern museums, eg Tenement Museum in New York, and the Museum of Black American History in Washington DC.
- Appreciation for the ongoing work to examine, and face up to issues arising from US history – eg slavery – typified, not only by the museums which tell the story in great detail and complexity, but eg the presentation in Colonial Williamsburg, which not only illustrates the facts and history of slavery itself, but also now the difficulties and contentious questions of how to present that history with integrity to modern visitors.
- Spanish being very much in use, and in evidence – almost as a second language to English - in every one of the major cities visited.
- Finding in myself gratitude and appreciation for some of the achievements of the US as a nation, which have touched and improved human lives across the world – eg the space research and exploration; discovering also that some traumatic events on US soil, such as the 9-11 terrorist attacks, have had a universal impact, and have changed the lives of all people worldwide. I found myself needing to respect, and recognise, that it is the US who are now guardians for the rest of the world, of these significant objects and places.
- The Newseum, in Washington DC, presenting a comprehensive and thoughtful history and archive record of Journalism particularly from the fifteenth century onwards. Nuanced discussion of fundamental questions in the context of the First Amendment of the American Constitution – at a time over this particular summer when in both the US and the UK, dramatic new constitutional crises were being played out every day in real life.
- Opportunity to share the summer's unusual experiences with my congregation in St Fagans, who welcomed, and very much enjoyed, the ministry of the Revd Dr Ken Asel, with whom I swapped houses.

## 6. Finances

I was very grateful to receive grants towards this Sabbatical leave from:

Isla Johnston Trust	£ 1,950
St George's Trust	£ 350

The major costs of the 'base' sabbatical trip, which enabled everything else to happen were:

	£
Return flights between UK and USA	948
Health Insurance, Travel Insurance and ESTA	384
Travel/o'night hotels in UK and US from base to dep. Airport	348
US mobile Phone – 2 mth contract	111
Fuel for car use around Kerrville	242
Hospitality for 5 of clergy conversations	291
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	£ 2,324
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The costs of my whole trip were much greater, but naturally included a considerable level of travel, hotel and sightseeing costs around the USA, which were at my own discretion. [For example, as indication, the round trip of 11 days, from Texas to New York and Boston (flights + hotel accomm) was approx. £ 1,157 - before food and museums fees etc.].

*Peggy Jackson*

*27<sup>th</sup> September 2019*