



From: The Vicar of Lancaster

Chair of the Major Churches Network

28 May 2019

MEDIA RELEASE: “The Major Churches Network” is launched in Lancaster

A recent meeting of the Greater Churches Network took place in Lancaster Priory, hosted by the Chair of the Network, The Revd Canon Chris Newlands, Vicar of Lancaster. The decision was taken to rename the group as the Major Churches Network, and to adopt a new constitution. This was a significant move and, though several questions were raised in the discussion, the vote by the members of the Network was unanimous in favour of the change. The Greater Churches Network was therefore formally closed, and the new “Major Churches Network” was formed, and its Inaugural General Meeting took place.

The Greater Churches Network had been formed in 1991 as a support group for clergy and laity who had responsibility for churches with a “cathedral-like” building and ministry, but without the resources available to cathedrals in the Church of England. This informal network had no formal relationship with the Church of England, but its informal nature meant that the members could come together to share best practice and bring in experts to advise on matters of importance to their ministry and mission. Regional meetings have also been set up to allow members to meet together for mutual support and encouragement.

More recently an important study has been commissioned into “Major Parish Churches” under the auspices of the Church Buildings Council, the official body with overall responsibility for the Church of England parish churches and chapels, together with Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This resulted in the appointment of a “Cathedrals and Major Churches Officer” within the CBC, and the identification of around 300 churches in England which met certain agreed criteria. These define a “Major Parish Church” as having exceptional significance, being physically very large (over 1000m² footprint), listed as Grade I, II* (or exceptionally II), open to visitors daily, having a role or roles beyond those of a typical parish church, and making a considerable civic, cultural, and economic contribution to their community.

Churches in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland that meet the criteria of a Major Church are welcome to become Associate Members of the MCN, and attend the annual conferences, which will have many elements which will be relevant to their ministry and mission, even though they do not fall under the auspices of the Church of England.

The new constitution was formally adopted at the General Meeting, and officers were elected, and a number of new members were welcomed into the Major Churches Network (MCN). All churches who are recognised as Major Churches by the CBC are eligible to join the MCN, on payment of an annual subscription, if they feel that membership would be of benefit to them.

The Network will meet annually, the next meeting in 2020 being a Day Conference in London hosted by the Church Buildings Council, and the next residential Conference in 2021.

For further information, please contact:

The Revd Canon Chris Newlands (Chair) (contact details below)

Rosie Smith (Cathedrals and Major Churches Officer, Church Buildings Council)
rosanna.smith@churchofengland.org

(Photographs below;)

Photos of the Conference delegates in Lancaster Priory on the final day:



Priority Vicarage, Priority Close, Lancaster, LA1 1YZ
Tel: 01524 63200 (Vicarage) 01524 65338 (Parish Office)
chris@lancasterpriory.org
www.lancasterpriory.org