



## Symposium in Practical Theology and Religious Education

Leslie J Francis and Tania ap Sion



The Right Revd David Walker

The St Mary's Centre Symposium in Practical Theology and Religious Education was again fully booked this year with 44 researchers from the UK, Europe, the USA and Canada participating in the event held at Noddfa, Penmaenmawr, from 25 to 27 September 2012.

The annual St Mary's Centre Symposium in Practical Theology and Religious Education provides an opportunity for the dispersed community of scholars collaborating with the Centre:

- to share the findings from completed research
- to discuss the design and development of new projects
- to support and nurture research students
- to engage with practitioners and policy-makers.

The Right Revd David Walker, Bishop of Dudley, provided the Symposium's Public Lecture, and spoke about types of belonging and the rural church. Drawing on the results of a number of empirical studies that he has conducted, Bishop David argued that people belong to the rural church in four distinct ways.

- Some belong by engaging with the activities (they attend services most weeks)
- Some belong by engaging with events (they come to the harvest festival or the carol service)

- Some belong by connections with the place (they may not attend services or even live locally, but the place carries powerful significance for them)
- Some belong by connections with people (they may not be known by the vicar, but they feel that they know the vicar and can turn to him or to her)

Bishop David went on to argue that pastoral practice and pastoral care need to distinguish between these different ways of belonging, accept their validity, and be sensitive to the distinctive expectations and needs of each of these styles.



The list of participants and presentations can be viewed in the accompanying programme.