

Welshpool Methodist Church, High Street

“Celebrating and Sharing God’s Love”

“IN TOUCH” issue 13

News and Updates

1. **Happy Birthday** to Bryan Langford who will be 91 on 20th September. We send good wishes to him and to all who will be celebrating birthdays this month.

2. **Thanks from the Postings** “Jane and I, and I am sure many others, would like to thank all those at Welshpool Methodist Church who have kept us in touch and enabled us to know that we are valued members of the Church family. There have been numerous phone calls and messages from members and friends in addition to information from the church. It is invidious to single out people, but we want to thank Janice for ‘In Touch’ and Jubilate updates, Derek for processing the weekly Service Sheet and wading through the regulations, Anne and Graham for keeping the Church open and safe for Prayer and Services, also the Stewards and volunteers who have enabled people to be safe, and those who have produced the weekly home Service Sheet. On a personal level, we would like to say how moved we were by the cards and greetings we received on our Diamond Anniversary – so different from 1960 but equally rewarding. Thank you every one and we look forward to a more recognisable future with the support and guidance of our new Minister. Terry”.

3. **Walking with Friends** – on Saturday 26th September, going up Rodney’s Pillar, leaving church at 10.30am, with picnic lunch on the top (weather permitting).

4. **Morning Worship** continues at 10.45am each Sunday – Holy Communion with Revd Marian on 13th, Prayer and Praise on 20th, and Revd Jacquie on 27th. We understand that some churches are operating a booking system for attendees, but the Circuit Leadership Team has decided not to recommend this practice to churches in our circuit. Should we fill all the seats in our own church, we will be operating our overflow system, relaying the service into the Meeting Room (although not for receiving Holy Communion).

A weekly Worship Sheet will continue to be produced for those unable to worship with us, and for others who would still like to receive it. However, if you have been receiving this by post but no longer wish to do so, please let us know.

5. **Mid-Week Opening for Private Prayer** continues on Wednesdays from 10am until 12, and 2 until 4pm. Although those coming in for prayer may be few in number, we feel that this is a service to the community which we should continue to offer. As current guidelines insist, we need to have someone on duty when the church is open. If you can spare an hour to join our team of volunteers please tel. 850514.

6. The **Welcome Service** for Revd Jacquie Evans took place on 3rd September, led by Revd Dr Stephen Wigley, Chair of the Wales Synod. In pre-Covid times, the church would have been full, with representatives from all the churches around the circuit, and with invited guests. It would have been followed by refreshments and a

time to chat with friends and meet the 'new minister', but this year ours was the only 'live' Welcome Service to be held in the Wales Synod. Numbers were restricted and fellowship after the service was not possible. However, being able to welcome Jacquie (and husband Jon) in person was appreciated by all who were able to attend – we managed to seat 40 in church and 14 in the Meeting Room, all socially distanced, including representatives from Churches Together, Synod Cymru and Girl Guiding, together with a few members from most churches in the circuit, and past minister Revd Martin Dawes, (and wife Pam), who was Jacquie's mentor in a previous circuit. We are sorry we were not able to accommodate more of you, but we share with you here a summary of the event:-

Before the service we were able to enjoy live organ music played by Vio, the ban on using pipe organs having been lifted, but with singing still not allowed, we listened to recordings of the hymns, with words on the screen (no doubt with some of us not being able to resist joining in quietly behind our masks!) – “Ye Servants of God”, “Have you heard God's Voice”, “I, the Lord of Sea and Sky”, “Hear the Call of the Kingdom” and “Be Thou my Vision” – the first and last chosen by us, and the other three by Jacquie. (Thanks to Derek for projecting the complete service for all to follow, and to Graham for printing paper copies).

Stephen based his address on three readings selected from the Methodist Worship Book's Welcome Service - Isaiah 42:1-9, Acts 2:42-47 and John 21:15-19. Each of the readings offers a challenge to its hearers to move forward into an unknown future, recognising the need to make a fresh start, not looking back with nostalgia for the past, but moving on with a new mission and vision of hope. Stephen related this message to our own situation in these “strange and challenging times” when we are wondering what our future as a church and as a circuit will be. Those who were challenged in the Bible verses faced their uncertain futures with hope, faith and trust, and found their way through to the future which God had planned for them – and this is our challenge too. Stephen quoted words of Cardinal Newman: “To love is to change; to be perfect is to change often.” We are called to a time of change – “it's not all about new technology, although it might have a part to play, but it is about trusting, about keeping faith and about always being ready still to be able to give a reason for the hope that is within us”.

Following the Presentation of Jacquie to the congregation, and her responses and promises, and those of the Circuit, she received greetings and welcomes from Michael Jones on behalf of the circuit, from Revd Keith Fantham on behalf of Welshpool Churches Together, from Revd Jennie Hurd on behalf of Synod Cymru, and from Helen Davies, on behalf of Girl Guiding.

In her response, Jacquie thanked everyone for their welcome and extended a 'virtual hug' to all present “because I'm that kind of person!” She continued: “It's lovely to be here..... I hope to be able to shed fresh light on familiar words, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ..... to fire everybody up.....” and concluded: “Let's all work together for the good of the Kingdom here in this circuit”.

We look forward to working with Revd Jacquie, perhaps sometimes in new and unfamiliar ways, but hopefully we are ready for the challenge of change, as we continue to “Celebrate and Share God's Love” in this community.

Happy New Year! A Prayer for September - published on the Methodist website

Renewing God,

September is a new year for the Methodist community,

So we pray for those Methodist churches, tentatively opening their buildings; for ministers who have moved to new appointments during these changing and challenging times; for the Connexional team, adapting to new ways of working.

May the Methodist people listen deeply, discerning your promptings as you guide us from disorientation to reorientation.

We pray for children going back to school after such a long time, and those starting for the first time; for governors, head teachers, and all involved in education as they prepare for and adapt to new ways of working.

May new discoveries be made, aspirations raised, and dreams nurtured

And as this New Year commences, may our faith in you be deepened, our love for you refreshed, and our hope in you be our sufficiency.

For the best of all is.... God is with us. Amen.

Welshpool Methodist Church, 2019 – 2020 – 2021!

The turn of any year is a time for looking back, and a time for looking forward, and the Connexional year is no exception. If we had been able to hold our Annual Church Meeting, that is exactly what we would have been doing – so here is a review of the year - and some thoughts as we move forward.

Our regular activities continued until the Spring and were well received – on Mondays, our weekly Coffee mornings, Jubilate singing practices and afternoon Playgroup; on Tuesdays, evening House Bible Fellowship; on Wednesdays, monthly Mid-week Movies; on Thursdays, midday Bible Reading alternating with Contemplative Prayer; also evening House Craft Group; on Fridays, monthly Friday Afternoon Fellowship and evening Gallery Group; and on Saturdays, fortnightly Friendship Lunches and monthly 'Walking with Friends'. In addition, our premises were used by many different Community Groups throughout the week - for education, exercise, cultural activities, and various meetings.

In **September**, it was the turn of our Circuit to organise events throughout the month for the Synod's Year of Prayer initiative. A Prayer Corner, with a Prayer Wall, was set up at the back of church and the church was open for prayer each day (and this was continued into future months). Each week in September we held a prayer meeting, each with a different focus – Focus on Prayer led by Bill, Focus on the Bible led by Derek, Focus on the News led by Gordon, and Focus on Children and Young People led by Karen. In addition, Derek led two Prayer Walks, one in town, the other rural. On the first Saturday the church hosted a circuit Safeguarding Course, providing lunch for the attendees. On the last weekend, Jubilate celebrated their 8th Anniversary, presenting a Music and Poetry Supper Concert on Saturday, and enjoying their annual Anniversary Sunday Lunch at the Lakeside the following day.

Revd Sue Lawler returned to take our Harvest Service at the beginning of **October**, when we passed on the Prayer Initiative Scrapbook to the Gwent Hills and Vales circuit. Our Harvest Lunch followed the service. Mid-month, a morning was spent packing Christmas Shoeboxes, and on the last Friday evening, we enjoyed another

of Derek's popular Fun Quiz Evenings, raising money for the church's charity. Synod Chair, Revd Stephen Wigley, conducted our morning service on the last Sunday.

On 7th **November** there was great rejoicing when we received the news that our circuit had been matched with a potential minister in the first round of Stationing (having failed at the last three previous attempts). Revd Jacquie (with Jon) visited a week later, touring the circuit and meeting circuit and church stewards. Jacquie subsequently accepted our invitation to serve as Superintendent Minister from September 2020. The outstanding event of the year at Welshpool took place over the weekend of 9th/10th when, despite the snow, over 140 people from all over the area (and beyond) packed the church to hear John Bell speak (and lead us in song) on the theme of "Singing our way into and out of belief". The following morning he preached at the United Service for Remembrance Sunday at St Mary's. On 28th some joined others in Newtown to discuss the Report of the Marriage and Relationships Task Group "God in Love Unites Us". On 30th we held our Winter Fair.

In **December** our Advent and Christmas activities included singing carols on the steps as the town's Christmas lights were switched on, in the street to Saturday shoppers and in Monday Coffee Morning, raising funds for Action for Children. Our services included the annual Service of Light, Playgroup's Christingle, Jubilate's presentation of Roger Jones' musical "The Inn Crowd", a traditional service of Nine Lessons and Carols, and on Christmas Eve, a Crib Service and the Midnight Service of Holy Communion. In addition, we took part in the Churches Together Nativity Walk around the town, our church re-enacting the Inn Scene in the church foyer.

January arrived, and little did we know what the year had in store, but looking back the words of the Covenant Service held on 5th proved to be particularly pertinent during the time of lockdown and beyond: "Put me to what you will"

In **February** we hosted a Coffee Morning raising funds for Samaritans, but had to cancel our Games Afternoon at the end of the month, and then **March** arrived, coronavirus really took hold, we held our last service on 15th, and from 16th all services and activities were cancelled and the premises closed. Wanting to provide worship of some kind, the first of our weekly home Service Sheets was produced for the following Sunday, 22nd, and to keep in contact with both the church family and our wider community, the first of our fortnightly newsletters, "In Touch", was issued on 25th. Sadly several planned events weren't able to take place – the Spring Fair, Churches Together Lent Groups and Christian Aid Week events, Plant Sale, Vocalease Concert, Jubilate's Pentecost celebration of "Saints Alive!", the annual Church Outing etc, but we did celebrate Easter Day with a beautiful flower arrangement by Anne displayed in the Church Foyer for all to see. After 3 months, restrictions began to be lifted, and on 22nd **June** we opened our premises for Individual Prayer, and then, with our Risk Assessment in place, we were able to resume worship, following strict guidelines, on 26th **July**. We are hoping to hear that we will be able to re-start some of our group activities in **October**.

So what of the future? We have heard of the success of both 'virtual' services and Drive Through services – two examples of very different ways to worship. Are they for us? No doubt many of us wish we could turn the clock back – but this is unlikely to happen, so instead, we must be prepared to embrace change, whatever form that may take. This can be an exciting time in the life of the church – so let us go forward in faith, trusting in God's guidance along whatever paths he may take us.

From Gordon: 'Wither now, Welshpool?'

The 'church' will continue in diverse forms that fit the circumstances and situation – so, wither now Welshpool? (This is a personal view – responses invited)

No, there will be no great revival such as that of the late 19th century. Our congregation will see significant change in numbers in the next five to ten years. The network of chapels, of several denominations, is contracting rapidly. Sadly, there has been little stomach for denominational joining. Attachment to buildings remains strong among the older, deeper rooted generation. Will Covid 19 bring permanent changes in the way people gather, not just for worship, but for all manner of recreational and educational activities? So 'Wither now Welshpool?'

Service to others is fundamental to the Christian pilgrimage. To draw people in we need appropriate premises, but these demand a toll in terms of management and maintenance, both financial and human. Can we continue to do that? Our premises are elderly and have some issues that will not go away. What about our outreach to those for whom 'church buildings' will always be a barrier? Do we need a different public face? Do we need to sever the Wesley umbilical cord?

'Very well, clever clogs', you may be thinking, 'what would you do?'

Admittedly, a difficult question! I would either sell the church and premises, to buy the Talbot pub (or similar), transforming it into a cafe and charity shop, together with a worship space for services, and a flat above to accommodate the homeless, or I would donate the rear church premises to a trust to be run for community benefit, and make the worship church even more multi-use.

Or... do we simply become guardians of an endangered species?

Education Sunday, 13th September

The theme of Education Sunday 2020 is "A Learning People in a Time of Change". An introduction to the theme has been written by Barbara Easton, who is Head of Service, Methodist Academies and Schools Trust, and who will be Vice President of the Methodist Conference 2021-2022. The following is an extract. She writes:

"Most people's experience of 2020 has been a bit of a roller-coaster, not all bad or good. For our children and young people this is also true and there is much for which they will want to give thanks. Over the last few months, many have learned to ride a bike, play an instrument, train a puppy, or crack a computer game. But there have been dark moments. We know that not all youngsters have been able, or willing, to learn away from the resources and imperatives of the classroom. They have struggled to be away from school, and now they may struggle to be back....

The early days of the pandemic brought a sense that the world could embrace a better way of living – neighbours rushed to help, the roads emptied, the birds sang.... Yet more recently, as things moved on, people rushed gladly back to fast travel, fast food, fast fashion. Being kind took its place alongside being stressed, angry, judgemental... human... We have not yet become the people we were made to be. How can we embrace change when we are anxious and struggling ourselves? But how else will we step out into the Kingdom if it is not by embracing the chance to be a learning people in a time of change? For us all, our children and young people, and ourselves, there is both hope and opportunity."

Sing Praises! Julia's choice of hymns for Mondays 14th and 21st September

“Guide me O Thou Great Jehovah” (StF 465) has words by William Williams, who became an ordained curate in 1740 and wrote many hymns. He was living through a time of change in the established church and by the 1740s we find various forms of Methodism emerging. William Williams was denied ordination to the priesthood because of his views. He chose to travel Wales, with precarious finances, often selling what he could be employed to sell, and eking out the difference, it appears, with pamphlets and books. He was a prolific writer. In Isaiah chapter 58 he found the images and inspiration for this, his most famous hymn, taking comfort from knowing that God did not desert his people in the wilderness, nor would he desert his devoted servants. The tune, Cwm Rhondda, by John Hughes, was published in 1907, and the double line at each verse end allows many lovely harmonies to flow.

“Teach Me My God and King” (StF 668) is by a famous son of Montgomery, the 16th century writer, George Herbert. He too was influenced by the politics and issues of the day. Like much of his writing, the hymn is based on his grappling with his expressions of faith and how the world reveals the creator. It conveys the message ‘Do what you have to do for God in cheerful manner’. (2 Cor. 9 “....and because of the proof which this service of yours brings, many will give glory to God....”)

“Duty of Care” – *this poem written by Julia was the winning entry in a competition run by the Newtown Library in July, the remit for which was to imagine any changes or helpful scenarios for going forward following lockdown. Julia wrote this following a dream in which she was clutching her fist around a rope....*

I'm clinging to a rope; each day thicker
squeezing the rough jute until I'm fully awake.
Hopes mingle with all too invasive fears.
Kindness and sensitivity almost seemed to be winning.
We spoke of nature's fight back. Cleaner air;
clear waterways; birdsong louder than traffic noise.
We shared blossom on trees on screens,
held long conversations with miniature faces.
Our well-ordered store cupboards and neat homes
We long to step away from.
We crave friends and a full diary.
We didn't want the old normal.
We prayed for a new regime of awareness.
Stir crazy emerging into discordant groups.
The news jumps about with inconclusive highlights;
demands for rights, regardless of the vulnerable.
Inability to wait; evidenced by cries for instant gratification.
Singing, theatricals and dancing all forbidden;
No hugs and kisses: families still separated.
The isolated scared to shop.
So I wake. The fear has changed.
The new normal so starkly resembles the old
And I wait for ascent in the duty of care.

To make you smile.... and think? (Submitted by Graham)

“We Worship at St. Tesco’s” by Pam Ayres

Pam's introduction: “Interestingly near where I live in Gloucestershire they've recently been putting up a new supermarket. As it went up, I couldn't help thinking it had similarities with the church, 'cause it's a big building, a long building, and it had a tower at one end, and they actually put a clock on it, and it had like a little pointed roof and I could see great parallels between it and a church, although on Sunday you wouldn't confuse the two of course because the church is fairly deserted, whereas at the supermarket, there's a stampede”.

Nowadays we worship at St Tesco. At first the neighbours seemed a little shocked,
But then St Tesco's doors are always open whereas St Cuthbert's are always locked.
It's hard to get to know the congregation, and the vicar isn't actually ordained,
They haven't got a pulpit or a chancel
But they've got enormous windows and they're stained!

I'm glad we're in the parish of St Tesco, I feel so happy walking down the aisle,
While the Reverend was always rather gloomy,
The checkout-out girls have always got a smile.
Their uniform is anything but dreary; it's polyester cotton and it's striped,
And pretty tunes come floating down from heaven,
It isn't organ music, but it's piped!

Thank heavens I converted to St Tesco; I find this new religion suits me fine,
It's altogether younger than St Cuthbert's where the congregation all look 99!
The vicar used to talk about the 'profits', but he didn't mean the same as you and I,
He couldn't hold a candle to St Tesco, and anyway, his steeple's not so high.

Sometimes I dream I'm sitting in St Cuthbert's, in that old pew where water always
dripped; I can smell the incense sweetly burning,
and the rising damp that flourished in the crypt.
Today no candles twinkle in the window and no confetti lingers round the gate,
There's no more blushing brides or bouncing babies,
Verily it's past its sell-by-date.

But business is booming at St Tesco; the worshippers are spending more and more;
They're getting such a throng on Sunday morning
That they're going to have to reinforce the floor.
And frankly it has been a revelation: on Sunday now we relish going out,
And seeing all that inexpensive lager has made my husband so much more devout!

They're stripping out the timber at St Cuthbert's;
Well, it doesn't earn enough to pay its keep.
They ought to take a lesson from St. Tesco and learn to pile it high and sell it cheap!
Some ladies still are singing in the choir of the earth they will inherit if they're meek,
But St Tesco has on high the voice of angels with all the special offers of the week.

But sometimes in the busy supermarket, above the merry ringing of the till,
I fancy I can hear a church bell ringing from the steeple of St. Cuthbert's on the hill.
The bell has gone, the roof, the stained glass window – I dare say a merciful release,
For nowadays we worship at St Tesco.
It's closing time, St Cuthbert. Rest in Peace....

Harvest Thanksgiving 2020, Sunday 4th October

Donations are invited for items that can be passed on to the Food Bank. Particular needs are milk powder, tinned meats, coffee (small jars), jam, custard (all with long use by dates, please) - and toiletries. (The Food Bank has plenty of baked beans!) Please note: we will not be able to accept fresh fruit and vegetables this year.

Puzzle Time: Countries of the World (another puzzle from Oswestry Methodists)

1. A nap ma had to wear? (6)
2. Twenty-one golden shillings? (6)
3. Silvery white little Christina, don't cry for her (9)
4. Initially, a question and the answer really? (5)
5. Take legal action against the desperate man (5)
6. This is uncle for Wimbledon Common (8)
7. A scam given green light? (5)
8. Short line parallel to the equator and, go by this way? (6)
9. Young Malcolm joins the Territorial Army (5)
10. Scan adaption – it's in there (6)
11. Support for women, in short nothing, what a nut (6)
12. Sounds like a producer of preserves? (7)
13. Care duo all mixed up? (7)
14. It's time, when traffic lights turn green (4)
15. Feeling peckish? (7)
16. A hide-out for children, examine and hopefully tick my work? (7)
17. End waltz sir, and re-jig for new formation (11)
18. Sounds like a musical drama? (6)
19. The, in archaic form, with males (5)
20. Potassium, uranium in short, and do stay awhile? (6)

Answers to Puzzles in Issue 12: Numbers and Letters

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| 1 | 1, 2, Buckle my Shoe | 2 | 4 Seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter |
| 3 | 4 Weeks in a Month | 4 | 6 Wives of Henry the Eighth |
| 5 | 7 Days in a Week (<i>apologies!</i>) | 6 | 7 Brides for 7 Brothers |
| 7 | 13 a Baker's Dozen | 8 | 24 Blackbirds, Baked in a Pie |
| 9 | 30 Days hath September, April, June and November | | |
| 10 | 3 Coins in a Fountain | 11 | The 39 Steps |
| 12 | 40 Days of Lent | 13 | 52 Weeks in a Year |
| 14 | 60 Seconds in a Minute | 15 | Motorway Speed Limit 70 miles per hour |
| 16 | 77 Sunset Strip | 18 | 101 Dalmatians |
| 19 | 124 Old Pennies in a Pound | 20 | 366 Days in a Leap Year |
| 21 | 1066 Battle of Hastings | 22 | 1966 England Won the World Cup |
| 23 | 12 Days of Christmas/Disciples of Christ | | |
| 24 | Holes on a Golf Course | 25 | 66 Books in the Bible |

Thanks to all of you who have been 'in touch' with contributions for this issue. Please send your news, messages, thoughts, poems, prayers, quizzes, funny stories etc. for issue 14, which will be out on 23rd September, to rhodes4144@gmail.com, by phone 01938 850514, or post to "Brynteg", Castle Caereinion, Welshpool, SY21 9AS, by 19th. All contributions welcome. (Cake orders: Gwen 555988 or Janice 850514).