

Welshpool Methodist Church, High Street

“Celebrating and Sharing God’s Love”

“IN TOUCH” issue 19

News and Updates

1. **Happy Birthday** – Harry Owen will be 94 tomorrow, 3rd December, and Geoff Spencer will be 94 on Sunday 6th. To them and several other friends who have birthdays and anniversaries in the coming days, we send our good wishes.

2. **A message from Jane** – 2020 is a special year for the Postings family – our Diamond Wedding, and my 90th Birthday. We had planned celebrations but how things change. However, there is always a silver lining. We have been sustained by the love of the society at Welshpool Methodist Church. Friends have sent cards and messages, for which an enormous Thank you, but overall, we have felt the love and inclusion of the church – we have not been abandoned, we are included, which gives us real comfort. The individual contacts, the bulletins and the home worship sheets keep us connected and still ‘at home’ in society. Thank you to all of you at ‘Our Church’ for the Christian love extended both to those present and those joining in spirit. *(Thankfully, after a few days in hospital, Jane is back at home. We send her our good wishes and remember her in our prayers).*

3. **Condolences** – we extend sympathy to Rev Jacquie and Jon following the death of Jacquie’s father, and assure them that they are in our thoughts and prayers.

4. **Sunday and mid-week services in December** – Graham will be leading worship on 6th and Rev Marian on 13th (Holy Communion). Sadly, there can be no Carol Service this year, but on 20th, morning worship will be a Prayer and Praise service and will include Christmas readings and music. Eileen Jobling will lead morning worship on 27th. Home Worship sheets continue to be prepared for those unable to join us in church. The Service of Light, to remember those not with us this Christmas, will be held on Tuesday 8th at 7pm, led by Rev Marian, and on Christmas Eve the Midnight Communion Service will begin at 11.30pm, led by Rev Jacquie. There will be no services on Christmas Day, either at our church or at the Baptist.

5. **Mid-week activities** – the church continues to be open for Private Prayer each Wednesday, 10-12 and 2-4. Jubilate (Faith, Fun and Fellowship) will meet on Monday 7th at 10.15am, Bible Reading group on Thursday 10th at 11am and Gallery Group on 18th at 7pm. (Details of Saturday walks in December from Derek, 556117).

6. **Collection for Action for Children** – this year we are unable to sing our carols in the street or have our annual Coffee and Carols event, both of which raised funds for Action for Children. Instead, on Saturday mornings 12th and 19th, recorded carols will be relayed into the street and Pat J, our Action for Children rep, will be present with collecting buckets. Weather permitting there will also be a fundraising stall.

7. **‘All We Can’ Harvest appeal** – the total received to date from filled Smartie tubes and other donations for the ‘Bicycles for Uganda’ Appeal is **£502.59**. Many thanks.

8. **Reminder** – please do not leave Christmas cards for exchange or distribution in the church foyer this year. *(Seasonal Greetings may be sent via “In Touch” if you wish).*

Advent

"The celebration of Advent is possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come" – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The word 'Advent' is derived from the Latin word *adventus* meaning "coming". In the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and Gaul, Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the Feast of Epiphany in January. During this time of preparation, Christians would spend 40 days in penance, prayer and fasting. Originally, there was little connection between Advent and Christmas, but by the 6th century, Roman Christians had tied Advent to the coming of Christ, but the "coming" they had in mind was not Christ's coming at his birth, but his "second coming" in the clouds as the judge of the world. It was not until much later that the Advent season was linked to Christ's first coming at Christmas.

Now Advent begins on the Sunday that falls between 27th November and 3rd December. For many Advent is equated with a busy time of preparing for Christmas, and in the midst of all the activity, it is sometimes easy, even for us, to overlook Advent as a time of fasting and prayer, much like Lent.

The Advent wreath first appeared in Germany in 1839, when a Lutheran minister working at a mission for children created a wreath out of a wheel of a cart, and placed 20 small red candles and four large white candles inside the ring. The red candles were lit on weekdays and the white candles on Sundays. Later wreaths were created out of evergreens, symbolising everlasting life, the circle reminding us of God's unending love and the eternal life He makes possible.

The four outer candles on today's wreath traditionally represent hope, faith, joy and peace. Another interpretation is that the 1st candle is to remind us of the people of God for whom Jesus came, the 2nd the prophets who foretold his coming, the 3rd John the Baptist who prepared the way, and the 4th Mary, who bore the child. The 5th candle lit on Christmas Day, celebrates the birth of Christ, "light of the world".

Advent (from Arnold Kellett's "Kellett's Christmas")

The first candle lit!

The first tiny doors of Advent Calendars tweezed open by eager young fingers...
Christmas is coming!

Hark! The glad sound

Of whispered enquiries, of rustling paper, the mounting tension of excited children probing and questioning their exhausted mothers...

How frenzied our work swept on by the sense of growing momentum...

Was R.L.S. right? Better to travel hopefully than to arrive?

Is the pleasure all here in anticipation, in imagination, in our expectation of how good it will be?

Advent is preparing... Not shopping days only, not spending on stomachs,
but clearing the mind, and opening the heart in readiness for something deeper than social fun and family reunion.

All may travel hopefully,

But only those who go as far as Bethlehem shall find arrival better than the journey.

Thoughts for Advent 2020: a message from Gilbert Markus, an authority on Celtic Spirituality, presenting Radio 4's Morning Worship on Advent Sunday

'For me the strangest thing about this COVID pandemic has been what it has done to my understanding of my own body.

All my life I have understood reasonably well how to use physical gestures as expressions of love and friendship, as ways of building up the city, ways of belonging to other people; we all do this all the time.

The hug or the kiss you give in greeting or farewell; the hand-shake on being introduced to someone; the time spent sharing food and drink.

The gatherings of people in church, or mosque; in synagogue or gurdwara; in social club or night club.... singing together.

My father is 93 years old, and lives in Glasgow, only an hour's drive away. But I haven't seen him face-to-face for about five months, because all the things we used to do to express our love are now a threat to the people we love.

People used to kiss someone because we loved them. Now we talk to them by phone or on Zoom because we love them.

We used to shake someone's hand because we valued their company. And now we stand two metres away and hide behind a mask, because we value them.

We used to gather around the bedside of the dying, to touch them, to hold their hands, to say farewell. And now we gaze through a window, as brave nurses in protective equipment perform those last ministries of kindness.

Our very bodies, our gestures, have become strange to us; un-natural.

We are moving through a landscape that has been made strange by danger, so that loving one another looks and feels, physically, very different from what we are used to. Perhaps moving our bodies through this new landscape is also a kind of pilgrimage. It's involved a kind of leave-taking, at least for the present, from our familiar world. It asks us to invent a whole new language of love, in a land made strange by a virus.

In the midst of all this I try to remind myself, no matter how strange these new gestures of love may feel, no matter how frustrating it is, it is still love. It is still this love, no matter how improvised it is in our strange new circumstances, that builds the city, that makes us human. And as that ancient hymn reminds us, *Ubi caritas, Deus ibi est*. Where there is love and loving kindness, there is God.'

Christmas Greetings from Vio: My Christmas message goes to all the folk who showed such kindness to me in the last twelve months. I had such wonderful support from prayers, thoughts and actions. The Church is so much more than our building and I am acutely aware of the problems being faced, and appreciate the sincere involvement of those coping with the problem.

But whilst we have so many lovely people we truly have something to celebrate this Christmas. My love to you all, Vio

Christmas Greetings from Ruthie: Seasonal Wishes from Ellesmere – Pam and I would like to send our love, and wish all our friends at Welshpool Methodist Church a pleasant Christmas, albeit a different one than we may have been used to. Ruthie

Christmas Greetings from Marilyn and Clive: To all our dear friends at Welshpool Methodist Church we send you our best wishes for a truly Happy Christmas and a New Year full of hope for a better year ahead with progression out of the clutches of this awful Coronavirus and the chance for us all to enjoy and share all the company and comradeship we have missed for so long. Merry Christmas from Marilyn and Clive

Ruthie also sent these comments on an article in Issue 18: "Reading Rev Marian's story of some hymns being dubbed "quasi-religious nursery rhymes" reminded me of another visiting Anglican minister unenthusiastically commenting on our New Hymnbook. It was about 1983 when a version of "Hymns and Psalms" was published. He said, 'We Anglicans have our A&M – "Ancient and Modern" – and now I see that you have your own A&M – "Altered and Mutilated"!'"

(Marian wonders what his reaction would have been to our "Singing the Faith"!)

From Prue and Barbara: A Christmas Poem *(Submitted by both Prue, from her store of snippets collected over the years, and Barbara, who had found it in a recent newspaper)*

I have a list of friends I know, all written in a book
And every year at Christmastime I go and take a look,
And that is when I realise their names are all a part
Not of the book they're written in, but of my very heart.

For each name stands for someone whose path touched mine
And then left such a print of friendship that I want to touch again,
And while it sounds fantastic for me to make this claim
I really feel that I'm composed of each and every name.

So never think my Christmas cards are just a mere routine
Of names upon a Christmas list, forgotten in between.
For when I send a Christmas card that is addressed to you
It's because you're on the list of folks that I am indebted to,
And every year when Christmas comes, I realise anew
The biggest gift that life can give is meeting folk like you.
So may the Christmas spirit that each season still outpours
Leave its richest blessing in the hearts of you and yours.

From Graham: The Unspeakable Gift *(source unknown)*

Long ago, there ruled in Persia a wise and good king. He loved his people. He wanted to know how they lived. He wanted to know their hardships. Often he dressed in the clothes of a working man or beggar, and went to the homes of the poor. No one whom he visited thought he was their ruler. One time he visited a very poor man who lived in a cellar. He ate the coarse food the poor man ate. He spoke cheerful, kind words to him. Then he left. Later he visited the poor man again and disclosed his identity saying, "I am your king!" The king thought the man would surely ask for some gift or favour, but he didn't. Instead he said, "You left your palace and your glory to visit me in this dark, dreary place. You ate the coarse food I ate. You brought gladness to my heart! To others you have given your rich gifts. To me you have given yourself!"

The King of glory, the Lord Jesus Christ, gave himself to you and me. The bible calls Him "the unspeakable gift!"

Sing Praises! Julia's choice of hymns for Mondays 7th and 14th December

Jubilate members have been receiving Monday hymns since March and here we are still sharing with our friends across the community with 'In Touch'. My two hymns for you this week, which I hope you enjoy, keep in mind our Advent preparations.

My first choice for 7th is (StF 182) "On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord is nigh". The second verse is of particular note, as it speaks directly to all of us: 'Make straight the way for God within.' That is the message of our time of Advent preparation. John Chandler, who died in 1870, was mostly a translator of hymns from Latin sources, although he did write a few of his own, including this.

My second choice, for 14th is (StF 178) "Long ago prophets knew, Christ would come born a Jew". This is a distinctly 20th century hymn and includes a bright chorus: 'Ring bells ring, ring, ring! Song choirs sing, sing, sing! When he comes, when he comes, who will make him welcome?' Revd Fred Pratt Green was a Methodist minister who wrote most of his hymns (many of which appear in our 'Singing the Faith') during his retirement. He died in 2000 aged 97.

My grandmother would have two traditions in the preparation for Christmas at home. One was to clean the house from top to bottom. She explained to me that this was to be ready for the Christ Child. Next she would say that you should have a place set for the Lord, maybe coming in the guise of a stranger. To this day I make my preparations in a similar way. It has the added benefit for my home companions and visitors that surfaces are cleared ready for decorations; and we always make sure there is something to offer in the way of hospitality should it be required. I'm guessing this is the case for you too, as you have your mince pies, shortbread, bara brith, nuts and extra drinks to offer and maybe a nice large cake. This year it will be really strange not to be inviting neighbours and friends into our homes and of course, families will not be able to gather in large groups. I pray, however, that each of you will be part of a support bubble and will have an opportunity to be in the company of loved ones or close friends. If, however, you are usually alone and expect to be so this year I do hope you will find that with the absence of those little events that punctuate December – Christmas fetes, carol singers, chapel coffee mornings and worship - you will not hesitate to let someone know if this year is particularly looking lonelier for you than previously. I have heard of quite a few people who live alone who are going to double up for Christmas dinner. That would seem a good idea if practicable. The extra place at the table this year may be filled unexpectedly. My best wishes, Julia.

Jubilate's mini-reunion!

Last Monday, 30th November, there was great rejoicing among some of our Jubilate members when we met (socially distanced and masked) for the first time since the beginning of March. Unable to sing at present we caught up with each others' news, finding out what each had been doing during lockdown, while enjoying coffee from our flasks. Our devotions were led by Julia (focussing, appropriately for the day, on the disciple Andrew) and then we began learning (by listening to the CD) the opening song from Roger Jones' musical "Saints Alive!" which we hope to present next year. We will meet again next Monday 6th December at 10.15am for another hour of 'Faith, Fun, Fellowship and Flasks'. All members welcome.

More Montgomeryshire Folktales: *(Sets of all tales are available in the Church Foyer)*

The Escape

Lady Winifred travelled to London to free her husband, the Earl of Nithsdale, imprisoned in the Tower of London. Winifred and her maid visited the Earl. Her plan was to sneak him out in women's clothes, to the Earl's embarrassment. When a petition of pardon failed to release him, the plan went ahead. Winifred dressed the earl as a maid, and Winifred and her two 'maids' walked out of the Tower unchallenged. She and the Earl went to live in exile in Rome, but her maid, Grace Evans, was given a cottage on Welshpool.

Mac the Packman

Evan and Marged ran the Wtra Wen inn, Llanfair Caereinion. They pretended to be nice to their customers, but they weren't. Money, special possessions and clothes all went missing from their customers' bags. One night, Mac the Packman stayed at the inn. Everyone liked Mac. He travelled from town to town, selling goods out of his pack and he always had the latest gossip, a joke and a story. Mac was on his way to a wedding, bringing a special paisley shawl ordered for the bride. Mac and the shawl never arrived. No one knew what had happened until a woman spotted Marged's petticoat beneath her dress – it was made out of the paisley shawl. Marged and Evan were arrested and confessed to killing Mac. Evan was hung and Marged died shortly after.

From Helen E: 'Music to My Ears; *(Anthony de Mello)*

I was neurotic for years - anxious, depressed and selfish - and everyone kept telling me to change. And I resented them, and agreed with them, and wanted to change, but simply couldn't, no matter how hard I tried. I felt powerless and trapped. One day, God said: 'Don't change. I love you as you are.' These words were music to my ears. I relaxed. I came alive. And suddenly I changed.

17th Century Nun's Prayer *(sent for inclusion in "In Touch" by both Leah and Betty)*

Lord, Thou knowest me better than I know myself, that I am growing older and will someday be old. Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every occasion.

Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs. Make me thoughtful but not moody; helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it all, but Thou knowest Lord that I want a few friends at the end.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point. Seal my lips on my aches and pains. They are increasing, and the love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. I dare not ask for grace enough to enjoy the tales of others' pains, but help me to endure them with patience.

I dare not ask for improved memory, but for a growing humility and a lessening cocksureness when my memory seems to clash with memories of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet; I do not want to be a saint – some of them are so hard to live with – but a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the devil. Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places, and talent in unexpected people. And give me, O God, the grace to tell them so. AMEN,

Favourite Recipes from the Saturday Lunch Menu

MEGAN's MARSHMALLOW AND RASPBERRY CHEESECAKE

1x200g bag marshmallow	3ozs Butter
225g Philadelphia (not Light)	8-10 Digestive biscuits
1 pkt. Dream Topping, made up	1 tbsp. Syrup
Raspberries	

1. Line base of 7" or 8" loose bottom tin. Make biscuit base by melting butter, adding syrup and biscuits, then press mixture into tin.
2. Cut marshmallows into small pieces and melt in microwave for 1 minute. Stir. Add cheese and continue to melt, 10 seconds at a time. Stir well, and allow to cool.
3. Make up topping and add raspberries, then add to marshmallow mix and fold in. Pile on base. Chill overnight in fridge. Decorate as desired.

APRICOT AND GINGER TEABREAD (NO SUGAR - approved as suitable for diabetics)

7ozs 'no soak' apricots	½ tsp vegetable/sunflower oil
1 tsp. ground ginger	8ozs SR flour
2ozs raisins	8 level tbsp SLENDA granulated
½ pt orange juice	2 eggs, beaten

1. Mix together the apricots, ground ginger, raisins and orange juice and leave to soak for 30 minutes.
2. Sift flour into a large bowl and stir in the SLENDA.
3. Beat the eggs into the apricot mixture.
4. Make a well in the middle of the flour and add the apricot mixture. Beat well.
5. Put into a lined 2lb. loaf tin. Bake for 45 minutes (180C/gas 4) until golden and an inserted skewer comes out clean. Leave in tin for 10 minutes before turning out.

To make you smile!

From Pat P:

No Nativity this year because the 3 Wise Men face a travel ban,
The shepherds have been furloughed,
The Inn keeper has shut under tier 3 restrictions (and has had a slump in bookings).
Santa won't be working as he would break the rule of 6 with Dasher, Dancer,
Prancer, Vixen, Donner and Blitzen.
As for Rudolph, with that red nose, he should be isolating and taking a test!

From a Friendship Book:

A small boy had set his heart on being one of the Wise Men in his school's Nativity Play, and was deeply disappointed and annoyed when the teacher cast him in the part of the innkeeper instead.

That's why he introduced an unscripted amendment to the official version, and when Joseph knocked at his door asking for a place to stay, he replied, "Come in, there's plenty of room!"

Joseph was equal to the occasion, however. He poked his head inside, had a quick look round, and retorted, "I'm not taking my wife into a place like that. Come on Mary, we'll sleep in the stable!"

Puzzle Time

Christmas Carols: *the first letters of the first words of each first lines of the carols from which these extracts are taken reveal my Christmas message to you! Sing-a-long and enjoy!*

1. Right against the forest fence by St Agnes' fountain
2. Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing
3. Cast out our sin and enter in
4. May you beautifully rime your eve-time song you singers
5. Its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom
6. What can I give him, poor as I am?
7. Our God, contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man
8. When he comes, who will make him welcome?
9. Tender to me the promise of his word; in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice
10. He was little, weak and helpless, tears and smiles like us he knew
11. Sages, leave your contemplations
12. Love was born at Christmas, stars and angels gave the sign
13. O sisters too, how may we do for to preserve this day
14. In the heavenly country bright need they no created light
15. Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head
16. Salute the happy morn
17. Light and life to all he brings
18. Likewise a bright star in the sky did appear which led the wise men from the East to draw near
19. The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing
20. Sing through all Jerusalem, Christ is born in Bethlehem
21. But his triumph day is breaking, and we hail it with a song
22. When the stars begin to fall – you will hear the trumpet sound
23. No crib for a bed
24. Glories stream from heaven afar; Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia

Answers to Puzzles in Issue 18

Guess the Movies

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Gone with the Wind | 2. Carousel |
| 3. Oliver | 4. Holiday Inn |
| 5. Singing in the Rain | 6. Some like it hot |
| 7. Cat on a hot tin roof | 8. Charlie and the Chocolate Factory |
| 9. The Longest Day | 10. Paint your wagon |

Kinds of Dancing

- | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| 1 Tango | 2 Salsa | 3 Foxtrot | 4 Charleston | 5 Quickstep |
| 6 Jive | 7 Ballet | 8 Limbo | 9 Disco | 10 Twist |
| 11 Can Can | 12 Tap | 13 Jitterbug | 14 Quadrille | 15 Conga |
| 16 Lambeth Walk | 17 Highland fling | 18 Fandango | 19 Barn | 20 Eight-some Reel |

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 20 which will be out on 16th December, to rhodes4144@gmail.com, by phone 01938 850514, or post to "Brynteg", Castle Caereinion, Welshpool, SY21 9AS, by Saturday 12th December (Cake orders: Gwen 555988 or Janice 850514)