

Welshpool Methodist Church, High Street

“Celebrating and Sharing God’s Love”

“IN TOUCH” issue 23, 27th January 2021

News and Updates

1. **Congratulations** – to Gwen Jones, celebrating her 90th Birthday on 6th February. We send best wishes to her and to all with Birthdays in the coming days.
2. **Good Wishes** – to John Gordon, now back at home after treatment in hospital. We continue to think of him and others of our church family who are unwell, receiving or recovering from treatment, or isolating at home. You are not forgotten.
3. **Roy Cook update** – Kath S writes: “As you know my ‘rent-a dad’ Roy has moved into Dorothy Hughes House. He was understandably apprehensive with such a major change, but he had a warm welcome from fellow residents and our members Jennifer Platt and Joan Corbett. If you phone him, please speak slowly and clearly, as his hearing isn’t the best. I go to see him through the window every other day, and we speak by phone. He had his vaccination last Wednesday.”
4. **Funeral** – Richard Ballard’s funeral takes place on Wednesday 3rd February. Attendance is by invitation only, but you may wish to pause at home around midday to spend a few moments remembering Richard, a much loved member of our church family. Any donations in his memory, for Wales Air Ambulance or Guide Dogs for the Blind, should be sent to Peate’s Funeral Directors, Salop Road.
5. **Revd Peter Jennings** – news has reached us that the Revd Peter Jennings, who was a circuit minister at Llanidloes some twenty years ago, has passed away.
6. **Zoom** – our circuit has recently purchased a Zoom license to enable us to hold meetings via Zoom during lockdown, a number of which are coming up next month - Church Property and Finance, and Pastoral Committees, and Church Council. If you are a member of any of these, and have a computer, tablet or iPad, you may wish to prepare by downloading Zoom in readiness (it costs nothing). Derek is happy to help you set up – contact him on derekp1411@btinternet.com or phone 556117. We will be holding some of our other regular activities via Zoom. Bible Reading resumes on 11th February at 11am, continuing on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays.
7. **Update from Church Stewards** – the stewards met by Zoom on Saturday 23rd, and ask you to please note the following:
 - * In view of the current situation, it was agreed that the church should remain closed until a further review on 20th February.
 - * To help inform any decision made on this date, numbers of those who have had the vaccine will be taken into consideration. Please contact Janice, who is keeping a record (850514, rhodes4144@gmail.com) – details will be treated as confidential.
 - * As we are unable to meet, you may be wondering how you can get your weekly offerings to us. If you would like to transfer funds from your bank account or set up a Standing Order, contact Derek for details. Alternatively, you could send him a cheque (21 Clos Bryn Y Ddol, SY21 7UP) or just put your envelopes aside each week.
 - * Christian Aid “Count Your Blessings” Lent Appeal – details in the next “In Touch”.

From Revd Marian – marking significant events, today and in the coming days

Holocaust Memorial Day, 27th January

January 27th is the day designated as Holocaust Memorial Day; the date marks the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest death camp, and it's a day to remember the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, and the millions of others killed under Nazi persecution and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. Some of you will remember the song made popular by Peter, Paul and Mary – 'Where have all the flowers gone?' which contained the words 'When will they ever learn?'

The theme of this year's commemoration is 'Be the light in the darkness' reflecting the feelings of a survivor of the Holocaust, Gena Turgel: 'We will continue to do our bit for as long as we can, secure in the knowledge that others will continue to light a candle long after us'.

This speaks to the heart of our faith – Jesus, the light of the world, invites us to live the light and to let the light shine for others.

For many, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a light in the darkness. A German Lutheran Pastor and theologian, he was imprisoned and executed for his plan to assassinate Hitler. He struggled with the knowledge of what was happening and the sixth commandment. His reflections in 'The Cost of Discipleship' are well worth reading. These are the last lines of a poem written shortly before his execution –

Who Am I?

Who am I? This or the Other?
Am I one person today and tomorrow another?
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,
and before myself a contemptible woebegone weakling?
Or is something within me like a beaten army
fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?
Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine,
Whoever I am thou knowest, O God, I am thine.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's statue is one of ten to modern martyrs standing above the west entrance to Westminster Abbey. I don't know who said: 'When the power of love overpowers the love of power then the world will live in peace' but it seems appropriate.

Candlemas, 2nd February

In the early January edition of "In Touch", the Revd Dr Stephen Wigley wrote that their Nativity crib would remain on their bookshelf until February 2nd, Candlemas. Mine will stay on the mantelpiece until that day, when the Christmas-Epiphany season comes to an end.

The day of the Feast of Candlemas also marks 'The Purification of Mary' and 'The Presentation of Christ in the Temple'. Some of you will remember, perhaps with horror, the ceremony for the 'churching of women' some 40 days after they had given birth. I remember going with a friend of mine, many years ago; it was her first

trip out of the house since the birth of her daughter and her mother-in-law wouldn't allow her to visit until she had been 'churched'. Prayers were said in the side chapel as she wasn't allowed into the main church. The Book of Common Prayer calls the service 'The Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth' or 'The Churching of Women' and it also says that she must offer 'accustomed offerings'. It's based on the Jewish law, written in the Book of Leviticus (chapter 12). So Mary went to the Temple in Jerusalem for her purification.

In the Eastern Orthodox Church the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple is celebrated as one of the twelve great feasts that occur through the year. Again, this was a requirement of the Jewish Law for a firstborn male child at forty days old and, in the Christian Church it's been celebrated since the 5th century (Luke 2: 22-35). It's also known as *Hypapante*, 'The Meeting', and we're familiar with the story of Anna and Simeon meeting and recognising the infant Jesus in the Temple. Another Epiphany – revelation! The old man, Simeon, saw in Jesus 'a light to lighten the Gentiles' so, traditionally, candles to be used in church through the year were blessed, lit and processed around the dark church on this day, a festival of candles (Candlemas) and of light, and, in the home, a lighted candle was put in the window to bring light to the long dark winter.

For those of you who love snowdrops, they're also known as Candlemas Bells.

Little Candle *(from Graham, source unknown)*

Once upon a time a little candle stood in a room filled with other candles, most of them much larger and much more beautiful than she was. Some were ornate and some were rather simple, like she was. Some were white, some blue, some pink, some green. She had no idea why she was there, and the other candles made her feel rather small and insignificant.

When the sun went down and the room began to get dark, she noticed a large man walking towards her with a ball of fire on a stick. She suddenly realised that he was going to set her on fire. "No, no!" she cried, "don't burn me, please!", but she knew that she could not be heard and prepared for the pain that would surely follow.

To her surprise, the room filled with light. She wondered where it came from since the man had extinguished his fire stick. To her delight, she realised that the light came from herself.

Then the man struck another fire stick and, one by one, lit the other candles in the room. Each one gave out the same light that she did.

During the next few hours, she noticed that, slowly, her wax began to flow. She became aware that she would soon die. With this realisation came a sense of why she had been created. "Perhaps my purpose on earth is to give out light until I die," she mused. And that's exactly what she did.

God created you and me to produce light in a dark world. Like that little candle, we can all produce the same amount of light, no matter how small or what colour we might be. But we can't produce light until we receive it from an outside source. That source is Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.

Sing Praises! Julia's Choice of Hymns for weeks beginning 1st and 8th February

Candlemas is on 2nd, so we look again at the Holy Family, as they bring two small birds to the Temple for the purification of Mary, according to the Law. Here we meet Simeon and Anna. A Canticle, the Nunc Dimittis, sung for centuries in our Christian Heritage, comes from this episode, recalling the treasured words in the heart of Mary, spoken by the old man Simeon. The words from Common Worship can be found in **StF 794: "Lord now let your servant depart in peace"**. I find these words enormously comforting and evocative. When I first began to assist at funeral services this was given to me to say as the coffin began its journey out from the front of the church to the exit. The use of this canticle of Simeon was one of the contributions I made as my Mother's coffin sat before me at her funeral, although in this instance she had requested to have her coffin wheeled out during the final hymn with no one following. When anyone asks me how I keep from tears at the funerals of those I know so well I say the same thing which held true in this particular situation – I look at the place I stand and reach into the depths of the faith I have celebrated, which if it means anything must mean more at a funeral. I only knew that as I spoke these words I had to concentrate upon them – take it at a run and keep going, like driving through standing water in a flash flood. There have been numerous settings for choral and congregational singing of this canticle. Either sing it, if you have a tune in your head, or say it aloud as a prayer.

Our next hymn is **StF 350 "I cannot tell..."** As we follow through the church's year we are about to enter into the repetition of the miracles, healings and sufferings of Christ as we go towards Lent. This hymn is a good one to sing at this time as we are taken from the Nativity... and on, through the pain of rejection, towards the revelation of the glory awaiting. Each verse has its wondering Why and How on the theme of the Son of God come amongst us...and then without answers, but statements of faith in each verse..."But this I know"... In verse 2 we have "He heals the broken hearted and stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear". I hope in your lockdown and shielding these words are of comfort. v. 4 "But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture, and myriad, myriad human voices sing, and earth to heaven, and heaven to earth shall answer: 'at last the Saviour, Saviour of the world is King!'" The setting to this hymn tends to be the tune "Greensleeves", attributed to Henry VIII, or at least his court (*although in StF it is set to the Irish traditional melody, the Londonderry Air*). Please pray for all involved in ministry to the bereaved as the restrictions and isolation of this year continues.

My best wishes, Julia Francis.

From Terry J: Prayer Circle

"Friends will be aware of our Church's Prayer Circle, organised for some years by Eileen. Several of us act as intercessors, praying from the list built up from the sponsors (those who have requested prayers for friends, relatives, etc.) This is updated every two months, when some can leave and new requests received. However, new requests are now very rarely received, and this throws into question the future of this Christian ministry. Any requests for prayer should come to Eileen or me, by letter (15 Brookfield Road, Welshpool, SY21 7PZ) or by phone (01938 552349)".

Many are called ... but few are postmen! *(A conversation with God about vocation)*

I was expecting a package. From the landing window I could see if the postman was coming up the road. I was just thinking "In the good old days..." when God joined me and finished the sentence... *"The post was always on the doormat by 8."*

"Exactly," I said. "Whatever happened to commitment and service?"

"Maybe he's got a particularly heavy delivery this morning" said God.

"Are you making excuses for him?" I asked.

"Not at all," said God. *"I'm simply trying to understand his situation. If you weren't so impatient for your parcel you might do the same."*

"It's still true," I insisted. "There's no dedication to the job any more."

"You know he was up at half past four," said God. *"Isn't that dedication? When do you get up that early to go to work?"*

"Getting-up times don't come into it," I argued. "Besides, his is just a job. I had a vocation."

"Did you, now?" said God. *"Would you care to explain?"*

"Well," I began, with a feeling, as usual, that he was not so much leading me by green pastures as into deep waters. "Well, there are jobs and there are vocations."

"Such as...?"

My feet felt, suddenly, strangely damp. "Years ago," I began...*"in the good old days of commitment and service?"* God added with a raised eyebrow.

"Yes," I went on. "There were recognised vocations – teaching, nursing, the ministry of the church, local preaching, calls to the mission field."

"Just jobs," said God.

I sensed the water rising towards my knees. "No!" I said, plunging in up to the neck. "Vocations - people were called."

"What you're saying, then," said God, *"is that no one was ever called to be a postman, or a lorry driver?"* "Exactly"

"Or accountant?" "Well, only if he was Church Treasurer."

Now I knew I was drowning, but I thrashed about in the flood of my own ignorance.

"Would you like a lifebelt?" asked God. *"Presuming that one job rates more highly than another is pure arrogance, spiritual snobbery. In whatever trade or profession men and women happen to find themselves, what they are called to is service to others, leading to job satisfaction and self-esteem. That's what I call vocation!"*

"Oh look!" I said desperately, changing the subject. "There's the postman!"

But the postman went whizzing straight past - letters to deliver; a calling to fulfill!

(Richard Adams, from a past Magnet magazine)

From Pat P: 10 Maxims to apply to how we live our lives

1. To listen more than we talk
2. To smile more than we frown
3. To think "we" more than we think "me"
4. To agree more than we disagree
5. To compliment more than we criticise
6. To laugh more than we cry
7. To "do" more than we "don't"
8. To act more than we react
9. To save more than we squander
10. To work more than we whine

From Clive and Marilyn: *asking if this is something for Jubilate to consider!*

Online “**Pimms and Hymns**” sing-along sessions at a North Wales church have attracted people from as far away as South Africa, Brazil and Canada. Father Lee Taylor, from St Collen’s Church, Llangollen, set up Facebook Live shows when his pews fell silent due to Covid restrictions. Father Lee said: “People started to share and the online audience just exploded.”

The sessions -“a real light in the darkness of lockdown, with a few drinks”- have been running since last March, and are a homage to the summer Garden Party, known as “Pimms and Hymns”, which Mr Taylor, aged 43, hosts each year.

“I get phone calls, emails and letters from people all over the world, saying ‘You’ve lifted my spirits’, and asking me to pray for their loved ones who are sick with the virus,” he said. “I started the sessions as I was trying to think of ways to bring comfort and reassurance and to cheer people at home. While I can’t hear people joining in, I feel them there with me in the room.”

The vicar is known for pouring a glass of wine or a cocktail before performing for his Facebook congregation!

bbc.co.uk/news/wales

From Andrea: Be sure your sins will find you out.... *(This will make you smile!)*

Some people have smelly feet, I had smelly shoes!! To make matters worse they were my summer “best shoes” which I loved and my mother had just told me I could wear them to school when the autumn term started until the bad weather began. At any other time, i would have been over the moon. Those shoes were so grown up, nearly a slip-on, with the strap low down the front of the foot, but oh dear, once my feet got warm the smell that drifted up was unbelievable. There was nothing I could do because to confess the problem would have meant even more trouble....

It had all started innocently enough. For some reason that lovely, sunny, Sunday afternoon there had been no Sunday School. At a loose end, my cousin Sue and I had begged to be allowed to go for a bike ride; I suppose we would have been about eleven or twelve and a free, sunny afternoon was not to be wasted. There was no problem with a cycle ride, the problem was that we sneaked off to the riding stable, which was strictly off-limits on a Sunday and we were, of course, wearing our Sunday best.

In those days Sunday was still a rest day, so ponies were all turned out in the fields. We petted the more curious ones over the gates on the lane and then went to sit in the shade in one of the buildings. When we cooled down, we decided to have a game of “Follow the Leader”. The elder by all of three months, I was automatically the Leader. In and out we went, up and down the granary steps, over a few bales stacked on the floor and then I got a bit too clever.

Inside the large stable block there was a calf pen which contained about half a dozen young calves. Railings ran the full length of the pen, separating it off from the wide corridor in front of the pony stalls. I decided the only way to go from one end to the other was by stepping along the bottom rail while going hand over hand along the top one. To make it even more daring, it was important to go really fast.

Unfortunately, about half way along, I slipped. Even more unfortunately, I ended up to my ankles in the slurry ditch which ran all the way under the railings to the drain just outside the door. Anyone who knows anything about young stock will know that they can make a very wet and smelly mess!

I dashed outside, stripped off my shoes and once pristine white socks and washed them all in the water trough. The shoes soon looked respectable but the socks were beyond hope. I rolled them up and put them in my bicycle bag. My lovely shoes soon dried in the warm afternoon sun but oh, how they ponged. Sue was very reassuring, "Don't worry, the smell will go off on the ride home; lose the socks and you'll be okay"

Well, I did just that. I put my bike away in the shed when I got home and lobbed the offending socks behind some lumber, right at the back, which hadn't been moved for years. Sue was right, I *should* have got away with it; nobody noticed me sneaking upstairs without any socks and coming down with slippers on. She was also right about the smell, it *had* disappeared on the ride home, except, every time I wore those shoes afterwards, as soon as my feet got warm that awful slurry smell would start wafting around me like some malevolent spirit.

I was well and truly punished for sneaking off to the stables. I had weeks of embarrassing misery going to and from school on public transport, trying to pretend I was not the one wafting "Eau de Cowshed" all around the bus.

The socks...? The socks must have rotted away in their own brown damp; they were never discovered. About forty or more years later I asked if anything unusual was found when the shed was emptied before being moved... and yes, I finally confessed!

From Barbara R: "Lockdown Big Bottom Blues" *(from a recent newspaper's Poetry Corner)*

When these lockdowns started the sun was shining bright;
We could all sit outside chatting at a distance that was right.

The season changed to autumn, with the rain umbrellas used;
We got stuck inside watching TV and got the Lockdown Big Bottom Blues.

At first we went out cycling, or a lovely walk around the park,
But as the weather got colder, we stayed in from morning 'til dark.

Unable to go on holiday, and our caravan we cannot use,
The wrong food we ate too often. Oh! Those Lockdown Big Bottom Blues!

Light at the end of the tunnel - a vaccine is here now,
We will all get through this together - one day, some way, somehow.

Then we will all meet up together, and see whomever we choose,
Get out and about in the sunshine, and get rid of those Big Bottom Blues.

2020 has been a hard year, with sad times, that's for sure,
I pray things will be better, with some good times, and lots more,

So, these Lockdown Big Bottom Blues can just fly out the door,
We really, really don't need you – not now, or forever more!

Catherine Marchant

Puzzle Time: Fruit, Vegetables and Nuts

1. Lotto Ma took to eat within (6)
2. Vehicle has deep rust? (6)
3. A degree for Grandma (6)
4. An arranged meeting, maybe blind? (4)
5. Emile lost direction, turning around (4)
6. Sounds like money for you (6)
7. Let the fellow depart (5)
8. Poet manager reorganised (11)
9. Very dark headgear (10)
10. Popeye's mate? Rather oily (5)
11. Inexpensive! Mix it up! (5)
12. Direction with mole has two options (5)
13. Whizz around, almost in pain (7)
14. Old penny, morning, my heir! (6)
15. Plumber needed for this in Staffs (4)
16. Sounds as if dad's had a little bite (7)
17. Short radio, approximately (6)
18. Take a pot at one inside (6)
19. You may not care for one of these (3)
20. One of five and Church of England (6)
21. Vertically, it's spot on (4)
22. Sounds like a brace (4)
23. Will dad cough up? Sounds a bit like he will (6)
24. Sounds as though physical exercise is able to produce head case (6)
25. Found in the bones (6)

Answers to Puzzles in Issue 22: Synonyms

Boot-Shoe, Strip-Bare, Fat-Stout, High-Tall, Hard-Stern, Friend- Ally, Barn-Shed, Paw-Hand, Stack-Rick, Lash-Beat, Maid-Miss, Kneel-Bend, Belt-Band, Hut-Shack, Unite-Wed, Boat-Ship, Gaunt-Lean, Single-One, Corn-Wheat, Kind-Sort

And finally, "When" (a Pause for Thought for our times from Barbara R):

When every day is Sunday and everything is shut,
You have to keep on going even though you've had enough.
When all around is different, and nothing looks or feels the same,
Just stand and close your eyes and imagine it here again.
When it all takes such an effort, lift your head up to the sky,
For like the clouds that move above is, this time will too pass by. (Jayne Greathead)

Thanks to those who have contributed to this issue of "In Touch". Please send material for issue 24, out on 10th February, to rhodes4144@gmail.com, by phone 01938 850514, or post to "Brynteg", Castle Caereinion, Welshpool, SY21 9AS, **by 6th**. All contributions are welcome - news, comments, thoughts, prayers, poems, interesting information, funny stories, puzzles, favourite recipes, etc.

Cake orders to Gwen 555988 or Janice 850514