

Welshpool Methodist Church, High Street
“Celebrating and Sharing God’s Love”
“IN TOUCH” issue 24, 10th February 2021

News and Updates

1. **Congratulations** – to Gwenno Jones, whose photo of the cobbled path at St Mary’s Church has appeared on the Camera Club’s page in the “County Times”.
2. **Welcome** – to Doris McNulty, who has recently moved to Guilsfield. We look forward to welcoming her into our church family.
3. **Down Memory Lane** – Alan C has uploaded onto YouTube a concert filmed in the Methodist Church back in the 1990s. How many performers do you recognise? You may see yourself! The link is: <https://youtu.be/-YaV8XBODuY>. Enjoy!
4. **Friday Night is Quiz Night** - Derek’s Fun Quiz Nights have always been very popular, and now he is running them on Zoom on Friday evenings at 7pm. If you would like to take part, contact Derek (556117, derekp1411@btinternet.com).
5. **Bible Reading** – Bible Reading resumes on Zoom on Thursday 11th February at 11am, when we will be reading Paul’s First Letter to Timothy, using any version of our own bibles. The group will continue to meet for an hour on every 2nd and 4th Thursdays in the month. Contact Derek for link, meeting ID and password.
6. **Church Council** – the next meeting will be held on Zoom on Thursday 18th February at 7.15pm. Members will be sent the joining details. Any member who is unable to join but who wishes to submit any comments or an item for Any Other Business should please contact the secretary. Apologies will be received as usual.
7. **Stewards’ Meeting** - the next meeting will be held on Zoom on Saturday 20th February at 11am. Derek will send details.
8. **Sunday Worship, 21st February** – Revd Jacquie will be leading a short Circuit Service on Zoom, starting at 10.30am. If you are a member of our congregation, you should have received an email with the link but all are invited. The Meeting ID is 832 0179 8210, and the Password is 074440. Jacquie stresses that this is her first and therefore experimental Zoom service. Feedback is requested! (Our worship sheets continue to be available – thanks to all who continue to prepare these for us).
9. **Lent Groups** – ‘Welshpool Churches Together’ will be holding Lent Groups on the theme of “Caring for Creation” every Wednesday from 24th February at 7.30pm on Zoom. Joining details will be sent once received.
10. **“Count Your Blessings” Lent Appeal** – no information has yet been issued by Christian Aid about this year’s appeal. We hope to learn more soon.
11. **Thanks** - to all who have responded to the requests in the last issue. It is good to know so many of you have had your first vaccination, and we have gratefully received some weekly offerings. Reminder: 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).

From Revd Marian – marking significant events in the coming days

This year, it's suggested by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland that **Racial Justice Sunday** be marked on 14th February. However, the Catholic Church in England and Wales was suggesting that the Sunday be observed on 31st January and, although it appears in the Church Calendar in the Methodist diary as February 9th (which isn't a Sunday!) it doesn't appear on the pages of the diary itself.

Last year, 2020, marked the 25th anniversary of Racial Justice Sunday (RJS) in Britain and Ireland. This significant anniversary also coincided with the tragic killing of African American George Floyd and the re-emergence of the Black Lives Matter Movement with its various protests on both sides of the Atlantic. All this coincided with the emergence of a pandemic that continues to wreak havoc in societies around the world, ruining lives in the process. The COVID-19 crisis has also highlighted the existing inequalities in our society; the poorer, more marginalised communities are disproportionately impacted by this pandemic, in due course, all these events served to demonstrate the need for greater racial justice in Britain and Ireland.

These events also caused much soul-searching and anxious conversations within the Church, as to how it should respond to what has taken place. In the aftermath of George Floyd's killing, many denominations issued statements condemning the killing; some called for changes in society as well as the Church, while others had conversations about its significance. Practically all recognised that this was a Kairos moment in which inaction or indifference was not an option.

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) believe this was a moment for Christians to be bold and prophetic – for us to look to Christian scriptures which speak of a God who loves justice, and a Saviour who was “sent....to set the oppressed free”. It was also recognised that the journey toward racial justice would not be easy, but one that could be achieved with courage, conviction and faith. All journeys begin with steps, and for CTBI, those steps involve the “Three ‘R’s” of

Remembering, Reflecting and Responding:

- Remembering the importance of racial justice
- Reflecting on human diversity and thanking God for it
- Responding by working to end injustice, racism and ignorance through prayer and action

Quite a challenge and, maybe, something to think about through Lent!

(Some words, from a past Magnet magazine, seem appropriate at this point):

Taste and see the sweetness of diversity, the richness of many cultures, in this one, unique, never uniform world.

Taste and see the bitterness of divisions, the barrenness of our imaginations, the false limitations we put upon the world.

Taste and see the goodness of creation, the nourishment of God's giving in equal love for every child in the world.

Taste and see the evil of our denial, the selfishness of failing to share with brothers and sisters, the resources of the world.

Creator God, help us to taste and see, welcome and affirm, celebrate and share – in the name of Jesus who came to redeem the way we live in this world; in the power of the Spirit, who, in a world of difference, makes us one. Amen.

Revd Marian continues:

Shrove Tuesday falls on February 16th. Derived from 'shrive', this was the day for confessing sins as a preparation for the season of Lent and there was sometimes feasting as some foods were used up before Lent began, hence 'Fat Tuesday', or Mardi Gras, and our own pancake tradition. There are places marking the day with a carnival before the sombre days to come.

On **Ash Wednesday**, the palm crosses from the previous years were/are burned and, at a service on that day, people are marked in ash with a cross on their forehead with the words: 'Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return'. So the period of 40 days leading up to Easter begins. If you've tried to count, you'll know that from Ash Wednesday to Easter Day is 47 days but Sundays – always feast days and never fast days – don't count, so we have our 40 days. For much of his life John Wesley fasted on Fridays, beginning on a Thursday afternoon and ending at teatime on Friday. During Lent, he would fast on Wednesdays as well. Fasting, prayer, almsgiving and study are the traditional Lenten disciplines and we got used to 'giving up something for Lent'! That's fine... but what about taking something on for Lent – committing ourselves to reading a book of the Bible, maybe one of the gospels and following the journey of Jesus from the temptations to the cross and beyond to Easter day; being more diligent about our prayer; wondering whether we can give away more to charity and doing it!

A peaceful and productive Lent to you all!

Origins of St. Valentine's Day, 14th February

There are many legends surrounding the origins of St. Valentine's Day. One tells of a wonderful priest who lived during the reign of the Roman emperor Claudius II, about 200AD. At this time Rome was in desperate need of an army and Claudius believed that married men would make less reliable soldiers because they wouldn't want to leave their wives and families, so he forbade young men to get married. However, Valentine secretly defied Claudius and performed marriage ceremonies in the temple. So he became known as the friend of those in love. Eventually Claudius found out what the young priest was doing and Valentine was thrown into jail. During his imprisonment, Valentine is said to have cured the jailer's daughter of blindness, and they fell in love, but because of this miracle, he was sentenced to die. On the day he died, 14th February 270AD, he wrote the girl a note in which he spoke of their bonds of affection, and signed it "From your Valentine".

Another legend tells of Valentine, beloved by the village children because he always allowed them to play in his garden. He was placed in prison by the Romans for refusing to worship their gods. During his imprisonment the children exchanged notes with him, attached to small bouquets of flowers, which they flung through the prison bars. Valentine was put to death on 14th February.

In 1969, the RC church, while continuing to recognise Valentine as a saint, removed him from the General Roman Calendar due to lack of reliable information.

Sing Praises! Julia's Choice of Hymns for weeks beginning 15th and 22nd February

As we go forward to the season of Lent, we have coincidentally reached St Valentine's Day on 14th February, so I am beginning with a once popular wedding hymn, **StF 605, "O Perfect Love"**. Dorothy Frances Gurney wrote this hymn in 1884 to be sung at her sister's wedding. It begins with the vision of a couple kneeling in prayer as they make their vows. In the second verse, a life of tenderness, charity and steadfast faith, patient hope and brave endurance is the focus, as with childlike trust the couple surrender their lives to each other, whilst in God's grace they may continue in joy, which brightens earthly sorrow.

You will be familiar I am sure, with another of Dorothy Frances Gurney's little verses:

"The kiss of the sun for pardon, the song of the bird for mirth,
One is nearer to God in garden than anywhere else on earth"

This verse is often found on terracotta and stone plaques from garden centres, and is popularised by the real feeling that being alongside nature has a way of reaching down into our anxieties, providing us with a healing experience to be found in the closeness of the peace of God.

Lent is about being brought back to a right way of Life. Our journey may take us from the Baptism of Jesus, out to the wilderness, and then back towards Jerusalem where Jesus will face the worst kind of betrayal. Yet this sacrifice of the Lamb of God was to enable us to be aware of the closeness of God. We are called upon to repent. Some people find this hard, especially if they are not aware of any particular evil in their way of life – a simple life, loving family, being kind to people, giving to charity and so forth. Why then the need to repent? It may not be that we commit bad actions but we are all aware that we omit to do something each day that makes us part of a perfect creation. Sins of omission we call them - when there are good things we have left undone, kind words unsaid, prejudice or unjustified thoughts not rectified. We are not all given the gifts and calling to be great movers and shakers of a stand against injustice, but we all have the duty to pray for and praise it in action. We have the power within us to be the face of encouragement for those works of God needed in our society. So let us go to the helpful words of another hymn writer at this Lenten time which may help us in our prayers for repentance - John Keble's often sung hymn "**Blest are the pure in heart**" (**StF 244**).

The final verse gives us the words for a short prayer:

"Lord, we your presence seek, a vision of your face.

Give us a pure and lowly heart, a temple of your grace." Best wishes, Julia Francis

Some thoughts and contributions on the theme of Heaven – your comments invited

From Pat P: "Heaven in Touch - Would we enjoy Heaven?"

This piece is adapted from chapter 2 of "Holiness", a book written by J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), an Anglican rector, and eventually Bishop of the Diocese of Liverpool from 1880 until 1900. Much of his work was among working class people, and his main concern was for the decline in practical holiness in his day. He emphasised that, while faith in Christ's working in one's life was necessary, so also was effort and exertion.

"Most people hope to go to heaven when they die; but few, it may be feared, take the trouble to consider whether they would enjoy heaven if they got there. Heaven is essentially a holy place; its inhabitants are all holy; its occupations are all holy. To

be really happy in heaven, it is clear and plain that we must be somewhat trained and made ready for heaven while we are on earth. We must be saints before we die, if we are to be saints afterwards in glory.

The favourite idea of many, that dying people need nothing except absolution and forgiveness of sins to fit them for their great change, is a profound delusion. We need the work of the Holy Spirit as well as the work of Christ; we need the renewal of the heart as well as the atoning blood; we need to be sanctified as well as to be justified. It is common to hear people say on their death-beds, 'I only want the Lord to forgive my sins, and take me to rest'. But those who say such things forget that the rest in heaven would be absolutely useless if we had no heart to enjoy it! What could an unsanctified person do in heaven, if by any chance he or she got there? Let that question be fairly looked at in the face, and fairly answered.

No people can possibly be happy in a place where they are not in their element, and where all around them are not congenial to their tastes, habits, and character. When an eagle is happy in an iron cage, when a sheep is happy in the water, when an owl is happy in the blaze of noonday sun, when a fish is happy on dry land – only then will I admit that an unsanctified person could be happy in heaven."

Gordon comments:

"Perhaps Bishop Ryle was having a little dig at Roman Catholics and others who thought a confession and priestly absolution in the final days was sufficient. The Bishop was clearly saying that unless you find pleasure in living a "righteous life" on earth, you might find heaven rather disappointing."

More thoughts to ponder:

John Wesley: "All need to be saved. All may be saved. All may know that they are saved. All may be saved to the uttermost."

Laurence Ellis: "Heaven comes as a gift, to be accepted, not pursued; if you chase it, you lose it."

Leslie Weatherhead: "I think death is a tremendous adventure – a gateway into a new life, in which you have further powers, deeper joys, and wonderful new horizons."

Christine Rossetti: "The loves that meet in Paradise shall cast out fear, and Paradise has room for you and me and all."

And on a lighter note, some children's questions - how would YOU answer them?!

1. What is heaven? Will we have bodies, or will we be ghosts floating on clouds?
2. Will we still be ourselves, or will we become angels?
3. Will my friends be in heaven? Will my dog go to heaven?
4. Will heaven get full? If it does, what will happen? Where will people go?
5. What won't be in heaven that we can have here on earth?
6. Will I get bored in heaven? Will I still have things to eat and drink?
7. Can we go to heaven NOW?
8. Can you have babies in heaven?
9. How old will I be in heaven?
10. Where do you go after you have been in heaven?

Calling All Cooks!

If you are at a loose end during lockdown, and looking for something a little challenging to fill your time, why not attempt the following recipe, sent in by **Terry P**, from The "Stamford" Cookery Book, 1909, price 1/- Nett, for which his Great Aunt was one of the contributors.

(When selecting which version of the Bible to use, bear in mind when this recipe was written. Having tested this, I can report that the resulting cake was much enjoyed! I reduced the recipe to two thirds of ingredients e.g. 2 of no.4, not 3, in a 7" cake tin, and baked for about 1 hour 10 minutes)

BIBLE CAKE

1. ½ lb. Judges V, verse 25, last clause
2. ½ lb. Jeremiah VI, verse 20
3. 1 Tablespoon 1 Samuel XIV, verse 25
4. 3 Tablespoons Jeremiah XVII, verse 11
5. ½ lb. 1 Samuel XXX, verse 12
6. ¼ lb. Nahum III, verse 12, chopped *(having none of these, I substituted dates)*
7. 2 ounces Numbers XVII, verse 8, chopped *(or otherwise!)*
8. 1 lb. 1 Kings IV, verse 22
9. Season to taste with 2 Chronicles IX, verse 9
10. A pinch of Leviticus II, verse 13
11. 1 teaspoon of Amos IV, verse 5
12. 3 tablespoons of Judges IV, verse 19
(NB "Leaven" means "Baking powder")

"Beat Nos. 1, 2, and 3 to a cream; add 4, one at a time, still beating; then add 5, 6 and 7, and beat again. Add 8, 9, 10 and 11, having previously mixed them; and lastly, No.12. Bake in a slow oven for approx. 1 ½ hours."

And from the Saturday Friendship Lunch Menu, a warming soup for winter

CURRIED PARSNIP AND APPLE SOUP (Serves 4)

2 tsp sunflower oil	500g/1¼ lb Parsnips, chopped
1 tbsp mild curry powder	1 large onion, chopped
1¼ pts chicken stock	1 large cooking apple, chopped
Salt & black pepper	Natural yoghurt to garnish (optional)

1. Heat the oil in a large, heavy-based pan and gently fry the curry powder for 2-3 minutes.
2. Add the parsnips, onion and apple; stir well until coated.
3. Add the stock and seasoning. Bring to the boil. Simmer for about 30 minutes until the vegetables are soft.
4. Put in liquidiser and blend (or press through sieve). Re-heat before serving.
5. Serve with a swirl of yoghurt.

(You could make in quantity, as this soup freezes well. You could also try substituting parsnips for carrots – just as tasty!)

If you have a favourite recipe, please send it in so that we can share it.

From Barbara: "Ode to Rain" (from Poetry Corner in a recent newspaper)

Raindrops, sheeting from the grey, low hanging clouds, bouncing off bus shelters;
Pelting against window panes, pooling in puddles on pavements,
Gurgling along gutters, diving in droves down drains,
Roaming around in mains underground,
Rushing in rivers, surging seawards, washing in waves, turning with tides,
Cooled by the wind, warmed by the sun - waiting, waiting, waiting...
then, one hot day, evaporating.
Congregating, high up in the sky, in clouds, back to where they were before.
And so the cycle starts once more.
Raindrops, sheeting from the grey, low hanging clouds...

Winter Ducks

From "An Unremarkable Morning" – poems by Andrea Davies

A slide-ways waddle scoots the ducks across
The frozen pond to where they come to nest
Against the twisted and obliging boughs
Of bleached and weathered willow, patterned wood
That rises unperturbed through wet and cold,
its woven withy screen a safe abode.
Unless they rise in cacophonous flight
The hunter's gun will not disturb them here,
And creaking ice deters the padding fox.
Their down and feather fluffed and plumped for warmth,
Soft greens and browns gleam in a snatch
Of winter sun; a-top each up-stretched neck
A silky head, embossed with shining eyes,
Like glassy beads, indignant not surprised.
Suspiciously they cast their searching gaze,
Sweep one last panoramic stare, then tuck
their heads away beneath a warming wing.
Like humped and mossy stones they roundly sleep,
Harsh winter's chill, a time to be endured,
obeying Nature's rhythms to survive.

And to make you smile:

Sometimes children take Bible lessons literally. And sometimes we can learn from them as they struggle to learn for themselves.

A puzzled girl asked her mother if it was true that, as she had heard, God was bigger than any of us. Her mother reassured her that He was. But the Sunday school teacher had also told the girl that God lives in each of us.

"If that's true," she asked her mum, "wouldn't He show through?"

It's up to each of us to make sure that, in our case, He does!

Puzzle Time: 'Toys, Games and Playthings' is the theme this time – all anagram and crossword style clues. Hope you can remember having or playing some of these long ago – although you may still be enjoying some today!

1. With direction, go on this....and a prayer? (5)
2. Moon side has a number of pips (8)
3. Look up, down, often – to begin with (4)
4. Choose to pass over then add table tennis without the smell! (8)
5. Les paid E Cook for changing coloured patterns (12)
6. Sounds like Mr Roosevelt 'in the nuddy'! (5, 4)
7. Pop hit down, as new arrangement (4, 3, 3)
8. They say it's a virtue (8)
9. Sounds like a hint with bread mixture (6)
10. Dance, with woodcutter (6)
11. Tuneful seats? (7, 6)
12. Minor activities? (7, 8)
13. Sounds like legendary bird gives monarch a husky voice (7, 5)
14. Kind of charmers with stocking damage? (6, 3, 7)
15. Elgin has some (7)
16. Cops kit (and) go, to make springing movement (4, 5)
17. Mode of transport to badger's home (5, 3)
18. Piano lever with motor vehicle (5, 3)
19. These may cause one to feel cold if doors are left open (8)
20. Lord Lamps makes a little carriage loved by little girls (5, 4)
21. Directions each end, with a cap in the middle – down you go! (5)
22. Local dance, with a whisky? (9)
23. Push small value coin (5-9)
24. Aircraft with rotor blades – or could be axe (7)
25. Instruction to begin filming guy (6, 3)

Answers to Puzzle Time, issue 23: Fruits, Vegetables and Nuts

1 Tomato	6 Cashew	11 Peach	16 Parsnip	21 Plum
2 Carrot	7 Mango	12 Lemon/Melon	17 Radish	22 Pear
3 Banana	8 Pomegranate	13 Spinach	18 Potato	23 Papaya
4 Date	9 Blackberry	14 Damson	19 Fig	24 Peanut
5 Lime	10 Olive	15 Leek	20 Quince	25 Marrow

Thanks to those who have contributed to this issue of "In Touch" – and apologies that some with political references which might have caused offence, even though amusing, have been rejected. Please send material for issue 25, out on 24th February, to rhodes4144@gmail.com, by phone 01938 850514, or post to "Brynteg", Castle Caereinion, Welshpool, SY21 9AS, **by 20th**. All contributions are welcome - news, comments, thoughts, prayers, poems, interesting information, funny stories, puzzles, favourite recipes, etc. (but please - nothing political!)

Cake orders to Gwen 555988 or Janice 850514