

TEULU ASAPH

GROW **FAITH** • BRING **HOPE** • DEMONSTRATE **LOVE**

CONNECTING OUR DIOCESAN FAMILY

GWANWYN 2025 | SPRING 2025



Adnoddau Cenhadaeth Resourcing Mission

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From the Editor

Welcome to our first *Teulu Asaph* of 2025. In this edition, we're showcasing some of the projects across the diocese which have been successful in gaining grants from the Church in Wales' Church Growth Fund. It's a way of celebrating their success and inspiring you to consider what might be possible in your own church and Mission Area. There's information on how you can access the funding on page 5.

Plus, we hear from other projects that are using their own resourcefulness to bring hope and further God's Mission across the diocese.

If you have exciting plans for 2025 to bring hope in your community, do share them with *Teulu Asaph*

so others can be inspired and join in. I look forward to receiving your good news stories, photographs and articles for the summer edition. You can find the deadline date for submissions below, and details of how to reach me are just here.



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Page 4



Page 7



Page 11

Contents

- 3 Gair gan yr Esgob / Bishop's Word
- 4 Growth Fund Success in our Churches
- 6 Newyddion / News
- 7 Sound Baths in Llangollen: A Fresh Expression of Faith
- 8 Resourcing Mission across the Diocese
- 10 Working Globally, Supporting Locally
- 11 Mission Area Leader is Eisteddfod Chairman
- 12 Ysgolion / Schools
- 14 Eich Newyddion Chi / Your News
- 16 Hygiene Packs for Those in Need

Cover image: A sound bath meditation at St Collen's Church in Llangollen.

Photo credit: Andrei Daniel, adpro.uk

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Gair gan yr Esgob / Bishop's Word

Adnoddau Cenhadaeth

Rwy'n hoffi'r ffaith fod iaith yn gallu bod yn chwareus. Mae gan rai geiriau fwy nag un ystyr. Mae'r gair 'adnoddau' yn ddiddorol. Gall olygu arian neu asedau eraill y gellir eu defnyddio i gyflawni nod. Ond, yn aml, mae dweud bod gan bobl 'yr adnoddau i wneud rhywbeth' yn golygu eu bod yn fedrus, yn greadigol ac yn ddyfeisgar.

Mae Duw wedi gorchymyn i ni, yr Eglwys, rannu'r Newyddion Da am Iesu mewn gair a gweithred – dyna'n Cenhadaeth ni. Cawsom ein hanfon allan i gyflawni'r amcan hwnnw. Er mwyn gwneud hynny, mae angen y ddau fath o adnoddau.

Yn ddiweddar, mae'r Eglwys yng Nghymru wedi clustnodi £100 miliwn o'i hadnoddau i ariannu mentrau cenhadol newydd – heb roi baich ar ein system gyfrannau na'r sianeli cyllid arferol, ond trwy gloddio'n ddwfn i'r cronfeydd wrth gefn er mwyn sicrhau bod digon ar gael i geisio gwneud pethau'n wahanol ledled Cymru. Mae'r rhifyn hwn o *Teulu Asaph* yn sôn am rai o'r pethau newydd a ariannir yn ein hesgobaeth gan grantiau o Gronfa Twf yr Eglwys. Mae hyn wir yn newyddion da i ni i gyd.

Fodd bynnag, er mwyn ufuddhau i Dduw ac estyn allan â'r Newyddion Da – mae arnom angen y ddau fath o adnoddau. Mae angen bod yn fedrus, yn greadigol ac yn ddyfeisgar gymaint ag y mae angen arian ac asedau eraill – er enghraifft, y dyfeisgarwch i roi cynnig ar syniadau newydd a ffyrdd newydd o wneud hen bethau. Mae llawer wedi dweud wrthyf eu bod wedi'u bendithio â chynulleidfaoedd mwy nag arfer y Nadolig hwn – a oes gennym ddigwyddiadau eraill i'w gwahodd iddynt, ffyrdd eraill o roi'r Newyddion Da ar waith mewn ffordd ddeniadol a bywiol? Pa adnoddau bynnag sydd gennym, materol neu bersonol, mae lle i'w defnyddio er budd yr Efengyl.

Resourcing Mission

I like the way language can play games. In English there seems to be a link between the words 'resources' and 'resourcefulness'. This link can help us when we come to talk about 'resourcing mission'. As a Church, we are commanded by God to be sharers – in word and deed – of the Good News of Jesus. That is our Mission, we have been sent out with a purpose.

The Church in Wales has recently set aside £100 million to resource new initiatives in mission – not burdening our share system and the normal channels of finances but digging deep into reserves to ensure that there is enough to try to do things differently across Wales. This edition of *Teulu Asaph* speaks of some of the new things financed in our diocese by grants from the Church Growth Fund. This is genuinely good news for us all.

However, if we are to obey God to reach out with good news – we need resourcefulness just as much as we need resources – and resourcefulness is the inventiveness to try new ideas and new ways of doing old things. Many people have told me that they were blessed by larger congregations this Christmas – have we got other initiatives to invite them along to, other ways of living out the Good News in Jesus in a way which is attractive and life-giving? Whatever our resources, there is always scope for resourcefulness.





Growth Fund Success in our Churches

Churches across the diocese are being encouraged to consider the ways in which they bring hope in their local communities. From providing sacred spaces for worship and prayer to running food hubs and hosting coffee mornings, there is a wide range of activities offered by churches which bring hope.

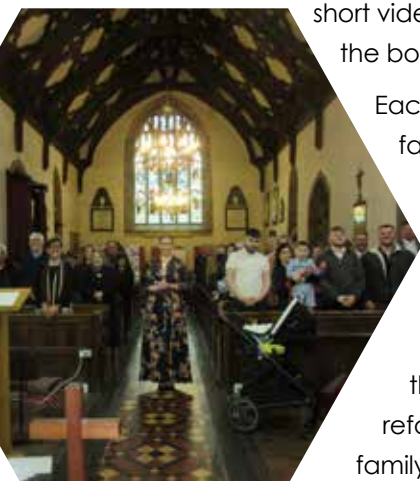
Some of those activities are making the most of the Church in Wales Growth Fund to extend their provision and resource mission. Others have been bringing hope since lockdown or before and are continuing to serve their community (see the back cover). The **Mission Area Leader of Pool, the Revd Paulette Gower**, introduces two projects which have successfully applied for Growth Fund Money.

The Living Story of St Nicholas' Church, Montgomery

This project has been awarded more than £9,000 from the Growth Fund with the aim of increasing the number of children and families regularly worshipping at the church. The project builds on a community initiative in lockdown when individual members of St Nicholas' were part of a project telling the stories of the town's buildings and the people who helped to shape its past and influence its future.

Now, with the help of Montgomery Church in Wales School, we hope to help children to understand the link between significant parts of the church building and the faith stories of individuals. From this the children will create material to produce a series of eight interpretation boards. Each board will take an aspect of the church building and use it as a bridge, telling the story of how the past connects into the story of St Nicholas' today. Individual stories will be filmed and short videos produced and linked to the boards by QR codes.

Each term, we plan to invite local families to a church-based workshop to offer them the opportunity to explore the story of one aspect of the church and add their own story. These will then be incorporated into a reformatted monthly family service.



Arts Alive in Berriew

In Berriew, we've set up a project called *Arts Alive in Berriew*. This is aiming to grow the number of children and families who are part of St Beuno's Church and encourage their journey of discipleship, by providing a new expression of church, with a special focus on art, music and drama.



Within our church congregation we have people who enjoy art, music and drama. It would be good to use these skills as part of our outreach, by providing a midweek club and annual holiday club for children, with a special focus on art, music and drama. As the church does not have toilet or kitchen facilities, we will be hiring the Old School Hall, next to the church.

These new clubs will provide opportunities for children to showcase their work through musical productions, included as part of special festival services. They will also help to shape a more engaging monthly family service by including music and drama elements. The first of these art, music and drama events took place in December 2024, with an activity morning for children and families, focused on our Christmas Eve Crib Service.

Now in 2025, we're planning a series of workshops for children, including an Easter arts activity day focused on the Easter story. This will be followed over the summer with the first of the annual five-day summer holiday clubs, culminating with the musical *Joseph*.



Tier 1 of the Church in Wales Growth Fund is open to churches and Mission Areas across the diocese. St Asaph Cathedral recently applied for money towards audio visual screens as **Jackie Feak, the Cathedral Administration and Business Officer**, writes:

Enhancing Liturgy Through Technology

St Asaph Cathedral has been a recipient of £10,000 from the Growth Fund towards the purchase and installation of four 75" audio visual screens on moveable stands. These will enable the service to be displayed and easy to follow from all seats in the congregation. The large screens will ensure readability, particularly for older congregation members, and those who are visually impaired.

We anticipate that the screens will help people in the following situations:

- Families will be able to follow the service on screen whilst also providing attention to their small children; they won't have to balance a service book or lose their page!
- Many of those attending baptisms, funerals and weddings do not normally attend church services, and they can often feel out of their depth in a strange environment, especially when trying to follow a service book.
- Large congregations for diocesan services, such as Ordinations, will be able to follow procedures in the nave and high altar as activities can be streamed to the screens, helping people remain fully engaged in the service.

The provision of technology, which makes it easy to follow the service, will result in new members of the congregation feeling welcome, engaged and more likely to revisit the Cathedral.

Has your Church got a project which would benefit from the Growth Fund?

Tier 1 of the Growth Fund is open for grant applications of no more than £10,000, mainly from Mission Areas or churches, for work which is both innovative locally and replicable nationally. Each application must clearly align with at least one of the 10 evangelistic contexts, outlined in the application form.



The following are an example of three of those contexts:

- **Place and story:** The revitalisation of place and story, such as pilgrimage and storytelling, connects the church with its history in a new and living way.
- **Pioneer ministry:** The work of pioneering is predicated on the idea that culture is now more diverse than ever. To pioneer a fresh expression of church is to create a church for a distinct cultural group or with a distinct ethos and purpose.
- **Chaplaincies:** The potential for developing specialists who can grow church in specific contexts (schools, businesses, airports, prisons) is largely underdeveloped but new energy suggests a different model may have new potential.

The projects mentioned here are the first three to receive funding in this diocese and applications from two more churches were recently approved (see page 7 for another successful project). The diocesan Director of Operations, Jon Morris, (jonathanmorris@cinw.org.uk) and the Funding Administrator, Martyn Schlangen, (martynschlangen@cinw.org.uk) have developed a process to assist you in your application. Email them for information.

You can find out more about the Church in Wales Growth Fund at <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/evangelism/the-church-growth-fund/>

See pages 8/9 for projects awarded Tier 2 funding in the diocese.





Consultations on Same-Sex Blessings

Dates and venues have been announced for a series of consultations around the diocese to reflect on the provision of Blessings for Same-Sex Unions.

The consultations are being carried out across the Church in Wales, by the bishops, to ask what changes are required at the end of the five-year experimental period currently in place. There are a number of options to be discerned: could the provision be extended? Should it lapse? Could a further step be taken to provide for clergy to solemnize the marriage of same-sex couples. Anyone who wishes to contribute to this process is

invited to attend one consultation most convenient for them. Each consultation will follow a similar format of careful, reflective listening to those who wish to speak. There will be no debate or discussion.

- Thursday 27 March, 7pm: Prestatyn Community Hall (next to Christ Church Prestatyn)
- Monday 31 March, 7pm: St Mary's Church Hall, Ruabon
- Wednesday 2 April, 7pm: Llandrinio Village Hall
- Thursday 8 May, 7pm: St David's Hall, adjacent to the Church, at Penrhyn Bay

- Monday 12 May, 7pm: Llangollen Pavilion
- Monday 19 May, 7pm: St Mark's Church Hall, Connah's Quay.

The final consultation for clergy holding the Bishop's Licence or Permission to Officiate will be held on Thursday 22 May, 2pm, at All Saints Church Hall, Southsea.



Celebrations for the First Church in Wales Church



The first church to be consecrated after the disestablishment of the Church in Wales in 1920 is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

St Martin's of Tours in Llay opened in 1925 as the village was being developed. It was built to serve miners at the new Llay Main Colliery and their families and was described

in a newspaper report at the time as being "cheering evidence of the courage and vitality of the Church in Wales". To mark 100 years, the Bishop of St Asaph led a service of celebration on Sunday 23 February, with children from the local school reading the prayers.

Substantial Renovation for Historic Ruthin Church

A church in Ruthin is temporarily relocating as work begins on a £1.6m transformation project.

St Peter's Church in the centre of the town dates back 700 years and is being re-ordered to create a kitchen, toilets, meeting space, a balcony, level access and new underfloor heating. The interior will offer a more flexible space for community use, as well as worship,

with the chancel area being lifted and the high altar lowered. Most of the pews will be replaced by more comfortable and movable seating. Next door, the cloisters are being renovated to offer pilgrim accommodation with three ensuite rooms, including one with accessible facilities.

While the work is taking place, members of the congregations at

St Peter's will be relocated to St Mwrog Church in nearby Llanfwrog for the 9am service, and to Ysgol Borthyn Voluntary Controlled Church in Wales School for the 4pm service.





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Sound Baths at St Collen's Church: A Fresh Expression of Faith

Every month, St Collen's Church in Llangollen is holding a sound bath. They are proving to be a powerful, transformative way to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in a modern, accessible, and deeply meaningful way.

In fact, St Collen's is among the most recent churches to receive money from the Growth Fund! As the **Vicar of Llangollen, Father Lee Taylor**, explains, these events attract from 65 to over 100 participants from all walks of life.

What are sound baths?

Sound baths are immersive experiences where participants are enveloped in sound vibrations, typically from instruments like gongs, crystal bowls, and chimes. At St Collen's we use digitised sound technology. These sounds work on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level to bring relaxation, healing and a sense of connection. In recent years, sound healing has surged in popularity, reflecting a growing desire for experiential spiritual practices in a fast-paced, often overwhelming world.

Alongside my priestly duties, I am also a trained Biofield Sound Practitioner. I also collaborate with Interstate Industries (Hemi-Sync) in the United States, developing guided meditations using specific frequencies to promote physical healing, emotional balance, and spiritual connection. These frequencies create an environment for spiritual seekers of all backgrounds to explore the transcendent in an inclusive and accessible way. This work directly informs and enhances the sound baths at St Collen's, ensuring they provide a deeply immersive and transformative experience.

Sound baths align with Christ's ministry of holistic care for body, mind and spirit. Just as Jesus healed the sick, comforted the sorrowful and proclaimed God's Kingdom, the sound baths offer a modern way to nurture wholeness and peace in participants' lives.

A welcoming, transformative space

One of the most powerful aspects of the sound baths at St Collen's is their ability to welcome people into the church – many for the first time in years or ever.

Participants consistently share how loved and accepted they feel in the space. Feedback from a recent questionnaire revealed:

- "I have never felt so welcomed in a church before."
- "This was my first time back in church in decades, and it felt amazing to be here."
- "I feel so uplifted and at peace after this experience."

These testimonials speak to the transformative power of creating a non-judgemental, loving atmosphere. By opening the doors in this way, we embody God's unconditional love and make the church a sanctuary for healing and connection.

A fresh expression of church

Sound baths at St Collen's represent a 'fresh expression' of church, meeting people where they are and inviting them to experience the sacred in a new way. For many, the experiential nature of sound healing is more engaging than traditional forms of worship, especially for those who identify as 'spiritual but not religious'. Far from being outside the Christian faith, sound baths honour a desire for experience while gently inviting participants into deeper reflection on God's presence and love.

Pathways to faith

While sound baths are non-doctrinal and inclusive, they are opening doors to deeper engagement with faith. We are exploring ways to provide pathways for those interested, such as enquirers' courses, reflective talks, or informal gatherings for spiritual discussions. These initiatives would allow participants to explore Christian spirituality at their own pace, guided by the work of the Holy Spirit.

As the church continues to seek new ways to share the Good News, the sound baths at St Collen's offer a compelling model for what it means to be a welcoming and transformative presence in the world today.

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/LlanGroupChurches> for details of the next sound bath at St Collen's.





Resourcing Mission Across the Diocese

Last year, the diocese was awarded more than £5.6m to launch two major projects to encourage church growth. One project is aimed specifically at supporting rural communities with the appointment of Rural Pioneer



Missioners. The other will extend the provision of Hub Churches. The new Director of Transforming Ministry, the Revd Mike Haslam, will have oversight of both these projects.

Rural Pioneer Missioners



The Growth Fund money allows for the creation of three Rural Pioneer Missioner posts. These will be based in the Mission Areas of Caereinion, Tanat Vyrnwy and Valle Crucis and will offer each area additional capacity for mission. The Revd Helen Dawson (left) has already been appointed as the Pioneer Missioner for the Caereinion Mission Area.

Rural Pioneer Missioners will be connecting with new people in new ways and in new parts of each Mission Area. Each will bring creative new ways to enable mission and outreach. The intention is to develop models which can be adapted and lived out in other rural communities across both the diocese and the province.

The creation of Rural Pioneer Missioners means Mission Areas can continue to value and strengthen traditional church, while at the same time, develop new ways of being church.

Pioneer Missioners will:

- work with the Mission Area Shared Ministry Team and Mission Area Conference in developing their strategic vision and outreach
- work to build up the life of the Mission Area churches in collaboration with the clergy rooted in the churches
- go out to the communities across the Mission Area, meet people where they are, start new activities and invite people to join in
- have an entrepreneurial spirit and pioneer new worshipping communities across the Mission Area

- proactively build links with schools across the Mission Area and find creative ways of engaging with children and young people
- encourage existing church communities in mission and evangelism, building people up and growing effective teams
- support the existing provision of worship, occasional offices and pastoral care in the Mission Area as a priest, but this will not be their main focus.

Look out for news of the appointment of further Rural Pioneer Missioners in the coming weeks and pray for them, their work and the people they will meet.

Hub Churches

The Growth Fund Money will enable the opening of three new hub churches this year, to join the four already established in Welshpool, Mold, Holywell and Penrhyn Bay. The new hubs will be in St Giles' in Wrexham, All Saints' in Newtown and Christ Church in Prestatyn. Each new hub is committing to create a new congregation based on a specialist focus. Another three hub churches will be identified and announced next year.

St Giles' in Wrexham



The plan for St Giles' is to create a centre of musical excellence using the 'Choir Church' model to start a new choir and a new congregation to go with it. The aim is to attract children from as wide a range of backgrounds as possible

across the city. At the same time, the church will develop nurture and discipleship programmes and explore the idea of a city-centre chaplaincy.

A Hub Church Associate Priest has already been appointed. The Revd Petra Goodband joined the team at St Giles' in Autumn 2024, and the Revd James Tout was announced as the Vicar of St Giles in February 2025.

All Saints' in Newtown

All Saints' is already becoming a centre of hospitality excellence after the church underwent a major re-ordering in 2023. All Saints' runs a regular Tuesday soup-lunch which is preceded by Holy Communion. It also

operates as a Well-Fed Food Hub, with weekly deliveries of meals from the Flintshire-based social business Well-Fed. A new congregation is being established as a result of the church's outreach to the local community, established during lockdown with the weekly Sunday Lunch deliveries. The Hub Leader is the Revd Canon Nia Wyn Morris, and a recruitment process is underway for an associate priest and lay worker.



Christ Church in Prestatyn

Christ Church is aiming to become a centre of eco excellence and will seek to grow the church through Forest Church and other outdoor projects. Christ Church



has already become a silver eco church, and the Mission Hub Leader, the Revd Gregor Lachlann-Waddell, is a member of the Church in Wales Climate Change Hub. Gregor has been instrumental in encouraging other

churches in the Mission Area to become eco-churches. A recruitment process is underway for a curate/associate priest and lay worker to join the team at Christ Church.

Other roles supported by the Growth Fund

As part of the bid to the Growth Fund, two new diocesan posts are being created to ensure the successful development and sustainability of the projects. A Project Manager will oversee the implementation of the plans, and an Income Generation Manager will ensure giving is embedded into the culture of new congregations from the start. Both posts will be sharing their learning with Mission Areas to ensure the continued resourcing of mission in all our churches. The recruitment process for both roles is underway.

To find out more about the Rural Pioneer Missioners and the Hub Churches, please contact the Director of Transforming Ministry, the Revd Mike Haslam:

mikehaslam@cinw.org.uk

Future Plans

It will be four years this year since our first Resource Church, Hope Street, in Wrexham opened. The launch was delayed owing to Covid, but online services started in early 2021 and events to mark the start of regular worship and events happened in October 2021. Now, thoughts are turning to the opening of a second Resource Church, a Hope Street church plant. **The Archdeacon of Wrexham, the Ven. Dr Hayley Matthews,** gives *Teulu Asaph* an update.

Built into the original plan for Hope Street was the expectation that it would resource the opening of other churches, based on the Hope Street model. Discussions have been underway over the last year to identify a location, and a number of site visits have been made to potential buildings. Now a possible base for a church plant has been identified after a series of positive meetings.

Subject to funding, St Tudfil's in Coedpoeth will be the location of Hope Street's first church plant. The church, based in the centre of the village, was temporary closed last year while urgent works were carried out. After a campaign by the local community to keep the church open, three services were held towards the end of last year (Remembrance, a Christingle service and a Carol Service) all of which were well attended. As 2025 begins, the church is starting an Alpha Course in collaboration with Hope Street.

The next steps will be to identify funding to re-order the church and resource it to become a Hope Street plant. It is likely to be 2026 before plans are finalised and everything is in place for Coedpoeth to be a Hope Street plant to bring hope to the local community.





A new bishop's nominee for the Anglican mission agency, USPG, has been appointed by Bishop Gregory. Debbie Sawyer, a pastoral chaplain in Dyffryn Clwyd Mission Area, outlines the work of the charity and encourages you to support its campaigns.

This time last year, I am ashamed to admit, that I had little knowledge of USPG other than hearing a few snippets during a stay in Tanzania in 2023. Now, as Bishop Gregory's nominee in representing the Diocese of St Asaph as a council member, I attend meetings, and act as a link between USPG UK and our Anglican community here in North Wales.

USPG's London Headquarters is based in bright, cheerful offices nestling beneath The Shard, close to the enticing Borough Market. When I visited, team members from near and far each shared their stories as to how, through their Anglican church background, they had come to work for USPG. I left their offices on a high, inspired by what I'd heard.

Working for three months in our link diocese of Southwest Tanganyika, set me on a pathway into ministry far beyond our Welsh borders. Travelling is deeply rooted within my soul, so combined with my role as an Airport Chaplain, and my local Welsh ministry, an interest in the projects and mission which USPG carries out globally, was already well nurtured.

You may still be wondering, what exactly is USPG as the title gives nothing away!

USPG describe themselves as "the Anglican mission agency that partners with churches and communities around the world reflecting the call of God to enliven faith, strengthen relationships, unlock potential and champion justice." USPG has played a significant role in worldwide Christian mission since its foundation in 1701.

At their 2024 conference *United Beyond Borders*, speakers attended from South Africa, US, France and Guyana, as well as team members from London. It was a fantastic conference! Whilst I departed feeling uplifted from those intensive days, I also carried memories of the emotional speeches by a young Canadian on life in the refugee camps of Calais. He and his wife work tirelessly amongst the endless arrivals banished through war, famine and much more from their homelands around the world; their hopes for a better future so often drowned in despair.

USPG's Chairman, Duncan Dormor, delivered a powerful overview of their 10-year Codrington Reparations Project in Barbados. It acknowledges the impact of historic slavery on modern-day Barbados, and outlines a vision which rethinks mission, energises church and champions justice.

Some churches in our diocese already contribute to the work of USPG, and for the rest of us, as bishop's nominee, I pray that you consider our brothers and sisters in Christ far beyond our Welsh borders; those who toil to survive each day under conditions most of us would find impossible to endure. This is where USPG steps in: they give hope and support through our Anglican Church network, sharing the Gospel of Christ actively across the globe, focusing intensely, on humanity in need.

USPG can willingly offer our churches some excellent guest speakers who truly bring to life their ongoing 60 global projects, with a current urgent focus on supporting the Anglican hospital in Gaza.

For more information or to donate, visit USPG.org.uk or call 020 7921 2200 or email Debbie, debbieasawy7@mail.com





Mission Area Leader is Eisteddfod Chairman

The Mission Area Leader of Valle Crucis has become the new Chairman of the celebrated Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod. John Gambles, who is also a worship leader at St Tysilio Church in Llantysilio, has been a volunteer with the Eisteddfod since 1987 when he became involved as Deputy Head of Ysgol Dinas Bran in the town.

Dave Hennigan from Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod highlights the links between the Eisteddfod and the local church.

John's appointment is a significant milestone in his long-standing involvement with arts and community organisations. His appointment as Chairman is an exciting new chapter for the iconic festival, which has been promoting international peace and harmony and the sharing of cultures through music and dance since 1947.

John's journey to this prestigious position is deeply rooted in his tireless dedication to local community causes. As a Trustee of the Valle Crucis Mission Area, he has played a key role in preserving and promoting the heritage of the region, ensuring that the historical and cultural legacy are celebrated and protected.

His appointment as Chairman of the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod is a natural progression for someone who has demonstrated such a deep commitment to the arts and culture. The Eisteddfod, with its rich tradition of showcasing talent from around the world, is a platform for cultural exchange and understanding, values that align closely with John's own passion for community-building, faith and cultural preservation. As Chairman, he brings a wealth of experience and a clear vision for the future of the festival, ensuring it continues to evolve while staying true to its roots of promoting peace.

The Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod has been intrinsically linked with St Collen's and local churches since it began. Another former Chairman, Gethin Davies, now Life Vice-President, is part of the congregation, as are several Board Members. Father Lee Taylor, Vicar of St Collen's Church, is also a member of the Musical and Staging Team. The church hosts daily recitals featuring international competitors during the festival and celebrates an annual Eisteddfod Service at the end of the festival at which Bishop Gregory has preached. The church and its community hall also host events around the year to support the festival.

John said: "I am immensely proud to have become the new Chairman of the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod. Since 1947, the festival has played a leading role in promoting peace and internationalism through music and dance. Every year, we welcome the world to our beautiful part of northeast Wales, and to play a leading role in delivering the festival is an enormous privilege. We are lucky to have over 600 active volunteers, many who work all year round to deliver our unique peace festival – people from all walks of life I count as friends.

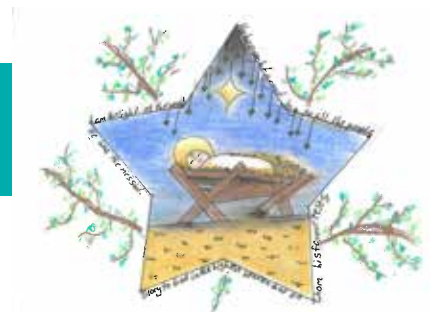
"Together, we deliver something truly special and precious to all of us. I am proud of the links with St Collen's, our Mission Area and diocese that go back generations. We will work hard to move towards an all-year round organisation that will also help to strengthen the local economy and ensure that Llangollen, a town with a big voice, continues to play its part in modern Wales."

Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod takes place from 8–13 July. You can find out more and book tickets at <https://international-eisteddfod.co.uk>

Bishop's Christmas Card Competition Winner

A pupil from Montgomery Church in Wales School in Powys won the Bishop of St Asaph's Christmas Card competition. Rosie, who is nine year's old, created an image of a Jesse Tree, which traces God's promises through the Old Testament to the birth of Jesus. Rosie's Jesse Tree clearly shows the symbols which represent the lineage of Jesus from the Creation of the World, through to his birth in Bethlehem. On the back of the card was an image by Robyn, a

Year 6 pupil in St Mary's School in Overton. Robyn's image depicts Jesus in the manger as a star-shaped bauble for a Christmas tree. These images were two of more than 1,400 submitted by children from the 49 Church in Wales Schools across the Diocese of St Asaph. The theme of the competition was *Jesus Hope of the World* and it inspired wider work in our church schools on lineage as well as Old Testament stories, as described on these pages.



Jesse Tree: What does the Family Tree of Jesus Look Like?

This was a great key question for Ysgol Bodafon as they took on a Christmas term's RVE study on The Jesse Tree, writes Kathryn Mann.

Each class was given a Jesse Tree resources pack as a stimulus to the topic. Each then chose from a range of Bible stories from Adam and Eve to the arrival of baby Jesus. Each story was used to design a simple symbol to add to a classroom Jesse Tree. It was a great way to learn Bible stories!

The classes had their own trees. Some were made from real branches from outside. Others were made with wire, papier-mâché and real twigs! These became a focal point of the stories and a focus in the Reflective Areas in each class. Cross-curriculum work included 2D symbol shapes in Maths, creating the tree itself in mixed media and exploring trees in rainforests today. Some also explored trees mentioned in the Bible.

At the end of the Christmas term, the Jesse Trees was full of symbolic reminders of the stories that point us towards Christmas Day.



The Jesse Tree: Ysgol Pentre CIW

Every year, the pupils enjoy entering the Bishop's Christmas Card Competition, writes Mrs Evans, Assistant Headteacher at Ysgol Pentre. This year was especially interesting for the staff. During discussions about The Jesse Tree, it became apparent that while the children were very familiar with the more commonly known Bible stories

such as *Noah's Ark*, *Creation* and *The Good Samaritan*, they were less familiar with the stories such as *Ruth*, *Jonah and the Whale*, and *Joseph and his Dreamcoat*.

It was amazing to see the pupils enjoying the stories that appeared new to them. Every day in each class, we now share stories in the

form of reading from the Bible, watching Bible cartoons or watching Teddy Francis-John videos. It was wonderful to see the Jesse Trees brought to life using a wider range of stories. We even made our own 3D Jesse Tree decorations to put on our tree in the hall.



The Promise of a New Life

At St John the Baptist VA School, Penymynydd, our year 5 and 6 pupils were challenged with the task to produce a Jesse Tree based on the things they would miss if they left their homes to start a new life on board the Titanic, writes headteacher, Mrs Stephens.

The Jesse Tree beautifully connects to the themes of hope, loss and renewal found in the Titanic's story, especially when seen through the lens of Christmas. The Jesse Tree culminates in the birth of Christ,

the ultimate symbol of love, hope and new beginnings celebrated at Christmas. Similarly, the Titanic represented dreams of a fresh start, with many passengers embarking on a journey of faith and courage toward a better life.

Reflecting on what they would miss leaving their homes, pupils could relate to the sacrifices made by those aboard the Titanic, who left behind loved ones, familiar places and treasured traditions. These sacrifices resonate with the

Christmas story, where Mary and Joseph left their home, trusting in God's plan, culminating in the birth of Jesus. Just as Christmas reminds us of the joy and renewal that comes through faith and love, the Jesse Tree and the Titanic invite reflection on the resilience and hope required to embrace new beginnings. By connecting these themes, pupils can appreciate the enduring message of Christmas: that even amidst loss, love and hope can light the way forward.

Welcome to the New Head of Education, Children's and Youth Work



A new diocesan Head of Education, Children's and Youth Work has started in post.

Louise Williams is an experienced teacher, senior leader and head

teacher and will be using those experiences to further develop strong and purposeful relationships with schools across the diocese. Previously, Louise was head of a Church in Wales Voluntary Aided School in Wrexham and is a qualified Executive Coach and

Mentor. She is an experienced schools' inspector, working with Estyn, and is a community and local authority school governor.

You can contact Louise, via email: Louisewilliams@cinw.org.uk



Special Award for Mothers' Union Member

A Mothers' Union (MU) member from Guilsfield near Welshpool has celebrated her 108th birthday and received a special medal as one of the oldest members of Mothers' Union, writes Meryl Thelwell. The award to Kathleen Somerville was sent personally by the MU Worldwide President, Sheran Harper. She also received a bouquet of flowers from the MU in St Asaph.

Remarkably, Kathleen was living independently until a few months ago and still attending Mothers' Union meetings. She is now living comfortably in a nursing home in Welshpool.

In her younger days, after qualifying as a teacher, Kathleen's first job was in Birmingham. Her family were

living in Llandrinio in Powys. At the weekend, Kathleen would cycle home from Birmingham and cycle back for Monday morning. During the Second World War the children she was teaching were evacuated to Cheltenham and Kathleen went with them. She spent 10 years teaching in Kenya but had to return to Britain during the Mau Mau uprising.

Pictured above with Kathleen are, left to right, the diocesan Chaplain Archdeacon John Thelwell, Meryl Thelwell, Archidiaconal President for Montgomery Archdeaconry who presented the medal, and Maud Griffiths, Branch Leader at Guilsfield.

Christmas Dinner in Llandrillo yn Rhos

The churches in Llandrillo yn Rhos provided a Christmas dinner for 16 people who would otherwise have been on their own, writes Gordon Jones. My wife, Anne, and I hosted the meal of traditional turkey dinner, dessert, tea/coffee, mince pies and chocolates. Kind donations meant that costs were kept to a minimum. There was

a warm-welcome and friendly atmosphere, and everyone enjoyed music and a light-hearted quiz after the meal. St George's Church has been recently redeveloped to include a kitchen, toilets and meeting space. In 2025 we hope to make more use of these facilities to welcome the wider community.





Dathliadau yn Y Bala



Roedd 2024 yn flwyddyn nodedig i'r Bala. "Pam?", fe'ch clywaf yn holi. Mae Alyson Evan o Eglwys Crist, Y Bala yn esbonio.

700 mlynedd ynghynt yn 1324 fe gyhoeddwyd Siarter y Bala. Sefydlwyd tref y Bala yn 1310 gan Roger Mortimer a oedd yn Arglwydd y Waun. Adnewyddwyd y siarter yn 1324 gan y Brenin Edward II.

Mae'r gair Bala yn golygu 'afon yn llifo o lyn' neu 'tir rhwng dau lyn'.

Roedd y Siarter yn gwneud y Bala yn fwrdeisdref rydd gyda'r hawl i ethol Maer a dau feili, i gynnal carchar, marchnad wythnosol a dwy ffair flynyddol. Fe gynhelir y ffeiriau yma hyd heddiw ym Mis Mai a Mis Hydref.

Cynhaliwyd nifer o weithgareddau dros y flwyddyn i ddatlu ein bod Yma o Hyd, sef gweithdy creu llusernau a gorymdaith i ddilyn, taith gerdded lenyddol, arddangosfa 700 yn y Plase, a gweu sgarff i ddatlu gan ei rhoi ar safle yr hen gastell.

Cafwyd hefyd wasanaeth i ddatlu cyfraniad Cristnogaeth i hanes y dref.

Pleser mawr i ni fel aelodau Eglwys Crist yw datgan balchder mawr fod dau o'n haelodau ffyddlon Mr Trevor H Jones a Dr Adrian Murray wedi derbyn anrhydeddau gan y dref yn y dathliad Sêr y Bala.

Derbyniodd Adrian wobwr am ei gyfraniad i hybu amgylchedd y dref: Sicrhau bod na ddim sbwriel o gwmpas y strydoedd a'r lleoedd gwyrdd er mwyn gwarchod natur.

Derbyniodd Trevor wobwr am fod yn arwr tawel y dref. Mae yn gweithio yn ddiflino dros achosion da, yn cyfrannu at waith yn y gymuned, gan edrych ar ôl Canolfan Bro Tegid. Yn ogystal cafodd Trevor oleuo Coeden Nadolig y dre ar noson siopa hwyr.

Diolchwn fod gennym bobl gweithgar yn ein plith ac rydym yn hynod falch fod y gymuned gyfan wedi cydnabod hynny a dewis dau Arwr o blith ein cynulleidfia.

Celebrations in Bala



2024 was an important year for Bala. "Why?" I can hear you asking. Alyson Evans from Christ Church, Bala explains.

700 years ago in 1324, the Bala Charter was received. The town of Bala was established in 1310 by Roger Mortimer who was Lord of Chirk. The Charter was re-issued in 1324 by King Edward II.

The word Bala means 'a river flowing from a lake' or 'land between two lakes'.

The Charter made Bala a free borough which meant a mayor and two bailiffs could be elected. It could have a jail, hold a weekly market and two annual fairs. These fairs are still held today in May and October.

Several activities were held over the year to celebrate that we are Yma o Hyd. There was a lantern workshop and parade, a literary walk, 700-year exhibition at Plase and a long scarf knitted and placed at the location of the old castle.

A service was held to celebrate the Christian faith in the town.

It gives us as members of Christ Church great pleasure to announce that two of our faithful members namely Mr Trevor Jones and Dr Adrian Murray received awards from the town as an appreciation of their community work at the Sêr Y Bala Stars evening.

Adrian received his award for his contribution to the environment: Best Environmentalist - ensuring that there was no rubbish in the streets and there are green places to protect nature.

Trevor received the award of best unsung hero. He works tirelessly for good causes, aids community work, whilst looking after Canolfan Bro Tegid. Trevor was also asked to turn on the Christmas Tree lights on the late night shopping evening.

We are so thankful that there are so many hard-working people amongst us and that the community as a whole recognised this and chose two heroes from our congregation.



Hygiene Packs for Those in Need



A project to provide hygiene products to those in need in Towyn during the Coronavirus Pandemic has continued and grown in scale. Carefully prepared Hygiene Hampers, containing all sorts of cleaning and personal care products, started being distributed across the Aber-Morfa Mission Area during the summer of 2020. **Teulu Asaph** went to see how the scheme has evolved.

The Hygiene Hamper Project was started by the Vicar of St Mary's in Towyn, the Revd Jan Crane, her daughters, Jessica and Vicky, and the Mission Area Warden, Jean Carthy. Between them, they source and distribute the hygiene products in various ways across the Mission Area.

Jan said: "When we first started, the Hygiene Hampers were made and distributed from St Mary's. Many of the hampers were going to families in Rhyl so it made sense to join with St Ann's Church in Rhyl to ensure no one in need was being missed and people in Rhyl could access the support more easily. Now we get referrals from local schools to support families."

The idea for the project came from Jan's personal experience. "During Covid when many people were furloughed or lost their job, family finances could often only cover food. Hygiene products were not top of the essential-to-buy list. Knowing what it was like to have to budget carefully to cover the essentials, I set up the Hygiene Hamper project to support local people."



During the pandemic, hygiene products were often difficult to buy and therefore could be expensive, especially pandemic essentials like facemasks and hand sanitiser.

"When we first started," Jan went on, "we created elaborate hampers which looked like gifts and we were keen to encourage people to see them as a gift and not to be embarrassed. As the need continued and grew, we had feedback from people to create packs rather than hampers. These are often distributed via local schools so using carrier bags for the products was more practical."

St Mary's provide five packs at a time to each school, who then distribute them to families in need. When they need more, the schools contact Jan again.

As well as working with local schools, the team also work with Food Share Conwy, which distributes food from St Mary's Church every Friday morning. Hygiene products, provided by the church, are available for people to pick up at the same time as they collect their Food Share items. The church also provides hot drinks, a listening ear and a space for prayer. In response to the continued cost-of-living crisis, an Energy Advisor attends once a month to help people with their energy bills and ensure they are getting all the support for which they are eligible.

Jan added: "It's sad that this project is still needed but we are continuing to see people around here struggle, especially for food, which means there isn't money to buy anything else, like hygiene products. It's been important to adapt the hygiene hamper project to meet local need in a way which best serves the community."

Look out for a film about this project on the diocesan Youtube Channel and social media.