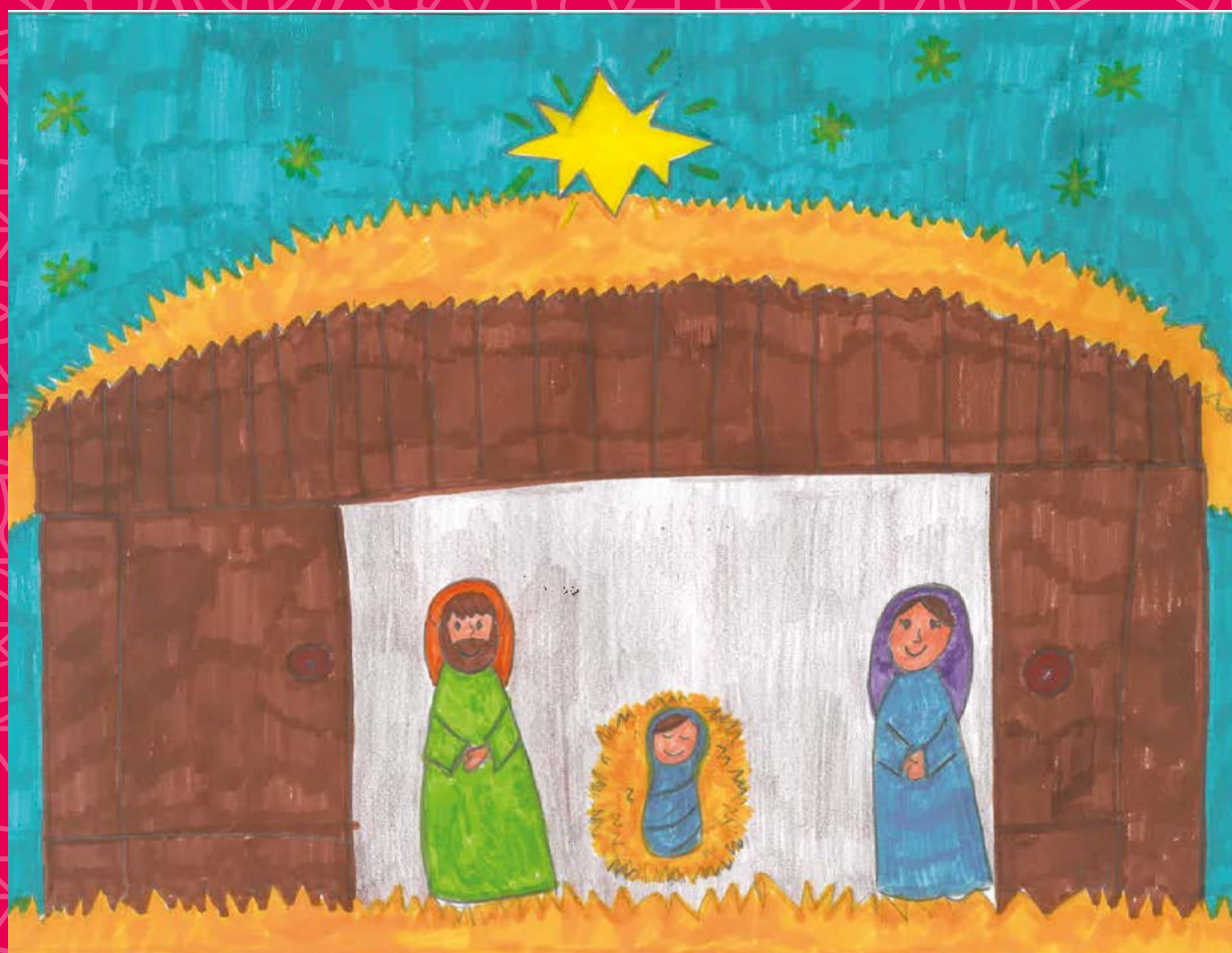


TEULU ASAPH

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

CONNECTING OUR DIOCESAN FAMILY

RHAGFYR-CHWEFROR 2024 | DECEMBER-FEBRUARY 2024



Cofleidio Taith yr Adfent
Cronfa Twf yn Agor

Embracing the Advent Journey
Growth Fund Opens

AM DDIM | FREE



From the Editor

Once again, we find ourselves at the start of the church's year with the arrival of Advent. It's a time of waiting and expectation; an opportunity to reflect on our life and death and a journey towards the arrival of God in the World, through the birth of Jesus. And it's an opportunity to see how our church schools are marking Advent and Christmas, with Bishop Gregory's Christmas Card Competition. Congratulations to Edie Harding, one of the winners, whose design adorns the cover of this edition. You can find out more about the competition and see a selection of other entries on page 12. The seasonal theme continues with a reflection on Advent from one of our Ordinands and an encouragement to go along to a Plygain service this year.

Thank you to everyone who sent in news of their services, activities and events over the last few months, and those who shared a poem with us. If you're a poet and would like me to include a seasonal poem in the future, please send me an email.

May I wish you a blessed and joyful Advent, Christmas and New Year.



Karen

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Cover image: An entry into Bishop Gregory's Christmas Card Competition from Edie Harding, age 8, from All Saints School, Gresford. See page 12 for more information.

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For the Word created mud and got it going
It filled our empty brains with blood and set it flowing
And for thousands of regimes
It's endured all our follies and fancy schemes
It's been tough, and yet it seems to be growing!
O you people of power, your hour is now
You may plan to rule forever, but you never do somehow!
So we wait in silent treason until reason is restored
And we wait for the season of the Word of the Lord
We await the season of the Word of the Lord!

Mass, Leonard Bernstein



Bishop's Word / Gair gan yr Esgob

Defiance and Hope

One of my favourite classical music pieces is the Mass composed by Leonard Bernstein. It's not a liturgical piece, despite the name, but a theatre production in which the reflections of many characters are entwined around the Eucharistic texts. At one point, a New Testament reading is proclaimed, and the priest responds by reflecting on the power of the Word of God, as in the verse above.

We are in Advent once again, preparing for Christmas, but we come out of a year in which there have been many signs of brutality. Putin's 'special military operation' has become a war in which both sides are bogged down, and apparently running low on weapons. Hamas has perpetrated crimes of unspeakable savagery against innocent Jews, and Israel again punishes the population of Gaza in their furious response. Lesser acts of revenge, evil or indifference mar our society, as we victimise refugees, and demean the needy.

Yet the message of Christmas is that the Word of God expressed in Jesus, and living and acting in the world today cannot be defeated and will not be overcome – a baby is God's signal to us that sin will be conquered, evil will be defeated, injustice will be overturned. Love will conquer in the end. The defiance and hope expressed by a Jewish composer in the context of a Christian text speaks true.

Herfeiddiol a Gobeithiol

Mae Mass o waith Leonard Bernstein ymhlith fy hoff ddarnau i o gerddoriaeth glasurol. Nid darn litwrgaidd ydyw, er gwaetha'r enw, ond cynhyrchiad theatr lle caiff myfyrdodau llawer o gymeriadau eu plethu o amgylch geiriau'r Ewcharist. Mewn un man, cawn ddarllenid o'r Testament Newydd, ac mae'r offeiriad yn ymateb â'r pennill uchod sy'n myfyrio ar rym Gair Duw.

Daeth yr Adfent unwaith eto, cyfnod o baratoi ar gyfer y Nadolig, a hynny ar ddiwedd blwyddyn lle gwelsom lawer o arwyddion o greulondeb. Mae 'ymgyrch filwrol arbennig' Putin wedi troi'n rhyfel sy'n llethu'r ddwy ochr ac, i bob golwg, wedi'u gadael yn brin o arfau. Mae Hamas wedi troseddu mewn ffyrdd erchyll yn erbyn lldewon diniwed, ac mae Israel unwaith eto'n cosbi poblogaeth Gaza â'u hymateb cynddeiriog. Mae achosion llai o ddial, drygioni neu ddifaterwch yn staen ar ein cymdeithas, a ninnau'n erlid ffoaduriaid ac yn amharchu pobl anghenus.

Serch hynny, neges y Nadolig yw na ellir trechu na gorchfygu Gair Duw – Gair a gaiff ei fynegi ym mherson Iesu, ac sy'n byw ac yn gweithredu yn y byd heddiw. Anfonodd Duw faban yn arwydd i ni y bydd pechod yn cael ei drechu, drygioni'n cael ei orchfygu ac anghyfiawnder yn cael ei ddymchwel. Cariad fydd oruchaf yn y diwedd. Gwelwn wirionedd yng ngwaith herfeiddiol a gobeithiol cyfansoddwr lldewig yng nghyd-destun geiriau Cristnogol.



Church Growth Fund Opens



The Church in Wales' £100 million Growth Fund has opened for applications. Described as a 'once-in-a-generation' opportunity, the fund aims to resource confident and consistent evangelism across all six dioceses in Wales. The Archbishop of Wales, the Most Revd Andrew John, explained more about the Church Growth Fund at our Diocesan Conference in October, and Teulu Asaph provides some key points as the process gets underway.

The Church in Wales has set aside £100 million of capital reserves to invest in evangelism over the next ten years. The Fund aims to see people encounter Jesus, come to faith, be baptised and become disciples. It will do this by encouraging churches, mission areas, cathedrals, dioceses and collaborations between dioceses to develop new and exciting ways to share the Christian message.

Two tiers

The Church Growth Fund is split into two tiers. The first, Tier 1, is for grant applications up to £10,000, mainly from mission areas, for work which is both innovative locally and replicable nationally. These grants are not for work on buildings. Tier 2 bids are for grants of more than £10,000. Applications can be made by individual dioceses, dioceses working in partnership or the six cathedrals as a group. Only Tier 2 is open for applications in 2023. Tier 1 applications will be considered from 2024 onwards.

The Church in Wales has identified ten arenas for evangelism, and all bids (both Tier 1 and Tier 2) should be aligned with at least one of those evangelistic contexts.

They are:

- **Attractional and established church:** Sharing good news through Sunday and midweek worship, using church seasons and the ministry of local disciples.
- **Place and story:** Pilgrimage and storytelling connect 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.
- **Memorialisation:** Gathering and honouring for significant societal or national moments presents evangelistic opportunities.
- **Commemoration:** Connections with the wider community which need a 'liturgy', such as baptisms, marriages and funerals.
- **Process evangelism:** Courses such as *Alpha* or *Emmaus* show that faith is a journey and that belonging, connecting and engaging are key steps towards full inclusion.
- **Church planting:** There are many churches who successfully plant new congregations which grow and develop.
- **Para church partnerships:** Organisations like the Church Army specialise in delivering and facilitating evangelism and wider missional work at a local level.
- **Chaplaincies:** The potential for developing specialists who can grow church in specific contexts is largely underdeveloped and needs to be explored.
- **Cathedrals:** Cathedrals and large cathedral-like churches attract people who deliberately seek out excellence in music, hospitality, storytelling, liturgy and architecture.

Preparations underway

Currently across the Diocese of St Asaph, work is taking place to develop a range of potential Tier 2 bids, with a view to submitting them early in 2024. In the meantime, churches and mission areas can begin preparing their own bids for Tier 1. Any bid must have the written support of Bishop Gregory and approval from the Mission Area Conference. If you would like to have an informal conversation about your idea, please contact the Diocesan Director of Operations, Jon Morris: jonathanmorris@cinw.org.uk



You can find all the information about the Church Growth Fund with guidance notes and application forms at <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/evangelism>





Is your Church Using the Membership App?



Earlier this year, the Diocese of St Asaph became the first in the Church in Wales to introduce the Membership App, a simple, real-time

way of recording everyone who comes along to services and activities in church. As the **Diocesan Director of Operations, Jon Morris, explains, the end of 2023 is a good time to take stock and remind ourselves why the App is so important to our diocese and the Church in Wales.**

Many of our churches are already using the Membership App successfully and recording attendance for services and activities. I would like to thank everyone who has helped with this achievement! We now need to make sure that all our churches are using the App to build up a complete picture for our diocese.

Easy to use

The App is a computer program developed by the Church in Wales. It runs on a PC, a tablet or a smartphone. It has been designed to be as easy to use as possible, with a single form allowing people to enter figures each week. Doing this means that, for the first time, we will have up-to-date information on how many people attend church; where faith is growing, where there are glimpses of hope and love is being demonstrated. In short, we can see what projects are bearing fruit. This information will be invaluable when making future investment decisions. With accurate information, we can spend wisely and make best use of funds to support new as well as existing projects.

Supporting growth

The Membership App is not confined to our diocese. Although we were the first to adopt the technology, it is being rolled out across the province. This will help us understand what is working right across Wales.

To get the very best from this system, we need to see weekly returns from all our churches. People need to enter accurate information to record what is happening. The better our figures, the richer and more useful the data will be. The Membership App is a powerful tool to support growth and will provide helpful information for bids to the Church Growth Fund.

Not everyone is expected to use the App. People in a position to record information have been invited to do so and have been sent an email with full instructions.

For those people who want some help and guidance on how to get started, there is a dedicated Membership App page on our diocesan website. You will find it at <https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/membership>. You can also contact the Diocesan Office directly to have a chat with one of the team who will be happy to help you.

MEMBERSHIP APP

LET'S GET STARTED





Embracing the Advent Journey: Life as an Ordinand in the Church in Wales



What does Advent mean to you?
That's the question our online Advent Calendar is considering this year. People from across the diocese are sharing what Advent means to them and how they are making space for God at this time. Here, one of our Ordinands, Stuart Dean from Offa Mission Area, offers his reflections on the Advent Journey.

Advent in the Church in Wales holds a special place for me as an Ordinand, marking a period of profound spiritual significance, growth and anticipation. As the world prepares for the joyous celebration of Christ's birth, I find myself immersed in a unique and transformative experience within the ecclesiastical setting of the Church in Wales before, God willing, I am ordained a deacon next year.

Beacons of light

Advent is synonymous with acts of kindness and compassion. As Ordinands in the Church in Wales it is, I feel, our duty to actively engage with our communities, embodying the spirit of giving and love. From organising food collections to visiting the elderly, or those who are excluded and marginalised, it is for us to become beacons of light, spreading warmth and joy during the cold winter months.

The life of an Ordinand during Advent is not without its challenges! Balancing the demands of placement ministry, personal reflection and academic pursuits can be daunting, as essay deadlines and family pressures, commitments and expectations all mix into one. Doubts may surface, testing our faith and resolve. Yet, it is within these challenges that I have found strength, drawing inspiration from the very teachings I have studied and strive to uphold.

Sense of belonging

One of the most profound aspects I find is the sense of belonging. I have a supportive community, comprising my placement supervisor, fellow Ordinands, clergy and congregation. Together we are becoming a nurturing family as we share burdens and joys, often finding solace in traditions and jointly fostering an environment where growth and learning flourish.

Being an Ordinand in the Church in Wales during Advent is a transformative odyssey. It is a period of profound spiritual growth, challenges and unwavering commitment. Through service, reflection and the support of a nurturing community, I believe we as Ordinands emerge from Advent with a renewed sense of purpose, ready to embrace our ministry with open hearts and unwavering faith. As the echoes of Advent linger, they remind us of the timeless message of faith, hope and love, and redemption that continues to inspire our journey in the Church in Wales.

You can see the diocesan Advent Calendar at <https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/advent-calendar/> and on social media channels.



Top Awards for Two Churches

Two churches in the Diocese of St Asaph have won prestigious awards in the National Church Awards 2023.

Holy Trinity Church in Trefnant in the Denbigh Mission Area was the Wales winner in The Church and Community Volunteer Awards. These celebrate the contribution which

volunteers make to both looking after and making best use of churches to benefit local communities and people. St Peter's Church in Llanbedr in the Dyffryn Clwyd Mission Area was the country winner in the Church Tourism Awards, which encourages churches to be open and welcoming



for visitors to explore. Representatives of both churches attended the award ceremony in London in early November.

40 Years of Ministry



The Bishop of St Asaph has celebrated 40 years since his ordination to the diaconate in Michaelmas 1983. Bishop

Gregory marked the occasion on 24 September, writing in his Ad Clerum: "It is hard to know where the years have gone, and the perspectives I had as a new deacon are probably very different from my perspectives now. However, it is apparent to

me that the Church has changed enormously through those decades, with recognition of new attitudes towards divorce, the ordination of women, and same-sex partnerships." Bishop Gregory has been Bishop of St Asaph for 14 of his 40 years in ministry, overseeing the introduction of mission areas, contributing to the Church in Wales' development of a blessing for same-sex marriages, and facilitating the opening of the diocese's first resource church, Hope Street, in Wrexham. At a recent meeting of the Bishops' Staff team, Bishop Gregory was presented with an artistic representation of the diocesan logo: Growing Faith, Bringing Hope, Demonstrating Love.

Online Energy Footprint Tool



Churches are being encouraged to submit data into the Church in Wales' Online Energy Tool before the end of 2023. The Energy Footprint

Tool calculates the amount of carbon ('the carbon footprint') each building has produced over the previous calendar year. The Church in Wales' Climate Champion, Dr Julia Edwards, said: "The tool is easy-to-use and available to all Church in Wales churches. It will assist us in reducing our impact on the climate and help us to focus resources on the biggest emitters. It's likely that many churches will have a very low carbon footprint, and these will easily be reduced further by swapping to a green energy tariff or taking other simple steps." The Energy Footprint Tool for 2022 data will close on 31 December and re-open for the input of 2023 data in Spring 2024. You can find out more at <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/about-us/our-campaigns/environment/>

Blood Bikes Wales

Blood Bikes Wales will be the recipient of the 2024 Diocesan Offering. The charity provides a

completely free courier service for the NHS in Wales, relying solely on volunteers and donations. Volunteers transport blood, drugs, human tissue, mothers' milk and other medical requirements between hospitals, blood transfusion banks and other medical facilities to assist the NHS. There are two Blood Bikes Wales groups which cover the St Asaph

Diocese: Wrexham Group, which serves northeast Wales, and Powys Group, which serves mid Wales. This service enables the NHS to save money that would otherwise be spent on courier services and to use those savings for the benefit of its patients. More information can be found at <https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/diocesan-conference/diocesan-offering/>





As we enter the seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, some churches will be planning their Plygain, an ancient Welsh carol service. The stronghold of the tradition is the old county of Montgomeryshire (north Powys), where a network of services thrives. The [Revd Linda Mary Edwards](#) grew up in South Wales and knew nothing of the tradition until she moved to Pennant Melangell to be the Priest Guardian of the Shrine Church in 2003. Here she describes her experience of attending a Plygain.

After a shortened form of Evening Prayer, there is the announcement: 'The Plygain is open.' There follows a silence (rather like a Quaker meeting), as we wait for the first party to come forward. No one decides beforehand: it is what I like to call a movement of the Spirit, and one trusts the flow that ensues, as party after party come forward to make their contribution. The spontaneity of this is part of the appeal for me.

When each party has sung, this is referred to as the end of the first round. There follows a congregational carol which everyone joins in and then the second round begins. The parties come up in the order which was established the first time round, and sing a different carol. One of the most moving things about a Plygain for me is the amazing theology contained in the words of each carol. There are many Old Testament references going back as far as the Garden of Eden and the fall of humanity, and on through the prophets, the birth and the passion of Christ. They are somehow able to convey a sense of the immensity of our God coming to us as a vulnerable baby held in the lap of a human mother. They never fail to bring tears to my

eyes. I attended the Plygain at Llanrwst earlier this year and happened to be sitting next to a man who was similarly moved and told me he always was when hearing the words of these amazing carols.

The other important aspect of the Plygain is that it is most definitely not a performance to be evaluated, but an act of worship by ordinary people who are making their offerings to God.

At the end, by tradition, all the men of all the parties come to the front and sing *Carol y Swper*, *The Supper Carol*. The words again rehearse the story of our salvation ending up with an invitation to join in the feast that is waiting for everyone. The fellowship is warm, with a real sense of community and togetherness.

If you have never had the pleasure of attending a Plygain, I cannot recommend it highly enough. The music will probably do it, but if you want to get the most out of it, and you are not Welsh-speaking, I recommend having a look at translations of some of the most popular carols sung in a Plygain and you will get an idea of what I mean.

You can find a full list of all the upcoming Plygain services at <https://www.plygain.org/home.htm>
The St Asaph diocesan Plygain is one of the largest gatherings and is always held right at the end of the season in St Asaph Cathedral, welcoming singers from across the diocese and beyond. This year it will be held on Friday 26 January 2024 at 7pm. All are most welcome: there really is the most wonderful treat in store for you!



A ninnau ar drothwy'r Adfent a thymor y Nadolig, bydd rhai eglwysi'n trefnu i gynnal eu Plygain, sef gwasanaeth carolau traddodiadol Cymreig. Yn yr hen Sir Drefaldwyn (gogledd Powys) y mae cadarnle'r traddodiad ac mae'n ffynnu mewn sawl man yno hyd heddiw. Yn y de y magwyd y **Parchg Linda Mary Edwards a wyddai hi ddim byd am y traddodiad tan iddi symud i **Bennant Melangell** i fod yn **Geidwad-offeiriad Eglwys y Greifa yn 2003**. Yma, mae'n disgrifio'r profiad o fod mewn Plygain.**

Yn dilyn fersiwn fer o'r Hwylol Weddi, clywir y cyhoeddiad: 'Y mae'r Plygain yn agored.' Wedyn, distawrwydd (yn debyg iawn i gyfarfod y Crynwyr) wrth i ni aros i'r parti cyntaf godi a mynd i wynebu'r gynulleidfa. Ni phenderfynnir ymlaen llaw pa barti yw'r un cyntaf i godi ar eu traed. I mi, mae hyn yn teimlo fel pe bai'r Ysbryd yn gweithredu yn ein plith. Rydym yn ymddiried yn yr Ysbryd wrth i barti ar ôl parti godi ar eu traed a chanu eu carolau.

Mae natur ddigymell hyn yn rhan o'r apêl ataf. Un 'rownd' yw pan mae pob parti wedi canu un garol. Yn dilyn y rownd gyntaf, cenir un garol gan y gynulleidfa i gyd. Wedi hynny, mae'r ail rownd yn dechrau, gyda'r parffion yn canu yn yr un drefn ag a wnaethant yn ystod y rownd gyntaf. Ni chaiff unrhyw garolau eu hailadrodd. Un o'r pethau mwyaf teimladwy am y Plygain i mi yw'r ddiwinyddiaeth ryfeddol sydd yng ngeiriau pob carol. Ynddynt, mae'r cyfeiriadau at yr Hen Destament yn mynd â ni mor bell yn ôl â Gardd Eden a chwymp dynolryw. Hefyd, eir â ni trwy'r proffwydi, genedigaeth Crist, a hyd at ei groeshoeliad a'i atgyfodiad.

Mewn ffordd arbennig, mae geiriau'r carolau'n cyfleu anferthedd ein Duw a ddaeth atom yn faban

bregus, yn gorwedd yng nglin mam ddynol. Nid yw'r geiriau byth yn methu â dod â dagrau i'm llygaid. Llynedd, mynychais Blygain Llanrwst, a digwydd bod i mi eistedd wrth ymyl dyn a gafodd ei gyffwrdd gan y carolau yn yr un modd â minnau. Dywedodd ef wrthyf ei fod yntau'n cael ei effeithio yn y fath fodd bob tro mae'n clywed y carolau rhyfeddol hyn.

Pwysig cofio nad 'perfformiad' sy'n cael ei 'werthuso' yw'r Blygain. Mae'n wasanaeth o addoli gan bobl gyffredin sy'n rhoi eu hoffrymau i Dduw.

Ar ddiwedd y gwasanaeth, yn ôl traddodiad, mae dynion y parffion i gyd yn sefyll o flaen y gynulleidfa ac yn canu *Carol y Swper*. Eto, mae'r garol honno'n adlewyrchu hanes ein hiachawdwriaeth, ac mae'r geiriau olaf yn ein gwahodd ni i gyd i gymryd rhan yn y wledd. Mae'r gymdeithas yn gynnes, gyda gwir ymdeimlad o gymuned ac undod.

Os nad ydych chi erioed wedi cael y pleser o fynychu gwasanaeth Plygain, rwy'n argymhell yn gryf eich bod yn ei wneud. Fe gewch lawer o bleser drwy wrando ar y gerddoriaeth, ond os ydych chi am gael y gorau ohono, gwrandewch yn astud ar y geiriau. Os oes gennych chi ffrindiau nad ydynt yn medru'r Gymraeg, gorau oll os cânt olwg ymlaen llaw ar gyfieithiadau o'r carolau mwyaf poblogaidd.



Gallwch ddod o hyd i restr lawn o'r holl wasanaethau Plygain sydd ar ddod rhwng diwedd Tachwedd a diwedd Ionawr ar <https://www.plygain.org/home.htm> Mae Plygain Esgobaeth Llanelwy yn un o'r cyfarfodydd mwyaf, ac fe'i cynhelir bob amser ar ddiwedd y tymor yng Nghadeirlan Llanelwy, gan groesawu cantorion o bob rhan o'r esgobaeth a thu hwnt. Eleni fe'i cynhelir ar ddydd Gwener 26 Ionawr, 2024, am 7pm. Croeso cynnes i bawb: p'un a ydych chi'n siarad Cymraeg ai peidio, bydd pleser heb ei ail yn eich aros!



Rural Round-Up

Looking After Our Well-Being

How are you looking after yourself at the moment? That was the question asked at the Autumn Clergy Synods and it inspired our Rural Affairs Advisor, the Revd Hermione Morris, to reflect on well-being and measures we can take to look after and maximise it.

One of the strands of well-being 'management' is that of having appropriate support in ministry and life. This, as we all know, can come from different avenues, people and organisations. I thought I would share a little about three rural organisations with which I connect, and from where I gather support and ideas to help in ministry and well-being.

Rural Ministries

This is 'a growing network of rural churches, pioneers and practitioners, which exists to inspire, empower, and support denominations, churches, pioneers, and those with just a glimmer of an idea who are called to live in rural communities across the UK' (from their website). They do this through listening, partnering with others, connecting, and resourcing people within the rural church and communities. One of the things they do which I love is to send out a reflection by email each Sunday morning. They are always thought-provoking, honest and stimulating, as well as sometimes being humorous and informative. You can sign up to receive them by visiting their website: www.ruralministries.org.uk

ACA – The Agricultural Chaplains Association

As a committee member of the ACA, I receive support from other committee members when we meet online and when we connect between meetings. These are an opportunity to share the joys and sorrows, blessings

and concerns of ministering within the agricultural sector. There's also a monthly email called *The Listening Ear*, another thought-provoking, humorous and informative means of support. If you're ministering within the agricultural sector you may be eligible to join the Association and receive this mailing. Do visit their website to find out more: www.agrichaplains.org.uk

Rural Mission Solutions

This is 'a Christian charity that specialises in serving village churches throughout the UK, providing encouragement and support to enable them to engage with their local communities to express God's love and share the good news' (from their website). I have found their webinars and expansive resource collection (available via their website), including many seasonal items, of great benefit. They often encourage me to be imaginative as to how their ideas may be put into action locally. They can be found at www.ruralmissionsolutions.org.uk

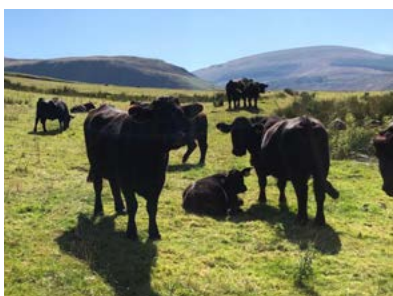
So, these are three national organisations supporting everyone in rural communities and churches. They are a major component in my well-being support 'package' – and possibly in yours too!





Harvest with the Young Farmers

Churches in the Mold Mission Area have been looking at ways in which they can serve and connect with their local farming community more effectively. The Revd Dan Morgan explains how a conversation with the local Young Farmers Club (YFC) on behalf of Northop Church led to the creation of a joint Harvest Festival.



It was during some fun evenings at the church, with Kahoot quizzes and hot chocolate, that we came up with and developed the idea of creating a joint Harvest service. We wanted to

make it relevant to the types of agriculture that are found locally, which are largely livestock based rather than arable or fruit/vegetable growing.

Throughout the summer months, teenagers in the YFC took over 100 photos of activities on their farms, including silage making, shearing and milking. These were curated into

a video montage with recorded prayers of thanksgiving spoken by the YFC members. This was then used in the service, creating a locally grounded thanksgiving for this year's fruitfulness. The use of technology was blended with simple, traditional harvest liturgy and hymns, with members of the farming community and church taking part.

The Young Farmers Club and Northop Church members with farming connections spread the word and invited people along. More than 120 farmers and family members came and celebrated together. Light, home-cooked refreshments followed, and the conversation continued well into the evening. It was great to see the farming community gathered in the church, worshipping together and using it as a place of community.

In order to find out how we, as a church, could continue to support the ongoing spiritual life and discipleship of the farming community, we asked the people that came to the Harvest Festival to complete a survey. This has generated some useful insights as to how we might move forward to build on the success of this event. The journey continues...





Christmas Card Competition

More than 1,400 children from church schools across the diocese have submitted an entry into the Bishop of St Asaph's Christmas Card Competition. Each year Bishop Gregory invites schools to take part in the competition and chooses a design to be made into a Christmas card which he sends to friends and family around the world. This year, there will be three additional images selected as:

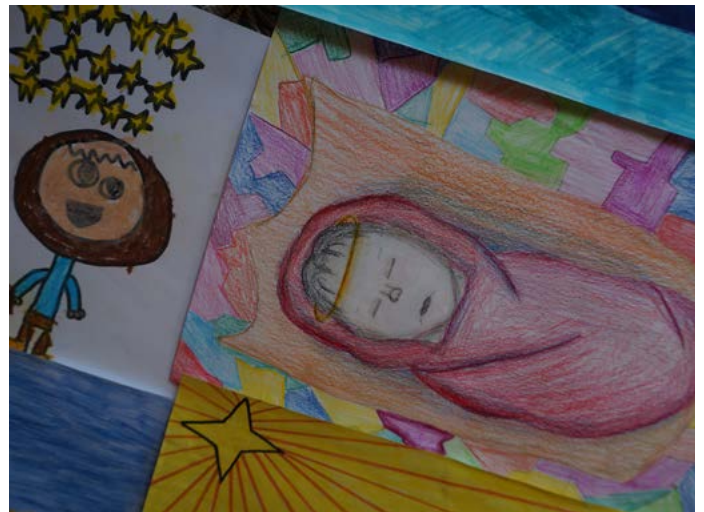
- the cover of this magazine
- the cover image for a card for St Asaph Cathedral
- the cover image for a card which churches can send out to their local community.

The theme this year is Jesus is Born, and schools were encouraged to read Luke's account of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:1–12) and consider:

- How does the story of Mary's journey to Bethlehem and Jesus' birth make you feel?
- How Mary might have been feeling as she prepared to travel to Bethlehem.
- What difference did it make that there was no room available for Mary to have her baby?
- How did Mary care for Jesus when he was born?
- What is important about this part of the story?

Congratulations to Edie Harding, age 8, from All Saints School, Gresford who designed the cover of this magazine. The other winners will be announced by Bishop Gregory and details will be available at <https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/news/>

Here is a selection of the images submitted for the competition:



Scarecrow Wedding

The nursery class at Madras Voluntary Aided School in Penley received a mysterious delivery to their classroom in September. As their teacher, Alison Jarvis, explains, the parcel led to a journey learning about love and marriage.

When the children opened the parcel, they found two sticks, some straw, a pair of blue dungarees, a shirt and a hat! What could it mean? The mystery was solved when the children read a letter inside, from a very special scarecrow, Harry O'Hay the scarecrow from the book, *Scarecrow's Wedding*. Using the contents of the parcel, they made Harry O'Hay, and decided that he needed a bride, Betty O'Barley. One morning Betty appeared in the classroom too.

The children thought it would be a wonderful idea to hold a wedding for Harry and Betty. So, on 5 October at St Mary Magdalene's Church in



Penley, the Revd Michael Winwood, married Harry and Betty. Reverend Michael told the children that Harry and Betty would make promises to care and love each other, just as God promises to care and love us. He also told us God made a promise by sending a rainbow.

The children all looked so smart in their wedding outfits and enjoyed a very special service in church and a wonderful reception back at school.



Puppets in Hanmer



The children of St Chad's Voluntary Aided School in Hanmer enjoyed a fun session watching a puppet show about consequences, writes the headteacher, Nicola Locker.

It was part of Collective Worship, contained in a Mothers' Union Know Your Church workshop, and was led by the Revd Michael Winwood. The session included an action story about the good and bad consequences of Croissant-the-Dog!

Community Cohesion in Brymbo

The children of St Mary's Voluntary Aided School in Brymbo have been working to develop local community cohesion, writes the Diocesan Schools' Officer, Jennie Downes. The school's values echo the community belief that everyone should be supported to flourish within a strong and connected network. The children have liaised with their Acting Headteacher, Andrew Williams, and local clergy, the Revd Will Marshall and the Revd Emma Dale, who have supported them in developing the new role of Church Councillor within the school. Six children lead

the Church Council. They are now thinking about the school's ethos and creating an action plan which focuses on developing the distinctiveness of their school as a church school.

The children regularly lead Collective Worship, covering themes such as friendship and gratitude. These themes are carried into the community as the children enjoy building intergenerational friendships based on respect and compassion. Activities such as Forest School, outdoor worship and visiting the elderly within the

community are purposefully bringing people together, promoting greater understanding and helping to rebuild a happy and cohesive community.





Age is no Limit



A fearless 80-year-old member of St Mary's Church, Ruabon, in the Offa Mission Area celebrated her milestone birthday at 100 miles per hour. Wendy Hughes (left) rode the Velocity Zip Wire in Penrhyn Quarry, Bethesda, raising money for a local hospice-in-patient unit at Nightingale House in Wrexham. It is the second time that Wendy

has taken a Zip Wire Challenge having previously raised £1,000 for Wales Air Ambulance to mark her 75th birthday. So far, Wendy has raised £600 but will keep going to raise as much as she can. You can sponsor Wendy on her Gofundme page: '80th Birthday Zip Wire for Nightingale House'.

Knit and Knatter

Members of the St Mary's and St Peter's Knit and Natter Group, in Bagillt, in Estuary and Mountain Mission Area have been busy making baby clothes and blankets.

Their handiwork supports babies in Ysbyty Glan Clwyd Neonatal Unit. The group meets every Tuesday from 1.30pm to 3.30pm in the

Church, and new members are always welcome. You can knit, crochet, sew or just come and have a cuppa and chat! The group meets at the same time as the Well-Fed hub, making it a good opportunity to order ready-meals or slow-cooker bags of food for collection the following week.



Celebrating its Re-ordering

On Sunday 22 October, St Bartholomew's Church, Sealand, in Borderlands Mission Area held a service of thanksgiving for the reordering of the church, writes Jan

Smith. The service was led by the Bishop of St Asaph and was attended by members of the mission area and wider community. It was the culmination of our vision to make this beautiful 156-year-old building suitable for modern needs. Our small congregation began planning a millennium project in 2000, initially just installing a much-needed toilet! Gradually, this developed into a larger vision of a new community space,

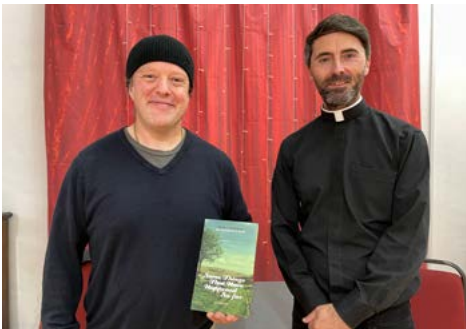
including lighting, heating, a kitchen and a café. The aim was still to be a worshipping Christian community, but in a space flexible enough to welcome people for food, warmth and support. In 2018, the Welsh Government's Peoples and Places fund awarded us a grant of just under £120,000, which was confirmation of our plans and an answer to prayer! The project began in October 2019 and, despite the pandemic, was completed in a year. Our big vision was at last realised, and the building is now used to help the whole community.





Poetry from our Church Poets

Poetry of the Psalms



An award-winning poet and member of St Collen's Church in Llangollen in the Valle Crucis Mission Area has published his third collection of poetry. Gareth Culshaw launched *Some Things That Have Happened so Far* at a poetry reading in St Collen's Community Hall in the summer. Gareth, who was winner of the Backlash Best Book Award for Poetry, has turned his attention to the Book of Psalms and is being inspired to write a poem based on all 150 Psalms. Here you can read his poem based on Psalm 23:

Psalm 23

I follow you, O Lord! You're the light
shuffled by the clouds. I wait
for the hills to rise each morning.
I know you're here with your staff
ready to point me on a road
too long for my heart to know alone.
I keep track on your light as you
show me a way that filters through my body.
I take fear and let it drown with rain,
or harden in frost. You've guided
my earth, straightened out the curve
that comes with this planet.
Lead me, O Lord, find a path that sits
inside me like a morning yet to birth
light. I'll follow you, until the horizon
palms me away as a breeze with birdsong.

© Gareth Culshaw

If you would like to submit a poem for possible inclusion in *Teulu Asaph*, please email it to the Editor: karenmaurice@cinw.org.uk

We also had another poetry submission for *Teulu Asaph* from Maura Kelly.

The Broken Soul

They thought that I was down and out
They thought that I was done
The more they kept me on the ground
The more I looked towards that sun

And as those rays of light shone down
To warm my aging face
I found my shoulders rise once more
As I stood in humble grace

No tears, no regrets, no shattered life
Will destroy my battered soul
Instead I'll fight and pursue each dream
As I move towards my goal

The ridicule, the words of harm
The insults and the pain
Endured by a man whose defiant spirit
Fights back to erase his shame

When a man is lost and feels all alone
He must look within himself
And rid his thoughts of any doubt
That his life is blessed with wealth

No gold, no silver to weigh him down
Only pennies small and few
But in his heart he carries the belief
That his life can be renewed

Blows and strikes may knock you over
In a life that's tough and hard
But a winner will find inside his mind
The strength to rebuild his guard

So look towards that sun my lad
When your battles near their end
And remember this as you rise again
That a broken soul can mend

© Maura Kelly

Caffi Mary Jones



Dydd Mercher-Sul
Wed - Sun
10am - 4pm

www.maryjones.org.uk



Set on the edge of Llyn Tegid, Caffi Mary Jones is open Wednesday to Sunday from 10am–4pm and is only one mile from the centre of Bala.

The cosy cafe offers a selection of hot drinks, tasty homemade cakes and light lunches from local suppliers, all served with an incredible view of Llyn Tegid.

Caffi Mary Jones is dog friendly. There is ample free parking and a children's play area. A warm welcome awaits all.

Caffi Mary Jones is also available to prebooked groups and can be flexible to suit your requirements. Contact us on 01678 521877 for more information.

Follow us on social media to keep up to date with all special events including school holidays, Christmas festivities and plans for 2024!

Byd Mary Jones World, Llanycil, Bala LL23 7YF