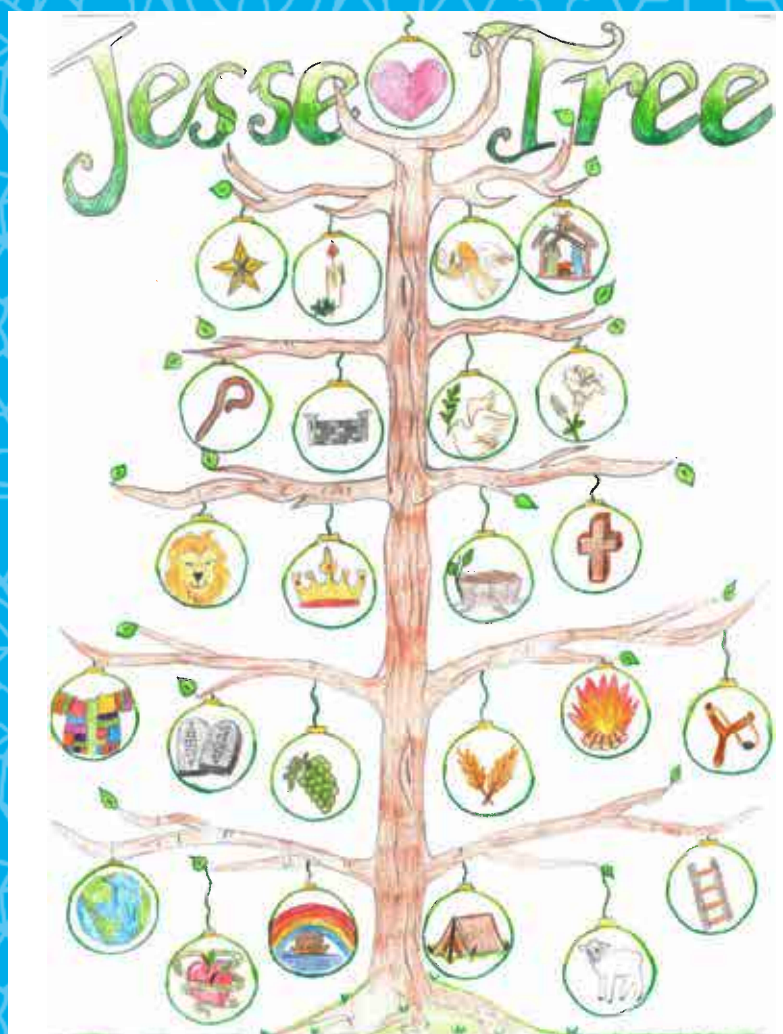


TEULU ASAPH

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

CONNECTING OUR DIOCESAN FAMILY

RHAGFYR-CHWEFROR 2025 | DECEMBER-FEBRUARY 2025



Dod â Gobaith
Iesu, Gobaith y Byd

Bringing Hope
Jesus, Hope of the World

AM DDIM | FREE



From the Editor

In this edition of our diocesan magazine, we're Bringing Hope! That's the new focus of the diocese, as we move from Growing Faith to Bringing Hope. This is, of course, our three-fold diocesan motto: Grow Faith, Bring Hope, Demonstrate Love.

Bringing Hope is a pertinent theme as we enter Advent and look ahead to Christmas, Epiphany and 2025. There are plenty of examples in the magazine: An old church transformed into a centre for health and well-being; the start of Wales' only Parish Nurse Service; sector-specific chaplaincy work in settings across the diocese and beyond, and the success of our churches at a prestigious award ceremony. There's plenty to celebrate and to inspire you.

The next edition of *Teulu Asaph* will be out during Lent and will look ahead to Easter. If you have plans to bring hope, please share them. I look forward to receiving your news, stories, photographs and suggestions for the next edition. In the meantime, every blessing to you for the forthcoming season of celebration and hope.



Karen

Karen Maurice, Editor

karenmaurice@cinw.org.uk
07918 133420

Diocesan Office, High Street,
St Asaph, LL17 0RD



Page 5



Page 8



Page 13

Contents

- 3 Gair gan yr Esgob / Bishop's Word
- 4 New Life for Historic Church
- 5 Wales' Only Parish Nurse
- 6 Award-winning Churches
- 7 Newyddion / News
- 8 Bringing Hope as Pastoral Chaplains
- 10 Rural Round-Up
- 10 Going Green
- 11 Spiritual Direction to Connect with God
- 12 Ysgolion / Schools
- 14 Eich Newyddion Chi / Your News
- 15 Travelling Evensong – Have you Discovered it?
- 16 Praying with Saints Through the Ages

Thank you to Hayla and Sienna, from St Joseph's School in Wrexham, and Mirain from Ysgol Tremeirchion, for their images of a Jesse Tree. All were entries into Bishop Gregory's Christmas Card Competition. More details on page 12.





Gair gan yr Esgob / Bishop's Word

Dod â Gobaith

Dyma adnod sydd bob amser yn fy nghyffwrdd i'r byw: "A'r goleuni sydd yn llewyrchu yn y tywyllwch; a'r tywyllwch nid oedd yn ei amgyffred." (Ioan 1.5) Yn aml, caiff tywyllwch ei gysylltu â chyfnod o ofn, pan fydd drygioni'n haerllug, a phobl ar eu mwyafr bregus. Efallai nad yw'n syndod bod pobl yn dewis dathlu Calan Gaeaf wrth i'r Hydref ddyfnhau. Fodd bynnag, mae newyddion da Duw yng Nghrist yn cyhoeddi bod Gair y Bywyd wedi gorchfygu'r tywyllwch, ac na all y tywyllwch fyth amgyffred, heb sôn am drechu, y datguddiad o gariad Duw a gafwyd pan anwyd y Baban ym Methlehem. Dyma'r neges Gristnogol – y Gobaith y bydd Duw yn gorchfygu, ac na all Duw fyth gael ei gaethiwo gan drais, ofn na thywyllwch, fel bod ei Gariad a'i ofal yn cael eu dinistrio.

Rydym ni'n cael ein galw i fod yn bobl y Gobaith, ac ar ddiwedd y flwyddyn pryd y buom yn canolbwyntio ar 'Tyfu Ffydd', rydym yn symud tuag at flwyddyn 'Dod â Gobaith' yn 2025. Mae adnod yn y Llythyr at y Colosiaid sydd hefyd bob amser yn denu fy sylw: "Bydded i air Crist breswyllo ynoch yn ei gyfoeth. Dysgwch a rhybuddiwch eich gilydd gyda phob doethineb. Â chalonnau diolchgar canwch i Dduw salmau ac emynau a chaniadau ysbrydol." (Colosiaid 3.16)

Dylai'r weledigaeth hon o Eglwys yn cael ei chalonogi gan addewidion Duw, gan fyw ei bywyd fel cân o fawl, roi hyder i ni yn ein bywydau Cristnogol – fel unigolion ac fel Eglwys, a gweddiwn y byddwn ni, yn 2025, yn gariad i bawb y bydd amynt ei angen.

Bringing Hope

I am always deeply moved by the Scripture: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it." (John 1.5) Darkness is often associated with a time of fear, when wickedness is emboldened, and people are at their most vulnerable. It is perhaps not surprising that folk choose to celebrate Halloween as Autumn deepens. However, the good news of God in Christ is that the Word of Life has overcome the darkness, and that the darkness can never grasp, let alone extinguish, the revelation of God's love in the birth of the Child of Bethlehem. This is the Christian message of Hope – that God will conquer, that God cannot ever be so besieged by violence, fear or darkness, that his Love and his care are destroyed.

We are called to be people of Hope, and as the year closes, we transition from a year when the focus has been on 'Growing Faith' towards 'Bringing Hope' in 2025. The Letter to the Colossians uses a phrase which also always attracts my attention: "Let the message of Christ dwell in you richly – teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your heart." (Colossians 3.16)

This vision of a Church taking heart in God's promises, and living life as a song of praise, should embolden us in our Christian lives – as individuals and as Church, and let us pray that in 2025 we will be love to all those who need it.



New Life for Historic Church

An historic church in Holywell, largely closed for more than 15 years, has been transformed into a health and well-being centre for the local community. St James' Church, which is part of the Holywell Mission Hub and on the site of St Winefride's Holy Well in the town, has undergone an extensive refurbishment. *Teulu Asaph* went along to see the results.

There's been a church on the site of St James' since the seventh century when it was founded by St Beuno, and the holy well of St Winefride, which gives Holywell its name, has been a place of pilgrimage since at least 1115. St James' ceased to be a regular place of worship for the town when the new church of St Peter's was opened in 2007. Since then, St James' was used only for occasional funerals and civic services, and was falling into further disrepair. After major fundraising and the successful acquisition of substantial grants, St James' now offers a café, a central space for major events and services, meeting and consulting rooms, and a Parish Nursing Service. Well-Being @ St James', as it is now known, was re-dedicated by the Bishop of St Asaph in October.

The vision for this project lies in the work the churches have been doing in the community and seeks to directly meet local needs, says the Vicar of Holywell, Father Dominic Cawdell OGS. "The Holywell and Greenfield Churches have been at the heart of the town and our work increased greatly through the pandemic and the following cost-of-living crisis. We provide food, support and access to services through The Table, a weekly Eucharist service, lunch and social supermarket. This

work revealed the levels of practical, emotional and spiritual need in parts of our town and many people look to the church for support. Well-being @ St James' is a significant extension of this work and a way to bring new life to this ancient building, and to



bless all in our community who need healing, wholeness, and above all, hope."

There are five key aspects to Well-Being @ St James':

Well-Bean Coffee Shop – this offers refreshments and a safe space for all. It will offer employment opportunities to those with learning difficulties in collaboration with local partners. Volunteers are being sought to assist with the running of the café, says Fr Dominic.

Well-Being Rooms – one of these is dedicated to the work of the Parish Nursing Service, while the other is hosting various support groups.

Centre Space and Sanctuary – this will host fundraising concerts and recitals as well as major services.

St Dorcas' Chapel – this is a small chapel for individual meditation, reflection and prayer. In addition, it will host a weekly healing service at 10am on a Thursday morning.

Parish Nursing – see page 5.

Looking Ahead

Next year, Well-Being @ St James' will be creating a Physik Garden in the church grounds. This is a garden specifically planted with plants and herbs used in traditional medicine. They were often attached to medical schools, monasteries or apothecaries and have their roots in ancient herbal medicine, dating back to the Medieval and Renaissance times.





Wales' Only Parish Nurse



At the heart of Well-Being @ St James' is the Parish Nursing Service. Margaret Mort is currently the only Parish Nurse in Wales but has 50 colleagues in parishes across England and Scotland. Teulu Asaph met with Margaret to find out more about her work.

Margaret is a registered nurse and is bound by the Nursing Code of Conduct. Until her retirement earlier this year, she was a nurse in the Minor Injuries Unit at Holywell Hospital. She is bringing her qualifications, experience and training, as well as her Christian faith, to her work at St James'. "I'll be able to spend time with people," said Margaret, "in a way that often isn't possible in the NHS. I can offer a listening ear and if people wish, an opportunity to pray together. It will be a truly holistic service and I'm looking forward to treating everyone, whether they are people of faith or not, with love, patience and time."

Margaret will be based at Well-Being @ St James' on a Wednesday and Thursday morning. Wednesdays is by appointment only and she will be taking referrals from local GPs and other organisations. Recent statistics show that 10% of the population visit their GP 60 times or more every year. Margaret is hoping that she can relieve some of that pressure on doctors by offering three hour-long sessions for people to talk.

On Thursdays, there will be a healing service in St Dorcas' Chapel followed by a drop-in for people to speak to Margaret. As well as listening and prayer, Margaret will be able to do health screenings, take blood pressure readings, assess weight and BMI and advocate for people to help them access the right services.

"We're starting slowly and being led by the Holy Spirit to see what the community needs most," said Margaret. "Many of the parish nurses I've spoken to in other parts of the country say the service develops in ways they weren't anticipating. I'm open to change and to see what's needed. We've already identified that a bereavement café will be beneficial to people. This will be an informal meeting in the Well-Bean Café but people can talk to me 1-2-1 if they wish."

"I also offer hand massage which is good for people living on their own. This helps people to open up, and there's lots of research showing that lack of physical contact can contribute to depression."

Margaret may be the only Parish Nurse in Wales but she would encourage other churches to consider this for their own communities.

Find out more

Why not visit Well-Being @ St James' to find out for yourselves how the church has been transformed. For details, visit <https://holwellchurches.co.uk/wellbeing> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/stjamesholwell>

If you would like to volunteer at Well-Bean Café, please email Fr Dominic Cawdell OGS:

DominicCawdell@churchinwales.org.uk



Parish Nursing Ministries UK

Our Parish Nurse

WHAT IS A PARISH NURSE?
A Parish Nurse is a registered nurse who works for the Church. They are there to serve the local community regardless of faith, no faith, gender or ethnicity and their role is to offer holistic health care.

MEET OUR PARISH NURSE
My name is Margaret. I qualified in 1979, I am a registered nurse and in recent years I have worked in Holywell Hospital in the Minor Injuries Unit.

As a Registered Nurse I am bound by the Nursing code of conduct, I am accountable for my actions and any consultations will be confidential unless there are any Safeguarding needs.

WHEN OUR NURSE IS AVAILABLE

I will be available for 12 hours a week. On a Monday and Tuesday I will alternate between the Table and the Holway Community centre. On a Wednesday and Thursday I will be at Well-Being @ St James, Wednesdays will be appointments but on a Thursday it will be a drop in service.

SERVICES AVAILABLE

Health Screening (B/P, Weight, BMI etc.)
Healthy living advice
Hand Massage
A listening ear
Spiritual Support
Mental Health support
Home visits to support families
Post bereavement visits
Signposting to other services depending on individual needs
Advocacy
Support groups for a variety of issues

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO COME ALONG ON A THURSDAY OR EMAIL TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT ON A WEDNESDAY

EMAIL ADDRESS: holwellnurse@gmail.com
PHONE NUMBER: 073950430090



Award-winning Churches



Two churches from Denbigh Mission Area were winners in the National Church Awards 2024, often described as the BAFTAS for churches. The award ceremony was held in the Chapterhouse of Lincoln Cathedral in October and the Mission Area Leader of Denbigh, the Revd Rebecca Sparey-Taylor was among the guests. She writes:

One of the winning churches, St Mary and St Nefydd in Llanefydd was earmarked for closure less than five years ago, but a small group from the village worked exceptionally hard to turn the church around. They formed a Friends group, Cyfellion Eglwys Llanefydd, which has not just taken care of the grade 1 listed building ensuring necessary maintenance work was completed, but worked hard to open the once-locked building to visitors and pilgrims to this special site.



Photos courtesy of Push Creativity & National Churches Trust

The group has raised the profile of the church within the village by hosting special one-off events, such as a concert by renowned harpist Catrin Finch, a flower festival celebrating women, and hosting the village Flower and Produce Show and Christmas Tree festival. It has also partnered with other organisations, including the North Wales Pilgrim's Way, which has been re-routed to include the church.

It is no surprise therefore that Llanefydd won the Open for Visitors Award for Wales 2024. A great tribute to the enthusiasm and drive of the Friends group. Kate Tindle and Roberta Owain-Ashbrook received the award.

Corpus Christi Church in Tremeirchion attracts many visitors walking from St Beuno's Jesuit Centre where they are on retreat, and from along the North Wales Pilgrim's Way. When I suggested to the congregation that they might like to consider starting Forest Church, I was imagining monthly services held outside in the churchyard under the ancient Yew trees. The Church, however, had many more ideas. Before the first service had even taken place, they had partnered with the council to replace broken stiles and gates along the local footpaths. Each of these is now emblazoned with a small wooden plaque designed by the children of Ysgol Tremeirchion with their Forest Church logo designs.

Forest Church services take place monthly with both activities for children, and more reflective activities for adults, helping each of us to experience God through nature. We have held pet services and learnt about Noah's Ark. At Easter, the local farmer brought along newborn lambs and chicks.

The judging panel said of Corpus Christi: "It made me think of that gorgeous scene in The Vicar of Dibley where all the animals come into the church, and it is just beautiful chaos." There is so much always going on in the church that is probably a very good description and a tribute to the church for winning the Volunteer and Community Engagement Award 2024. The award was received by Martin and Wendy Baxter.

It is lovely that our two churches have been recognised in this way. So often the loyal dedication and work of all of our volunteers can appear to go unnoticed. But without them, our churches would cease to exist. A church works best where the priest can work in partnership with all the members of the church, sharing Jesus into their communities and drawing people to him. The churches across our Mission Area continue to quietly do this day by day and I am incredibly proud that Corpus Christi and Ss Mary and Nefydd have been acknowledged.





Growth Fund Award Success

Two major initiatives to boost growth in churches across the diocese have secured more than £5.6m of funding from the Church in Wales' Growth Fund.

Six more Mission Hub Churches will be created in key locations across the diocese. Four are already underway in Holywell, Mold, Welshpool and Penrhyn Bay. Over the next three years, hubs will be created in two phases. The next hubs will be in St Giles' in Wrexham, All Saints in Newtown and Christ Church in Prestatyn (pictured, right).

Mission Hub Churches have a structure that harnesses ministry and outreach skills. Each is led by an experienced Mission Hub Priest, supported by an associate priest or a curate and a lay minister who focus on outreach. Each hub is created to be a centre of excellence for running and growing a church, with people encouraged to come into their church for a range of worship and other activities.

The second initiative to receive funding – Rural Pioneer Missioners – is focused specifically on rural areas,

especially within the Archdeaconry of Montgomery. The project centres on three Pioneer Missioners, each working within a distinct rural area. Each Pioneer Missioner will support all churches (and communities) in the Mission Area and build capacity for mission and growth in strategic



Discernment on Same-Sex Unions

A period of discernment will open in 2025 to consider whether to extend permission allowing clergy to bless the marriage or civil partnership of same-sex couples. The five-year period for the Experimental Rite will come to an end in September 2026, and the bishops of the Church in Wales want to invite people to consider the next steps. Conversations will consider whether to extend this permission or let it lapse, or to take a further step and provide for clergy to solemnize the marriage of same-sex couples. Details of how this will be carried out in the Diocese of St Asaph will follow in the spring.

Journey through Advent

The bishops of the Church in Wales are inviting people to join them as they explore the true meaning of Christmas in a new course for Advent. *O Come Let Us Adore Him* is a six-week course through the season of Advent to Christmas and onto Epiphany. The course consists of Bible readings, reflections, prayers and discussion questions with each session led by one of the bishops and people from their diocese. Among the themes explored are climate change, conflict, pilgrimage, wild places and encounters with

others. The course begins with an introduction from the Archbishop of Wales, and the first session, for Advent 1, is led by Bishop Gregory and the Diocese of St Asaph. The course can be completed in study groups, in church communities or at home. All the materials are fully bilingual and can be downloaded from the Church in Wales website at <https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/evangelism/o-come-let-us-adore-him-advent-course-2024/>





Bringing Hope as Pastoral Chaplains

Chaplaincy can take many forms and chaplains can work or volunteer to bring hope in many places, industries and organisations. We might be familiar with the idea of a hospital chaplain or a prison chaplain, but what about an airport chaplain or foodbank chaplain? There are nine pastoral chaplains licensed by the Bishop of St Asaph to minister in various settings. They take a lead, along with Mission Area clergy, for the pastoral work in a Mission Area but they can also undertake sector specific chaplaincy. Debbie Sawyer, pastoral chaplain in Dyffryn Clwyd Mission Area is also a chaplain at Manchester Airport.

Airport Chaplaincy

Travel post-Covid was a tiresome affair, but worth it to spend five days with my son in Dubai, writes **Debbie**. Checking in at Manchester Airport, our PCR tests proved unacceptable. We tested again, waited, walking back and forth until declared fit to go. During the process, I had seen *him* walking round and round the station mezzanine. Hooded, scruffy, a dark face shuttered against the outside world. On his back, a small bundle of belongings.

He haunted me during our happy time in that high rise, wealthy Middle Eastern city, until one afternoon I suddenly thought 'airport chaplain'! I quickly discovered that The Chaplaincy at Manchester Airport had a substantial multi-faith team. Once I got home, I contacted the lead chaplain, the Revd George Lane, and arranged a week of placement as part of my pastoral chaplaincy training at St Padarn's.

My placement was an exciting, happy week in May 2022. Each day I met different members of the Chaplaincy. We walked or bussed to every extremity of the airport, with a real highlight being a full demonstration of the wondrous 'striker' fire engines!

More poignantly, we visited the detention centre where deportees awaited travel to their homeland, for varying reasons, often to face arrest, imprisonment or even death. We chatted to a newly bereaved staff member, trying desperately to bring normality into her life following her husband's premature death at 52. A non-passenger needed to be 'moved on'. She spoke with a broad Italian accent fiercely protecting a trolley transporting her many carrier bags. In a sorry state, she needed hospitalisation. We made the necessary calls and bought her sandwiches and coffee with 10 sugars.

Since my working life was in the travel industry, I was in my element and St Padarn's granted a year's extension as my final placement. After this, Revd George suggested I apply for a permanent volunteer post. I had no hesitation in doing so!

There's no set pattern to our day-to-day work. After morning prayer, we make our daily rounds connecting with any one of the 25,000 airport employees. In case of tragedies or worries, they know where to find us, and many do. We visit the private jet terminal where not only the wealthy pass through, but also those needing privacy and protection. We work closely with Border Force, airport community police, and paramedics, whose jobs are often heartbreakingly tough. Six multi-faith prayer rooms need constant monitoring, the favourite nightspot of our homeless residents. Amid these daily tasks, are humanitarian referrals from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office or a Red Cross request for our aid with repatriations, often from distressing and tragic circumstances. We witness an increasing number of lives impacted by war, abuse and modern slavery.

The Chaplaincy leads memorial services for air disasters, events relevant to Manchester Airport, and Remembrance Day; a spectacular event held beneath Concorde, with brass bands, marching cadets and dignitaries.



Maria

Josh

Lucy

Jo

As a multi-faith team, we highlight religious festivals such as Easter, Ramadan, Christmas and Passover, offering airport staff sweet treats, or even a feast for Eid!

As airport chaplains extend across the globe, we come together annually at a UK or world conference. I attended in Frankfurt this year receiving my 'wings' as an IACAC (International Association of Civil Aviation Chaplains) member. I returned strengthened by the bonds we share through the diversity of our work. At its core lies our faith in God who has blessed us with the compassion and empathy needed for this role.

Health Care Chaplaincy

My name is **Maria Jurado Morante** and I was licensed as a pastoral chaplain in May 2024 after two years' training with St Padarn's. I am also a nurse and have been for 25 years. I would describe chaplaincy as the art of listening and staying presence for those in need.

I work in a Neurological Centre looking after young and middle-aged people with brain injuries. I already deliver pastoral care as part of my job, supporting my patients through my faith but also supporting the staff that sometimes get lost in understanding why life brings such suffering.

I am based in Wrexham Mission Area, working as part of its healing ministry team and leading healing services. In the summer, I volunteered at a church festival called Focus, taking care of young adults with special needs while we were worshipping.

My calling is growing and, although my time is limited by my job, I am exploring other ways to share and spread my passion for God, so other people find God in their lives.

Foodbank Chaplaincy

Josh Schoch was licensed as a pastoral chaplain in May 2024 and is a chaplain in Estuary and Mountain Mission Area. He writes:

Serving as a pastoral chaplain in Holywell has been very rewarding. It allows me to get to know the community personally and support a variety of projects. At the Foodbank, I see firsthand the struggles people are going through. One of the parts of the role that I find most rewarding is simply offering a hot drink and a friendly chat to people who come in. For some, it might be the only conversation they have that day. Just being there to listen can make a real difference. Those small moments of connection feel incredibly meaningful, especially in a community where so many people feel alone.

There are other chaplains across the diocese including:

Jo Bowles in the Aberconwy Mission Area has just been appointed as a chaplain to North Wales Police. This is a voluntary role, and she will be spending time supporting officers and staff in the Control Room in St Asaph.

Lucy Farrar in the Aled Mission Area, is a trainee Pastoral Chaplain and she is developing a ministry with her trained therapy dog, Ben the Beagle. They spent time with the welcomers at St Asaph Cathedral earlier this year.

If you're interested in exploring a vocation as a chaplain or other ministry, please contact the Vocations Officer, the Revd Jayne Coxall: jaynecoxall@cinw.org.uk or visit the Vocations and Ministry section of the diocesan website: <https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/vocations-and-ministry>

Reflecting on Harvest

During the Autumn, the Revd Hermione Morris, Diocesan Rural Life Advisor, had the joy and delight of celebrating and giving thanks for the Harvest with churches other than those in which she regularly ministers and serves in Tanat-Vyrnwy Mission Area (MA). Hermione writes:

I was invited to attend the Harvest Festival service in Northop Church, and witness Northop Young Farmers Club contributing to and taking part in the service once again. There were some fabulous video prayers as well as readings.

I was also invited to preach at All Saints Church in Penylan, in Offa MA. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate with them as the only fully rural church in the MA. There were beautiful decorations, a wonderful supper and probably the biggest pumpkin I've ever seen – a slice of which I took home. It's now in the



freezer awaiting some culinary creativity! We're already planning to celebrate Rural Mission Sunday together next June – an opportunity to acknowledge and value congregations in rural churches and communities, as we give thanks to God for all He is and chooses to do through us, His people.

Looking ahead to 2025, I'm hoping there will be further opportunities for me to work with rural MAs and churches in the diocese, supporting mission and ministry, as well as some exciting developments provincially.



Rural Mission and Ministry Course

Several people from the diocese have been on this course and found it beneficial. The dates for 2025 are 20–21 May or 24–25 September.

There is also a 'bite-sized rural mission course' online from January to March.

For more information and to book your place, visit <https://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/ruralministrycourse/>

Going Green

Churches in the Pool Mission Area are pushing ahead with plans to improve their eco church credentials.

St Tyssil in Llandyssil is attempting to improve on its silver award and attain gold. It will be only the third church in the diocese to achieve the highest award. Over the summer, the church held a green fair to encourage community participation in their efforts.

St Michael's Church in Forden is working towards its silver award and held a 'Build A Bug Hotel and Carbon Footprint' Service. Old and young joined together to create the bug hotel.





Spiritual Direction to Deepen your Relationship with God



A new Convenor of the Diocesan College of Spiritual Directors has been appointed by the Bishop of St Asaph. The Revd Jo Mackriell will be the first point of contact for anyone seeking spiritual direction and here she explains what it is and how it can help you on your own journey of faith.

Spiritual direction or spiritual accompaniment as it is sometimes called is for anyone who wants to deepen their relationship with God. It can be one of the tools we use along with worshipping together, reading our Bible and praying, and can provide a means by which we explore the true potential of our relationship to God.

Spiritual direction is one Christian accompanying another to discover more about their personal relationship with a God who wants to have a personal relationship with us. The director and directee can be either lay or ordained.

Our Christian life is not something that is isolated from the rest of life. Often experience of God might come through prayer, but this is not exclusively how we meet with God in our day-to-day lives. We might have a sense of God's presence anywhere, in a church, in the countryside, in the middle of a busy supermarket, on our own or when talking to a friend or colleague. Through spiritual direction we are encouraged to see that our relationship with God is organic, a relationship that grows and develops and leads us forward.

Your spiritual director might ask questions such as, "What is happening in your life?" or "What does moving forward look like or feel like?" God is the real spiritual director, but as accompaniers we are a listening ear, someone who helps others to hear what God is saying and encourages a deeper and more profound intimacy with our creator and sustainer.

The spiritual director is not there to problem solve or give the answers to difficult experiences. They will not tell you that you are wrong or expect you to follow their suggestions if you do not wish to. However, it is a safe and confidential space. All of our spiritual directors in the Church in Wales have undergone extensive training and have been commissioned to this particular ministry.

How spiritual direction works

A meeting with a spiritual director usually lasts about one hour and you would meet either in person or via Zoom or phone every eight to 12 weeks or more often if it is needed. The first few meetings will give you a sense of whether this relationship will work for you. People can stay with the same spiritual director for just a short time or many years.

If you would like to be put in touch with a spiritual director, please email me at jomackriell@cinw.org.uk. I will ask you a few questions about where you live and whether you would like in-person or virtual sessions. I will then send you the contact details of a spiritual director.

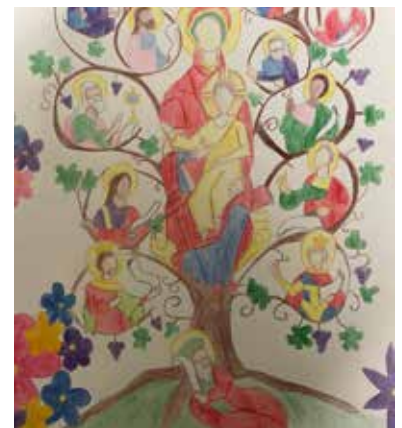
You can find out more at <https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/prayer/spiritual-direction>





Bishop's Christmas Card Competition

Pupils across our 49 Church in Wales Schools have submitted entries into Bishop Gregory's annual Christmas Card Competition. The theme is Jesus, Hope of the World, and schools have been learning about the Jesse Tree, which depicts the lineage of Jesus. One of the entries is the cover for this edition of *Teulu Asaph* and you can see a tiny selection of the others here. The winner will be announced on Thursday 12 December and that entry is being turned into a Christmas Card which the bishop sends to family and friends around the world. Thank you to everyone who submitted an entry.



Exceptional Estyn

Schools in The Bryniau Clwyd Federation have received an **Exceptional Estyn Inspection Report**. Ysgol Yr Esgob Church in Wales VA School federated with Ysgol Licswm Church in Wales VA School in 2020. Since then, the two small schools have gone from strength to strength, says the report, published after the inspection in May 2024. The leadership of the schools were marked out as having 'established a strong team ethos' and making 'effective use of the opportunities that a federation of school presents'. The acting headteacher Emma O'Neill said: "We are incredibly proud of the reports, recognising the exceptionally positive attitudes to learning that our children have, the warm relationships between our children and staff, amongst many other points. Ysgol Licswm and Ysgol Yr Esgob are both small, nurturing and inclusive schools whereby the wellbeing of our pupils is at the heart of everything we do."

Know Your Church

Every half term, students at St Chad's Primary School in Hanmer participate in a 'Know Your Church' workshop, reports the **headteacher, Nicola Locker**. The Mothers' Union organises activities related to our current school topic, which is 'Tell Us a Story' this term. The workshops focus on Bible stories. We start with a whole-school session and then divide into smaller classes. This half term, we explored the stories of Noah's Ark, Joseph and his dream coat, the Good Samaritan, and David and Goliath. We are thankful for this connection with our community.





Confirmation Service in Montgomery

What connects more than 120 children, a similar number of teddy bears, a headteacher, a bishop and a mayor? Dr Helen Hayes, the Mission Area Warden of Pool, can tell us!

They were all gathered in St Nicholas' Church in Montgomery on Wednesday 18 September to witness Sarah Brian, the headteacher of Montgomery Church in Wales School, being confirmed by the Bishop of St Asaph, Gregory Cameron.

In this special service, put together by the Revd Paulette Gower, Pool Mission Area Leader, children from the school presented their headteacher to Bishop Gregory to be confirmed. In addition, they acted as Bishop's chaplains, sang and signed worship songs, prayed for Miss Brian and joined with the ecumenical *Open the Book Team* to tell the story of Noah's Ark, one of Miss Brian's favourite Bible Stories. Bishop Gregory, accompanied by Bishop Bear, then visited Montgomery Church in Wales School to chat to the children.

Miss Brian said: "My confirmation service was such an important and special day for me, so it felt right that the whole school community were there. I thought the children did an amazing job with their roles as

chaplains, prayer readers and also in singing my favourite hymns. I was so incredibly proud of each and everyone of them.

"We were honoured to then welcome Bishop Gregory, Reverend Paulette and other members of the clergy and congregation back to school for a wonderful lunch. Bishop Gregory then went to each class, talking to the children and answering their many questions.

"The whole day was an incredible experience and one that I shall never forget."

One of the pupils, Lucy, aged 10, said: "It was a great experience to help the Bishop, and to see my headteacher being confirmed. She was very brave."

The Revd Paulette Gower added: "It was a real privilege for me to be involved both in preparing Sarah for her confirmation and being invited to put together such a unique service. It will be something that I will always remember as a special part of my ministry in Montgomery. Teddy Francis-John enjoyed it too of course!"



Nursery Visit to Church

As part of their 1960s topic, the Nursery at Ysgol Madras have been looking at the book *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*, writes Alison Jarvis. One day a large tiger appeared at school and stayed with the children for a couple of weeks. Then as quickly as he came, he disappeared. On Monday 21 October the children went over to St Mary Magdalene Church in Penley to take their Harvest gifts for the Foodbank. When they arrived, who should be sitting there in church, but the tiger! He had brought a large picnic basket with lots of yummy treats for the children. The tiger joined the children back at school for a picnic before he went off on his next adventure.





Church hosts outdoor Rock Concert

At the end of August, the Mold Mission Hub invited an organisation called 'The Extreme Tour' to come to Mold, reports the Revd Martin Batchelor, Hub Leader. For two days a group of ten people, based in the Midlands and consisting of musicians and artists from USA, Germany, Wales and England spent time with us, meeting people in and around Mold. This led to some interesting links and faith conversations, as well as some impromptu gigs in some of the clubs and pubs!

On the final night we held an outdoor rock concert outside St Mary's. Over four hours, seven Christian bands played a variety of music. Around 100 people of all ages but mainly in their teens and 20s came. The night ended with everyone singing *Amazing Grace*.

Since then, we have made connections with a whole group of people we would probably never have met, and we are also finding that people really appreciated that we did this for the community. The event was a little out of our comfort zone, but well worth it!



Poppy Waterfall

More than 1,400 poppies were knitted and crocheted by members of St Michael's Church in Forden in the Pool Mission Area to mark Remembrance. Over 150 people visited the poppy display in church over the remembrance weekend and twice the usual number of people attend the annual remembrance Sunday service.



School Choir for Harvest Festival

On Sunday 20 October, members of Ysgol Madras School Choir took part in the Harvest Festival at St Mary Magdalene Church in Penley, writes Alison Jarvis.

The children sang three songs, and a Year 6 pupil read the Gospel. This was followed by a presentation about Harvest and then a poem was read by Year 6.





Travelling Evensong – Have You Discovered It?



Every month, a dedicated choir from the Denbigh Mission Area travel to one of the Mission Area churches to lead a service of Evensong. It has been running for six years now and **Kath Mitchell-Dawson from St Dyfnog's Church, Llanrhaeadr-yng-Nghinmeirch, explains how it started and how it operates.**

Over several years, churches in the Denbigh Mission Area had held occasional services of evensong which were fairly well attended and greeted with some enthusiasm. More than once, the comment was heard, "Why can't we do this more often?"

In response, John Harris from St Michael's Church in Caerwys and I set up Travelling Evensong (TE) in November 2018 with a view to taking a service of sung evensong to each of the churches in the Mission Area.

The TE choir visited all 14 churches in the Mission Area before the pandemic caused the suspension of church services. We were able to resume in October 2022 in St Mary's Church in Denbigh, where we welcomed a congregation of over 90 people. We have continued to take a service of choral evensong, once a month, around the Mission Area.

The format

TE services include sung responses, simple chants for the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis, a simple chant for the psalm, hymns and a simple introit. The host church is invited to provide readers for the lessons and, if they wish, a cantor to lead the service, although the travelling group can provide one if the church is unable to do so.

The services normally take place on the fourth Sunday of the month, at 5pm. The choir arrives an hour before the service to practise, and very much welcomes a cup of tea afterwards!

The choir

We number eight at present (two sopranos, two altos, two tenor and two basses). I am the organist/accompanist

and John is choral director. Not all our choir members are able to read music, and most of us are over 70 but we make up for that with boundless enthusiasm!

We rehearse once a week for an hour, with an occasional extra practice on a Saturday for 'specials', such as the Christmas event, and for an hour before each service in the church where it is being held.

Forthcoming services and events

Services (dates and churches for 2025 to be confirmed):

Sunday 1 December, 5pm:

Advent Carol Service at St James Church, Nantglyn.
Hymns, carols and readings to begin the season of Advent

Sunday 26 January, 5pm:

Sung Evensong at Holy Trinity Church, Trefnant

Sunday 23 February, 5pm:

Sung Evensong at St Tynog's Church, Llandyrnog

Sunday 23 March, 5pm:

Sung Evensong at St Michael's Church, Caerwys

Words and Music: Travelling Evensong's Celebration of Christmas

Wednesday 18 December at 7pm: St Dyfnog's Church, Llanrhaeadr-yng-Nghinmeirch. This is not evensong, nor a service but something a bit different. It will include a few carols you may not have heard before, and Christmas-themed poetry and readings, some serious, some not so serious. The event will last about an hour, and light refreshments will be served afterwards. There is no charge, but a retiring collection will be taken to help with the expenses of the church and choir.

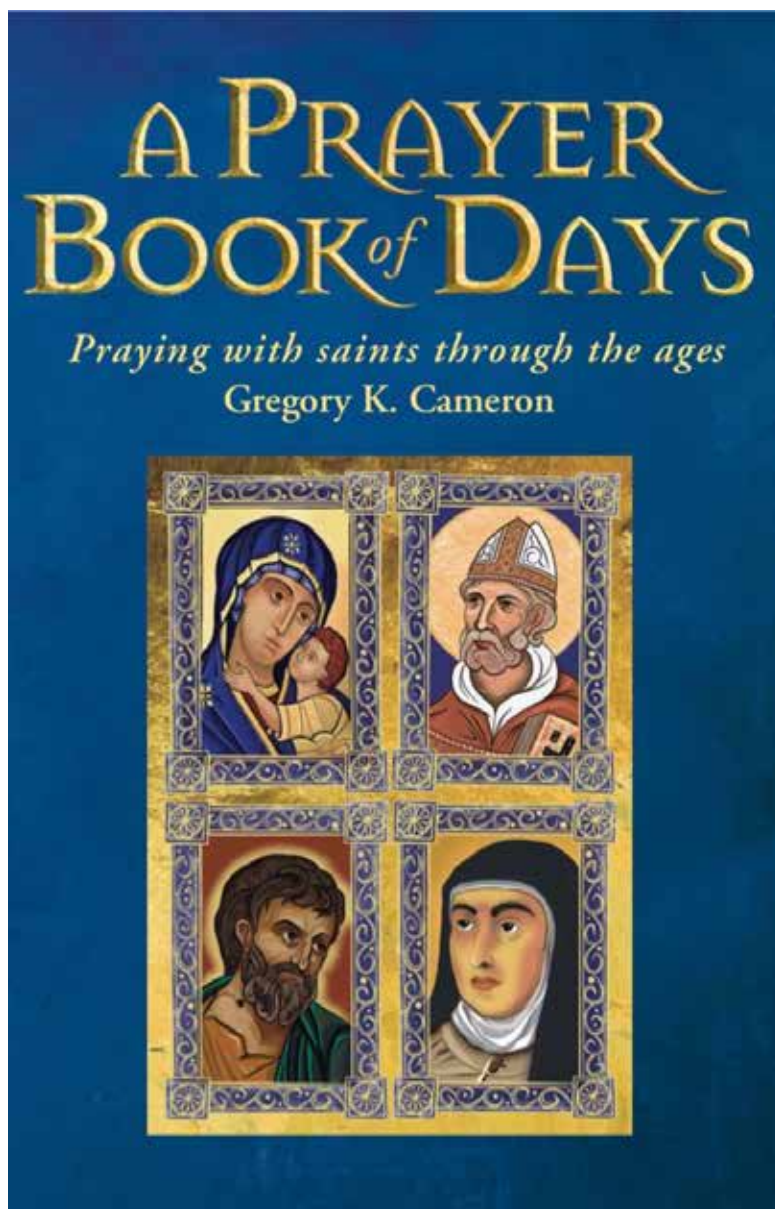


Want to get involved?

We would welcome additional singers. If you love evensong, and would like to be involved, come and join us! Contact **John Harris** on **07774 976827 / jghcymru@outlook.com** or **Kath Mitchell-Dawson** on **07711 675076 / KathMitchellDawson@gmail.com** or come to the next evensong service and talk to us there.



New Book from the Bishop of St Asaph



The Bishop of St Asaph has written a third book. *A Prayer Book of Days: Praying with saints through the ages* offers 31 daily prayers from the treasury of Christian spirituality through the centuries. It follows a similar pattern to the bishop's previous books *An Advent Book of Days* and *An Easter Book of Days* and includes prayers from some of the best-known figures in the Christian faith—St Augustine, Patrick, Julian of Norwich—as well as lesser-known figures.

Each daily section includes an original icon-style illustration by Bishop Gregory, a prayer, the story that lies behind it and a reflection on its significance in history and for faith today.

The book is published by Canterbury Press and can be ordered at:

<https://canterburypress.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781786225955/a-prayer-book-of-days>