

Rhagfyr 2024 December

ISSUE/ RHIFYN 70

BABELL ZION NEWYDD



“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given and the government shall be
up his shoulder.....

“Canys bachgen a aned i ni, mab a roddwyd i ni a bydd y llywodraeth ar ei
ysgwydd ef.....” Eseia 9:6

The Tuesday Singalongs

We have been out and about during November. We visited Towy Castle on the 5th and Plas y Dderwen on the 19th where in both places we always receive the warmest of welcomes. The songs range from well known hymns to those of the popular musicals, the old time music halls and film music. We allow Lisa at Plas y Dderwen free rein with the Sound of Music medley as she knows them all so well. What a star!

We'll be singing Carols on the 17th at the two residential homes together with the Aelwyd in Tregynnwyr. All are welcome to join us.



Singalong Tuesdays:

Rhagfyr/December 3rd at Babell Zion Newydd

Rhagfyr/December 17th: Carol singing at Towy Castle, the Aelwyd and Plas y Dderwen

January/ Ionawr 7fed: Babell Zion Newydd

21st : Babell Zion Newydd

The Sunday Club

While we are busy preparing for the Children's Christmas Service we are also following the stories of Isaac and Jacob. We welcomed two new members during the month in Harry and Alice and we hope they will enjoy their time with us. They have already been given parts for the Nativity Service.

Help for Ukraine

Donations to the Friendship Centre and Service Collections during November and December will be donated towards the Ukrainian Appeal. Mike Hnyda is a member of Nottage Chapel Porthcawl and is half Ukrainian. He has made several humanitarian trips to Ukraine during the conflict. The generosity of the members at Nottage has helped him to purchase an ambulance and a 4x4 pick up for the medical teams in Ukraine. The work continues. We are pleased to be able to help and all donations will be presented to Rev Mike Shephard during our United service on the 29th of December.

Christmas Fayre, Coffee and Mince Pie

A huge thank you to you all for another successful Coffee Morning and Christmas Fayre on the 29th of November which raised £688.60. A big thank you to Carole for co-ordinating the arrangements and for everyone's hard work as ever. Unwaith eto roedd hi'n dda i weld y gymdeithas yn dod at ei gilydd ac i deimlo'r awyrgylch hyfryd. Diolch i bawb a gefnogodd.

A series on the Book of Psalms Part 1 by Pat Morgan

An Introduction

If you hear the Book of Psalms mentioned how does it make you feel? Do you feel pleased because you like the lovely language; you like the way they praise the Lord; you like the way they do “the heavy lifting”, giving you a voice and asking for mercy and forgiveness when you can’t find the words.

The word ‘Psalm’ means ‘song’ from the Hebrew word “Mizmor”. The Psalms were the hymn book of the Jewish people and it is quite a thrill to think we are hearing the very words our Lord would have sung and known.

We are so lucky in Babel Zion Newydd to have strong talented musicians as leaders. For a little chapel, musically we “punch above our weight”. The Jewish religion too had their talented individuals who could play the harps, cymbals, trumpets, lyres (some with 10 strings), pipes and tambourines. They had a choir too, made up of female voices which may surprise us a little in a male led tradition. The musicians and singers lined the steps and gateways to the temple welcoming pilgrims and worshippers. Some psalms are called ‘ascent’ psalms, sung as people processed towards Jerusalem and climbed the Mount of Zion.

Psalm 100: “Enter the Temple gates with thanksgiving, go into its courts with praise.” Feast Days were held in high regard and sometimes the sacred ark which contained the holiest word of God was carried in procession. New Year Feast Day was important and was called the “ingathering”. I like that warm and friendly term ‘ingathering’. Maybe we could gather at a New Year Prayer meeting welcoming established members and new friends? It must have been quite a celebration of God’s faithfulness with music, singing and dancing - Psalm 122 is an “ascent psalm: *“I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the House of the Lord.”and now we are here standing inside the gates of Jerusalem!”*

Some psalms tell us exactly what their purpose was eg Psalm 100 has the heading, *‘A psalm for giving grateful praise’*. Sometimes in our prayerful quiet moments the words just will not flow. Reading a psalm can be a joyful experience instead. A formal pattern was used occasionally to get things going! Psalm 106 and 107 begin: *“Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, His love endures for ever.”*

Asking for mercy and forgiveness is a deep passionate cry as real today as it was thousands of years ago. David in Psalm 143 says, *“Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy.”* Again in Psalm 142, *“I cry aloud to the Lord, I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy.”*

In these days of instant gratification whether it be instant coffee, instant deliveries or instant digital photography I smile at David’s pleas. In Psalm 141 he sounds in a panic, *“I call to you Lord, come quickly!”* The urgency is repeated in Psalm 38: *“Come quickly to help me, my Lord and Saviour.”* Human nature hasn’t changed. We still ask the God of eternity to help with our issues a.s.a.p

We may consider mindfulness to be a new and exciting modern concept. Advice columns tell us to focus on the moment, enjoy the cup of tea, enjoy watching the garden blackbird take a bath in the puddle. We should slow down, avoid distractions and find an inner calm. The ancient writers knew a thing or two about finding strength – they looked to God whom they sometimes called Elohim. The vocabulary they used to describe him is positive, supportive and bold. Words like *‘my rock’*, *‘our fortress’*, *‘our strength’*, *‘shield’*, *‘shelter’*, and *‘stronghold’* all bring comfort.

Psalm 144: *“Praise be to the Lord, my rock.”* Psalm 121: *“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help.”* Psalm 46: *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”* Maybe when the road gets rocky we should turn to the “rock of ages”.

The images taken from the natural world bring gentle comfort too.

Psalm 42 suggests that somewhere deep down in the human make-up of body, mind and spirit there is a deep longing for the Father God. *“As the deer pants for the streams of water so my soul pants for you, my God.”*

On occasion we may feel lost and alone. The writer of Psalm 102 understands: *“I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins.....I lie awake; I have become like a bird alone on a roof.”*

Psalm 17 asks for God’s tenderness: *“...hide me in the shadow of your wings.”*

Sometimes pressures mounted for the writers of the psalms. Psalm 55 yearns to get away from it all: *“Oh that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.”* He knew and we know today that feeling of “It’ll be nice to get away!”

The Book of Psalms is a little treasure house written by various people: Moses, Solomon, David, and those unknown. They were written for all sorts of occasions- national emergencies, crowning of kings, formal religious ceremonies but many came from the writer’s heart, like those prayers or laments written in exile where there are touches of “hiraeth” for homeland and for Jerusalem.

The Psalms point us towards a God who is good and whose love endures forever.

=====

Cerddwyr Cynnwr

The Cerddwyr have had their annual outing to Lampeter for their Christmas Dinner hosted and prepared by Gareth Richards of S4C fame. An enjoyable afternoon was had by all. The October walk was led by Gareth around Llanymdyfri starting and ending at the Castle Car Park where Gareth gave us information on Llywelyn ap Gruffydd Fychan of Caerwys who was hung, drawn and quartered by Henry 4th for supporting Owain Glyndwr's rebellion in 1401. A monument has been erected there to commemorate his bravery.

The next place of interest to us was Llanfair ar y Bryn and the churchyard where William Williams Pantycelyn is buried. We sang a few verses of his well known hymn *Pererin Wyf* at the graveside. Williams was a prolific hymnwriter and a very popular preacher in the eighteenth century. Of the thousand hymns to his name there are 87 in Caneuon Ffydd. Diolch i Gareth am yr arweiniad unwaith eto ac rym ni'n falch iawn i weld Dawn yn ôl gyda ni am ychydig amser ar ddydd Iau. Da ei gweld yn gwella'n raddol bach a'r chwerthiniad iach yn dychwelyd.

The Epitaph on William Williams's grave reads

To the Memory of William Williams Pantycelyn of this parish



Author of several works in prose and verse
He waits here for the coming of the Morning Star
which shall usher in the glories of the First
resurrection
When at the Sound of the Archangel's trumpet
The sleeping dust shall be reanimated and death
forever shall be swallowed up in victory.
Born 1717 died 1791
Aged 74 years



Esme writes on The Welsh painting 'Salem'



I am almost sure many of you will have seen this painting by Sydney Curnow Vosper [1866-1942]

It depicts a scene in Salem Chapel in the village of Gwynfryn near Llanbedr, Harlech painted in 1908 and which has become a Welsh icon denoting Welsh life at the beginning of the twentieth century. This was when the chapel was at the heart of Welsh life and when the traditional Welsh

Costume was worn by many. Sian Owen, the lady in the picture, was 71 years old at the time, widowed, having lost her husband George in the 1880's and living in an isolated farmhouse. They had one son William and Sian also raised William's two sons who were later killed in the First World War. Sian died in 1927 and is buried in Llanfair churchyard near Harlech.

Nearly all those in the painting were modelled from life. Sian is seen walking down the aisle to the family pew wearing the traditional shawl. Many have suggested that they can see a devil's face in the folds and in the fringe over her left arm. At first glance this appears to be a painting capturing both traditional Welsh dress and the atmosphere of a Welsh chapel but other details have given it another layer of meaning. Firstly it is 10 o'clock according to the clock on the wall which could suggest that Sian was late for the service to ensure everyone would see her entrance and her beautiful shawl. The devil in the folds of the shawl might add to this interpretation. Secondly her bright shawl is in contrast to the sombre dress of the other people present and this could suggest vanity on her part. I have a copy of the painting in my hall and I won't accept that Sian Owen was late for the service due to her vanity and pride. Vosper was born in Devon in 1866 and was married to Constance James of Merthyr Tydfil- the reason it seems for the Welsh themes in his paintings. There are two versions of it- one held at the National Library of Wales and another at Port Sunlight near Liverpool. The original was bought by Lord Lever in 1909 and used to market Lever Brother Sunlight Soap.

On a personal note, I have had excellent news on my journey with cancer: the tumour has reduced considerably and I shall not be seen for six months. Thank you all for your prayers and for keeping in touch with me on this journey.

Esme Phillips

The Advent wreath

The traditions behind the Advent Wreath are varied and interesting and have their roots in the history of European Christianity. Before the Protestant Reformation the Catholic Church had used old pagan ideas and adapted them to their own beliefs. The holly and the Ivy and evergreen trees demonstrated that life continues however hard the winter months and so the Romans would decorate their homes with evergreen leaves during the dark season. The Catholics created circles of leaves to decorate their dark homes during Christmas and would decorate them with candles. We know for certain that this happened in Germany and some say that it was Martin Luther himself who began the tradition. It was Luther who translated the Latin and Greek Bible to the German and composed many hymns so that people could sing them in their own language. It is believed that he instituted the advent wreath tradition in order to encourage children to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas. So what is the symbolism of the wreath?

It is circular not square. It is a symbol of eternity. It has no beginning or end, just as God himself. The four candles stand for many things. Some believe they stand for the 4000 years between the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden to the coming of the Messiah. Others believe they symbolise the four weeks leading up to Christmas Day. When they are not alight they symbolise the darkness of the world before the coming of Christ. Lit, they demonstrate the light and hope of the Gospel. Holly reminds us of the crown of thorns, the leaves remind us of the eternity of our souls.



Purple is an important colour to denote the Advent time and the pink candle symbolises Mary the mother of Jesus. The first purple candle is a symbol of hope, the second purple a symbol of the prophets and their message proclaiming the coming of the Messiah and the third is a symbol of John the Baptist who said that there was someone greater than he whose sandals he would be unworthy to untie.

On Christmas Day the central white candle is lit as a symbol of Jesus, the purity of God come into the world.

=====

Sunday Services/Gwasanaethau ar y Sul

Members' Led Advent Service	10am	1/12/2024
Community Carol Service Minister	2pm	8/12/2024
Dr Dai Lloyd Abertawe.	2pm	15/12/2024
Carol Service with the children Minister	2pm	22/12/2024
Christmas Eve Service Minister	11.15pm	24/12/2024
Rev Mike Shepherd: United Service	10.30am	29/12/2024
Members' led service	10am	5/5/2025

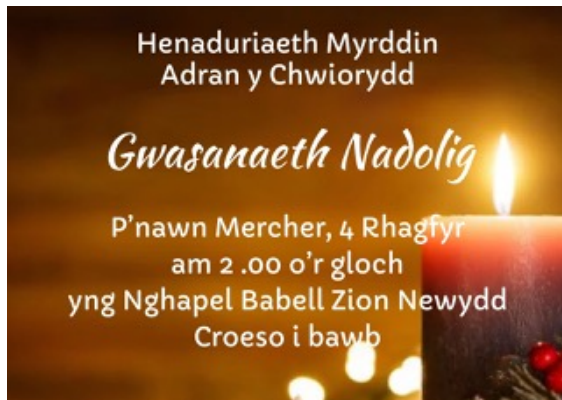
Flowers/ Blodau		Cleaning/Glanhau	Announcing and Communion Cyhoeddi a Pharatoi'r Cymun
Helen Gibbon	Ionawr/ January	Sian, Meurig and Carole	Sian Cassell
Jackie Evans	February/ Chwefror	Helen and Gwyn and Andrew	Pat Morgan
Maisie Johnson	March/ Mawrth	Jackie and Maisie	Lynn Davies

Dates for the Diary

Monday night January 6th at 6pm Prayer Meeting
Tuesday January 21st at 10am Elders' Meeting
Nos Lun 27ain o Ionawr 7 o'r gloch: Cwrdd Dosbarth yng Nghapel Cwmdwyfran

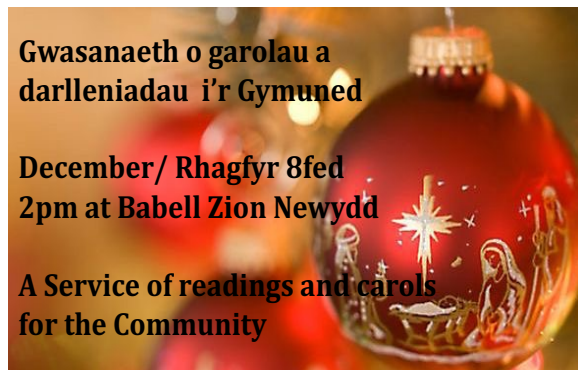
Friendship Centre Rota

5.12.24	Maisie and Rosemary
12.12.24	Pat and Carole
19.12.24	Tina/Nan/Kevin
9.1.25	Helen and Sian
16.1.25	Maisie and Rosemary
23.1.25	Pat and Carole
30.1.25	Tina, Nan and Kevin
6.2.25	Helen and Sian



The Christmas Carol service
for the Presbytery Sisterhood
at Babell Zion Newydd on
Wednesday 4th of December.

All welcome. This will be a
Welsh service.



The Community Carol
Service 8th of December at
2pm

Pob dymuniad da i bawb am Nadolig dedwydd a Blwyddyn
Newydd heddychlon

Best wishes for a blessed Christmas and a Peaceful New Year

Diolch i Pat ac Esme am eu cyfraniadau y mis hwn. We always need contributions for
the Newsletter in any shape or form. It would be lovely to read your stories.





Homeless at Christmas

There will be many homeless and displaced people this Christmas as there have been throughout the year but somehow it is heart wrenching to think that there will be one or two in our vicinity sleeping rough on the street or under bridges during this Christmas period when families and friends come together for their own particular celebrations. Last week I happened to phone our Minister Emyr on his mobile phone to discuss the Community Service only to find that he was in Pensarn in case the sleeper who had made his bed underneath the underpass was still there. He had spent the previous cold Saturday night bedded there and Emyr had hoped that he could have opened the door of the Chapel to him for sustenance.

There is one particular church in Havelock Street Newport who are doing just that- opening their doors to the homeless and are in the process of adapting one of their rooms to offer a place for the night. There are more homeless people in Newport than anywhere else in Wales and so Newport City Council and the Salvation Army have decided to work together to adapt the chapel building to accommodate those on the street and to help them find places to live. The story is on YOUTUBE under the title Homelessness-Hope in Newport, Cymru (Wales)

However, to come back to Pensarn, the sleeper wasn't there and whatever his reasons for being homeless that night let us hope that the situation has been resolved and that one person at least is back with his family.

A prayer for Advent

Lord Jesus, we remember with joy how you brought hope throughout your ministry and a feeling of purpose to so many whose lives seemed to have lost direction. You brought light into their worlds, joy in their sadness and new beginnings when the end seemed near. Lord of all peoples, the Word which became flesh, bring hope to your world today. Amen

Gweddi dros gyfnod yr Adfent

Arglwydd Iesu Grist, cofiwn â llawenydd sut y daethost â gobaith trwy gydol dy weinidogaeth a theimlad o bwrpas i fywydau a ymddangosai yn ddi-gyfeiriad. Daethost â goleuni i'w bywydau, llawenydd yn eu tristwch a dechreuadau newydd pan oedd y diwedd yn ymddangos yn agos. Arglwydd pawb, tyrd â gobaith i'th fyd heddiw. Amen.

