

Babell Zion Newydd

**SUMMER Newsletter
Cylchlythyr yr HAF
2016**



This newsletter has been digitised as part of a project to archive material relating to Llangunnor so that a record exists for future generations

Thanks to Babell Zion Newydd Chapel for permission to do this

The logo consists of a blue rectangular box with a dark blue border. Inside the box, the words "LLANGUNNOR" and "NETWORK" are written in a white, serif, all-caps font, stacked one above the other.

LLANGUNNOR
NETWORK

A word of thanks

Revd Mike Shephard came to Babell in September 2012. Word had it that Mike and Gwen were coming back to live in the vicinity and we promptly got in touch, in the hope that Mike would be looking to continue serving in the ministry. He was and we succeeded in getting the Presbytery, somehow or other, to agree to our calling. Our association with Mike went back to those years at Lammas Street when he'd come to preach at Babell on a Sunday afternoon and make us all feel as if we had always known him. The Candlelight Services at the English Baptist to which we were invited were different and many of the carols were well known tunes sung on words penned by Mike himself. They were of course relevant to this day and age and we still sing them in Babell and in carol services in my village of Capel Dewi.

Many of Mike's sermons even from those days are still memorable. Sian Cassell cannot sing "All things bright and beautiful", even to this day, without hearkening back to Mike's sermon on those very words all those years ago. Whether Mike had done his homework on us remains unknown but very soon he was calling us a fragile church and I soon realized that Mike was not going to be satisfied until numbers increased. We knew we had to make some changes and if anyone was going to see changes through it was Mike. There was no beating about the bush: the church building had to be made relevant to the 21st century, and although the message of the Gospel remains the same as it did two thousand years ago, the mode of communication has changed and people constantly need to be challenged. Mike was at the helm. Change there would be. With the improvements to the chapel interior and the opening of the Friendship Centre, together with links made with Llangunnor School and the wider community there was never a dull moment. Sian, Mike and I [and Mali the Jack Russell] delivered 200 letters in and around Babell and when we ran out of letters Mike made more and decided to go it alone. What energy! However, although the mind and the heart are willing one forgets that the body clock is slowing and one cannot do today what one did thirty, twenty or even ten years ago.

Much has been achieved in a short while and I would like to thank Mike on behalf of us all for his leadership in an all too brief a time. Mike has reminded us time and time again how the Gospel of Jesus needs to be put into action and if we cannot go the first mile then there is certainly no point in going the second. We are living in an age where commitment has no place unless we can see the advantages and benefits which come of it. However, the unseen benefits are far greater than any earthly joys can bring. "For what is seen is temporary, but what is **unseen** is eternal."

Many have mentioned in this special tribute newsletter Mike's ability with words- the spoken and also the written- and his poems have been a source of inspiration to many a lay preacher. His poem, "I almost went to church last night" has been mentioned a few times but as I searched for another example of his work, there was one which I just had to include. Mike uses an experience – and a most pleasant one at that- to give us all a warning about where we stand with our Maker. Choosing this particular poem also ties in with the improvements made to the Chapel building, [I prefer to call them improvements- one chap asked me could he see the chapel after the minister had gutted it!!] for during the renovations we lost the lovely wooden box containing the hymn numbers for the wooden boards. So I have included the poem 'Judgement by Numbers' for reflection.

Thank you Mike for taking us on, for your vision as to how we should move forward, for helping us to become a more active church in the Community, for your thought provoking sermons and for leading the way to establishing Babell Zion Newydd. Thank you also for introducing us to your family. I shall remember Ben and Laura's contributions to our services with affection and we do hope that you will continue to visit us. Diolch i Gwen am ei hynawsedd tuag atom bob amser ac i aelodau'r teulu i gyd gan ddymuno pob bendith i'r dyfodol.

Helen Gibbon

Judgement By Numbers MFS

"Have you seen the Numbers?"
[The Organist now asked]
"The Numbers?" said I in reply;
"Not since Sunday last!"
"Ah, well!", he said, *"No problem!"*
We'll leave the spaces blank!
I have no doubt it's kids again
Playing silly pranks?"

The matter was forgotten then,
For worship now begun;
Introit, prayers and readings
And songs, today, well sung!
Then Sermon on the subject
Of those unanswered prayers;
My purpose was to demonstrate
That God knew best and cared.

And now to my amazement
The youths at back of church
Held up the hymn board numbers
Gone missing, despite search!

A five! A six! A Seven! Two eights!
And there, right at the end-
Two youngsters with a *One* and *Nought!*
I hoped that this meant *ten!*

I should, perhaps have scolded
And showed them I was vexed;
Instead, I found a cause to smile
And which is more- a *text!*
Imagine hymn board numbers
Held up by God's own Son!
I wonder if our worship
Would merit *His Well Done?*

And what of 'Judgement' yet to be
When time has passed away?
What will the numbers signify?
What will those figures say?
"A poor attempt! No effort made!
Deserved so low a score!"
I hope that Judgement Day will bring,
The chance to try once more.

Family News

As a church, we express our deepest condolences to Nan on the loss of her sister Gweneira Jones, Mr Alwyn Bevan on the loss of his dear wife Olive, and Helen's brother Hywel and his wife Sian on the sudden passing of Sian's father Beynon – or "JB" as he was affectionately known.

Gweneira had been in a home in Saundersfoot for 8 years and Nan had been a loyal sister to the last, visiting her every week and this using the bus service. The funeral was held on Wednesday 13th April and was led by Pastor John Morgan. Pat and Helen represented Babel.

Olive and Alwyn Bevan had been faithful friends of Zion for many years until Olive suffered a severe stroke and could no longer attend worship. Alwyn cared for Olive at home for many years following her stroke, despite his own failing health.

I had known "JB" for many years as he was a faithful member of Carmarthen Male Voice Choir for many, many years. A very quiet, sincere and gentle man whose written work had seen him win numerous "chairs" at Eisteddfodau. He will be greatly missed by everyone.

O Lord Jesus Christ, God of all consolation, look with compassion on your children in their loss. Strengthen in them the gift of faith and give to their troubled hearts the light of hope.

Please keep in your prayers Vi and her daughter Mandy. Also, we think of Elwyn Roberts and Ken Loomes who have been unwell recently and also Doreen who by the time this newsletter sees day will have had a hip operation.

Heavenly Father we pray for those who are ill. Give them grace to be patient and courageous during this time, and strong in the faith that you are with them at all times.

Heartfelt Congratulations go to Mrs Nancy Butter who celebrated her 100th birthday on April 21st. Lilian and Carole were invited to the celebratory lunch in the Ivy Bush, where a large gathering of family and friends from the many organisations that Nancy had been a part of were present to share in her special day. Needless to say she received well over a hundred birthday cards – including one from Her Majesty The Queen – but 2 cards in particular held a special place in her heart. For many years Nancy had taught in the Catholic School in Union Street and had received 2 handmade cards by the current pupils of the school. Nancy visited the school during her birthday week to say “Thank you” to the children and in her words, “to show them what a 100 year old person looks like!!” Nancy also shared some birthday cake with the children.

Beginning of April Babell and Zion united to form the new church of Babell Zion Newydd. I think that everyone will agree that this unity has taken off extremely well, and friendships are already beginning to emerge. Speaking as a former member of Zion, I would personally like to thank all the members and friends of Babell for accepting us in to your church family and making us all feel so welcome.

The concert given by Cor Meibion Dathlu Cwmtawe, held on April 9th was a resounding success and so many people have remarked that it was “the best ever.” It was a wonderful evening and special thanks and congratulations go to all the soloists who took part. We should not forget that a concert does not “just happen.” It takes a lot of time planning such an event and we would like to thank Helen for the work she put in to make this such a successful evening. It’s a well-known fact that choirs perform best when there is the prospect of good food and an even better cuppa and for this we thank Vi for organising and all those who contributed towards the buffet – whether it be making the cakes, sandwiches or doing the washing up.

On Thursday evening May 12th at a meeting of Llangunnor Community Council 3 people received awards for their services to the community. Amongst them was our very own Mike Shephard. We congratulate Mike most warmly. This is a fitting tribute to the warmth with which he has been received in the community of Llangynnwyr. We also wish to congratulate Mrs Beryl Richards who retired from Llangunnor School last July and was instrumental in bringing the school choir to Babell and also to Canon Aled Griffiths who is also held in high esteem in the community and especially at Babell. Congratulations also to Lee Whatley as he becomes vice chair of the Council this year. Llongyfarchiadau calonnog i chi gyd.

Carole Rees

The outgoing Chair Cllr Glenda Lloyd presenting the award to Mike



The present Chair Cllr David Watson with Canon Aled, Beryl Richards and Mike



Au revoir Mike Shephard

I have never been a regular church goer since I was a child but recently I have been attending regularly. Why did I never go? Well sermons always put me off.

Why do I attend now? Two words - Mike Shephard. If I had known what a good sermon he gave I would have been a regular visitor to the English Baptist church in Lammis Street many years ago. Unfortunately I didn't hear about him from my new neighbour (Doris Jones) until long after he left.

The first year I moved to Cwmffrwd I attended several Christmas Carol services and at Babel I found not only a warm and friendly welcome but Mike himself. His sermons are understandable, relevant, down to earth, have a clear message and a start and finish point. What I find especially heart-warming is his non dictatorial delivery. He doesn't rant and rave but allows you to believe in your own way while encouraging you to think about your beliefs. It has been a pleasure to listen to his sermons which have a meaning in today's world and I will miss his regular input into Sundays. Hopefully he will find time in his busy retirement to preach to us now and then in the years to come.

Mike you will be missed.

Linda Owen

The one thing we cannot escape from throughout our lives is change. Love it or hate it, we must all embrace it as we are powerless to prevent progress. It is the management of change that is crucial. I suspect, as the years pass, we all hope that our contribution to the quality of life for ourselves and those around us will have some positive significance no matter how minor. Personally I have experienced many changes over the last 73 years. Thankfully we all have selective memories and the good experiences make the bad ones pale into insignificance.

I hope Mike Shephard recognises the words above as they are particularly apt in his case. I have only known Mike for a very short time but I recognise in him much of what I have admired in other gifted Christian ministers I have had the privilege of knowing over the years. His sermons are always challenging and thought provoking; delivered with both reverence and humour. His message pertaining to Christian Unity is a cry from the heart and probably the most important issue for our society at the present time. I am sure as Mike heads for retirement he will have experienced one more change for the better with Zion and Babel joining forces to face an uncertain future together.

On a personal note I have to record that having known Gwen and Mike has been a pleasure and on occasion great fun. I hope their future together in retirement will be long and happy and I'm sure we will all be pleased to see Mike return occasionally to preach in our chapel and it would be lovely to see them both drop into the Friendship Centre from time to time.

Trevor Lloyd

Thank you Mike for your time spent at Babel Zion Newydd. Thank you for beautifully crafted sermons full of wit, personal insight and truth- who could fail 'to get the message' when presented by the deft touch of a talented professional.

Thank you for quiet moments of thoughtful prayer – always apt, always sincere, always a blessing, a challenge and a comfort.

Thank you for your modern outlook, enthusiasm and vision, always pressing forwards, wondering how the church can serve her people and the community in the 21st century.

Thank you and Gwen for your warmth, welcome and friendship.

As a "nearly made it to 70-year old", we thank you. Enjoy your retirement. You've earned it. We pray that you'll take your own advice, take your foot off the pedal. You are allowed to!

Pat Morgan

The last four years have flown by and the work that you have done in that time has been fantastic. Babel Zion Newydd is a far better place for having had your ministry. With best wishes to you and Gwen for a happy retirement.

Sian Cassell

Mike,

You and Gwen were a great comfort to me when I became a member in 2012 and I also speak for the late Eires Roberts.

In my view, Mike was born to be centre stage, but not as an actor but as a man who cares passionately for a cause. "Mike being Mike," even as you approach seventy, your energy and stamina continue and does not flag. You like being able to anticipate change.

With all good wishes

Esme Phillips

Dear Mike

I have been invited to send a message to your newsletter on behalf of Newton Chapel.

I must say it was a shock to hear that you were going to retire! 1968 might seem a long time ago but our recollections of that time are still very vivid. On a personal note I well remember on your first visit "with a view", I had recently had a serious accident and was laying in a hospital bed when Mr David Brown [our moderator during the interregnum] walked into the ward followed by this very young Welshman, fresh from College who was introduced as the candidate to become our minister. I immediately formed a rapport with him as did our whole congregation including the children. We had a strong Sunday School in those days. There was always a story told, often funny, which children and adults could relate to and there was never any problem getting the children to come to chapel when Mike was taking the service.

Mike, do you recall the story about the crab always walking sideways?

Being a small rural group of churches we did not have our own Baptistry. When a baptism took place we had to conduct the service in the larger churches in the towns and so the deacons led by Mike decided to install one at our chapel at Newton, but we had to raise the funds first and so the children and young people set out on a sponsored walk across Dartmoor. All ages took part, from 4 to 80 years of age and we raised the money and thus our Baptistry was built.

At that time we had a small male voice choir and we still have. Incidentally, we shall be celebrating our 65th year this year, but Mike, you wrote some poems for our elocutionist to recite at our concerts and I remember one vividly called "I almost went to church last night." We still use your poems from time to time as they bring the message of the present time to the audiences.

It was a pleasant surprise when you and Gwen appeared on the morning of your Ruby wedding at our little chapel again, sadly, only a brief visit and our greatest regret was that you left all too soon. A quote from our booklet of the history of our chapel, "He was greatly respected".

Thank you Mike for the privilege of knowing and sharing friendship with yourself and Gwen and perhaps you will have more time to come back and visit us again.

God bless you both in your retirement.

Ray and Grace Quance

Newton St Petrock Baptist Chapel.

Although I had heard of the Rev Mike Shephard via his poetry, I did not meet him until he became the minister of a church in my home-town of Tredegar. By this time I had been made redundant with the closure of Ebbw Vale Steelworks and as a result found myself, despite my faith, at a low ebb.

The Church that Mike took on had all but closed and was in a sorry state of repair. He asked me would I look at attempting to raise funds to repair the Church. I willingly took it on and it gave me a new lease of life. I love a challenge and this was one monumental challenge. However, the Church now has a new roof, interior totally repaired, new central heating and almost looking like new but is still very much work in progress.

Also during this time in Tredegar, Mike was taken quite ill and as a result this left the pulpit short of preachers. The secretary asked me to help. My old job did require me to give talks but on a subject I knew very well. So once again a new challenge and one that again I accepted. This however was a challenge I really began to enjoy- preaching the gospel. I must say I wish I had known Mike when I was younger. I feel sure my life may have followed a very different path.

Mike and Gwen- it has been a pleasure to have known you, albeit briefly. You deserve a rest although I feel sure you will do some preaching in your very unique style. God bless you both, Stuart and Lynne Price.

I welcome the opportunity to wish Michael well on the occasion of his retirement.

I have known Mike for many years. We first met during my time as pastor of a small Baptist Church in the village of Tafarnaubach near Tredegar. It was 1962, and a young Mike would come to the Manse door once a week selling a local newspaper. After a number of attempts he finally persuaded me to buy. We struck an agreement: I would buy his paper if he would attend my church. The deal was done, and so it was the beginning of a journey for Mike that would see him go on to train for the ministry and become a very “successful” minister of the Gospel.

I could see from those early years that we had in him a very gifted lad. I remember asking him what he would like to do eventually and his reply was no surprise: “I’d like to be a journalist”. Mike has always been good with words, written and spoken. His poems have been an inspiration and were used by me to make a telling point in an otherwise average sermon.

He has a smile that is so disarming and words that are, like the Good Book says, “Apples of Gold in pictures of Silver.” It is no wonder that Mike has been such a good communicator. But if he has a way with words, he has a way with people too and has that rare gift of reaching those who would be considered on the fringes of church life. He has a pastoral heart and I’m sure that has been a great advantage in his work with parents and children in the Child Advisory Service.

I think of the Pastorates Mike has served and in almost every one he has raised the membership numbers. In one church I know, he began a new work from “scratch”! His Drop-In Centres were a great success wherever he went, too.

In many ways he is something of a menace in the ministry, for he would ever be a hard act to follow! I for one would never fancy being his successor!

To be all you need to be in the Royal work of being a Christian Minister, many colleagues would agree that it can’t be achieved without the support of the loved ones at home. Gwen has been such a loyal support to Mike through the years. It’s not been without a cost as that quite brilliant piece she wrote for the Spring news has shown. Many a minister’s spouse would say they could completely identify with the sentiments she expressed.

I do hope that Mike will continue serving the churches as and when opportunities arise. He has so much to give, still.

I wish you well, dear friend,

Pob bendith

Ron Powell

Barbara Caswell writes

We met Mike for the first time around 2008, when he was a loyal and inspirational minister to High Street Baptist Church, Merthyr Tydfil.

Mike and Gwen soon became firm, much loved friends who have supported us through the good and sometimes sad times in our lives.

How can we ever forget the service of baptism in September 2011, when Bob among others from High Street and Saron Tredegar were baptized by Mike. What an amazing spiritual atmosphere was in church on that Sunday evening.

When sadly my mother passed away in April 2012, it was Mike whom we turned to in our grief and when I rang to ask him to officiate at her funeral, without hesitation, he said, “Yes, of course I will.”

It is always a pleasure to see Mike and Gwen as often as we can and to make the occasional visit to our friends at Babell where we have been made so welcome by everyone. We remember fondly the opening of the Friendship Centre where we felt so much at home. Diolch yn fawr.

We must mention the wonderful concert which we had the privilege of attending on Saturday April 9th. The music and singing was superb; a very special memorable evening enjoyed so much by everyone. Our grateful thanks to Helen for kindly offering us tickets. Our love and best wishes to Mike on his retirement. May he enjoy a long, healthy and happy time with Gwen and his family, and of course with all his friends at Babell Zion Newydd.

God bless you all,

Barbara and Bob Caswell

Dear Mike and Gwen,

May I wish you both a happy and healthy retirement and thank you for the way that you have moved the chapel forward. Nelda

A message from Horeb and Sardis : The Church at Trefil

Dear Mike,

I guess it is more than 50 years since that teenager from Tafarnaubach came to Trefil to preach his first sermon. Since then much water has passed down the river that separates the two chapels in Trefil and likewise so much has happened in the world, in our chapels and in our lives.

Those first visits were as a rookie in the pulpit and our chapels have a long and proud commitment to giving opportunities and encouragement to novice ministers. We now know that it set you on a path that has touched many people in many corners of our country and even over the border in England.

Your return as a qualified minister, meant so much to the deaconate of both chapels and then, as we jumped forward to recent times, it meant so much to us all when you finally became our minister.

Your homecoming, so to speak, was a more experienced, dare I say, wiser person but above all, a minister more aware of the needs of the individuals and our community. Someone who practised what he preached and someone who reached out to everyone whoever they were, wherever they came from and above all whatever was their need.

I know that in our private conversations we have discussed the many issues that challenge the church today and you have instilled in us all the necessity to be a welcoming church. You undoubtedly did this through your message with sermons of an elegant simplicity, full of beauty and love, wisdom and advice, challenging us to live our lives as our Lord would have wanted us to.

The 'young people' of Trefil have travelled near and far, ministers who cut their teeth here have moved on to larger and grander chapels and set up missions around the world. They never leave our hearts or our prayers. Many return to visit – including you- but only you came home to stay, even if it was only for a little while.

You kept in touch with books of poetry and updates of news of your children and grandchildren. Our journey with you has been a very long one. You have been one of us for more years than I can remember. You knew our parents and grandparents, children and grandchildren. You have christened us, married us and led our funerals. Most importantly you welcomed us into membership, shared Holy Communion, cried with us tears of joy and tears of laughter.

Finally, in closing, can I share with you the words of Irish writer, Michael Longly, who, at the height of the troubles in Northern Ireland wrote,

All these people,

Alive or dead,

Are civilised.

The civilised are those who can love, those who can forgive and those who can hope.

For me this sums up your time with us. You showed us love, you never judged us and you always preached a message of forgiveness.

You are and will always be someone very special to us. We wish you a long and happy retirement. We hope that you and Gwen will have more time to enjoy your family and your garden but please come back and visit every once in a while. There will always be a croeso cynnes Cymru, here for you in our pulpit, in our chapel and in our homes and one day I may even get round to taking you to the Chartist Cave.

Love and Blessings,

Alyson Tippings

An article submitted by John Green from the English Baptist's Newsletter

Our good friend Rev. Mike Shephard has announced his forthcoming retirement from ministry.

Mike was part-time Minister of the English Baptist Church from 1987 to 1999, when he was replaced by Rev. Moyra Davies. He subsequently ministered at Memorial Baptist Church in Swansea (2000) and in Siloh Uniting Church (2007) and Saron Chapel (2009), both in Tredegar, before moving back to Carmarthenshire and becoming part-time Minister at Babell Chapel in Pensarn (2012).

Mike trained for the Ministry at North Wales Baptist College in Bangor, and was ordained in September 1968 at the tender age of 21, making him at that time the youngest ordained minister in Britain, and he held pastorates in North Devon, West Glamorgan and Radnorshire.

In the 1980s Mike experienced a loss of faith which kept him away from Church circles for a good seven years. To quote our lamented friend and Deacon Edmor Phillips, "[Mike's return to ministry was] a visible proof of a God who refuses to let us go and who 'dogs our footsteps' until we turn to him again". At Llammas Street the theme of doubt was never far away from Mike's sermons, which many of us found very reassuring in our own spiritual journeys, and recalled the wonderful words of the poet John Betjeman:

*No blinding light, a fitful glow
Is all the light of faith I know
Which sometimes goes completely out
And leaves me plunging round in doubt.*

Mike's induction service at the English Baptist Church took place on 17th October 1987. Rev. Peter Saunders presided; Martin Dalling, who had done much to ensure the survival of our Church in the previous minister-less years, outlined the history of the call; and Rev. Ronald Powell from Manchester delivered the sermon.

Mike's ministry was a very productive time for our Church on many different fronts. We all found it impossible to say no to any reasonable (or unreasonable!) request, and consequently found ourselves, quite against our better judgement, sleeping out in cardboard boxes (to raise money for the homeless), reading the Bible to passers-by from a specially constructed pulpit in Llammas Street, climbing Pen-y-fan in appalling weather and running round the streets of Carmarthen wearing Hare & Tortoise T-shirts!! The congregation grew, Mike opened the Drop-in Centre which is still thriving today, introduced Carols by Candlelight, initiated the Christmas Day lunch which continues to serve a vital social need in our town, and established Club 2000. During this same period he studied part-time to obtain an honours degree in theology, wrote letters to the Baptist Times, contributed to youth work in the Centre, led Study Groups, composed hundreds of short poems which were later published as a series of seven collections such as *The Cradle and the Cross*, produced Church newsletters and completed two London Marathons and several other grueling challenges, all for charity.

Now approaching 70 years of age, Mike has decided after much soul-searching to bow out and take retirement on 22nd May. This is a little earlier than planned, and is understandably linked to the stresses and strains of combining his role as a Minister with that of a Family Court Adviser. We have known for some time that Mike suffers from Seasonal Affective Disorder, which he says has become far more marked this year, verging on depression.

There is never a perfect moment to retire, and Mike naturally regrets departing at an exciting time for Babell, on the cusp of combining with our good friends round the corner at Zion to form the Babell Zion Newydd Uniting Church. But 48 years after Mike's ordination as a minister, and following a 45-year career in social work, no one could ever accuse him of not devoting the major part of his life to the service of Christ and to those less fortunate members of our communities.

Throughout this half-century Mike has been admirably backed up by his dear wife Gwen. Gwen would rightly object to being referred to simply as a Minister's wife, but she has followed Mike around the country, enduring in particular a very challenging time in Tredegar, and has worked incredibly hard, *always* behind the scenes, to provide support for every aspect of Mike's ministry (except the Hare & Tortoise Club, perhaps!). Mike and Gwen are now looking forward to enjoying services from the pews and spending more time with each other, their children and their beloved grandchildren. All of us at the English Baptist Church wish Mike and Gwen a long, happy and above all healthy retirement.

John Green

Margaret Dawkin writes

Memorial Baptist Church Swansea send their greetings to Mike [and Gwen] on the occasion of his retirement from the ministry on 22nd of May 2016.

Mike was minister at Memorial from April 2000 to March 2007, and during those seven years worked hard to make Memorial of relevance to the community around it. He offered the church as a base for the Swansea Counselling Service where trained counsellors work out of Memorial on two days a week. As a Family Court Adviser, Mike set up a child contact centre which was opened by Dame Butler Schloss, who was then Chief Judge of the Family Division. Sadly this group had to close a few years ago because of lack of funds.

Mike was instrumental in opening a Friendship Centre which is still in existence, although sadly a little depleted. He also began the production of a quarterly church magazine which is still "going strong".

During Mike's ministry he officiated at the first baptism to be held in the new church. In total there were six baptismal services and ten services of membership on "Confession of Faith". Our membership grew from 23 in 2000 to 49 in 2007. Regrettably, we are now only 14 members.

In 2002 Mike organized a sponsored ascent of Pen-y-Fan and in 2005 a 10 mile walk along the Swansea Seafront to Mumbles and back - both events in atrocious weather conditions- but we all completed the course and raised funds for the church.

Thank you Mike for everything you did for Memorial. May God bless you and Gwen- and we all wish you both every happiness in your retirement. With love- Margaret [Secretary of Memorial Baptist Church]

From Bwlch-y-Sarnau Baptist Chapel

Revd Mike Shephard served as our minister for a few years and was very popular. We wish Michael and his wife Gwen God's Richest Blessing and many happy years in his retirement. I speak on behalf of the members of the Church
Yours faithfully

ATRees [Secretary]

Marlene Jervis writes

Mike was minister of Sardis from November 1971- October 1972.

Coming to us from Devon we were his second Pastorate in the Ministry.

When Mike came as our pastor it was a part- time ministry because he was also appeals organiser for South Wales with the organisation "Help the Aged" he felt he could pastor the church in conjunction with this organisation.

He was a young minister who was well liked with a lovely sense of humour.

Mike combined "Help the Aged" and Church well during the eleven months. There were some baptisms, the young people enjoyed taking part in 24 hour sponsored Bible reading and also a sponsored silence.

When "Help The Aged" expanded his area of work, Mike felt he couldn't do justice to the Church and thus decided to move on.

Mike has many talents of which writing poetry is an obvious gift. Among his many many poems one of the best known is "I almost went to church last night"

Now after 48 years in the ministry you are retiring. Mike, may God bless you with a long, happy, healthy retirement. But does one really retire from God's work?

With love and best wishes

The Fellowship in Sardis.

Daphne writes

I would like this opportunity to pay tribute to Mike Shephard, a man I met over 20 years ago when he first came to the English Baptist Church as our Pastor. He completely immersed himself in the task of running our church, was dedicated and committed, setting up a drop-in centre, opening up the Church on Christmas Day to feed the lonely and underprivileged and so many other projects too numerous to mention. All this was done with patience and good humour.

Unfortunately nothing in life is constant and Mike had to move on to pastures new but we have remained in touch.

And so finally, after 47 sometimes grueling years I'm sure, Mike is retiring. So, I'd like to say thank you Mike for your guidance, care and help over the years. You deserve a well earned rest, so I send you and Gwen my love and best wishes for a long and happy retirement. I'm sure Mike your Maker will be looking down and saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Daphne English Baptist Lammas Street.

Liz Amery writes

I have known Mike, Gwen and family for as long as I can remember. I was only young when my family started going to the English Baptist Church where Mike became the minister. I'll always remember whenever I saw Mike and Gwen, they would both give me the biggest hug ever! [and they still do now!]

I have such wonderful memories of all the things we used to do at the English Baptist, such as sleeping out in cardboard boxes, going on mountain walks and even Carols by Candlelight stick in my memory as a young child. Mike dedicated me at the English Baptist Church when I was 9 so when I had my little girl Ellie -Grace and heard that Mike was coming back to the Carmarthen area there was no-one else I would have wanted to dedicate her more than Mike and was absolutely thrilled when he agreed. This led us on to becoming members of the Sunday School with Helen and Sian. I think I'm not the only one who will say that both Mike and Gwen have had such a positive and Godly influence on my life.

I wish Mike a happy and healthy retirement, and will miss him and Gwen lots.

All our love and best wishes

Liz and Ellie-Grace

Donna writes

Dear Mike and Gwen- so much I could say that I don't know what to say. So I'll keep it short. Thank you to two amazing people. Good luck on your semi- retirement Mike. Hope you and Gwen enjoy yourselves. Hope you get to relax more.

Really gonna miss you. Be great if you can keep in touch. You've got my number- if you haven't let me know.

All the best -Donna

Jackie writes

Wishing you both a long and happy retirement . It's been a pleasure to know you and to have heard and enjoyed Mike's sermons which are always thought provoking. Hoping we will see you soon. Good health and all the very best from Jackie and family.

Meinir Loader writes

Rhaid yw manteisio ar y cyfle yma i ddymuno'n dda i Weinidog Eglwys Babell Zion Newydd, y Parchedig a Mrs Mike Shephard ar eu hymddeoliad. Cyfoethogwyd yr Eglwys ynghyd ag ardal ehangach gan Weinidogaeth ysbrydoledig Mike, y gŵr diymhongar a didwyll, pregethwr yr Efengyl a bugail ffyddlon. Diolch amdano ac am y fraint o'i adnabod ef a'i briod Gwen.

Lee writes

" To Mike, wishing you and Gwen all the best as you enter into a new phase of your life. May you enjoy the extra time that you'll be able to spend in the garden and doing the things you enjoy."

A Wedding at Babell Zion Newydd

Cynhaliwyd priodas Sinderela yng Nghapel y Babell gan blant Dosbarth Pwyll o Ysgol Llangynnwr. Roedd hi'n gyfle ardderchog i'r plant dderbyn profiadau gwahanol ac yn esiampl hyfryd o'r berthynas rhyngweithiol rhwng y Capel a'r Ysgol. Mwynhaodd y plant a'r athrawon y diwrnod ac y maent yn estyn diolchiadau i bawb a oedd ynghlwm â'r oedfa.

Mrs Michelle Llewelyn



QUIZ and CAWL 29th February to celebrate St. David's Day

Twpsod Tŷ Hen, Mongrels, The Goonies, CND, House Trained, The Strollers, John the Baptist's Team, The Dream Team, Cennin Pedr, Ramsey Street, Under Dogs and The Cooks made up the twelve teams who noisily contested the quiz this year and the feedback indicated they all had fun – well I hope so! Twelve teams was certainly an improvement on last year's nine. Most of the teams did very well indeed but the two papers covering general knowledge proved to be the Achilles heel for one or two. It is pleasing to record that all the teams got over half the questions correct and the winners got within 9 points of sweeping the board. Having said all that not all teams had four players, there were a couple teams of two; and both did well. The winning CND team fielded five people (three players plus two observers apparently). Sadly, as I had only provisioned for teams of four they had to share four tubes of Smarties but got a double dip in the 'sweetie box'. I suspect Janet, who incidentally wasn't competing this year, had briefed some chapel acquaintances on her ploy of aiming to come last and picking up a booby prize. Regardless, Twpsod Tŷ Hen went away with a little bottle of wine each and everyone got a dip in the 'sweetie box'.

The quiz was just one aspect of the proceedings and at the midpoint of the evening everyone was invited to take their seats at tables in the vestry to be served with a bowl of cawl. The tables had been attractively laid out and each had French bread in a basket and Cheddar cheese on plates. The atmosphere was warm and jolly with everyone enjoying themselves. I think it is safe to say that the meal went well.

There are several reasons for the meal's success which I would like to share with you all, as it is the work behind the scenes that ensures the success of any venture. The 'Quiz and Cawl' always starts with Sian and Helen joining Linda and me in preparing the vegetables and lamb, and cooking the cawl in my kitchen at home. That is always great fun with lots of banter and laughter. Latterly as we were preparing the tables Linda suggested that instead of people queuing up for their cawl that they were seated and then served. This simple idea turned out to work very well indeed with Linda filling the bowls and Maisie, Nelda, Helen and Sian taking them round on trays. It is worth remembering too that at the end of the evening there is rather a lot of clearing up to do. During the second half of the quiz my scorer, Linda, kept sneaking off to the vestry to wash the dishes, so at the end of the evening the work for the rest of us was much reduced. Thanks, again to Nelda, Maisie, Helen and Sian for clearing the tables and returning the Vestry and the Chapel back to normal.

It is also worth noting that other than the cost of the cheese and bread all the ingredients for making approximately 50 portions of cawl were donated. I have left out the donor's names to save them any embarrassment; but I'm sure you will know who they are.

I am pleased to make the following comment every year I'm quizmaster. When you have so many willing and hard working people backing you, running a quiz is so easy. A huge thank you to you all.

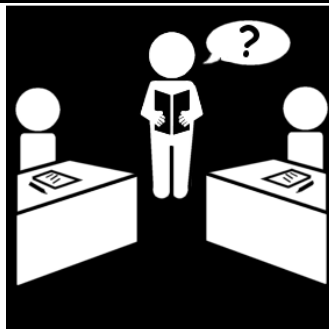
Diolch yn fawr i chi gyd
Trevor Lloyd



Molly Thomas, the registrar, oversees the signing of the register.



Llangunnor School children receive prizes for the 'Letters to God' Competition.



After our disappointing showing in last year's annual quiz at Babell, we decided this year to up the ante and enter two teams. **"John the Baptist's Team"** comprised Steve, Sheila, Menna and myself, a very strong-looking line-up on paper. It must be said straight away that without Menna we wouldn't have won this quiz. We didn't win it with Menna either, but that's hardly the point. In the post-match inquest into our lack of success on the night, several excuses were proffered: Babell's home advantage; key injuries to squad members in the qualifying rounds; the absence of questions on sport; one or two contentious answers (e.g. "England" was deemed to be incorrect to "Which country was known as Albion?"); and finally our team members obviously being far too young to remember songs like "Mellow Yellow" and films such as "Pink Panther". But in the final analysis we were forced to confront the truth – the main reason for our defeat was that we didn't know very much. Having mistaken St. Paul's Cathedral for St. Peter's Basilica (900 miles away), perhaps we should have gone to Specsavers.

Fortunately honour was restored to the Baptist Church thanks to a magnificent performance by our A-team **"The Mongrels"**, consisting of Peter, Christine, Lois and Anne, who scored a mighty impressive 77 out of 87, a mere point behind the winners "CND". There was an ugly rumour circulating that this was far from a team effort: that Peter dictated all the correct answers, Lois copied them out, and the other two had only come for the cawl; this was hotly disputed by Christine and Anne.

Be that as it may, we all agreed that this was a splendid social occasion enjoyed by almost 50 participants, and our thanks go to Trevor Lloyd, the impassive, even-handed and affable quizmaster, and to all those who worked throughout the day to lay on a delicious supper of cawl, cheese and fresh bread.

Gyda llawer o ddiolch i'n ffrindiau yng Nghapel y Babell.

John

Cyngerdd Mawreddog/ Grand Concert



Braf oedd gweld Capel y Babell Zion Newydd yn gysurus lawn i groesawu Côr Meibion Dathlu Cwm Tawe dan arweiniad Mr Conway Morgan, ynghyd â llu o artistiaid. Dyma'r gyngerdd gyntaf i gael ei chynnal ers i'r Capel gael ei adnewyddu a da oedd defnyddio'r achlysur i goffáu y diweddarn Vernon Williams, blaenor a weithiodd yn ddiwyd i gynnal a chadw yr adeiladau yn ystod ei fywyd.

Fis Hydref diwetha, teithiodd y Côr i Pennsylvania gyda Ffion Haf, Helen Gibbon, Finley Bizell-Browning, Luke

James a Sion Matthey. Cawsom fwynhad o wrando ar ddetholiadau o sioeau cerdd *Miss Saigon*, *Phantom of the Opera* ynghyd â *Les Misérables*. Yn ogystal, cawsom berfformiadau cyfoethog gan artistiaid unigol a chan y Côr o emynau a chaneuon Cymraeg. Dyma oedd gwledd o ganu yn wir. Diolch am y fraint o fod yno.

Meinir Loader

Recollections of Company Sergeant- Major Keith Anders

Do you remember the old song which included the words “I joined the Navy to see the world”? Well, Company Sergeant –Major Keith Anders has certainly seen the world, not serving in the Navy but as a distinguished member of the Irish Guards. The Irish Guards were formed by Queen Victoria during the Boer War. The regiment proudly sported a marine- coloured plume which was worn in their head-gear to reflect the Irish connection with the clover. Keith found himself in the Guards at the tender age of 17- the Irish link coming from his mother’s family.

In those early days of endless training the idea was to produce a soldier who reacted immediately to commands on the parade ground and who would react in the same efficient way in combat. Weapon training took in the whole gamut of rifles, rocket launchers, grenades, knives and many other pieces of equipment. Keith recalls pressing his body low into the earth crawling under barbed wire in the dark with live ammunition being fired overhead. Those early days were grueling, character forming and tinged with adventure to an eager young man.

His 22 years of service included 14 years on active service with the Colours and 8 years as a reserve officer. Keith’s experience spanned the Middle East, the Far East, Africa and Europe. He served with the British Army of the Rhine [BAOR], the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation [NATO] and general peace- keeping duties.

Two of his proudest moments on ceremonial duty were, firstly, keeping guard outside Buckingham Palace, the night before the Queen’s Coronation and being part of the whole glorious event and secondly, being part of “The Death Watch Squad” guarding the coffin of Queen Mary as her body lay in state. His rifle inverted, head bowed low guarding the body of the late queen was strangely moving and awe inspiring.

Being shot in the stomach while on active service in Malaya must surely count as a low point but as is often the case in the forces, black humour prevailed. Keith recalls the medical officer saying, “Well one good thing, the bullet didn’t stop to have a look around-it was straight in and out.”

Keith recalls a surreal experience in the Sahara Desert- seeing a camel train appearing cresting a sand dune, approximately twenty camels led by a rider on the leading animal. Drug trafficking was a problem even in those days and millions of pounds worth of drugs heading for Europe were intercepted by HM Forces.

Other tough experiences included witnessing awful atrocities in Kenya in the days of Mau Mau. Sometimes it fell to Keith to oversee the burial of fallen colleagues, their bodies wrapped in groundsheets, their sacrifice often forgotten except by their loved ones and brothers-in-arms.

So Company Sergeant- Major Anders, thank you for your service to King, Queen and Country. Life in the Irish Guards took you to Germany, Norway, Egypt, Cyprus, Jordan, Kenya, Malaya, Japan and the Brecon Beacons. In each place, as a serving officer of HM Forces, you did your duty, whether in combat or on peace-keeping duties. We salute you Sir. Pat Morgan

Beibl.net



For many years the Bible has been accessible through the internet on Bible.net or Beibl.net. in Welsh. Now a hard copy of Beibl.net has been published making the Welsh version even more accessible in every day language. In this year of the Living Bible when we are encouraged to read a portion of the Bible every day, we are open to ideas on how we could draw attention to this fact. Is anybody up for a sponsored 24 hour reading of the Bible? This would mean organizing a rota of readers to read portions throughout the day and the night continuously until we complete the whole 66 books of the Bible: 39 in the Old Testament and 26 in the New Testament. We have already held a 24 organ marathon and Sleep out. This would be a new venture. Names gladly accepted.

Beibl.net

Mae beibl.net mewn print am y tro cyntaf, sef Beibl mewn Cymraeg llafar – iaith bob dydd. Mae’r cyfieithiad yma yn dod â’r Beibl yn fyw i genhedlaeth newydd o siaradwyr Cymraeg.

The last Word from Mike himself

Dear Friends

There is a well-known proverb which states that big doors are often supported by very small hinges. It is a reminder that seemingly insignificant events can have huge consequences and may well determine the future direction of our lives.

Think, for instance, of Simon of Cyrene – the man who carried the cross for Jesus. Had Simon entered the city one hour earlier, or one hour later, his history might have been entirely different. If he had accessed the city by some other gate he would not have caught the eye of the centurion who compelled him to undertake a task which, in years to come, if not then, would be seen as the most wonderful moment of his life. Listen to these words of J.P. Struthers: *“Ten years after this, or twenty, if you are spared, you may come to see that the most important event in this year was the crossing of a street, or the opening of a door, or what some might regard as just a chance word.”* Big doors do indeed swing on small hinges.

Just think. Had I not been doing a Saturday evening Football Echo round I would not have called at the home of a local Baptist Minister in the hope of making a sale. Had I not have done so I would not have met the Reverend Ronald Powell. Had that meeting not have happened I would not have come under his influence. If I had not met him I would not have attended his church and would never have become a minister. Had I not become a minister, I would not have gone to Bangor to study theology. Had that been the case I would not have met my wife. David and Catherine would not have been born. Our grandchildren would not have existed. A single football echo, costing but a few pence becomes, suddenly, one of the most significant of publications. All of us, I suspect, could tell a similar story of, seemingly trivial, events and ‘accidental’ happenings causing us to turn round and walk in completely new directions.

I sometimes ask the question would I have been a happier person had I not have done that football echo round? I didn’t usually sell the paper door to door but chose, instead, to ply my trade in the pubs and clubs where people were more likely to buy a copy. The manse was not really on my route. It would have been easier not to have bothered calling there. If I had given it a miss would my life have been better? Would it have been worse?

In the last newsletter, Gwen submitted an article on the highs and lows of being a minister’s spouse. I think it true to say that her contribution has provoked more response than any of my own contributions to newsletters over many years. The number of telephone calls received, particularly from the wives or husbands of ministers are quite substantial and all of them have said how much they appreciated her honesty.

Do I have the courage to be equally honest? Has that football echo proved to be a blessing or a curse?

I would have to say that churches can be very difficult places, with the phrase “walking on eggshells” coming readily to mind. I have never really understood why religious faith is so divisive and why it is that Christian people find it so difficult to love each other. Every minister expends a great deal of energy dealing with those proverbial ‘storms in teacups’ and in smoothing feathers which become quickly ruffled. As with so many ministers, I have had to spend time placating adults who have ‘fallen out with each other or with the church’ and have had to pour many a barrel of oil on troubled waters. It is not why we went into ministry but, sadly, it is part of the role.

I have also been surprised at the lack of charity shown by Christians towards ministers with whom they disagree. They can become quite hateful and their criticisms can be very barbed and cruel. The North Wales Baptist College, where I was a student was liberal in its teaching and we were encouraged to adopt a questioning approach to faith. It would not have been impossible for a Bangor student to hold to a belief in the inerrancy of scripture. Such a view would, however, be challenged and I, for one, felt liberated when I was introduced to new ways of thinking. As someone has put it: “The things we were allowed not to believe were as wonderful as the things we did believe.”

If I have been a little disillusioned with churches it is because our congregations, generally, do not want to be challenged in a similar way. Their cry is for “that old time religion” and the thought of having their prejudices disturbed is anathema to them. Let one example suffice:

I once preached a sermon on Jonah and the whale and suggested that the story was not to be taken literally. It was true, but it was truth expressed in the form of a parable. Jonah represented Israel. God chose the nation to make him known to other nations, symbolised by the kingdom of Nineva. Israel refused, preferring to keep the faith to itself. God

punished Israel by means of exile and disintegration – this being signified by Jonah being swallowed by a whale – until she repented and obeyed his will. Following the sermon I was approached by an elderly lady who, thankfully was only armed with an umbrella. “Young Man!” She thundered, “That was terrible! How dare you say such things! I believe every dot and comma of the Bible! If the Bible said that Jonah swallowed the whale I would believe it! I will see to it that you do not preach in this church again!” The tragedy is that her attitude is commonplace and that ministers, rather than face the fallout, keep their views to themselves or, at the very least, tone them down. It can be so frustrating.

I have also been saddened, over the years, by the unrealistic expectations which some churches have of their minister. There is an expectation, nurtured if not always voiced, that he or she must possess a variety of skills. They must be studious, give time to sermon preparation and deliver it with eloquence. They will possess pastoral gifts and will be good visitors, to the home and hospital. They will lead study groups, forge links with the community, be able to relate to young people, have boundless energy – and what is more – be prepared to work for a salary which, in real terms, averages out at less than the minimum wage! Most ministers, inevitably, will rely upon their spouse’ income to supplement their own. Failing that, there is the option of taking on additional employment and serving the churches for a reduced stipend.

It would be my view that nothing disillusion a minister more than church members who opt out of church life and who attend infrequently. I accept that numbers are not everything. I also know that a good congregation gives wings to our words and that it is easier to preach to the many, than to the few. The Ministry is a lonely job and encouragement, in the form of a warm word or regular attendance at worship goes an awfully long way.

All that said, I do feel privileged to have been called to the work of Christian Ministry and, if it were possible to go back in time, I would do the same thing again.

I know of few professions where one is allowed to share, so intimately, in the highs and lows of human life. I have been invited to stand with people on the mountain tops of their experience and to be part of their joy and happiness. I have also been confidante to their innermost secrets. I have ministered to them in times of illness. I have buried their dead or held their own hand as they themselves have passed from the world. I have laughed with people. I have cried with them. I have shared silences too deep for words.

The Christian Ministry has afforded me the opportunity to touch many lives and I am grateful for having been given a vision of what the church, at its best, can become. It is a family in which people care for each other and in which people, whatever their background, are accepted and feel at home. The church is at its best when it is the ‘Body of Christ, acting out his ministry and mission to the world. In looking back I thank God for giving me the energy to set up Drop In Centres and Friendship Centres – initiatives staffed by people who seldom get recognition – but which have helped so many in need of human friendship.

I have ministered in some eight churches, with varying degrees of success. I have made mistakes along the way but can say, with honesty, that I have always ‘done my best’ and have never given less than 100% in terms of commitment. For most of my 48 years in ministry I have exercised a dual role, earning my main source of income from ‘secular’ occupation. That will have brought me close to ‘burn out’ on occasion. It has, though, enabled me to help revitalise small, struggling churches which, otherwise, could not have afforded ministry.

I have met some very lovely people over the years, in every church, and none more so than here at Babel Zion Newydd. I am grateful for your friendship, encouragement and support. Our friendship will, of course, continue. So, in answer to my opening question – was that ‘Echo round’ the cause of a blessing or a curse? It resulted in a more difficult life than I might have had but also a more fulfilled one. It resulted in wounds, and heartbreak on occasion but also enrichment in a deepening of experience and in the form of ministering angels who brought healing and fresh resolve. It lead me into pathways I would never otherwise have walked and which will, no doubt, have equipped me for the next stage of the spiritual journey.

Let me close by thanking Ron Powell for purchasing that Football Echo, even though he had no interest in football! I have cursed you, on occasion, Ron! As I look back, though, on all the ups and downs of church life, I know that it was a blessing when our paths crossed.

One other thing. My thanks to Gwen for ‘always being there’ and for supporting me through thick and thin. I couldn’t have done it without her.

Mike Shephard



Ar fore lau gwlyb o Ionawr dyma lun o'r Dosbarth Cymraeg yn chware Gêm y 'Steddfod dan arweiniad Bronwen Wilkins.

Mae'n dda gweld Bronwen nôl gyda ni ar ôl cwmp ar wyliau yn yr eira nôl yn Chwefror. Rydym yn falch iawn eich bod yn well Bronwen.



Perfformiwyd y ddrama-gerdd Esther gan Nan Lewis ac Eric Jones yn y Lyric diwedd Ionawr. Helen gymerodd rôl y Frenhines Fasti. Mae Cwmni Myrddin yn diolch i'r Babell am gael ymarfer yn y capel ac maent wedi cyfrannu can punt tuag at yr achos. Diolch yn fawr iddynt. Bydd ail gyfle i weld y cynhyrchiad ar Fedi'r 14 eg yn y Ffwrnes Llanelli.



Christmas - The Story-the Second Year.

Members of the town's chapels for the second year running came together to present the CHRISTMAS Story at the English Baptist Chapel in Lammas Street during the third week of December. It is estimated that around 1746 people – this including school children - attended. Helen and Sian represented Babell but while Helen was happy to be in costume, Sian preferred to brave the elements during what was a very wet and cold week to ensure that the donkeys were well looked after.

A reunion took place on May 12th when the company watched the DVD in Welsh and in English. We look forward to having your support again this year.

The Next newsletter will start a series on our favourite hymns. Could you please prepare a few notes on your favourite hymn/s[up to 3] explaining the reason for your choice. We look forward to hearing from you.



"I don't think we have a signal, Mike. We've sort of lost sight of the reservoir."

"Never mind! Time for a photo call!"





Which direction do you think we should take then?



Linda thinks she knows!



Mike is still not sure!



**Time for a cuppa!
Linda's mobile App has saved the day.
"Gwen, do you remember those bulls on Anglesey?"**

THE COMING QUARTER

MAY	1	10.30	Mr Hywel Hughes
	8	10.30	Minister Communion
	15	2pm	Mr Hugh Waddell 2pm
	22	10.30	MINISTER'S FINAL SERVICE
	29	2pm	Pastor John Morgan 2pm
June	5	10.30	Mr David Davies
	12	10.30	Mr David Folland
	19	10.30	Family Service
	26	2pm	Pastor John Morgan
		4.30pm	Gŵyl Hirddydd Haf y Dosbarth yn y Parc dan arweiniad Parch Beti Wyn James
July	3	10.30	Mr Hywel Hughes
	10	10.30	Sul Sbsial Ysgol Bro Myrddin
	17	10.30	Family Service
	24	10.30	Pastor John Morgan
	31	2pm	Rev Jonathan Kirk
August 14th			Revd Mike Shephard: United Service for the town held in Babell Zion Newydd
Sept	4th	10.30	Family Service
	11th	10.30	Revd Adelaide Wheeler Cocks
	18th	2pm	Pastor John Morgan
	25th		Cymanfa Ganu Priordy Caerfyrddin

Open The Book

A team is being established to take Assemblies in Llangunnor School as part of the Bible Society "Open the Book" project. If you are interested in joining please contact Helen 01267290518. On Sunday May 15th Helen received the sum of £100 from Bethel Church Johnstown towards the 'Open the Book' project as they commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Apostolic Church. A Prayer of Blessing was said on the day and received, inscribed in frame, to commemorate the occasion. Christmas- the Story also received £100 as did many other charities in the town. We thank them most warmly for their generosity.