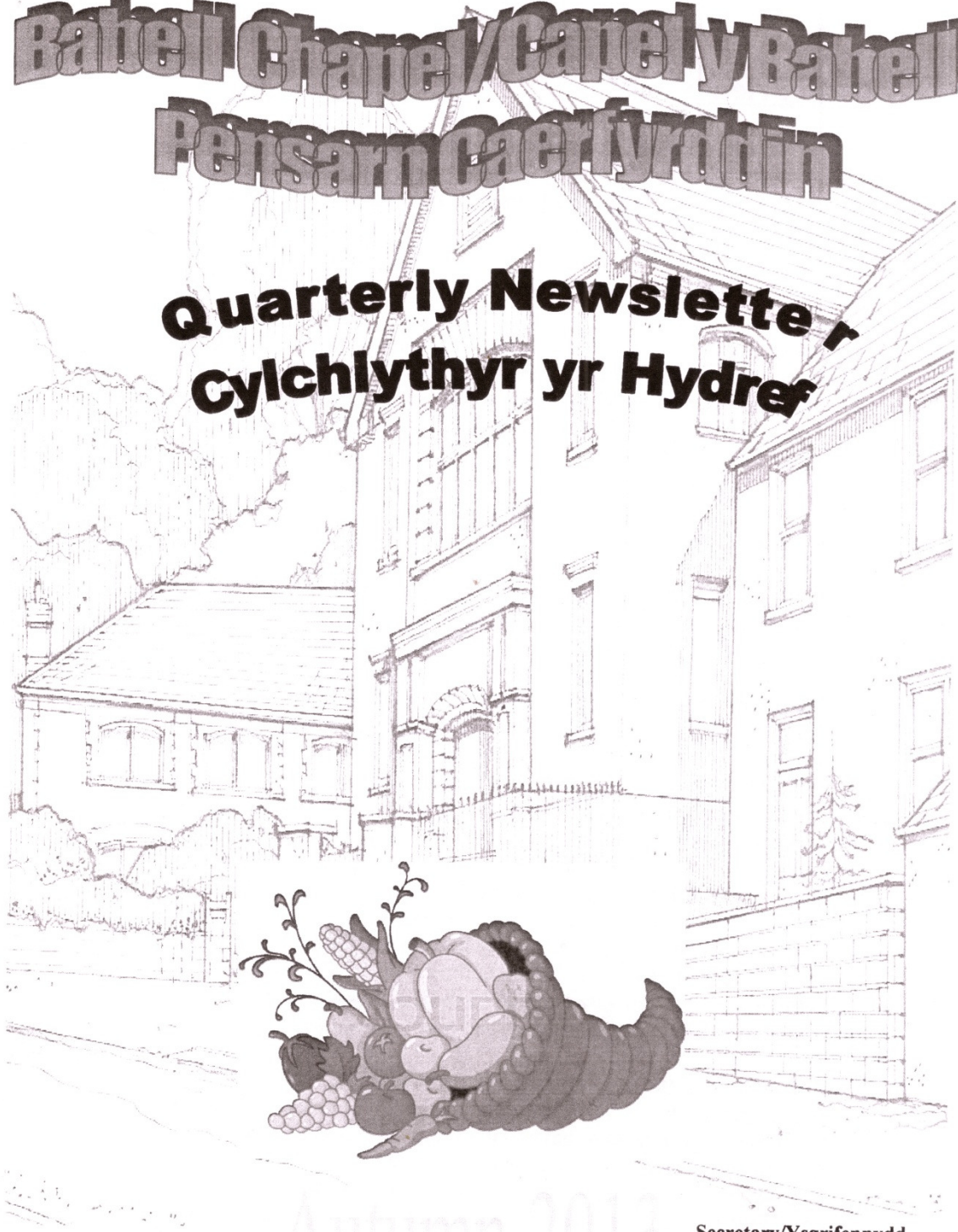


Babell Chapel/Capel y Babell Pensarn Caerfyrddin

Quarterly Newslette Cylchlythyr yr Hydref



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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 Mike Shephard for permission to do this.



Online at

<http://www.llangunnor.net>

Dear Friends

I doubt if many of us will have read the fifth chapter of Genesis. It is one of the most tedious chapters in the Bible in that it is little more than a list of names. Yet this genealogy, dull though it is, contains a gem of spiritual biography.

Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him

It is incredibly hard to sum up the totality of a person's life in a single sentence or phrase and the epitaphs found on gravestones rarely do justice to all that the person was when alive. I think that this particular tribute comes close to achieving that end when it says, quite simply, that Enoch had *walked with God*.

It is a lovely thing to have said about one and causes us to ask what such a walk might entail?

For one thing, it will be a reverent, trustful walk. The Bible contains a story about King Hezekiah and tells of how he was stricken down with a very serious illness from which he almost died. When his health returned he expressed thankfulness to God and said that he would now *go softly all my days*. It is a beautiful phrase and truly describes the walk of a religious person. He or she is one who always walks as though in a solemn procession in some great cathedral, as we walk, when suddenly, in Austria or Italy, we come upon a wayside Calvary. Those who walk with God will always walk very reverently. And when the way gets rough and the sun goes in and the storm breaks, they will not rebel, or utter wild and whirling words about God's strange dealings with them. They know that we are in the world, not on a pleasure-cruise, but on a pilgrimage, to grow a soul; that wounds and weariness are to be expected and call forth the hero within us. They do not necessarily believe that God directly wills everything that happens in life. They believe, rather, that God does will something *in* everything that happens to them and humbly, and trustingly they seek to discover that something and obey.

For another thing, the truly religious person will always walk compassionately. We have all met people who are so keen to reach their goal that they never seem to have time to turn aside and help another. One of the most unpleasant people I ever encountered boasted that "*I don't do compassion*" and, these years on, I remain shocked by his words. How different was the attitude of Jesus. He always felt another's

burden as though it were his own and sought to help. "Come unto me," he cried to the toiling, heavy-laden multitudes, "and I will give you rest." As we grow older we realise that Wordsworth was right to equate the best moments of our lives with occasions when we have performed little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love:

*The strongest moment of my life
Is when I think about the poor;
When, like a spring that rain has fed,
My pity rises more and more.*

*The flower that loves the warmth and light
Has all its mornings bathed in dew;
My heart has moments wet with tears,
My weakness is they are so few.*

It is the moments 'wet with tears' which are our finest moments, when we are moved with compassion for some other's need and go forth to help. As one minister said to his congregation: "All of us here are people of like passions and sufferings: let us help one another for the Cross's sake, for God's sake, for our own sake. Let us be merciful to one another. Let us comfort one another. Be kind to the person next to you this week. He also, as well as you, is fighting a hard battle."

The religious person will also walk hopefully. He or she does not believe that life is just striving and ending in nothing. They are convinced that there will be a climax to every human story and that the adventure of living goes on. I wonder have we read or seen that strange play 'Waiting for Godot?' Someone once asked a producer of the play to say what message it contained? He replied: "It reminds us that life is so grim we don't want to go on. But life says we must go on. So we go on." Just that! The religious person also goes on, but not grudgingly, not despairingly, but hopefully.

One evening towards the end of General Booth's life, his daughter found him in his study extremely weak and frail. Booth at that time was almost blind. The window looked out across the countryside and, today, there was a beautiful sunset. 'Can you see it?' she asked her father. 'No,' he said, 'I can't see it.' She led him nearer the window and held him up, but it was no use. 'No,' my dear,' he said, 'I cannot see the sunset, but I shall see the sunrise.'

All of us, if we so wish, can walk with God. One suspects it will be an immensely enriching pilgrimage, though not an easy one. Enjoy the journey!

FAMILY NEWS

It is hard to believe that I will shortly be celebrating my first anniversary as minister of Babell, Carmarthen. I cannot say that we have experienced substantial growth during these early months but new friends have joined us and are to be thanked for giving us cause for hope. Indeed, in early September it will be my privilege to receive *Esme Phillips* into the membership of our church and we welcome her warmly. One does not, of course, have to become an official member of Babell to be part of our family and anyone with an interest in the work here already 'belongs' in the true sense of that word. We are grateful to everyone who, in some way or another, has contributed to the good of our church in the year that has gone and are looking forward, with anticipation, to the opening of our *Friendship Centre* on 19th September.

Can I, at this point, express good wishes to *Helen Gibbon* as she retires from teaching. She has specialised in Religious Education and, over the years, will have had a wonderful influence on many hundreds of young people. She has also used her considerable musical talents on their behalf and I am aware, that at the Urdd Eisteddfod this year, the choirs lead by her achieved considerable success. Fortunately, her skills will continue to be used, both within the community and the church, and for this we are grateful.

In similar vein, we congratulate *Marian Evans* on the success which she enjoyed at the same eisteddfod and count ourselves blessed to have two such gifted sisters contributing to the musical life of our church. Some friends, inevitably, will have had little to celebrate in recent months and we remember those who have lost loved ones during this period. We think especially of *May James* who has lost a brother, and of *Nan Thomas* who mourns the passing of a nephew.

We think, too, of friends who are unwell and remember them in our prayers. I hesitate to name names for fear of omitting someone but must mention *Vernon Williams*. His courage is an inspiration to us all and we do wish him well.

Our appreciation, once again, to *Trevor Lloyd* and *Linda Owen* for organising another quiz night. These really are happy occasions and add to the enjoyment which should be part and parcel of church life. Somewhat unusually our church *closes* for the month of August and, to begin with, I found this strange. Retrospectively, I can see the value of it in that it affords all of us the opportunity to recharge our batteries and return to church in September rested and revitalised. One of the things I learned on my walk around Anglesey was the importance of solitude and quiet and of becoming 'less busy' – if only for brief periods. It is possible

to lose Christ in serving him and August was a time, hopefully, when all of us rediscovered him again.

As we look towards the future can I please stress the importance of *being loyal* to the worship of our church. I am the last person to condemn non attendance as there was a seven year period in my own life when I opted out of churchgoing completely. Sometimes that 'opting out' is due to a loss of faith. We might have been hurt by life or, possibly, by another person. We are all fragile people and, on occasion, handle things badly, or get things wrong. How lovely it would be, though, if we could all make a new beginning and work *together* to make Babell a very special place. I began our Family News by stating that I am approaching the first anniversary of my appointment as minister of this church. That said I will shortly be sixty seven and it is unlikely that I will have the strength or vitality to remain in post after my seventieth birthday. Please help me, in the time that I have left here, be it long or short, to ensure that this church 'goes on' whoever is minister and will never join the growing list of churches throughout Wales who have closed.

Thank you for making this first year *such a happy one* for me. We all 'get on' so well and there is a lovely 'family feel' here. If there are any undercurrents they are well hidden and the absence of friction is in itself a blessing.

With gratitude

MIKE SHEPHARD

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Please note that there will be no service here on Sept 29th.

The united Gymanfa Ganu will be held that day. Venue to be announced.

We are reminded that the service on October 20th will be our Harvest Service and will be a Family Service. **It will be at 10.30am.**

The next Newsletter will appear in late **November/early December**. It would be lovely to have contributions from others, so making it a production of the whole church. Items need to be with me by **20th October** as I am not here in November.

MFS

A visit to Glastonbury

At the end of July Gwyn and I spent a week in Glastonbury and once again on our travels were overwhelmed by the history and folklore connected this time with this quiet little town. [Not so quiet, I must add, when the annual festival is held in the vicinity about seven miles away in Pilton]. In the centre of the town there are the ruins of the abbey and monastery which cover about 36 acres. There on the way in, past St Patrick's little church dating back to the 12th century, is the Thorn of Glastonbury. According to tradition Joseph of Arimathea came to the Island of Glastonbury 30 years after the crucifixion of Jesus together with 11 of his followers. Joseph, a weary traveller, on reaching mount Wearyall planted his staff into the ground from which sprung a tree. This tree, a hawthorn tree, still flowers twice a year at Christmas and Easter and is known as the Thorn of Glastonbury. Further reading revealed that tradition also has it that Joseph of Arimathea was married to Mary's sister, making him an uncle of Jesus and that he actually came to Glastonbury with the child Jesus on one of his visits. This was the story which led William Blake to write that famous hymn which by now is known as Jerusalem and sung to the music of Sir Hubert Parry.

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark satanic mills?

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant

William Blake [1757-1827] wrote the hymn in 1804. Coincidentally W. Arvon Roberts Pwllheli in the Welsh Presbyterian paper "Goleuad" this week also goes onto say more. Another tradition has it that Jesus visited Cornwall and that he acquired mining skills which would account for the song that Cornish miners, about a hundred years ago, used to sing - "Jesus was a miner". It is also said that Joseph of Arimathea visited Cornwall in his own ships and that he stayed in St Just and St Michael's Mount.

William Blake was brought up during the Industrial Revolution in that part of industrialised England close to the Albion Mills on the river Thames which were destroyed by fire. Perhaps this is the reference to the "dark satanic mills" in his hymn. He contrasts this with the visit of Jesus to the green pastures of the unspoilt part of England which perhaps was home to Jesus for a brief time.

However, many including the theologian Spurgeon would dismiss these as pure fanciful tales for Blake asks four questions rather than stating a visit to be true. According to this view, the poem says that there may, or may not, have been a divine visit, when there was briefly heaven in England or it may be taken to mean a spiritual awakening. However there is nothing more powerful than a parable or a story to illustrate a particular truth and as one writer says: "But that was then; now, we are faced with the challenge of creating such a country once again."

EHG

Newyddion o'r Steddfod

Tra bod Mike yn cerdded arfordir Ynys Môn roedd rhai ohonom yn treulio wythnos yn yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol yn Ninbych ac wythnos braf oedd hi hefyd. Doedd dim llwyfan i fod eleni ac felly roedd hi'n braf cael mwynhau yr arlwy ar y maes ac yn y pafiliwn. Roedd y gwasanaeth ar fore Sul yn un i'w chofio am fwy nag un rheswm. Hir y cofiaf ddatganiad yr unawdydd a'r côr o'r Sanctus gan Gounod i ddechrau'r gwasanaeth a phob darlleniad a stori wedi eu trosglwyddo mor glir a deallus. Roedd y neges a oedd mewn tair rhan yn amserol iawn. Roedd yn ein hatgoffa am yr hyn y mae ein gweinidog am wneud yn y Babell sef bod rhaid i'n heglwysi estyn allan i'r gymuned. Rhaid iddynt fod ar agor ar hyd yr wythnos. Does dim pwrpas agor y drysau am un awr yn unig ar y Sul heb gyswllt â chynulleidfao o un wythnos i'r llall. Soniwyd sut roedd rhai eglwysi yn gweithio'n ddyfal i ddarparu banciau bwyd yn Ninbych ac mae hyn yn wir am sawl ardal erbyn hyn ar draws Cymru. Mae gennym rôl i chwarae. Hoffwn gymryd y cyfle hwn i ddiolch i Mike am yr ymdrech y mae wedi ei wneud dros yr haf i godi arian ar gyfer y ganolfan ac am ei weledigaeth o'r hyn all ddigwydd yno o wythnos i wythnos.

Dwy ddim yn un sydd yn hoffi bod mewn tyrfa. Am ryw rheswm rwy'n gweld torf yn fygythiol iawn ond nos Wener olaf y steddfod mi wnes i ymuno gyda'r dorf oedd yn gwrando ar gyngerdd ffarwel Edward H. Mae nhw'n dweud bod pum mil yno felly nawr mae gennyf ryw syniad maint y dorf roedd Iesu wedi eu porthi. Mae clawr y Goleuad yr wythnos hon yn agor gyda geiriau Mistar Duw, un o ganeuon mwyaf cyfarwydd Edward H ynghyd ag Ysbryd y Nos, Plant y Fflam a Cân yn Ofer i enwi ond rhai. Er mai i'r saithdegau y perthyn y caneuon hyn maent yr un mor berthnasol heddiw ac yn ymwneud gyda chwestiynau mawr bywyd sydd yn peri i ni gwestiynu llawer am ein perthynas ni â'n gilydd. Does dim rhyfedd yn y byd fod plant, rhieni, neiniau a theidiau yno yn morio canu oherwydd geiriau cyfarwydd ydynt, yn dal yn cael eu canu gan gorau ysgol, coleg a phentref. Cawsant eu hysbrydoli gan hinsawdd y cyfnod o ganlyniad i ddigwyddiadau a phrofiadau personol ac mae'n bosib y gellir dweud mai ffurf ar emyn ydynt mewn dillad newydd.

Mistar Duw, Mistar Duw maent yn dweud dy fod yn fyw,

Mistar Duw, wyt ti gyda ni o hyd?

Ar faes y frwydr mae bywyd fel y gwydr.....

Wyt ti'n clywed swm y bwled ar y bared?

Wedi i mi farw ydw i'n cael byw?

Mae Cân yn Ofer yn gofyn y cwestiwn pam ydym yn cefnu ar y malais a'r trais sydd yn y byd a'u bod hi'n hen bryd i ni godi llais. Oes rhywbeth wedi newid ers y saithdegau? Diolch i Edward H am gyfraniad mor godidog.

EHG



Llongyfarchiadau mawr i Lyn a Janet Pentremeurig ar ddathlu eu priodas Ruddem ar Awst 31ain. Pob dymuniad da i chi'ch dau.



Many congratulations to Lyn and Janet Pentremeurig on their Ruby Wedding Anniversary August 31st. Best wishes to you both.

ELF AND SAFETY

God was having another bad day. Tomorrow, according to his diary, was The Beginning and he had thought that everything was set to go. The lawyers and scientists at the Multiverse Planning Authority had given the OK to his plans, and he had finally convinced them that the Big Bang would not make a noise if there was no life form yet in existence to hear it. The Trade Descriptions people had then quibbled about the legitimacy of calling it a Big Bang if no one could hear a bang, but he had finally gained their permission.

So god was preparing to get a good night's sleep, as he had a creative day ahead, when there was a knock on his celestial door. "Who on not-yet-Earth could that be?" he wondered, and opened the door to a group of people with clipboards. "Health and Safety." Their leader said by way of introduction. "I'm Health, she's Safety and the rest of us are 'and.' No, only joking. Seriously though, nothing to worry yourself about. We just need to give your plans a final once over before you start."

"I thought we'd been through all that with the Planning People," God said.

"They're concerned with the general impact your Universe will make on the Multiverse," the man explained. "We're talking more about the safety of the enterprise for the life forms that live there. We've looked at your plans and must say there are one or two aspects that give us cause for concern." He took a thick dossier from his briefcase.

"Here we go again," muttered God under his breath.

"We see that, at the start, it will be without form and void," said the H&S man.

"No problems with that, though you do say that darkness will be upon the face of the deep. This seems to us to run the risk of people falling into the deep and drowning. As a general rule, we do insist that bodies of deep water should be well lit."

"That's why I immediately create light," God said.

"Yes," nodded the H&S man, "but you then go on to divide the light from the darkness, leaving the darkness in place at night, as we understand it. That's definitely a safety hazard and warning notices would be required."

"As you can see from the plans," God said, "there will be two lights, one for the day and the other for the night."

"With respect, your Godliness, you seem to have the lights the wrong way round from an H&S perspective," the man said. "You should have the bright light at night when it's needed. The other one's only reflected light, as we understand it, and not enough to keep people safe from falling into the deep."

"Anything else?" God sighed.

"We're concerned about the brighter lights in the sky," said the man. "There seems to us to be a high probability that they will collapse under their own gravitational pull and form black holes, which will pose a danger to anyone coming close. You'll need some Danger: Black Holes signage."

"And then," the man continued, "We come to our snake-bite risk assessment in your planned garden."

And God did shake his head sadly and showed his visitors out.

From the 'Beachcomber' column in the Daily Express
Submitted by Gwen Shephard

AN ANGLESEY PILGRIMAGE

In late July/early August I enjoyed a very special holiday walking the Isle of Anglesey Coastal Path. It is 125 miles in length and, given that I have a tendency to get lost on occasion, it can be considerably longer. The scenery, from beginning to end, is stunning and, with the exception of one rainy afternoon, was enjoyed in glorious sunshine.

I use the word 'pilgrimage' deliberately. This was always intended to be a 'get away from it all' kind of holiday. It was an opportunity to enjoy a time of solitude and to appreciate the kind of silence alluded to by Joan in Shaw's play. Joan is speaking to the Dauphin who has complained that the voices should be coming to him and not to her. Joan replies:

They do come to you, Sire, but you do not hear them. When the Angelus sounds, you have done with it and go your way. If only you would sit in the field, at eventide, listening to the pealing of the bells after they have ceased ringing you too would hear the voice of God.

This particular pilgrimage would have been difficult to arrange without the assistance of others and I must express gratitude to those who helped make it possible. I am grateful to Gwen for permitting me to 'disappear' for ten days whilst she stayed with one of her sisters near Caernarfon. Mrs Sylvia Bennett, who runs a B&B in Holyhead, provided me with a comfortable base and so wonderful a breakfast that lunch was unnecessary! The members of the New Park Street Baptist Church, in the town, were very helpful, providing transport to those parts of the Island which were not easily accessed by bus. To Clive, Wendy and Mike – My sincere thanks.

DAY ONE. HOLYHEAD TO TREARDDUR BAY

This 12 mile stretch of coastline is one of the most dramatic sections of the entire coastal path with the greatest height gain – up to 2000 feet if you take in Holyhead Mountain. It is also a section of great contrast; from the busy port of Holyhead, to the isolated expanse of heather-clad cliffs around Holyhead Mountain and beyond.

The area around South Stack Lighthouse is breathtakingly beautiful and it must have been a wonderful experience to have been a child growing up in such surroundings. Holyhead was Gwen's childhood home, of course with 'The Mountain' being part of her actual postal address. This area was her 'playground' and one can well understand why it is that she still

misses a view of the sea.

The Apostle John is said to have written the Book of Revelation but I have always doubted if that is the case. John, the disciple of Jesus, was very much a man of the sea and it was on the shore of Galilee that he and his fellow fisherman first met with Jesus. The sea was part of his very heart and yet, when describing the 'New Jerusalem' (Rev 21:1) he says that *"the sea was no more."* I cannot imagine that such a heaven would have been heaven for him – any more than it would be for anyone brought up within sight and sound of the waves breaking upon the Anglesey shore. Whoever it was who wrote the mysterious book of Revelation it is not likely to have been the disciple John and material which has ever been associated with religious eccentrics cannot, I feel, be traced back to his hand.

As I thought on these things I was thankful for the freedom to hold such views with the capacity to doubt being one of God's greatest gifts to humankind. I could not comprehend being a Moslem and being forbidden to question the divine authorship of the Koran, which is said to be the very word of God and which cannot, in any way, be challenged or questioned. I thought that the world would be a saner place if we all agreed that God *does not write books*. I believe in a God whose hands bear the blood stains of Calvary. Stained with blood. Not with ink!

Since I last walked this familiar stretch of coastline I noticed that several seats given in memory of loved ones had been sited in a seaward direction. I noticed the names of the deceased and their age. I realised that, for the most part, they had been younger than me. I thought of how unpredictable life can be and of how fortunate I was to have sufficient health and energy to be attempting a 125 mile walk. I deliberately use the word 'fortunate' as to use the word 'God' would be to raise more questions than answers. I know for a fact that God does not have favourites and that to be the 'chosen' of God is, in any event, something of a dubious blessing. As one Jewish Rabbi, with reference to the Jews being God's Chosen People, is said to have declared: *"I don't mean to sound ungrateful, Lord, but would it be possible, just once in a while, for you to choose someone else instead?"*

DAY TWO. TREARDDUR BAY TO RHOSNEIGR

The official guidebook advises a walk of just over eight miles ending at Four Mile Bridge. In order to complete the walk within my own time

scale meant that, today, I would need to reach Rhosneigr which appeared to be double that distance, if not more.

Leaving Trearddur Bay I passed the Treaddur Bay Hotel where, in 1967, when still a student, I had worked as a waiter. The employment lasted one day! I recalled serving at table during a very posh do and asking a well dressed lady if she wanted mashed potato. The mash simply would not come off the spoon and she ended up with as much potato on her clothes as on her plate. Serving the peas was also something of a disaster and it was obvious that silver service was not for me. I did not go back on the second day – even to collect my pay! The Head waiter, noticing my absence would undoubtedly have questioned my staying power. I did though find alternative employment – as a bin man in Banger – and enjoyed that Job more than any other work done, before or since.

I think I demonstrated excellent staying power today, though. By the end of the day my feet were badly blistered, particularly under the toes and I realised that it was some time since I had undertaken a long distance walk. I loved gardening but, this apart, had done little exercise for some months. I really wasn't as fit, or prepared as I had imagined.

I wondered how fit I was spiritually? Did I do enough spiritual exercise. When did I last pray? Not in the sense of talking. But of listening? When was the last time I had read the Bible – other than for the purpose of sermon preparation? Did I make time for God in the overly busy life that I led? If we lose what we do not use than was I at risk of losing my soul? Was it credible that a minister of religion, dealing with matters of the spirit could lose the capacity for God which, ultimately, is what is meant by the word 'Soul?'

By the end of that second day my feet were an agony and I began to worry that I would be unable to walk at all on the day following. Why hadn't I prepared more vigorously? My doubts increased further when, at Rhosneigr, my muscles went into spasm and I could barely reach the car. Upon arriving back in Holyhead I lay on the bed and being unable to move from it had to forego an evening meal. I slept until morning.

DAY THREE. RHOSNEIGR TO MALTRAETH

Amazingly, I felt much better today. A good night's rest had worked wonders. I remembered preaching on one of the psalms and focussing on the words. 'He gives to his beloved sleep.' More modern versions of the Bible translate it differently to that and suggest that the more accurate

rendering is “He gives to his beloved *in* sleep. The idea here is that God ministers to the soul when we are asleep performing a secret ministry of which we have no conscious awareness but from which we will have benefited. The debilitating muscle aches and spasms had certainly disappeared and, with the help of a blister kit, courtesy of Boots (no pun intended) I was ready for the challenge of a new day.

Today’s route took me inland as the Bodorgan Estate, where William and Kate rent a home, does not permit public access across its land. What a shame. Whatever happened to the ‘Right to Roam’ legislation? By what authority can any landowner prevent access to the countryside and to an ocean which is every person’s birthright? I felt this denial, instinctively to be wrong and believed strongly, that it should be challenged. I was glad to note that I had not lost my ‘political’ soul and had not become immune to such issues as class and privilege. I am walking the Anglesey coastline at the time of a by-election. Plaid Cymru is the frontrunner. Dare I say that I want UKIP to win!!!

The blisters are still troublesome but I am determined that they will not undermine the sheer pleasure of walking. I thought of a friend who was now paralysed having broken her neck in a riding accident. How she would love to be able to undertake this walk. Why am I moaning about blisters? How dare I moan about them!

DAY FOUR. MALTRAETH TO NEWBOROUGH

The toilets at Newborough were closed. This resulted in a late start as I had to look elsewhere for one that was open. I then had to return to Newborough and leave my car there before travelling on to my new starting place in Maltraeth.

I thought about churches which are closed for the greater part of every week and of those which offer nothing but religious succour to those who venture inside. Where are the Drop-In Centres and Friendship Centres? I know of churches which offer every kind of help and are never closed to the needy. They are staffed, not simply by professional clergy but by a variety of dedicated volunteers, inclusive of doctors, nurses, counsellors, teachers and parents who are able to offer much more than can be supplied by the minister, no matter how dedicated she or he might be. I sometimes imagine a depressed person, contemplating suicide, who stops outside some of our churches and examines the notice board which outlines the activities for the week: *Sunday Worship. Prayer Group. Bible Study. Women’s Fellowship. Men’s Fellowship.* Concluding that there is

nothing here for them they carry on their way and ultimately take their own life. I reminded myself that I was undertaking a sponsored walk aimed at raising money to set up a Friendship Centre at the church where I am minister. The walk, at that moment seemed so worthwhile.

That said the horseflies were a real pain today and, never more so, than in Newborough forest. They really are quite horrible creatures. It was all very well for Mrs Alexander to write the hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' but she was taking a very narrow view of nature. She doesn't mention the horsefly who, forsaking the recently dumped mound of manure, lands on exposed skin and having sunk something into the human body begins to feast, hungrily, upon blood. Its a very inadequate theology that fails to take account of the less pleasant facts of human existence. Disease Germs! Plague.! Cancer! Earthquakes! Are we to say that God did not create such things? If he did create them then for what reason? And why didn't Noah swat that last pair of horseflies before they had chance to breed and inflict pain upon someone who was simply trying to undertake a charity walk?

As I thought on these things I took the utmost pleasure in killing as many of the pests as possible notching up at least three hundred kills in one afternoon! On each occasion I uttered words to the effect of "*Got you! You B***** Thing!*" Anyone hearing me would have been surprised to learn that I was a minister of a church!

The horseflies, of course were simply being horseflies. When all is said and done their bites are normally more of a nuisance than anything else.

I was reminded, though, that it is often the petty things that destroy the effectiveness of churches. Quarrels over silly things. Arguments over creedal statements. Many a church has been torn apart by the equivalent of horseflies! I wondered if I was part of the problem or part of the solution?

DAY FIVE. NEWBOROUGH TO BEAUMARIS.

Another Marathon in that I must have covered twenty miles today. The lack of bus services didn't help but there, it was a Sunday. Why do things shut down on Sundays? I was reminded of how I hated Sundays as a child. Don't do this! Don't do that! I remembered how I disliked Sunday School and, whenever possible, 'mitched off.' Even now, Sunday can be a tedious day with the most innocent of pleasures being frowned on by

churchgoers. It was said of the early puritans that they objected to bear-baiting, not because of the pain it gave the bear but because of the pleasure it gave the spectators. It seems to me that this puritan temperament lives on in some modern-day Christians and one can sympathise with those who see the church as unattractive. I thought of the way in which the Keep Sunday Special Campaign had frowned on sport on Sundays. Would it not have been better for the churches to have formed an inter-church football league with games being played, after church, on a Sunday? Why are we so slow to adapt to a changing world view?

DAY SIX. BEAUMARIS TO PENTRAETH

What wonderful views with the priory at Penmon, together with the headland itself, being a very special place. It was on the road to Penmon that I met a workman busily painting roadside stones white for fear that they could present a danger to unwary motorists. We began talking about stones in general and acknowledged that the stones would still be here long after the last motor vehicle had disappeared from the earth. It was a humbling thought and was reinforced by the quiet atmosphere of the priory church. One was reminded of eternal values and of lessons contained in nature. If we only had ears to hear the very stones of this place would have some very important things to say to us.

It was a few miles from Pentraeth that I encountered a bullock blocking my path. I tend to be wary when entering a field of livestock but this was a solitary creature, some distance away from the rest of the herd. Even so I was afraid. I recalled 'Pilgrim's Progress' and the story of the two lions blocking Christian's path. I remembered the counsel of Watchman, the porter: *Fear Not, Master Christian but go boldly forward keeping to the centre of the path.* Christian obeyed and, when he got closer to the lions he found that they were chained and could not reach him. I would do likewise and all would be well.

This bullock, unfortunately, had not read the script. As I approached him he bellowed loudly and the next moment I saw a large herd of bullocks bearing down the field in my direction. Losing any faith I possessed I ran as fast as my tired legs would permit, breathing a sigh of relief upon reaching a gate and clambering, breathlessly over. The fact that the gate was unhinged (a bit like me at this point) and held up by twine had gone unnoticed. My weight, alas, caused the string to break and down the gate fell, with me underneath! Ignoring any cuts and bruises I lifted it off and made good my escape, reaching the safety of a road before my 'persecuters.' I had to walk around the field in order to regain the path

being followed, relentlessly, by that same herd of bullocks which, thankfully were now separated from me by a thorny hedge. I muttered something like “So much for John Bunyan” and continued my journey.

All joking apart, it really is foolish to pretend that God delivers us from all the dangers of life or to see prayer as a cure-all for life’s problems. There are occasions when misfortunes come to meet us, not in ones or twos but in battalions and to argue that God will save us from them is nonsensical. The author of the 23rd Psalm did not ask to be delivered from the dark valley. He rejoiced, rather, that God would be with him amidst life’s shadows. In a world containing events such as The Holocaust it is only the theology of a Suffering God that can enable us to make sense of life and its tragedies.

DAY SEVEN. PENTRAETH TO MOELFRE

Beautiful beaches, such as Red Wharf Bay and Benllech made this section of the path a joy to walk. I found time to paddle in the shallows and be a child again. How sad when we forget that it is often the simple things of life that give most pleasure. I remembered camping in Benllech when our children were young. I can’t recall the year but do know that Boy George was ‘Top of the Pops.’ The holiday was memorable for the fact that Anglesey experienced an earthquake that summer and that Gwen and I could say, quite literally that “The earth moved for us.”

The beaches, for all their beauty, were not overly crowded, this despite the sunshine. I did see surfers, assisted by kites, riding the waves, all this against the backdrop of Snowdonia. What a lovely world we live in!

DAY EIGHT. MOELFRE TO CEMAES

Another long walk but necessary if I was to do the walk in ten days. The stretch of coastline between Amlwch and Cemaes is a walker’s dream and the scenery is amongst the best on offer. Not even a soaking could spoil the pleasure of walking it, though sunshine, obviously, would have been the icing on the cake. I recalled a song which contained the lines: “I never promised you a rose garden. There has to be a little rain sometimes.” It could be the theme song of our Christian Pilgrimage and we all need to bear in mind the old Arab proverb to the effect that “too much sunshine makes a desert.” I remember being a minister in Devon and visiting one of my parishioners – a working blacksmith. He pointed to a pile of scrap metal and suggested that it could well form the basis of a Sunday sermon. He stated: “*That metal is flawed. It cannot be used. It is*

useless. It is scrap. I sometimes ask the Lord to bend me and mould me; to place me in the furnace if necessary and to hammer me into shape. He can do what he wants with me as long as he doesn't throw me on life's scrapheap! Well said, Mr Lawrence! I have never forgotten you or your wise words and yes – I have preached on the theme several times over the last forty or more years.

The Anglesey Coastal Path is, generally, well sign posted but the markers, at times, can be extremely vague. Today, as on several other occasions, I got somewhat lost and, having strayed from the path, had to get myself back on track. There were times when I was grateful to fellow walkers, albeit few in number, who were able to point me in the right direction. This was a demonstration of the fact that we need other people around us if we are to arrive, safely, at journey's end. There are times when we benefit from solitude. When solitude is enforced it can become loneliness and that can be a curse rather than a blessing. We are better people for opening ourselves up to each other.

My occasional experiences of 'being lost' reminded me that the issue of Divine Guidance is not as straightforward as some Christians believe. One encounters Christians, at times, who claim to have insight into the mind of God. They talk about "God's Will" as if it were an easy thing to determine. I wonder if they ever consider such a claim to be blasphemous?

I thought of occasions when I had been inducted into the pastorate of my previous churches. In each instance I was asked if I believed this call to be of God? There has only been one occasion when I was absolutely convinced of the 'rightness' of my action. On the other six occasions I really wanted to say "*I hope so*" or "*Time will tell.*" Coward that I am, I invariably 'went with the flow' and assented to something which can be but rarely 'known.' We are much too glib in this respect and are quick to use the name of God in justification of our own desires and ambitions. One can learn much from Judaism. In that religion the name of God is so holy that it must not even be spoken aloud. The vowels of the word are omitted so that the remaining letters are unpronounceable. How sad that the Christian Church has forgotten so much of its Jewish heritage!

DAY NINE. CEMAES TO CHURCH BAY

I got lost again and ended up in a seemingly impenetrable forest with no clear pathway. It was quite unpleasant and my anxiety was heightened when I wandered into huge netted enclosures, overgrown with ferns,

brambles and other head high plants. From the undergrowth came sounds of scurrying movements followed by the sight of hundreds of small creatures running hither and thither. It appeared, to my heightened imagination, that I had strayed into Jurassic Park! When I realised that these 'creatures' were young pheasants being reared for the Autumn and Winter Shoots I felt a little foolish but, for all that, considerably relieved. I thought of all those occasions in life, particularly on sleepless nights when relatively minor problems loom large and when no clear solution comes to mind. In the morning one's fears seem more manageable, the fact being that sooner or later the dawn will break.

This part of the path is, in many ways, the least appealing. For one thing is the presence of wind farms which, from a walker's point of view, I detest. I feel that the beauty of our countryside is being destroyed with the upland areas of Wales, not to mention its coastline, being ruined by their presence. My complaint against them is that they are intrusive and destroy that sense of 'remoteness' which is so essential for the well being of the human spirit. How important is 'the wilderness' in the Biblical Story. It was here that bible characters encountered God and were changed by him. The Wilderness experience enabled Elijah to perceive God speaking in the silence. Jesus went into the Wilderness to discover the manner in which the world was to be won for God, discovering that there could be no salvation unless he walked the way of the cross. Part of the secret of Christ's poise was his habit of *rising before dawn and going into a desert place to pray*. I wonder would he have frequented those desert places had there have been wind farms sited in them? More ugly than the wind farms is the presence of Wylfa Power Station. It is an architectural monstrosity and is akin to a huge carbuncle on the face of Anglesey. That said the island needs employment and should Wylfa B become a reality it will employ many hundreds of people.

The Power Station does have an excellent cafeteria though and it was here that I entered into a discussion, with fellow travellers, about the merits, or otherwise, of Nuclear Energy and Wind Power. The debate was quite heated with several views being held. There was, however, no falling out among us and we agreed to disagree where agreement was impossible. How sad it is that the churches, historically, have found that so difficult with denominations, more numerous than 'Heinz' fifty seven varieties' testifying to the utter folly of Christian people. Even today we would rather die than unite.

As I thought about this foolishness I considered the Anglesey Coastline. There are numerous bays and inlets here. Some are broad and deep and

large boats can sail on their waters. Others are small and shallow and, like Aberffraw, have become disabled by the build up of silt. Each bay and inlet is different but *it is the same sea in all of them*. Is that not equally true of religion? The ocean of truth flows here and is called by such and such a name. It flows there and is called something else. I am not suggesting that all faith is equally valid or that some are not more silted up than are others. *But it is the same God in all of them*. If only we realised as much the world would be a kindlier place. The risk of another world war which is likely to be a religious one would also be greatly diminished.

Saying goodbye to Wylfa I walked on. It continued to dominate 'my' landscape even after I had left it behind as I kept turning round to look at it. Another parable! How often do I hark back to past sins and failures and allow regrets to mar my future and sap my energy? How silly! I resolved today that this would cease. I would learn from my mistakes and having learned the lesson would walk on.

Its my last day on Anglesey tomorrow. I felt quite sad at this thought. I wished the coastline was longer than 125 miles and that I had time to keep on walking. I've been reading a most marvellous book called '*The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*.' I think there is something of Harold Fry in me. He though, was walking to save someone. Who was I walking to save? I took inspiration from the New Park Street Chapel in Holyhead. The minister had told me that members of the congregation had walked, in relay, around Anglesey praying for the Island as they walked. What a lovely thing to do – wherever we live and whatever our community.

DAY TEN. CHURCH BAY TO HOLYHEAD

A fourteen mile walk today and every step of it a pleasure to take. I even walked through another herd of bullocks with only the mildest fluttering of my heart. The only frustration was the seeming lack of progress as the route takes one inland and, seemingly, away from one's goal. I could see Holyhead Mountain but seemed to be getting no closer to it. Life, at times, can be like that too. The important thing is to believe that there is a purpose and that slowly but surely we will reach journey's end.

When I was a babe, time slept. When I was a child, time crept. When I became a man, time ran. When older still I grew, time flew. Soon I will reach time's end and, O Lord, wilt thou have saved me then?

Holyhead is a busy port. I hadn't realised until today that some of the loveliest beaches, like Penrhos, lie very close to the harbour. Yet another sermon? We spend our lives hungering for distant pleasures imagining that these hold the key to happiness. Were we but to realise it the greatest happiness is to be found closer to home and is already within our grasp. How does the poet express it? CARPE DIEM. Seize the day!

This has been a lovely holiday. I have enjoyed the solitude and the remoteness though seeing other walkers, on occasion, has been a source of encouragement. I have had time for thought and reflection and that is no bad thing. I certainly feel spiritually refreshed and, being less jaded, am a little more ready for the challenges that lie ahead.

I am also thinking of the day when I retire, not only from my work as a Family Court Advisor but from active church based ministry. In a perfect world Gwen and I will purchase a camper van and, health permitting, will use it as a base for walking the whole coast of Britain. We may well take three or four years to complete the journey

As I commit that thought to paper I am reminded of my grandmother's words: *"Hush! Don't tell God your plans!"*

My thanks to everyone who has sponsored this walk. If you would like to do so all gifts, no matter how small, will be greatly appreciated. Our Friendship Centre will open on Sept 19th 2013.

Mike Shephard



FORGETTING THE THINGS THAT LIE BEHIND

Dear Lord I place into your hands
The things that I regret.
Forgive the sins which haunt me yet:
The word and deed I can't forget:
I leave them all with you.

Dear Lord I place into your hands
My less successful days.
I bring to you my foolish ways:
The rain filled skies and clouds of grey:
I leave them all with you.

Dear Lord I place into your hands
The fears which weigh me down.
I bring to you the anxious frown:
The sorrows deep and thorny crown:
I leave them all with you.

Dear Lord I place into your hands
The hurt which I have known.
I bring to you the anguished groan:
The seeds of grief by others sown:
I leave them all with you.

Dear Lord I place into your hands
The cross that I must bear.
I bring to you my loss and care:
And knowing that my pain you share:
I leave it all with you.

Mike Shephard

*Words suitable for singing or saying during a 'burial of the past' service.
If being sung the appropriate tune is 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind.'*

THE COMING QUARTER

September

<u>1st</u>	Minister/ Communion
<u>8th</u>	Revd Geraint Davies
<u>15th</u>	Minister
<u>22nd</u>	Revd Geraint Davies
<u>29th</u>	NO SERVICE HERE/GYMANFA

October

<u>6th</u>	Minister/ Communion
<u>13th</u>	Revd John Morgan
<u>20th</u>	Minister
<u>27th</u>	Minister

November

<u>3rd</u>	Mr Hugh Waddell/ Communion conducted by Helen Gibbon.
<u>10th</u>	Revd John Morgan
<u>17th</u>	Mr Mark Lonney
<u>24th</u>	Revd Aled Maskell

We express our appreciation to all friends who lead us in worship Sunday by Sunday. Many, Many thanks.



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