

Babell Chapel/Capel y Babell

Pensarn

**Autumn  
Newsletter  
Cylchlythyr  
yr Hydref  
2015**

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Thanks to Mike Shephard for permission to do this.



Online at

<http://www.llangunnor.net>

## Dear Friends

The Apostles' Creed begins with the affirmation that God is the "*Maker of Heaven and Earth.*"

Not every Christian believes that the book of Genesis contains a literal account of creation. It doesn't really matter whether the world was created in six literal days or over a timescale covering millions, or billions of years. I am quite happy to accept the theory of evolution as, to me, it was God's chosen method of bringing life into being. In accepting the 'Big Bang' I also argue that it was God who caused it to happen. I like the poem written by William Herbert Carruth. It begins:

*A fire-mist and a planet –  
A crystal and a cell,  
A jelly-fish and a saurian,  
And caves where the cave-men dwell;  
Then a sense of law and beauty  
And a face turned from the clod, -  
Some call it Evolution,  
And others call it God.*

Whatever the method of creation, God remains the Creator and without him life would have been impossible.

The more relevant question is not how did God create the world? It is why did he create it?

To answer the question fully is impossible as it would involve reading the mystery of the mind of God. That said, I commend the answer provided by James Welldon Johnson in his poem, *The Creation*.

*God stepped out on space,  
And he looked around and said:  
'I'm lonely –  
I'll make me a world.'*

So God made everything, and of everything he was able to say: 'That's good!' But there was still something missing. The poem continues:

*Then God walked around,  
And God looked around  
On all that he had made.  
He looked at his sun,  
And he looked at his moon,  
And he looked at his little stars;  
He looked on his world  
With all its living things,  
And God said: 'I'm lonely still.'  
Then God sat down –  
On the side of a hill where he could think;  
By a deep, wide river he sat down;  
With his head in his hands,  
God thought and thought,  
Till he thought: 'I'll make me a man!'*

A child might have written that. A child could certainly understand it; but it sums up the whole doctrine of creation. God, being love, created the world and all that is in it in order to have someone to love and someone to love him. Creation is a necessity of the love of God.

I do not, as a norm, resent growing old. If pressed I would say that the best part of life is 'Now.' In point of fact it is only 'Now' that we have.

I must admit, though, that a recent headline in our newspapers caused me to envy the young children of today. 'SPACE TELESCOPE DISCOVERS EARTHLIKE PLANET.' It would surely be arrogance on our part to assume that we are alone in the universe. If God is love then, in love, he might well have created millions of planets capable of supporting intelligent life.

The problem is that Kepler 452b is 1,400 light years away in the constellation of Cygnus and that, as yet, we lack the technology to travel so great a distance in an acceptable timespan. That is a challenge for our children's children's children who may be amongst those who will travel to the stars. How I would like to have journeyed with them to another world. Upon arrival they may well find it inhabited already. My only fear is that the human race will spoil any

planet which it discovers. For one thing it may be necessary, sadly, for there to be rule that no settler transport religion with them!

That said, the realisation that we are not alone could bring the world together in a way nothing else can. It would underline the fact that the creation is bigger than we can possibly imagine. We would have to find a theology big enough to accommodate a God whose love is of staggering dimensions. How it would rebuke all those who believe that they have God taped and who think that he has nothing further to say.

I recently preached a sermon on Zechariah's vision of the young man with a measuring line who, after the return of the Jews from exile, wanted to rediscover where the walls of Jerusalem had once stood so that the shattered city could be rebuilt on its original foundations. Zechariah hears God saying: "Put the measuring line away. The New Jerusalem shall be too big to have walls."

That is a message we need to hear today. God is love. We are all children of God. Not just on planet earth but on worlds which, as yet, are unknown to us.

All Good Wishes

Mike Shephard

## **Family News**

In our last newsletter I mentioned the 'unity discussions' taking place between the four Presbyterian Churches in Carmarthen – Babell, Bethania, Heol Dwr and Zion.

It is important that we understand that no final decision has been made and that anything said here is tentative and speculative. That said, there is a very real possibility that Zion will close and decide, en bloc, to join Babell.

In order that an informed decision can be made the congregation at Zion will join us for three Sunday morning services in September. At the end of that period the final decision will be made. I hope there will be a positive outcome as when we have worshipped together, both at Babell and at Zion, there has been a very noticeable 'buzz' in the air which, from the minister's point of view, made it easy to preach. The enjoyment of worship was enhanced for all of us.

I have never put down roots in any church but, like many ministers, have had to 'up sticks' and move on to 'pastures new'. In consequence of frequent upheavals, Gwen and I have become used to change and are relatively good at coping with it.

It is difficult for those of us without roots to understand the pain experienced by friends whose memories are linked with one Christian fellowship. Difficult. But not impossible. I was very conscious during our discussions that some members of Zion are heartbroken at the prospect of closing the church and starting again elsewhere. It was to Zion that they were carried as babes in arms. It was there that they were Christened and confirmed. They were married there. It was from Zion that their loved ones were buried. They had hoped that their own funeral would take place there. To tell people, faced by the closure of a place of worship, that the church is not the building but the people, can seem hollow at such a time. Memories are very important, particularly when associated with special places. Indeed, they make the place special.

There is little that one can say at such moments and words can sound very empty. What we would say to the congregation of Zion is that they will be very welcome were they to join us. We will receive them on equal terms and believe that, with mutual understanding for our different traditions, we can become a truly 'united' congregation. Would it not be wonderful if we could succeed in breaking down barriers, be they rooted in history, language or theology and create something very special here? Shakespeare reminds us that there "is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at its flood, leads on to fortune." He also emphasises that were we to miss it we will "spend our lives in backwaters." In other words:

**OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS. DON'T WASTE IT!**

I must, at this point, thank Babel for its willingness to embrace change in order for the dream to become a reality. Not the least of these is to change the time of Sunday worship to 10.30am WHEN I AM PRESENT. It would be impractical to ask visiting ministers to change their plans at short notice so, for the time being, those services will continue to be held in the afternoon. I would emphasise that this change is experimental and will be subject to review early in the New Year. If the new time leads to an increase in congregation size, as I believe it will, we may well decide to make morning services the norm. Significantly, discussion about this was 'on the agenda' before the possibility of forming a united church was even raised. Zion, for our information, had not broached the subject. **What has been discussed with Zion is our wish to continue singing two Welsh hymns on a Sunday This was not seen as a problem and it was thought valuable to retain something of our ethos.**

Turning to other matters, you will be aware that we have yet to do the Bethesda Zip Slide, our earlier attempt to do so having been aborted when the braking mechanism failed! I am not being completely honest, of course. Nine of the ten participants were prevented from completing the challenge because of a faulty mechanism. I was the only one banned for being 3 kilos overweight! I have now been shamed into going on a diet! The next attempt will be on 19<sup>th</sup> September at 8.20am!

The Zip Slide was scheduled to take place on the same weekend as our good friend, Roy, celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Congratulations, Roy! Roy has asked me to thank the church for helping him celebrate the occasion and wants to say that the cards and cake were greatly appreciated.

Our best wishes to everyone who has been unwell of late. Amongst those known to me are Sally Evans, Edwina Jones, Gwen Shephard, Vi Williams, Pat and Robert Morgan, Mandy Walters, Donna Evans and Keith Anders. We send our love to Elizabeth Evans who is now home after a stay on Dewi Ward, Glangwilli Hospital.

We extend a warm welcome to Leighton Williams who started attending Babell in late July. We hope he will be very happy here. It was lovely to hear him say that he was "looking for a church." We assure him of our support and prayers.

Earlier this summer some of us attended The Big Lunch – a community event held in the grounds of Llangunnor School. Our good friend, Lee Whatley, did much to make the event so successful and we are very fortunate to have him as a member of the Community Council. His interest in Babell means much to us.

Many comment that the flower containers, to the front of the church, have been particularly lovely this year. Our sincere thanks to Doreen Davies for keeping them watered. Such commitment is not always noticed or commented upon. Where, though, would we be without those folk who do the unseen tasks in a church? We would be much poorer without them. Thank you, Doreen.

Our congratulations to Nan Thomas who recently completed 45 years as a volunteer with the British Red Cross. This is in addition to the many other organisations with which she has been involved over the years. She also found time, when younger, to work as well. A splendid achievement, Nan!

In closing our family news we extend the warmest of welcome to Ela-Grace, the daughter of Sabrina and granddaughter of Mr and Mrs John Owen Jones, who was christened here on July 19<sup>th</sup>. We wish all the family well.

As I write, we are on the point of ceasing activities for the month of August. We start meeting again on Sunday September 6<sup>th</sup>. Our Friendship Centre starts back on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, as do our Welsh classes. A rest can be beneficial and can help recharge our depleted batteries.

## CHILDREN'S LETTERS TO GOD

I hope to invite the children of Llangunnor School to take part in a 'Children's Letter to God' competition, to be held during the coming term. I have organised several of these competitions over the years and the resultant, church based, prize giving has been supported by children and parents. The following extracts are taken from a book of letters compiled by Carmel Reilly: Here are some from the 'theological' section:

*Dear God,*

*Why aren't you friends with the devil? My teacher says he used to be an angel. Did you have an argument? When we argue at school our teacher makes us say sorry. Would you let him back if he said sorry? Maybe then he wouldn't do all those bad things.*

*Lee*

*Dear God,*

*When will it be the end of the world? I would like to have enough time to say goodbye to everyone. Are you going to make another world afterwards?*

*Henry*

*Dear God,*

*Is this the only planet where there are living things? There are so many planets in the universe; there must be one somewhere with aliens living there. Also, does the universe go on forever, or is there an end to it? What is on the other side?*

*Luke*

*Dear God,*

*Why did the father like the prodigal son better than his brother? Do you like good people better if they do some sins first?*

*Alan*

*Dear God,*

*Who is your mummy and daddy?*

*Calvin*

*Dear God,*

*Last week we read about Abraham and Isaac. I didn't understand why you wanted Abraham to kill Isaac, his son. I understand that Abraham wanted to do what he was told, but it was wrong to kill his son. It seems awful to ask something like that just to test him.*

*Jane*

*Dear God,*

*Why didn't you tell Eve not to trust the snake? Then she wouldn't have eaten that stupid old apple. Did you secretly want her to eat it?*

*Tristan*

*Dear God,*

*Why were you such a lot of different things in the Bible? You were a burning bush and a*



*lamb and a lion. And only some people could hear you. Why can't we all hear you or see you?*

*Marko*

*Dear God,*

*The priest says we have to pray kneeling down by our bed at night. But I like going out to the yard to talk to you. Then no one is listening and I'm not sleepy. It's better to talk to you there. Is that Ok with you?*

*Damian*

*Dear God,*

*Do you have friends in heaven? You must get lonely sometimes all on your own. If you ever need someone to talk to you could come round to our house.*

*Wendy*

*Dear God,*

*Why am I me and not someone else? Will I still be me when I die? I have a lot of questions for you to answer when I meet you.*

*Ronnie*

## **BIBLE STUDIES**

We have decided that, during every quarter, we will have Bible studies at Babell. During this quarter they will be held on the last two Tuesdays in September and the first two Tuesdays in October. We will meet at 6.30pm for a period of a little over one hour. I suggest that this time round we focus on an introduction to the Gospels.

## **OTHER DATES FOR OUR DIARY**

**SUNDAY OCTOBER 4<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am: ALL AGE WORSHIP WITH THE CHOIR OF LLANGUNNOR SCHOOL. Their presence is to be confirmed.**

**SUNDAY OCTOBER 18<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am: HARVEST FESTIVAL WITH THE CRESCENDO CHOIR**

**PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THE SECOND SUNDAY IN NOVEMBER IS REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY**

**On September 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> some of us will have distributed information about the church to every household in our neighbourhood. On 8<sup>th</sup> September, from 6pm, I will be in the church to meet with any folk who wish to know more about the church.**

## A LETTER FROM HEAVEN

Our good friend, Keith Anders, lost his much loved wife some four or more years ago. Keith will admit that he has difficulty coping with that bereavement. It was what first brought him to the Friendship Centre and to the church. He has asked that this be included in the newsletter:

### To my dearest family and friends

I want you to know that I am now dwelling with God Above and that I am enveloped in a sense of his eternal love.

I don't want you to be unhappy because I am out of sight. I remain close to you in the day; and at night.

I will be watching you scale the highest hills and will be with you as you climb. You can reach the summit by taking one step at a time.

Grief is natural; as are tears; especially after so many loving years.

But do not waste your anguish or pain. Use it to help others find the light again.

Then your hurt will not be in vain. Recall how flowers need the rain.

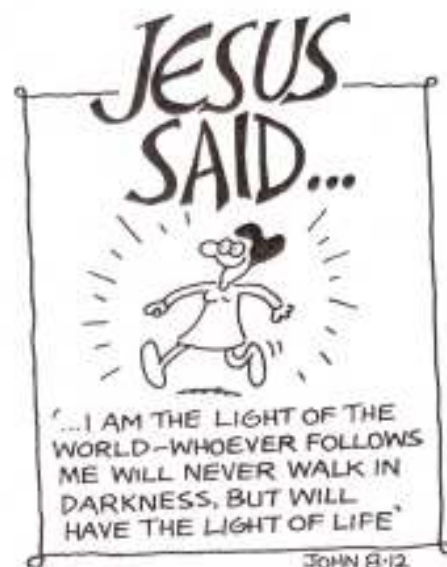
Your life will have been worthwhile if you can make another lost one smile.

Look out for those who are feeling low. Lift them up and help them through.

You can do it if you have the mind. I'm with you. Just a step behind.

And one day; when from the body you are free we shall meet again, you and me.

*Thank you for this, Keith. We very much appreciate you friendship and are glad we found each other. MFS*



## Church Secretary's report Myrddin District News

As we try to work more closely with other chapels and churches within our own and across the denominations many have asked me to explain what is meant by 'Dosbarth Myrddin.' Here is an attempt at a brief explanation.

The Methodist church got its name for the most part for being very organized. They were methodical in their approach to their structure and organisation. We at Babell belong to the Methodist circuit of churches or as it is known today, the Presbyterian Church of Wales. As part of that structure all individual churches are grouped into districts of which there are five in Carmarthenshire. Babell belongs to the Myrddin District which comprises of the following chapels:

Heol Dwr, Bethania, Ty Hen Meidrim, Bethel Meidrim, Trinity St Clears, Bethel Cynwyl Elfed, Cwmdwyfran, Bethel Rhydargaeau, Moriah Llansteffan and Bancyfelin. We are fortunate here in Babell to have the part time ministry of the Revd Mike Shephard and Bancyfelin also has Revd Beti Wyn Priordy as their minister. Elders from each of these churches meet four times a year prior to the Presbytery meeting to discuss and support each other and by so doing have come to know each other and have worshipped at joint services on numerous occasions but mainly at Christmas, Easter and Harvest. We visit all the district chapels in turn but have also held open air services at

Llansteffan for some years and in Carmarthen Park of late.

This year was no exception. The Revd Beti Wyn as usual made the necessary arrangements for a service in the park but found that the visiting circus coincided with our 5 o'clock service. However the circus family not only changed their performance times in order to accommodate us but also invited us to hold the service in the BIG TOP. They also attended the service, helped out with the sound



system throughout the service and served tea and popcorn at the end. Beti Wyn has already made a note of when the circus is in town next year!

For the last four years District members have also travelled on what we like to call pilgrimages. This June our pilgrimage involved visiting the Welsh centre at Soar, a converted chapel in Merthyr, the home of the musician Joseph Parry, Cyfarthfa Castle and the Church of Llanfair at Penrhys in the Rhondda. It is to the latter that I shall turn briefly. As we approached the estate of Penrhys we stopped at the shrine of the Virgin Mary, "Our Lady of Penrhys," which countless pilgrims along the generations have visited and then it was back on the bus and onto the purpose built church on the hill. We were greeted by Sharon Rees and two of her staff who kindly gave us refreshments in the café before leading us on a guided tour of the library, the music room, the clothes shop, the homework room and the convention room before leading us to the main part of the building – the church itself.

A pilgrimage it was not for that word conjures up sacrifice and commitment. It was a very comfortable coach that we had for the journey and there was no sacrifice involved. However even though this was my fourth visit to Penrhys I am still in awe of the work carried out there by a very dedicated team of believers. We all had our eyes opened to the need there is in our communities for spiritual as well as material help and one can only act on Sharon's request which was to pray for the work they are doing there and for their friends from Madagascar who also spend time doing missionary work there. We can of course go into our pockets. I am reminded of the Sermon at Priordy last Sunday morning and was it Spurgeon who said that the last part of a man to be converted is his pocket!

In an attempt to raise money for a new PA system at Penrhys many who went on the trip came together with friends for a lovely meal at the Sheesh Mahal on the evening of Monday July 20.<sup>th</sup> It was again a time to get together for a worthwhile cause.





### Sunday School News

On Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> of June we held a family service during which the members of the Sunday school took part. However this was also a farewell service for Kian, Ioan and Josh who have by now moved to their new home with their parents Ian and Kelly in Llanelli. We wish them well and wish to thank them as a family for their loyal support during the all too brief time that they were with us.

#### CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to past members of the Sunday school on their outstanding A-Level results. We

wish Erin and Ffion and Steffan and Dylan all the very best as they start their studies at the following universities: Erin and Dylan at Cardiff, Ffion at Loughborough and Steffan at Bangor. With morning services on the horizon a new time and perhaps another day has to be allocated for the Sunday Club. [Another title as well- should it become Friday Club?] Please let us know how you feel about this. Do you know of any children who would be interested in joining us? Generations of children are in danger of losing out on the Bible stories and their significance for our lives today. It is our duty as the Lord's disciples to ensure that this does not happen.

### One project which tries to bring the Bible Stories to school: OPEN THE BOOK/AGOR Y LLYFR



Every Friday a team of chapel members visits Nantgaredig school to take an assembly. These assemblies have been designed by the Bible Society and have a set format each week to be completed within a three year cycle. Each assembly involves a story teller, actors who can be children as well as the team members and a presenter who sets the scene and leads the school in a meditation and short prayer at the end. We hope to start OPEN THE BOOK assemblies in Llangunnor School. If you would like to become involved, and you are never too old, please contact me on 01267290518. Not everyone is

confident enough to take part in presentations but there is room to help with props and simple costumes or just background help.

### Zip Wire/ Postponed!



The arm bands prove it all- that is as far as they got- the registration point!

All the best for the next time which will be September 19<sup>th</sup> at 8.20am. You brave people!

# GWYL MAWL MEDI Dydd Sul 27 Medi 2015

## CAPEL HEOL AWST

Oedfa o Fawl i'r Plant a'r Oedolion 10 y Bore

Arweinydd Robert Nicholls Caerdydd

Oedfa Bregethu 2 y Prynawn

Y Parchedig Ieuan Davies Waunarlwydd

*Rihysal y Plant Y Priordy*

*Bore Sul 13 Medi 2015 am 11*

*Bore Sul 20 Medi 2015 am 11*

*Arweinydd – Nicki Roderick*

*Rihysal yr Oedolion Heol Awst*

*Nos Sul 13 Medi 2015 am 7*

*Nos Sul 20 Medi 2015 am 7*

*Arweinydd – Helen Gibbon*

## Dates for the diary

October 4 <sup>th</sup> :	10.30am All Age Service with Llangunnor School Choir
Hydref 11eg:	Cyngerdd yr Hen Ganiadau yng Nghapel y Priordy
October 18 <sup>th</sup> :	10.30 am Harvest Thanksgiving Service Babell
Tachwedd/ November 8 <sup>th</sup> :	Joio gyda Iesu yn Salem Llandeilo
Tachwedd 28ain:	Cyngerdd yn Heol Dŵr: Côr Seingar a'r Tri Baritôn
November 29 <sup>th</sup> :	Ty Cymorth Service at the Botanic Gardens
December 13 <sup>th</sup> :	<b>4.30pm</b> Candlelight Service at Babell with WI Choir
Rhagfyr 13eg :	Plygain Merched y Wawr yn Heol Dŵr 7.30pm
December 20 <sup>th</sup> :	<b>4pm</b> Candlelight Service at Babell with Crescendo
Rhagfyr 20fed:	6 pm gwasanaeth y Dosbarth yng Nghapel Bancyfelin/ The District Christmas Service at Bancyfelin



## HAVE YOU READ?

Have you read *THE CHRONICLES OF HUGH de SINGLETON, SURGEON* By Mel Starr. They are set in the 1360s and are a very good read. They are not religious books but do contain some insightful spiritual passages. Here is an extract. The writer has been wounded by an arrow and muses on what has brought him to this point:

*How had I come to such a plight? Perhaps if William of Garstang had not given his books to me, six years past, when he was near to death from plague, I would not be here, wounded, upon the floor of Marcham Church. One of William's three books was 'Surgery,' by Henri de Mondeville. I read it and it changed my vocation.*

*Had I not spent a year of study in Paris, I could not have stitched up the lacerated leg of Lord Gilbert Talbot when a horse kicked him upon Oxford High Street. Then I would not have been offered a post as Lord Gilbert's bailiff at Bampton, and was I not given such authority in that place I would not have known of John Thrale's death or his coin, and would not now lay pierced upon the cold flags of All Saint's Church.*

*But it was my skill as a surgeon which led me to meet Kate Caxton and claim her for my bride. I might wish the flow of my life had followed some other course, so to avoid the sorrow which occasionally afflicts me, as with all men, but had it done so I would never have known the joy of life with Kate. I would not have bounced our baby upon my knee and heard her squeal with delight. Why should I wish my way had been altered so as to avoid this place and this moment? Some other sorrows would surely have come to me had I chosen to walk other paths, and the bliss I found with Kate, the pleasure of life among the folk of Bampton, the satisfaction of my work as surgeon and for Lord Gilbert, all this I would have lost.*

*I turned upon my pallet to seek a more comfortable position, adjusted the blanket, and finally fell to sleep, content with my lot. I did awaken often through the night, and when I did I breathed a prayer that the Lord Christ would take pity upon me and send me, whole and recovered, back to Kate's arms. I resolved never again to question His direction for my life, or lament the sorrows which come my way, for then I must also repent of the delights He has allowed me .....*"

Contributed by Gwen Shephard. The books are published by Monarch Books.

## THE COMING QUARTER

This is a time of transition and the time of services will vary. During the coming months we will meet at 10.30am when I am conducting worship. When visiting ministers do so we will meet at 2pm. We will review this arrangement in the New Year by which time we will have a better view of matters. I would add that we intend to embark upon this period of experimentation whether or not Zion decides to join us. It has long been my personal view that meeting at 2pm is an obstacle to congregational growth as people, generally, are reluctant to come out in the afternoon. I may be quite wrong in that judgement. Thus the need for reassessment during the early part of 2016. It would be useful, I think, to spend Lent 'taking the spiritual pulse' of the church, generally, and deciding what developments need to take place. Change is never easy and can be unsettling and painful. It is nonetheless essential that we consider different ways of doing things. We will get some things right. On occasion we will have got it wrong and will need to revert to the old ways or, alternatively, try yet another approach. Thank you for your forbearance.

<u>SEPTEMBER 6<sup>th</sup></u>	MINISTER	10.30/COMMUNION
<u>13<sup>th</sup></u>	MINISTER	10.30
<u>20<sup>th</sup></u>	REVD ADELAID WHEELER-COX	10.30
<u>27<sup>th</sup></u>	GYMANFA/ NO SERVICE HERE	

Our friends at Zion to decide their future today.

Please Pray for them as they deliberate.

<u>OCTOBER 4<sup>th</sup></u>	MINISTER/ HARVEST	10.30
<u>11<sup>th</sup></u>	PASTOR JOHN MORGAN	2pm
<u>18<sup>th</sup></u>	MINISTER	10.30/COMMUNION
<u>25<sup>th</sup></u>	MINISTER	10.30
<u>NOVEMBER 1<sup>st</sup></u>	MINISTER	10.30/COMMUNION
<u>8<sup>th</sup></u>	MR MARK LONNEY REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY	2pm
<u>15<sup>th</sup></u>	MR HUGH WADDELL	2pm
<u>22<sup>nd</sup></u>	PASTOR JOHN MORGAN	2pm
<u>29<sup>th</sup></u>	REVD HUGH GEORGE	2pm
<u>DECEMBER 6<sup>th</sup></u>	MINISTER	10.30/COMMUNION
<u>13<sup>th</sup></u>	CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT	4.30pm

<b>DECEMBER 20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT</b>	<b>4.30 pm</b>
<b>24<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>CHRISTMAS EVE COMMUNION</b>	<b>11.15 pm</b>
<b>27<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>PASTOR JOHN MORGAN</b>	<b>2pm</b>

Please note that the minister is not available during the month of November as this is his holiday month. He will lead worship on November 1<sup>st</sup> and will then be away until the first Sunday in December when he will again conduct the service.

### OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Much depends on the decision made by ZION. IF we are to unite it is likely that we will convene one or more meetings in October in order to look at the future. Dates have yet to be formulated but one envisages that any such meetings will need to take place on a Monday or Tuesday evening. It would be appreciated if we could make every effort to be present at those meetings and, if at all possible, prioritise them. Thank you.

### JUDGEMENT BY NUMBERS

One Sunday morning, when I was minister of the English Baptist Church in Lamma Street, Carmarthen the hymn numbers disappeared from the box in which they were kept. Subsequent events prompted this piece of verse.

"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!  
 "I'll leave the hymn board blank.  
 I have no doubt its kids again –  
 playing silly pranks."

The matter was forgotten,  
 for worship now begun:  
 Introit, prayers and readings:  
 And songs, today, well sung.  
 The sermon theme was focussed  
 on those *unanswered* prayers.



My purpose was to demonstrate,  
That God knew best; and cared.

And then, to my amazement,  
The youths at back of church –  
held up those missing numbers,  
still lost despite our search.  
A Five! A six! A seven! Two eights!  
And at the very end –  
Two youngsters with a one! And nought!  
I hoped that this meant ten!

I should perhaps have scolded;  
But far from being vexed,  
I couldn't help but broadly smile;  
I'd found next Sunday's 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 that last judgement,  
when time has sped away?  
What will those numbers signify?  
What will those figures say?  
'A poor attempt! No effort made!  
Deserves so low a score!  
I hope that Judgement Day will bring –  
A chance to try once more



"I take it my sermon didn't meet with your approval, Mr. Smith?"

Mike Shephard



"The hours are long, the pay's lousy, but the long-term prospects are out of this world . . ."

## DON'T BLAME ME!

*Here, by popular request, another conversation from the book 'God Worra Yorkshireman' by Jeff Loy. The author sets out, deliberately, to provoke thought. He certainly makes us think, whatever our theology.*

I popped into the newsagents and saw God flicking through a copy of the 'Observer.'

"This is a mess!" he says pointing at the headline. "Look at it, 'A Year of Disasters.' "

"Well, why aren't you doing something about it?" I says, "Instead of standing there reading what you already know?"

"What do you want me to do?" he says.

"What do we want you to do?" I says. "Earthquakes! Floods! Raging fires! Thousands dead? What do you think we want you to do? Stop it happening!"

"Don't look at me," he says, "I'm not causing them."

"Course you are," I says, "You're God! The buck stops here! I know you move in mysterious ways, but I reckon you're losing the plot!"

"Listen!" he says. "How long do you think it took me to create this lot: land, sea, flowers, trees, animals, people, the whole shebang. How long?"

"Six days," I says.

"And how long was that since?" he says.

I says, "Millions of years."

"Right," he says. "So, I did all this lot in six days, millions of years ago, and you thought it was still under guarantee?"

He say. "If you believe I created it, thank you very much, but how come I get saddled with the maintenance contract? It's millions of years old, it's out of warranty, bits keep coming off! The way you lot carry on, I reckon it's done very well to hold together this long! You drill it, you mine it, you bomb it, you blow great holes in it, you waste what it grows, pollute the rivers, spoil the sea, cut down the forests!"

"That's all part of survival!" I says, "But it's you that's behind all these disasters . . ."

"Me?" he says. "How do you work that out?"

"Stands to reason!" I says.

"What! Hurting folk? Upsetting millions of people. Why would I do that?"

"To punish us," I says.

He gives me one of those looks that'd take paint off.

"You'll know if I decide to punish you," he says, "I'm very selective."

"Oh yes!" I says, "like with Noah's flood, when you wiped out ninety-nine percent of the population at a stroke!"

"That was different," he says.

"That was genocide!" I says. "You'd be locked up today."

I could see he was getting bolshie.

"How long will it take you lot to spot the fact that every time something goes wrong it isn't necessarily down to me?" he says. "You go through life making trouble, creating problems, ignoring everything I've done, then the first sign of a cock-up and it's 'blame God' "

"But you must know when things are going to happen," I says, "so why don't you let on?"

"I'm God!" he says, not a blinking fortune teller."

I says, "Yes, and some of us are trying to help!"

"Good!" he says. "You can start by paying for this paper, I've no change."

Jeff Loy



"Your first baptism, is it?"



## A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF GOD

**Sunday** I know it is a sign of respect that I am addressed by many believers in sacred languages – languages used for the purpose of worship and no other. It is also claimed that I make reply by means of ‘tongues’ - unintelligible noises uttered by believers when they get carried away in spiritual fervour. I want you to know that it has nothing to do with me. Humanity itself is my basic language. Human relationships are the grammar and syntax of my native tongue. There is nothing of overwhelming significance I have communicated to the world in any other way. Nor do I intend to do so.

**Monday** How bitter and angry some theologians get when they quarrel! Their lack of charity towards one another shows they do not understand the first thing about their trade – for love is the abridgement of all theology. All its doctrines, dogmas and propositions tend towards this one, simple end. The theologian who shows no love towards those with whom he is in dispute reveals that he knows nothing about me, however learned he may be.

**Tuesday** In a weak moment I granted that man two wishes – that he would win the lottery and live to be a hundred. Silly of me, I know, but every now and then I have a brainstorm – I’m only superhuman, after all. Well, now he is reviling me for going back on my promises. He won the lottery all right and spent a fair slice of his winnings on a hair transplant, new teeth and cosmetic surgery. Then one day, hurrying out of Harrods, he was knocked down and killed by a taxi. Now he demands to know what happened to the promise that he would live to be a hundred. To be entirely truthful, he got knocked down because I just didn’t recognise him.

**Wednesday** In that country they amputate a man’s hand for theft and behead a woman caught in adultery. They insist these punishments are done in my name and they read passages from a so-called holy book whilst the sentences are carried out. What strange madness is this! I create human beings whole for my pleasure and these zealots dismember them to my glory. They have evolved a new doctrine – salvation by subtraction. Cut off the hand that steals, pluck out the eyes that lust and what is left is accounted righteous. To cut off a man’s hand for stealing is as logical as smashing a musical instrument that plays a false note. If I had wanted to make it impossible for human beings to sin I would not have robbed them of their faculties but denied them free will.

**Thursday** I’ve been doing the annual accounts. Planet earth is seriously overdrawn. Have the inhabitants looked at the figures lately? Every time a single member is added to the human race earth has to provide an additional fifty-six thousand gallons of milk, nine thousand pounds of wheat and a thousand trees. And the planet must make room for an extra one hundred and fifty thousand pounds of garbage and one hundred and forty thousand pounds of poisonous waste in the atmosphere. And yet they still add millions to

their populations every day. The human race is in great danger of accomplishing the most spectacular mass suicide in the history of the universe. They seem incapable of grasping the simple truth that they did not come into the world, they came out of it, and if they do not do what is necessary with the earth, the earth will do what is necessary with them. At the risk of becoming a heavenly bore. I must insist that there are no free lunches in my universe. What human beings take out of the world they pay for. Or if they do not pay someone else will have to – in this case their children and their children's children.

**Friday** I sympathise with that preacher's attempt to describe my nature and being. Words really will not do. The most one can say, really, is that I am not infinity like an endless mist; I am more a synthesis of infinity and boundary – just as a vast ocean has a near shore. I wonder if that helps.

**Saturday** A devout Jew was climbing Mount Carmel. His foot slipped and he hung over a sheer drop clinging to the branch of an overhanging tree. I responded to his cry for help by asking him whether he trusted me without reservation. He said he did, so I told him to let go of the branch. 'What?' he asked. 'Let go of the branch' I repeated. There was a pause, then he asked, 'Excuse me, but is there anyone else up there?'

*From Colin Morris' book of the same name.*

## **SMILE AWHILE**

A man was beaten up by gangsters on the road to Jericho. He lay there, half dead, robbed of all his money, groaning in agony. A priest came along and passed by on the other side. A Levite came along and also passed by on the other side. Finally, a social worker came along, looked at the man and said: 'Whoever did this needs help.'

A child wrote: 'Christians are only allowed one wife. Having one wife is known as monotony.'

There is one modern chorus which contains a repeated refrain which sounds like 'Agad reigns.' Who is Agad? And should we really be worshipping him in Christian services?

As for misprints, who wouldn't rush to attend the church service advertised in the church magazine as 'Evensnog?'

Sources unknown

## HAVE WE LEARNT SO LITTLE OVER THE YEARS

Petronius Arbiter, circa 210BC wrote '*We trained very hard.... but it seems that every time we were beginning to form up into teams we would be reorganised. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganising; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation*'.

How many examples can you think of where Arbiter's words ring true – sadly there are many – 1996 Local Authority Reorganisation in Wales being a shining example. However, this does not always need to be the case, particularly where there are no hidden agendas and common sense and good will prevails. It is necessary to optimistically look to the future whilst not forgetting the lessons of the past. Perhaps the word 'compromise' sums up all the factors necessary for any change to be a lasting success. The modernisation of Babell has thrust the Chapel into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It has wonderful facilities which need to be utilised as much as possible, other than its primary role as a place of worship. We need to seek out innovative ideas to attract both members and non-members to join together. The Candlelit carol services at Christmas, Cawl and Quiz on St David's Day are good examples of events that attract many to the chapel; but more are needed. Perhaps illustrated talks, a musical evening, even a craft fair could be considered for example. I am sure any suggestions you may have to carry Babell forward would be most welcome and Helen or Mike would be pleased to hear from you.

This Autumn Newsletter is complete but what about the next one where we celebrate Christmas. I feel sure there are many articles which could be submitted which pertain to this wonderful time of year. Incidentally, if you like toffee try this:-

### **TOFFEE AND FANNY** (Taffi a ffani)

one pound soft, brown sugar	a knob of butter
one large cupful cold water	oil of peppermint
two teaspoonfuls vinegar	

Put all the ingredients (except for the oil of peppermint) in a cast iron saucepan over a moderate heat, and boil, stirring continuously, for fifteen minutes. Test a teaspoonful of the boiling mixture in cold water and if it hardens immediately remove the mixture from the heat. Pour out the bulk of the mixture on to a greased slab or dish but retain a small amount in the saucepan. (Keep this in a warm place to prevent it from hardening.) Grease both hands with butter and 'pull' the toffee while it is hot, as quickly as possible, adding a few drops of the oil of peppermint while pulling. Continue pulling until a creamy colour is attained. Place in long, flat strips, about an inch wide, on the table and pour the toffee that was retained to form a thin brown line along the centre of each strip. Cut into smaller pieces before it hardens.

*This recipe is from Welsh Fare by Minwel Tibbott.*

Personally I hope to include some old recipes from Christmases past in the next Newsletter. What can you offer to share with us all?

TREVOR

## **TWO MEN WHO WERE INVOLVED WITH A WORLD BEST SELLER**

In 1563, four Welsh bishops and the bishop of Hereford were instructed to prepare a translation of the Bible and the Common Prayer Book into Welsh, and publish them by the first of March that year - a tall order!

The one who attempted to meet the deadline was Richard Davies (1501-1581) the then bishop of St David's. He translated the Common Prayer Book, but to translate the Bible he invited the nobleman and linguist William Salesbury to the palace at Abergwili to assist him; the man who had urged a nation to insist on having the Holy Scriptures translated into their own language - a wise choice. With some help from Thomas Huet the cantor at St David's cathedral they translated the New Testament, and both books were published in 1567. To Welsh readers today the language and style would seem very archaic.

It gives one a certain thrill to realise that this work was accomplished on the very site of the present Carmarthen Museum (the old Bishop's Palace).

By 1588 the translation of the entire Bible was accomplished by William Morgan (c1541-1604) who later became the bishop of St. Asaph. This was written in a refined and dignified style.

Between 1588 and 1900 innumerable editions and revised versions of the Welsh Bible were to follow.

One such (family) Bible with detailed commentaries on every chapter was produced by the Rev. Peter Williams (1722-1796). Peter Williams was born in a house on the border between the parishes of Laugharne and Llansadwrnen. He was orphaned at the age of twelve and was adopted by an uncle (his mother's brother). After leaving school he studied for three years at the Athrofa (Academy) in Carmarthen, and on one occasion he was deeply moved by a sermon given by the Rev. George Whitfield in Heol Awst chapel.

He left the Athrofa at the age of twenty one and started a school at Cynwyl Elfed, and while preparing himself for Holy Orders he was given a licence to preach and the curacy of Eglwys Gymmun on the Carmarthenshire Pembrokeshire border in the absence of the incumbent who resided in England. During his time there he was accused of a leaning to Methodism and his licence and stipend were withdrawn by the bishop. He was promised ordination at the end of three years as long as he didn't preach in the meantime.

Eventually, Rev. Griffith Jones, Llanddowror, recommended him to a vacancy in a Swansea parish where he was initially welcomed but fell foul of the parish hierarchy. After a short stint in Llangranog he resolved to become an itinerant preacher and took to the road. He travelled on horseback and preached to anyone prepared to listen to him. His ministry which lasted fifty years took him from Abergorlech to Llanidloes, Newtown, Llanfair Caer Einion, Llandrindod, Bala, Lleyn in Arfon and Anglesey.

He spent his last years in Gelli Lednais farm Llandyfaelog where he worked on his Bible - which was first published in 1770. He is buried in Llandyfaelog parish churchyard.

It is possible that the Bible's greatest contribution to Wales was to make it's language one of a very high standard at a time when there was no cultural institution or university to centralise lively literary activity and nurture essential enlightenment.

### Sources:

Thomas Parry (ed) Hanes Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg hyd 1900, Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru.

Peter Williams, Beibl yr Addoliad Teuluol, The London Printing and Publishing Company 1770.

## **DAU GYFIEITHYDD O SIR GÂR**

Yn y flwyddyn 1563 cafodd pedwar o esgobion Cymru ac esgob Henffordd orchymyn i gyfieithu'r Beibl a'r Llyfr Gweddi Cyffredin i'r Gymraeg, a'u hargraffu erbyn Mawrth Iaf o'r un flwyddyn - tipyn o gamp!

Yr un a geisiodd gyflawni'r dasg oedd Richard Davies (1501-1581) esgob Tyddewi ar y pryd. Llwyddodd i gyfieithu y Llyfr Gweddi Cyffredin, ond i gyfieithu'r Beibl gwahoddodd yr uchelwr ac ieithydd William Salesbury i Dy'r Escob yn Abergwili i roi cymorth iddo; gwr a oedd wedi annogi'r genedl i hawlio cael yr Ysgrythyrau yn eu hiaith eu hunain. Gyda help llaw oddi wrth Thomas Huet cantor yr Eglwys Gadeiriol yn Nhyddewi cyfieithwyd y Testament Newydd ac argraffwyd y ddau lyfr yn 1567. Byddai Cymry heddiw yn ei chael yn anodd i ddarllen yr iaith hynafol ynddynt. Onid cyffrous yw sylweddoli fod y gwaith hwn wedi ei gyflawni yn yr union fan lle mae'r Amgueddfa bresennol yng Nghaerfyrddin (hen Dy'r Esgob).

Erbyn 1588 'roedd cyfieithiad o'r Beibl wedi ei gwblhau gan William Morgan (c1541-1604) a ddaeth yn esgob Llanelwy yn ddiweddarach, mewn arddull gain ac urddasol.

Rhwng 1588 a 1900 ynddangosodd fersiynau a chyfieithiadau dirifedi eraill o'r Beibl yn y Gymraeg.

Un engraifft o'r rhain yw Beibl (teuluol) y Parch Peter Williams (1722-1796) gyda sylwebaeth manwl ar bob pennod. Ganwyd Peter Williams ar y ffin rhwng plwyfi Talacharn a Llansadwrnen. Pan oedd yn ddeuddeg oed fe'i amddifanwyd ac fe'i mabwysaidwyd gan ewythr (brawd ei fam). Ar ol gadael yr ysgol bu'n astudio am dair blynedd yn yr Athrofa yng Nghaerfyrddin, ac ar un achlysur cafodd wefr o wrando ar y Parch George Whitfield yn pregethu yng nghapel Heol Awst.

Ar ol gadael yr Athrofa yn un ar hugain oed a dechrau ysgol yng Nghynwyl Elfed, aeth ymlaen i baratoi ei hun ar gyfer Urddau Sanctaidd. Rhoddwyd trwydded iddo i bregethu a churadiaeth Eglwys Gymmun ar y ffin rhwng Sir Gâr a Sir Benfro a gofal yr eglwys yn absenoldeb y periglor a oedd yn cartrefu yn Lloegr. Yn ystod ei arhosiad fe'i cyhuddwyd o gefnogi'r Methodistiaid. Cymerodd yr esgob ei drwydded a'i gyflog oddi arno, ond dywedodd wrtho yr ordeiniau ef ar yr amod nad oedd i bregethu am dair blynedd.

yna, fe gymeradwyodd y Parch Griffith Jones, Llandowror, Biwyf yn Abertawe iddo; lle cafodd groeso i ddechrau ond y diwedd cafodd ei urru oddiyno gan lywodraethwyr yr eglwys. Ar ol amser byr yn Llangranog penerfynodd fynd yn bregethwr teithiol. Teithiodd trwy Gymru ar gefn ei geffyl a phregethu i unrhywun oedd yn barod i wrando. Aeth ei weinidogaeth, am hanner can mlynedd ag ef o Abergorlech i Llanidloes, Y Drefnewydd, Llanfair Caer Einion, Llandrindod, Y Bala, Llyn ac Ynys Môn.

Treuliodd ei flynyddoedd olaf yn gweithio ar ei feibl yn fferm Gelli Lœdnais, Llandyfaelog, ac yno y bu farw a'i gladdu ym mynwent eglwys Llandyfaelog. Argraffwyd ei feibl yn 1770.

Dichon, mai cymwynas fwyaf cyfieithu'r Beibl i'r Gymraeg oedd achub yr iaith rhag dirywio mewn cynnod pan nad oedd seflynad diwylliannol na phrifysgol i feithrin bywyd llenyddol a safonau traddodiadol brydyddol.

Ffynonellau:

'Hanes Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg hyd 1900' Thomas Parry, Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru.

'Beibl yr Addoliad Teuluol' Parch Peter Williams, The London Printing and Publishing Company.

'Hanes Bywyd a Marwolaeth y diweddar Barchedig Peter Williams'.



## Esme Writes

I would like to share a typical letter from my friends Mike and Moira in Tasmania.

They are a joy to know and their adventures are well worth reading about. Both have just returned from a motor cycling trip of 2500 kilometers to Vietnam. Not so long ago they arrived in New Zealand and Moira writes, " I know Wales claims to have the world's longest place name LLANFAIR PWLL GWYNGYLL GO GER Y CHWYRN DROBWYLL LLANDISSILIO GO GO GOCH but this one is nearly in contention

TEWHAREWAREWATANGAOTEOPETAUAAWAHIAO

which means the gathering place for the war parties of WAHIAO so she took a picture and sent it onto me.

She states that on July 29<sup>th</sup> she will get her pension at 65. That will put a smile on Moira's face. I guess they don't get many female OAP's putting new tyres on their motor bikes or repairing punctures.

Their next motorcycling trip is for three weeks to North Island i.e. mainland Australia to celebrate.

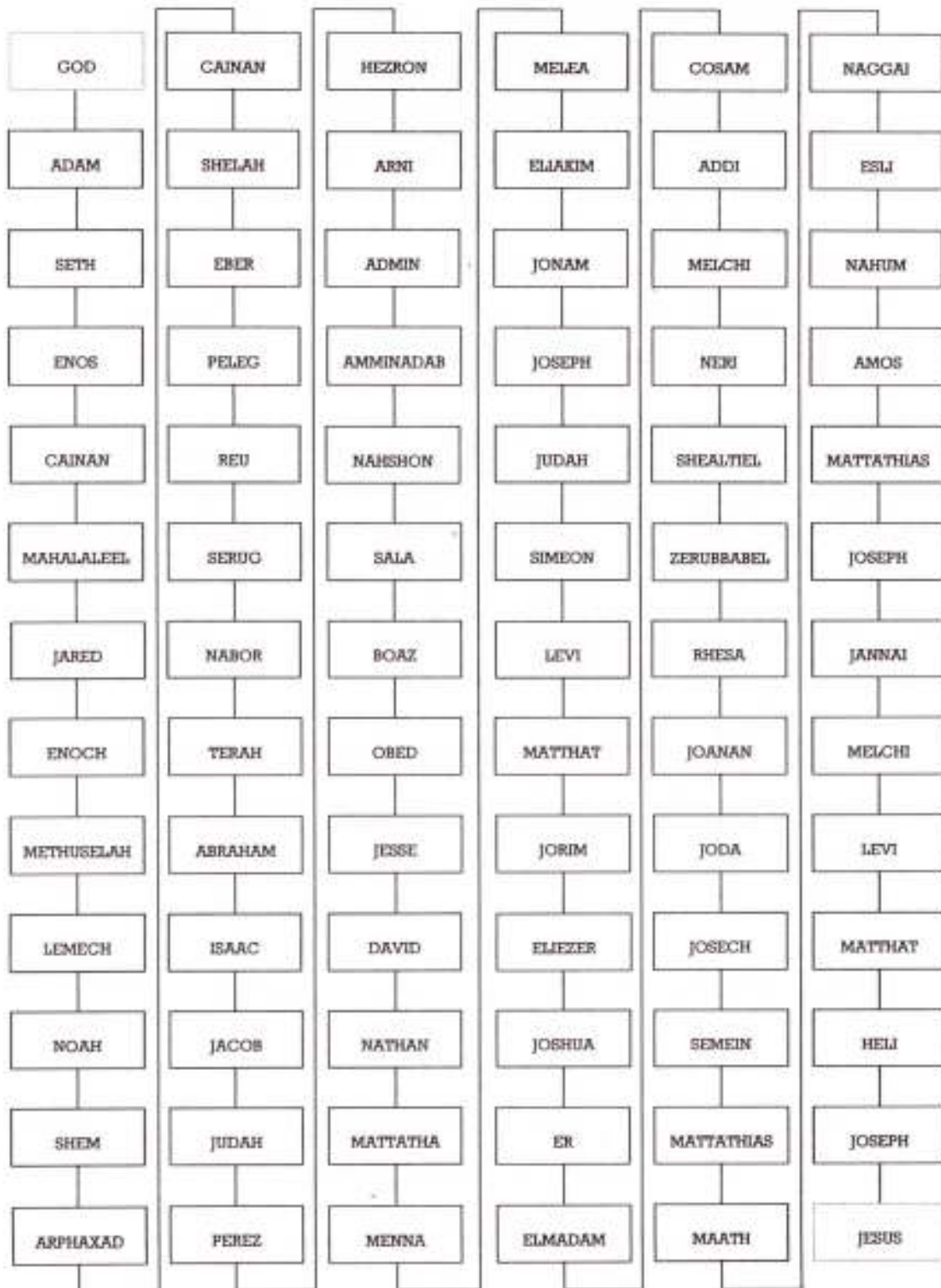
Moira writes, " When I see that blue Airmail stamp UK it's so exciting as it is much more preferable than emails or facebook which in my view are "too instant."



## SMILE AGAIN

I was standing in a library. A funny looking bloke came up to me and placed a book in my one hand and some tippex in the other. He ran off. I noticed that he had used the tippex to cover every comma and full stop in the book. Suddenly the police arrived and arrested me. I was taken to court on a charge of defacing a library book. The judge looked at me and said: "Whoever did this is going to get a long sentence."

## PROBABLY THE LONGEST FAMILY TREE IN THE WORLD



Competition without a prize: HOW MANY OF THESE NAMES CAN YOU FIND? WRITE DOWN THE BIBLE REFERENCES.



A man was caught in a flood. Two men came by in a boat to rescue him, but he waved them away shouting "NO THE LORD WILL SAVE ME." One hour later another boat came along, but again the man said "NO THE LORD WILL SAVE ME." Eventually, a helicopter arrived but the man insisted, "THE LORD WILL SAVE ME." Unfortunately the man drowned and at the gates of heaven he asked St. Peter, "WHY DIDN'T THE LORD SAVE ME?" and St. Peter replied ...

"... for crying out loud-  
he sent two boats  
and a helicopter,  
what more do you want?!"