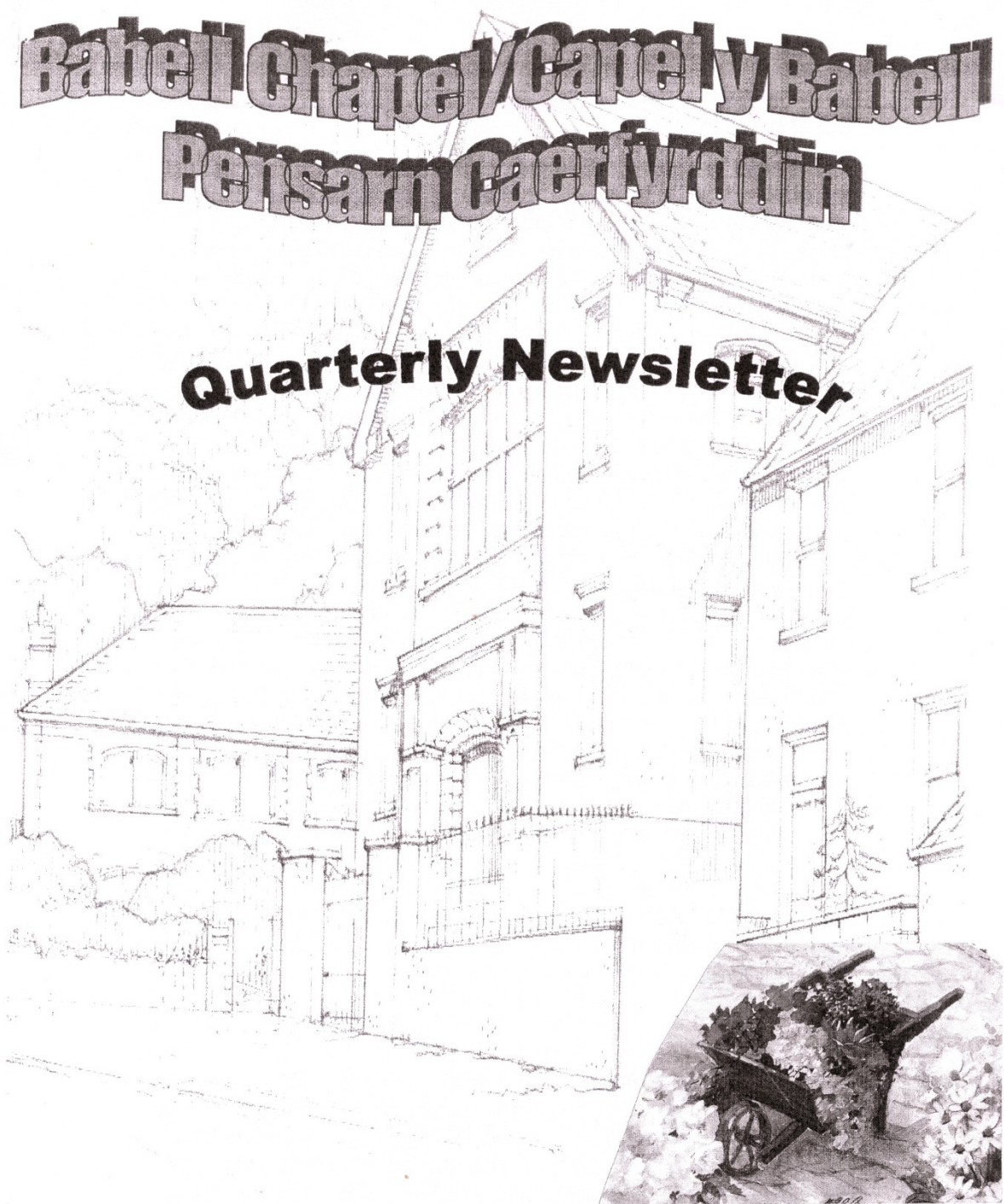


# Babell Chapel/Capel y Babell Pensarn Caerfyrddin

## Quarterly Newsletter



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Summer 2013

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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

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## **Dear Friends**

Among the books which I have read one stands out as being the most inspiring and challenging. It is entitled, *The Cost of Discipleship* and was written by a German minister named Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Its message is dramatically underlined by the circumstances of the author's life.

In the early nineteen thirties, Bonhoeffer was the most promising of the young leaders of the Lutheran Church in Germany. With Hitler's rise to power, however, he sensed the terrifying predicament which faced him and all other devout German Christians. He knew that a choice had to be made between Hitler and Christ: either he had to be disloyal to his religious faith or disloyal to his nation. He chose Christ and repeatedly, in his sermons and pastoral letters, he pronounced the judgement of God on the pagan system of the Nazis; repeatedly, the Gestapo warned him that, in so doing, he was risking his own life and his family's safety. Easy escape was offered: friends arranged for him to give a three year lecture tour in the United States, but Bonhoeffer could not retreat from duty. He remained in America for less than a month and then returned to Germany to be with his fellow Christians in their hour of trial. He joined the underground and for a time was leader of the Church and a leader of the resistance. In 1942, when the plot to assassinate Hitler failed, Bonhoeffer was among those arrested. For the next three years, he lived in prison and concentration camps under continual threats of torture and death. Despite these sufferings, he remained firm in his faith, spending the long days ministering to other prisoners and writing articles and essays which were smuggled out of prison. When it became apparent to the Nazis that his loyalty to Christ and his opposition to Hitler could never be shaken he was hanged at Flossenburg by special order of Heinrich Himmler. When Bonhoeffer had written of the cost of Christian discipleship he knew whereof he wrote. To him, it had been a clear choice either to condone the evil of the world and so to deny his Master, or to stand and suffer and die for Christ.

His book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, begins with these words: "Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of the Christian Church." Bonhoeffer goes on to explain what he means: He is saying that the greatest weakness of the Church is the tendency to sell the Gospel of Jesus Christ at bargain prices and to demand nothing in return. To quote Bonhoeffer: "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, Baptism without Church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution



without contrition. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the Cross, grace without Jesus Christ.....”

Bonhoeffer’s charge that we are trying to sell the Gospel at bargain prices cannot be denied by the modern Church. All about us there is evidence that his warning stands true. We can point to church membership rolls covered with the names of people who have joined the Church but who have not given their lives to the Lord of the Church. We can refer to any number of nominal Christians who use the Church as a convenience in which to be “hatched, matched, or despatched,” but whose lives are a sheer contradiction of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We see our cheap Christianity in our willingness to give the Gospel to the disinterested, to baptise the children of all-but-pagan parents, to ask the blessing of Christ on marriages in which he will be given no share, to read the promises of Christ over the bodies of men and women who were content to ignore him all their lives. We see our cheap Christianity in our stewardship, being prepared to spend a relative fortune on our own pleasures and offering a pittance to the ministry and mission of the churches. We see our cheap Christianity in our half hearted discipleship: a secular club or fraternal lodge makes far greater demands of its members in terms of loyalty, attendance and contributions, than does the average church. We see our cheap Christianity in our personal devotions: surveys show that over three quarters of the people who profess to be Christians never really pray and are abysmally ignorant of the teachings of the Bible. Because Christ died for all, we assume that the blessings of the Christian faith can be showered upon all. We keep throwing the Gospel to people who are not prepared to pay the cost of the Gospel. We are afraid to demand repentance, faith, and sacrifice, and so we try to “popularise” Christianity by selling the Gospel at half-price. We want to see our churches full so we water down the rules of membership. We must not make it hard for people to join a church. We make the process cheap and easy.

But the Christian faith is never cheap and never easy. The shed blood of Jesus Christ is the cost of salvation. It cannot be bartered! Nor should we seek to receive the blessings of the Church without commitment to the Church. I want the church at Babell to grow but not as regards numbers alone. We need to become a people who have dedicated their lives to Christ and who, come what may, will put him first. There is a cost to discipleship. God grant that we will be prepared to pay the price of it in full.

WITH ALL GOOD WISHES

MIKE SHEPHARD



## **Family News**

I do hope that you approve of our new church notice board. It is quite striking in appearance and is meant to catch the eye of those who pass by. The words *A Broad Based Church Serving the Community* are intended to send out a message as to the type of church we are striving to become. We need to be 'broad' as regards our attitude to other people, being welcoming of a diverse humanity. No one should feel excluded on grounds of language, background, cultural identity or sexual orientation. We are all children of God and it was for all that Christ died. We must be 'broad' with reference to doctrine and belief, avoiding the use of 'labels' such as 'evangelical' or 'liberal' to describe Babell. There is room here for everyone – be they great believers or great doubters. Not one of us possesses the whole of truth and each one of us is on a journey of discovery which may take us eternity to complete.

The phrase relating to 'serving the community' is especially significant as we are hopeful, later this year, of establishing some form of 'drop-in' facility on church premises. One appreciates that this will be costly, both with regard to money and time and that sacrifice is needful. It is nevertheless a path which must be walked if we are to be of relevance to the community in which we are situated. We have already spoken, amongst other things, of establishing an 'Upper Room' for this purpose and one suspects that an exciting and challenging time lies ahead of us.

We are already beginning to think of fund raising events with our sponsored walk on Spring Bank Holiday being a very enjoyable event for those able to take part in it. Mrs Pat Morgan has agreed to tell you more about it and this appears elsewhere in the newsletter.

I am hoping to raise additional funds this summer by walking round the coast of Anglesey, a distance close on one hundred and twenty miles. Sponsors, as ever, will be welcome. Our newsletter goes out to a wide association of friends and I would welcome gifts, be they large or small.

Our notice board also makes mention of a Sunday Club, meeting at 10.30am. I am grateful to Helen Gibbon, Sian Cassell and Libby Jones for all their work and do hope that you will encourage your children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews to attend. It really is great fun and very different to the more traditional Sunday School of past years. Numbers attending are very small at present so please do what you can to make this venture known.

We extend our condolences to Alun and Sally Evans on the passing of Alun's brother. We think of them at this time.

It was my privilege, on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May, to dedicate one of the children who attend our Sunday Club, albeit at a service held at the English Baptist Church, Carmarthen where I was minister from 1987 until 2000. I refer to Ellie-Grace who, at a little under three years of age, is the child of Elizabeth Amery. I dedicated Elizabeth when she was a child and was thrilled when she sought me out at Babell and asked me to arrange a similar service for her daughter. She wanted the service to be in the church she once attended and I was happy to do this for her. I found the service memorable and it was lovely to see some seventy people present, several of whom I had not seen for many years. One suspects that Elizabeth and Ellie-Grace will be involved in the life of both churches and it will be wonderful to see them worshipping with us from time to time.

We have had a number of memorable services in our own church of late with the service on Easter Sunday deserving special mention. It was an all age service and was attended by over thirty people, several of them children. The Easter Egg Hunt was certainly an attraction with Joshua, one of my own grandchildren making a very telling comment the night before! The conversation went something like this.

- Joshua**     *Grampy, I can't wait until tomorrow morning when I come To church.*
- Grampy**     *That is lovely Josh. I am so pleased that you want to come to Church.*
- Joshua**     *I must admit that I'm really coming for the chocolate! In fact, I'm only coming for the chocolate!*

Whatever the motivation it was lovely to see children there and we do hope they will come again. We are hopeful of holding periodic *Family Services* but much depends on attracting children into our church.

Our service on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> May was equally special in that it was my privilege to dedicate a lectern given in memory of Mrs Sally Cassell. The 'enjoyment' of the service was aided by an excellent congregation and by a family tribute which concentrated on the more humorous side of Sally's personality. I know I speak for everyone when I say that she is much missed. At a time when we are attempting to reach out into our community her particular gifts would have been such an asset. The Lectern will be a reminder of one who was much loved and we are



appreciative of it. Incidentally, very few ministers these days use the pulpit from which to preach the sermon. A lectern brings one nearer to the people and makes it that much more difficult for any preacher to be 'six feet above contradiction!!'

We are still trying to recruit players for a five a side football team. Ideally players will be nine or over with an upper age limit of thirteen years. If we can establish a Babell team we can then set about organising an inter-church competition with matches being played after church on a Sunday. We already have a referee in the person of Mr John Green. We need someone to coach the youngsters. He/she must be prepared to work for nothing but the fringe benefits will be *out of this world!* Do let others know about this. Any interested young person must have some involvement in the life of our church.

How wonderful it is to see Mrs Nan Thomas back in church after a lengthy illness. It was lovely to see you Nan and we hope that your health will continue to improve.

It is marvellous, too to see Vernon Williams with us again as he was much missed when unable to attend.

Meanwhile, we remember those who continue to experience poor health with the name of Mrs Ena Wilkins coming readily to mind. We extend good wishes to Mrs Elizabeth Evans, who is recovering at home after a time in hospital and to Trevor Lloyd, who was in hospital, very briefly, earlier this year.

I cannot remember if I thanked Trevor Lloyd and Linda Owen for organising our very successful quiz night back in March. It was an enjoyable occasion and was in no way marred by the power cut which plunged us into darkness. We simply carried on, aided by candles left over from our Christmas festivities! A big thank you to everyone who supported the event, as well as to those who prepared and served the delicious cawl. Can we do it again please – possibly in late June?

The word 'Cawl' is, of course, a good Welsh word. I am coming across a number of Welsh words of late in that I am *attempting* to learn the language. If I am honest I would have to say that progress is painfully slow and that I find the spelling and pronunciation of Welsh words very difficult. I recently complained about this, during class, arguing that the language must be the most difficult of all languages to learn. The following week, Sarah, a fellow student gave me a poem which says much the same thing about the English Language. I use it to close our

Family News. It is anonymous which is a shame, as I would like to have given credit to its author. Here it is:

### **OUR STRANGE LINGO**

I take it you already know  
Of though and bough and cough and dough?  
Others may stumble, but not you  
On hiccough, thorough, laugh and through.  
Well done! And now you wish, perhaps  
To learn of less familiar traps . . .

Beware of heard, a dreadful word,  
That looks like beard and sounds like bird.  
And dead; it's said like bed, not bead –  
For goodness sake don't call it 'deed!'

Watch out for meat and great and threat.  
(They rhyme with suite and straight and debt).  
A moth is not a moth in mother,  
Nor both in bother, broth in brother,  
And here is not a match for there,  
Nor dear and fear for bear and pear,  
And then there's dose and rose and lose –  
Just look these up – and goose and choose,  
And cork and work, and card and ward,  
And font and front, and word and sword,  
And do and go, and thwart and cart –  
Come, come, I've hardly made a start!

A dreadful language? Man Alive!  
I mastered it when I was five ....

### **ROLLING IN THE AISLES**

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 passed by on the other side. Finally, a social worker came along, looked at the man and said: 'Whoever did this needs help.'

'You gentiles have taken everything from us,' argued the Jew.  
'Like what?' asked the Christian.  
'Like the Ten Commandments, for a start.'  
'We may have taken them,' replied the Christian, 'but you can't possibly accuse us of keeping them!'



A minister was in despair at the failure of his sermons. Somehow, he never chose a subject that arrested the congregation, made them sit up, think, change their lives – or at least come up to him afterwards, shake his hand and say: ‘What a wonderful sermon, Minister.’

No, unfortunately, those who did not fall asleep during his sermons, sneaked past him at the porch or gave him a limp handshake and a formal, ‘Good morning, Reverend.’ Things came to a head one weekend. Trying to prepare his sermon, he stormed out of his study and said to his wife:

‘What’s the use? I might as well climb into the pulpit and talk about riding bicycles.’

‘Don’t be absurd,’ said his wife.

‘Well, why not – it would shake them out of their complacency – a totally unexpected, unusual subject – you never know.’

So ‘Riding Bicycles’ it was. His wife was very apprehensive, but she went into the crèche, as she did every morning service, leaving her husband to face the congregation alone. But as he climbed the pulpit steps, unknown to her, a far more brilliant idea entered his head.

‘Not “Riding Bicycles” – no – that’ll never wake them up,’ he thought, ‘I’ll preach on sex. I’ll startle the whole congregation and preach a frank, searching, compelling sermon – on SEX!!’

And he did. And it was brilliant. It was funny. It was honest. It was moving. It came from the heart. It was the sermon of his life.

Afterwards, the congregation mobbed him. They shook his hand, thanked him for taking the lid off so many problems, for his sympathetic insight.

A woman rushed into the crèche and went up to the minister’s wife. ‘Your husband was wonderful!’ she said. ‘You should have heard his sermon. Such a brilliant choice of subject.’

‘Really?’ said his wife, astonished. ‘I thought it was a very odd choice considering he’s only done it three times in his life. To be perfectly honest with you – ’ she whispered confidentially – ‘the first time he fell over and the second time his hat blew off.’

### **SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**

Tradition has it that Thomas Aquinas was proudly showed round the Vatican treasury. The Pope said to him: ‘We can no longer say, “Silver and gold have we none.”’ ‘No,’ said Aquinas, ‘and we can no longer say, “in the name of Jesus, rise up and walk.”’

One enterprising church magazine ran a competition to see who could find the most arresting church notice board. A popular one is CH..CH – WHAT’S MISSING? U R. Another warns: SEVEN PRAYERLESS DAYS MAKE ONE WEAK. One church claimed to be the SOUL AGENTS FOR THE DISTRICT. The winner was WE ARE NOW OPEN ON SUNDAYS.

The solution is not, as someone has observed, to put more fire unto the sermons – but to put more of the sermons into the fire.

Of all nonsense, religious nonsense is the most nonsensical



Helen Gibbon writes .....

It has been a busy time for members yet again. The Quiz night was a major success and after the Cawl and cheese it was a surprising candlelit second half due to the heating system overloading the electricity supply. However this only added to the ambience of the evening. Many thanks to Trevor and Linda for all the organising.

The Sunday Easter Service was held in the morning with a few children present for the Easter egg hunt. Mike will have to have lessons next year as to how to hide the eggs!

This was followed with refreshments in the vestry.

Another memorable service was held on May 16<sup>th</sup> when a lectern made by Mr Alun Davies Pencader was presented in memory of Mrs Sallie Cassell. Sian and family wish to thank everyone for their generosity and to Aled, Sallie's nephew for the tribute.

Sian and I represented Babell at Cwmdwyfran on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April and reported on church activities.

Sian and I are also on duty rota at the weekly Thursday night Welsh language children's Christian club at St John's [ GIG ]. It is truly a joy to watch Aron and Iestyn ap Hywel bring the New Testament stories alive to a small group of primary school children and also to take part in the games. We are both children at heart! Both men distributed Welsh Bibles to Year 3 in Llangunnor School on 17<sup>th</sup> of April and Mike and I distributed English Bibles to the Year 3 English stream on behalf of Babell. Please pray that children will soon join the Sunday School. Ellie Grace has started with us of late and thanks to Libby we now have a new wall display on the Life and Ministry of Jesus.

A meeting of the elders took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May when Mike presented to us his ideas for the Friendship Centre which will hopefully start in September on every Thursday from 10.30 to 2.30 in the afternoon. An open meeting will be held on June 10<sup>th</sup> at 6.30 for further discussion. It was decided to keep the Sunday Club to the morning and services to the afternoon for the time being.

The Sponsored Walk raised £700 which is a good start to fund the Friendship Centre and other plans. Many, many thanks to all who contributed. If we thought 8 miles was far then we should consider what Mike is about to embark upon in August! A walk along the whole Anglesey coastline, again to raise money for the Centre. We shall have to arrange to meet him at the last lap!

The usual door to door collectors for Christian Aid raised £316.06. Thank you one and all.

On Tuesday May 21<sup>st</sup> Vi and Sian went to the afternoon meeting of the South Wales Women's Mission Rally at Heol Dŵr and I joined them for the evening lecture given by Catrin Williams, the daughter of Revd and Mrs Cynwyl Williams, on how artists over the centuries have portrayed women in the Bible, three in particular, Eve, Bathsheba and the daughter of Jephtha[ who isn't even named] and how this has influenced our opinions of women. It was a very interesting and enlightening lecture. Catrin is Head of the Theological department at Trinity St. David's.

By now the new sign is up. Mike spent a good part of the day on Friday preparing a place for it and Gwynedd helped him on Saturday to put it in its place. It is very prominent and hopefully inviting. Let us invite people to join us on a regular basis and enjoy fellowship together.



Bu'n dymor gweithgar eto ym mywyd yr aelodau. Roedd y noson gwis yn llwyddiant ysgubol ac er bod y gwres wedi gorlwytho'r system drydanol a'n gadael mewn tywyllwch roedd cynnal gweddill y cwis yng ngolau kannwyll wedi ychwanegu tipyn at awyrgylch y noson. Diolch i Trevor a Linda am drefnu'r cwbl.

Cynhaliwyd gwasanaeth Sul y Pasg yn y bore gyda nifer fechan o blant wedi dod ynghyd ar gyfer oedfa deuluol a chwilio wrthgwrs am y wyau siocled cuddiedig. Bydd rhaid i Mike gael gwersi ar sut i guddio erbyn y flwyddyn nesaf! Cawsom baned a sgwrs braf yn y festri i ddilyn.

Oedfa arall a gadawodd argraff oedd gwasanaeth brynhawn Sul Mai 16eg pan gyflwynwyd darllenfa er côf am Mrs Sallie Cassell. Dymuniad Sian a'r teulu yw diolch i bawb am eu caredigrwydd ac i Aled, nai Sallie am y deyrnged hyfryd.

Sian a finne aeth i'r Cwrdd Dosbarth yng Nghwmdwyfran ar 23ain o Ebrill ac adrodd nôl ar y gweithgareddau yn y Babell ar hyn o bryd.

Mae Sian a finau hefyd ar rota dyletswydd yng nghyfarfodydd GIG bob nos Iau.

Mae'n wirioneddol dda i fod yno a gwylio Aron a Iestyn ap Hywel wrth eu gwaith yn dod â straeon y Testament Newydd yn fyw i'r plant cynradd. Bu'r ddau yn Ysgol Llangynnwr yn dosbarthu Beiblau i'r disgyblion ar fore Mercher 17eg o Ebrill ar ran GIG ac fe aeth Mike a finau at y ffrwd Saesneg a dosbarthu Beiblau yn enw Babell. Gweddiwn y gwelwn ni blant yn dod i'r Ysgol Sul yn fuan. Mae Ellie Grace wedi dechrau yn yr Ysgol Sul ac mae'r diolch i Libby fod gennym arddangosfa newydd ar Fywyd a Gweinidogaeth Iesu.

Cafwyd cyfarfod y blaenoriaid ar Fai 1af pan gyflwynodd Mike ei syniadau ar gyfer y Ganolfan Cyfeillion sef Friendship Centre i'w gynnal ar ddydd Iau yn wythnosol o 10.30 i 2.30 yn y prynhawn o fis Medi ymlaen. Bydd cyfarfod agored i'w gynnal ar Fehefin 10fed am 6.30 i drafod ei syniadau ymhellach. Penderfynwyd cadw at y drefn o gynnal Ysgol Sul yn y bore a'r oedfa yn y prynhawn ar hyn o bryd.

Rydym wedi dechrau codi arian ar gyfer y syniadau newydd ac fe godwyd £700 ar y daith noddedig ar ŵyl y banc Calan Mai. Dechrau arbennig. Diolch i bawb am eu cyfraniadau. Os oeddem yn meddwl bod 8 milltir yn bell nid yw'n ddim i gymharu â bwriad Mike i gerdded arfordir Sir Fôn yn gyfan ym mis Awst.

Buodd y casglyddion arferol allan yn casglu o ddrws i ddrws ar gyfer Cymorth Cristnogol ac fe godwyd £316.06.

Nos Fawrth Mai 21ain aeth Vi a Sian i gyfarfod Cenhadol y Chwirydd Sasiwn y De yn Heol Dŵr yn y prynhawn i ac ymunais i â nhw yn y nos i glywed Catrin Williams sef merch y Parch a Mrs Cynwyl Williams yn siarad am sut mae arlunwyr wedi dehongli tair gwraig yn y Beibl ar hyd y canrifoedd a sut mae artistiaid yn medru dylanwadu ar ein ffordd ni o feddwl. Y tair dan sylw oedd Efa, Bathsheba a merch Jephtha. Darlith ddiddorol a goleuedig iawn. Mae Catrin bellach yn bennaeth ar yr Adran Ddiwinyddiaeth ym Mhrifysgol Y Drindod Dewi Sant.

Treuliodd Mike ran fawr o ddydd Gwener yn paratoi lle i'r arwydd newydd a gyda chymorth Gwynedd fe'i osodwyd yn ei le bore Sadwrn. Mae'n amlwg iawn ac yn gwahodd gobeithio. Dewch i ni gael gwahodd pobl i ymuno gyda ni yn rheolaidd gan fwynhau cymdeithas groeshawgar gyda'n gilydd.

## Rhai pethau diddorol/ Some interesting points

John Calvin's view on the Sermon/ Barn John Calfin ar y bregeth

Mae sylwadau John Calfin ar bregethu yn ddiddorol iawn:

- Rhaid paratoi yn fanwl.
- Dylai'r brawddegau fod yn fyr.
- Dylid aros yn yr un llyfr o'r dechrau i'r diwedd gan fynd o un adran i'r llall.
- Dylid egluro yn fanwl ystyr y geiriau yn yr ieithoedd gwreiddiol sef Hebraeg ar gyfer yr Hen Destament a Groeg ar gyfer y Testament Newydd.
- Dylid addasu'r neges ar gyfer heddiw.
- Ni ddylid bychanu addolwyr ond dangos tosturi a gofal am y gynulleidfa.
- Mae gwahaniaeth rhwng pregeth a darlith.
- Mae pregethwr yn caru Duw a charu ei bobl.

Gyda llaw : Byddai pregeth yn para tua awr!

Vocabulary/Geirfa:

Hebraeg: Hebrew

Groeg: Greek

darlith: lecture

pregeth: sermon

bychanu: belittle

gwahaniaeth: difference

yn fanwl: in detail

Gyda llaw: By the way

awr: hour

egluro: explain

## The Calendar

	Pregethwr / Preacher	Blodau /Flowers	Glanhau /Cleaning
June/ Mehefin 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Revd. Mike	Miss Sian Cassell	Miss Charmaine Williams
9 <sup>th</sup>	Revd Mike		
16 <sup>th</sup>	Revd Mike Family Service		
23 <sup>rd</sup>	Revd Mike		
30 <sup>th</sup>	Pastor John Morgan		
Gorffennaf /July 7 <sup>th</sup>	Revd Mike 2pm Gwyl Hirddydd Haf Parc Caerfyrddin 5pm	Mrs Edwina Jones	Mrs Janet Davies
14 <sup>fed</sup>	Pererindod/Pilgrimage		
21 <sup>st</sup>	Rev Mike 2pm		
28 <sup>th</sup>	Revd Mike		



## **STEPPING OUT FOR THE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE**

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2013 dawned bright and sunny. Could this be right – a clear, blue, cloudless sky on a Bank Holiday Monday? People in the Western Isles of Scotland call such lovely days a ‘given day’ and so it seemed.

The happy band of would-be walkers gathered in Burry Port Harbour Car Park at 10.00am sharp. We were a motley crew made up of bright young people (Welsh Champions at athletics no less!), seasoned walkers (almost professional in their level of fitness) and the rest of us, wary yet well intentioned, bringing up the rear. Twelve walkers, two supporters and ‘back up’ staff on a bicycle made up the group.

It was a really enjoyable experience. Gales of laughter rippled along the path, confidences were exchanged, anecdotes told and the most natural of all activities – just walking – brought people together. People walked and talked with those with whom they normally exchange polite smiles. A welcome break was had at the Pavilion Café in Pwll and refreshed and rejuvenated the walk progressed.

The Coastal Path is now a jewel in Carmarthenshire’s tourist attractions. The landscape which had once been scarred by coal tips, ugly power stations belching smoke, fiery furnaces of tinplate and steel works and clanging shunting trains delivering raw materials is now calm and manicured. The hollows which once housed slag and ash now hide grebes, swans and water voles.

At lunch-time in Llanelli one or two peeled off but the hardy core soldiered on.

A lunch-time picnic was much enjoyed and soon the return journey was underway.

Stars of the show must be the young people who set off and maintained a cracking pace. We will not dwell on one or two of the ‘oldies’ who veered off the straight and narrow path – losing their way but, rest assured, optional tracking devices may be available next year!

The back-up staff on a bike did a great job dispensing encouragement, water and carrying the ‘magic sponge’ and first aid – thankfully not needed.

The final total is not quite totted up yet but it’s sure to be in the hundreds. Well done Babell members and friends.

It is hoped the fun and friendship enjoyed along the way will spill over and embrace those who’ll be welcomed at the Friendship Centre.

Pat Morgan

*(Thank you for this Pat. You have a lovely turn of phrase and I enjoyed your description of the transformed landscape MFS)*



## TALKING POINT

We speak of Jesus as being “knowable” and in one sense he is. Yet we know so little about him. He was only a young man when he died and of that short life we have records dealing with only three or four years. The records were written by men and although they were certainly “inspired” they were not thereby turned into Dictaphones nor could they look at him, describe what he did, or report what he said, save as they looked through the tinted glasses of their own prejudices, their limited outlook, their complexes and their wishful thinking. The result is that there are few sentences we can take as the exact words he spoke, though we can and should read all four Gospels, get the total impact which his personality made, and then be in a position to say about the individual sentence, “This sounds just like him,” or of other sentences, “No one would report an unlikely sentence like that unless he had said it.” At the same time, some sentences which purport to have been spoken by him we must reject out of hand, or perhaps rather, put them in a mental drawer in our minds and label the drawer, “Awaiting further light.”

This will sound to some an outrageous thing to say and they will angrily ask me if I do not believe the Bible record. I can only reply that I cannot make myself believe that Jesus spoke words which are completely out of character with the total impact which his personality makes upon me, derived from all four Gospels, from the experiences of the saints, and from my own poor but sincere thought of him after half a century’s meditation and experience. I must, I feel, judge the Bible by Jesus, not judge Jesus by the Bible, written, as it was, by fallible men who sometimes contradict one another, and who must sometimes have been mistaken in their estimate of him. To acclaim that the Bible *contains* the Word of God is not to say that all its words are the words of God.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Matthew tells us in his famous chapter about the sheep and the goats that Jesus will turn to those on his left-hand – the goats – and say, “*Depart from me you cursed into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels because I was hungry and you gave me no food . . .*” (Matthew 25: 41-42). But Luke says that when Jesus was not just left hungry, but was being put to death, he said, “*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34). Both these sentences could not have come from the same lips.

Do you see what I am saying here? It is a psychological impossibility that the lips which said, “Father, forgive them” would also speak threats of eternal torment. The former statement sounds exactly like Jesus. The latter statement is something that he would never have said.

And the scholars think likewise. They point out that the passage about the sheep and the goats only occurs in St. Matthew’s Gospel. Moreover, an almost identical passage occurs in the book of Enoch – an apocryphal book which was adjudged not worthy enough to be included in the Bible. It is surely evident that both owe their form to a common *imaginative* tradition. So, When Jesus is reported as consigning to everlasting torture those who displease him I *know* in my heart that there is something wrong somewhere. Either he is misreported or misunderstood, or else some bias of the reporter has distorted his ideas, or the reporter is expressing – as some of his disciples were wont to do (Luke 9:54) – their desire that those who did not support him should meet some dire fate.

By the judgement of a court within my own heart, more reliable than a theory of the inspiration of the Scriptures, I reject such sayings. No one can believe – even on the



evidence of a Biblical writer – that God is a despotic, cruel tyrant or that Jesus would support action which sounds more like Buchenwald and Belson than the spirit which said, “Father, forgive them.”

From the writings of Dr Leslie Weatherhead

**DID YOU FEEL STIMULATED BY THE ABOVE ARGUMENT?** Did it make you angry? Or did you find yourself in agreement with it? I want this church to be a place where we are not afraid to give voice to our doubts and where we are prepared to ask difficult questions. Let me know if you would like to explore this, and similar issues further. If sufficient interest is expressed we can then organise a series of discussion groups at Babell – possible during the season of Lent 2014.

MFS

## **ON A LIGHTER NOTE**

A pious old lady saw a beautiful parrot in the pet-shop window. The owner warned her that the bird had picked up shocking language from its former owner, a merchant seaman, but the old lady insisted that she could curb such filthy habits. Sure enough, on the very first day, the parrot swore – using quite a few words the old lady had never heard before but knew were dreadfully rude. Immediately, she grabbed the parrot from its perch and shut the freezer.

‘Stay there for a few minutes,’ she told the parrot, ‘and perhaps the freezing cold will improve your vocabulary.’

As his eyes grew accustomed to the dark, the parrot noticed a frozen chicken and said: ‘I hate to think what words you’ve been using.’



"PERHAPS I COULD EXPLAIN  
AGAIN WHAT I MEANT BY  
'SHARED LEADERSHIP'..."



## ON BECOMING OBSESSED WITH SELF

The longer people live the harder they can become. They can grow a protective shell about themselves, a shell so thick that self-interest becomes the chief end of life.

A novelist summed up one of his characters in a sentence: *EDITH WAS A LITTLE COUNTRY BOUNDED ON THE NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST BY EDITH.*

What had happened to Edith is obvious. She had allowed life to narrow her interests. She was wrapped up in herself. She had ceased to care deeply about others and had come to believe that the whole universe revolved around her alone.

There are many 'Ediths' in the world. They are of both sexes. They can be husband, wife, father, mother, son or daughter. Edith may be me. Edith might be you.

The trouble with many a life is not that it is lived badly. The trouble is that it is lived selfishly.

A man made himself famous in the catering business. He established a chain of restaurants around the country. As he lay dying, his relatives gathered round his bed. They bent over him to hear his final words. His last whisper was: 'Slice the ham thin.' We laugh. It could be that we are laughing at ourselves. Here is a poem, written by Phyllis McGinley, called 'Occupation Housewife' It is a poem about what can happen to a woman in the middle years. Change the analogies and it can apply to men also.

*Her health is good. She owns to forty-one,  
Keeps her hair bright with vegetable rinses,  
Has two well-nourished children – daughter and son,  
Just now away at school. Her house, with chintzes,  
Expensive, curtained, animates the caller,  
And she is fond of early American glass,  
Stacked in an English breakfront, somewhat taller  
Than her best friend's. Last year she took a class  
In modern drama at the Country Centre.  
Twice on Good Fridays she's heard 'Parsifal' sung.  
She often says she might have been a painter,  
Or writer, perhaps, except she married young.  
She diets, and with Contract she delays  
The encroaching desolation of her days.*

The sting is in the last line – 'the encroaching desolation of her days.' Time and time again it is clear why people are disillusioned about life and bored by it. They are hoarding what they should be giving away. They are fussing over themselves – their health, their diet, their figure, the impression they make on others – when they should be giving of themselves to others. They think they are here to be served. They are wrong. True happiness will only be found as we begin to serve.

From Readers Digest/ contributed Gwen Shephard





## NO EXCUSE SUNDAY

There was a church: It surveyed  
a thousand absentees.  
And acting on the lessons learned,  
it planned its strategy.  
Some folk had said: 'We work all week;  
A 'lie-in' is our due.'  
So beds were bought, and these were put  
in designated pews.  
The worshippers could slumber now,  
in sermon and through prayer.  
It really did not matter -  
As long as they were there.  
Some people quipped: 'Were we to come,  
the roof might well cave in!'  
Steel helmets were thus issued,  
with a protective rim.  
'The seats are hard!' moaned others.  
That problem was soon fixed -  
The church provided cushions,  
from foam two metres thick.  
'The church is cold!' Yet others said:  
For them there was hot air -  
Gifted by the minister,  
Who wanted people there.  
We cannot come,' said others still,  
'Our eyes are very sore!  
We stay up late on Saturday,  
watching Channel Four!'  
The church was sympathetic,  
and was not cross or vexed.  
An eyebath filled with Optrex,  
was there on Sunday next.  
And candles on the altar,  
were dimmed lest harmful glare,  
upset the congregation,  
who would, with luck, file there.

Many said: 'We'd like to come;  
But what about the Roast?'  
This problem, though, was overcome,  
more easily than most.  
An oven, fan assisted,  
was sited in the aisle;  
The Bread of Life and Sunday Lunch,  
were in this way combined.  
The timescale of the services,  
meant medium steak. Or rare.  
No one need miss their dinner -  
through simply being there.  
Some people claimed to worship God,  
in garden or on hills.  
The church bought shrubs and flowers,  
and placed them on the sills.  
The preacher, a keen gardener,  
then tore the pulpit down;  
And stood upon a tub to speak  
with conifers around.  
And deacons, clad in wellies,  
wore daisies in their hair.  
The church can be a garden, friends!  
Don't stay away - Be there!  
Relations were adopted -  
for those who liked to visit.  
There were boot sales in the vestibule,  
with slogan 'Do not miss it!'  
There were medicines and tonics,  
all stacked up by the door;  
And 'pick me ups' and 'bring me downs'  
upon the shelves and floor.  
The church was very mindful,  
of those so full of care;  
And did its best to guarantee,  
that all such folk were there.

But despite all compromise, the 'many' stayed away.  
And seemed to have excuses every single day.  
It was too wet, too hot, too cold; They had too much to do.  
Some noses, like Pinocchio's, just grew! And grew! And grew!  
The truth, if one but tells it - (I don't know if I dare);  
Some folk will find excuses - for never being there!

Mike Shephard ©

## **ANOTHER WEEK IN THE LIFE OF GOD** from the book of the same name by Colin Morris

**Sunday** Trinity Sunday today. I derive a certain gentle amusement from observing preachers tie themselves into verbal knots trying to do justice to the complexity of my nature. Of course their troubles start even before they get to the sermon; at the Prayer Book Preface for Trinity Sunday in fact: *Who art one God, one Lord; not only one person, but three Persons in one Substance . . . without difference or inequality . . .* It is a beautifully turned sentence, of course, but I never hear it without wondering – am I really as complicated as all that?

**Monday** I do not give my blessing to one person and withhold it from another. All are my beneficiaries. I am Father of all. Whoever denies that I am the Father of another human being declares not that other person but himself an orphan.

**Tuesday** This scholar claims: ‘God will become obsolete in my lifetime.’ Well, in *his* lifetime, maybe, but not in *mine*.

**Wednesday** Beware of the person who does not fear me. That person is greatly to be feared.

**Thursday** Faith in me ought not to reduce humanity to abject dependence and passivity. For faith is a two-way business. Their faith in me is only one side of the coin; I also put great faith in them; to this extent – the world belongs to me but it will be what they make it.

**Friday** I sympathize 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** I locate all my mysteries just beyond the range of the human imagination – near enough to tantalize; far enough to extend its range. In a playful mood I tease the human spirit; in a serious mood, I challenge it. Either method makes it grow.

## **BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY**

**Back to Church Sunday** is designed to encourage people to invite their friends and neighbours back to church on one specific day. It is based on research showing that 25% of the population would be open to such an invitation. Experience shows that it works. Many Anglican churches have had excellent results, and in the North Western Baptist Association last year, participating churches saw an average increase of twelve in their congregation that Sunday. Back to Church Sunday will be held in September. Details to follow.



## THE COMING QUARTER

Please note that no services are held in the month of August. This is a holiday month when many regular worshippers are away. It is also an opportunity for joining with other congregations and for getting to know them. The minister will be available throughout the month.

### JUNE 2013

June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 2pm

Minister and Mrs Helen Gibbon/Communion  
Minister

June 9<sup>th</sup> at 2pm

Minister/ Family Service if children present

June 16<sup>th</sup> 10:30am

Minister

June 23<sup>rd</sup> at 2pm

### JULY 2013

July 7<sup>th</sup> at 2pm

Minister/Communion

July 14<sup>th</sup> at 2pm

Rev John Morgan

July 21 at 2pm

Minister

July 28 at 2pm

Minister

### SEPTEMBER 1<sup>st</sup> at 2pm Minister

We do apologise for any inconvenience caused by our recent experiments with times of services. People have been confused and we are sorry about this. All services this quarter are at 2pm save for that on June 16<sup>th</sup> which will be at 10.30am. This may be a family service. If no children are present it will be the more traditional form of service..

# Sunday Club



Every Sunday

Time: 10.30 – 11.30 am

Babell Chapel Pensarn

Come and join in a variety of exciting activities which will include Bible stories, competitions, games, quizzes, crafts, singing, instrument playing and prizes. You can choose. Our minister the Revd Mike Shephard wants to start a football league in Llangunnor. Are you game?

Revd Mike: 01558 822 595  
or Helen : 01267 290518