

*Babell Chapel/Capel y Babell
Pensarn*

**S U M M E R Newslette
Cylchlythyr yr HAF
2014**

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Thanks to Mike Shephard for permission to do this.



Online at

<http://www.llangunnor.net>

Dear Friends

Do you despise the Church of God?

The question was asked by Paul (1 Corinthians 11) some 2000 years ago. Even then people were demonstrating, both through word and action, how little regard they had for the Christian Church.

Changed though the circumstances are from the day when Paul wrote, the question remains pertinent and thousands of our contemporaries would return to it a resounding affirmative. They do despise the church or, what is worse, ignore it. They cannot see that it has any relevance to problems of the world or, for that matter, to their own daily life. They might even, like Swinburne, the poet, express admiration for the Nazarene while they condemn his “leprous bride,” the church.

I have just finished listening to a debate on Radio Wales in which the question was asked: “Is Britain a Christian Country?” The programme saddened me in that the majority of those contributing to the debate had turned their back upon their Christian heritage and only attended church at major festivals, such as Easter or Christmas or for special occasions like weddings or funerals.

Most of us, I think, will agree that this is the case and heartening though it was to see over fifty people in church on Easter Sunday we know, full well, that such an attendance is not yet likely to be the norm.

I work as a Family Court Adviser and the majority of my colleagues are non-churchgoers. Many of my friends describe themselves as being atheists and cannot understand why I have need of a God who is “an ever absent friend in time of trouble.” They are quite happy with a materialistic interpretation of life and see no need for faith. They respect my right to believe but make it obvious that belief is not for them. They see the churches as outdated and as having no future. Some feel that the world will be a better place were there to

be no religion in it. They are too polite to say it but, in their heart, they despise the Church of God.

If we are to retain our faith in the church it will be because we believe in what churches at their best are trying to say.

Someone protests that they stutter and yes, they do. Some of them stutter badly; yet, for all their stuttering, consider what at their best they are trying to say: No civilisation can survive if it neglects the spiritual ends of life. What shall it profit a person, or city, or a nation, to gain the whole world and lose the soul? At their best they are trying to say that.

The fishermen of Brittany have a legend that, off their coast, deep sunken in the sea, is the ideal community of Atlantis and that sometimes, when the nights are clear and the winds are quiet, if a person's heart is right, they can hear the pealing of the bells. So is the human soul, with sacred things deep hidden in it that the storms of life cause us to forget. But, sometimes, quieted in worship, we can hear the pealing of the bells. And the church is trying to say that.

If we are to return a hearty negative to the question it will be because we see that these imperfect churches are a long way from dead. Many of them are going concerns

We had better not despise the church because within its ample borders live about one third of the population of the globe. The churches wield a tremendous influence for good or evil in the world. When they are stupid, backward looking, fundamentalist in doctrine, superstitious, the effects, as with all religions, can be catastrophic. When they are intelligent, enlightened, ethically minded, recapturing the essential message of Jesus and applying them courageously to modern life, the consequences are inestimably beneficial. What happens to the Christian church in this next generation is one of the

most crucial problems of our civilisation and, in Britain, its survival is of the utmost importance.

If we are to return a resounding negative to this question, it will be because we see how much we personally need the church.

People sometimes say: “But I don’t need the church. I am getting along fine without it.” To which I answer: Getting along without the church? Not in Britain. If you want really to get on without the church you will have to go a long way from here. In this country you are surrounded on every side by traditions that came out of the church, by families whose roots are in the church, by ideas and ideals that were born from the church and by men and women who still believe in the church. In Britain you cannot live without the church. I will tell you what it would mean to live without the church. Let the church die. Let generation after generation rise that never knew it. Let Jesus become a myth, the message of the Bible forgotten, faith in God nebulous, worship finished, no more sacred music now, only secular; no more religious education of the children now, only secular; a literature from which have been deleted the ideas that have their roots in religious heritage – then you could live without the church. Do you wish to try?

Let me close by challenging those of you who do not desire to live without the church. Please come into the fellowship of Babell. For mark it! A full Christianity involves fellowship. There are great musical compositions which no artist can play alone. No matter how well that first violinist can play, he or she cannot interpret them alone. It takes an orchestra – the oboes and violas and violins, the flutes and drums and horns – to interpret such great compositions. And Christianity is great. No soloist alone can render it. Ah, you solitary piccolo, trying to render the Overture to *Tannhauser*! It cannot be done. But you might help. Even if nobody noticed you, you might help – in the orchestra.

MIKE SHEPHARD

What I like about Babell

It's the friendliness and camaraderie. It makes it a pleasure to come to chapel.

Janet and Lyn

Babell has always been a warm and friendly chapel

Nan

Babell holds so many happy memories for me. I've been part of the warm and friendly community since childhood. I've always enjoyed contributing to the musical items and special services. So many happy occasions are close to my heart – my Wedding and Christening – Babell will always be part of me. My daughter and son played an enthusiastic part in Sunday school activities too.

Marian and family

Mae Babell yn capel cyfeillgar y gymuned.

Edwina

Babell is homely and the people are welcoming. It's like a second family.

Sian

With Mike at the helm we are an open church and are moving forward to the next decade confidently.

Helen and Gwyn

There's always a warm and friendly welcome at Babell.

Nelda

Babell has a friendly welcoming atmosphere.

Linda

There are friendly people in Babell. We share lots of fun and everyone helps one another.

Sally and Alun

The welcome at Babell has always been so special. The companionship of the Friendship Centre is very important to us.

Caerwen and Alan

There's always a nice friendly atmosphere in Babell and I always feel better for having joined in.

Jackie

I've had such a long association with Babell. It's part of who I am. My children and grandchildren were always deeply involved in the Sunday School and chapel, they gave us such pleasure.

I've witnessed marriages and, sadly, the funeral of my dear late husband here. Babell is part of my life and always will be. It is where I want to be.

Vi and family

I am very liberal in my beliefs. I find belief very difficult at times and preach "as a doubter to doubters." It is the bargain I made with God when I returned to ministry after a crushing loss of faith in my thirties. I believe in the principles of openness and acceptance for all. The church should be inclusive in every sense of that word. It should strive to be non-judgemental in its approach to people. In these theologically conservative times there are few churches where I can truly 'fit in.' Babell is one of the exceptions to that rule. It is a place where I feel at home. I love the music and believe that we are blessed to have so much talent available to us. I take heart from our modest growth in numbers. I value your willingness to take risks and for being prepared to accept change.

Mike

I like coming to Babell because it is God's house.

Charmaine

Babell is a lovely friendly place in which to meet people.

Maisie and family

Going to Babell is like going home. People really care for one another. The music, the prayers (I love the new little prayer tree on which we can hang quiet intercessions) and the Word, all lift the spirits. There's an easy blend of the traditional and lively interactive worship.

Pat

I really enjoy attending Babell – good welcome and friendly people.

Roy

Babell is somewhere you will be valued. It gave me a confidence I didn't know I had. People show community spirit. They are non-judgemental and caring. I have really started enjoying myself and have been given opportunity and encouragement. I am very grateful for everything Babell gives me. I love coming to the Friendship Centre. The Foot Washing service on Maundy Thursday was great. The Study Group was thought provoking. Babell brings back values that are hard to find in the society we live in. Everyone at Babell makes it a nice place to be part of.

Donna

My great pleasure in attending Babell Chapel, albeit for just a short period of time, has been twofold. The welcome, warmth and kindness of the members made me quickly feel part of a family. Also Babell is blessed with a very gifted minister. Mike brings great humour and

enthusiasm which is infectious. The introduction of the Friendship Centre has done 'just what it says on the tin' and hopefully more people will be drawn to it and perhaps to the chapel as well.

Trevor Lloyd

I am about to celebrate 1 year at my home, Glyn Aur. After visiting Babell on one or two occasions I became a member here. I have a sense of belonging in Babell. It is different to other churches and denominations. The atmosphere is like something I have not experienced before. It is warm and welcoming, no airs and graces, but friendly and helpful. Becoming a member also helped me settle in my new environment. Although in the 'autumn of my years' I look forward to enjoying happiness in the future.

Esme

*When we came back to live in West Wales I said "Right! I've done my bit for churches! They are difficult places at best and can be an agony. I will attend a church where my husband is not the minister and will just **be me.**" I did try other churches but came away wondering why I had bothered. There was a lack of warmth and welcome. One chapel, in Llandeilo, didn't even have a notice board outside and did not advertise the time of its services! I came to Babell, occasionally, to begin with and the church 'grew on me.' There are no undercurrents here and it is a very happy church. I love the musical tradition and, even when the congregation is small, am lifted by the singing. It is a spiritual place but is not overly religious. 'Religious' people can be such a pain at times and make me feel uncomfortable. We have fun here and laughter is never far away. We also know how to hug people when they are feeling down. Coming to the Friendship Centre is a tonic. The Friendship Centre at Babell is the fifth 'Drop In' that Mike has helped establish and, in my view, is one of the best. I am happy to postpone my retirement from churches for a little while longer. Thank you Babell!*

Gwen

I think that the newsletter is a great idea and I enjoy the writing and see it as a valuable resource. I would like to see more emphasis on what has happened over the last quarter and on what will be happening in the coming months. I have asked Mike to save a copy of it to my disc and I will then put it on the internet. What I like about Babell is the friendliness of everyone. I remember when I first came to Babell, not really knowing what to expect and finding a seat hidden at the back. I was given a warm welcome by everyone and it is heartening to see such a close knit community at Babell.

Lee

There is always a friendly welcome at Babell.

Dorothy

It's wonderful to make new friends.

Sybil

I enjoy myself on a Thursday morning coming to the Friendship Centre. I like teasing the "young" ladies.

Stan

Babell has a warm atmosphere, everyone is very welcoming and it's homely.

Doreen

I love the warm and friendly nature of the people at Babell. Some days, I want to go out and come in again, just to experience the warm greetings. I appreciate the preaching of the Word of God and try to put into practice what I hear. Keep the music "rocking," Helen. Thank you for the fellowship and friendship.

Joy

Everyone was so welcoming when I began to attend Babell. They were not at all Judgemental. They were just so pleased to see you! How lovely is that? So – I thank you.

Iris

There is always a warm welcome whenever I have visited Babell and the people there are very friendly. I really enjoyed the quiz night and the family service – particularly the stories of the teddy bears. However, the thing I like most about Babell is Mike's sermons. They are always enjoyable and thought provoking. My dear friends, Gwen and Joy, are also reasons I enjoy visiting Babell – their company is always uplifting.

Judith

Fond memories. Getting married in Babell. Children and Grandchildren christened in Babell. Always a warm welcome, very friendly – enjoy the singing.

Owen

We like Babell for its warm welcome and ambience of today's chapel – yet it retains a strong sense of Welsh history.

Audrey and Elwyn

I like coming to Grampy's church because it is fun and because Helen and Sian are there. I wish I lived in Wales. Then I could come every week.

Ben Shephard (aged 6)

I like coming to Sunday Club because I like singing songs and seeing Sian and Helen and the boys. I like learning the Bible stories.

Ellie-Grace (and Liz)

I like coming to Sunday Club because I learn about God. I like coming because of the company.

Josh

I like coming because it gives me a chance to play the guitar and I just like it.

Ioan

I love singing and seeing Sian and Helen and Liz. It's fun.

Kian

What an encouraging response. *Our thanks to Pat for collating the responses.* Not everyone has responded to the request for comments but they are welcome to do so at any time. We will then include them in the next newsletter.

It is heartening to note that the same theme keeps reoccurring. Warmth, Friendliness, Humour, Freedom to doubt and a Non-Judgemental Attitude. These are all things that I desire in a church so to have discovered them at Babell is wonderful.

Over forty people responded to this survey and, whether through attendance at worship and Sunday Club or through using the Friendship Centre, have spoken positively of their involvement with Babell. Some responses include the words “and family” which is indicative of an even larger pool of goodwill towards our church.

It has never been my lot to minister to a large, thriving church. My particular calling has been to revitalise small churches and, on one occasion, to start a ‘church from scratch.’ I have sometimes envied ministers who have ‘inherited’ thriving churches where finance is no object and where resources are plentiful. That said, there is nothing to beat helping a struggling church to grow – not only numerically – but in influence and service to others. Thank you, one and all, for the help you give to this very special place. Do we despise the church?

Clearly Not!

MFS



News from the Sunday School

It's been another busy term. During Lent the children have been involved with the story of Jesus in the wilderness and how he was tempted to become king of this earthly world. Some Christians give up things over Lent and we thought of all the things that we would find it very difficult to live without. Sweets and Crisps were top of the list and computer games came a close second. The Easter Story culminated with a special Service for the children on Easter morning with an Easter egg hunt and quiz on the kings and emperors of this earthly world. Thank you Liz for making all the crowns and thank you Mike and Gwen for the dozens of cream eggs hidden between the pews. The children made their own special musical contribution to the service and it's good to see that Ioan has started guitar tuition. It was also lovely to see Mike and Gwen's family with us at the service and at the meal afterwards in Nantgaredig: David and family from Leicester, Catherine and the boys and also nephew Dylan and Emma and the children from Llangadog.

Gwasanaeth y Pasg

Cafwyd gwasanaeth deuluol ar fore'r Sul y Pasg gyda llawer o wahanol agweddau iddo. Cymerwyd fel thema brenhinoedd daearol gan ddiweddu gyda ein Harglwydd Iesu fel y Brenin nefol a'r brenin yn ein calonnau. Roedd gan ein gweinidog gwis ar ein cyfer ac anerchiad ar Tomos yr Amheuwyr. Roedd Tomos wedi cael prawf fod yr Iesu'n fyw. "Gwyn eu byd", meddai Iesu, "y rhai sy'n credu ond sydd heb weld". Darlennodd Lleucu hanes Tomos a chanwyd y gân hyfryd honno "Yno yn hwyrddydd Ebrill" [All in the April Evening] fel deuawd gan Heledd a Helen i gyfeiliant piano gan Marian. Canodd plant yr ysgol Sul rai o'r caneuon y maent wedi bod yn eu dysgu yn ddiweddar. Da oedd gweld cymaint yn y gynulleidfa ar fore Sul y Pasg eleni.

Diolch/ Thank you Esme and Trevor for your kind contributions

Bu Esme ar raglen Heno ar S4C rhai wythnosau yn ôl yn sôn am hanes ei thad wedi i gofnodion rhyfel a medalau ddod i'r golwg Yn ddiweddar iawn daeth i sylw Esme a'i brawd y dylai eu tad fod wedi derbyn medalau am ei ran fel milwr yn ystod blynyddoedd yr Ail Rhyfel Byd. Dywedodd Esme nad oedd wedi clywed ei thad erioed yn sôn am y rhyfel erchyll a mwy na thebyg nad oedd yn dymuno yr un fedal er côf amdani. Cafodd Esme gyfraniad ariannol am ei chyfraniad i'r rhaglen ac y mae wedi cyflwyno'r swm hwnnw i'r Capel ac at waith y Ganolfan Gyfeillgar. Diolch yn fawr Esme.

Mae Trevor hefyd, fel siaradwr cyhoeddus wedi bod yn cyfrannu ar lawr gwlad mewn ambell i fudiad neu gymdeithas. Cafodd gydnabyddiaeth am ei anerchiadau diddorol ac mae yntau hefyd wedi rhoi'r arian hwnnw tuag at y Ganolfan. Diolch yn fawr iawn Trevor.

The Beatitudes for today

Blessed are the Poor . . .

Not the penniless

But those whose heart is free.

Blessed are those who mourn . . .

Not those who whimper

But those who raise their voices.

Blessed are the meek . . .

Not the soft

But those who are patient and tolerant.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice . . .

Not those who whine

But those who struggle.

Blessed are the merciful . . .

Not those who forget

But those who forgive.

Blessed are the pure in heart . . .

Not those who act like angels

But those whose life is transparent.

Blessed are the peacemakers . . .

Not those who shun conflict

But those who face it squarely.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for Justice . . .

Not because they suffer

But because they love

P. Jacob/ chile.

FAMILY NEWS

We extend our condolences to *Edwina Jones* on the loss of a much loved brother. We think of *Nan Thomas* who mourns the passing of a sister in law to whom she was very close. We sympathise with *Nelda Davies* on the loss of a cousin.

We send our best wishes to our friend, *Ena Wilkins* who has left hospital and is now in residential care in the Llangunnor area.

On a happier note we express thanks to all who contributed to a memorable service on *Easter Sunday*. It was lovely to see fifty or so people in church on that day and to experience the 'buzz' that comes from being part of a larger and vibrant congregation. The Easter Egg Hunt was enjoyed by the children and it was good to witness their excitement and to hear their laughter. We also appreciated the musical contribution made by members of our Sunday Club and of the adults who, as ever, moved us with their rendering of 'All in the April Evening' sung in Welsh. The service was entertaining but was also meaningful with the task of matching the crown to the kingdom having a very serious message. The children quickly grasped that the risen Jesus, unlike earthly monarchs, had no visible kingdom. He is everywhere, his throne being within the human heart and soul. I am very grateful to *Elizabeth Amery* for making the crowns and to *Donna, Sian and Helen* for their assistance. The service was 'made for us' by the presence of our visitors and I do hope that you will come again, not only on special occasions but whenever you feel able to do so. It gives us such a lift.

The congregation for our *Maundy Thursday* service was much smaller but the occasion was just as memorable. It is customary to celebrate communion on this day as it marks the inauguration of the Lord's Supper. What was new this year was the ceremony of foot washing, initiated by Jesus on the same night and, in my opinion, of equal importance. It is strange that the church, historically, has placed so much store by the former whilst, for the most part, ignoring the latter. Its symbolism, for a servant church, is important and one is grateful to *Sian Cassell* for 'volunteering' her feet for washing.

It is so lovely to be minister of a church that is prepared to try new things. I certainly believe that this is helping me develop as a minister, the truth being that 'old dogs CAN learn new tricks.' I am learning that it is good on occasion to depart from tradition and to preach the gospel in alternative ways.

It is good to see our *Friendship Centre* continuing to flourish and our thanks, as always, to those who staff it on a weekly basis. One recent initiative is the Welsh Classes that precede it and our thanks to *Bronwen Wilkins* for being so patient a teacher. If you would like to learn basic Welsh (very basic in my case) the class starts on Thursday at a little after 9am ending at 10.15am.

Another new initiative this year was the Lenten Discussion Group which focussed on the book *'Pilgrim's Progress'* and was led by our friend, David Folland. David will admit that he and I are at opposite ends of the theological spectrum but are, for all that, united in our desire to follow Jesus. From a personal point of view I found it useful to listen to a point of view other than my own and to reflect on a different interpretation of truth. It was a good Lenten discipline and David's more conservative approach to Scripture provided us with much food for thought. We thank him for his contagious enthusiasm and for giving us, so willingly, of his time. Our numbers, sadly were small but one hopes that we will, increasingly, come to realise the importance of being an 'informed' people. Elsewhere in the newsletter is a comment on the Oxford Council who refused permission for a Passion play to be held on Good Friday on grounds that it was "inappropriate for matters of a sexual nature to be aired on a bank holiday." Dear God! What have we come to as a nation? Is it credible that 'so called' educated people can be so stupid? Or is this the inevitable result of secularisation – theological illiteracy?

Our next discussion group will be in the autumn at which time I hope to follow the *Emmaus Course*, this being an introduction to Christianity. The course encourages a questioning approach to religious belief and is for those who wish to explore matters of faith. It is open to great believers and great doubters. Please let me know if you are interested in this and tell me something of your availability. You do not have to attend Babell or, indeed, any church in order to participate. A Tuesday or Wednesday evening will be best for me. Preparing for a study group, as David Folland will testify, involves the leader in a considerable amount of work. The effort is especially worthwhile if the attendance is good. Incidentally, it was great to see two of our younger friends – Lee and Donna present during Lent.

We will recall that all our activities cease during August and this provides a much needed space for relaxation. We can become overly busy as Christians and can be in danger of deserting God by entering his service. The August break is a chance to recharge our batteries. We need to shut down this August

as the outside of the chapel is to be painted. Our worship area, meanwhile, is to be revamped and redesigned in order for the building to be of wider use to the community. I do know that some of us have misgivings about removing the pews and replacing them with 'comfortable' chairs. The thought of the *seat fawr* being removed to accommodate a platform is also a source of concern and one is very sensitive to any hurt caused by these developments. We must nevertheless adapt our buildings if we are to engage with a changing world, and be relevant again. It is sobering to think that this is the third generation to be lost to the churches. If we do not change – we die. We may die anyway but, if so, let us go out with a bang rather than with a whimper.

The envisaged changes will permit a wider use of the church than is possible at present. By way of example our St David's 'Cawl and Quiz' evening (thanks to Linda and Trevor) was a real success with twelve teams of four players taking part. Most came from a non-churchgoing background and would not normally attend church. Whilst our purpose was not evangelistic the event, nevertheless, helped to break down barriers between church and community. It was an opportunity to engage with people in a non-threatening way and for those all-important 'links' to be forged. If our buildings are to survive they must become more than preaching centres, open for an hour or so each week. They must become meeting places in which all manner of activities can take place, including worship. The worship of the church will continue, as now, in a reverent manner and, if anything, will be enhanced by the changes that are planned. The pulpit will remain, as will the Communion Table. I would very much like to see a large rough-hewn cross to the front of the church so that the message of the gospel is proclaimed no matter how badly one preaches. If misgivings remain please discuss them with me or the elders as our aim is simply that of helping the church move forward.

The other planned change is to have a sizeable screen installed from which the words of hymns can be sung. It can also be utilised during our services of 'all age' worship and, once again, could well enhance our enjoyment of services. Changes of this kind, though new to us, have been a feature of some churches for several years and many people speak positively of such developments. I feel certain that, in time, we will too. Thank you, again, for your preparedness to attempt change, difficult though it can be.

Allow me to close our family news by returning to a note sounded previously. *Please come and help us grow as a church.* If you are a church member who

has got out of the habit of regular churchgoing we would love to welcome you back. I would never criticise any person who has opted out of church as, in the past, I did so myself. If you have become disillusioned with churches tell us in what way we can improve and, with your help, we will change. Some of us believe that it is better to reform the church from *within* rather than criticising it from the touchlines. If you find belief difficult you are not alone. Others at Babell do so as well. None of us know all the answers. God is a mystery but it can be exciting to discover more about him. Come and help us in the search. It may be that you are presently attending a church that is on the point of closure. The temptation then is to join a thriving church with the adage of “a crowd attracting a crowd” being very true. The smaller church, though, has greater need of your help and Babell will welcome you warmly.

In closing our family news I would like to thank you for your support and friendship during the two years that I have been minister here. Your encouragement is very much valued.

MFS

I HEAR A WHISPER that some of us oldies feel it unfair that Easter Egg Hunts are restricted to children. What about us?

The plea is not being ignored. Next year we will have an event for our more senior citizens. How about a ‘*Hunt for My Glasses*’ competition? Alternatively we could have a quiz with a choice of answers, one of them being *Wotsisname? !!!*

HERE ARE SOME MORE SAYINGS ABOUT AGEING

These days Happy Hour is a NAP.

Regular naps prevent old age – especially if you take them while you’re driving.

Parents should be kind to their children for one simple reason: they choose your care home.

Over the hill? I don’t remember any hill.

You have to be fifty-nine to believe a man is at his best at sixty.

You know you’re getting on when the only whistles you get come from the kettle.

The good news about middle age is that the glass is still half full. The bad news is that before you know it your teeth will be soaking in it.

One of the advantages of old age is that it lets you sing while you brush your teeth

A sure sign of old age is waking up feeling like the morning after the night before and realising you haven't been anywhere.

I only need glasses when I'm driving the car . . . and trying to find where I parked it.

Signs of old age? There are three: loss of memory and . . . I can't remember the other two.

The main thing that's wrong with the younger generation is that I'm not in it.

You know you're old when you bend down to tie your shoelaces and start wondering what else you could do while you're down there.

You can live without sex but not without glasses

From Senior Moments/Past Times Trading Ltd

PASSION PLAY FIASCO IS SAD INDICTMENT OF IGNORANT BRITAIN

Did you hear about the passion play in Oxford denied a performance licence because one of the city council's officials mistakenly imagined that "passion" meant "sex show" rather than a religious production traditionally shown at Easter?

The story would be quite funny if it weren't such a depressing example of just how ignorant we British have become about our Christian heritage. A generation or two ago almost everyone in the country would have known that the "passion" was the name given to the period from Christ's entry to Jerusalem on a donkey up to the Last Supper, the agony in the garden and his Crucifixion. Today the chances are that the vast majority of people don't even know what happened on Good Friday, let alone why the day a man was put to death on a cross might be considered in any way "good."

The reason we 'oldies' knew these things is that we went to Sunday school and because at day school we had to attend daily assembly and study the Christian Faith. It was just a normal part of growing up and was not in any way unusual. We do our children no favours when we deny them this opportunity. We are cutting them off from something which remains a vital part of our national culture.

We don't know when exactly Christianity came to Britain but there were

Christians here by the 2nd century and the faith was well established by the 4th century. That means that for at least 1,700 years our national culture has been permeated with Christian ritual, tradition and knowledge. We see it in our churches and cathedrals; in ancient stone crosses; in the timing of our holidays (The word means Holy Day); in our art, music and literature.

Especially our literature. The language of the Book of Common Prayer and the King James Bible are part of our everyday speech: “till death us do part”; “for richer for poorer”; “ashes to ashes”; “all things to all men”; “God forbid”; “holier than thou”; “den of thieves”; sheep’s clothing”; “woe is me”; “land of Nod” – and there’s barely a book in the English language, from the Anglo-Saxon era’s *Dream Of The Rood* up to Larkin’s *The Whitsun Weddings*, which isn’t in some way indebted to Christian tradition.

It’s this cultural loss which is perhaps the worst thing about the national abandonment of our national religion. There are other consequences: the way so many gullible idiots in need of a replacement faith have embraced pagan beliefs; the way we no longer feel bound to behave well on earth for fear of judgement in the afterlife; the death of marriage and the family.

But for a country which so prides itself on its glorious past it is surely a tragedy beyond measure that we have so casually cast aside the religion that for nearly 2,000 years helped define our national identity.

And the people to blame for this as much as anyone are our Christian leaders. How appropriate that this passion play embarrassment should have occurred in Oxford, the city whose bishop lent his support to demands by local Muslims that they be allowed to broadcast the Islamic call to prayer through loudspeakers.

Our schools are no better. Religious studies are still on the curriculum in one form or another but – thanks to the pernicious influence of the Left-wing doctrine of multiculturalism – Christianity is now treated as but one religion among many, with no special claim to a British child’s attention.

If there’s space for lessons in Diwali or Eid, fine. But surely the first priority ought still to be to give children a basic grounding in those biblical stories which until quite recently would have been considered their birthright?

That is why I shall be taking my family to church this Easter. Not because I’m worried about burning in hell or because I’m born again or because I want to be the next Archbishop of Canterbury. It is because Christianity is the religion of my ancestors, it is the religion of our heritage and the religion that made our country great.

James Delingpole/*The Express* Friday April 18th 2014

CAWL and QUIZ 4th March 2014 to celebrate St. David's Day

Twelve teams took part in this quiz which seemed to be well received by all those who took part. Whilst the runners up, the Sugarbabes, scored a notable 61%, the outright winners, The Exiles, achieved 95%. Joint second place went to Hill Tops & Calypso. Fourth, fifth, sixth & seventh places went to Babell Belles, Ancient Artefacts, The Party Animals & Heather's Muppets respectively. Eighth place was shared by Alan's Angles & Team Rhiannon. Bolahaul Buddies were tenth & Three As and a Star were eleventh. Everyone came away with a creditable score in what was a diverse and reasonably challenging quiz. So a big thank you to all of you who took part. The top prize was four £10 vouchers (generously donated by Lee Whatley). The winning team graciously returned their prize; giving it to Babell Chapel Friendship Centre, a gesture that was greatly appreciated.

In the interval a traditional Welsh lamb cawl, and a vegetarian version, was served with cheese and bread rolls. All reports were very positive pertaining to the food. At the end of the evening there was tea and Welsh cakes available.

Although we may pat ourselves on the back for a successful evening it is worth giving some thought as to how much work went in to making it so. It was my pleasure to host the cawl makers in my home the day before the quiz. Starting at 10am Sian, Helen and Linda worked like trojans peeling and chopping up a mountain of vegetables, whilst I simply added them, with the other ingredients, to the pots on the stove. By lunchtime four saucepans of soup were bubbling away merrily while we all sat down to a meal of cawl a chaws a bara Ffraneg. This cawl was from a trial batch made a week earlier where the recipe had been tested on some of those attending the Friendship Centre. Sadly Helen had returned too late that day to sample it and expressed her disappointment vehemently and repeatedly! However, I think we recovered the situation at the pre-quiz lunch which we all enjoyed. It is worth noting that Helen produced the vegetarian version as well.

In the schoolroom, and behind the scenes, Vi laid out the tables in readiness, ensuring there were ample bread rolls and a plentiful supply of cheddar cheese. When we all trooped back for part two of the quiz Vi was left to do all the clearing up. At the end of the quiz the schoolroom was once again ready to receive the influx of people for tea and Welsh cakes. After all the quiz players had left it was again Vi, with, this time, a little help from others who returned the schoolroom to normality ready for the meeting of the Friendship Centre two days later. That involves a lot of hard work and deserves recognition. Thank you Vi.

At the close of the quiz Mike presented Linda with a beautiful orchid and gave me a bottle of wine. Thank you very much.

Finally, I have to say that all the people who I have mentioned above made my job as quizmaster a real pleasure. Believe it or not it is very easy to front an event when you have so many willing and hard working people backing you.

Trevor Lloyd

ESME PHILLIPS reminds us of the 1987 floods

Last winter was the wettest on record but flooding is nothing new - particularly in the Carmarthen area.

I vividly remember the floods of October 1987 and recorded the event in my diary. I wrote as follows:

Carmarthen looked savage after the recent storm which occurred on Saturday night continuing into Sunday - 16th and 17th October. The most badly affected area was Pensarn.

Nearly a month's rainfall, of more than six inches, fell in just 24 hours. The River Towy burst its banks and, despite flood prevention schemes, caused untold damage. The floods were the worst in living memory.

Prince Charles and his then wife, the Princess of Wales, visited the stricken area on October 21st 1987 and met the disaster victims. The water had poured into scores of homes and business premises, blocked roads, hit mail deliveries and wrecked telephone services. The town's railway station was closed as the waters reached the top edge of the platform.

The floodwaters caused thousands of pounds worth of damage at Pensarn. Garages with new and used cars, superstores, DIY and tyre services all suffered. Sea King helicopters conducted a survey of the flooded areas.

Llandyssul was one of the worst hit areas with a rescue fire engine being itself trapped by the water. As I write a welsh poem comes to mind - "CLYCHAU CANTRE'R GWAELOD"

Abergwili suffered badly. The A40 to Carmarthen was blocked.

At Glanrhyd, 4 miles from Llandeilo four people sadly died when an early morning train plunged into a swollen river after flood waters swept away a rail bridge. May they rest in peace.

Esme

Thank you for this Esme. It is hard to believe that this was twenty seven years ago. I remember the occasion well as, on that Saturday, I was inducted as minister of the English Baptist Church in Lammas Street, Carmarthen. The weather was appalling. The heating system broke down and the church had to be warmed by means of industrial hot air blowers. The rain that weekend was a sign of things to come. I spent 13 years as minister of Lammas Street. During those years I organised numerous outdoor events and IT ALWAYS RAINED! I should have been named NOAH.

Incidentally, I recommend the film Noah. It is a real blockbuster. It is somewhat different to the original story but is very entertaining. We went to see it over Easter. It was the first time I had been in a cinema in 35 years. The last film I saw in a cinema was *Strange Encounters of the Third Kind*. What a sheltered life I lead!

MFS

NIGHTLIFE

Twixt the earth and moonlit sky,
See the wise old owl doth fly.
Searching in his silent flight,
To sustain his day's respite.

'Neath the hedgerow, by yon field,
See the hungry hedgehog steal,
Hunting, scurrying through the grass,
Quick! Before the night doth pass.

Silver starlight, creatures calling,
Dampness as the dew comes falling.
Pools of moonlight, velvet shade;
Of such are night-time mysteries made.

Siwla Virago

SMILE AWHILE

An evangelist was baptising people in a river when a stranger arrived on the bank. Intrigued he stopped to observe what was happening.

"You want to find Jesus?" asked the preacher.

"Sure do" said the stranger. "You want me to join you in the water?"

"Come on in" cried the evangelist. I want everyone to find the Lord."

With that the preacher took hold of the man and immersed him, roughly, in the water. "You found Jesus yet?" He asked.

"No Sir" came the reply. " I ain't found Jesus."

Once again the preacher ducked the man in the river. "You found Jesus yet?" he posed.

“No Sir! I be looking really hard but I ain’t found him.”

The evangelist ducks him for a third and fourth and fifth time and asks the same question.

“You found Jesus?” he cries.

The man, by this time half drowned protests:

“No Sir. I have not found Jesus. But are you sure this is where he fell in?”

I love that story. It appeals to my sometimes irreverent sense of humour. It does, of course, have a serious point to make. Are we so eager to make converts that we ‘rush them into the kingdom’ before they are ready for commitment. Is that one of the reasons why so many ‘would-be’ disciples fall by the wayside and opt out of the Christian Church? Should we be spending more time in needful preparation and in teaching people the meaning of faith and belief? If the above story reminds us to do so it will have served its purpose.

All joking aside can I remind you that I will be leading a PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND IN LATE AUGUST/EARLY SEPTEMBER 2015. One of the things I would love to do is to baptise someone in the River Jordan. If you would like to be baptised in that special place do let me know.

Thus far eleven people have expressed an interest in the pilgrimage. We need more pilgrims so please make your interest known.

MFS

HYMNS FOR DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS

Dentist: Crown Him with many crowns.

Dry Cleaners: O for a faith that will not shrink.

Taxation Officers: We give thee but thine own.

Obstetricians: Come, labour on.

Cycle Repairers: My chains fell off.

Archival memoirs of bygone days

THE BOAT RACE

A little published fact concerns a boat race which was run a few years ago. The race was between a Japanese crew and a team representing a certain County Council in Wales. The new County Council had emerged following the Government's reorganisation of Local Authorities in 1996. Both crews practised long and hard to reach their peak performance, but on the day of the race the Japanese team won by a mile.

The County Council team were somewhat discouraged and morale was at an all time low. Elected members and senior managers acknowledged that the reason for the crushing defeat had to be established and consequently decided to set up a working party to investigate the whole matter and recommend a course of remedial action to overcome the problem. A working party was formed immediately and quickly recognised that the Japanese team had eight people rowing and only one steering their boat, and the County Council team had eight people steering but only one rowing in theirs. This led to a firm of management consultants being hired, at great expense to analyse the whole unfortunate incident and make recommendations to eradicate the perceived difficulty. After several months the consultants reported that they had identified the problem - too many people were steering and not enough rowing in the County Council boat. They recommended that to avoid a defeat the next year the team structure had to be modified and should comprise of 4 Steering Supervisors, 2 Steering Managers, 1 Executive Steering Manager and a Director of Steering Services. A performance and appraisal scheme should be introduced to monitor the person rowing the boat which was felt would offer the rower more incentive to work harder.

The County Council embraced all the recommendations and training began immediately. The Japanese were challenged to another boat race. This time the Japanese won by an even bigger margin than before. This was the last straw for the County Council who promptly laid off the rower on the grounds of lack of commitment and resulting poor performance. The boat and its oar were sold off and the order for the new craft was cancelled. The money saved was used to finance an above average pay award to the new steering group whose obvious success had only been marred by the inadequate efforts of the rower.

Trevor Lloyd.

Thank you for this Trevor. There are some churches like this. All the work gets done by the few!!!

OUR MAY DAY WALK

On a slightly overcast Bank Holiday Monday at the start of May a party of eager walkers gathered for a 10am start at the car park by the Discovery Centre in Llanelli. The route we would be taking would be the reverse of the route taken last year and would cover about eight miles in total.

A discussion took place as to whether the car park would be monitored on a Bank Holiday as the maximum stay was four hours and that could quite possibly have been a challenge to achieve!



The party comprising of ten (with two dogs getting an extra long walk) set off on the gentle walk to Burry Port Harbour along the Millennium Coastal Path.

We had very quickly left the car park and Discovery Centre behind us and were soon making our way toward "Festival Fields", which will be the venue for the 2014 National Eisteddfod at the start of July.

A welcome break came at the halfway point (Pwll) where we had the opportunity to sit on cushioned seats to recharge. However we could not sit and rest for long as we were still on a four hour deadline to get back to the car park - so it was onwards we went towards our goal.

All manner of topics were discussed as we walked and I think it was Gwen that mentioned that you did not seem to notice how far you had gone while you talked as you walked.

(That was certainly useful for the return journey!)

The path was relatively busy with fellow walkers and cyclists and we did need to remember to keep to one side of the path to allow these cyclists to zoom past at lightning speeds.

Soon the familiar sight of the lighthouse at Burry Port signalled we were getting closer to the harbour and our destination, stopping only to admire a heron doing a spot of fishing and to get a group photo (unfortunately Gwyn had returned to get his bike and missed the photo).

Once we got to Burry Port we observed some very brave souls out on the water taking part in Kite Surfing and it really was quite remarkable to watch them flying over the water doing all sorts of acrobatics. Maybe this would be a good sponsored event for Mike to consider next after his successful trek around Anglesey (no bullocks in sight).

Pat, Charmaine and Seren (the dog) had to leave at Burry Port while the rest of us found a sheltered spot away from the wind for a lunch time picnic, which Mali (the dog) seemed to enjoy with all the spare food. Once this was finished the return journey back to Llanelli began.

The return journey did seem to take longer not helped by the fact that you could see the Discovery Centre in the distance and no matter how long you walked it never seemed to get any closer. We did

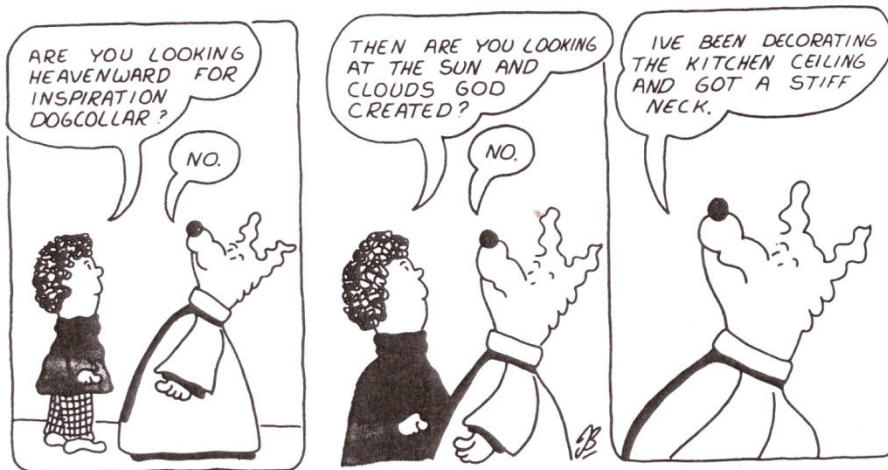
arrive back just after the maximum four hour stay in the car park but were not greeted by parking enforcement notices stuck to our windscreens so a quick cup of tea was called for at the cafe in the Discovery Centre.

A good day out enjoyed by everyone and the rain managed to hold off.

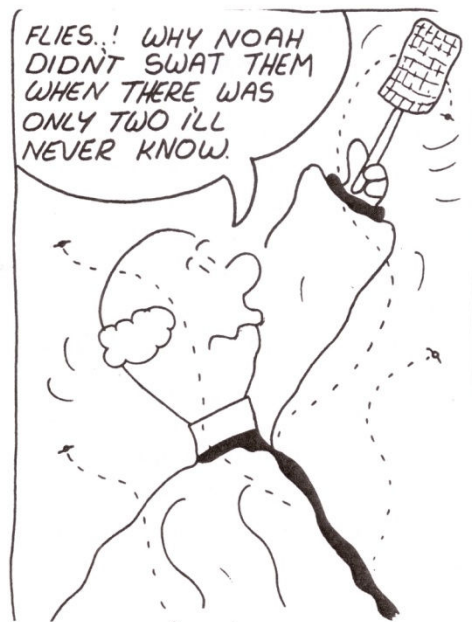
Lee Whatley

Thank you for this Lee. I'm not sure about the Kite Surfing! Are you still intending to take part in the sponsored Fire walk in Carmarthen Park?!

Dogcollar



A missionary described his first meeting with cannibals: 'The most important thing is to stay calm. The last thing you want is to get in a stew.'



THE COMING QUARTER

JUNE 1 st	2pm	MINISTER/ HOLY COMMUNION
JUNE 8 th	2pm	DAVID FOLLAND
JUNE 15 th	2pm	MINISTER
JUNE 22 nd	2pm	Revd J MORGAN
JUNE 29 th	2pm	MINISTER
JULY 6 th	2pm	MINISTER/ HOLY COMMUNION
JULY 13 th	2pm	HUGH WADDELL
JULY 20 th	2pm	MINISTER
JULY 27 th		
AUGUST		NO SERVICES AT BABELL
SEPT 7 th	2pm	MINISTER/ HOLY COMMUNION

GIFT DAY AT BABELL

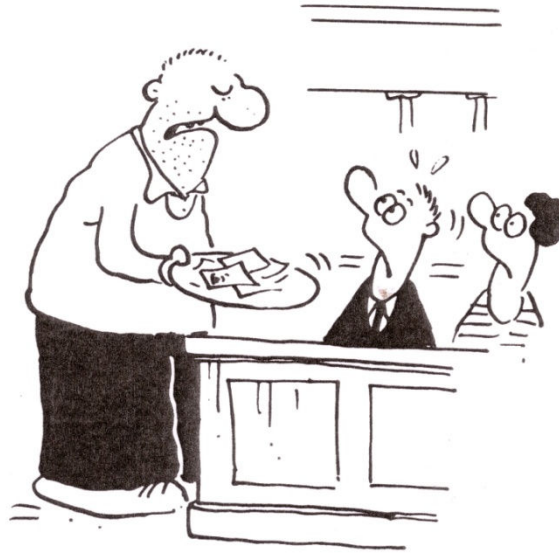
SATURDAY JULY 5th

12 Noon

Followed by a fish and chip lunch in the schoolroom at 1pm

You will be aware of the work to be carried out at Babell during August. This will involve the church in considerable expense but we are confident that the monies can be found.

It has been decided, therefore, to have a gift day on the first Saturday in July. This will be an opportunity for all those with links to Babell to make a donation to the church. It will be a thank offering for all that the chapel has given us over the years. It will also afford **new friends** the opportunity of helping contribute to the future of the church. Friends, old and new, are invited to attend at the church between 12 noon and 1pm in order to offer their gift. We will then have a fish and chip lunch to which everyone is invited. Every gift, be it large or small will be greatly appreciated.



"I'M 'KNUCKLES', AND I'M IN CHARGE OF THE OFFERTORY PLATE..."

the GABERDINE SWINE

by MITCH



LOVE ONE ANOTHER

A poem by Lucy Berry

Lucy Berry spoke at Catalyst Live in both Reading and Manchester. She is a poet, URC minister, sometime radio personality and her book, Trouble with Church is available from kevinmayhew.com

But Lord

But Lord – if They come to our church
we might hear about Life outside.
You would,
said the Lord.

But Lord – there is no Life apart from you.
That's right,
said the Lord.

But Lord – then there is no Life outside of church.
Not true,
laughed the Lord.

But Lord – to learn their story is to
feel their loneliness.
My loneliness,
said the Lord

But Lord – to listen to Them is to
know their terror.
My terror,
Said the Lord.

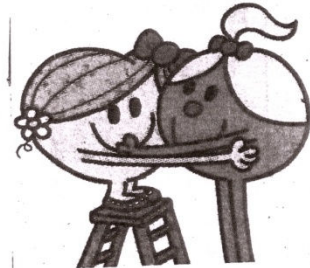
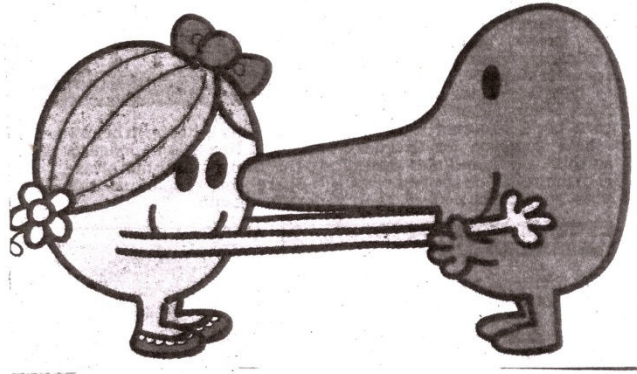
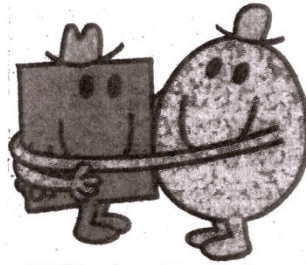
Or to hear Them is to
know their fear.
My fear,
said the Lord.

And to know Them might be to love Them
or to hate Them
To love me, or to hate me
said the Lord.

Or to embrace Them truly, truly,
we would then belong to Them.
Truly, truly, you would belong to me.
said the Lord.

But Lord – if we do this we will be changed.
We can hope,
laughed the Lord.
We can pray.

But Lord – if we do this thing
we would no longer be our church.
No!
My church.
said the Lord.
You would be My church.



Can you identify the five types of hug as outlined above? They are the Bear Hug, the Jubilation Hug, the Clinch-Troduction, the Body Hug and the Big Squeezy. The characters have been released to mark the arrival of a new Mr Men/Little Miss book – Little Miss Hug. She will be welcome at Babell any time!

Submitted by Revd Viv Rees

TOBABEL CHURCH FROM HIGANDAVISE

