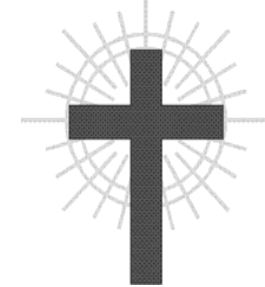
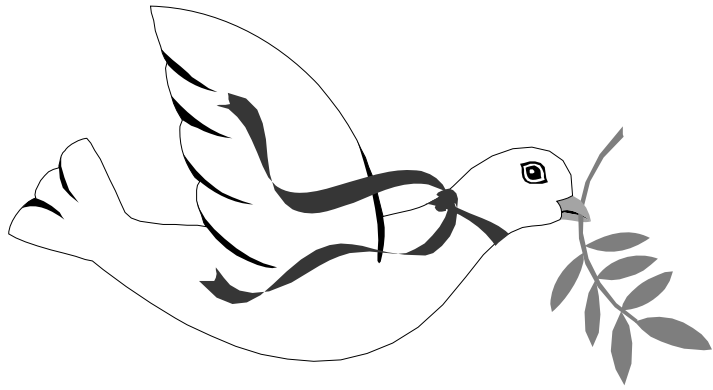


THE MESSENGER



**Monmouth
Trellech
Broad Oak
Gwern-y-Saint
Llancloudy**

May/June 2010



background, I still find that the great hymns of the chapel stir my soul, but I also find the sheer beauty, dignity and elegance of Anglican Cathedral Evensong utterly transporting.

Along with the incomparable hymns of Charles Wesley, I find the spirituals coming from the black community, so rooted in the hardships and suffering they experienced, to be immensely powerful and deeply moving.

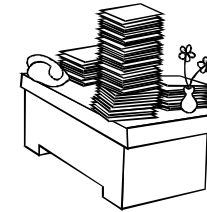
Our experience of living in Rome, and sharing with Roman Catholics at such close quarters, was also formative for me in enlarging my perspective of the Christian family, and deepening my appreciation of and respect for the enormous riches of that tradition.

I have gained immeasurably from them all.

The politicians in the general election have been outdoing each other in promising **change**. I have no doubt that the Church too must change, and yes, it must purge itself of much that is unworthy. Charles Wesley, in his hymn, called us “to serve the present age”, and if that means, as our President suggested in his address to the Anglican General Synod, that Methodism must eventually “die” in its current form, and bring its own great riches and distinctive contribution into the coming great Church, One and renewed for mission, then I for one, do not have a problem with that. Is not dying and rising to new life fairly fundamental to our faith?

In the meantime, surely we would not want to be less charitable than Messrs Cameron, Brown and Clegg in our affirmation of, and our solidarity with, our Catholic brothers and sisters, especially in a time of some travail for them.

John Lloyd Williams



From the Minister's Desk

We recently completed the fourth plan for the Newport and Lower Wye Circuit . While this was the quickest to make so far, it was the most difficult because of holidays, a sabbatical and ministers leaving the Circuit. I said when the Circuits amalgamated that I would continue the united services within the Churches of the old circuit and so this next quarter there will be three sectional services (SS on the plan) at Llancloudy, Gwern-Y-Saint and the open air at The Narth. In September I plan a further such service at Broad Oak for their Harvest.

The next Methodist year is complicated because there will be no minister covering Caldicot, Rogiet and Pennycamawr. It seems that the Circuit has barely started before we are in the midst of change. Maree Farrimond and Andy Walker both finish in July and while Ann Ellis is coming, as a probationer to Bishpool and Shaftsbury, there is no replacement for Maree.

This will mean that Richard, Andrew Webster, Louise, Joe and myself will be taking on extra responsibilities for a year. It also means that we will be 29 services per quarter down on the plan. We are asking Churches which are able to agree to a service where they “ Do their own thing” however this should not mean getting a local preacher to take the service!!!!!!

Hopefully we will be up to full complement for the Methodist year 2011/2012.

During the next few weeks I will be taking some time as holiday. We are not going away but I will not be available. If you phone, Pam or Vicky will say I am not available. I may be in the house but will not be available for work. Thank you for respecting this.

The next few weeks also contain two of the festivals of the Church. A couple of years ago on Ascension day Pam and I were in the Countdown Studios in Leeds.

We were greeted by Dudley Dolittle, the warm up comedian, with the words “Hello vicar, took my mother in law(she’s a Roman Catholic) to Church this morning cause it’s Ascension Day.”

“What’s that” said Carol Vorderman

“It’s the day God went back to Heaven” said Dudley.

Well it may not be God going back but it certainly was Jesus returning to the Glory that was his of right to pray for us

The second festival is Pentecost, the birth of the Church and the power of God’s spirit poured out on the Church. In some ways the Holy Spirit is the best kept secret in the Church. But the apostle Peter says that the Holy Spirit is for “those afar off, whoever God has called” We are those afar off who are called by God, the promise of the Spirit is for us today.

I invite you to celebrate these festivals with joy and expectation.

God Bless

Barry

The saddest part of all, it seems to me, is that the deluge of negative publicity (and how the media loves to sensationalise anything to do with sex and the Church) has served to obscure the immense contribution for good in human society that the Catholic Church has made and continues to make. Its outstanding record on relief work, especially in some of the most deprived parts of our world, its solidarity with the poor, its stand for human rights, peace and justice, and the devoted, but unsung work of so many priests and people on a local level, are all too often overlooked in the rush to condemn the obvious sins that have been exposed.

One thinks of men like Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador, who spoke out so strongly against poverty, social injustice and human rights abuses in his country, that he was assassinated by a government backed death squad, while he was saying Mass in church.

One thinks of men like Cardinal John Henry Newman, who will be beatified by Pope Benedict on September 19th, during his visit to Britain. He was a man of immense stature, whose writing and thinking has hugely enriched not just the Catholic Church, but indeed the church universal. His great hymn “Lead kindly light...” certainly speaks to my experience, and I think has done to that of countless other Christians, and who cannot thrill to the sublime marriage of Newman’s words and Elgar’s music in “Praise to the holiest in the height”, from his poem, “The Dream of Gerontius”.

Throughout my own ministry, I have been deeply committed to the cause of ecumenism, the unity of Christians, because I firmly believe that we should be one, as St. John, puts it, “that the world may believe”. But I also maintain that commitment because I have found my own spiritual journey to have been enormously enriched by the contributions of the various traditions within the Christian Church. Coming from a staunch Welsh non-conformist



**Rumblings
From a not
quite extinct
volcano**

Or

Thoughts from a “worn-out” minister

How interesting, that of all the issues which the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat leaders discussed in their three televised debates leading up to the General Election, virtually the only matter on which they completely agreed, was that they all welcomed the forthcoming visit to Britain of the Pope. An “in and out” Anglican, a Presbyterian and an atheist all felt that the Pope’s visit was a good thing. They all had reservations about some of the Catholic Church’s positions on such things as contraception and homosexuality, but they all felt that it was right for Pope Benedict to come.

Shortly after the televised debate, of course, there was the leaked Foreign Office memorandum with its utterly crass suggestions as to what the Pope might be asked to undertake on his visit. Is it too much to expect, one wonders, that civil servants in a major government department would be better employed than in “brainstorming” such puerile and offensive fantasies?

It is true to say, however, that the Catholic Church has not been having a very good press of late. The scandal of abusive priests has rocked the Church to its foundations, and has been deeply distressing, not only to those directly involved, but to most faithful and committed Catholics.

Dates for the diary

- June** Tues 8th Circuit Meeting Cross Keys 7.30 p.m.
Wed 23rd. Local Preachers meeting Chepstow 7.30 p.m.
- July** Sun 4th Sectional Service Llancloudy 6.00p.m
Sun 18th Farewell to Andy Walker Bishpool
Sun 25th Farewell to Maree Farrimond Caldicot
- Aug.** Sun 1st Sectional service Gwern-Y-Saint 6.30p.m.
Sun 29th Sectional Service, Open Air The Narth 6.15 p.m.

DUST IF YOU MUST!

Dust if you must but wouldn't it be better
to paint a picture or write a letter,
bake a cake or plant a seed,
ponder the difference of want and need.

Dust if you must but there is not much time
with rivers to swim, mountains to climb,
music to hear and books to read,
friends to cherish and life to lead.

Dust if you must but the world's out there
with sun in your eyes, wind in your hair
a flutter of snow, a shower of rain
this day will not come round again.

Dust if you must but bear in mind
old age will come and it's not kind
-and when you go, as go you must
you, yourself, will make more dust.

Ann Smed

MONMOUTH METHODIST CHURCH

will perform

Roger Jones' Musical "Saints Alive"

on Friday May 28th at 7pm.

The musical tells the story of the birth of the Christian Church at Pentecost and is based on the account in Acts chapters 1 and 2.

It portrays vividly the change in the Apostles from being frightened, defeated and hopeless men to a group of people who turned the world upside down.

Everyone is welcome. Please come and celebrate Pentecost in this act of worship.

Story time --- The Church's Year.

This is a story that takes us from birth to everlasting life. Life has many beginnings and endings, ups and downs highs and lows, and ordinary times, and the Church's year reflects all this.

Advent is the beginning with hope, faith, pregnancy, a waiting time with worries and fears of what might be. The birth at Christmas brings the highs of joy, peace, celebration, love relief and delight and good news of the start of Jesus' human life.

Epiphany is about giving and promising, with gifts and greetings. Lent is about repentance, reflection, temptations in life and Christian response - a fresh start. It leads to Passiontide with its dramas of guilt, forgiveness and deep emotion, and so to an ending, yet this leads to another beginning.

Passiontide gives way to Easter, the new birth, as Jesus' divine nature becomes apparent through his risen life. Yet there has to be the farewells and promises of Ascension.

Then comes Pentecost, the start of eternal life for all. We are written into the story through the long Trinity season with its reminders of grace, love, learning, and growing in faith. Each chapter of the Church's year is teaching us to grow in faith, prayer, love and service to others.

Ann Smed

**ART FOR AFRICA
2010**

Catbrook Memorial Hall

Friday 16th July 6 pm to 9 pm
Saturday 17th July 10 am to 6 pm
Sunday 18th July 10 am to 6 pm

***ART AND CRAFT BY LOCAL ARTISTS,
REFRESHMENTS, CAKES, POTTERY,
CARDS, TRAIDCRAFT & MORE!***

Food Security in Zimbabwe

Proceeds to a Christian Aid partner project in Zimbabwe which is pioneering conservation agriculture, providing support to farmers in the drought-prone Matabeleland South region. Reports indicate the remarkable difference the use of these techniques has made, despite the troubles in Zimbabwe. Full details at the exhibition.

And again, as last year, for every £1 raised, the European Union will provide an additional £3 - effectively quadrupling donations!

***A warm welcome to all to the
20th Art for Africa!***

Get with the tech!

It is not only Nick Robinson and Robert Peston who have “blogs” these days. The President and Vice President of the Methodist Conference have a very interesting and readable one too, which gives an account of their travels at home and abroad in their year of office. You can find it at <http://www.methodist-presandvp.blogspot.com/>

You can find out, for example, how their brief visit to Israel and Palestine furthered their understanding of the conflict, you can read their letter to the people of Haiti following the earthquake, and you can even learn of their visits to Wales!

The Methodist Church is also promoting another interesting venture making use of new technology :

Following a successful pilot, the Church is now offering free weekly prayer texts to help Methodists join in prayer with hundreds of others on topical and personal issues.

Users of the pilot service were asked to text in their feedback and the result was overwhelmingly positive. June M texted in to say, "I welcome those prayer time texts, they make me stop & pray whatever I'm doing, where ever I am. Thank you 4 a valued service."

To start receiving the texts simply send a text message reading PRAYNOW to 82088, which will be charged at your standard network rate. All prayer texts received will be free of charge.

You can also get weekly Methodist prayer text messages on Twitter as well as on your mobile phone. To get the prayer texts on Twitter follow www.twitter.com/methodistprayer.

Sent by ***John Lloyd-Williams***

Monmouth Social & Catering Committee

Events

Since our last Newsletter, the Social Committee have held two events. The first was the Fair Trade Coffee Morning on 13th March when we had a very successful morning selling Fair Trade goods and raising money for the Fair Trade cause. The event was well supported and £172 was raised by selling the goods and from donations for coffee and the Bring & Buy stall. We hope it drew attention to the cause and made people more aware of the need to remember those who are working under extreme difficulties to try to make a living. Thank you for your support.

Our second event was the Victorian Tea on 24th April. On a beautiful afternoon about 35 people came and enjoyed tea and fellowship with a great deal of chat!! The tea ladies were dressed in black and white with spotless white lacy aprons and there were pretty posies on the tables. It was a very enjoyable afternoon and Church funds benefitted by £265. Our thanks to all who helped and all who supported this afternoon.

In May we look forward to the musical "Saints Alive" being presented in the Chapel in Monmouth on 28th at 7 p.m. Jennifer and Ann (Mills) would be pleased to hear from you if you are not already involved and would like to take part. Choir rehearsals are on Friday evenings; for drama rehearsals see Ann.

On June 19th you are invited to Afternoon Tea at Dorothea, Llansoy, between 3 and 5 p.m. I hope we will be blessed by lovely weather as we were last year.

On June 26th we are holding a Beetle Drive in the Hall at 5.30 p.m. with a finger buffet. We look forward to seeing lots of our younger people for a 'fun' evening.

Many artists and helpers, the Monmouth Christian Aid Committee and many more too numerous to name individually, put in a lot of hard work to keep the weekend running! Many thanks are due to them all.

Then, when fifteen years of moving all the furniture from the downstairs rooms either upstairs or into the barn became too onerous for people of a certain age, the exhibition was warmly welcomed into Catbrook Memorial Hall, where it has been successfully held for the last four years.

Nearly £70,000 has been raised for a variety of Christian Aid projects in more than a dozen African countries. Hundreds of paintings have been sold. The most raised in any one year was £6,438.01 in 2006, which became a thanksgiving for Hazel.

Christian Aid is a leader in the monitoring and accountability of projects and in the participation in projects of people in the poor communities. Each year a project in Africa is carefully selected after discussion with Christian Aid in Cardiff.

Will it be 21, and more?

If you'd relish this challenge, please contact Peter or Catherine Symes at Fern Lea, Trellech Cross, Monmouth NP25 4PX, phone 01600 860264 or email prsymes@tiscali.co.uk

Peter Symes

Art for Africa is 20! Will it be 21?

This year's Art for Africa exhibition will be the twentieth, and the fifth to be held in Catbrook Hall. It will also be the last, unless someone comes forward to carry it on.

We are looking for someone, or perhaps a small group, to take it on, refresh it, enliven it, develop it into "more and better."

It all started in a small way in 1991, when Hazel Symes and a few members of the Wye Valley Art Society were chatting in the dining room of Fern Lea. It was the time when people were becoming more aware of the dire need of many African countries. Discussing what they could do, Bertie Lloyd pointed out that they could paint some pictures, hang them from the picture rails in the room and offer them for sale.

That first year, we actually filled two or three rooms of Fern Lea with paintings by local artists. Then, year by year, the number of artists grew, and the number of pictures hung grew to over 300, so that the walls of every room on the ground floor of the house were covered with pictures. Many subsequent visitors have said that they had never seen the inside of the house without hundreds of pictures up!

People asked for drinks and refreshments, so the granny annex became the refreshment room. Also, year by year, the Fern Lea garden became filled with tents and gazebos housing anything from a variety of cards, to pots, to bric-a-brac, to plants, to books, to mobiles, to jewellery, to wood carvings, to glassware, to Traidcraft products and produce. We also had artists demonstrating their skills; we had musicians playing; we had a handloom demonstration; we had a resident hawk; we even had a small plane flypast one year!

On July 10th - we are invited to Brook Cottage by Ann & Patrick Mills for tea and cake and a walk around their beautiful garden. On this occasion we hope that the weather will be a little better than last year!!

We are hoping to organise a Church outing sometime in August. Please look out for more details.

Don't forget our Craft Fair on November 13th between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. We will need lots of help for this. Please look out for more details.

The Social Committee is trying to organise events that can be enjoyed by all and, if you have any ideas of things you would like to do, please let us know.

P.S.

Please join us for coffee, cakes and fellowship on Saturday, 22nd May between 10 a.m. and 12 noon.

Pat Evans and Jean Morgan

Getting to know you

***Emily Morgan,
Administrator for the Newport and Lower Wye Methodist
Circuit introduces herself***

I was appointed to this position in August 2009 and started work in September as the new circuit officially came into being. I work 15 hours each week, and I am very grateful for the opportunity as it allows me to work around the needs of my two children aged three and six years.

A member of Caldicot Methodist Church I am involved with singing in our church choir and also in 'Ruach1, our worship band. I chaperone for our Sunday school, where I think I learn as much as the young people! On Wednesday evenings I am one of the leaders at our 'Hive' youth group. The Hive1 is for local children aged between five and 11. We are very fortunate to have about 26-30 children most Wednesdays. I may be biased, but I think they are all brilliant - although their inquisitive minds can make some of our discussions a little challenging!

We are currently in the process of setting up a new group for children aged 11-13, as we felt that there was a gap in our provision for this group. Our first meeting is Tuesday 9th February, so please remember us in your prayers.

My job is to support our Superintendent, Revd Barry Smith, and our Circuit Treasurer, Mr Owain Ellis. I also support the other ministers in any way I can.

One of the major things I am responsible for is coordinating,

printing and distributing the quarterly circuit plan. I have to ascertain the availability of all the local preachers, supernumerary ministers and ministers for the preaching plan for the circuit. With up to 34 services per Sunday, Spread across 22 different churches and chapels, this takes up quite a lot of my time.

I will also be updating and organising the reprinting of the circuit handbooks over the next few months. I will, no doubt, be contacting the church stewards to make sure that all the details are correct, and making sure the right people are included. I would welcome any feedback and suggestions from the current handbooks.

Ensuring that the October congregation counts are reported on time is my responsibility. We managed to get all our data in before the deadline this year.

I also offer support to Yvonne Oakes, local preachers' secretary, where possible, as she has a lot of local preachers to look after now. If I can help anyone with queries I am always available either on email or the phone. As you can appreciate, as the circuit moves forward, so does the job, and I am sure that it will change as the needs of the circuit do.

Emily Morgan