

# the TREASURY

MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WALES

## The Presbyterian Church of Wales' tongue

by Catrin and Ifan Roberts

*In view of the decision that was agreed by a small majority during the closing session of the General Assembly at Wrexham on 10th July 2019, Revd Catrin Roberts and Revd Ifan Roberts have made a momentous decision in protest.*

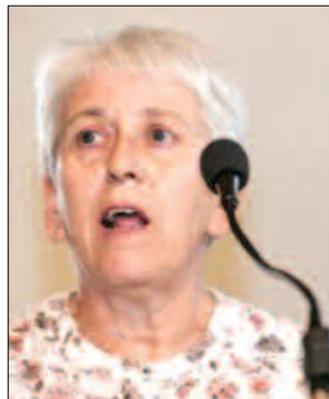
### The Church is speaking with a 'forked tongue'

Do you remember the old cowboys and Indians films? One sentence heard frequently in these films was "White man speaks with forked tongue". The native Americans would use this phrase when faced with the hypocrisy and lies of those trying to steal their land.

And now, the Presbyterian Church of Wales is speaking with a 'forked tongue'. A vote taken at this year's General Assembly to allow applications to be made to the Heritage fund of the National Lottery was passed by two votes. The Connexion has considered this matter 4 times previously and concluded that it would be immoral for us as a Christian Church to use money raised through gambling to support the church in any way. And the Lottery is gambling!

### In which way do we speak with a 'forked tongue'?

We have Restrictive Covenants which seek to ensure that our



buildings are not used for some purposes – gambling included. We have an Ethical Investment Policy which seeks to ensure that as a church we don't invest in areas that lead to suffering or taking advantage of people – including the gambling industry. And yet, we have decided that it's ok to take money from the gambling industry.

### We are willing to take money despite the suffering of others

We speak with a 'forked tongue' because we have been called by Jesus to take care of others, the poor, those who suffer. Yet, by taking this decision, we declare that we are willing to take money despite the suffering of others, in the interest of self-preservation or to preserve buildings. The facts are clear – the number of people suffering as a result of gambling (and their families) is on the increase in Wales, and across the UK. If you need further evidence of this, use the i-player facility to look at the Panorama programme

broadcasted on August 12th, 2019 and you will see how large companies mercilessly exploit people and encourage them to gamble, leading to enormous problems and even suicides (the latest estimate is that at least half a million people within the UK are addicted to gambling). And of ever-increasing concern is the purchase of National Lottery scratch cards (60 different ones are listed, as well as on-line versions). The Living Room's Beat the Odds campaign warns us increasingly of the dangers of scratch cards and on-line betting, and the National Lottery is leading the way in promoting such activities.

### The good name of our Connexion is being used to give credence to an industry that profits from dependency

By being willing to receive money from the gambling industry the good name of our Connexion is being used to give credence to an industry that profits from dependency. In

doing this we are speaking with a 'forked tongue' whilst at the same time claiming to feel concern for such sufferers, donating thousands towards the work of the Living Room which seeks to free people from their dependency.

### The National Lottery has made gambling respectable, fooling us to believe that we are making substantial contributions towards good causes.

The PR machine of the company running and profiting from the National Lottery has made gambling respectable, fooling people (and us as a Connexion) to believe that we are making substantial contributions towards so many good causes. But of the money spent by individuals on the National Lottery only 28% goes towards good causes, 28p in every pound. Were we to give £1 to any one of the good causes supported by the Lottery, gift-aiding it, then the good cause would receive £1.25. But the basic principle of the Lottery is that we give in the hope of receiving something back. Jesus does not ask us for that kind of giving, but says, "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." Matthew 6.3

### Don't live as everyone else lives. Be different!

The prophets told the people – don't live as everyone else lives. Be different. Paul gave people the challenge – don't be conformed to this world. With the decision to take money from the Heritage Fund of the National Lottery (for whatever reason), we are turning a deaf ear to this message.

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# Llandudno-Keswick Bible Week 2019

by Neil Kirkham

With hundreds of participants, aged from eighteen months to one hundred and three, and drawn from across the UK, meeting everyone's expectations at this year's Bible Week was a tall order. But at 6 foot 8 inches, speaker James Robson is used to tall orders (also bad height jokes!) and he presented his series of talks with engaging scholarship, humour and passion.

James, now Ministry Director of Keswick Ministries, is a former lecturer in Old Testament studies at Oak Hill College and Oxford University. Still, choosing Nehemiah as the basis for his morning sessions on the theme of 'First Things First' was perhaps a little unexpected. It was, however, an inspired choice. James drew out of chapters 8, 9 and 10 the desperate need of the people of God, struggling after a period of judgement, for spiritual renewal and transformation. His three talks covered 'Celebration' – praise and glory to God after the rebuilding, 'Confession' – recognising God's incomparable wisdom, authority, righteousness, patience and generosity and the need for us



to confess our ingratitude and arrogance in the face of those things, and 'Commitment' – the need for a collective, whole-life, whole-hearted commitment to listening for and doing God's will.

For his three evening sessions, James chose the theme of 'Encounters with Jesus in Luke's Gospel' and his own words perhaps best sum up why he did so: "We all need a fresh encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ – to see Him as He deals powerfully and tenderly with individuals. Neither they, nor we, are the same after meeting with Him." Drawing on Jesus's encounters with the sinful woman who anointed His feet, the two thieves crucified alongside Him, and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, James highlighted different responses to Jesus's love and forgiveness, asking us to explore in our hearts the ways in which we might sometimes be more like Simon the Pharisee than the sinful woman, more like the criminal who hurled insults at Jesus than the one who asked Jesus simply to remember him, more like the disciples who didn't recognise Jesus even when He was amongst them. Poignantly and visually supporting James's message was an exhibition by a local Christian art group of work inspired by his themes,

## EDITORIAL

### A DEPARTURE FROM THE OLD PATHS

It has been a long-held principle of the Presbyterian Church of Wales that the Church avoids investing in businesses that profit from the gambling, alcohol and armaments industries. Equally, the churches of the Connexion have been resolute in their agreement not to apply for financial help from the National Lottery.

All that changed on 10th July 2019 in the final hour of the General Assembly when by a vote of 35-33 it was decided to permit applications to be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

So in deferred business, by a majority of two, the high-principled stance that has set the Connexion apart from other mainline denominations in Wales over accepting money from the National Lottery has been eroded. The noble spirit of Hudson Taylor that 'God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply' has been set aside so that the only Grade 1 listed building in the Connexion that qualifies may apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The misery that gambling causes has been ignored.

The Assembly has taken its first step on a path that will surely result in further requests for a widening of the decision to allow all churches to apply for lottery money. We can only conclude that the thirty-five who voted to support the motion have never sung the popular hymn *Great is Thy Faithfulness* with its words of testimony – 'all I have needed Thy hand hath hand hath provided'.

including dynamic charcoal sketches by 'artist-in-residence' for the week, Tom.

As well as a top-class main speaker, Bible Week affords the opportunity to showcase local ministries, which this year ranged from links between local churches and *The Mercy Rescue Mission* in Kenya, the *Living Waters Project* in Tanzania and people in rehab in Estonia, to the work of *Compassion UK* and *Llandudno YFC*. Two local authors, Ian Jennings ('By a Departing Light') and Tim Gough ('Rebooted'), were also on hand during the week to sign copies

of their books.

*Bible Week* is very much an inter-church event and it was lovely to see leaders, readers, musicians, prayer team members, stewards, caterers and other volunteers drawn from so many churches working together. It was our pleasure in Gloddaeth Church to host for the first time. As a result of all these efforts, and thanks to the amazing generosity of the people attending, £3,000 has been donated from the event to the Bible Society.

Neil Kirkham is minister of Gloddaeth, Llandudno

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#### Can we imagine Jesus putting the Temple building before people's wellbeing?

The letters WWJD stand for the question 'What Would Jesus Do?'. Can we imagine Jesus putting the Temple building before people's wellbeing?

#### We believe that the Connexion has turned its back on a core principle!

We have served as ordained ministers within the Presbyterian Church of Wales and have been glad of every opportunity to do so. We have not agreed with every decision taken nor with everything done during this time, but with the decision to allow churches to receive money raised through gambling, we believe that the Connexion

has turned its back on an absolutely core principle, and as a result we have lost our integrity. This has been a source of sadness and worry. As a sign of our protest at what has happened, we have asked the Connexion not to include our names in the list of ministers which appears in the Year Book nor include us as members of the Connexion's Departments and Committees as we do not want to be part of a Church administration that accepts money from the proceeds of gambling.

*Catrin Roberts has served the Church as an ordained minister since 1989. Ifan Roberts who was ordained in 1980 is a former General Secretary of the Connexion. He retired as Chief Administrator earlier this year.*

#### Alpha, Builth Wells

On Sunday morning the 18th August, the church at Alpha received two visitors from Swansea. Mrs Gill Griffiths and her son arrived in the morning service carrying an important gift for the church.

When the church foundations were laid for the present building in 1902, there were two silver foundation stone trowels produced by the contractors, Richards of Newport for the dignitaries to lay the foundation stone. One was used by a Mr Mark Lloyd and his trowel has been in the possession of the church since that time, but the other was lost until 18th August, when the second trowel was returned in its presentation case. This second trowel had been given to Dame Clara

Davies, the mother of Ivor Novello. She was a famous international opera singer and sang in many of the famous opera houses in Europe. Dame Clara's missing trowel that had been lost for one hundred and seventeen years came home having been discovered by Mrs Davies in the estate of a relative. Mrs Griffiths is the great, great granddaughter of Mr A P Morgan, a previous elder and choirmaster of the church. Dame Clara died on the 12th March 1908 in Rome and was eighty-three years old when she visited Builth Wells to lay the foundation stone of the new church.

