

the TREASURY

MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WALES

Penrhyn Bay in the Vanguard of Churches Re-opening



'At last' ... 'It's good to be here again' ... 'How nice to see you after so long'. These were some of the comments after the Morning Service in Penrhyn Bay on Sunday, 9th August.

When the General Secretary sent us his twenty-six page Document 'Preparing to worship

together in our buildings' the Elders met on Monday 3rd August and discussed the implications of opening again for worship, but abiding by the Guidelines set down. At that meeting it was agreed that we should hold a Service the following Sunday. Arrangements

were made to clean the premises, how many people could we accommodate within social distancing, what signage was needed and also, how to inform the congregation. These were carried out by an army of volunteers and all was ready and in place by the weekend.

The Service was conducted by Revd John Dowber, hymns were projected on the screen with sound and we sat and worshipped silently with our mouths, but joyfully in our hearts. There were some thirty people present and this was the number that we had arranged the seating for. The sound-system took the Service into the schoolroom which was set up as an overflow so if more people come in future weeks we can cater for them. Some of our congregation felt that it was too soon to meet again, and we respect their views, but they were not left out as the proceedings were broadcast live on the church web-site.

Success for Morgan Bryn

One of the Candidates for the Ministry of the Connexion, Mr Morgan Bryn Williams completed his B.D. studies at Union Theological College, Belfast this summer and been awarded a degree with honours. He is returning to Belfast next week pursue studies for an M.Th. degree that begins at his College in September.



The closing months of the academic year have been difficult for all students at school and university, and those who know Morgan or his parents, Bryn and Nia Williams (Pwllheli) will join with the family in celebrating his success.

Death of Revd Elfed ap Nefydd Roberts announced

The death of Revd Principal (Emeritus) Elfed ap Nefydd Roberts MA, DD, occurred on 12th August. He was the penultimate Principal of the United Theological College (1980–1997). A native of Rhuddlan, he began his ministry at the English Presbyterian Church of Wales, Llanelli in 1960. A private funeral service will be held on 21st August in St Asaph and a fuller tribute will appear in a future issue of 'the Treasury'.



With the elders of the English Presbyterian Church, Llanelli, c.1960

Future issues of the Treasury and Y Goleuad

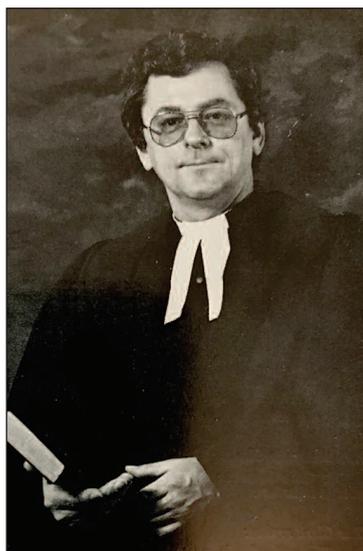
It has been decided that both papers will appear in an online format until mid 2021. If any readers would like to be added to the *Treasury online list of subscribers* and to receive a reminder by email once a new issue appears, they should send their email details to joanna.thomas-wright@ebcpw.cymru Please add 'Treasury online subscriber' on the subject line.

Obituary

Revd Bruce Tennyson Nelmes, B.A., M.Sc.

*One of the last of the missionaries to leave for Assam
by boat from Liverpool*

Revd Bruce Nelmes was nurtured in the faith by the fellowship at St. Cennydd Presbyterian Church in Caerphilly, and the example of the Godly people of the Church remained in his memory throughout his life. He was the second person to be called to the Mission Field from St. Cennydd. Revd Tony Crockett had gone to the Khasi Hills some years before him.



After National Service Bruce was called to serve as a missionary, and he trained at the United Theological College, Aberystwyth. He was ordained in 1959 alongside Revd Bill Steed and Revd Dr Eryl Davies. The charge at the ordination service in Oswald Road, Oswestry was given by Revd Professor Ifor Enoch who many years later used the same sermon at a service in which Bruce happened to be present. He was seen off in Liverpool by Revd R Leslie Jones then Secretary of the Foreign Mission Office at Faulkner Street, Liverpool. As Revd Dr Hmar Sangkhuma has observed, in the Divine plan Bruce's departure coincided with the return to India of Miss Katie Hughes (Pi Zaii) and Revd Zairema who had been visiting Wales. They all travelled together to Lushai Hills. It was a very different sort of journey to his last visit to Mizoram which he made on a Bulgarian Airline for the Gospel Centenary in 1994 with Revd B Tudor Lloyd

as a companion. Bruce arrived in Aizawl in November 1959 and served in Mission Veng Pastorate. He helped in the Loch Printing Press and taught at Aizawl Theological College. After a year he was transferred to Haflong as there was no Welsh missionary there. He returned to Wales for good in December 1961. In Mizoram he was known as Pu Nela (Friendly/Graceful One/Sir) and in Assam where he was known as Haihanghying (Good for all).

His work as a missionary was greatly respected in North East India, and he was made a 'chief' or 'THANGSUO'. This is the highest honour that he could be paid, and is the equivalent of being made a duke in the United Kingdom. In addition, a school was named after him in Assam, *The B.T. Nelmes English School*.

After returning to Britain, Bruce worked for Hymac as a draughtsman, helping to design their heavy machinery. He was a qualified mechanical engineer. Over time, he rose to management and held various senior roles. He travelled throughout Britain and Scandinavia. He introduced computers into the company at the start of the 'computer revolution' in the 1970's. He was also involved in the introduction of 360 degree slew and of joy stick controls. In addition, he served as an Independent 'Ratepayer' Councillor for Caerphilly, where he lived.

In 1978, he was called back into the full-time ministry to five churches centred around Hope, Pontyclun. His ministry was blessed, in that every church received new members at a time of church decline. He had a heart for young people and continued his previous youth work for the Association in the East by leading the Junior Holiday Fellowship in Trefeca. In the Pontyclun pastorate his work was particularly well blessed when many young people made their own profession of faith, some going on to serve God either in a



Best man at the wedding of Revd Pazawna on 8th January 1961

paid or voluntary leadership basis.

Later, he enrolled with the Open University from where he graduated with both a Bachelors and Masters degrees, whilst simultaneously working as a college lecturer.

Bruce married Jenny in 1980 and to their delight, in 1985, their son Richard was born. However, in 1989, Bruce suffered a massive heart attack that left him with significant permanent damage. His consultant told Jenny that the doctors could do nothing further for him and he was sent home to die. Jenny didn't tell Bruce, but prayed that God would give Bruce the heart of a twenty-year old in order to live on. And live on he did – for a further thirty-one years! His GP, who knew of the severe damage to his heart, once told him that he 'must have a direct line to God.'

During these years, he was part of the Healing Ministry, Moderator of Glamorgan Presbytery East and Rota Secretary.

He was a spiritual man who enjoyed a faith of deep conviction – he loved to share it and his joy, humour and loving personality gave him many opportunities to do so. He was an 'infectious' Christian who was modest about his achievements. In every aspect of his life, he sought to give all the glory to God. He was a gentleman who was also a gentle man. He was humble and could not understand why he was so loved and respected in the parts of India where he served.

In later life, though less physically active, he took great pleasure in learning more about the faith. He stood up for what

he believed was right and this did not always make him popular! He sought and followed God's leading in his life. He was "God's man."

Bruce had prepared for his funeral which was taken by his son Richard. It was during lockdown both in Wales and Mizoram and there were only 7 present. It is usual in Mizoram to celebrate the person's life at the same as the funeral, but in his case it was done at a later time, and five minutes of their memorial service was in English. Pu Nela is still remembered in Mizoram today. Donations in memory of Bruce Nelmes are going to the school that bears his name, which is in a remote part of the jungle in Assam.

In evaluating the remarkable legacy of Revd Bruce Nelmes, Sangkhuma remembers him as evangelical, intelligent and a linguist. Though he was only one year in Lushai hills, he excelled in the Mizo language. One of his favourite songs was, 'Fade, fade each earthy joy, Jesus is mine' (SSS 1045). He could sing all four stanzas in Mizo without looking at the hymn book.

The fourth verse is so appropriate as he is now with the Lord forever.

*Farewell, mortality,
Jesus is mine.
Welcome, eternity,
Jesus is mine,
Welcome, O loved and blest,
Welcome, sweet scenes of rest,
Welcome, my Saviour's breast,
Jesus is mine.*

**Bruce Nelmes,
born 26th August 1931,
died 3rd May 2020**

T D Phillips

LETTER to the Editor



From Revd Dr Tom Phillips

Recently Barna, a research organisation in the USA published a report of what they found in May about Christians and the Church in the pandemic. The results were that one in three Christians did not return to church. The situation in America in the pandemic has not been the same as in the UK and the findings of research there reveals that the situation is not identical to what UK research reveals, though often there is a similarity. It appears that many people in the USA feel abandoned by their church. Contact has been kept through the internet, such as online services and church emails, but the need that was not met was personal contact via telephone or even within the internet links. It is too late to recover the months that have passed and the lost opportunities to build relationships and maintain fellowship. Friends in the ministry have told me that they have learned that we cannot copy the old patterns of worship; services and sermons must have their times adjusted to the internet medium. For example sermons need to be shorter and focused, also sitting in front of a screen is not perceived as worship and is fraught with distractions.

I have, yet again through circumstances which have prevailed in my life, been able to sample diverse preachers and the “services” they were involved in. It has been good to reflect on my faith, my worship and my commitment to the Lord. Like many in our congregations, age is catching up rapidly on what I can do, physical limitations become more noticeable and health an increasing daily concern. One thing I have learned more of is that the Lord is exceedingly gracious and merciful.

I had met an international Reformed theologian a few times prior to the pandemic and look forward to listening to him teach and encourage when we are able to gather again. I had been much exercised by asking of myself and others what is a

Christian, how do you come to faith, what is worship, what is the Church and what is the work of the Church. This had led me to conclude there are four main groups. (i) Those who see the Church purely as a society. (ii) Those who share that view but clothe it in evangelical language. (iii) Those who are evangelical but are influenced by modern social thought. (iv) Those whose faith and worldview is based in and through the Scriptures which is accepted as inerrant. These four groupings I had started discussing with him in our chats.

Lockdowns are being imposed selectively and the return to the old normal is painfully slow. We talk of re-opening churches but how we will fare is yet to be discovered. In my opinion, it is a good opportunity to reflect on what the Church, and what we as individuals, are doing. The strengths and weaknesses of the past months can illuminate our way ahead.

First we must return to the faith. The chief end of man is to glorify God and not be pseudo-social. An example is that it is not the Church’s job to run food banks whereas it is the responsibility of Christians in expressing their faith to do so. We are a worshipping community within which rapport and relationships are found which lead to corporate worship and a growing faith.

Some will not return because they see no value in an hour or two on a Sunday sitting and listening without getting involved. Jesus said to go and make disciples and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. That is listening, learning and growing in the faith and being involved. The old saying about worship is that it is what you put in and not what you take out that is key.

Secondly the church is a gathering of God’s people. It has been of some fruitfulness to have been able to use the internet to mitigate some of the effects of lockdown. The New Testament talks of the Church gathering together to worship and partake of the sacraments,

and it is this interaction that has been keenly felt to be have been lacking. It will be good to meet in worship and share in partaking Communion. Many of us missed not only our church family but our natural family because of shielding and other restrictions. It is not easy to make the quick quip or aside on the internet, but when face to face it is easier, and also the way it is said carries much meaning.

Thirdly, many churches have recorded hits on their sites and been pleased at their scale. Numbers can be deceiving because they do not tell how long some were logged in and in no way do they reflect the degree of attentiveness. My computer has come back into use again. It is logged into a network constantly. Though it is on I am not sitting at it working. How many logged into a service and then during that period dashed off to make a cup of tea, or to answer the door to the courier? Barna’s research showed that people had a quick look at other churches internet offerings and in a small but important way it led them to change church as restrictions were lifted. Another finding was that non-church goers were logging in out of curiosity, but it did not lead to church attendance.

The Church did not become respected by the State until the time of Constantine in 312 AD. Since then the Church has at times enjoyed favour, and other times persecution. We do not know what this turbulent time we are in will lead to but we have the assurance the Church will continue. We will adapt our services, our buildings and structures to cope, but like a mighty army we are in a strategic retreat ready to break forth once again in the work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As we return to our church buildings we can but emulate the early Church as we are told in Acts 2: 42-44 ‘The believers spent their time listening to the teaching of the apostles. They shared everything with each other. They ate together and prayed together. Many wonders and miraculous signs were happening through the apostles, and everyone felt great respect for God. All the believers stayed together and shared everything.’

Yours truly.

The Derwen Project

This is an initiative of the *Waleswide* church planting and strengthening churches movement to identify, equip, support and release some pioneer leaders around Wales. These men and women will actively seek to bring the Gospel to those in Wales who may not otherwise have the opportunity to encounter and respond to Jesus. We have called the project *Derwen* [oaks] from Isaiah 61:3, ‘They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour.’

The Derwen Project is a two-year programme for anyone who has a heart to share the Good News of Jesus in Wales in a pioneering context. It could be the first step towards pioneering ministry for some, and for others it could support their development as new pioneers and leaders. It will be a time for learning, fellowship, prayer, and personal development at a national and regional level, alongside local mentor relationships and placement experiences.

We are running this project in partnership with *Souled Out Cymru* and it will function bilingually, with an emphasis on younger leaders, but Welsh is not a requirement for participation. Over the last couple of months, we have briefed our *Waleswide* partner churches about Derwen, reached out to some specific denominational and church leaders across the nation, and now want to let everyone know how excited we are about the *Derwen Project*. We would value your support in prayer, giving or partnering practically. If you would like to know more, please write or email:

PO Box 4287,
CARDIFF, CF14 8GS
post@waleswide.org
www.waleswide.org