

the TREASURY

MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WALES

Everything's different, not everything's new

Those who have been attending the General Assembly over the years will recall that one of the first items on the agenda, following the opening service and welcoming delegates, is the AGM. This is an agenda item when we adopt the Annual Financial Report, and check on other issues relating to the Presbyterian Church of Wales as a charity.

Following the decision to adjourn the 2020 Assembly we have been advised that we

need to meet the requirement to complete this work this year, and that we can do this, not by holding a virtual Assembly, but by holding an Annual Meeting of the charity virtually, which is the item referred to above. To realise this, the Executive Committee of the General Assembly Board has called an **Annual Meeting on the 13th of October 2020 at 10.00 am**. If you are an elder or officer in one of our churches, the Presbytery will have already

notified you of the meeting. The meeting will be held using the Zoom facility, and you will be able to join on your computer, tablet or smartphone, or join by phone by dialling into the meeting. We are sending the invitation and papers to delegates on Tuesday (28th September 2020), and the information will include details of how to join the AGM. We are also keen to remind all our elders / ministers that you are members of the AGM, and if you wish to join but are not a representative then we can share the details with you. Send a word to Eleri Melhuish (elери.melhuish@ebcpcw.cymru or 02920627465), who will be able to provide you with the information. As required by our Rules, anyone who is not a representative at the AGM, can request a copy of the papers to be presented, and you can make a request by sending a note to Eleri Melhuish.

In terms of the meeting agenda, as noted above, we will be discussing 'corporate' issues - adopting the Financial Report, confirming our Trustees and appointing external Auditors. We will also recommend the 2021 Ministry and Mission Contribution levels, the ecumenical contribution and 2021 grants, and the 2021 stipend / salary levels. The Executive has also decided to bring to the meeting one issue relating to rules on trading as a charity, and, of particular interest to readers of our Denominational weekly, the future of *Y Goleuad* from January 2021 following the discussion of creating one denominational weekly paper. The AGM will be chaired by the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Revd Marcus



'After six months of interpreting Covid-19 regulations, the General Secretary is entitled to a momentary flop'

Robinson, and after discussing the above issues, the Moderator will take the opportunity to offer some comments on how things have been over the last six months. Although the terms of the annual Meeting mean that it will be a business-related meeting, we trust that the Moderator's contribution will also be an opportunity to give thanks for, and celebrate the contribution of the leaders in our churches over the last six or so months, and an opportunity to encourage one another as we look forward to the winter and spring.

Whether you join the meeting or not, please pray for the work during this time. Pray for churches and leaders locally, pray for our witness in our communities, and pray that the Lord, above all, will administer His grace in the lives of people who are struggling to cope with the current situation. Although our time is taken up by internal discussions as churches and as a Connexion, please pray that we will all know when this is being done at the expense of our primary responsibility of being the salt and light in our society.

Revd Meirion Morris (General Secretary, Presbyterian Church of Wales)

Mancott Couple Celebrate 65th Wedding Anniversary

All over Britain people have had to take difficult and unwelcome decisions about upcoming weddings. Guests lists have had to be slashed, and whittled down further as fresh restrictions on such happy events have been imposed. Undaunted, Mancott members, Ron and Kath Lammond decided to celebrate their sixty-fifth



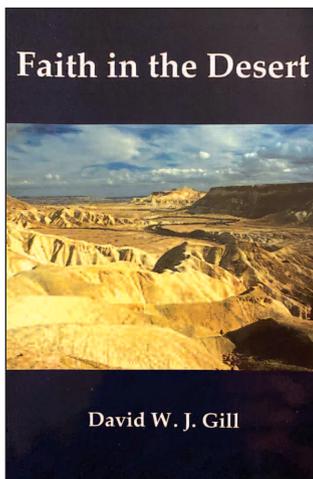
wedding anniversary on 17th September with a lunch on their own in nearby Burton, South Wirral. The following Sunday they shared memories of their wedding day with the members of Mancott church with which they have been associated for all that time. Kath recalled how their's was one of the last weddings that the Revd J Howard Williams conducted before his removal to Bath Street, Aberystwyth in October 1955. Ron, who attended Sandycroft church (now closed) used to come to Mancott for an after church meeting on a Sunday at the Manse, where he met Kath. Because her parents ran the local shop, the wedding was held at 3pm, and in order for the couple to catch the train to London for their honeymoon, the service, reception and speeches were all concluded by 6.30pm.

New Books

'It was books that made me feel that perhaps I wasn't alone' (William Herondale)

As more and more places become subject to local Coronavirus restrictions, we highlight four books written or published during lockdown that have been drawn to our attention.

'Faith in the Desert'
by Professor David Gill
83 pages



Many years ago we used to sing a chorus that began, 'My Lord knows the way through the wilderness, All I have to do is follow . . .'

It sounds so easy but I believed it then, and still do. However it's only in the last few weeks that I've given any thought to what that wilderness might really be like: dry, sandy but mostly vast areas of barren rocks and mountains. In his book, David Gill compares our time in Corona virus lockdown to a desert, through which we are all travelling. In his own words: These reflections on the Psalms were written during Lent 2020. We made our ascent through the Judean desert from Jericho to Jerusalem during a time of self-isolation imposed by the corona virus pandemic.

Each day, as we move towards Easter, we have the text of one of the Psalms of Ascent (120—134) with David's reflections on it, made interesting by his personal experience and knowledge of the area and illustrated by wonderful photos of the locality.

Finally, arriving in Jerusalem we have Passover Psalms (113-118) and one for Good Friday

(22). Commenting on Psalm 115, David says, Shielding is one of the words emerging in the present crisis, but it is good to remember that the Lord is not only our help but our shield. We may feel alone and isolated, but our Lord remembers us in our different situations, and he promises to bless those who fear him 'both the small and the great.' and our response is one of praise:

But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord!

No need to wait for Lent to benefit from these psalms and reflections—they are for now and every day.

Eleanor Jenkins (*Elder and church secretary at Bethesda, Burry Green*)

The Captain Commanded Me, 'Full Speed Ahead'. This is my true story

Christian autobiography published via Amazon, September 2020): 220 pages, ISBN: 979 868166 940 1 Printed copies: £12.95 plus p&p, Kindle: £8.00 (with many of the photographs in colour)

This is a true story based on real life events. The story reveals that Nisam from Sri-Lanka, born in a small Buddhist village to a fairly wealthy Muslim family, left home aged 21, travelled about twenty-five thousand miles across land from Sri-Lanka to Europe, then joined a merchant ship in an Iranian port in Khorramshahr, worked on three Iranian and two Greek ships, and sailed as a Seaman / Helmsman through many parts of the world. The story follows Nisam's heroic adventure over land, sea and oceans, finally

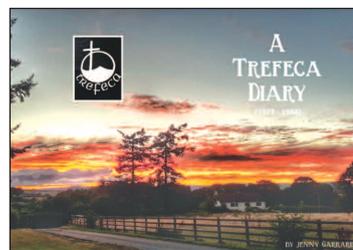
meeting Christian people in Denmark, an event which changed his faith. He then settled in Wales. This book is an inspirational, true story.

Jonathan David (*Crescent Christian Centre, Newtown*)

A Trefeca Diary (1973–1984)

by Jenny Garrard

You will have heard about the 'Trefeca Letters', a fruitful source for those researching the history of Howell Harris, and the



'Teulu' which he founded in Trefeca. Recently 'A Trefeca Diary (1973 – 1974)' has been published by the Revd Jenny Garrard. Within nine chapters she describes the developments in the old college since she first went there as Administrative Assistant in 1973, the post becoming Assistant Warden within a year. When Jenny arrived in Trefeca from Eye, Suffolk, the Revd John Tudor had been the Warden for seven years. The Tudors were followed by The Revd Arthur Meirion Roberts in 1975 and then in 1983 by Mr Ronwy Rogers 1983. Reference is made to the valuable assistance of the three wives, Nerys, Morfudd and Dorothy.

When Jenny left Trefeca she had "a mix of diaries, memories and memorabilia" collected over eleven years, and these are incorporated in this book which includes eight pages of photographs. Jenny says, "They were some of the busiest, happiest, most formative years of my life". She refers to many events - humorous, deeply serious and challenging.

What was the response of the two schoolboys from London when they saw the cross on the mound as they approached the college?

What was the biggest challenge faced by the early Wardens?

Which Warden ate a daffodil on Easter morning 1981?

In which languages were the

words, "Christ is risen – He is risen indeed" uttered on Easter morning 1982?

The answers to these and other questions can be found within the book.

Jenny hopes that reflecting on the breadth of Trefeca's contributions within the Church and nation will be helpful to those of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Wales involved in making decisions for Trefeca's future role.

In her introduction Jenny says, "this is an offering of thanksgiving to God, and to the Presbyterian Church of Wales for all I gained from that experience". All proceeds will go to Trefeca, as a way of helping their loss of earnings this year.

Copies will be available to purchase in Trefeca, or by post from Revd Jenny Garrard, 18 Hafren Terrace, Llanidloes SY18 6AT (01686 413354)

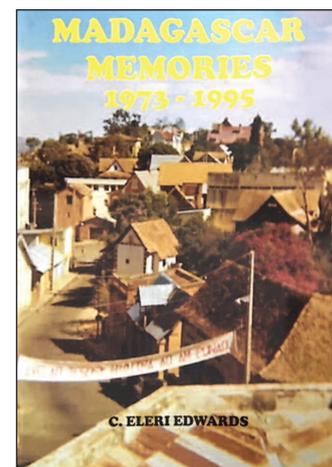
Email: j.garrard@pc-q.net

The cost is £5 + £1.40 postage.

Trefor Lewis (*Chairman, Trefeca Department*)

Madagascar Memories 1973–1995

by C Eleri Edwards
151 pages



'When I was ordained in 1999 in Glyn Ceiriog, apart from the support of faithful friends from England and Wales, I was delighted that CWM was also there, represented by a man from Madagascar who was working for the Head Office of CWM in Livingstone House at the time. He was Laurent Ramambason and by now he works six months of the year in Madagascar teaching Theology and six months in the USA, teaching Theology there too.

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continued from page 2

He asked me more recently to write my 'living history' which, he explained, is my own story as I remember it from those now rather far-off days. "Do it in any language – French, English or Malagasy – but not Welsh" he told me! I have put it off for a long time and now in the COVID lock-down it was the ideal occupation to give my days a structure and to give me great pleasure, thinking back and writing it all down. People probably wondered what I was doing out there and were too polite to ask so I have cast my mind back and tried to give an impression of the place, the people and the tasks I was asked to do as a mission partner.

'Partnership in Mission' was what they called the new paradigm of mission in the 1970's and I believed in it wholeheartedly – In those days in Madagascar, there was change in the air not only in the Church but also in the nation with political unrest and new ideas around. I felt I was privileged to be part of the transformation. It was an exciting time and a challenging time: school teaching without text books or any aids; communications without any computers or even mobile phones; education of widely disparate pupils. I did what I could. By now the CWM has moved to Singapore and no doubt has a new paradigm though I am not clear what it is, but it no doubt builds on what we experienced in those fascinating years and on what came long before.

Memory is selective, my sister and brother in law told me just to write what I remembered and that is what I have done – concentrating on Madagascar with one part mentioning my brief time in Wales and the trip to India. I called the resulting little book 'Madagascar Memories' – the memories are sometimes haphazard so I have tried to write the main story in the ten chapters and put the random memories in Appendices of which there are also ten including the epilogue at the very end.

I hope my nephews and niece and greats will eventually take an interest, but also I really hope you will enjoy the read if you decide to try, and the book comes as a tribute to all those I worked with down the years. I

MRS JOYCE AKRILL

(Sister Joyce Dowber)

Joyce was born in Liverpool in 1936, and was one of twins. She and her brother Edward, were joined by a younger brother, John three years later who eventually became the resident minister at Penrhyn Bay. Like her grandparents and parents, with her brothers she attended Bowden Road Presbyterian Church of Wales, Garston, and was educated at Calder Grammar School where in spite of illness she did well in her studies. On leaving school Joyce worked as a Secretary. It was through attending a Billy Graham meeting which was relayed to Liverpool that she was converted, and a little later, Joyce felt a call to Christian service within the Presbyterian Church of Wales and was sent under the auspices of the Forward Movement to Ridgeland Bible College in Kent in 1958 for two years of training. After completing her studies, she was appointed as a Sister of the People to work on the Gabalfa housing estate, Cardiff in 1960. Her work was demanding with regular children's and youth meetings, visitation, evangelism and Sunday services, but she received help from Christians from Memorial Hall and Heath

Church. Her future husband, Richard was a University student when the IVF held a mission on the Gabalfa estate towards the end of the summer



term in 1964. As a result he continued his involvement in the work there, and became a chemistry teacher in the city following his graduation. After completing eight years of service in Gabalfa, Joyce became a member of Heath church in 1968 when Sunday services in Gabalfa ceased, although the Sunday school continued until 1971.

Joyce and Richard married in 1969. They were blessed with four children and became very active in Heath church

where Joyce taught a girls' Bible class. Years later, Joyce became a secretarial assistant to the Church Secretary in Heath church for several years. In 1968, Joyce and Richard assumed the enormous task of receiving Camps bookings for the Evangelical Movement of Wales and organising transport for campers until 1993. This involved a considerable amount of work and responsibility. They both served as officers in EMW Camps during the summer holidays until Joyce withdrew from camps due to children arriving on the scene!

She will be greatly missed in the church and by her many friends. Her home was open to students and in latter years to Asylum seekers, especially Iranians who often spent Sunday lunch with her and Richard. Some of these people still refer to Joyce as their 'Mum!'. Since the mid-1990s, Joyce, my wife and two other ladies met for a prayer meeting for revival on Thursday afternoons, a prayer meeting that has only stopped due to Covid 19 restrictions. Her funeral, followed by burial, took place on 1st October at Heath Evangelical Church.

D Eryl Davies (Cardiff)

Joyce Akrill, born 20th October 1936, died 20th September 2020

also want to thank you all who were always so supportive of me in the Churches at home and prayed and helped in many ways. The book costs £10 (plus postage) and profits from this book will go to help the Mamre sisters in their mission.'
c.e.edwards.t21@btinternet.com or 0161 866 9629

We conclude these book commendations with **an excerpt from the MAMRE Chronicle** dated 4th July 2020 in which the Sisters exhort their readers to 'Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you' (1 Thessalonians 5: 18). Their explanation of how they determined to live for Christ despite their changed circumstances challenges us all.

'With God's help we reflected together on how to live this lock-

down. Yes all things work together for good for those who love God: so we were able to increase our times of prayer, and prayer is the main activity of Mamre. There were intercessions for the world every hour and the sisters took it in turns to lead these prayers every day. We are also comforted by the prayers ourselves, and by sharing the Word of God in which everyone participates.

We put morning prayer a little later than usual so that we have more sleep and the rest our bodies need. We also brought forward our evening prayer so that we could follow the news and that helped us a lot in our prayer subjects.

We go out much less, and only go for urgent shopping. Each sister uses her talents for the tasks in the community and

we can help each other. We have weeded the garden and yard. Sister Alexandrine regularly looks after the garden. We all enjoy collecting the harvest from it. It is a big help for us. We only go to market for other essentials once every two or three weeks. The flowers in the garden cheer us up in the chapel and we enjoy walking in the garden. All our window panes have been cleaned and now they sparkle in the sun.'

The Sisters routine is a reminder of a hymn we often sang from the Revised Church Hymnary by George Herbert (1593-1633) [Ed.]

A servant with this clause makes drudgery divine: who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws, makes that and the action fine.

An Open Letter to HM Government

The *Sunday Times* on 27th September was prominent amongst the Press coverage of an Open Letter (copy below) that was sent to the Prime Minister and the First Minister of Wales three days earlier.

Those who drafted the text have declared that its chief aim is that elected representatives should hear concerns about the importance of churches staying open.

Their hope is that it will also show that the Church throughout the United Kingdom has a voice which needs to be heard.

As most MP's are (rightly) reluctant to take note of anything which does not come from their own constituents, the compilers are asking constituents to consider sending a copy of the letter to their Member of Parliament and Member of Welsh Government stating support for its contents, and asking them to raise the matter in London and Cardiff. The four, Dave Gobbett (Cardiff), David Johnston (Northern Ireland), Paul Levy (London), Willie Philip (Glasgow), Matthew Roberts (York) ask that all continue to pray for governments in the four jurisdictions.

To:
The Prime Minister Boris Johnson
First Minister Mark Drakeford
First Minister Nicola Sturgeon
First Minister Arlene Foster and
Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill

24th September 2020

Dear Prime, First and Deputy First Ministers,

As church leaders from across the four nations of the UK, we have been deeply concerned about the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic across society. We have carefully followed government guidance to restrict its spread. But increasingly our concern relates to the damaging effects of anti-Covid restrictions on many of the most important aspects of life.

Our God-given task as Christian ministers and leaders is to point people to Jesus Christ, who said he came to bring 'life in all its fullness'. Therefore, we are troubled by policies which prioritise bare existence at the expense of those things that give quality, meaning and purpose to life. Increasingly severe restrictions are having a powerful dehumanising effect on people's lives, resulting in a growing wave of loneliness, anxiety and damaged mental health. This particularly affects the disadvantaged and vulnerable in our society, even as it erodes precious freedoms for all. In our

churches, many have been working tirelessly to provide help to those most affected. We entirely support proportionate measures to protect those most vulnerable to SARS-CoV-2. But we question whether the UK Government and the devolved administrations have it in their power either to eliminate this virus or to suppress it for an indefinite period while we await a vaccine. And we cannot support attempts to achieve these

which, in our view, cause more damage to people, families and society – physically and spiritually – than the virus itself.

The public worship of the Christian church is particularly essential for our nation's wellbeing. As we live in the shadow of a virus we are unable to control, people urgently need the opportunity to hear and experience the good news and



Rev David M Gobbett

EDITORIAL

This week the *Daily Telegraph* contained a report that according to experts tea should never be made with boiling water as it produces a cup that tastes like "cabbage water". The latest recommendation is that black teas should be made with water at 80C. In its editorial, the paper cited George Orwell's eleven step guide, *A Nice Cup of Tea* (1946) that counselled that "the water should be actually boiling at the point of impact". Having had a grandfather who blended leaf tea for a living, and eschewed teabags as being the dust of the tea crate, we weigh in with Orwell and make it our practice to patronise those cafes and restaurants who serve Assam, Ceylon and other leaf teas in hotel plate tea pots made with boiling water.



Unlike the late Revd Wilfred Smith (whose photograph appears on page 5) who followed the good old practice of visiting his members on weekday afternoons, but never accepted any refreshments, we have always followed that long-standing tradition associated with the clergy of drinking tea when visiting the homes of members.

With tea or without tea, the habit of clergy visitation seems to have fallen of fashion. Dr Paul Beasley-Murray begins a chapter in his book, *Transform your church* by quoting a member observing how 'Ministers it seems have given up on visiting'. 'In this season of the anniversaries of ministers' ordinations, we are reminded of the advice proffered by the late Revd Glaslyn D. Bowen when addressing the ordinands (of whom Revd Wilfred Smith was one) in Westgate, Pembroke in 1975, "Always have time to take tea with an old lady".

Doing so is surely part of the care that the apostle writes of in 1 Thessalonians 2: 8, to share 'not only the Gospel of God, but also our own selves'.

hope of Jesus Christ, who holds our lives in his hands. The supportive relationships that churches nurture between people are vital, and simply cannot be dispensed with again without significant harm. And most of all, we know that regular gathering to worship God is essential for human life to be lived to the full.

We have been and will remain very careful to apply rigorous hygiene, social distancing and appropriate risk assessment in our churches. As a result, church worship presents a hugely lesser risk of transmission than pubs, restaurants, gyms and schools; and it is more important than them all. We therefore wish to state categorically that we must not be asked to suspend Christian worship again. For us to do so would cause serious damage to our congregations, our service of the nation, and our duty as Christian ministers. We therefore call upon the Westminster and devolved

governments to find ways of protecting those who truly are vulnerable to Covid-19 without unnecessary and authoritarian restrictions on loving families, essential personal relationships, and the worship of the Christian Church.

Yours sincerely,
Rev A Paul Levy, Minister, Ealing International Presbyterian Church, London
Rev David M Gobbett, Lead Pastor, Highfields Church, Cardiff, Wales
Rev David Johnston, Minister Emeritus, Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Rev Dr Matthew PW Roberts, Minister, Trinity Church York, England
Rev Dr William JU Philip, Minister, The Tron Church Glasgow, Scotland
and 693 other signatories. An additional 162 have also signed since the letter was sent.

For more details refer to:
<http://ministersletter.wordpress.com>

emails to the Editor



From the Eldership at Mount Pleasant, Ebbw Vale

'We had Thought'

We met as an Eldership over recent weeks to plan the re-opening of the church. Arrangements were being put in place to open on October 4th, and then we received the announcement of a new lockdown in Blaenau Gwent from September 22nd, meaning that we are unable to open although we had thought that we could resume services.

This puts us in mind of one of the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection. You remember the two people returning to Emmaus after learning of the crucifixion? They had not stayed in Jerusalem long enough to know that Jesus had been raised, as He had prophesied to His disciples. They travelled despondently and met a stranger, who enquired why they were so downhearted. Their response was to tell him that they had hoped that Jesus would be raised from the dead. 'We had thought' that Jesus would overcome death, but they were disappointed. Their eyes were opened to see the stranger (Jesus) reveal Himself to them as they shared in the breaking of bread. They had thought that their hopes and dreams were shattered, but it was not so. They returned to

Jerusalem where they met the disciples and rejoiced in the news of Jesus' resurrection.

We are all disappointed that we cannot open the Church for worship, but we still have the presence of the risen Lord with us, whether we are together or apart. It is this presence and the strength of our faith which continues to bind us together, and will keep us until the day when we are able to open our doors once again. May we all know this strength as we continue to serve and witness to our Lord in these difficult times.

From: **Mr David Boorman**
Elder, Tabernacle, Penclawdd

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews exhorted his readers not to 'forsake the assembling of themselves together.' During the height of the pandemic we

were not allowed to meet together. Now, we thank God, our churches are open again. I recognise that some of us are unable to attend for health reasons. However, those who can go, should make every effort to attend. Particular blessings are attached to corporate worship. 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' We need to be fed under the ministry of the Word of God. We unite in bringing our praises and our petitions to the Throne of Grace. We benefit from the fellowship we have with one another. Remember that Christ did not just love you. He 'loved the church and gave himself for it.'

If the pandemic gets worse churches may be closed again. Seize the opportunity to go while you can.

ONE MORE THING



Reverend
Jonathan Hodgins

NOTES ON THE BEARD

On Tuesday 6 July 1535 Sir Thomas More was brought to the scaffold to be executed. As he knelt down to await his own beheading he reached down for his lengthy beard and pulled it aside noting that, 'it had never committed any treason.'

Not everybody is so committed to the beard. Children's author Roald Dahl encouraged a generation of children to adopt his pognophobia through his children's novel, *The Twits* written because Dahl had a 'desire to 'do something against beards'. He described Mr Twits' beard as being "spiky,

hard and full of food including tinned sardines, Stilton cheese, and corn flakes"!

In the real world however it is shaving that sounds unpleasant. Doctors say that it spreads bacteria around the face, causes hair follicle infection, irritates the skin and causes blemishes and acne. The beard on the other hand is a good protector. University of Southern Queensland found that facial hair can block up to 95% of the sun's harmful UV rays. Scientists also posit that they protect those who suffer from hay-fever by filtering out pollen and dust.

There are many kinds of beard. The smallest is the little button beard worn by the cool boy bands (and not-so-cool church ministers) in the nineties. Sometimes known as the 'Soul Patch' or the 'Flavour Saver' (ugh) it has fallen out of favour in recent years. Similarly the moustache-less 'Chin Curtain' worn most famously in America by

Abraham Lincoln and more famously in Wales by the late Revd Wilfred Smith (Terrace Road, Swansea) is not commonly seen today.

Of course over the years the beard has gone in and out of fashion. The longest beard belonged to Norwegian Hans Langseth. It stretched to over 17 feet. He died in 1927 but his beard was not lost. In 1967 it was donated to the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC where it is stored to this day.

German king and Holy Roman Emperor, Otto The Great swore by his beard when making a vow. And before that, Roman senators grew beards in times of trouble or disaster.

The most well known beard in the Bible probably belongs to Aaron. We read about it in Psalm 133 being covered with oil. To those who have never worn a beard the image will have limited value but to the hirsute it's a soothing image. A beard can be itchy, in hot weather it can really aggravate.



The hairs spike this way and that, and require real taming in order to be groomed. But beard oil smooths, tames and unifies, and turns the crustiest scruff into a Colonel Sanders.

The Psalmist uses that image to help us think of the power of unity. But how does oil unify us as Christians in the Church? Well the oil was used to signify a priest's anointing. It demonstrated that this man was set apart by God, and called to a new role. The priest was called to serve others; he could not opt to do things his way whenever he felt like it. Christians are similarly called by God not to be served but to serve. In our individualistic age that is counter cultural and we find it hard to do. But when we succumb to God's ways and allow the balm of the Holy Spirit to work in our church communities we become less prickly, less concerned with individual needs and rights, and settle down into the corporate worship of God.

And so the Psalmist is right: 'How delightfully good when brothers live together in harmony! It is like fine oil on the head, running down Aaron's beard onto his robes.'

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