

the TREASURY

MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WALES

***The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want***

A shepherd in Biblical times would lay down his life for his sheep, protecting them from danger and death. The shepherd would ensure that the sheep were safe and well taken care of. David, the Psalmist, knew this well having grown up as a shepherd. He would protect his sheep. How much more will God protect us?

***He maketh me to lie down in
green pastures: he leadeth
me beside the still waters***

Wherever we are, imagine the green pastures David is illustrating, imagine the still waters. Let's allow our hearts to be as peaceful as this image. Invite Jesus into this space of quietness. Imagine Jesus gently placing us down in a good place, a place where the water is still, a place of peace.

These two images of green pastures and still waters offer us both nourishment and peacefulness. We are led to a safe place, where His gifts are good.

***He restoreth my soul: he
leadeth me in the paths of
righteousness for his
name's sake***

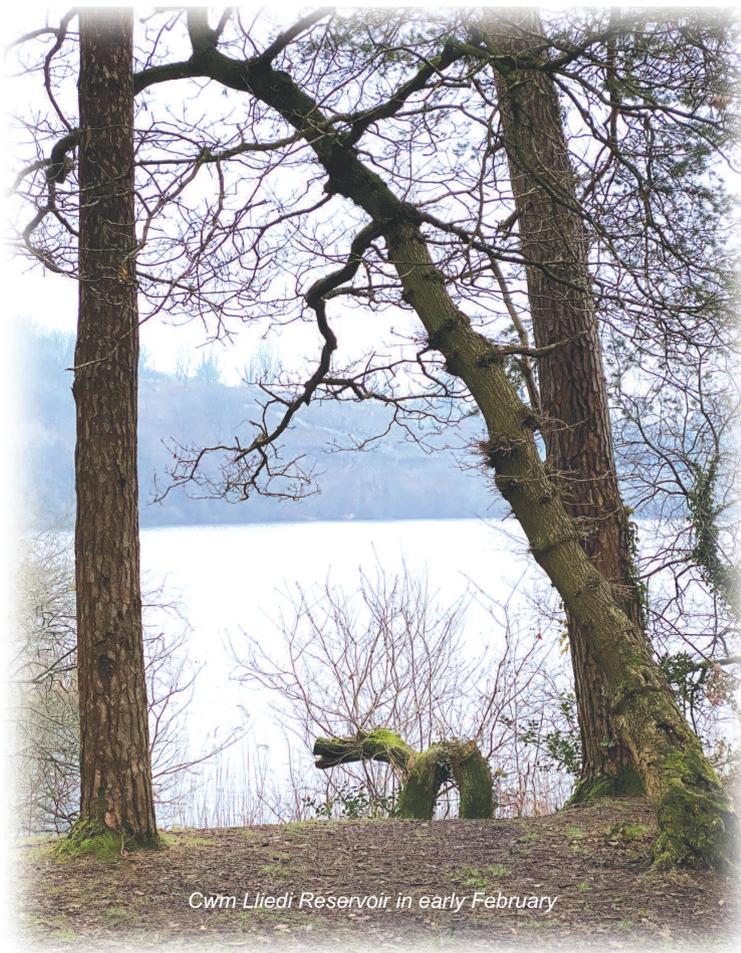
The Psalmist is very clear, that the Lord sees our soul, and that He is restoring all that is broken in us. In reflecting on this verse we are reminded that in Jesus, we are being renewed, made new. And in leading us to a path of righteousness, His truth becomes our identity.

***Yea, though I walk through the
valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou
art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they
comfort me***

The beauty here is that no matter where we find yourself in life, even in our lowest of lows, we can bring everything to God

STILL WATERS

by Revd Bryn Williams



Cwm Lliedi Reservoir in early February

and be reminded that we have nothing to fear, because He is with us. We are not alone. His rod will defend us against all manner of attacks and His staff will guide and lead us to safety.

***Thou preparest a table before
me in the presence of mine
enemies: thou anointest my
head with oil; my cup
runneth over***

Though enemies can surround us, we are safe at God's table.

His oil protects, heals, and shields us from harm. Our needs are met completely.

***Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me all the days
of my life: and I will dwell
in the house of the LORD
for ever***

The Psalm closes with the fact that God's goodness and mercy is with us, accompanying us home. It is His home that awaits us. Good news indeed.

A PRAYER

Father God we thank you that Jesus is our Good Shepherd and that our needs are completely taken care of. Help us to bring our hearts and minds to that place of nourishment. That place of quietness where the water is still and all is peace.

Remind us Lord that You are in the business of restoring what is broken in us and that by Your renewing, we are made new.

Guide us Lord to that place where we bring everything before you and let us know that we have nothing to fear, because You are with us. With us in Your protection and with us in Your leading.

Father as we face all manner of evil, may we know Your all-embracing love in protecting, healing and shielding us from harm.

And Lord, draw us closer in our hearts and minds to more of that knowledge of Your goodness and Your mercies and of Your home as our home.

We pray all these things in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

This meditation by Revd Bryn Williams is on a similar theme to a series of Bible Studies being led on Zoom by Mrs Sarah Morris and the Women's Department. It is their hope that you'll be able to join their Zoom meetings.

Zoom links or phone number and any other information can be obtained from sarah.morris@ebcpcw.cymru Tel: 07554005423

The studies will be held at 1.30pm on Wednesdays, February 17th, March 3rd, 17th, 31st.

Not the Sunday Sermon

By Dr Mike Ward

"I, Joseph Robinette Biden Junior, do solemnly swear..." My one good ear was bent to the radio listening to the inauguration of the 46th President of the United States. Well, it only happens every four years and for too many reasons to list, the last presidential inauguration was one I just had to avoid, not that I was invited. And as the words of the oath of office floated over a cold and socially distanced Capitol Hill in Washington, it was a far cry from the events we witnessed on television at the beginning of January. Actually, it was not so much a far cry away as a gentle spoken word away – the only tuneless cry came from Lady Gaga belting out *The Star-Spangled Banner*, overdressed like Miss Piggy at the Oscars.

As for those events that unfolded on 6th January... Americans witnessed the bricks-and-mortar heart of their constitution, the citadel under whose dome Abraham Lincoln had signed the Act of Emancipation on New Year's Day 1863 – "if my name ever goes down in history, it'll be for this act and my whole soul is in it" – being stormed by a mob of armed insurrectionists paying little heed to the history or sacredness of the place they were violating. As one political commentator noted, try to imagine how we would react if we witnessed an armed mob not only storming the gates of Westminster but marching into the debating chamber of Parliament itself waving their flags and sitting on the Speaker's chair... (Well, it did happen once but that was almost 400 years ago.) The last time the Capitol was taken over was by British troops in 1813, but they politely left after two days for a cup of tea, having discovered they could not burn down the building because it was made of stone.

This time, the storming of the Capitol seemed different. It certainly *looked* different. The images were broadcast across the world: a confederate flag (anyone for slavery?) being paraded through the entrance hall, someone taking the podium as a souvenir, police trying to hold back the mob. Jake Angeli stood apart – wearing a horned helmet and with his painted face, this bearded man looked more like Davy Crockett than a 21st-century conspiracy theorist. Whilst he posed for the camera, dressed to impress, another bearded man, Richard Barnett, took selfies with his feet up on Speaker Nancy Pelosi's chair. But of course the star of the show if you could call it that was the Capitol itself, a temple of democracy. A temple desecrated live on television.

There was another temple once. It was in Jerusalem and it too symbolised everything to the people of the nation Israel. It was the citadel, the home of their religion. True, it was not the same temple that Solomon had built, but it was good enough. It was more than simply good enough. It was a holy place. It was a temple that people came from afar to worship in, to touch its stones. And there was another bearded man here too, old Simeon. But nobody noticed him. He was lost amongst the hustle and bustle of daily worshippers and the grandeur of the stones and artefacts that make up any place of worship, large or small. He had not so much stormed the temple, but he had crept in. Simeon did not carry a flag, but he was as true an Israelite patriot as any. He had prayed all his life for the Messiah that Israel had craved for over the centuries. So in a sense he too was a bearded protester, only one who chose to pray rather than shout. And his moment came with the arrival of Jesus' parents (Luke 2 vv 25-35).

And we should remember this – Mary and Joseph did not bring the baby to see Simeon. Oh, no: they brought him *to the temple*. It was the temple, not any one person, which was the most important part of this story, as indeed it would be throughout Jesus' life. It is surely no coincidence that on the last night of his ministry on earth, Jesus took his followers past the front door of the temple, the same temple that Mary and Joseph had taken him as a baby, the

same door through which he had been carried to be blessed. I often say that buildings are not the most important part of our faith and that is true – after all, we are discovering, however painful a lesson it may be, during lockdown that we can just about manage without "going to church" on a Sunday. "We are the church" etc! And yet, and yet... buildings still mean something, they draw us to them, symbols of our faith, temples of the living flame of the Spirit that burns within each one of us. So yes, buildings do matter.

Jesus could not ignore the temple. *He had to be there*. He said so himself when, as a 12-year-old, he was found there by his absent-minded parents three days after leaving Jerusalem for the Passover. (Well, David Cameron left behind his 8-year-old daughter Nancy in a pub once. Easily done, like forgetting your smartphone.) But what did it stand for? Either at the beginning of his ministry or at its end – we cannot be sure of the timing – Jesus will indeed storm the temple, overturn the tables of the moneylenders, and attack the merchants doing their business. Perhaps the temple had changed since Simeon's day and the place that Jesus remembered as a teenager? Or perhaps he just saw things more clearly now? What does the Temple stand for?

As a denomination, the next few years will be the most challenging in our history. Some, perhaps many, chapels will close their doors for the last time. Chapels will be turned into antiques warehouses or expensive apartment developments. And as they close their doors, their photographs and artefacts will find their way to other chapels or to our national archive in Aberystwyth. But maybe along the way we will have lost something. Maybe we have left it too late to protest and to storm the temple to defend our faith against the rising tide of secularism?

(Footnote: largest ever congregation at Hoylake Church? The service of closure.)

Where will our Simeons go then to watch and pray - or the parents asking the minister, quite reasonably enough, for their child to "be christened"? Do not mock them. R S Thomas knew that with the closure of any

chapel, we lose something special:

**A little aside from the main road,
becalmed in a last-century greyness,
there is the chapel, ugly,
without the appeal
to the tourist to stop his car
and visit it. The traffic goes by,
and the river goes by, and
quick shadows
of clouds, too, and the chapel
settles
a little deeper into the grass.**

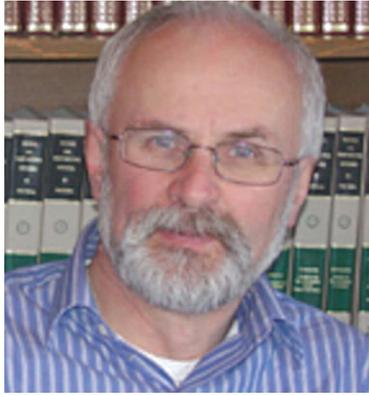
**But here once on an evening
like this,
in the darkness that was about
his hearers, a preacher caught
fire
and burned steadily before
them
with a strange light, so that
they saw
the splendour of the barren
mountains
about them and sang their
amens
fiercely, narrow but saved
in a way that men are not now.**

A young man entering a Liverpool church asking to be married there was challenged by the priest. The priest knew the young man was not a churchgoer. But the young man pointed to the walls and said: "Remember these bricks are full of the prayers of your people." Bricks can be special. Treat them with reverence, with awe but more than *anything with love and affection*.

And I remember our own dear Mr Thomas, not a poet but a man of God as Simeon was, elderly but with the fire still burning in his eyes, dear old Ron Thomas of Moreton Church who died from Covid last month, just two months after reaching his 100th birthday. He stormed our temple too, on a weekly basis, lately being driven there by his good friend Paula. The stones were special to him, you see – as long as his health allowed him, *he had to be there*. And perhaps somewhere in the distant past of such a quiet but deeply religious Welshman, Ron too was "saved in a way that men are not now". Ron will storm the temple in his quiet unassuming way no more. But the bricks of our church are full of his prayers. Some buildings are sacred indeed.

Revd Dr Mike Ward is minister of Moreton Presbyterian Church, Wirral.

Hope for the Church in Wales



Kevin Adams

The use of the word “unprecedented” in recent months has been, well, unprecedented! Governments, organisations and businesses have been facing huge challenges, with everyday life so far from normal. Churches, too, have had to find new ways to worship together, to care for each other and to share the Good News in their communities.

Through it all, we can find comfort and hope in remembering that, while so much else seems to be ‘different’, our Father God is unchanging. The God of love, holiness and salvation that we read of in the Bible, is still the same God today. The God who was worshipped during those great times of Welsh revival, is still the same God we worship today via our online services!

If you are in need of a reminder of how God has touched and changed his people’s lives in the past, look no further than this video that **Kevin Adams** recorded for *EQUIP 20*. Kevin explores the subject of “**Hope for the church in Wales**” and how we should use church history to give us hope for today.

“We don’t want to stay in the past - we want to live for today.”

Kevin Adams was born in Llanelli and worked as Pastor for eighteen years at Ammanford Evangelical Church. He became the Senior Pastor of East Baptist Church in Massachusetts, USA, in October 2004.

www.walesleadershipforum.org.uk

The Women’s Department

Come to the table

If I had had a pound every time I had shouted ‘Come to the table’ I would be a very rich person!! Mealtimes in our house have ranged from noisy family meals to quieter times of fellowship with good friends. Many meals are recorded in the Bible, from Abraham and Sarah entertaining 3 visitors in Genesis with fresh bread and meat to Jesus preparing a breakfast of fish for his disciples by the Sea of Galilee. Of course, alongside the real meals in the Bible there are many references to spiritual food that gives eternal life.

This is what is behind the title of the series of Bible Studies that we are organising for our women beginning in January, ‘Come to the table.’

The 6-part series is based on Psalm 23, and it is our hope to spend time at the table God himself has prepared for his people in his company and in fellowship with each other. Unfortunately, it can’t be a face-to-face feast – this will be a series held on Zoom – but as many have already experienced, meeting on Zoom can be a blessing and an encouragement. If you can’t use Zoom, you can listen in on the phone. So, we really hope that you’ll be able to join us,



and if you’re not sure, why not try one and see how it goes? You can get the Zoom links or phone number or any information from me:

sarah.morris@ebcpcw.cymru
07554005423

The studies will be held at 1.30 pm on January 20, February 3,17, March 3,17,31

LETTER to the Editor



From: **Moses Tutesigensi**
Whitchurch, Cardiff

Our God is a great big God

I hope in less than six-hundred words to give a response to Revd Dr Mike Ward’s sermon, *O little God of Bethlehem*, that was published in last month’s issue of *the Treasury*. By the end of this sentence, I will have 545 words left, so, here we go!

Firstly, the reason I have constrained myself to so many words is because the sermon finishes with a word count - who would have known that the sale of cabbages is covered by such a wordy regulation?! Brevity is an admirable quality but, surely, not at the expense of complete sentences. In the ESV the sentence that is John 3:16 comprises 24 words and only quoting 5 of those words fails to fully communicate the sublime truth of the text.

Secondly, the “playground view of God” that the sermon condemns happens to be simplistic but, nonetheless, in accordance with Christian theology as confessed by the Presbyterian Church of Wales.

“We believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator and ruler of all things.” What else does that mean if not that our God is big, strong, mighty and that he can do all that he wills and pleases?!

Thirdly, when we fail to use all the words that God gives us to communicate a message then it is inevitable that the message will become distorted. I agree that the Christmas that the politicians attempted to save had more to do with mammon than the incarnate Lord, however, distilling Christmas into those five words understates the drama of redemption that is encapsulated in the birth, life, death and ascension of Christ. “God so loved the world,” is a good start. But why not state the whole story? Indeed, the quotation itself begs to be finished because it is a supplementary part of the sentence. On its own it does not make sense. Let us look at the whole passage: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” Think about these three things:

1. God’s giving of his Son is an (the?) expression of his love for the world. 2. The questions of when and in what manner God sent his son come to the forefront when the whole passage is in view. 3. Finally, this verse presents the “so what” of Christmas – will you believe and have eternal life or not believe and perish? Can a God whose arrival “veiled in flesh” that has such a decisive impact on the destiny of humanity be rightly referred to as “O little God of Bethlehem?”

Finally, I would like to share an anecdote. At theological college, every Tuesday was a sort of reckoning day for us. One of the students would deliver a sermon to the whole college community and then later the students would critique the sermon under the guidance of one of the lecturers. The purpose of this exercise was not only that we should learn to preach appropriately to the congregation in front of us but also that we, the preachers, would learn to be hearers of sermons. One of the things that the lecturers would constantly drill into us was that we were to critique the sermon and not the sermon giver. I am submitting this short response not as a critique of the person who gave it but as a comment on some issues arising from the sermon. In the end, I believe that God can use both the sermon and this critique for good purposes.

A Word of Testimony

David Boorman was a former Academic Secretary and sometime Bursar of Swansea University. He was also an elder at Tabernacle, Penclawdd for over twenty years. His death on 7th January is another amongst the 113,000 nationwide that have been the result of Coronavirus. In this sadness, the knowledge of his wonderful conversion as a student at Cardiff brings us light and hope. It was at a CU Freshers' Squash in 1951 that he had only decided to attend because of the free tea on offer, that he heard Freddie Crittendon speak on Revelation 3: 20. hH gave his life to Christ and immediately confirmed his commitment by attending the early morning CU prayer meeting the next day. He soon followed this by baptism at Ararat Baptist Church, when he especially wanted to sing, 'O happy day, that fixed my choice on Thee my Saviour and my God'.

Years later, David's faith was to be tested by difficulty, bereavement and depression. He wrote about it all, giving God the glory and praise for bringing him through that and he called what he wrote 'A Word of Testimony'.

In February 2010 Jennifer (my wife) and I had a very enjoyable holiday in India. I returned home thanking God that He has given us "all things richly to enjoy". A few weeks later I had the privilege of preaching at Tabernacle, Penclawdd, on Palm Sunday evening. Little did I know that that was the last occasion on which I would preach for about three and a half years.

On the following Thursday I went shopping in Tesco Marina. When I came to drive home I was overcome with anxiety and only got back home with difficulty. I saw my GP that afternoon and was prescribed appropriate medication. Three days later I did not want to get out of bed. Another visit was paid to my GP who began to



treat me for depression. Subsequently, I was referred to a psychiatric consultant. At my first meeting I thought that I could outwit her and give the impression that I was not as ill as I really was. In fact, she was more than a match for me – a fact for which I came to thank God as she was able to help me in various ways. The next four years were a time of great trial for Jennifer as she had to endure my failure to respond to help. I would promise to make an effort, only to find that my promise was like "a morning cloud and, like the early dew" it went away. To Jennifer's sorrow but, sadly, not to mine, holidays to Canada to see her sister and to the Norwegian fjords were cancelled. I had no wish to go out or to receive visitors. I would go to bed before 7pm and not get up until about 9am the next day. I could not concentrate on reading. I was anxious and agitated. I would not accept help. The consultant psychiatrist tried to get me involved in group therapy but I refused. I was anxious and agitated. If Jennifer went out I wanted to know when she would return and frequently phoned her to find out how much longer she would be. My reading of the Scriptures and my praying were infrequent and for months on end I did not go to God's house on the Lord's Day. Such was my condition for a considerable time.

How then does God come into this? After all, this is a word

of testimony and not an exercise in self-pity! Well, God comes into it in a number of ways. In the first place, when I was at my lowest, Christian friends were praying regularly for me. At the same time He did not cast me away on account of my backsliding. He still loved me with an everlasting love. He was teaching me lessons which only became clear after my recovery, especially the importance of maintaining communion with Him both in cloud and sunshine. And then there was the medication. It was very slow to "kick in" but imperceptibly it did begin to have some effect. God is the Creator, and Man (I use the word in a generic sense), as God's image bearer, has the ability to create. Some compose musical masterpieces, others paint breathtaking paintings, others write superb literature – and yet others push back the boundaries of medical research and come up, for example, with the drugs which I was prescribed. Again, others work in the field of technology - and so someone at Amazon.com. and one of its subsidiaries came up with the Kindle! On my 80th birthday, three years into my depression, my wife gave me a Kindle – and I began to read again. I wish I could say that I downloaded Christian books but that would be untrue. I read Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, William Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, Conan Doyle, John Galsworthy – and, for good measure, detective stories by P.D. James and Ruth Rendall. But at least I was reading. Eventually I began to read the Bible, to pray and to go to church again. Like David, albeit in a very different situation,

"In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God;

He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry entered His ears"

(2 Samuel 22 v.7)

If recovery was slow, nevertheless it had begun but, although it was seen by others, it was not seen by me. I was encouraged by the friends at Ebenezer, Oldwalls to resume preaching occasionally. On one such occasion I became ill in the middle of my sermon, doubtless due to anxiety. But then about two months ago, almost overnight, I awoke one morning with the conviction that God had

lifted the cloud from off my head. I wanted to read His Word, to pray, to enjoy fellowship with fellow believers and to preach again. I wanted to go on holiday and to welcome visitors here. I enjoyed the wonder and beauty of God's creation. Truly, God had answered my prayers and those of dear Christian friends. God promised His people through the prophet Joel that "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten" (Joel 2 v.25). For four years the locusts nibbled at me but they will not for any longer. I pray that God will do for me what He did in the days of Joel. When I was a pupil at Woking Grammar School in the 1940s we always sang at the final assembly of the school year the hymn: "Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing" (not, I regret to say, the lovely hymn by John Fawcett which is to be found in Christian Hymns but one from a collection of hymns prepared for Rugby School!). As you can imagine, we sang it wholeheartedly, quite unlike the way in which we sang "Lord, behold us with Thy blessing" at the beginning of the school year. In the first of these two hymns are the following words:

"Time that's lost may all retrieve"

It is my prayer that in the days that are left to me I may, with God's help, do just that, "redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5 v.16).

(This was written in the summer of 2014. We thank God that He both heard and answered David's prayer).



**The Treasury will continue to be published online only until further notice.
The next issue will appear on 7th March**

Loving and supporting our schools

If the coronavirus pandemic has taught us anything, it's made us realize the importance of schools, and everyone involved in the work of schools, be they teachers, teaching assistants, administrative and kitchen staff or caretakers. It has also underlined the vital role our schools play, not only in educating our children, but also providing them with company, a social life and care.

DO YOU AGREE?

If so, then you're being called to love our schools, and to show that love by taking part in a

campaign encouraging us to pray for our schools. The Pray for Schools movement aims to make every school a prayed-for school. And we are all invited to add our prayers to those of others. By following the link:

<https://www.prayforschools.org/loveourschools/>

you'll reach the website which offers information and resources to help in your prayers. The resources are also available in Welsh.

Let's love our schools – by praying regularly for them.



Another Lockdown Publication: 'The Monster Outside'

One of our readers has published a story in verse that begins 'A Monster has come to visit out town...' and how children and grown-ups 'deal with a monster we can't even see.' Available through Waterstones, Amazon and directly from the author, profits from the sale of this colourful children's title are being donated to charity. Its theme resonates with Mental Health week which took place earlier this month.



Fairtrade Fortnight is upcoming

(22nd February - 7th March)

Join the live Fairtrade quiz!

What's happening: We're bringing our whole Fairtrade community together for an extra special quiz night. Join us for a fun evening filled with all sorts of general knowledge questions and even a special guest appearance.



Date and time: 5th March at 7:30pm

Further details: fairtrade.org.uk



Coming Soon from the Women's Sub-Committee

Theme Resource Book I am the Good Shepherd

Many of you will have used our Theme books over recent years, and know how valuable they are. Full of articles and ideas to encourage us in our faith and walk with God, they are written especially for the women of our churches by Carys and Sarah, the Dorcas workers.

We are so excited to let you know that this Resource book

will be in our hands soon – after the disappointment of not being able to complete it and get it to print last year due to Covid 19 restrictions.

Our theme is the verse from John 10:11 'I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.' Little did we know when we chose this verse to be our theme how we would need shepherding during 2020 and 2021. But, our heavenly Father

knew, and we trust that under his blessing this theme book will

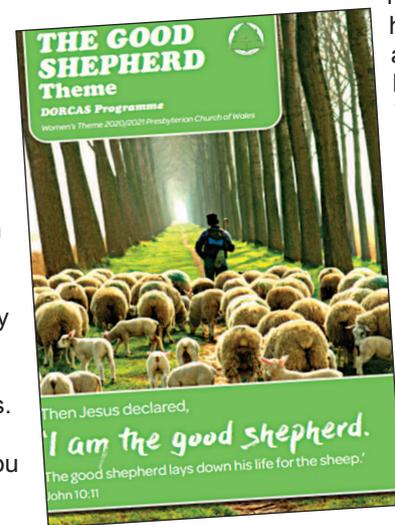
help us to turn to him, to follow him and to experience his love and care. We have included Bible studies, a complete Service, testimonies, service outlines as well as updates on our Mission projects and ideas for craft.

You can place orders for copies with

Eirian Roberts, Bala office by phone or email: Eirian (01678) 520065 eirian.roberts@ebcpcw.cymru If you email an order please include:

Name, address with postcode, how many copies, name of your Presbytery.

Copies are offered free of charge but gifts are welcome. If you order a copy for yourself why not consider ordering a second copy for a friend?



Jedem Das Seine



What do you think?

by Jonathan Hodgins

To each his own. How many times have you said that phrase? You see a man walking down the street wearing enormous purple pantaloons. You smile at your friend and whisper 'oh well, to each his own!' Or past a woman with piercings rattling in her ears. 'To each his own' you think. It's a commonplace attitude in the tolerant society we are trying to foster. But in Germany the phrase is rarely used, and when it is it inevitably creates controversy. That's because in German the phrase is *Jedem Das Seine* and it is inextricably linked to the gates of *Buchenwald* Concentration camp.

Once we hear the words concentration camp we immediately put that in the box in our mind labelled 'irredeemably evil' and of course it is. But the one time Director of the British Museum, Neil MacGregor has written a fascinating article about the gates at *Buchenwald* that reveals how confused and conflicted humanity is.

Take for example the name *Buchenwald*. It is named after the site where it was built, *buchen weld* – beech forest. Immediately we imagine a German idyll dug up to make way for a site of unimaginable horror. But not every tree was removed. One oak tree named Goethe's Oak was left as a tribute to the great German poet and statesman, Johann Goethe who had lived near the site.

Amazing isn't it? The Nazi SS, famed for burning books in Berlin in 1933, wanted to leave a tribute to a great man of literature even as they uprooted everything else to build a concentration camp.

The strange ironies don't end there. *Buchenwald* was built in the Weimar region of Germany. Weimar remains famous for its doomed experiment in liberal democracy. In the aftermath of the First World War, Weimar welcomed what *Volker Weidemann* calls the 'dreamers' to establish an alternative to militarism and imperialism.

A Free State of Bavaria was established around which the "luminaries of German cultural history gathered". And yet in that same region, less than twenty years later a concentration camp was built by some of the very same people.

And what of those gates? The words *Jedem Das Seine* are famous in Germany for a piece by J S Bach, another luminary of German culture. The Nazis took the phrase and took it to mean 'to each as he deserves'. It was a statement to those imprisoned that they had what was coming to them, and that the Nazis were entitled to treat them as they deserved. It was important that everybody understood this and so the Nazis took one of the inmates (a craftsman called Franz Ehrlich) and had him design them.

We're used to the ironies of *Buchenwald* now, so here is another. Ehrlich was in *Buchenwald* because he was a

communist. He came to the attention of the Nazi authorities because of his links to the Bauhaus movement. Bauhaus was a modernist design school, a sort of precursor to IKEA, which was committed to minimalist, practical principles of design. They had no time for the design principles of the Nazis who loved Gothic type and Neo-Classical architecture and so were deemed enemies of the people. Nonetheless the SS asked Ehrlich to design the typeface for the gates and didn't seem to notice (or perhaps care) that the typeface was classically Bauhaus. MacGregor says that Ehrlich:

"Specifically chose for his design this really artistic, beautiful, almost dancing front, with strong Bauhaus influences, which was in the Nazi view, degenerate art - the kind of stuff they'd just been banning. So in a sense Ehrlich putting it in the typeface was saying: "Actually there is another Germany, there is another tradition: we will persist, our spirit lives on."

Which sounds wonderful but how about this? Ehrlich survived the camp. When the country separated into East and West Ehrlich was happy to find himself on the communist side and continued to work as an architect for the regime. What do we make of a man who, imprisoned by one totalitarian regime went on to serve another? Perhaps we say, he had no choice, a man has to work. But when the Stasi files were opened in the 1990s Ehrlich (who died in 1984) was

found to have been an informer, a collaborator with the state.

So what are we to make of this journey to *Buchenwald*? I think perhaps this. That it stands as a reminder of the complicated and fallen nature that we have to live with and alongside. The same people who love freedom can stand by and allow slavery. That those who create beauty can use the same words to enforce cruelty and, that those words can themselves be fired back at the accuser. That the prisoner can willingly become the informer. And what can we say to that?

Saying 'to each his own' is no good. Allowing each to do as he sees fit, ends up with the strong oppressing the weak, as we saw in *Buchenwald*. We want to see justice for cruelty, oppression and treachery. But equally *who wants to be the judge and say 'to each as he deserves?'* In all of its paradoxes *Buchenwald* shows us just how confused we are as people. Was Ehrlich a saint or sinner? Was the lumberjack who cleared the beech forest? How about the builder who assembled the huts? When Eisenhower visited the site he demanded the people of Weimar be brought to see what had been done in their name. What should have happened to them? Each to his own or each as he deserves?

To each as he deserves. Not so with God's grace. Into our complicated world comes God with a simple gift. His Grace given to all who ask, undeserved. And once received it is a powerful antidote to the selfishness and brutality that can be found in the human heart. One of the inmates at *Buchenwald* was a minister called Paul Schneider. He famously spoke out against professing German Christians who has swapped the gospel for German nationalism. Inevitably he was arrested and brutally abused. He died at the hands of a guard named Martin Sommer. Sommer was notorious for his treatment of Christians having previously beaten a Catholic priest to death and crucifying two others.

In 1958 he was tried for war crimes and sent to prison. Unable to care for himself, in his old age he was nursed. But by whom? Who would show grace and kindness to this monster? Who would give the 'Hangman of *Buchenwald*' what he didn't deserve? Who do you think?

'As Welsh people we are under a great debt to this woman, and we can never put a price on her service nor measure the work she did in being an instrument to give 'the People's Preacher' to the people ... In her self denial, Wales heard a message from Heaven – her efforts facilitated the way for Wales to be drenched by the irresistible eloquence of the 'hero from Talysarn'.

Biographies of women are not common in Wales, however much many deserve it. Undoubtedly that is a loss to the country; it is a priceless service to commemorate those who are worthy.

Although I have had some information here and there, it is to my mother that I am indebted for her story in its wide extent, since she was born and bred in this area, therefore had knowledge of Mrs Jones's movements and her private life. From my mother's reminiscences, I could have written a volume about her twice the size, and if any letter of praise comes from the work, she has the first claim to it.

Birth and early years

Frances Edwards, or rather as she was more commonly known, Fanny Edwards, was a daughter of Thomas and Anne Edwards. She was born at Cefn-faes, Ffestiniog, in May 1805. ... From Cefn-faes, the family moved to Llanllyfni (to Llwydcoed farm). They moved from there to a farm called Taldrwst. Thomas Edwards was looked upon as a cultured man of a cultivated mind who was very knowledgeable with regard to slate quarries. He was among the first in Dyffryn Nantlle to hold the office of overseer. He was a very zealous Methodist, ... taking a great interest in the cause in Talysarn.

[Fanny's] mother, Ann Edwards, is portrayed as a woman of strong common sense ... and of strong religious convictions. She possessed an exceptional and melodious singing voice, and since it was so penetrating, it could be heard throughout the whole chapel. Ann Edwards died in March 1816 at the early age of 35

A love story with a difference

*Celebrating a wonderful Welsh woman
– wife of a Prince of Preachers*

FANNY JONES TALSARN (1805-77)
Virtuous Wife of Valiant Preacher

Extracts from *Cofiant Mrs Fanny Jones, Gweddw y Diweddar Barch. J. Jones, Talysarn* by O. Llew. Owain of Talysarn.
Translated by Marian G. Clifford (née Edwards)

years and Fanny Jones loved to speak often of her mother, and the longing (hiraethus) memories were intensely felt. She admired her mother's piety and remembered the sad moments when she died - so peacefully and without struggle, calling her children together to kiss them and exhort them to godly living.

By this time we see young Fanny bereft of her mother at the time of her awakening - that time which is so full of life and vivacity - a restless time common in young people. Here she was in this situation without home guidance at the most important time of her life, the period of awakening to self-knowledge. The young girl is face to face with the world, and the world is dangerous for her, having lost the one who would have guided her. But we shall see the effect this had on the life of Fanny Edwards.

When she came to a suitable age, she was sent to school at Caernarfon, and during this time, her circle of acquaintance widened. She tended to be friendly and affectionate - naturally therefore, she was a character who drew people to her. She had a good education in Caernarfon, and since she learned quickly, she benefitted greatly - more possibly than others who didn't have such a keen mind. While on this course of instruction she came into contact with several important people in society, and the association with some lasted to the end of her life. One of her best friends was Miss Roberts, Castell, Bangor, and she frequently went to her home to

spend the Sabbath with her. Miss Roberts married Mr Owen Roberts, Dinas, near Caernarfon, but their friendship did not cease while they lived. In addition to her school, she had another important advantage through the woman with whom she lodged, Sussi Roberts. She was industrious, noted for her cleanliness, orderliness and economical ways, and was very wise and provident. She taught Fanny Jones how to behave properly and modestly, and she responded to the instruction. Since she was naturally ladylike, and as was noticed earlier, quick to learn, she soon became quite polished and an adornment to the circle she served.

After returning from school, she was given the total care of her father's home, and she played her part to great satisfaction. She showed providence in her care of her father's possessions and circumstances at this time of his life. Thrift was instinctive in her character. It was not for show. This element or feature remained prominent all her life. Providence and thrift were her chief characteristics but they did not develop into stinginess or miserliness. She controlled them to be beautiful and acceptable virtues in her character, since she showed so much compassion towards those in needy circumstances. She used them to her praise in her youth, in her family responsibilities and in her old age. Her life was leavened with them to be of service, and widened her popularity.

She was spoken of when she ran her father's home as one remarkably kind to the poor and compassionate to the needy. She believed that those who were merciful to the poor would not be in need while on earth, and her beliefs were revealed in this more than once.

It so happened during her time at home that there was a year of scarcity, and necessity drove scores of the poor to go from house to house to beg, and each one took care to call at every farmhouse, since they thought it would be easier to get a bit of food there. Although crowds called at Taldrwst, Fanny Edwards could not refuse to give alms to any of them. She knew that 'the God of Providence' above saw all her kindnesses and that she through these kind deeds was working according to the Commandments. She had a religious upbringing, and without realising it, her love for her Saviour grew intensely, and that love was rooted through every part of her life, until it flowered in beauty and fragrance. She used to say that she did not know of any time in her life that she did not love Jesus Christ. In addition to the religious home she had, her religious leanings were nurtured from within; she possessed circumstances which gave every advantage to show the love that was in her heart and to warm the flame which was burning and growing gradually. She appreciated these advantages and said toward the end of her life that these very circumstances were of enormous advantage to her in increasing her devotion.

One of the people who were a help to Fanny Edwards in nourishing this reverence for religious things was Ann Parry, Ty-Capel, Llanllyfni. She was an especially godly old woman - her godliness made her well-known and famous among the ministers of Wales. This elderly sister kept the chapel house at Llanllyfni for fifty years and there are many interesting stories about her. She prayed much, and there are facts to prove that some ministers had powerful meetings at the very moments when she prayed for them, that God would own their message.

In the old days, preachers would travel on horseback, and every one who passed through Llanllyfni would be sure to call on Ann Parry for some refreshments. Many men of

continued on next page

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reputation and influence would come to Llanllyfni to preach at this time and everyone knew it was the old lady who succeeded in getting them since she used to keep a journal. This was the environment which influenced Fanny Edwards - it was under the mantle of this old sister that she was brought up, and who gave her guidance.

Fanny herself promised that she had listened to her advice and that it would be a help to her all her life. Other circumstances which left their mark on her whole life were the presence and victory of the old godly people in the religious meetings, and the words of Fanny Jones toward the end of her life were: "I would never tire of the godly old people jumping up and rejoicing in Llanllyfni, when they were on fire, praising God, and the influence that was in their lives at that time has stayed with me all my life." She was drawn like that to strong spiritual characters - Welsh characters, old-fashioned, sincere, until she increased in the virtues they had.

Courtship and Marriage

[After John Jones's arrival in Talsarn, he established singing meetings]. Among the young people who gathered like this was a bright young girl, lively and pretty - therefore special, a young girl who drew everyone's attention with her beauty and cheerfulness... This girl drew the attention of John Jones and his love began to stir when he saw her; and if heaven leads in life or provides in marriage, these circumstances worked for this. A secret inner turbulence came to the bosom of Fanny Edwards - she couldn't describe it - she didn't know what it was. She hadn't spoken to the young stranger, and yet there was something wonderful and mysterious between them - something she could neither describe nor explain. At the same time there was a stirring in the heart of the young man, though he looked calm and unmoved, so unperturbed that no one knew from him outwardly that he had noticed anyone more than anyone else in the singing meetings; yet, something spoke inside him, and his thoughts always ran to the bright and beautiful one at the singing meeting.

What could explain the mystery? Neither knew what the

other was thinking - they didn't have an opportunity to make known the fervency of their hearts to each other - they didn't converse in such a way as to convey their thoughts and wishes to each other. What therefore caused these stirrings in the hearts of each, one for the other? We have to conclude that Heaven was intervening to lead them to each other, and the value that one was to the other in their lives confirms this idea. It was the choice of God to care for one of the 'strong of Wales' and to prepare him for the service of his country, and as Ioan Eifion said with great vivacity in a 'cywydd' (alliterative poem) about the subject:

John Jones oedd long – oedd
long lawn
O ddoniau'r Nefoedd uniawn.
Fanny dda a'l llywiau'n llon,
Hwylus, rhag creig gofalon.
Duw a'i rhodd – gododd o gant
Ar gyfer y gwr gwiwfant.

John Jones was a ship – a ship
full
Of Heaven's upright gifts;
Good Fanny merrily steering,
Sailing along in spite of rocks of
care;
God gave her - raised her up
out of a hundred
For the sake of the worthy man.

More than once John Jones himself found his eyes drawn toward the young girl without knowing it; Fanny Edwards from the other side was fixing her eyes on him in amazement. In this unwitting meeting of eyes, each one awoke as from a dream, and in a twinkling turned their eyes in another direction. This eye contact happened often, and it is odd that both fell into the same mistake as the other, without ever saying a word to each other, yet something spoke in each heart that there was some strange meeting together of the two hearts. Fanny had stolen John Jones's heart and John Jones had stolen Fanny's heart. These strange feelings increased in the heart of John Jones and the spark began to be a burning flame - burning so much that he himself took note of the young girl one night in the chapel house, and the fact that John Jones - quiet, deep and serious - noticed [her] gave him strong proof that she had totally won his heart. He asked the family who kept Ty Capel (the chapel house), "Who was that young girl?" "Oh!" they said, "Fanny Edwards, daughter of Thomas

Edwards, Taldrwst, a respected farmer and overseer in Cloddfa'r Lôn Quarry." "Well," he replied, "she's a very lively girl." That was all he said that night. Somehow he had felt inadequate in her company during the conversation at Ty Capel, and he noticed her again at his lodging, i.e. in the home of his cousin, the wife of Mr Griffith Williams, overseer of the Talsarn Quarry, and Mr Williams understood at once that Fanny had won his heart. He said, "She'll make you a good wife, John Jones," appealing to a stranger who was in the house who knew Fanny well, for a confirmation of his observation. He confirmed it with the sentence, "She'll make a very excellent one for him."

After this conversation the matter was left alone, and they continued with other ordinary things, but as Emerson said - "All mankind loves a lover." So it was with John Jones, and he went to the stranger who was at his lodgings the following day, revealing to him the tumult in his bosom, how the girl had won his heart.

At the end of the second singing meeting, John Jones went to Fanny Edwards with the purpose of escorting her a little way in the direction of her home, and before leaving, put a letter into her hand. Fanny Edwards went home, and going straightaway to her bedroom opened the letter, asked for guidance from Heaven in the circumstances and placed herself in the Lord's hands. John Jones went there for her answer at mid-day the next day, and although Fanny Edwards was certain of her own feelings, she couldn't give an answer until she had spoken with her father, so he had to come away a little stunned. In the meantime, he went to see Dr Griffith Roberts, bone doctor, Llanllyfni (the stranger) and asked him to say a word on his behalf to Thomas Edwards, and also to ask Fanny Edwards for a definite answer to his letter... Not knowing what her feelings were, the obliging man went, quite anxiously, because he did not in the least understand how she felt, and conveyed to her the request of John Jones; and in spite of her great surprise, Fanny was totally ready and ripe for the question, answering in the affirmative without hesitation. In this reply the two felt that they had had in the agreement a basis for the

comfort of their lives,...

In the story of the two we see an intellectual mystery coming to light - the association of minds or the influence of thoughts on each other. Each one worked unknowingly on the thoughts of the other. Fanny Edwards thought about John Jones whether in her sight or out of her sight, before ever speaking a word to him, and John Jones thought about Fanny Edwards before he ever spoke a word to her. Indeed we could say that there was some leading from above in guiding them towards one another - touching their thoughts until it produced feelings that inclined them towards each other. It was said - indeed Fanny Jones herself told the story - an amazing little tale about her before she ever saw John Jones. Her father and step-mother were in Caernarfon at the time of the 1822 Session [of the Calvinistic Methodists], and after coming home, they told of a strange man of a preacher, a modest young man who was having tea at the same time as them, and they described him as one full of virtues, and the most pleasant that they had ever had in their company. As she heard this story told, something struck Fanny's mind (though she hadn't seen him) that he would be her husband. From that moment, she couldn't get rid of that idea - it followed her everywhere.

Soon after this, Fanny Edwards heard of the young man's coming to Llanllyfni to preach, and she made a decision to go to hear him and see him. Unfortunately, she failed to fulfil her household duties in time to go to the chapel punctually, and she had to be satisfied to hear a little of him from the door; although she didn't see the preacher, there was something in his voice that touched her heartstrings a little, and for the life of her she couldn't stop thinking that he would be her husband. We see through this that Providence was working in the background and working for her good in preparing the two hearts for each other. From the viewpoint of Heaven, Fanny Edwards was the 'perfect helpmeet', the most suitable from all aspects to help John Jones to prepare himself to be God's messenger, and to deliver with irresistible strength the great message entrusted to him from Heaven.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

MID WALES & BORDER PRESBYTERY

My experiences of 'The Bible Course' by Andrew Ollerton

I often feel inadequate when challenged about my faith, but this course gave me a new found confidence from the outset as we were reminded of the words of Charles Spurgeon, "Scripture is like a lion.

Whoever heard of defending a lion? Just turn it loose and it will defend itself."

It was very encouraging to learn that the Bible remains the World's most popular book with over 400 million copies sold or distributed each year, in addition to millions of downloads.

Despite already having read

the Bible through, I have often struggled to gain a clear grasp of the overall structure. It is amazing to think that it consists of a collection of books written over a period of 1,500 years in three different languages by various authors with vastly different backgrounds. This course helps us to appreciate the harmony and continuity from the beginning in Genesis to the final Book of Revelation. We discover prophecies fulfilled and read of Jesus endorsing the Holy Scriptures with the words, "It is written..."

Addressing a pertinent question often asked in our modern society, "Is Genesis compatible with modern science?" Francis Collins, former head of the Human

Genome Project shares his view that God can be worshipped in a laboratory as well as a cathedral. The God of the Bible is also the God of the genome.

Unable to meet in person, but through the blessings of Zoom, 19 participants from the length and breadth of the Mid-Wales and Border Presbytery have gathered 'virtually' to enjoy this excellent and informative course every Thursday afternoon. It has been a worthwhile opportunity to make new contacts and learn from each other. Revd Monica O'Dea, supported by four others who take turns to lead, has successfully adapted the course into a series of one-hour sessions to suit this new online format. Traditionally, as with its forerunner The Alpha course, the participants would hold longer meetings during which refreshments are shared.

As I am approaching the half-way stage of the course, I look forward to the teaching, discussion time and personal reflection opportunities to come. Some of our group are retired while others are still in employment. Whatever your age, circumstances or level of knowledge, I would recommend this course to you with its clear and engaging resources. There is always something new to discover or a fresh understanding to be gained, even in the most familiar passage.

Ann Dackevych, Tabernacle Chapel, Arddleen

For further details, please contact
monica.odea@ebcpcw.org.uk

The course is based on eight video clips, and individual workbooks, which are available in Welsh and English. If you would like support to run this course in your church, or if you would like to join an ongoing group, contact delyth.oswy@ebcpcw.cymru

Also see The Bible Society Bible Course web-site.

LONDON ROAD, NEATH

One of the elders, Mr Frank Phillips has set up a new web site.

It contains an interesting account of the beginnings of the church in 1880 when five families left the Welsh chapel at Bethlehem Green, and details of the present building that opened in 1904 with its notable Norman and Beard organ. Recent ministers of the church have included Revd W H Steed and Revd Emlyn Jones. Despite many other changes in and around the church over the years, the Royal Mail box on the corner still stands, and remains in use. See:

londonroadpresbyterianchurchneath.co.uk



GOLFTYN



Mrs Phyllis Lewis celebrated her 100th birthday on Monday 8th February, two days after the Queen marked her 70th year as Monarch. Still very much a central figure amongst the close-knit congregation at Golftyn, Phyllis still serves the church as one of its elders. She recalls her family beginning to attend the chapel in Golftyn when she was five years of age. With her late husband, Ted, she has been involved in all the weekly activities over the years. Her lifelong home, Beckwith House is virtually opposite St Mark's Church in Wales where the Golftyn congregation now meet since the decision was made two years ago to sell the chapel building. As her minister, Revd Jonathan Hodgins observed in speaking of her milestone birthday, 'Mrs Lewis' 100th has given all of us something to celebrate after a long and trying year. Her favourite hymn, 'Great is Thy faithfulness' is an ideal one for celebrating God's goodness to Phyllis for over a century.'

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