

*DEC Coronavirus  
appeal*

**Remembering the  
Duke of Edinburgh**

*Ribbons of  
Remembrance*

**Why is nobody  
having the minister  
for lunch anymore?**

***The  
May  
Treasury  
2021***

THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WALES

# NEWSROUND

## **DEC Coronavirus Appeal The extended to include India endorsed by the Presbyterian Church of Wales Life & Witness Board**

**I**n India, a second wave of coronavirus is having a devastating impact. India's health system is struggling to cope, hospitals are overrun and oxygen supplies are falling short of demand.

You can make a difference today by donating to the Disasters Emergency Committee's Coronavirus Appeal.

DEC charities will help by supporting India's health system by setting up temporary Covid hospitals, providing ambulance and medical supplies; putting measures in place to slow the spread of Covid 19 e.g by providing masks, water, soap and hand sanitiser; and they will ensure that the most fragile families have enough food and clean water so that children don't become malnourished.

If you can make a donation, please visit [www.dec.org.uk](http://www.dec.org.uk) or call 0370 60 60 900. Each and every single donation will make a difference, and will be greatly appreciated.

### **News from India**

**T**he following message was received by Mount Pleasant church a few days before Easter. Sadly events in India have worsened, but those who remember John Colney's ministry in Ebbw Vale will appreciate this news of him and his family.

'Thank you for your thoughts and prayers. God has been good to us and we are thankful for His presence. Since returning back to our pastorate after my mother's funeral, which took place on 7th. March, the day after she passed away, we have been busy in our ministry. As we are also constructing our accommodation I have been entrusted with supervising the work and I haven't had much time to be by myself. We have decided to send Kima to a new school in Aizawl which is run by the Mizoram Synod. The entrance test will take place on Saturday, so I took Hmingtei and

our children to Aizawl yesterday evening. I have returned to Bilkhawthlir by myself today as I have a wedding to take tomorrow. I will be joining them in Aizawl after the service. Please pray for Kima.

Sang Sang is in Hebron school in Ooty as their exams are getting near. She is supposed to be home for half term but we have requested the school to make arrangements for her to stay there during half term because if she comes home she will have to spend all her time in quarantine and we won't be able to see much of her. We are waiting for a response from the school.

There have been new cases of covid in different parts of India. In Tamil Nadu where Sang Sang is, schools have been shut again, but as exams are getting near only students taking exams will continue to have classes. Please uphold Sang Sang in your prayers.

Our Government has permitted churches to have two evening services a week, plus morning and afternoon services. We aren't allowed to sing in services yet. Although the restrictions in

Mizoram are relaxed a bit, we are concerned about the safety of the members of our Church.

## **Golftyn's 100 leads the way back to church**

**1**00 year old Mrs Phyllis Lewis was in the forefront in supporting her minister, Revd Jonathan Hodgins in restarting services once again in Golftyn. The



congregation had not met for over a year when the group of regulars returned for an evening service on 2nd May. All present, apart from the minister and his three sons, have received both doses of the Covid vaccine, and there was much delight in meeting for live worship and hearing Brian Cotgreave playing the pipe organ once again.

## Bethesda, Burry Green

**F**rom Sunday 9th May children's activities will resume during the services following the lifting of Covid restrictions. All other regulations will be maintained, including the wearing of face coverings, social distancing, good air flow and a one-way system. Also, from this date and if weather permits, the church plans to hold services outdoors to provide greater protection from the virus. The Chapel App will be used to inform attendees in advance if the service is to be indoors or outside depending on the weather. If we are outside face coverings will be worn, and those attending are invited to bring folding chairs (some spares will be available). Revd Paul Kirby, the minister advises that people wrap up and perhaps bring a hot drink in a flask to keep warm!

Visitors are welcome. Contact Dr Paul Kirby (Tel/Text: 07552 230672 Email: kirby74@btinternet.com).

## Old Walls, Gower

**O**ne of the elders and chapel magazine editor, Eileen Hutin was asked recently about her memories of Sunday School in the 1930's. 'Did your father take you?', she was asked. 'Oh yes!' replied Eileen. And it seems that along with Eileen, her Dad, Will Morgan took almost everyone else as well! The late Muriel Crocker (who later taught at Tasker's School in Haverfordwest and attended Ebenezer in the time of Revd Arwyn Thomas), was heard to say that judging by the number of children on board, his car must have had expanding sides. Eileen says there was no health and safety involved, but a great deal of fun was had on the way! Once there, the fun continued as Mr Morgan took a class of older boys, including at that time, Donald Lewis and Gethin John, while Audrey Williams (celebrating 60 years as an elder), now grown up, led the older girls. Averil Grove had a class of little ones and the ladies were taught by whichever minister had come for the day to take the morning and evening services. As a teenager Eileen remembers being enthralled by the Bible teaching of Revd Professor Rheinallt

Nantlais Williams from Aberystwyth—she wished he could have come every week and remembers with some surprise, that she told him so!

### **Tyddyn Street United Church, Mold**

**E**aster Services this year at Tyddyn Street Church, Mold were again held on zoom. For Easter Day celebration there was a special morning service led by the Minister, Rev Dr Kathryn Price, with communion shared on zoom in the homes of members and friends; and, on Good Friday, the Minister led with a series of meditations.

At and around the church building, the Spring Garden is in flower and some related Easter decoration of the standing arches in the garden was provided by a group of church members, including Helen Bravey, Jill Denholm and Frida Jones. They were the simple black cross for Good Friday to remember the crucifixion and some brightly flowered crosses for the Resurrection and new hope on Easter Day. At present the Tyddyn Street church's plan is to return to services in the building at Whitsun, but with

the services available on zoom as well, making provision for as many as possible.

### **Mount Pleasant, Ebbw Vale**

**T**he Church was reopened on 4th April. It was so good to see the doors opened wide, with Graham Hendy on the steps welcoming everyone and reminding them to comply with the covid regulations. Sadly his companion on the door, Peter Watkins, was unable to be present that morning. We have been blessed with fine weather every week since the Church has reopened, and we have been delighted at the level of attendance, whilst for those unable to be present the services have been broadcast on Zoom. Hopes are that as the situation continues to improve the fellowship will be able to meet more freely.

### **Ribbons of Remembrance**

**M**arch 23rd 2021 saw the first anniversary of the first lockdown for Covid-19. But how to mark this significant and sombre milestone in a meaningful way a year on when in many ways it seems like a lifetime ago? So much has changed in our daily routines and way of living.

The local Cŷtun in Llanidloes and the nearby area thought it would be a good idea if we could have some way of remembering all those who have died as each of us in the town will have been aware of someone who had died or been affected by Covid. As a way of being able to personally recall, recollect and honour those people, it was decided we should have ribbons that we could tie to a special commemorative “prayer net” situated on the rails of the Eglwys Bresbyteraidd in China St. Bilingual posters with reflections are part of the net. A select, but ecumenically representative group, gathered together at 11am on the 23rd - face masks donned and keeping the obligatory social distance - to inaugurate this “memorial” for want of a better word.

Miss Marjorie Corbett, the Chair of CYTUN, spoke of the losses so



many had experienced in this last year and said a prayer for all who had suffered. She emphasised that it was important not only to remember those who had died, but also the much wider group of people who have been affected by loss as a result of this pandemic: loss of loved ones, loss of jobs, loss of status, and so much more. She reminded us that it was also important that we remember those who have died in the front-line care of others.

After a moment of silence and then a prayer, the Mayor of Llanidloes, Mrs Janet Crisp, was asked to tie the first ribbon. The first few ribbons placed there included a prayer from the Llanidloes Quaker Meeting which holds its services in Trinity:

We “hold in the light” all those who have died during the pandemic and all their families who have been bereaved. We also pray for everyone else who have been affected in any way during this difficult time, including those who continue to suffer from long-covid.

Even within a couple of days, those first ribbons have been joined by many more added by

people of all ages, taking the opportunity to pause and reflect and remember a family member or friend or one of the thousands worldwide who have suffered in any way through the Coronavirus. Some have come specially; some have seen the prayer net in passing and stopped to participate - precious prayers said for those we have lost.

We hope others will take time to add many more ribbons to the memorial over the next couple of weeks.

Easter coming reminds us of how good can come out of disaster. As Marjorie Corbett said, "There has already been goodness shown in the way people have shared with others and cared for others during this pandemic. We pray that even more of that will happen throughout the world and people will be able to put real values to the top of their list: care, love and compassion."

### **Pray for Schools**

**D**ick Eastman, through his book *The Hour that Changes the World* has helped many people to deepen their devotional life by outlining a pattern for prayer and

intercession (by dividing an hour into 12 x 5 minute periods of prayer, praise, thanksgiving and intercession.)

During the past few months, we've been given two opportunities to make a difference in the life of Wales' schools and pupils by joining in prayer, not for an hour, but for three quarters of an hour as part of the Prayers for Schools movement (<https://www.prayforschools.org/>). As schools open their doors with pupils, teachers and staff returning after lockdown, the need for every school to be a prayed for school has become more evident.

The three quarters of an hour prayer group is held over Zoom, with people who carry out Christian work in schools, and those who wish to support schools, joining together in prayer. A Welsh language break-out room is available for those wishing to pray in Welsh. In our last meeting on April 14 prayer topics were suggested by a North Wales secondary school head teacher, a person very aware of the worries and difficulties being faced after lockdown. We were

able to pray for the mental health of pupils and teachers, for the assessment system that will replace GCSE and A level exams, for the new Wales curriculum, the Senedd elections and the appointment of a new Education Minister. We also prayed for pupils and staff to be given a new energy in the task of learning and teaching.

The next three quarters of an hour of prayer for our schools will be held on June 23rd, 12.30 – 1.15p.m. Details are in the colophon at the end of this magazine.

## Employment Opportunity



lamorgan/London  
Presbytery  
Ministerial Assistant

We invite anyone interested in supporting Christian and Church work to apply for the post of Ministerial Assistant to serve the Presbyterian Churches within London.

To start: 1 Sept 2021

Hours: 35 hours per week  
Term: 2 years, with the first 6 months being a probationary period.

Salary: PCW Scale 23--27  
£23,950 - £26,056 pro rata with an opportunity to join the PCW pension scheme

Additional offer: A flat provided, and a travel allowance within London.

Candidates should be proficient in Welsh, or committed to learning the language (spoken and written).

This Post is subject to an enhanced DBS check and two satisfactory references.

For further details, please contact Hedd Morgan, Cardiff Office, on 029 2062 7465  
E: [hedd@ebcpcw.cymru](mailto:hedd@ebcpcw.cymru)

Closing Date: 4.00pm on Friday 7th June 2021

## I Am the Good Shepherd



We look forward to welcoming our women – North and South – to this unique opportunity to launch a new theme and resource book on Zoom.

We'll have opportunity to worship together, to hear interviews with some of those who have contributed to the theme book, and to spend time reflecting on the Good Shepherd. Please do join us, and tell others in your church too. Please contact [sarah.morris@ebcpcw.cymru](mailto:sarah.morris@ebcpcw.cymru) for the Zoom link



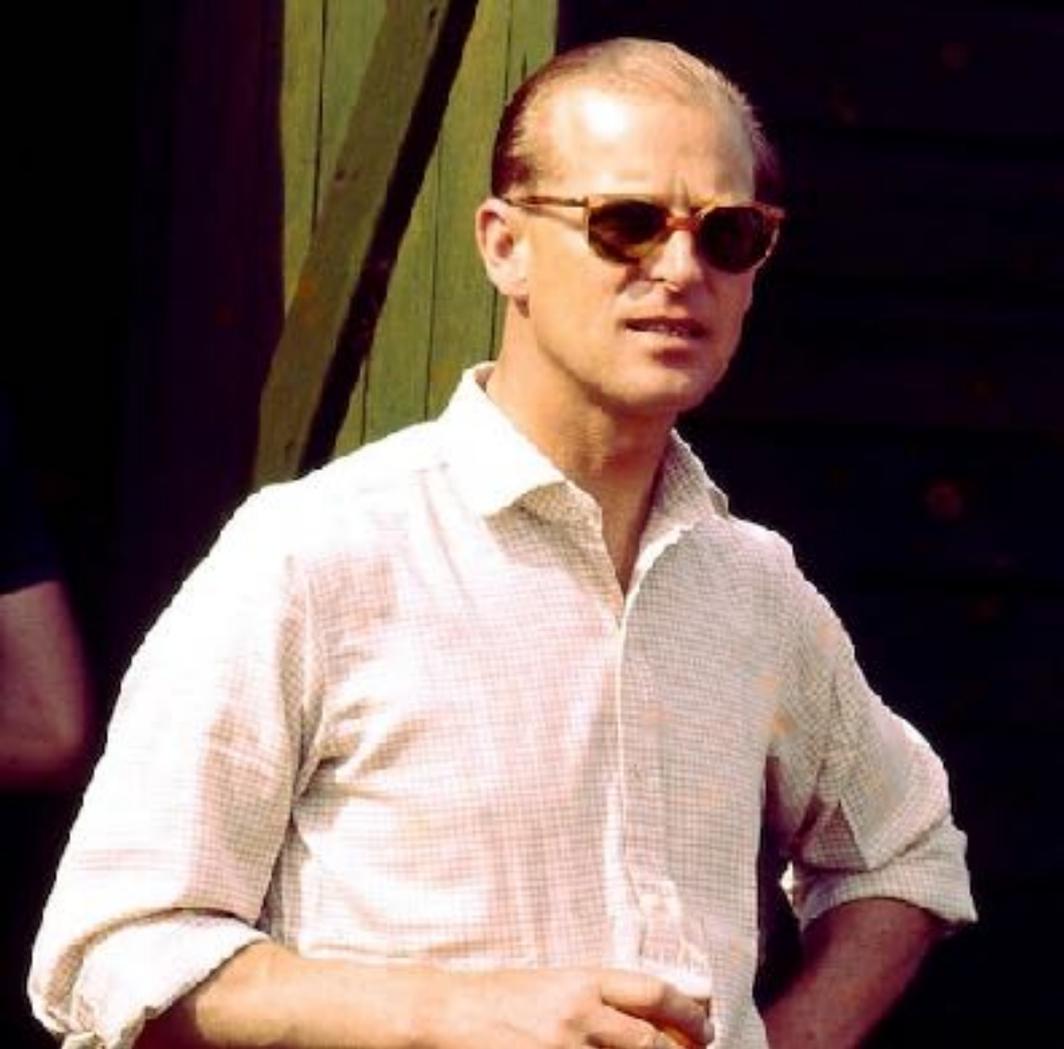
## **Revd W I Cynwil Williams, BA, BD., Cardiff**

**I**t is with sadness that we record the death of Revd Cynwil Williams in Rhyl on 1st May. Aged 84, he was a native of Cwrt y Cadno, and held pastorates at Heol Dwr, Carmarthen, Capel Mawr, Denbigh and Crwys Road, Cardiff where he is remembered as a conscientious pastor. He was ordained in 1962 and served as Moderator of the General Assembly in 1998. It was during his tenure at Crwys Road that the chapel moved to its present location in Richmond Road.

Affectionate and erudite, Cynwil was a popular preacher

throughout Wales. An avid reader of all types of literature, he frequently went about with a book in his pocket or in the small Gladstone-style bag he carried with him to meetings. Amongst his better known writings in Welsh are his biography of the former Archbishop of Wales and later of Canterbury, The Right Revd Dr Rowan Williams (2006) and his memoir of the Welsh poet and editor, Gwilym R Jones (2001). In 1992 Gwasg Pantycelyn published his 222 page Welsh language commentary on Ezekiel.

He is survived by his wife, Carol and three daughters to whom we extend our sympathy.



## In Memoriam - HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

**A**t the end of a long life it is always good to look back to the beginning. Prince

Philip of Greece was born on the 10th of June 1921 on the island of Corfu. His father was Prince Andrew of Greece and his mother was Princess Alice, the eldest child of Prince Louis of Battenberg and sister of Earl Mountbatten of Burma. After a coup d'état in 1922, his father was banished from Greece and the baby Philip's first voyage on a Royal Navy vessel was

in a crib made from an orange box as the family were assisted to safety in Italy. Eventually he came to live with his Mountbatten relatives in England before being sent in 1933 to a school in southern Germany run by educational pioneer Kurt Hahn, who due to the Nazi threat moved the school to Gordonstoun in Scotland. Prince Philip's early life also saw many challenges befall his family and he developed a very self-reliant spirit that gave him great resilience for his future life.

At a time when war was looming, Prince Philip decided on a military career that would set the tone for a life dedicated to the service of his country. Due to the family's seafaring tradition he became a cadet at the Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth, where he graduated top of his year. It was during a royal visit to Dartmouth that the young Princess Elizabeth first cast eyes on him, and the seeds of what became a long and happy marriage were sown.

He went on to distinguish himself in action, becoming the Navy's youngest First Lieutenant. During the Sicily landings whilst coming

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under attack from planes Prince Philip devised a plan to put them off target by creating a wooden raft with explosives on creating the illusion that the ships had been hit. The ruse worked and a senior officer described him as 'courageous and resourceful, a man who thought quickly.' The wartime years had given Prince Philip immense maritime experience and an enjoyment of service with the Royal Navy. In 1946 the Prince proposed to the 20year old Princess Elizabeth and they were eventually married in Westminster Abbey in November 1947. He was created Duke of Edinburgh by King George VI and here in Wales he also became the Earl of Meirioneth.

By 1950 the Prince had attained the rank of Lieutenant Commander and was given his own command based in Malta

where he and Princess Elizabeth could lead the life of a service family far from the requirements of royal duty.

Due to the King's ill health the royal couple were recalled and sent on a royal tour on his behalf. When sadly in February 1952 King George VI died their lives were instantly transformed as the Princess became Queen and Prince Philip, the Prince Consort.

It is difficult to imagine the impact of this great change on the young couple's life. At first it seems that Prince Philip was not sure what was expected of him as Prince Consort but he soon developed the role in a way that served our nation and the wider world with distinction.

Most of all the Duke of Edinburgh knew that his priority was to be a constant and dependable support for the Queen throughout the long years of her reign. During the celebration of their golden wedding anniversary the Queen paid this tribute to the longest-serving royal consort in British history – "He is someone who doesn't take easily to compliments, but he has quite simply been my strength and stay all these years. And I, and his

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whole family, and this and many other countries, owe him a debt greater than he would ever claim or we shall ever know."

A remarkable tribute, and as we consider their 73 years of married life we also reflect on the Queen's personal grief and pray that our Lord grants her strength and comfort at this time.

Her Majesty always knew how saddened Prince Philip had been to leave his naval career to be her faithful consort and on the occasion of his 90th birthday granted him the most senior rank in the Royal Navy – usually reserved for the sovereign – the title of 'Lord High Admiral'. The Duke of Edinburgh's life offers a remarkable example of steadfast Christian service. A very private person in many ways,

he was known for being extremely forthright. He once said in an interview “I’ve just done what I think was my best. I can’t suddenly change my whole way of doing things, I can’t change my interests or the way I react to things. That’s just my style.”

With that in mind I must try not to eulogise for too long because Prince Philip was notoriously intolerant of long sermons. He reportedly once said, ‘the mind cannot absorb what the backside cannot endure’!

In deference to his point of view I will seek to summarise his immense contribution to public life. He had completed over 22,000 solo engagements and delivered over 5,000 speeches. One of Prince Philip’s main concerns was the welfare of young people, and in 1956 that interest sparked the launch of his phenomenally successful Duke of Edinburgh’s Award.

He once said “If you can get young people to succeed in any area of activity that sensation of success will spread over into a lot of others”.

Prince Philip also took a keen interest in industry, visiting factories and becoming patron of

the Industrial Society, now known as the Work Foundation. I once witnessed him visiting a factory where in typical form he wandered off the red carpet and went to chat to some of the workers hiding round the back of the machinery. He was genuinely interested in people and wanted the best for them.

The same behaviour was often exhibited during his military visits. He served as Captain General of the Royal Marines for many years and often insisted on visiting the troops for a chat rather than attending the formal occasions.

Here in Wales he had contributed to the community by several spontaneous visits, such as in the aftermath of Aberfan, when he joined with our nation in marking our losses. He had also served as Chancellor of the University of Wales across four decades.

These reflections are but a flavour of his vast contribution and as we remember this remarkable man we give thanks for all he achieved and pray for strength and vision to continue his spirit of service to all in our community.

“Rest eternal grant unto him O Lord, and may light perpetual shine upon him”.



## The Naval Prayer

**O** eternal Lord God, who alone spreadest out the heavens and rulest the raging of the sea; who hast compassed the waters with bounds until day and night come to an end: be pleased to receive into thy almighty and most gracious protection the persons of us thy servants and the Fleet in which we serve. Preserve us from the dangers of the sea and of the air and from the violence of the enemy; that we may be a safeguard into our most gracious Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth, and her dominions, and a security for such as pass on the seas upon their lawful occasions; that the inhabitants of our Island and Commonwealth may in peace and quietness serve thee our God; and

that we may return in safety to enjoy the blessings of the land with the fruits of our labours and with a thankful remembrance of thy mercies to praise and glorify thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen'

The Last Verse of the hymn "Eternal Father, strong to save..." is always traditionally sung at the end of every service conducted at sea.

*"O Trinity of love and power,  
Our brethren shield in danger's hour;  
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,  
Protect them wheresoe'er they go:  
Thus evermore shall rise to Thee  
Glad hymns of praise from land  
and sea."*

*Revd Marcus Wyn Robinson*



## Providence

**T**he word ‘providence’ is theologically rich and biblical in its teaching though the word is rarely used today. People refer instead to ‘chance’, ‘coincidence’ and ‘fate’; some superstitiously touching wood or even engaging in fortune telling. All our lives, including international affairs, are governed not by impersonal fate but by our Creator God who sustains and directs all that happens. In his wise control of all things, God respects our free agency and never encourages sin. In these articles, I reflect on my life in the light of the Lord’s gracious providence in relation to

the Presbyterian Church of Wales, a denomination which has influenced my life and ministry. Sandycroft

My brother John and I experienced a happy home life; our parents were poor but they loved us dearly. My father worked on the Railway so we lived in Sandycroft, near Queensferry, which was within cycling distance of Chester Station where he was based. In the village there was a parish church, a church school, then the small Presbyterian and Methodist chapels. Before marrying, my parents were Welsh Baptist and Congregationalist but they sent us to the Presbyterian Sunday School and the main

services, despite a small Welsh Baptist cause nearby in Mancot. The Rev J. W. Phillips was a friendly minister. After his wife died, he married a member, Miss Rees who related interesting stories to us in our small week-night children's meetings. I was impressed when she read weekly a chapter describing Mary Jones and her obtaining a Bible from Thomas Charles, Bala. The Sunday School Superintendent was Mr Harris but usually teachers talked about everything in class, except the Bible. Sport was our favourite subject as boys! As a twelve-year-old, I played the organ when no one else was available but I was never impressed by the preaching. One member was a farmer and Cambridge graduate, Mr Llewelyn, who preached at regular intervals. A charming man, he was a notoriously long and boring preacher. There were happy moments like parties or a visit by the Sunday School to a Liverpool Pantomime!

As children, we regarded school days as an interruption! There were more exciting things to do like accompanying our father on his train journeys, waving a flag on the platforms or helping the milk

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man with his horse and cart in delivering milk. My favourite days were delivering bread and cakes with my Uncle in his Co-op van then driving the van, too, from the age of nine in quiet streets as he collected payment from customers. I enjoyed spreading jam and cream on the huge swiss rolls in the Co-op bakery near Mancot then trimming the edges before eating the scraps! Life was exciting!

### **Wilmer Road**

When I was fourteen, our family moved to Birkenhead because my father had gained promotion. Wilmer Road Presbyterian Church, was only a five-minute walk away and my parents became church members there, and at sixteen I, along with my brother, were baptised by sprinkling. It was providential that

the Interim Moderator of our church was the Revd David Edwards, Liverpool from the Foreign Missions office. His missionary experience in India, warm personality and interesting preaching attracted me as no other preacher had done. He was different. His faith was infectious and his passion for the Gospel impressive. Later he lay dying in a Liverpool hospital and asked for the Hallelujah Chorus and Worthy is the Lamb to be played. That impressed us; he was not a mere 'professional' but a genuine lover of the Lord Jesus. Both John and I knew we were not yet Christians though searching. God was at work in his providence. Within months, unexpectedly I felt a strange and direct call to the Christian ministry. It was an overwhelming conviction I could not ignore. Working in industry, my plan had been to return to the police and play soccer.

### **Presbytery**

Soon after receiving this call to the ministry, I shared the fact with the Church Secretary, Tom Gordon, a gracious, kind man who was thrilled with my news, and promised to encourage me. The news was shared with the church who supported my candidature,

then this was relayed to the Lancashire and Cheshire Presbytery. Events moved surprisingly quickly. I was impressed by the care and arrangements made for my call to be tested. Presbytery expected me to preach first in my home church, then in weeknight services in six other churches within the Presbytery when a minister would be present. I remember vividly preaching to a large Wednesday evening congregation on Amos in Hoylake when the Revd Percy Payne was the minister. He and the congregation encouraged me greatly as did other churches like Moreton and others in Liverpool such as St Columba's and Garston. I learned a great deal from the responses of ministers and members in those churches. Receiving these church reports on my preaching, Presbytery agreed I should proceed to the Candidates Board in Shrewsbury to be recognised formally as a ministerial candidate. Presbytery wisely recognised my lack of Bible knowledge and arranged for a local Welsh minister (Revd Aneurin Edwards) to coach me in Bible knowledge. Presbytery's provision was providential and a major help to me.

*Revd Dr Eryl Davies*



## An Open Letter to the Prime Minister

*The following was sent out last month. The letter is now closed for signatures but details of the signatories can be found in the colophon at the end of this magazine. If you would like to pursue this matter, please consider writing to your MP to give your view on vaccine passports, particularly with reference to their usage in*

*churches and Christian organisations).*

April 2021

Dear Prime Minister:

**A**s Christian leaders across a range of denominations, we continue to pray at this time for your government “and all in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity” (1 Timothy 2:2).

However, we write to you concerning an area of the most serious concern, namely the potential introduction into our society of so-called “vaccine passports” which have also been referred to as “COVID-status certificates” and “freedom passes”. We are wholly opposed to this suggestion and wish to make three points about the potential consideration of any scheme of this type.

Firstly, to make vaccination the basis of whether someone is allowed entry to a venue, or participation in an activity, makes no logical sense in terms of protecting others. If the vaccines are highly effective in preventing significant disease, as seems to be the evidence from trial results to date, then those who have been vaccinated have already received protection; there is no benefit to them of other people being vaccinated. Further, since vaccines do not prevent infection per se even a vaccinated person could in theory carry and potentially pass on the virus, so to decide someone’s “safe non-spreader” status on the basis of proof of their immunity to disease is spurious.

**The message we preach is given by God for all people. To deny people entry to hear this life-giving message and to receive this life-giving ministry would be a fundamental betrayal of Christ and the Gospel**

Secondly, the introduction of vaccine passports would constitute an unethical form of coercion and violation of the principle of informed consent. People may have various reasons for being unable or unwilling to receive vaccines currently available including, for some Christians, serious issues of conscience related to the ethics of vaccine manufacture or testing. We risk creating a two-tier society, a medical apartheid in which an underclass of people who decline vaccination are excluded from significant areas of public life. There is also a legitimate fear that this scheme would be the thin end of the wedge leading to a permanent state of affairs in which COVID vaccine status could be expanded to encompass other forms of medical treatment and perhaps even other criteria beyond that. This scheme has the potential to

bring about the end of liberal democracy as we know it and to create a surveillance state in which the government uses technology to control certain aspects of citizens' lives. As such, this constitutes one of the most dangerous policy proposals ever to be made in the history of British politics.

Finally, as Christian leaders we wish to state that we envisage no circumstances in which we could close our doors to those who do not have a vaccine passport, negative test certificate, or any other "proof of health". For the Church of Jesus Christ to shut out those deemed by the state to be social undesirables would be anathema to us and a denial of the truth of the Gospel. The message we preach is given by God for all people and consists in nothing other than the free gift of grace offered in Christ Jesus, with the universal call to repentance and faith in him. To deny people entry to hear this life-giving message and to receive this life-giving ministry would be a fundamental betrayal of Christ and the Gospel. Sincere Christian churches and organisations could not do this, and as Christian leaders we would be compelled

to resist any such Act of Parliament vigorously. We draw your attention to the recent Judicial Review overturning the Scottish Government's ban on public worship, which demonstrates that such disproportionate prevention of the right to worship is a clear infringement under Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights. We cannot see how any attempt to prevent people gathering for worship on the basis of either testing or non-vaccination would not similarly be ruled to be a breach. We agree with those members of Parliament who have already voiced opposition to this proposal: that it would be divisive, discriminatory and destructive to introduce any such mandatory health certification into British society. We call on the government to assert strongly and clearly that it will not contemplate this illiberal and dangerous plan, not now and not ever.

Yours sincerely,

*Rev Dr Jamie Franklin,  
Rev David Johnston,  
Rev Dr William JU Philip, and  
1530 others*



## What do vicars give thanks for?

“More tea, vicar?”

An innocent request that can strike fear in this usually stout heart. But it's an occupational hazard.

### One More Thing

Clergymen in fiction tend to be blundering buffoons. For example, Wodehouse's Revd Stinker Pinker 'constitutionally incapable of walking through the great Gobi desert without knocking something over', or grotesque characters like Blackadder's

Bishop of Bath and Wells who drowns babies in the christening font and then eats them later in the vestry, and the downright dodgy Father Ted Crilly, who swore blind that the collection was 'just resting in his account'!

In this respect the Bishop of Digne is the rarest of fictional characters, a priest who actually lives up to his calling. You will

know him from Les Miserables. Woken in the middle of the night by the police at the door, he is informed that Jean Valjean, a recently paroled criminal, has stolen the church silver from the Bishop's house. Rather than say 'J'accuse', the Bishop rebukes Valjean—

*But my friend, you left so early  
Surely something slipped your  
mind.*

*[at which point the bishop gives  
Valjean two candlesticks.]*

*You forgot I gave these also.*

*Would you leave the best behind?*

Once the police have gone he urges Valjean to make the most of his gift of grace urging him to become an honest man. It is deeply moving and used memorably and to great effect in the evangelism tool, Christianity Explored.

But the Bishop of Digne is unusual for another reason; he is a clergyman who offers hospitality rather than receiving it. A conversation after church recently reminded me of the one time commonplace offer of hospitality to the visiting minister.

**Some were terrible house guests. One came late to our house and laughed when my mother declared that the meat was burnt; another stayed for the weekend and left his underpants on the bedpost**

When I was a child 'Who's having the minister for lunch this week?' was a common question in our church. (A question commonly followed by some wag replying 'not us, we're having beef!'). Quite often our family would be the ones offering hospitality which was good news for me because it meant there would be pudding. Nowadays, it seems, a rare occurrence! So what killed off the visiting minister saying for lunch?

I suppose the chief culprit is the end of the evening service. No Sunday night service means there's no reason for the minister to stay on for a long after the Benediction. A coffee and biscuit in the vestry and a discrete cheque from the treasurer is all that's required.

**we learnt that even the most tiresome afternoon would eventually end with those sweet words, 'well it's been a lovely afternoon, but we'd better get ready for evening service.'**

Even in churches where there is an evening service, most minister's will choose to go home for the afternoon and come back in the evening. It's possible also, that those most acquainted with the idea of offering hospitality are those who are oldest in the congregation and therefore perhaps incapable of doing what they once did.

So what have we lost?

Well, we no longer need to worry about uncomfortable afternoons struggling to make conversation with an odd-bod, lay or ecclesiastical. Ministers don't have to worry about eating food they don't like (I once left broccoli on the side of my plate and my host said she would wait until I had finished it!). Children of those offering hospitality need not worry about 'being on their best behaviour' and church secretaries have one less rota service to worry about.

But there is undoubtedly a loss.

The end of offering hospitality to the visiting minister means we have lost the opportunity to exercise the gift of hospitality. A good visiting minister will be, by

definition, easily pleased. If he is worth his salt he will be friendly and thankful, an ideal person on whom to practice hospitality.

The end of offering hospitality to the visiting minister has also meant the end of the the opportunity to train little people in the art of service. A family with children has plenty of chances to talk about serving, but maybe not many chances to actually serve. Hosting the minister means tidying up for visitors; waiting your turn to share your story, and in so doing learning to listen to someone else. It means squashing in around the table to make room for a guest. And (when I was a child) it meant living with that heart stopping moment when seconds were offered to the visitor first. (I judged many a minister by whether or not he said those five wonderful words 'let the children go first').

‘But hold on’ you say, ‘I remember some ministers, and they were real rotters’. True. Some were terrible house guests. One came late to our house and laughed when my mother declared that the meat was burnt; another stayed for the weekend and left his underpants on the bedpost. Some were dreadful at making conversation, others talked the hind legs of the proverbial donkey. I remember one minister coming back for supper with his wife and not leaving till midnight. But even these – especially these, taught valuable lessons. We learnt patience. We learnt to love the unlovely. We learnt to put up with those who were difficult. Aside from anything else we learnt that even the worst, most tedious things in life eventually come to an end; that even the most tiresome afternoon would eventually end with those sweet words, ‘well it’s been a lovely afternoon, but we’d better get ready for evening service.’

So hospitality can be a chore but as churches stop offering to host the visiting minister, maybe we have lost an opportunity to prove week by week that in showing hospitality to strangers some

people have entertained angels without knowing it.

*Revd Jonathan Hodgins*

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## **THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH: A Poem**

*People come from near and far  
Ready to worship God, a star  
Every waking day is precious  
Sunday especially, more religious  
Best of all we meet a friend  
Young and old they all attend  
Time to bend a knee and pray  
Every pew is used today  
Rejoicing at this time of year  
It's time to celebrate and cheer  
Not think of "bunnies" everywhere.*

*Comfort comes within the walls  
His voice is clear as he calls  
Unknown to some he is everywhere  
Religion is there to help us prepare  
Comfort comes to one and all  
Hymns and prayers and love to all.*

*by Delma Thomas*

## COLOPHON

**DEC: India** *Casia Wiliam is External Relations Manager for the DEC in Wales. She can be contacted on 07973612966 or [cwiliam@dec.org.uk](mailto:cwiliam@dec.org.uk)*

**Pray for Schools** *Catrin Roberts authors this article. If you would like to take part, go to [www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/pray-for-schools-wales-prayer-zoom-tickets-150917758077](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/pray-for-schools-wales-prayer-zoom-tickets-150917758077)*

**Duke Of Edinburgh** *This is an extract from some of the reflections prepared by the Reverend Marcus Wyn Robinson, Moderator of the General Assembly and Chaplain Royal Navy for a ‘Celebration’ service broadcast on Radio Wales on Sunday 11th April 2021.*

**The Naval Prayer** *Extracted from an address delivered on Radio Wales by Revd Marcus Wyn Robinson, RN on Sunday 11th April two days after the death of Prince Philip.*

**Providence** *Revd Dr Eryl Davies lives in retirement in Cardiff after a lifetime of Christian ministry pastoring churches in Maesteg and Bangor, serving after that as Principal of ETCW, Bridgend. Photograph: The former Presbyterian Church in Sandycroft, Deeside, Editors own.*

**Letter to the Prime Minister** *Details of the signatories can be found at [vaccinepassportletter.wordpress.com](http://vaccinepassportletter.wordpress.com)*

**The Visiting Minister** *Revd Jonathan Hodgins lives in Mancot. He cares for four churches in Flintshire and Chester and is a community chaplain. Photograph: Advert for Ceylon Tea, Editors own.*

**Acrostic** *Thanks to the folk at Llanidloes for this submission*