

the September **TREASURY** 2023

MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WALES



BREAKTIME'S OVER!

Many readers will be feeling sorry to say goodbye to summer. After long sunny days spent relaxing in the garden or at the beach the thought of getting back to work can be tough. Like a sleepy teenager we may feel we want to ask for 'five more minutes' before rolling back over in bed.

Respectfully we invite readers to wake up! For this is perhaps the busiest, most significant time of the year. Between September and January our churches will have at least half a dozen opportunities to work with our communities. Christmas is the obvious one of course, but we also have Remembrance, Halloween and All

Saints Day, Fireworks night and Harvest. We can partner with other groups at this time of year. Tear Fund hold their Big Quiz Night on October 7 and Safeguarding Sunday will be held this year on November 19th.

Most readers will be involved formally, or informally in church leadership meaning they have opportunity to shape how their churches and communities mark these occasions.

May we take this opportunity to encourage our readers to take their opportunity by beginning to plan for these events for the good of those in your community and the glory of God.

PHOTO:
Adobe Images



NEWS FOR THE CHURCHES

ASSOCIATION IN THE EAST

The next meeting of the Association will take place in The Crescent, Newtown on Wednesday 4th October commencing at 10:30am (with coffee/tea from 10:00am) In the evening an ordination service will be held, when Mrs Rebecca Lalbiaksangi. (Montgomery) will be ordained to the ministry at 7pm. All are invited to the evening service.

MESSY CHURCH, CAERSWS

Who says you can't try something again? Several years ago, Revd Jenny Garrard started a Messy Church in Caersws when she was their Minister.

This summer saw its return thanks to a joint effort by Cytûn. A group from the churches in Caersws got together to plan and prepare a great afternoon for the families who came to Caersws

Presbyterian Church on Monday 21st August, themed around the story of The Good Samaritan. Once registered, families went through to the Sanctuary where the first task was to find the hidden labels to decorate paper bags (useful for collecting craft items made) with a cartoon version of the story. There was also the chance to make their own proper name badge.

Next it was back into the hall to choose from a variety of craft activities all related to the theme: Walk the narrow ravine from Jerusalem to Jericho leaving behind painted footprints and hand prints (very messy!); Make a 3D donkey; learn first aid; decorate biscuits, or craft friendship bracelets. There was even a bit of magic – making paper hands unfold to reveal a secret message by floating them on water.

Back into the Sanctuary, after an action song the Revd Peter Pike, a retired Anglican, led everybody through the story which everyone enjoyed tremendously. The cartoon video shown afterwards reinforced all that Peter had said. After singing the Superman Grace everyone returned to the hall, ready for the final activity – a Bring and Share Picnic.

All in all, it was a lovely afternoon enjoyed by all – children, parents and helpers. Revd Monica O'Dea, said:

“It was such a happy event and everything went so smoothly. Each and every person brought their valuable time and gifts to the event and we praise God for answering our prayers for all to go well. Let's keep praying for the seeds we have planted to grow with God's help.”

Jacqui Bebb writes: The event helped to reinforce links made through Cook with Church Club in the local Primary school as well as forge new links and we now have contact details for most of the families who attended who are keen to know when our next event will be.

We have a photo montage video of the event on our Pastorate YouTube Channel if you'd like to see what went on – a Google Search for Llandinam Area Pastorate YouTube Channel should find us.

HOW MANY A4 SHEETS?

In a recent meeting of the Northern Presbytery held at Mold on 13th September, Revd Mike Smith asked those present whether the Presbytery Year Book should become a paperless



document in future. Surprisingly, there was a strong swell of opinion that an actual paper copy was preferable for many. One minister told how he takes it with him on holiday, and one of the Clerks spoke of the ease of simply flicking through the pages to unearth addresses and the like. Despite the drive towards becoming a Greener presbytery, the overwhelming decision was to continue to print fewer actual copies. And whilst the Presbytery doesn't use three million pages to print the Year Book, a poster in Waverley station, Edinburgh seen next day, by one of those present, is a reminder of the amount of paper that Organisations generate.

THE END OF AN ERA

Sadly, on Sunday 13th August, Yandro chapel closed its doors for the last time. It went not with a whimper or a bang but a superb celebration of God's praise in the form of a Sankey evening led with great humour and thoughtfulness by Philip Watkins. Many well-known hymns, all from the old Sankey book were chosen, starting with What a Friend we



have in Jesus and Guide me O
thou great Jehovah and finishing
aply with God be with you till we
meet again.

Interspersed with the hymns were
poems and memories of former
events such as Sunday School
outings and Anniversary services.
Rachael recalled these in part of a
poem she wrote for the occasion:

*Children scrubbed and dressed up
smart
Anniversary day, my favourite part.
Weeks of practice came to this
On the stage - shaking we would sit.*

*Recitations read; duets & solos sung
We would all do our part
Bread of Heaven the final song
Within these walls the memories hung.*

The former Sunday School
members paid tribute to the
dedication and devotion of the
two Anns who have worked so
hard over the years to keep the
chapel alive and worshipping and
they were presented with gifts.
The Revd Robert Bebb, Moderator
elect of the Mid Wales & Border
Presbytery, formally closed the
church as part of the service,

recalling its history dating back to
Howell Harris.

Whilst the building only dates
from 1840, a fellowship in the area
goes back to the days of Howell
Harris in 1740 in the Pencraig/
New Radnor district. One of the
early leaders was a James
Beaumont an exhorter who was
almost fatally beaten by a mob –
there is a Court case in Presteigne
which speaks of a Riotous Assault
in Penybont in 1740.

The chapel itself, one room with
electricity now, but still no
running water, was built in 1840
and the same year a pamphlet was
published explaining the reason
for its construction:

.... that the neighbourhood might
enjoy the advantages of divine
worship and have a place of
education for their children.
T. Evans Esq kindly tendered
ground on his premises at Yardro
– this is a most eligible situation
being at the junction of four roads.
It is calculated that a small chapel
may be constructed in the place
for £100 – the inhabitants (most

of whom are small farmers or cottagers) have promised about £20. The same amount is expected from friends of the cause near and at a distance

The chapel was built following this appeal. It has had several Ministers over the years. In 1925 the membership was recorded as 22. Some years ago, Revd Brian Reardon became Part-Time Minister of the Builth Wells pastorate and gradually extended his responsibilities from Llangammarch Wells to Kenchester and taking in Yardro. He was tireless and unwavering in his commitment and working for the churches in his charge and beyond, but sadly with only four members, some of whom already worship in the local church as well, it is time to close the doors on this lovely little chapel in the middle of nowhere. Those four roads are all now single-track lanes with few passing places. Nevertheless, Yardro chapel went out in style, packed with people of all ages who had come to say their farewells. As is often the case when a church closes, the comment is made that if only those who came to the closing service would make the effort to come the rest of the year it would not need to close; but the people who came did not come out of loyalty to a building; their presence was a testimonial to the real church of Yardro, the people, and the seeds they have sown will not be lost. The legacy of Yardro, like the memories, will forever remain.

The service was a fitting end to all the chapel had achieved for the Lord over the years and there was already talk of another Sankey Evening next year in the church.
Jacqui Bebb

LLANDINAM AREA PASTORATE

A sunny afternoon in early September saw a good turnout for the second of our biannual Joint Pastorate Services in 2023. This time we were being hosted by Caersws and there was a very good turn out with all the eight churches of the Pastorate being well represented. The theme of the service was 'Service' and included some good old-fashioned hymns given a new twist with guitar accompanied duets. Full use was made of the now well-established audio-visual system: as well as the hymns being up on both screens and PowerPoint being used to illustrate the sermon, a video interview of the longest serving elder in the Presbytery, Mr Gwilym Evans MBE, a member of Caersws, was played. Gwilym is in his 62nd year of Eldership and still continues his faithful service with humility and dedication as the interview showed. He was a founding member of the Caersws Cytûn and his MBE was awarded for services to the local community.

Revd Monica O'Dea, our Minister, in her sermon, paid tribute to him and all the Elders in the Pastorate for their work, not only in their own churches, but throughout the Pastorate. She talked also of the importance of service which we as church members can all do, not only in our congregations but in the wider community - no matter how small or trivial it may seem to us; for as Zechariah reminds us it is not by our might or power, but by God's Spirit that great things are achieved for the Gospel. Afterwards, we moved into the schoolroom for a Bring & Share Tea which was superb, not only

for the quality and quantity of the food, but for the joyous fellowship with which it was shared. As Gwilym's 60th year as an Elder fell during the Covid lockdown, there had not been much celebration of the event; so, it was with great delight, and surprise that he cut the cake, made especially for the occasion by Gwyneth Jones from Llandinam. During the interview which we watched, Gwilym was asked about his hopes for the future, to which he replied:

"My hope for the future is that the church will be here for many years to come. I know this will be a challenge, but if we continue to pull together, be open minded and move with the times, AND with the help of prayer, I'd like to think there will always be a witness and fellowship here..." And we can all say Amen to that!

Jacqui Bebb

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WALES Ministries Department South West Wales Presbytery

Minister of Presbytery

**(There is an opening for a calling to a Pembrokeshire Pastorate, to possibly enhance to a Full Time role)*

The Ministries Department of the Presbyterian Church of Wales is looking to appoint a Presbytery Minister to look after a specific group of churches, providing training and equipping the elders of the Presbytery and assist on the Ministry and Mission Plan of the Presbytery.

Hours: 17.5 hours per week.*

Contract: 3yrs with the first 6 months being a probationary period.

Salary: £29,729 - £31,479 pro rata band 31-35, which could go up to £32,026-£34,216 pro rata, band 36-40 depending on qualifications and experience.

There will be an opportunity to join the PCW Pension Scheme

Location: Working from home however the post holder may be required to carry out work from other locations from time to time.

This post is subject to a detailed DBS disclosure and two satisfactory references.

A Christian Occupational Requirement applies to this post.

For more information, and for an application form, please contact:-
e-mail –

Shanta.Rupalia@ebcpw.cymru
02920 627465

Closing date : 4pm, 6th October 2023.

South East Wales Presbytery

Wellbeing Coordinator

The South East Wales Presbytery is keen to appoint a Wellbeing coordinator to Lead and coordinate the wellbeing initiatives of the South East Wales Presbytery.

Hours: 17.5 hours per week.

Contract: 3yrs with the first 6 months being a probationary period.

Salary: 22-26 on the PCW salary scale (£24,727 - £26,950 pro rata), which could increase to band

27-31 depending on qualifications and experience.

There will be an opportunity to join the PCW Pension Scheme

Location: Working from home however you will be required to carry out work from other locations from time to time.

This Post is subject to a detailed DBS disclosure and two satisfactory references. A Christian Occupational Requirement applies to this post.

For more information, and for an application form, please contact:- e-mail – Shanta.Rupalia@ebcpw.cymru tel – 07787 522904/ 02920 627465

Closing date : 4pm, 6th October, 2023.

South East Wales Presbytery

Clothing Ministry Manager

The South East Wales Presbytery is looking to appoint a Clothing Ministry manager to manage the staff, partnerships and processes of Carmel Community Clothing and to expand its work into the whole of the geographical area represented by the South East Wales Presbytery.

Hours: 17.5 hours per week.
Contract: 3yrs with the first 6 months being a probationary period.
Salary: 22-26 (£24,727- £26,950 pro rata) on the PCW salary scale on the PCW salary scale.

There will be an opportunity to join the PCW Pension Scheme.

Location: This post is a combination of working from home, from offices in Pontypridd and from other locations across SE Wales.

This Post is subject to a detailed DBS disclosure and two satisfactory references.

A Christian Occupational Requirement applies to this post.

For more information, and for an application form, please contact:- e-mail – Shanta.Rupalia@ebcpw.cymru tel – 07787 522904 / 02920 627465

Closing date: 4pm, 6th October, 2023.

GARDEN VILLAGE

The first weekend in September was a very special one for Bethel, as a packed church supported and rejoiced with church secretary Mr Peter Williams, as he was commissioned to administer the sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism. The uplifting and joyous service was led by Moderator Rev Dr Mike Ward. Presbytery Moderator Mr Bryn Williams delivered a thought provoking sermon Singing was accompanied by Mr Richard Lake.

Thanks to all for helping to celebrate this occasion, the Holy Spirit really did fill our church.

A slightly nervous Peter led his first communion service and welcomed three new members to Bethel including one teenage girl. We are truly blessed with the way our Lord is leading us, and we give him the Praise. Hallelujah, Amen.
Janet Davies



Reverend Professor Rheinallt Nantlais Williams, MBE, MA

Among my possessions since my parents passed away in 1999/2001 are all the family papers, which include many relating to Rheinallt Nantlais Williams, who was the minister at Tabernacle chapel in Whitchurch, Cardiff, the Presbyterian chapel where my

brother and I were christened and began Sunday School, now the Office of the Presbyterian Church of Wales.

These include papers and photographs relating to Rheinallt himself, but also some sent to my

*Induction of Mr
Rheinallt N.
Williams B.A. to
The Tabernacle,
Whitchurch 27
Sept. 1939.*



family, because both grandparents, Iorwerth John Howells and his wife Elen, and my father (Iorwerth Howells) were all elders at Tabernacle Chapel in Whitchurch and my father was the pipe organist. My grandparents also nursed Rheinallt through severe illness before WW2, so he was a family friend.

My brother Cenydd was his first christening in November 1939 (Cenydd Iorwerth Howells), his first name being suggested by Crwys (1875-1968), the Welsh poet who lived close to us. He studied law at Cambridge and became a senior lawyer at Lincoln's Inn and on the Wales and Chester circuit, but he passed away in 2008. I came soon after, in April 1941, and was named Susan Jane Howells, Jane being a historic name in my grandmother's family.

We attended chapel at Tabernacle as soon as possible and Sunday School, which was managed by

Margaret, my father's sister, who was a trained teacher.

The papers in my care include Rheinallt's induction service at Tabernacle on 27 September 1939, presided over by the Rev. Howell Williams, moderator of Glamorgan Presbytery East, and also a small booklet given to me, and to my brother, by 'Uncle Rheinallt'. It contains hymns, the Lord's Prayer, the New Testament, and also guidance about where to find help, and what Jesus taught about life's problems. The preface by Franklin D. Roosavelt from the White House in Washington said that this book would be important for every soldier and is called 'A Sacred Token'. It is 5 inches tall, 3 inches wide, and ½ an inch thick.

Other things among the papers are photographs of people and children at Tabernacle and postcards from Rheinallt to my family when he was in Italy and North Africa as Chaplain of the 8th Army.

From left to right on the back of the photo.
 Rev. Harold Davies, St David's Church, Pontypridd;
 Rev. R.M. Roberts, Plas Newydd Church, Cardiff;
 Rev. William Nantlais Williams, Bethany, Ammanford;
 Rev. John Roberts, Pembroke Terr. Cardiff;
 Rev. John Viner (ex pastor)



In 1946 our family moved to Carmarthenshire when my father was appointed Director of Educations after WW2. We moved to Nantgaredig in the Tywi valley, five miles from Carmarthen town. Cenydd and I started school in Welsh-speaking Nantgaredig primary school and we attended Sunday School at Nantgaredig Chapel. Welsh was not strange because it was the first language of my father's family, but we also started attending Zion Chapel in Carmarthen, which used English language, because my mother did not have enough Welsh, and my father became pipe organist at Zion.

After we moved to Carmarthenshire we met and became known by Nantlais Williams (1874-1959), Rheinallt's father who was the minister of Bethany, Ammanford from 1901-1944, and also saw our 'Uncle Rheinallt' frequently. We also followed Rheinallt becoming Principal of the Theological

College in Aberystwyth. This college building was attached to the old University College which dates from 1872, and when I decided to come to Aberystwyth to study History, stayed on to do a PhD and teach, I was often invited for tea on Sundays with Rheinallt's family.

In his latter years, my father became a member, like myself, at Bath Street Church, Aberystwyth. Rheinallt died in 1993.

As I know a lot about archives and their importance, I shall ensure that all these papers and photographs will be deposited in a safe place, such as the National Library of Wales.

Dr Susan J Davies

Second line from the left, namely those seated in the front row;
Mr Ivor Jones (elder) Clifton St. Church, Cardiff;
Rheinallt Williams, The Tabernacle, Whitchurch;
Rev. Howell Williams, Memorial Hall, Canton, Cardiff



SOULED OUT 2023

I'd love to share some of my highlights from attending Souled Out this summer - a five-day event in Coleg y Bala, jam packed with exciting activities, opportunities to worship together and grow a closer relationship with God.

The theme this year was 'Freedom', which touched on how God has set us free through the gift of his Son Jesus Christ. This Souled Out was especially important, as it landed a week before my baptism. It gave me the opportunity to grow even closer to God before my baptism, and give the week to reflect and thank him for the work he had done in my life since giving my life to Christ. Souled Out has also provided me with a safe place to have fun with friends, ask questions about my

faith and feel welcomed by everyone!

One of my personal highlights of the week was being able to bring my friend along and seeing her grow in faith. Watching her confidence grow by being so welcomed by the Souled Out community was amazing! Seeing how God worked in her life throughout the week, along with many more individuals was truly inspiring. Additionally, hearing individual's personal testimonies and experiences of how God has shaped their lives reminded me of how God truly can change lives.

Worshipping together is always my favourite part about Souled Out. The atmosphere is absolutely incredible, and being able to worship together freely where

there is no judgement, creates an indescribable experience. Souled Out offers the ability to praise God with like-minded people who love worshipping God. It was so powerful to see how God was working through everyone individually in the worship, especially in the after-hours session 'Deeper' which was a special opportunity to spend more time worshipping God.

The sessions were another highlight that enabled us to dive deeper into the theme of 'Freedom', where the speakers were able to explain the theme from the Bible and use different experiences and challenges from within our day to day lives. Personally, I also benefitted from the small groups held after the main talk, to discuss the questions and subjects that had been brought up by the speaker. It also gave me the opportunity to ask questions when I didn't understand something.

Another highlight of the week were the different activities that were so much fun! They gave me the chance to get to know the new people that had come for the first time and build a closer relationship with my other friends whilst enjoying some fun games. Different options were also available such as, playing in the annual Souled Out football game or having a chilled afternoon in a local café filled with crafting activities. Throughout the week we visited a trampoline park, went bowling, had a hog roast and danced the night away on the annual Souled Out dance floor with chocolate covered strawberries only to name a few things!

Being able to experience how God was moving in individual lives in Souled Out was truly a blessing. Watching people be set free and learning that by Jesus' sacrifice we have been set free from all guilt and comparison was amazing. I learnt that God loves us all equally and no one is better or worse; we are free and loved people by God.

Since coming to Souled Out, my life has completely changed. I have made friends for life and it was also the place where I gave my life fully to Jesus. To be able to come back every year is truly a blessing especially this year before I was baptised! Souled Out has been essential to the growth and depth of my faith, along with providing me with some of the best memories and lifelong friends supporting me through my Christian life. Souled Out gives you the opportunity to challenge your faith, have fun with amazing people and provides answers to any questions. I would highly recommend that you come and experience the best 5 days of the summer! It's too good to miss out on and I cannot wait for Souled Out 2024!!

Beca Davies is a student from Llanddewi Brefi.

For more information about this work with older youth and young adults, please contact Meryl Walters in Coleg y Bala for a chat on 01678 520565 or email info@souledoutcymru.net



Arranged by
Women's Committee

Contact the office for a link
01678 520 065

eirian.roberts@ebcpw.cymru

Wisdom for the day

Wednesday at 1.30
on zoom

Sept 27
October 11,25
November 8,22
December 6



FEAST DAYS

Have you ever been invited to someone's home or to a restaurant for a meal and you can't wait to go because you know you're in for a treat?

That's the kind of feeling the group who meet on Zoom for the Bible Studies get as we look forward to our time studying God's word together.

We began to meet during Covid, and we've carried on since then because we've had an appetite for more!

We've followed several series by now: we were encouraged as we studies the Psalms; challenged when considering women who encountered Jesus personally and inspired through our study of the Lord's Prayer. Every session follows the same pattern with time to look closely at the verses under

consideration, time to share our experiences in smaller groups and time to respond in worship through song.

A new series is starting on **September 27th at 1.30pm, and then fortnightly**, and we'll be looking at the book of **Proverbs**.

Our hope is that we'll be well fed, enjoy fellowship and grow to know the Lord better. If you'd like to join us, and a very warm welcome is guaranteed, **please contact Eirian Roberts for the Zoom link.**
eirian.roberts@ebcpw.cymru /
01678520065

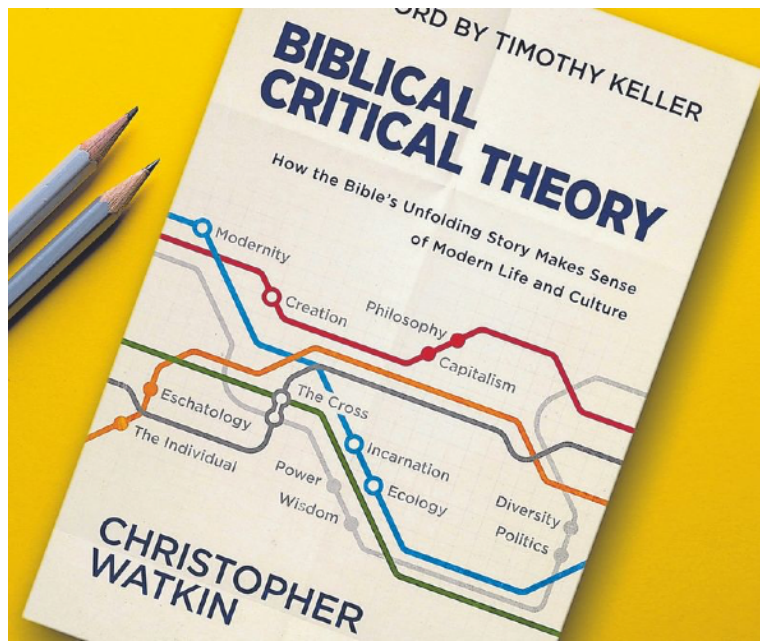


Holiday Reading

I am sure that some of you will think that there is something strange about the title of this little contribution. You might be tempted to ask, how is it that someone who has retired can talk of 'holiday' reading, is not life now a 24/7 holiday? I will merely respond by noting that I am the husband of someone who is in full-time employment and so the description applies to Sarah's holiday, with me in tow. Mind, after announcing mid-way through the break that I had finished a particular volume, her response was: 'Well, you might find time to talk to me now'! Ouch!

The volume in question was entitled *Biblical Critical Theory*, and in the foreword by the late Tim Keller it is a response to that attempt generally in 'critical theory to make visible the deep structures of a culture in order to

expose and change them... to not just accept what a culture says about itself, but also to see what is going on beneath the surface'. Amongst all the talk, especially in America and in Europe of particular worldviews, this volume holds that the Bible itself offers us the opportunity to both critique and appreciate these worldviews, while preventing us from being captured and co-opted by them. As an aside, I read an interesting comment by James Eglinton in the introduction to his translation of *Personality and Worldview* by J.H. Bavinck which suggest an insight into why worldview has not had much traction in a British context. He notes: 'Empires are not founded on admissions of arbitrariness or terms that point beyond themselves in a way that worldview gestures toward the heft of other worldviews. By



necessity, an empire needs to be the only show in town.’

Returning to *Biblical Critical Theory* one of the things that struck me was the effect of our understanding of being created in the image of God has on our whole response to both critical theories in general, and our understanding of who we are in particular. As you will know, the creation account in Genesis tells us: “Let us make man in our image, ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.’ (Genesis 1:26-27) Whereas with respect to plants, trees, vegetation, sea and land creatures are created ‘according to their kinds’ this phrase is missing in the creation of people. This is not to say that humans are utterly unique, we share much in common with fellow creatures, we breathe, eat and reproduce like them. We are creatures, and we are of the dust of the ground, not created from a meteor or divine fairy dust, but from ‘....good honest

muck... If he had a nickname, Adam could easily be referred to as Soily McSoilface’. But, it is also clear that we are particular, set apart, ‘in the image of God’.

Trying to understand this phrase, and what distinguishes us, has been the food and drink of philosophers and thinkers across the centuries. Some have sought to talk of this uniqueness in terms of our ability ‘to understand’, our ‘free agency’, our ‘economic cast of mind’, our ability to ‘improve ourselves’ or our ability to ‘sympathise with all sentient beings’. Mind you, Darwin would have none of it, claiming that ‘the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, certainly is one of degree and not of kind’.

Now, in case this contribution becomes an essay, something which I am not qualified to offer, I will just focus on the phrase, ‘image of God’, and specifically the two elements – image and of God.

The image of God motif hits the reset button both for those who think of themselves of supreme worth and for those who think of themselves of

With respect to the first element, image, Christopher Watkin notes that 'we are not self-contained, that we are not the final reference point for our own lives'.

In Issues facing Christians Today John Stott takes up this truth. He notes that human-beings are not 'self-explanatory.... We are not autonomous individuals, creating ourselves by the decisions and choices we make. No, we are images, we are reflections. The dignity of our humanity is derivative; it comes from Him whose image we bear...'

This understanding of 'image' both preserves us from thinking too highly of ourselves and takes away the burden of trying to define ourselves. This is a created given, not something we seek to attain or something which we could lose. '... this is good news....for a society where not presenting the perfect self-image is seen as personal failure and a lack of resolve, with all the attendant stress and mental health problems with which such an impossible standard of self-definition burdens us.'

The element 'of God' also is an incredible antidote to thinking too little of ourselves. While Paul speaks of all creation bearing witness to God, and while we see in sunsets, in mountains and valleys, in flora and fauna that witness to God's power and majesty, yet, the Bible says that it is only humans that reflect the image of God. We are not gods, but from the lowliest to the greatest, we have this dignity, a realisation that has spurred and guided exceptional Christian witness and service throughout the centuries.

'The image of God motif hits the reset button both for those who think of themselves of supreme worth and for those who think of themselves of small worth.'

For us, day by day we are forced to acknowledge that the 'image' has been marred and shattered by our sin and rebellion, but, praise God, not annihilated. Despite the consequences of how we are, the reality of who we are both ensures a personal humility and assurance, while at the same time ensures that our outward focus in serving is both realistic and optimistic. Beyond the day by day, we also look to the 'end of days', that realisation that the creation which was marred by sin, the creation that groans is a creation which will be renewed, when Jesus, who is described as 'the image of the invisible God', the one in whom 'all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell', will redeem all of creation. In that day, and only in that day fully:

*'When rejoicing in His presence,
when are banished grief and pain;
when the crooked ways are
straightened, and the dark things
shall be plain.*

*Face to face! O blissful moment!
Face to face – to see and know;
face to face with my Redeemer,
Jesus Christ, who loves me so.*

*Revd Meirion Morris is the former
General Secretary of the Presbyterian
Church of Wales.*

Spending the day with ABS ORR



What's your morning routine?

I will start off by saying: I am not a morning person. Usually, Nate gets up with the kids,

which is pretty early as they are 2, 4 & 6 years old. I am slow to wake up but once I'm up I'm usually straight to house chores or making the kids breakfast (I'm very much an on or off kind of person). Currently as a family we are reading through John's gospel, so we will read a little together over breakfast. Then whoever's working "at the office" will whizz off to get ready and whoever's working "at the home" will sort kids for the day. At the moment we home educate the kids so our week is divided 50/50 between work and home educating; its kind of a tag team system.

Where's the best place to go in Treforest to go for a coffee?

Honestly I quite like a coffee at home. We got gifted a coffee machine from neighbours about nine years ago and it's still going strong! Although if we're in Pontypridd town meeting someone it's gotta be a Zuccos.

What's the highlight of your working week?

That would have to be "Cwtsh" our Thursday Warm Space/community café. We took a break over summer, and I think we've all missed that connection with our locals and with artists and makers who

we've been journeying with for the past few months. "Cwtsh" is the place where some of my best conversations of the week happen. In addition to the Cwtsh would be whatever event is happening that week (Gallery, book launch, gig, open mic) tends to be the highlight of my week too. Seeing people blessed, seeing community built.

Tell us about your midweek meeting?

We moved house and county in January so although we have a new church we've yet to find a home group that fits with our week and our lifestyle. On Sundays we attend a church local to home which gives us a really restful slow sabbath which we are always grateful of. Our church has strong bible teaching; currently we are pressing into prayer and looking at 2 Chronicles 7:14 together as a body.

Who are you walking with in your local ministry?

In our previous church we walked closely with our neighbours and another family just down the road. I am still close with both these ladies and find comfort and support in sending (and receiving) voices messages of encouragement and meeting when we can. We also have a few couple-friends who we meet with monthly, share life and pray together/for one another.

Do you prefer a book at bedtime or fall asleep clutching your phone?

I generally try to put my phone down when I head to bed. I am a big book fan; when I read a book, I get pretty locked in, usually I can't put it down until I'm finished. Most nights I will try and read at least a little of my Bible before falling asleep.

Abs Orr works at Parc Arts with her husband Nate as part of the PCW Pioneer Ministry programme.



PUNDITS FOLLY

Reading Jonathan Eig's new biography of Martin Luther King one can't help but believe that at certain times a man or woman can come along who seems to embody, shape and even change the course of history.

Over the course of his life Martin Luther King found himself contending with, not only a nation, but the most powerful nation on earth. He confronted bus companies, education boards, state legislatures and eventually the federal government. Perhaps his greatest achievement though, was to wrestle with the consciences of millions of ordinary men and women and ask them to think again, not only about race or civil rights, but about history, responsibility, the nature of man and how one truly

changes not just the law, but the mind of a human being. Here are a few things Martin Luther King teaches us as Christians.

MLK shows us that the Christian is more than his mind

MLK understood better than many Christians that humans are more than their minds. In our Presbyterian tradition many hours are spent in theological colleges training leaders to think. Hours are spent on language study and apologetics and systematic and biblical theology. In our churches we encourage bible study and emphasise preaching and teaching the Bible. This is good and important. However, MLK would argue that we need to work also, on our character.

"Intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that's the goal of true education... If we are not careful, our colleges will produce a group of close-minded, unscientific, illogical propagandists, consumed with immoral acts. Be careful, 'brethren!' Be careful, teachers!"

Intellect is useful but can lack nuance. Character is more sensitive. In MLK's day it was possible to argue intellectually to keep black and white people 'separate but equal'. But character spotted the dreadful injustice of this policy. It was character that could not rest alongside injustice.

MLK shows us that the Christian is more than his church family

MLK wrote:

"the black man represses his emotions, puts up with discrimination as he is segregated and shunted into inferior housing and schools and closes his ears to the names he is called. On Sunday, these emotions burst forth. He shouts 'Amen! He sings and stamps feet, partly from joy at his freedom in his own church, partly from then. row of his experiences. For many blacks, religion has probably provided a safety valve against insanity or rebellion. But there's a danger in this isolationism, too. It can become as empty a form as any other. I often say to my people that if we had as much religion in our hearts and souls as in our in our legs and feet, we could change the world."

We ought to like our church family. We should feel like we have freedom to express ourselves and be ourselves in our church family. But MLK is right, we should not stop there. Our Sunday self is our true self. It should not be hidden in

the week and revealed on the Lord's Day. If we believe in justice and righteousness and the freedom that comes through the gospel our hearts and souls and legs and feet should be active seven days a week. Society tells us that religion should be kept to ourselves. MLK would not agree, nor would the prophets, nor should you.

MLK shows us that violence cannot win

When a member of the American Nazi Party jumped on stage and punched MLK in the face the preacher responded — 'help him back to his seat, let's pray for him'. Many people were amazed and moved by his grace. But as time went on, as tear gas canisters were thrown at crowds of peaceful protestors; as dogs were released on children; as men were imprisoned and women were raped, some of those protesting began to reject the theory of non-violent protest.

Violence seemed natural even (as Malcolm X was arguing) a positive reaction. Let strength prevail. But history shows that violence does not win. Brutality may force the other side to the table but it never comes without cost. It creates resentment and reproduces. MLK was not weak, he was wise. Violence could not win.

Very few in the world can understand this but the Christian can. The Christian is able to take this long, humiliating path. In fact he is equipped to. It is the path marked out by the Saviour. Jesus has taught us how to walk it, where it leads and where it ends:- 'even though we die, yet shall we live.'

MLK shows us that human beings are worse than we realise

When the Nazi punched MLK in the face the preacher responded — 'help him back to his seat, let's pray for him'.

The 'I Have A Dream' speech was given on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to 250,000 people. It's an inspiring piece of oratory to hear even 60 years on and 3000 miles away. But the next day, one American newspaper published a photograph of the litter left behind with this caption: 'Washington now that the trash has been cleared from the streets'. That appalling headline is one example of the stubborn darkness of the human heart. Christians can sometimes belittle sin. We talk about 'mistakes' or 'failures' or equate sin to eating too many sweets. What MLK and millions of other people experienced was bitter, wounding painful degrading sin. We should never forget the capacity of ordinary people to think, say, and do, grotesque, sinful things.

MLK shows us that we are weaker than we think

As the old minister said: 'when we point the finger, we have three fingers pointing straight back at us'. Reading Jonathan Eig's book there are three great tragedies in MLK's life.

One is his relationship with women. It is almost certain that MLK was an adulterer. He appears to have grieved over his sin at times but not to have repented of it. He saw the sin of others yet belittled his own. This is one of the great tragedies of MLK's life.

Politics was the second tragedy. His experience led to terrible depression. As he toured the country he found racism explicit in the South and implicit in the North. His enemies he could cope with; his friends were another matter. Those he thought he could count on began to renounce him

even as the work grew more overwhelming. He grew weary and isolated. It was literally too much for one man.

MLK shows us our need for Christ

The greatest tragedy about this iconic baptist minister is that there does not appear to be a moment in MLK's life where he professed faith in Christ. He was, it appears, what we might call a Liberal Protestant.

He believed it appears, in the goodness of man, the noble persuasiveness of words, the power of love. Nobody could have done more than MLK to live out Liberal Protestantism and yet he found it wanting. Without Christ he had no one to fall on, no one to shepherd him, nobody to give his burden to. Religion without Christ left him depressed, probably suicidal and profoundly disillusioned.

There is no criticism of MLK from here. He lived, in many ways, a fine life. He played his part in a noble venture. The tragedy is that he seemingly was not able to rest in the Saviour. We must learn from MLK our own limits. Man needs a messiah and only one man can be the messiah we need.

That said, let the final word be his. "We ain't what we wanna be. And we ain't what we gonna be."

May we learn from him the great potential of man. May we believe in, and strive for greater things. May we be braver and bolder. But may we know our limits and the limits of those around us. May we have a dream, but may our dream be Jesus and his kingdom.

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